

the bad plus

"By any standard, jazz or otherwise, it is moving, mighty music... bad to the bone, hot players with hard-rock hearts." - ROLLING STONE

"The Bad Plus are the Coen brothers of jazz: Midwesterners, both ironic and dead earnest, technically brilliant, beyond versatile, a little chilly sometimes, but funny, surprising, and pretty hard to pin down."
- THE NEW YORKER

"Easily the most likable and listenable jazz album of 2007." - BILLBOARD

"The Bad Plus are a reminder that American jazz hasn't gone to sleep. Play any of their albums and their collective sound leaps out of your speaker, steps all over your furniture and scares the bejesus out of the cat."
- OBSERVER MUSIC MONTHLY

<http://www.thebadplus.com>
<http://www.imnworld.com/thebadplus>



Arguably one of the biggest breakout stories of jazz in the past decade, THE BAD PLUS (REID ANDERSON - BASS; ETHAN IVERSON - PIANO; & DAVID KING - DRUMS) have connected with the jazz world and beyond with THESE ARE THE VISTAS (2003), GIVE (2004), SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY? (2005), and PROG (2007).

All three members of THE BAD PLUS hail from the Midwest: Reid and David from Minnesota, and Ethan from Wisconsin. The roots of the group date back to circa 1984 when Dave first heard Reid sing in a junior high rock band. By 1989, Reid and Ethan were playing free jazz at restaurants throughout America's dairy land. While 1990 marks Dave, Reid, and Ethan's first musical encounter, the group's eponymous debut album was released in 2001 on Fresh Sound, a Spanish Independent label. A 2002 performance at New York's Village Vanguard led to the signing with Columbia Records.

Since their debut recording, the group has been touring relentlessly, playing to and establishing one of the most diverse and ecstatic cross-over audiences at jazz clubs, symphony halls, and rock venues (opening for THE PIXIES, WILCO, etc.) in the U.S.A. and abroad, with glowing reviews from traditional jazz outlets and more.

Performing both original compositions and a variety of covers, THE BAD PLUS brings a winningly disparate body of influences to the stage. This is not a jazz trio for whom being "rock-influenced" means simply playing loud or referencing LED ZEPPELIN, NIRVANA, and THE PIXIES, etc. With deep experience writing and performing across several genres, these guys are shrewd, hearty improvisers with the ability to build, contort, distort, destroy, rebuild and reinvent without losing grasp of "the song."

"THE BAD PLUS has a forthright respect for melody as well as a fierce allegiance to abstraction; somehow the two go hand in hand. And neither grandeur nor sentiment is a source of embarrassment for these musicians whose only armor is an ironclad conviction in their own rare chemistry."
- THE NEW YORK TIMES



Vocalist is a plus for jazz trio

By [Steve Greenlee](#)

Globe Staff / April 6, 2009

Fans of the iconoclastic jazz trio the Bad Plus can be excused for reacting with skepticism upon hearing that the band's new album, "For All I Care," would feature a vocalist. Had pianist Ethan Iverson, bassist Reid Anderson, and drummer David King reached the end of their creative road? Was the inclusion of unknown alt-rock singer Wendy Lewis a gimmick aimed merely at bringing new attention to a group whose novelty of turning rock songs into jazz had worn off?

THE BAD PLUS WITH WENDY LEWIS At: Berklee Performance Center, Friday night

Friday night at Berklee, they proved neither was the case. Lewis's addition is part of the band's evolution. Her alto - strong, unwavering, but not overly dramatic - was a fourth instrument that became part of the musicians' give and take.

The trio started the show by playing six tunes without Lewis. They turned Stravinsky's "Apollo" into a vehicle for avant-garde improv and, if it's possible, made Ornette Coleman's "Song X" even more irreverent. Nuttiest of all was the prog-rock parody "Physical Cities," whose motif consisted of a single chord repeated - and at the tune's climax it was repeated maybe 100 times, in unison with a single bass note and pounded drum.

The concert truly began, however, when Lewis walked on stage and sang the first few bars of the country song "Lock, Stock and Teardrops," her lonely voice draped over Iverson's gently plinked high notes and a here-and-there bass. It was slow and languid but ever so riveting. When she finished, there were 10 seconds of dead silence before the audience - mostly Berklee students - erupted into applause. The quartet followed that with a total deconstruction of Nirvana's "Lithium" that would get lesser musicians all turned around, since this arrangement stuck a difficult 5/4 passage right in the middle of the chorus.

Before the night was over, Lewis and the Bad Plus would transfix us with achingly beautiful renditions of Wilco's "Radio Cure" and Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb," a version of "Blue Velvet" so creepy it might scare David Lynch, and a cover of U2's "New Year's Day" that might be described as acoustic arena rock. They stretched it out, sped it up, slowed it back down, and explored every imaginable crevice of the tune. This is what the best jazz musicians do.



No matter the song, it's the Bad Plus sound Trio expands horizons on new CD

By John Black

April 1, 2009



When it comes to covering a song, the members of The Bad Plus filter their choices through what pianist Ethan Anderson calls a series of “indefinable variables” – who wrote it, who recorded it, the genre and style of the recording – before they settle down to their instruments with it and see if it passes the ultimate litmus test.

“Does it sound like us when it’s done,” Anderson said. “It doesn’t matter what attracted us to it in the first place, the melody or the lyric or whatever, if it doesn’t sound like The Bad Plus when we play it, then why do it?”

For their latest CD, *For All I Care*, The Bad Plus put their sonic stamp of approval on songs from Yes (*Long Distance Runaround*), Nirvana (*Lithium*) and The Bee Gees (*How Deep is Your Love*), among others.

As a bonus, they enlisted the talents of vocalist Wendy Lewis, a fixture in the Minneapolis alt rock scene, to the mix, giving each song another layer of interpretation that still fits into the band’s mold. The idea of using Lewis was inspired in part by the collaborative recording by John Coltrane and vocalist Johnny Hartman, released in 1963. “Coltrane’s quartet had already developed a group language, and then they enlisted this incredible singer without changing the language of the band,” said drummer David King. “In that same sense, this is still very much a Bad Plus record. We just happen to have a great singer singing the songs with us.”

Anderson agreed. “We’ve known Wendy for years so when we decided to use a singer there really wasn’t any other choice for us,” he said. “Her voice is so unique, but I think it really amplifies the sound we’re looking for with these songs. We spent a lot of time rehearsing the songs with her and fine tuning them to make her voice a part of what we do and not a separate thing from the band, like you hear with a lot of other guest vocalists.”

Midwest Meets Big City



The Bad Plus

By Melissa Felicio

The Bad Plus are an enigma, an unconventional indie rock jazz band from Minneapolis including teenage buds bassist Reid Anderson, keyboardist Ethan Iverson and drummer David King. In their late 20s they reunited in New York City and their first attempt at a collaboration was unsuccessful. However, their second attempt proved a ferocity and energy of undeniable genius. Recording three instrumental albums to date, *The Bad Plus* is now “plus one” vocalist Wendy Lewis, Minneapolis’ own renowned alt rock songbird. The Bad Plus consider Lewis’ voice an instrument itself, adding an instant and fresh new dynamic to the band that no strings or keys could manage. Lewis appears on their latest, *For All I Care*, the band’s first album including vocals.

Among few original tracks, these

kings of the cover song rearrange some favorite pop culture classics including Pink Floyd and Nirvana renditions fusing them together with less familiar 20th century classical compositions. Lewis’s dreamlike vocals accompany Anderson’s thick bass notes deliberately intensifying the dark, raw texture of memorable American jazz of the past. Iverson’s haunting piano is intoxicating; you can imagine the awe of lone strangers as he plays at the local dive bar with a tip jar half empty atop his piano casting hypnotic spells. Jazz listeners will find refuge in the place where *The Bad Plus*’ instruments never end and Lewis’ lullabies lull you into peaceful sleep.

Check them out **Wednesday, March 25** at **The Wellmont Theater**, Montclair, NJ. Show time is 8 p.m. and tickets are \$23 and \$33. For more info go to thebadplus.com

BARNES & NOBLE REVIEW

For All I Care *THE BAD PLUS*

Six years and seven releases into a collective journey devoted to the notion of cultivating a stylistic room of their own, pianist Ethan Iverson, bassist Reid Anderson, and drummer David King, who comprise The Bad Plus, offer several firsts on *For All I Care*. For one thing, TBP completely eschews original music, instead presenting Iverson's idea-packed arrangements of Euro-canon music by Igor Stravinsky, Gyorgy Ligeti, and Milton Babbitt, and eight atonal, polymetric deconstructions of post-'70s pop tunes, their trademark since TBP's eponymous 2001 debut for Barcelona-based indie Fresh Sound, thereby doubling their "cover" output. Also for the first time, TBP joins forces with Minneapolis-based alt-rocker Wendy Lewis, who functions as a co-equal fourth musician on songs like Nirvana's "Lithium," the Bee Gees' "How Deep Is Your Love," and Heart's "Barracuda." Rather than inhibit TBP's collective energy, Lewis enhances it -- she knows how to project an emotional point of view while dealing with the cerebral, push-the-envelope heat of TBP's highly curated highbrow language. She articulates the lyrics clearly and understatedly, phrasing them in a rubato bob-and-weave over King's meters and timbral combinations, Anderson's vamps and interpolations, and Iverson's contrapuntal lines, eliminating any archness or camp that a listener might attach to TBP's purely instrumental treatments. Further energizing the flow are the signature compression and distortion techniques of TBP's producer Tchad Blake, back in the fold after recusing himself from 2007's *Prog*, a date that purported to evoke the band's in-person sound.

-Ted Panken

Irreverent trio The Bad Plus embraces pop as well as jazz

The Bad Plus, a New York jazz trio, plays a four-night stand at Dimitriou's Jazz Alley in Seattle, March 11-15.

By [Hugo Kugiya](#)

Special to The Seattle Times

The Bad Plus with vocalist Wendy Lewis. Left to right: Reid Anderson (Bassist), Wendy Lewis (Vocalist), David King (Drummer - sitting), Ethan Iverson (Pianist).

Their music is no joke, despite the fact that the members of the jazz trio the Bad Plus possess a definite sense of humor. Take the outgoing message on drummer Dave King's voice mail.

"This is Dave King of Dave King industries, people and products you can count on."

Dry humor for sure. But to King's chagrin, the music he plays has also been taken for the same.

"Like I spend 170 days a year away from my kids for a joke," said King, whose avant-garde trio begins a four-day run Thursday at Jazz Alley with singer Wendy Lewis.

"The people that really get it, get it. Some of the most militant, straight-ahead jazz critics are fans of the band. But some people will hold to this idea that we are not being serious no matter what we say, or how many records we sell."

The perception that the Bad Plus, indeed a darling of critics, is being ironic or sly comes from the fact that in addition to playing original, ambitious compositions, it also has decided to take on an eclectic mix of pop songs from the likes of ABBA, Blondie, David Bowie, Rush, Herb Alpert, Tears for Fears and Vangelis, who composed the theme from the movie "Chariots of Fire."

New York-based the Bad Plus, whose other members include pianist Ethan Iverson and bassist Reid Anderson — he and King were childhood friends in Minnesota — have added a vocalist for its latest album, "For All I Care," which includes covers of rock standards by Pink Floyd ("Comfortably Numb"), the Bee Gees ("How Deep is Your Love"), Yes ("Long Distance Runaround"), Heart ("Barracuda") and Nirvana ("Lithium").

"We feel it's a trajectory of improvised music, perfectly in line with the history of jazz," said King, who like the rest of the trio is in his late 30s. "If it's got a good melody, some great changes, if it relates well, if it can be interpreted in a way that sounds like its own music ... What's the problem?"

When a rock star chooses to dabble in old standards, as a few have done — Rod Stewart comes to mind — the effort is generally viewed with gravity and seriousness, as if the musician has matured and is answering a higher calling. But as a jazz group availing itself of the rock canon, the Bad Plus has not always been given the same benefit of the doubt.

"For All I Care" is a jazz record by any measure, improvised, uniquely interpreted, altered, but not beyond recognition, improved in a way that makes clear the quality of the musicianship.

"We grew up playing the book of standards," King said. "We all still play that music ... Jazz is based on melodies people knew. Why would that be any different if the songs were by Wilco, the Flaming Lips or Heart? This is music we heard growing up. We also know we can tear these songs apart, rebuild them so they're ours and take it for a ride. It's fun to hear a song that you know as long as it's new and it's not lightweight ... How many times can you play 'All the Things You Are?' "

The addition of Lewis, 52, a fixture on the alternative-rock scene in Minneapolis and a bandmate of King's in the 1990s, was inspired by the 1963 collaboration between John Coltrane and singer Johnny Hartman. Lewis does not so much become the center of the group as a fourth instrument. She described the process of adapting her voice to the band as "stripping things down."

As a career move, turning to jazz couldn't have turned out better for Lewis, who is touring the country with the Bad Plus and performing gigs overseas.

"For white women," Lewis said, "if you sing rock, you kind of vanish when you turn 50."

Last night: The Bad Plus at Soiled Dove

By Jon Solomon in [Last Night's Show](#)

Tuesday, Mar. 10 2009 @ 9:27AM



The Bad Plus

The Soiled Dove

Monday, March 9, 2008

There's a live recording of Rahsaan Roland Kirk where he talks about how he's going to play two entirely separate songs on two different saxophones. One was Dvorak's New World Symphony and the other was the standard "Sentimental Journey." He said it's like splitting your mind into two parts and equated it to one side of your brain saying, "ob la di, ob la da" and the other asking, "What does it mean?"

There were times last night, during the Bad Plus's outstanding set, where it seemed like pianist Ethan Iverson was essentially doing something similar where his hands seemed entirely non-dependent on each other, as he did on the song "Old Money," which he said was about "crime and punishment and the crimes that go unpunished." It was almost as if one hand was doing the crime and other was punishing it. Drummer David King was punishing the beat on the song as well, even reaching underneath his snare drum and snapping the metal snare a few times. The trio tackled most of its instrumental set with equal vigor, opening with Stravinsky's "Variation

d'Apollon," then "The Empire Strikes Backward" and "Anthem for the Earnest," both from the trio's 2005 release Suspicious Activity?

After an insanely killer take on "Big Eater," singer Wendy Lewis joined the trio for Nirvana's "Lithium" and Wilco's "Radio Cure," both of which are on the band's brand new album, For All I Care. Lewis's vocals fit wonderfully with the trio. After a somewhat meditative rendition of "Blue Velvet," King then locked into a groove by himself, sometimes playing slightly offbeat and at times kicking polyrhythms on the bass drum before Iverson and bassist Reid Anderson joined in for an angular take on U2's "New Year's Day."

When the guys in Bad Plus play cover songs, they don't just "cover" a song, they deconstruct it or sometimes reconstruct it and make it their own, as they did with a number of covers they did last night, including the Bee Gees' "How Deep is Your Love," Heart's "Barracuda" and Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb," which got the biggest response from the crowd.

After a standing ovation, the band came out for a version of Neil Young's "Heart of Gold," which started off as a cappella with each member singing. The Flaming Lips' "Feeling Yourself Disintegrate" was stellar way to close out the show.

THE BOSTON PHOENIX

Covers uncovered

The Bad Plus plus a singer

By JON GARELICK | March 9, 2009 |

"Beyond category" is what Duke Ellington called music he admired. He disliked the word "jazz." And, hey, don't we all want to exist beyond category? But everyone comes from somewhere, and so does music. No one is more aware of this than the Bad Plus, who'll be playing the Berklee Performance Center April 3. Beginning with their Columbia debut, *These Are the Vistas* (2003), they mixed whirligig originals with oddball covers by the likes of Nirvana and Blondie. Working in a traditional jazz format — acoustic piano trio — they didn't necessarily turn these covers into jazz. Unlike Brad Mehldau doing Radiohead, or Joshua Redman playing Dylan or Joni Mitchell, they weren't concerned with translating contemporary pop via jazz harmony or rhythm. When they played "Iron Man," they played "Iron Man."

Which is one reason I had always admired the trio but never loved them. Grunge-tattoo'd drummer Dave King was a mixed-meter demon, a master of precise, daunting rolls of clang and thwap with hard-rock muscle. Pianist Ethan Iverson — goateed, bald, bespectacled, in suit and tie — had a wealth of cross-genre skills in his fingertips, from fractured Paul Bley post-bop to Bach and beyond, plus a dry-humored delivery of between-song announcements. Bassist Reid Anderson was the indie-rocker type with the floppy 'do and the most ingratiating jazz style — a big warm tone, Charlie Haden–dark, rhythmically supple.

But their concoctions were all oil-and-water; there was never a sustained groove, hardly a jazz chord within earshot, and nothing to sink into, just their odd assemblages of pyrotechnic parts with a taste for rock bombast. In the midst of these frenetic originals, the covers came across as a joke: "Oh, hah, Neil Young — who knew!" It reminded me of the days when Steven Bernstein's Sex Mob quartet was messing with John Barry's James Bond themes — a chorus of "Goldfinger" followed by 10 minutes of split-reed Albert Ayler squall. I didn't get it. Or at least, I didn't connect with it.

The new *For All I Care* (Heads Up) is the trio's first album of *all* covers, and it takes them in opposite directions: they've added a singer (indie-rocker Wendy Lewis) as special guest, and, for the first time, the covers include classical as well as modern pop. So we get Pink Floyd, Yes, Wilco, and the Flaming Lips, but also Igor Stravinsky, Milton Babbitt, and György Ligeti. The classical pieces are perfect for the band. Ligeti's "Fém (Etude No. 8)" and Babbitt's "Semi-Simple Variations" (in two versions) are all spiky rhythms and mixed tonalities, perfectly turned miniatures that are bravura showpieces for the trio's ensemble dexterity. "Variation d'Apollon" (from Stravinsky's *Apollon musagète* ballet) lets the band get into *their* version of MJQ neo-Baroque-jazz fusion, with a touch of rock backbeat.

But the pieces with Lewis are the revelations. Nirvana's "Lithium" gets twisted with a recurring hiccup in the meter. (Lewis calls it a "sloshing" take on the song; see "Wendy Gets Bad," below.) Wilco's "Radio Cure" is both stark and cheerful, with first Lewis's solo voice, then rich, thrumming accompaniment from Anderson, then a pause for Iverson's ascending chromatic scale. Throw in the beautifully deployed dissonances and it becomes a down-mood art song.

There are touches like that all through the album, but the difference is Lewis's voice. That shouldn't be a surprise — what can provide a more immediate emotional connection to a song than a human voice singing lyrics? Lewis plays it straight, and the band have given her arrangements that comport. They've actually stripped the bombast *out* of Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb" — no strings, no guitar solo, just Iverson's cascading arpeggios and Anderson providing his earthy bass lines as well as vocal harmonies. When Iverson solos, he's understated, brooding. And the Flaming Lips' "Feeling Yourself Disintegrate" is positively majestic, with tubular bells added into the final chorus.

Of course, in the band's mind, *For All I Care* doesn't represent a big departure. When I get Anderson on the phone and tell him about my early reaction to their use of covers, he says, "We never do these things as a joke. We play these songs seriously and with a lot of love. People find it amusing because — especially when we first started doing it — it was a novel thing to play rock or pop. People were surprised and didn't know how to react, but we've always done it with a really serious intention."

Aye, but there's the rub. "People didn't know how to react." Don Byron used to like to say, taking his cue from Stravinsky, "Music is objective." Meaning it doesn't care who plays it, but also meaning that its "greatness" can be determined strictly by its musical properties. But how? Both Anderson and Iverson have talked about all music's being on a continuum — jazz, classical, pop. And in that sense, they're no different from classical prodigy Gunther Schuller, who as a child said to his father after hearing "Daybreak Express" on the radio, "Dad, last night I heard a piece by Duke Ellington and it was as good as anything by Beethoven or Mozart."

And yet. *For All I Care* has sent me back to the Bad Plus discography and given me new appreciation for the way they treat the melody of Tears for Fears' "Everybody Wants To Rule the World" (those Iverson arpeggios again, and even a jazz harmony here and there). And it's given me renewed respect for originals like "Mint," "Physical Cities," and "Cheney Piñata" (nothing if not humor). But, still, music isn't all *that* objective. It all comes from somewhere. Would I love the Bad Plus's "Life on Mars" if I didn't know the Bowie original? In the Bad Plus's estimation, you'd have to be from Mars not to.

Pop & Hiss

The L.A. Times music blog

Live review: Adding up the Bad Plus

11:55 AM PT, Mar 7 2009

How do you sleep at night knowing you're so awesome?" a voice from the front of the crowd calmly asked toward the end of **the Bad Plus'** sold-out show at the Mint on Friday night.

The band shared a laugh at the question, but given what the trio and new vocalist Wendy Lewis had shown up to that point, it was easy to forgive the hyperbole.

Best known for chocolate-in-my-peanut-butter jazz reworkings of indie and classic rock standards through its own eccentric and often staggeringly skillful lens, the Minneapolis-based trio worked through its instrumental first set of shape-shifting originals and modern classical covers. The set was highlighted by a reworking of Ligeti's "Fém (Etude No. 8)," which popcorned through a tangled, stutter-stop interplay, and meshed perfectly with a band that once covered **Aphex Twin**. Hinging on the time-bending feats of agility by maniacal drummer Dave King, the songs at times built to a thunderous climax that lifted King and pianist Ethan Iverson out of their seats to follow where inspiration led.

But it was the evening's second set that showcased the Bad Plus' new secret weapon: Minneapolis indie rock singer **Wendy Lewis**.

The notion that the trio would take on a vocalist for its new record was initially cause for some concern -- how could a band that took such chances with time and structure even find room for words? But hearing Lewis mesh with the Bad Plus is an often-breathtaking example of sympathetic musicianship, exemplified by a languid, impressionistic take on **Nirvana's** "Lithium," where Lewis' sharp voice stretched out select passages to uncover a new level of seasick melancholy to a song that is easy to take for granted after years of radio airplay.

A cover of "Comfortably Numb" was another of the evening's highlights, buoyed by a serpentine bass-line by Reid Anderson. As King worked his kit with gentle brushstrokes and rhythmic clicks, Lewis carried the **Pink Floyd** classic with sighing resignation and pregnant pauses, only to have the entire song woozily crumble around her as Iverson's fluttering piano sounded as if it were circling a drain through the final verse.

U2's "New Year's Day" also received a spirited renovation as Lewis, a diminutive presence in librarian glasses and a vintage shirt, conjured up the simmering bravado of a young Bono. Reworked to a twitchy, head-bobbing shuffle, the band broke the song down to dissonant chaos between the verses that meshed with the song's inner despair, only to find Lewis returning to soar over the top of the storm and lift the standing room-only crowd right along with her. (A clip of the act covering "New Year's Day" from a concert last year is below.)

Was it pure jazz? Was it something that would resonate with fans of the originals? The Bad Plus doesn't seem too terribly worried about the answers, and odds are, it's not keeping the band up at night.

-- Chris Barton



The Bad Plus

For All I Care

(Heads Up International)

On *For All I Care*, prog-jazz trio the Bad Plus (bassist Reid Anderson, pianist Ethan Iverson and drummer David King) joins forces with singer Wendy Lewis and emerges with a masterpiece. The CD opens with a cover of Nirvana's "Lithium," taking the original's quiet desperation to a completely different place. They do the same with Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb," which sounds like it's coming from inside the drug-induced haze related in the chorus. While Lewis sings, Iverson plays a manic piano riff that has little connection to Anderson and King's more straightforward approach. There are also several incursions into classical music that showcase the trio's dexterity and chemistry, but it's the pop efforts that are most surprising. They include a brilliant take on "Long Distance Runaround," which reinterprets Yes' electric classic acoustically without losing any of its energy. And their haunting rendition of the Bee Gees' "How Deep Is Your Love" emphasizes the jaded point of view of someone who no longer believes in romance.

- Ernest Barteldes



The Bad Plus adds a vocalist for their latest album and tour For All I Care

March 01st, 2009

By Timothy Dwenger

Are they a jazz band with a rock and roll problem or a rock and roll band with a jazz problem? Some say they walk the line between the two while others say they have created a dynamic new genre. Whatever the consensus, it is clear that The Bad Plus is pushing the sonic envelope all over the map.

While primarily an original band, according to their drummer Dave King, they have covered everyone from Abba to Nirvana since they formed in 2000. Black Sabbath's "Iron Man," Blondie's "Heart of Glass" and Wilco's "Radio Cure" may seem like strange cuts for a jazz trio to cover to purists out there, but King was quick to defend his band's choices in a recent interview with The Marquee as he boarded a plane to Poland.

"We are celebrating the idea of the 'new standard,'" he said. "The jazz standards of the American song book were all pop tunes of their time. We feel this is a part of the tradition of jazz and we don't want to ignore the music that was important to us on some level as we were growing up. We are continuing the idea that pop music is available to improvise on and can be really creatively rewarding."

Though covers have been a mainstay of their repertoire since the beginning, King and his musical foils, pianist Ethan Iverson and bassist Reid Anderson, worked exclusively as an instrumental band until they teamed up with a smoky voiced vocalist for their recent release *For All I Care*. "We had done five studio records as a trio and it is a jazz tradition to have some sort of sitting-in scenario or special guest thing," King said. "We tossed around the idea of another instrumentalist that we respect but then we started thinking, 'why don't we go all the way and do a vocal record?' One of our favorite records is the John Coltrane, Johnny Hartman record, where The Coltrane Quartet worked with a singer. What we love most about that record is that it is still the Coltrane Quartet; it's not a band backing a singer. It is a true collaboration. We felt like having a vocalist come in who is a true ensemble player would follow that tradition. We just wanted to flesh out some tunes in a new way with a vocalist who is very daring and not an ego type. It's really been fantastic."

The daring vocalist who fits in with this off-beat trio so well was a stranger to most outside of the northern Midwest. "When we were first tossing around ideas for singers, we were tossing around big names and then we thought that wouldn't work because it would be viewed more like we were backing someone up. So we started thinking of great singers that we knew that were unknown in an international way. Immediately Reid, who was a fan of some arty experimental projects I did with Wendy Lewis in the mid-Nineties in Minneapolis, said, 'What about Wendy?' I thought it was a perfect idea. We had remained friends over the years and I contacted her and she was up for it right away and it gelled immediately," said King.

As the project got underway, Lewis became a sort of fourth member of The Bad Plus. She brought a list of songs to the table that she wanted the group to consider for the album and she helped to arrange some of the material around her vocal ideas and strengths. "The three of us started deconstructing the

songs and vibing out the vocal and then we brought Wendy in and started rehearsing with her and she just fit right in," said King. "She came up with several great ideas, like singing 'Comfortably Numb' with that sort of talking verse, so it was really a collaborative effort," King said.

Now that the record is in the can and has hit shelves in both Europe and the U.S., the band is back on the road and they decided to bring Lewis along. "We open the show as a trio and play about five or six tunes before we bring her on," said King. "She isn't out in front or behind us, she's set up right with us. It's all pretty mellow. We are trying to retain as much of what people know of The Bad Plus as possible."

So whether you are a rock and roll fan who loves the lyrical intricacies of Jeff Tweedy and Kurt Cobain or a jazz cat with a taste for complex instrumentals in strange time signatures, The Bad Plus will cover the bases when they hit the stage.

METRO SAN JOSE

music & nightlife

02.25.09



FILTER JOB: The Bad Plus turn rock into jazz.

Bad for Everyone

Think jazz-rock fusion is better off dead? The Bad Plus make it sound good again.

By Steve Palopoli

DO THE BAD PLUS (a) play jazz music to reinvent rock? Or do they (b) play rock music to reinvent jazz? The answer might seem obvious at first, since the Minneapolis trio manned by pianist Ethan Iverson, bassist Reid Anderson and drummer David King do in fact play jazz music.

And the Bad Plus made their mark on pop culture by reinventing rock songs like Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and Blondie's "Heart of Glass" on their 2003 major-label debut, *These Are the Vistas*. These were interpretations that indie kids who had never even listened to a jazz album could understand and jazz purists who had learned long ago not to trust fusion could have their minds blown by. The band became so associated with their rock covers that they were known in shorthand as "the jazz band that plays Nirvana."

And yet the answer, as a life of standardized testing has reinforced time and time again, is probably (c), which in this case would be "both." Because the members of the Bad Plus play the music they play, the way they play it, for a reason. And their ambitions are no less than bringing jazz around to the same DIY ethic that saved rock music.

"The leader and sideman thing is pretty outmoded at this point," says Iverson of the state of jazz. "It's got to go more to guys in a garage making music."

The Bad Plus practice what they preach. The group is an exercise in band democracy: three leaders, everyone composes, everyone has a say. And while they have been praised for making jazz relevant again, it's not like they have everything figured out. In fact, the first time they played "Smells Like Teen Spirit"—at their very first live gig—it was a spur of the moment thing, and nobody thought it would turn into what it did.

"The first time we played a gig, we didn't have enough original material," Iverson recalls. "I actually didn't think it was going to work, but the minute we started I thought, 'This feels like something I've never heard before.'"

He wasn't the only one who felt that way. It wasn't like they did the first jazz cover of a rock song, or of Nirvana, or even of "Smells Like Teen Spirit." But this was different.

"One of my theories is that often when jazz musicians cover rock music, they add more or less traditional jazz harmonies to it. That somehow seems to weaken the song rather than strengthen it," says Iverson.

The Bad Plus, on the other hand, meld jazz technique and rock attitude: aggressive and percussive, bearing down at the points where traditional jazz would spin off. "We hit hard. We don't shy away from trying to push our poor little acoustic instruments as far as they can go," admits Iverson.

For the latest album, the Bad Plus have those instruments on a whole new set of songs. Though the covers get most of the attention, the Bad Plus usually play about 80 percent original material. For their latest album, though, the group decided to do nothing but interpretations. On *For All I Care*, the Bad Plus return to the Nirvana wellspring with "Lithium," and cover a remarkable range of songs besides: Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb," Wilco's "Radio Cure," the Bee Gees' "How Deep Is Your Love," Heart's "Barracuda," the Old 97's "Lock, Stock and Teardrops" and the Flaming Lips' "Feeling Yourself Disintegrate." Mixed in are contemporary classical pieces like Stravinsky's *Variation d'Apollon*.

This time, however, something new has been added: a singer. The band members collaborated with vocalist Wendy Lewis, who lent a like-minded rock approach to the lyrics of Kurt Cobain et al. She makes perhaps her biggest statement on "Comfortably Numb," digging into the song's progressive depths of despair while the music swirls into a haze even Roger Waters probably never imagined.

"'Comfortably Numb' we couldn't do without a singer," says Iverson. "If you play that melody on the piano, it's not going to work. It's too one-note to work as an instrumental melody."

Of course, by releasing this album, the band is once again flirting with the "jazz band that plays Nirvana" tag, practically assuring that its covers will get more attention than its original work for some time to come. Iverson doesn't mind; he sees it as part of a grand jazz tradition.

"We're improvisers," he says. "We're trying to figure out how to decode the pop culture of the moment. That's what we're here to do."

February 24, 2009

CD Reviews: The Bad Plus, Trail of Dead and Wild Light

Enjoyed this week: The Bad Plus' "For All I Care," ...And You Will Know Us By the Trail of Dead's "The Century of Self" and Wild Light's "Adult Nights."

By: **Matthew R. Perrine**, Budgeteer News

The Bad Plus, plus one

For the first time in its already-storied career, Minneapolis jazz trio the Bad Plus has recorded an album with a vocalist.

While some purists may scoff, any initial reservations will dissipate as soon as they hear how genuinely appealing Wendy Lewis sounds channeling Kurt Cobain on album opener "Lithium."

More than fitting into the well-oiled Bad Plus machine, however, the Cannon Falls chartreuse does one better and makes you wonder: Why didn't Reid Anderson, Ethan Iverson and David King invite her to join their triumphant soft parade earlier?

Another interesting twist is that this one's all covers. The group may have cemented its niche by jazzing up rock standards (my favorite being the trio's treatment of the Pixies' "Velouria" on 2004's "Give"), but they usually balance those well-known covers with these-guys-can-actually-compose-too originals. In other words, once they had all these covered groups' fans checking out their records, they took the opportunity to, wisely, show off their own. That's not the case on "For All I Care."

This time around, those "balances" come in the form of some obscure (at least to kids raised on rock 'n' roll radio) compositions by the likes of Babbitt, Ligeti and Stravinsky.

They're OK if you're really into the jazz scene, but they don't hold a candle to, say, Yes' "Long Distance Runaround," Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb" or Heart's "Barracuda" for casual listeners.

Another notable cover on this album is the Flaming Lips' "Feeling Yourself Disintegrate." But the one everyone should be trampling strangers on the street to hear is Wilco's "Radio Cure." That these four have managed to take Jeff Tweedy's masterpiece and weave in a fragile undercurrent and somehow make it *even more listenable* is just mindblowing. The master would be proud.

If you can top Tweedy at his own game, you're really onto something.



For All I Care

The Bad Plus with Wendy Lewis | [Heads Up International](#) (2009)

By [Matt Marshall](#)

The recordings of too many contemporary jazz singers teeter precipitously on a cliff overlooking the meandering river of easy listening. [Jane Monheit](#) and her ilk sculpt with cake-icing spatulas, decorating standards and new material alike with a thick sheen of creamy frosting. Those who might reasonably lay claim to being the musical descendants of Billie Holiday and Louis Armstrong are, more than likely, singing rock.

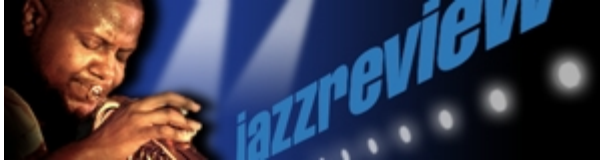
With *For All I Care*, The Bad Plus asks, "What's the difference?" Following on the heels of 2007's acclaimed *Prog* (Heads Up), *Care* goes farther afield than the band's previous work, culling music from the camps of artists as divergent as Igor Stravinsky, Waylon Jennings, Wilco and the Bee Gees. Joining them for the adventure is Wendy Lewis, a dynamic singer from the Minneapolis alt-rock scene.



From the opening vocal strains of Kurt Cobain's "Lithium," presented as a halting time massage, *Care* gives notice that it isn't your granddaddy's jazz record. Lewis' voice has a haunting, ethereal quality, but also carries enough weight and grit to scrape beneath the skin. Following, as she says, the lead of [Frank Sinatra](#), Lewis sticks closely to the melodies and, like Sinatra, is never anything less than eminently believable. By metamorphic turns, she inhabits the defeatist angst of "Lithium," the tired longing of "Radio Cure" and "How Deep is Your Love," the raw emptiness that opens into sweet, heavy relief of "Comfortably Numb" and the lighthearted surrender of "Feeling Yourself Disintegrate"—all with an expansive voice echoing from the core of the 21st century's ever-more-virtual breath. It's impossible to imagine Monheit or even [Cassandra Wilson](#) pulling off these tunes. And they're exactly the kind of songs that jazz singers need to explore in order to be relevant to most of the population under 50.

Lewis is the perfect complement to TBP's music, filling the spaces too often left empty on the minimalist *Prog* without ever seeming like a forced overdub. Pianist Ethan Iverson's playing, perhaps inspired by the modern classical interludes of Stravinsky, Gyorgy Ligeti and Milton Babbitt included in this set, is angular and orchestral throughout, giving the songs sharp, jarring edges usually missing from the tunes' original recordings. As such, this record more than satisfies the jazz requisite of driving into songs at unexpected and illuminating angles—preferably, as in cubism, from multiple angles at once. All but Heart's "Barracuda," which falters without a steamrolling guitar, are given new, dynamic—sometimes, thunderous—life here.

It will be interesting to see if other jazz or rock bands follow TBP's lead and use jazz, or jazz elements, to explore rock songs outside the canons of The Beatles and Radiohead. Will those other bands be as successful? Or does TBP have a unique gift of selecting rock tunes that *can* be converted to the jazz idiom? Or have they successfully argued that jazz—and jazz singing, in particular—can work with whatever material is thrown at it? The most refreshing quality of *For All I Care* is that it turns its back on such questions. Many will argue it's not even a jazz record. The Bad Plus couldn't care less.



Featured Artist: The Bad Plus joined by Wendy Lewis

CD Title: For All I Care

Year: 2009

Record Label: Heads Up

Style: Progressive

Review:

This perennially hip progressive jazz crew garners the services of Alt-rock diva Wendy Lewis for a gala that is about as genre busting as one could imagine. Yet the key ingredient lies within the trio's distinct musical aura that is largely about its picture perfect integration of jazz music into a disparate population of song-forms and styles. It's almost as if these pop/rock and classical pieces were among the band's self-penned songbook.

Lewis and the band launch the program with a promiscuous and memorable spin on Nirvana's "Lithium." As the trio's powerful insinuations via the all-acoustic format seem quite remarkable. With Reid Anderson's deep bass lines, pianist Ethan Iverson's resonating chord clusters and drummer David King's punchy backbeats, the overall portraiture is contrasted by the musicians' quirky, off-kilter detours and inventions.

The group casts a haunting, low-key rendition of Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb," nicely flavored with Iverson's swirling chord maneuvers amid a tumultuous free-jazz motif towards the finale. And they spin YES' "Long Distance Runaround" into a motif that sounds perfect for a jazz piano combo format, lustrously shaded by Lewis' wistful vocals. However, the plot thickens on their hybrid progressive-jazz/classical take on Milton Babbitt's "Semi-Simple Variations.

The artists slam the momentum into overdrive during their pumped up cover of Heart's hard rock hit, "Barracuda," which is shrewdly discombobulated by their cosmic breakdown during the bridge. Here, they uncannily mimic the power and presence of a rock band. Consequently, the trio seemingly owns the patent on bridging the proverbial gap between its persuasive integration of jazz related components and anything or everything that constitutes Western music. More importantly, the musicians defy any strict classifications while perpetuating a highly engaging mode of entertainment that yields the bountiful fruit.

Tracks:

Lithium, Comfortably Numb, Fém (Etude No. 8), Radio Cure, Long Distance Runaround, Semi-Simple Variations, How Deep is Your Love, Barracuda, Lock, Stock and Teardrops, Variation d'Apollon, Feeling Yourself Disintegrate, Semi-Simple Variations (Alternate Version)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

FEBRUARY 14, 2009

Rock and Pop Reimagined

Bad Plus Tosses Familiar Songs Into a Jazz Blender With Revealing Results

By [JIM FUSILLI](#)

Given the Bad Plus's passion for tossing rock songs into a jazz blender, perhaps it's no surprise that the trio is joined on its new album by a rock vocalist. In years past, it has given songs by Black Sabbath, David Bowie, Nirvana and Radiohead a sound that might be described as power jazz -- though the Bad Plus is capable of touching delicacy when required. With singer Wendy Lewis on "For All I Care" (Heads Up), it reinvents recognizable hits by the Bee Gees, Heart and Pink Floyd, among others, and reveals their hidden dimensions. Once you've heard the Bad Plus and Ms. Lewis take them on, "How Deep Is Your Love," "Barracuda" and "Comfortably Numb" will never sound the same.

Bad Plus's pianist, Ethan Iverson, told me when we spoke last week that the model was "John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman" (Impulse!). That 1963 collaboration between Coltrane's quartet and Hartman, a jazz vocalist, was "one of the great records of all time," he said. "A great sound, the interaction, and the language they worked out is the language of instrumental music. . . . The way the band plays is very pure."

The Bad Plus has covered Bacharach and David, Ornette Coleman, Rodgers and Hart, and the majority of its repertoire is original material written by Mr. Iverson, drummer David King and bassist Reid Anderson. On the new recording, as if to completely befuddle their followers, the musicians rework compositions by Babbitt, Ligeti and Stravinsky. But the focus here is on pop standards.

Ms. Lewis, who worked with Mr. King in the mid-1990s, called joining a well-established and much admired group for a project "a daunting task." Helping to select the material put her at ease; she brought in songs by Roger Miller and Wilco. "I felt very included," she said when we spoke last week. "But if someone told me three years ago I'd be singing with a jazz band, I would've laughed and laughed."

The trio approaches a song in much the way a singer would, said Ms. Lewis, who appears on eight of the disc's 12 numbers. "When they're working out song arrangements, they ask, 'What is this song trying to say melodically?'"

Mr. Iverson said, "One of the great things about great pop music is that there are so many parts in a song - details, countermelodies." In rock and pop, there are definitive texts the Bad Plus can explore. "You can cover Cole Porter, but there's no definitive recording."

The band builds the "Comfortably Numb" arrangement around a pattern by Mr. King -- just about the cleverest drummer at work today -- and Mr. Anderson's thumping acoustic bass line. As Ms. Lewis carries the haunting melody, Mr. Iverson enters by playing the riff that appears on the Pink Floyd rendition. Where David Gilmour's squealing guitar solo begins on the original, Mr. Iverson plays dark, disturbing chords -- this is, after all, a song about mental illness. The third verse finds Ms. Lewis dueting with Mr. Anderson, whose bass emerges as the dominating instrument, until Mr. Iverson gives voice to the terror inside the narrator's mind.

The Yes composition "Long Distance Runaround" conjures a specific meaning for Ms. Lewis, who, in her mid-50s, is some 20 years older than the Bad Plus members. The 1972 song represents "a different time," she said. "It's Yes" -- meaning there's bombast -- "and it's that era."

For Mr. Iverson, "Long Distance Runaround" is an interesting piece of music without connotations. He mentioned how Yes drummer Bill Bruford played an unorthodox pattern. "The chords I play emulate the original drum rhythm," he said. "It's very much a reimagining, but it draws from the original." The end result, he added, "is about as jazzy as the Bad Plus gets."

When a band with serious chops takes on a pop standard that seems anchored in the past, there's a tendency to think the musicians might be mocking the song. Not so with the Bad Plus. As Ms. Lewis put it, "They're not joking around."

"We're not making fun of the music," Mr. Iverson said. "There's always an element of seriousness. There is some complex emotion that we explore."

As it is with the Bee Gees' disco-era chestnut "How Deep Is Your Love." "I'm proud of that track," Mr. Iverson said. "Everybody knows it, and so we don't think of the emotion of the song. But there's a real sadness to it." With Ms. Lewis out front, the trio strips all the schmaltz from the familiar arrangement, letting the melody and lyrics lay bare over a straightforward reading. Reflecting the question in the title, they depart with the music unresolved.

The Bad Plus and Ms. Lewis will be on a European tour beginning Feb. 21 and then perform in the U.S. and Canada starting in early March. (See www.thebadplus.com for dates.) They'll add songs by Neil Young and U2 to the tunes on the new disc and may even pull out their raucous reading of Heart's "Barracuda," a performance on "For All I Care" that Mr. Iverson dubbed "a maraschino cherry on top of the ice-cream cone."

Mr. Fusilli is the Journal's rock and pop music critic. Email him at jfusilli@wsj.com.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO ARGONAUT

Bad Plus play nonstandard standards

Written by Marcus Kellis - Argonaut

THURSDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2009

More than in other genres, jazz has a certain tension between the old and the new. The story of jazz since its rise in the early part of the last century has been one of innovation and creativity. The line from early pianist and bandleader Jelly Roll Morton to the cool saxophonist Gerry Mulligan is not a straight line, but it's one made of incremental change, and even absent anything else, the classics are still known and played long after the deaths of the composers.

Performing standards or covers is a way for a musician to become immediately accessible to a listener, but performers – understandably – want to create new music, too.

The Bad Plus, primarily a trio of pianist Ethan Iverson, bassist Reid Anderson and drummer Dave King, all from Minneapolis, are a challenging group on most of the fronts a group can be challenging. On more than six albums, they've recorded plenty of original material, and they've played "My Funny Valentine" and "Blue Moon." But they've also played "Iron Man," "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and "Tom Sawyer."

On the new album, the group has augmented its sound with a vocalist for the first time, fellow Minnesotan Wendy Lewis. On it, they tackle "How Deep Is Your Love," "Lithium," "Comfortably Numb" and even the Flaming Lips' "Feeling Yourself Disintegrate."

Fans of the String Quartet Tribute series will almost certainly be disappointed, however. The Bad Plus is art music, and it may even be capital-A art music. They're very competent players, and they could perform straightforward, accurate, interesting covers.

They choose not to. The piano plays outside the key, the drums drop to half-time, the bass acts as if it's found something more interesting over there that it will go to by itself,

thank you.

The album has another unique distinction among the catalog in that it contains no originals at all. Igor Stravinskii, "Semi-Simple Variations," comp. Milton Babbitt and "Fem (Étude No. 8)," György Ligeti. The Stravinskii is relatively pleasant and straightforward, while the Babbitt and Ligeti are dissonant pieces not meant for easy listening. One can suppose that "Semi-Simple Variations" is a mild joke.

Over its catalog, the Bad Plus has frequently performed least-favorite songs of my

favorite bands. This album picks "Radio Cure" by Wilco, a track I'm afraid I sometimes skip while listening to the album on which it originally appeared.

But on more than any other song the vocal accompaniment brings tremendous insight. Anyone who has suffered a long-distance relationship will immediately understand the song's emotion. On this track, the Bad Plus fires on all cylinders. I wish I could say the same about the others, but they are nothing if not unafraid to fail. That's commendable, and it's a tremendous relief to see in the frequently stoic, stale world of jazz.

Music Review: The Bad Plus - "For All I Care"

by Jay Spanbauer, of the Advance Titan

Thursday, February 12, 2009

The Bad Plus, composed of Ethan Iverson, Reid Anderson and David King, have made a name for themselves creating dissonant jazz interpretations of popular songs.

The band's past material ranges from Rush's "Tom Sawyer" to Aphex Twins' "Film." The uniquely intricate and anomalous interpretations of popular songs have given the band an original sound that has interested audiences since its first album in 2001.

Along with the eclectic covers that have, undoubtedly, propelled the group to mainstream recognition, The Bad Plus always had an assortment of original gems on its albums. Its latest release, "For All I Care," however, contains only cover material.

The album features no new material by the band, but there are a few drastic changes that contribute to a new sound. "For All I Care" features indie vocalist Wendy Lewis throughout. Also, the album takes material from a wider group of genres, adding pieces by 20th century classical composers Igor Stravinsky, György Ligeti and Milton Babbitt.

The album is slightly overwhelming, but how can it not be? It begins with a track covering Nirvana, followed by Pink Floyd, György Ligeti, Wilco and Yes. With the extreme differences of each of those artists, it isn't hard to see the problem.

The music itself isn't the easiest to sit down and listen to in the first place, and when you are riding a rollercoaster from track to track a quandary is reached. Overall, the album is messy, and everything seems out of place, although, in Bad Plus' defense, there really is not an ideal way to arrange a set of tracks this diverse.

The addition of the vocals to the band was a poor move. But as not to take away from the abilities of Lewis, her voice is nothing less than stellar throughout. On even the simplest tracks, the trio is able to go on unique tangents by adding a different touch to the original song, but vocally, Lewis is unable to keep up. This isn't her fault, however, as there is only so much you can do as a vocalist with Nirvana's "Come As You Are," or Wilco's "Radio Cure." The main issue is the over-the-top arrangements often clash with the simplicity of the vocals. Simply put, the pairing of Lewis and the band, at best, sounds like a strange bar band.

Another disappointment is the absence of original material. 2007's "Prog," for example, had a magnitude of powerful original pieces, most notably the brilliant "Physical Cities." Albeit the band doesn't cover songs like normal bands do, there is a great deal of original arrangement in its interpretations. Sadly, it comes off as a waste of talent.



The Best Album from The Bad Plus

Posted Mon Feb 9, 2009, 5:39 PM ET

I've sometimes wondered how long The Bad Plus can keep up their high-concept mix of pop and punk covers, avant-classical harmonies, jazz cadences, kick-ass polyrhythms, and sly but un-ironic wit. Don't get me wrong: I like their music a lot; each of the players (Ethan Iverson, piano; Reid Anderson, bass; David King, drums) crackles with brio and virtuosity; their interplay is a delight. Still, in the six years since they improbably crashed onto the scene, there have been times when their conceit has seemed to reach its limit.

But the band's new album, *For All I Care* (on Telarc's Heads Up label), resolves the question: The Bad Plus, it's now clear, can go on for as long as they want; their resourcefulness seems to be limitless.

This is their most ambitious, and most accomplished, album, the one that should persuade the final doubters that there's serious—not brow-furrowed, in fact still quite playful, but in the best sense of the word *serious*—music going on here. The range of material is even more gasp-inducing than before—from Nirvana's "Lithium," Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb" and Yes' "Long Distance Runaround" to Stravinsky's "Variation d'Apollon," Gyorgy Legeti's "Etude No. 8," and Milton Babbitt's "Semi-Simple Variations." Iverson is, in fact, an expert and passionate interpreter of 20th-century classical piano music, and it's exciting to hear him cut loose on these latter pieces. There's always been a classical lilt to his playing. (After hearing the take on Stravinsky, put on "1972 Bronze Medalist" from their 2003 debut album, *These Are the Vistas*; the chords are very similar, and not by coincidence.) What's astonishing, though, is how seamlessly Reid and King integrate their own styles into this sort of work. It doesn't sound remotely like the academicism of Third Stream or the condescension of "jazzing up the classics;" it sounds natural, as if, for instance, Babbitt wrote in a late-Coltrane sort of style.

In this sense, and more intensely than their earlier albums, *For All I Care* renews and broadens the discussion of just what *is* a "jazz standard." In the 1930s and '40s, Coleman Hawkins and Charlie Parker transformed Broadway show tunes, the pop music of their day. Why should today's musicians restrict their alchemy to Gershwin and Kern? Why not expand the repertoire to Cobain, Jon Anderson, and the Brothers Gibb—if they prove the point in the process? (And speaking of the Bee-Gees, TBP's rendition of "How Deep Is Your Love?" exudes a fine ghostly melancholy that spins the lyrics in more intriguing ways than you might have imagined possible.)

Ah yes, lyrics. This is also the first Bad Plus album to feature a singer—Wendy Lewis, who hails from the indie-rock scene in Minneapolis (where Reid and King grew up and where the latter still lives). I'd never heard of her, but I look forward to hearing much more. Her voice has an insouciant cool while managing to tap a song's emotional depths. She reminds me a bit of Nico but with range and without the junkie chic.

This is also one of the few Bad Plus albums that aims for a more straight ahead sound, as opposed to the fanciful compression of many rock albums, and the effect is all to the good.

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SONG OF THE DAY »

The Bad Plus: The Dark Heart Of The Bee Gees

By Marc Silver

'How Deep Is Your Love' by The Bad Plus

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"How Deep Is Your Love"

CD: *For All I Care*

Artist: The Bad Plus

Label: Emarcy

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courtesy of the artist

The indie jazz outfit The Bad Plus revisits that falsetto-fueled Bee Gees relic, "How Deep Is Your Love."

MONDAY'S PICK

Song: "How Deep Is Your Love"

Artist: The Bad Plus

CD: *For All I Care*

Genre: Jazz

NPR.org, *February 9, 2009* - A ghostly bass plucks out notes that tremble with foreboding. A Steinway piano injects haunting, minor-key arpeggios. A woman chimes in, her voice seemingly filtered through gauze. It's natural to expect a song of apocalyptic doom, until it becomes clear that she's crooning "How Deep Is Your Love," that falsetto-fueled Bee Gees relic from the disco era.

After a few lines, her voice brightens, warms and grows clearer. But the vaguely dissonant instrumentation keeps a weird mood going. The singer is Minneapolis rocker Wendy Lewis, who joins the indie jazz outfit The Bad Plus on its new album, *For All I Care*, on which the fearless musicians tunnel into the dark heart of The Bee Gees, among many others. The Bad Plus converts "How Deep Is Your Love" from an excuse to slow dance to a pitiful plaint, but it's worth noting that Lewis addresses the song to "my savior when I fall." So The Bee Gees were singing about sin and redemption in the context of disco love. Who knew?

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Sep. 17, 2008

Christopher O'Riley's Bad Plus Epiphany

Real Sound Theory

Feb. 9, 2009

Artist: The Bad Plus

Title: For All I Care

Label: Heads Up International

Genre: Experimental Jazz

Rating: 8.5/10

What do Nirvana, Pink Floyd, Jeff Tweedy, the Bee Gees, Roger Miller, Yes, Heart, and The Flaming Lips have in common? Before you blow a fuse trying to connect this random group, listen to The Bad Plus's new album *For All I Care*. The Bad Plus has regularly covered other artist from other genres, but their latest with Wendy Lewis singing lead vocals is a new take on their style that may make a statement for other experimentalist to live up to in the future.

When an album starts with Nirvana, it usually goes downhill because few have the talent to take a grunge classic and form it into anything else. Wendy Lewis was the perfect choice for lead vocals and as she says, "For this project, I chose to just sing the songs." She does not add anything to the lyrics on any song, instead choosing a very simple style to go along with the sometimes strange and fantastic arrangements. There are songs here anyone will notice from the cannon of rock and pop, but The Bad Plus have also chosen to employ their classical upbringing by doing a few classical pieces by Gyorgi Ligeti, Milton Babbitt, and Igor Stravinsky. Every song on *For All I Care* is an homage to not only great music from many genres, but also a tribute to the great songwriters who made those songs originally come alive.

With a bevy of things going the right way, The Bad Plus is poised to make an extreme outburst onto the main page of every music magazine in America. They take the old and know how to wrap it in their arrangements, making them breathe again. Each listen of *For All I Care* will make you care more and more about this Minnesota band.

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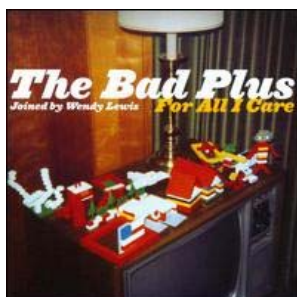
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Album

For All I Care

Rating

★★★★☆

Release Date

Nov 5, 2008

Recording Date

Apr 2008

Label

Emarcy

Genre

Jazz

Styles

Post-Bop
Post-Rock/
Experimental

Moods

Fun
Fierce
Bravado
Dramatic
Rebellious
Refined/
Mannered
Sad
Literate
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Review

by Thom Jurek

That the Bad Plus have recorded pop covers since their inception as a piano/bass/drums trio is a given in their M.O. The Minnesota-based trio has consistently added tunes by Blondie, Queen, Black Sabbath, David Bowie, Ornette Coleman, and Burt Bacharach to their albums -- in addition to their own compositions -- as they've gone about reinventing the piano trio sound and dynamic in jazz (they have become the loudest, most hard rocking acoustic trio in the music's history). Some critics have accused them of camp, but this is simply a pronouncement of ignorance and prejudicial conservative and "preservationist" paranoia. After a decade of working together, the Bad Plus, following up their brilliant 2007 album *Prog*, have undergone some major changes: they left Sony and now record themselves independently. They've chosen Heads Up as their label/distributor in the United States and Universal in the rest of the world. *For All I Care* also marks their first recording entirely comprised of covers. The songs range from tunes by Nirvana (who they've covered before), Wilco, and Pink Floyd to Milton Babbitt, Igor Stravinsky, Yes, the Flaming Lips, and Gyorgy Ligeti, to Heart, Roger Miller, and the Bee Gees. There isn't an original on the set. Another first for the trio on *For All I Care* is the addition of Minneapolis rock vocalist Wendy Lewis.

Perhaps the most compelling, shocking, and wonderful thing about this collaboration is how much Lewis' presence becomes part of the trio's landscape. Where before they've chosen tunes rich in irony for a jazz band to cover -- "Heart of Glass" and "Iron Man" come immediately to mind -- the emotional intensity and reverence Lewis offers the material only intensify their approach, especially "How Deep Is Your Love." On tracks like Heart's "Barracuda," Lewis becomes a real soloist despite deliberately downplaying her interpretive skill as a singer. In becoming a "member" of the band on this outing, she stands out as its singer. Her lack of vocal histrionics and acrobatics allows the melodic, harmonic embellishments and dimensional extensions by the band to roam free over the material. She grounds them but they still swing like mad. Check the reading of a "classic rock" nugget like "Long Distance Runaround" and you'll hear a fresh, brave, and utterly engaging song in its place -- despite the fact that the lyrics, and melody have been faithfully rendered. The same goes for Kurt Cobain's "Lithium" that opens the set. In the trio's able hands, the pathos in that lyric, and Cobain's melodic intricacy, can actually be heard. The dead space in Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb" comes across as revealing the void at the heart of the song. The heartbreak in the Flaming Lips' "Feeling Yourself Disintegrate" is devastating because of her dry delivery as accented by Reid Anderson's propulsive bass, Ethan Iverson's almost florid embellishing piano, and the in-the-cut breaks played by Dan King. On the modern classical material where vocals are absent, the trio look to interpret these works with deep concentration and bring out their improvisational possibilities as jazz tunes; they succeed in spades -- check the knotty contrapuntal bass and piano interaction on Ligeti's "Fém (Etude No. 8)" for example. This is one of the most compelling releases yet by one of the new jazz's finest bands to emerge in the 21st century.

Tracks

	Title	Composer	Time
1	Lithium	Cobain	4:48
2	Comfortably Numb	Gilmour, Waters	6:43

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The Bad Plus

★★★½

For All I Care *Heads Up*

Jazz piano trio bring on
singer, dissect Nirvana, Wilco



GROUPS LIKE the Bad Plus have made jazz covers cool again – maybe because one senses a true love for rock, not just its crossover potential. On their sixth CD, the inventive Minneapolis trio court disaster by adding a vocalist. Thankfully, she’s Wendy Lewis, an indie-rock vet who floats Kurt Cobain’s numbed equivocations over a capsizing groove here on “Lithium” and even nails that bone-chilling scream. It’s one of the few credible Nirvana covers ever. The crew also finds Wilco’s “Radio Cure” and mad rhythms in a piece by classical composer Milton Babbitt – it’s about as badass as high-brow gets. W.H.

Key Tracks: “Lithium,” “Radio Cure,” “Comfortably Numb”





The Bad Plus: *For All I Care*

[Heads Up/Do the Math]

By

Corey duBrowa on February 5, 2009 11:43 AM

Twin Cities alt-jazzbos take another bite out of the rock canon: this time, with vocals

It's a "your peanut butter's in my chocolate" musical conundrum: Are Minneapolis' Bad Plus a jazz combo with a healthy appreciation for modern pop, or a power trio that just happens to have strong feelings for jazz? Both, as it happens, and on the band's fifth studio LP, *For All I Care* (as in the Kurt Cobain lyric from "Lithium," which the trio covers here in typically skewed fashion), they add vocals to the mix for the first time as if to put their confusing array of footprints in cement, once and for all. Fellow Minnesotan Wendy Lewis serves as the trio's vocal muse on an album of cover songs spanning the rock universe, as represented by a sorta-faithful rendition of Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb"; a skeletal, bass-heavy reading of Wilco's "Radio Cure"; a McCoy Tyner-meets-Thelonious Monk spin on Yes' "Long Distance Runaround"; and idiosyncratic takes on Stravinsky's "Variation d'Apollon" and Liget's "Fém." If this all sounds like a dog's breakfast of sound, it is—the tunes themselves only occasionally work, with a dark-hearted gem like The Bee Gees' "How Deep Is Your Love" followed by a strangely mute iteration of Heart's "Barracuda" as though the two were meant to forever stand side-by-side as strange bedfellows. But for all of The Bad Plus' instrumental prowess and fearless exploration, it's Lewis' voice that stars here, bending notes and emotion to her will like so many coat hangers left outside in a tornado.



Music

The Bad Plus, 'For All I Care'

Avant-jazzists raise the bar by doing what they do best

By Jeff Miller

<http://www.thebadplus.com/>

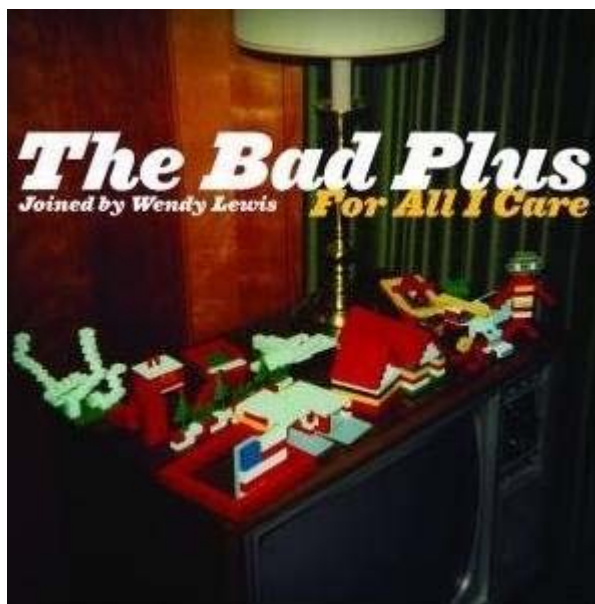
☆☆☆☆☆ (0 ratings) [Be the first to review](#)

The buzz: Thanks to a piano-led cover of “Smells Like Teen Spirit” in 2003, Midwestern trio the Bad Plus have established cred with both a rock audience (drawn in by not just the Nirvana song, but tricked-out versions of Sabbath’s “Iron Man” and the Pixies’ “Velouria”), and jazzists impressed by their massive chops. “For All I Care” is their first album as a four-piece, with Wendy Lewis cooing everything from Heart’s “Barracuda” to the Flaming Lips’ “Feeling Yourself Disintegrate.”

The verdict: Though their rep was established via their repertoire of covers, the Bad Plus’ records have always been stacked with mostly-uninteresting originals. No more, and good riddance: the members are much more comfortable in the skins of others, especially when they’re deconstructing Pink Floyd’s “Comfortably Numb,” making it a series of intriguingly off-tempo piano runs, or pushing challenging time changes into Nirvana’s otherwise straight-ahead “Lithium.” For her part, Lewis smartly stays true to the originals’ core melodies, making even an already-avant piece—like a smashingly broad version of Wilco’s “Radio Cure”—into jazz that’s both approachable and engaging.

Did you know? Enlisting Lewis to sing was inspired by a similar move by one of the Bad Plus’ idols, John Coltrane, who recorded a record with singer Johnny Hartman in 1963.

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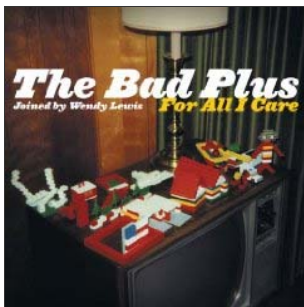




Article Courtesy AllAboutJazz.com

The Bad Plus / Wendy Lewis: For All I Care

By [Jeff Vrabel](#)



The Bad Plus / Wendy Lewis

For All I Care

[Heads Up International](#)

2009

If you are The Bad Plus, and you've spent your acclaimed and wacky career dismantling pop and jazz tunes down to their barely recognizable components--spreading those components around like bike pieces on a garage floor and building them back together into a state that bears only occasional resemblances to its source material--it is not the easiest thing in the world to advertise for helpers.

But when the band found itself looking to employ a singer for the first time, the hiring process was surprisingly speedy. "We felt like it was time for something different, (but) we didn't want to get a jazz singer," says bassist Reid Anderson. "We wanted someone with a direct approach, because that's really what we do as well."

To those familiar with The Bad Plus' work, this might come as a bit of shock. But Anderson has proof--and a history lesson. One of the precedents for the project, he says, was saxophonist John Coltrane's work with vocalist Johnny Hartman. "That was a very established band, with an established sound, that went into the studio with Hartman to record some songs. But the result is so powerful. It's not like a singer with a band, it's this collective music-making thing."

With *For All I Care*, The Bad Plus opted to keep things as simple as possible within the new set of sonic guidelines. "Amid all the other things going on, we're always very aware of the melody. So we wanted someone who wasn't as focused on changing the melody as doing it in a direct but personal way, but who also could deal with shifting time signatures and...unpleasant surprises. It had to be somebody who was capable and even enthusiastic about a musical underpinning that wasn't always going to be co-operating with them."

The answer came in Minneapolis vocalist Wendy Lewis, who gets front cover billing and to whom is left the difficult task of melding organically with one of the weirdest, hardest-to-describe, Bee Gees'-covering hipster crossover jazz trios currently working. Anderson says, perhaps semi-seriously, that he gets just as excited talking about the Carpenters as he does about Charles Mingus.

Lewis, Anderson continues, was a longtime associate of The Bad Plus' drummer David King. "I had

remembered a demo Dave had made (with Lewis) 10 years ago. I was just so struck by the vocals, the sound of her voice.” And when it came time to add a singer to The Bad Plus' bizarro-world mix, the fit was perfect. She was the only person the band approached to do this record.

“(The singer) had to be somebody who was capable and even enthusiastic about a musical underpinning that wasn't always going to be cooperating with them”

– Reid Anderson, bassist

And that record is a sticky, melancholy and effective merging of vocals to The Bad Plus' hall-of-mirrors jazz. Longtime admirers should be pleased by the crossover aspect, and Lewis' voice lends a new level of accessibility to some of the tracks--like the swelling, powerful and surprisingly straightforward take on the Flaming Lips' “Feeling Yourself Disintegrate,” the crushing “Comfortably Numb” and a syrupy take on Nirvana's “Lithium.”

The Bad Plus, of course, has drunk from the Nirvana well before, on perhaps the band's most recognizable and adventurous cover to date: “Smells Like Teen Spirit,” included on their breakthrough album *These Are The Vistas* (Columbia, 2003). “Lithium” differs from its flanneled predecessor in several crucial areas: it seethes rather than roars, there's no crashing cathartic middle, and though the song retains the original's mostly cloudy forecast, it kind of throws the time signature into a lottery-ball machine (though the band swears the version adheres to an unorthodox but consistent signature). It works. It's like Weird Al doing *Star Wars* songs--it's been done, sure, but things can work twice.

In fact, the whole album works, in its extremely singular way. If you find yourself in need of explaining the group's jagged appeal, tell someone the new record goes from the Bee Gees to Heart to a composition by tricky classical composer Milton Babbitt (“Semi-Simple Variations”). Pink Floyd's “Comfortably Numb,” against all odds and many of nature's current physics laws, gets bleaker, isolated, more shut-down than even the original, even while Lewis swirls up an unusually lovely harmony vocal. It's one of the few points on the record where The Bad Plus + 1 stay in the same room as the playbook--at least until pianist Ethan Iverson and drummer King start sweeping the rug out from underneath Lewis' feet, first in a tricky manner, then in such a way that it sounds like the theatre is falling to pieces around them, like that *Bugs Bunny* cartoon with the conductor.

The Wilco ballad, “Radio Cure,” gets a similar peeled-to-the-bone reading, with Lewis and Anderson opening things under a bare lightbulb: “There is something wrong with me.” Elsewhere, the damp, lowlit version of “How Deep Is Your Love” will scare the pants off of most Bee Gees fans. “Barracuda,” meanwhile, could be played on Guitar Hero. “It's just the energy of a great rock tune,” Anderson says of the song. “And that's the only song where the original has a female vocalist. We thought, “This is perfect for what Wendy can do.”

But for all The Bad Plus' signature oddness--the record is all cover versions--the album's most experimental moment might be its most accessible: a late-show cover of the Flaming Lips' “Feeling Yourself Disintegrate.” This may be one of only a few cases in which The Bad Plus' version of a pop song is a little bit less nuts than the original. Before it's out, the track, Lewis' best vocal performance on

the disc, works up a sudsy purple lather that you can easily imagine being played on radio. At the very least it will appeal to the lively blog world surrounding the Lips.

But, as always, The Bad Plus find a way to distill random-sounding source material into a single, whole sound. "This had to be a Bad Plus record--it's the sound of four people making music together, not the sound of a singer with a backup band," says Anderson. "So we had to get somebody who'd be willing to come into our world--and able to, because the kinds of things we're throwing at Wendy aren't the kinds of things that just anyone can deal with. That's the whole aesthetic of The Bad Plus: it's group music. This had to continue in that tradition."

Tracks: Lithium; Comfortably Numb; Fem (Etude No. 8); Radio Cure; Long Distance Runaround; Semi-Simple Variations; How Deep Is Your Love; Barracuda; Lock, Stock And Teardrops; Variation D'Apollon; Feeling Yourself Disintegrate; Semi-Simple Variations (Alternate Version).

Personnel: Reid Anderson: bass, vocals; Ethan Iverson: piano, bells; David King: drums, vocals; Wendy Lewis: vocals.

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For All I Care - The Bad Plus

[Brian Ferdman](#)

2009-02-03

For the last few years, the Midwestern piano trio The Bad Plus has made a name for themselves by boldly reinventing pop songs. Setting works by Black Sabbath, Radiohead, and Nirvana, among others, within a jazz context has earned The Bad Plus many fans, and their latest album, *For All I Care*, takes the process one step further. With vocalist Wendy Lewis in tow, the group leaves behind its original compositions and focuses entirely on covers, including pop, rock, and even some avant-garde classical works.

To her credit, Lewis does a fantastic job of fusing herself into this band. Instead of making this the Wendy Lewis Show with The Bad Plus or The Bad Plus featuring Special Guest Wendy Lewis, she easily becomes a fourth member of the group. This smooth integration is partly the result of her simple, non-descript voice, but it's also attributable to her much appreciated desire to serve the songs, rather than using the songs as vehicles to gain attention. To be perfectly honest, the entire band seems to be completely fixated on serving this material, and by stripping the songs down and then building them back up in a jazz context, they often succeed in providing a new layer of subtext for these works.

That's certainly the case with Nirvana's "Lithium," which adds in some odd time signatures, causing a slight lag behind the beat that later combines with the alternating explosions of Ethan Iverson's discordant piano and the lush, soothing grooves of Reid Anderson's bass to create an off-kilter feeling that is synonymous with those who need the mood-altering drug. This is one remarkable achievement, and I don't hesitate to say that The Bad Plus ooze way more substance out of this song than Nirvana ever did.

The same is also true of Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb." Drummer David King begins by gently brushing out a subtly swinging military cadence while Lewis delivers her vocal in a near comatose fashion. When the song shifts to the traditional David Gilmour-led "There is no pain, you are receding" section, a dreamlike haze is created by King's cymbal rides, Anderson's bouncy lines, and Iverson's ethereal arpeggios. After shifting back to the darkness of "Okay, just a little pin prick," The Bad Plus choose to skip the horrifying scream and opt for a few harrowing seconds of silence, which pulls you in close and leaves you on the edge of your seat. Once again, we wash into the hazy arpeggios, and everything builds to a wrenching climax as Iverson shifts into several different keys and threatens to spin off his axis before resolving into the numb finale of a truly powerful number. Make no bones about it, The Bad Plus' interpretation of this classic is nothing short of brilliant.

The charts on this album also push the songs to extremes, as Wilco's "Radio Cure" gets both darker and a bit more hopeful, while The Flaming Lips' "Feeling Yourself Disintegrate" becomes a more lighthearted and playful. Yes' "Long Distance Runaround" is perfect fodder for these musicians with its sprightly figures offering plenty of room to swing and its vocal section giving Lewis the opportunity to take these lyrics to places of regret where John Anderson feared to tread, ending on a fittingly awkward note. Even the Bee Gees' saccharine sweet, cliché-laden "How Deep Is Your Love" is suddenly infused with pathos and gravitas.

Critics and jazz purists may have derided The Bad Plus' previous dalliances with pop songs as little more than gimmickry, but such dismissals erroneously ignore the brilliance of these arrangements and the virtuoso musicianship required to execute them with such success. Furthermore, any criticism of the band's reinvention of pop music would be ignoring jazz's history of reworking pop standards from the 1930s through the mid 1960s. What the swing, bebop, and hardbop era players did to the songs of Tin Pan Alley, The Bad Plus are doing to the songs of heavy metal, classic, and indie rock. If it was perfectly acceptable for John Coltrane to interpret Rodgers and Hammerstein's "My Favorite Things," I see no reason why The Bad Plus can't tear down and rebuild Heart's "Barracuda." Ultimately, it doesn't appear as though The Bad Plus are losing any nights sleep over such criticisms, as evidenced by this great album's title. When your work is yielding such phenomenal results as *For All I Care*, you really shouldn't care what others think.

The Bad Plus gives music some attitude with 'For All I Care'

BY JIM FARBBER
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Tuesday, February 3rd 2009, 5:45 PM

Classical music intimidates a lot of people, jazz bores more and pop makes many a snob snicker.

Every one of those reactions irks [The Bad Plus](#). "Classical music doesn't have to be approached from the vantage point of how sophisticated it is," bassist [Reid Anderson](#) says. "Jazz doesn't have to be seen as so complicated, and even the simplest pop or rock tune doesn't have to be looked down on. It's a big, wide world out there and it's nice to explore all the nooks and crannies."

Few have explored more of them than The Bad Plus. Fewer still have done so with such chops and charm. On their fiercely creative new CD, "For All I Care," this ostensible jazz trio covers songs penned by pop stars (the [Bee Gees](#)' "How Deep Is Your Love"), art-rockers ([Yes](#)' "Long Distance Runaround"), "new music" avant-gardists ([Milton Babbitt](#)'s "Semi-Simple Variations") and classicists ([Igor Stravinsky](#)'s "Variation d'Apollon"). Not only do all the songs get along famously in their hands, some of their compositional and melodic qualities never shone brighter.

The Bad Plus - consisting of Anderson, pianist [Ethan Iverson](#) and drummer [David King](#) - has been mixing in sharp and inventive covers of songs by acts like [Black Sabbath](#), Nirvana and [Ornette Coleman](#) with their original pieces on six CDs now, released over eight years.

The new CD brings their efforts to a whole other level. For one thing, it's the group's first disk consisting entirely of interpretations. For another, it's their first to add classical pieces. Most significantly, it's this instrumental act's only CD to feature a singer - [Minneapolis](#) alt-rock vet [Wendy Lewis](#). Her deep and unadorned vocals lend a new specificity to the sound.

"Music, in the abstract, can express a lot of things," Anderson says. "And in the past we've taken care with our song titles to give people a jumping-off point. But lyrics take you to the next level. And the human voice strikes at the heart of the matter."

Anderson sees the group's temporary inclusion of a singer as simply "following through on a logical thought process. We love songs, so it's just natural for us to take the next step."

At first, they thought about collaborating with big-name stars, throwing out names like [Daryl Hall](#) and [Tom Jones](#). Then King played Anderson an old demo of Lewis, whom he had worked with in a band more than 10 years ago on the Minneapolis scene.

The whole combo's roots lie there. Anderson and King first met as kids in that Midwestern city. Iverson, who hails from [Wisconsin](#), met the other guys in high school in the '80s, though they didn't coalesce as The Bad Plus until 2000.

Hearing that ancient tape of Lewis struck Anderson immediately. "It was the combination of the purity of her sound with this real power," he says. "Also she's a very capable and daring musician herself."

You can hear that clearly on the CD, aided by the band's revelatory arrangements. Together, the singer and band change the Yes song crucially with the simplest fiddles. By slowing down the verses, and concentrating the vocals, Lewis grounds [Jon Anderson](#)'s airy take in a gripping passion. By switching [Steve Howe](#)'s original flitting guitar riff from an art-rock context to a jazz one, it morphs the lick from a pompous boast to a witty flourish worthy of prime [Dave Brubeck](#). In the version of the [Flaming Lips](#)' "Feeling Yourself Disintegrate," Lewis' full-lipped reading deepens the sensual sense of appreciation intended by the lyric.

There's also a grand take on [Pink Floyd](#)'s "Comfortably Numb," a swinging interpretation of [Gyorgy Ligeti](#)'s "Fém (Etude No. 8)" as well as a rocking attack on [Heart](#)'s "Barracuda." Anderson says the band cut the Heart song before [Sarah Palin](#) coopted it last fall but, admits "in light of that whole thing, it's amusing to play it."

Lewis shows her range by nailing both the harpy-like shrieks of "Barracuda" and the woozy contemplation of [Roger Miller](#)'s old country tune "Lock, Stock and Teardrops."

Despite the many qualities Lewis brings to the CD, the sound remains unmistakably Bad. "From the start this wasn't going to be a singer backed by a band," Anderson says. "This was a singer stepping into the band's already established sound."

They had a role model for that - a 1963 recording that featured singer [Johnny Hartman](#) fronting the firmly defined combo of [John Coltrane](#). If, at root, The Bad Plus belongs in Coltrane's jazz bin, not all the genre's fans have been eager to embrace them. "We've come in for some very harsh criticism ... from purists," the bassist says. "They're scared of allowing contemporary music into the world of jazz. But we feel it's very important for it to have this dialogue with contemporary music."