

Classic John Henry and the woeful Bert Williams gem “Nobody,” and breathes new life into songbook favorites such as “Jitterbug Waltz,” on which she accompanies herself on piano. But the title track, included here, also showcases McLorin Salvant’s powerful songwriting abilities. Reminiscent of Abbey Lincoln and Nina Simone, she shapes and shades individual words and syllables, stretching them for maximum effect. As throughout, McLorin Salvant receives simpatico support from pianist Aaron Diehl — another 2013 breakout artist — bassist Rodney Whitaker, drummer Herlin Riley and gutairist-banjoist James Chirillo.

Born in Russia, raised in Israel and having



toured all over the world with Cirque du Soleil, **Ilia Skibinsky** truly brings a global perspective to his music.

Closer to home, the saxophonist and composer has also played with jazz artists such as Joanne Brackeen,

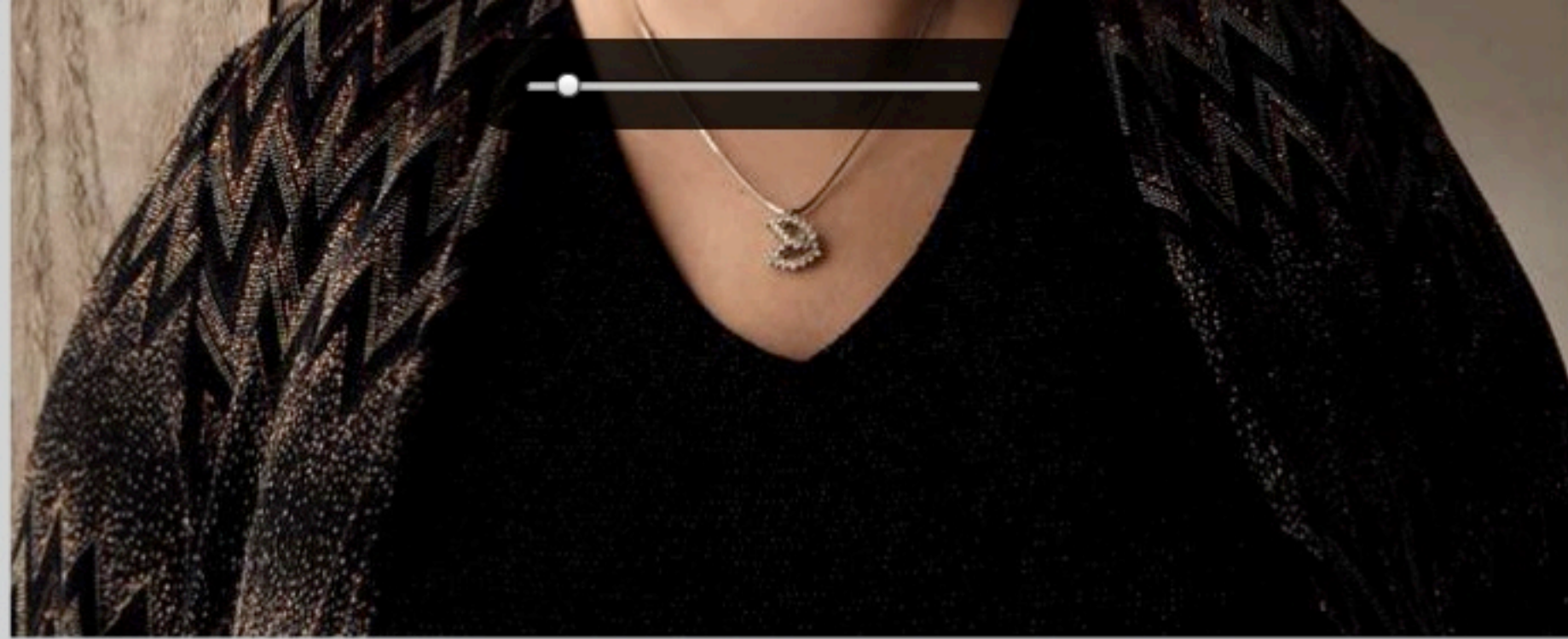
On Disc

Rodney Green and Bobby Sanabria. Last year, Skibinsky released the very personal-sounding *The Passage* (Mythology), on which he switches between alto and soprano and receives solid support from his quartet and outstanding guest artists. On the opening “The Passage (Part 1),” the leader sets forth on his journey with his soprano sax boldly charting the course. He’s in excellent company, too, his statements bolstered by a sturdy rhythm section — pianist Glenn Zaleski, bassist Edward Perez and drummer Colin Stranahan — and additional horns (trumpeter Matt Jodrell, tenorist Matthew Silberman). This sets the stage for a brilliant solo by guitarist Mike Moreno, in lyrical Metheny mode. Moreno picks up on Skibinsky’s tone and phrasing, blending a sense of adventure with a hint of uncertainty about the future. It’s a fitting leadoff track, leaving you hungry for the next number, the exuberant “The Passage (Part 2),” as well as the rest of the album.

Among jazz’s most singular voices, **Andy**



Bey’s rich, velvety croon is a thing of wonder in sparse musical settings.



Throughout her prolific career, vocalist and pianist **Diane Schuur** has interpreted swing, Great American Songbook standards, blues and pop; and recorded with the likes of B.B. King, the Count Basie Orchestra and the Caribbean Jazz Project. But nothing she’d done previously could have foretold her 2011 recording *The Gathering* (Vanguard), on which she interpreted classic country tunes — unless you count her affinity with fellow blind singer-keyboardist Ray Charles, who did the very same thing. Recorded in Nashville, the album includes nary a steel guitar or fiddle, but the contents are straight out of truckstop-jukebox nirvana. Schuur’s vocals are as clear and bracing as branch water as she dips into the songbooks of Hank Cochran, Merle Haggard, Tammy Wynette and Kris Kristofferson, backed by a solid band, which includes the strong presence of Mike Rojas on Wurlitzer. For her version of Willie Nelson’s “Healing Hands of Time,” Schuur receives beautiful support from the dual guitars of Mark Knopfler and producer Steve Buckingham, and the tenor sax of Kirk Whalum. The singer, who just turned 60 this month (December), also has a new live recording out, which returns her to her jazz roots.



Guitarist **John Abercrombie** ranks high among jazz’s most cinematic players and