

I can't remember exactly when I first met Ms Pintchik, but it was several years ago, when she was recommended to me as someone I had to hear. That I did, and she has now appeared twice at *JazzNights* with her trio, always featuring her husband, the brilliant bassist, Scott Hardy (JN32 in 2009 and JN55 in 2013). She is that rare pianist with an instantly recognizable "voice" and her trios combine her excellent originals with inventively reworked standards. There is much virtue in group longevity and in the compatibility from which longevity derives. In the old days, musicians often worked together for years, listening to each other, learning from each other, and developing a recognizable group sound that couldn't be missed. That's all too rare these days, as the lack of reliable, steady gigs and today's fragmented, "here today, elsewhere tomorrow, and somewhere else the next day" style has made the kind of steady growth working groups once achieved difficult. There are exceptions, and Leslie Pintchik's trio is one of them. She, her husband, bassist Scott Hardy have been playing together since the early 1990's, and it shows.

She is something of a late-comer to jazz, as she started her serious musical development in jazz only after getting her masters in English literature from Columbia. Instead of going on in that realm, she matriculated at another "University," Bradley's, the legendary club on University Place. No better place for an aspiring pianist, that's for sure. She attracted the attention of the great bassist Red Mitchell, and soon she, Red, and Scott - on guitar at that time - were a working trio.

Her current trio usually includes Michael Sarin on drums, and benefits from regular gigs in Westchester and New York. The group is sophisticated, subtle, and always

swinging. Her work often features imaginative deconstructions of tunes from the American songbook. It is instructive to contrast her approach with that of others who take a "deconstructive" view of standards. Compare her version of "Happy Days Are Here Again" with that of the gifted pianist Orrin Evans, who has done a different "Happy" tune more than once on CD - "I Want to be Happy." Both do these improbable standards brilliantly, and begin at roughly the same gentle, even glacial pace. But Orrin first rips his tune to pieces, then puts it back together with bravura gusto, whereas Leslie and her cohorts prize Happy Days apart, show us all that's going on inside, then use a delicate reconstitution to bring us back. Both approaches work, but hers is the more gorgeous and, I suspect, the more long-lasting version. I heard the trio we will hear in October do Leonard Bernstein's "Somewhere" at the Kitano a couple of years ago. My notes show that I was skeptical - to be honest, I don't think Mr. Bernstein's tunes usually work well in a jazz context - but I was completely won over - "there's a section where she caresses the notes beautifully - utterly appropriate. Then they go theatrical, and loud. Super." That tune opens her CD "Quartets" as well, see below.

The trio also does inventively crafted originals. She's a strong composer, as is Scott Hardy, who is a real force in this trio. He, and Michael Sarin are far more than accompanists here.

Ms. Pintchik has several fine CDs out, one a trio with Scott Hardy and percussionist Satoshi Takeishi, and the other with drummer Mark Dodge augmented by either Steve Wilson on alto or Mr. Takeishi. Both quartets work, and these two CDs, as well as her more recent effort (see below) have received very high praise.

Her website (<http://www.lesliepintchik.com/index.html>) features reviews of her work as well as her reviews/appreciations of others. It is well worth a look and listen. There are also many YouTube clips well worth a peek.

Leslie Pintchik CDs: Editorial comment: Not only are these CDs musically excellent, but they are beautifully designed. And I absolutely love the new label name - see below.

**So Glad To Be Here**, Ambient 003, 2004, (with Scott Hardy and Satoshi Takeishi)

**Quartets**, Ambient 006, 2007 (with Hardy, Mark Dodge and either Steve Wilson or Satoshi Takeishi)

**We're Here to Listen**, Pintch Hard Records CD 001 (with Hardy, Dodge and Takeishi)

**In the Nature of Things**, Pintch Hard 002 (Hardy, Sarin, Takeishi, Steve Wilson, Ron Horton)

**True North**, Pintch Hard 003, (Hardy, Sarin, Takeishi, Wilson, Horton)

There is also a nice DVD, Leslie Pintchik **Live in Concert**, Pintch Hard Records DVD 001