



*Evolution*  
Andrea Brachfeld & Insight (Origin)  
by Terrell Holmes

*Evolution*, by flutist Andrea Brachfeld & Insight, is not just an album; it's an eloquent, impassioned plea for humanity. Brachfeld, with a first-call rhythm section of pianist Bill O'Connell, bassist Harvie S and drummer Jason Tiemann, sets out a musically and culturally diverse welcome table that is instructive as well as entertaining.

Brachfeld has serious jazz chops, and she declares her pedigree when the band bears down on straight-ahead hard bop tunes like "What's Up", "The Unraveling of It All" and "Decimation of Transformation". Brachfeld's exploration of world music, however, makes this album a standout. Her beautiful arrangement of "Qingauit", by the Inuit throat singing duo Tudjaat, is a lovely surprise, as is the band's tender version of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach's "Ko Ribon", a Hebrew song praising God for His miracle of creation. The addition of an African wood flute, kalimba and shekere on "The Hut Song" enhances the atmosphere around the song's toe-tapping African rhythm, augmented by Brachfeld's spirited internal flute dialogue. "Child of the Earth", a spoken word affirmation, might be the album's defining

moment. Brachfeld's delivery reflects the words' urgency, her gradually rising voice driving the rhythm section relentlessly as the music builds and intensifies beneath her elemental message of acceptance and love.

Brachfeld clearly ranks among the top tier of jazz flutists. She plays with an enviable fluidity and deep passion, applying a feathery touch on ballads, or unleashing a controlled cyclonic fury on uptempo tunes, laying down staccato passages at the speed of a hummingbird's wings. It takes redoubtable supporting players to keep up with her, and it would be difficult to find a more energetic and talented trio than Harvie S, Tiemann and O'Connell. Their anticipation, spacing and meshing indicate either an extended period working together or a case of instant simpatico. The first-rate composing, arranging and playing throughout *Evolution* establish it as one of the best releases of the year so far.

For more info visit [andreabrachfeld.com](http://andreabrachfeld.com). Brachfeld is at Iridium Mar. 18 with Santi DeBriano and Lincoln Center Mar. 24. See Calendar.



*Universal Code*  
Muriel Grossmann (Dreamland)  
by Marco Cangiano

Saxophonist Muriel Grossmann stands out for her original approach, yet remains an underrated artist, particularly in the U.S. Her associations with Radomir Milojkovic (guitar), Gina Schwartz (bass) and Uros Stamenkovic (drums) date back at least a decade, while Llorenç Barceló (organ) entered her inner circle some five years ago. *Universal Code* is in many ways a natural progression from her earlier recordings, as her deep Coltrane-inspired spirituality meets an earthier feeling, where the soul component seems to prevail. Such a blend recalls Grant Green's underrated last phase, mainly due to the hypnotic interplay between Milojkovic's fleet guitars and Barceló's thick Hammond organ sound. Grossman's saxes float over this tapestry, while Stamenkovic's earthy drumming provides a solid foundation.

When Schwartz' full-sounding bass enters in "Transience", the group takes a slightly different tack, more inclined toward a modal landscape. One thinks of the classic Coltrane quartet when listening to the dance between Schwartz and Stamenkovic; Barceló's spacey organ à la Larry Young leads to the saxophonist's impassioned solo. Taken together, "Transience", "Non-Duality" and "Essence" form a suite of such rare intensity that a parallel to *A Love Supreme* may not be overly far-fetched. Grossmann's restraint and attention to the spaces between the notes contributes enormously to the overall atmosphere. In this regard, she sounds more comfortable on soprano, as in "Essence" where her solo navigates over Schwartz' insistent pattern.

With "Liberation", the group shifts back to a quartet and a more soul-anchored mood, Barceló's bass pedal taking charge. The leader on tenor soars over a dense rhythmic vamp. "Post-Meditation" has a suspenseful atmosphere at the outset, suddenly turning into a staccato blues-drenched solo by Milojkovic—once again Green comes to mind thanks to repeated single note lines—and culminating in a tight dialogue between Grossmann and Stamenkovic. "Compassion", a folksy medium-tempo ballad, concludes the album in a vintage rock-blues mode, Grossmann showing her more raucous side.

For more info, visit [murielgrossmann.com](http://murielgrossmann.com)

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