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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

After Tour, St. Vincent Jamming With Joy

She Follows David Byrne's Lead

St. Vincent's new album, her fourth, was released this week.

Renata Raksha

By Andy Beta

When Annie Clark returned from 18 exhaustive months of world-wide touring with David Byrne for their 2012 album "Love This Giant," she took all of 36 hours off before getting back to work.

"I was writing the new record immediately after tour," Ms. Clark, who doubles as St. Vincent, said. "The best way for me to get back into being in one place was to immediately start working."

This week has seen the release of St. Vincent's self-titled fourth album, her first for a major label. Seated in a West Village restaurant before the start of her European tour, her once-brown locks now dyed silver, Ms. Clark explained her work ethic.

"I have come to accept that I am more built for touring life than I am for domesticity," she said, snapping her fingers to make her point. "I'm just not very good at going from the elevated to the mundane."

Raised in Texas, Ms. Clark dropped out of Berklee College of Music three years into her studies, lasting three months in New York before returning back home—briefly. She joined the Dallas band the Polyphonic Spree a few weeks later and hit the road. She also toured with indie rocker Sufjan Stevens before striking out on her own as St. Vincent and returning to New York in 2007.

Her work means she's rarely in one place for long. "I'm here so infrequently, I almost treat New York City like a Midwest soccer-mom tourist," she said. "When I'm here, I go see shows, dance and theater performances."

While her delicate features have made Ms. Clark a frequent presence on music magazine covers, and she performed as part of Diane von Furstenberg's recent New York Fashion Week show, her songwriting and abrasive guitar style belie her beauty.

"I met Annie after a benefit that Red+Hot Organization did at Radio City in 2009 and I told her I found her 'Actor' video deeply disturbing," Mr. Byrne said via email. "How's that for an opening line: 'You really creep me out!'"

They discussed a collaboration, but their touring schedules delayed it for years. "Annie would send me some pretty out-of-the-box stuff, and then I'd work on it a while and realize it was brilliant," Mr. Byrne said about the process that led to the 12 songs of "Love This Giant." "I was taken with how she was writing beautiful melodies to convey pretty dark thoughts. She's a bundle of seeming contradictions."

Ms. Clark was intimidated at the thought of working with the former Talking Heads frontman. "At first, I was terrified," she said, "but he doesn't walk around reminding you he's David Byrne."

If anything, she took cues from his productivity, as during that time, he worked on an opera with Fatboy Slim, which included a world tour, while writing two books. As she geared up for her tour, she followed his lead again, bringing folding bicycles for her and her crew so that they can explore each new city.

Her tour with Mr. Byrne informed St. Vincent's music in another way.

"At the 'Love This Giant' shows, I was inspired by seeing people get up and dance," Ms. Clark said. "I was seeing that kind of energy that wasn't just anxiety or anger but joy. Whatever my previous interests had been on the last three albums, joy is on this record."

Her latest retains her acerbic wit and singular arrangements, her guitar often processed to sound like a modular synthesizer, the new songs infused with bright horn lines and a more pronounced back beat.

"My last album [2011's "Strange Mercy"] was about looking within and being self-lacerating," she said, her voice trailing off as she became self-conscious about talking about herself. "This record is more about extending a hand and talking with other people."

At the prospect of spending the next year or so on the road, playing shows every night, she visibly brightened. "I like the dramatic arc of a day on tour," she said, "with the massive adrenaline rush of a show at the end of every night."

THE JAZZ SCENE | By Will Friedwald

Jazz Meets Sports, An 'Extension' And Mardi Gras

Max Raabe And Palast Orchester

◆ **Carnegie Hall, Isaac Stern Auditorium**
57th Street & Seventh Avenue
(212) 247-7800
Monday

Max Raabe, tenor, bandleader and Schöner Gigolo, is most often described as the German Vince Giordano, since he plays rigorously authentic Art Deco orchestrations of Charlestons and tangos from the Jazz Age with his 11-piece "Palast Orchester." Yet it would also be appropriate to regard Herr Raabe as the Deutschlandish Richard Cheese, since he also specializes in hysterically gonzo arrangements of outrageously anachronistic hits like "Sex Bomb," "We Will Rock You"—and even "Oops!...I Did It Again" played as a minor-key fox trot circa 1930. Listeners may prefer to experience the band in a ballroom rather than a concert hall, but who's complaining?

German singer Max Raabe

Clare Fischer's 'Extension,' The Manhattan School Of Music Orchestra

◆ **John C. Borden Auditorium**
Manhattan School of Music,
122nd Street and Broadway
(917) 493-4428
Friday

Composer Clare Fischer (1928–2012), has been on the minds of many lately as his posthumously released "Music for Strings, Percussion and the Rest" just received a Grammy Award for best instrumental composition, one it clearly deserves for its mix of shimmering classical strings and jazz rhythm section. Tonight, the MSM Orchestra reprises a work that's probably never performed live in the city, Fischer's magnum opus "Extension" (1963) a sweeping suite comprised of contrasting time signatures and instrumental textures, with sources of inspiration ranging from Brazil and Africa to Stravinsky—nowhere else in the literature of the music is there anything quite like it.

Christian McBride 'Jazz Meets Sports'

◆ **Prudential Hall, New Jersey Performing Arts Center**
1 Center St., Newark
(973) 642-8989
Sunday

They came to play! This is the most unique idea for a jazz concert we've seen in some time—although it's always seemed there were more jazz guys who were sports fans than the other way around. The most prominent of the former, bassist and musical spokesperson Christian McBride, is shepherding a trio of the latter, starting with center fielder and smooth guitarist Bernie Williams as well as Los Angeles Laker and jazz advocate Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who brings "high visibility" to both the game and the music.

Highlights in Jazz: 'Salute to Ken Peplowski'

◆ **Tribeca Performing Arts Center**
199 Chambers St.
(212) 220-1460
Thursday

When we first heard Ken Peplowski 30 years ago in Benny Goodman's final reed section, we placed him as a direct continuation of those master clarinetists of the 1940s—like Goodman, Artie Shaw and Buddy DeFranco—with his immaculately clean execution, rapturous tone and sparkling melodicism. On his recent "Live at the Kitano," with pianist Dick Hyman, every track underscores the duo's remarkable capacity for interplay. Thursday's "Salute" features Mr. Peplowski's rhythm section of choice, with pianist Derek Smith, bassist Nicki Parrott and drummer-vibraphonist Chuck Redd, as well as his two most belligerently buoyant sparring partners in guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli and tenor titan Houston Person.

The Grand St. Stompers with trumpeter Gordon Au will perform with three other bands for Mardi Gras.

Lynn Redmile

Carnival Caravan: From Recife to New Orleans With Nation Beat

◆ **Dizzy's Club Coca Cola**
Broadway at 60th Street, (212) 258-9595

The Salon: Mardi Gras

◆ **The Players**
16 Gramercy Park South, (212) 475-6116
both on Tuesday

For too many years the No. 1 party night in New Orleans was ignored up North, but now there are two complementary blowouts on Fat Tuesday. At Dizzy's, Nation Beat, led by percussionist Scott Kettner, will split the difference between Carnival in Rio and a South Rampart Street Parade, as well as the difference between marching and dancing. At the Players, no fewer than four different bands are "second lining" it up: Gordon Au's Grand St. Stompers, Professor Cunningham and his Old School, Jessy Carolina and the Hot Mess, and the sensational Hot Sardines as a climax.

The Manhattan School of Music Orchestra will perform the magnum opus of composer Clare Fischer, seen above in a photograph circa 1960.

I-r: Redferns/Getty Images; Getty Images

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