



## CD REVIEWS

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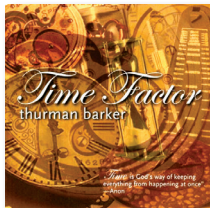


### **Strike Force** | Uptee Records (2010)

"I was excited to receive *Strike Force* by the **Thurman Barker Percussion Quintet**. I was even more pleased to hear the contents of the album, which are endlessly inventive and involving. The quintet plays everything from drums to vibes, marimbas and xylophones. The layering of instruments makes for a fascinatingly spacious depth of sound, with the rolling thunder of tympani bouncing chattering xylophones off their back. This is the type of music that is equally enthralling whether pumping from a turned-up stereo system or played back on headphones, where you can hear the intricacies of all the moving parts. *Strike Force* is an endlessly shifting and spinning album that never slows down enough for monotony to catch it. Just when the band gets locked pounding out a groove, an arresting theme emerges, sending them off to new vistas. The disc is a *tour de force* of imagination, combining power and finesse in equal measure."

**Stephen Latessa**, *AllAboutJazz.com*

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### **Time Factor** | Uptee Records (2001)

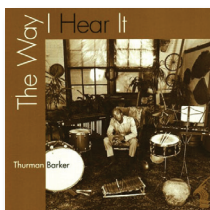
"Percussionist **Thurman Barker** has had great success playing with musicians who take the music out, and he is equally comfortable with those more inclined toward semi-structure. The artists on this recording fall into both camps, as does the music. As the title suggests, time is a measured element of the format, but it is a shifting, diversified form of time where the intricacy of the interplay causes the outcome to be unpredictable. Barker forcibly drives the quartet through songs having a multiplicity of time signatures. Whether it's the lyricalness of "A Time for Love" or the eruptiveness of "Time Out," Barker displays his mastery over time as a motivator to creativity. He hosts a clinic on the subject."

**Frank Rubolino**, *Cadence Magazine*

"**Thurman Barker's** new album *Time Factor* is a gem that reveals the depth of his talent. With talented jazz-ish musicians such as guitarist James Emery, keyboardist Rob Schwimmer and bassist Jerome Harris, Barker makes music that's challenging and compelling. It often features the swinging, driving rhythmic structures of jazz countering melodies and riffs that defy those structures. That juxtaposition gives the music its tension and magnetism."

**Steve Israel**, *The Times Herald-Record*

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### **The Way I Hear It** | Uptee Records (1999)

"Percussionist **Thurman Barker** is largely associated with his performances with the Chicago-based Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians in the 1960s. Since the 1980s, he has been New York-based, and has worked with a range of mostly free-style performers, from Henry Threadgill to Leroy Jenkins to Cecil Taylor. *The Way I Hear It* collects a few different groups within the jazz mainstream that the percussionist has led, all to reasonable good effect. While Barker successfully produces an album with broad appeal, and while there is some fine blowing



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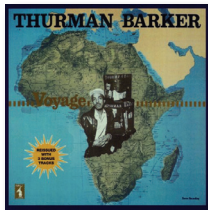
*CD Reviews, cont.*

and composing throughout, the overall effect is somewhat diminished by a sense that these cuts were pasted together as almost a “best of” collection. Barker is a fine enough stylist to record, for a major label, a full album as a leader with a single and perhaps the self-produced *The Way I Hear It* will set that process in motion.

**Steven A. Loewy**, *Cadence Magazine*

“Possibly the AACM’s hottest drummer, **Thurman Barker** teams up with pianist Marilyn Crispell, baritone Thomas Buckner and others for a half jazz, half new-music compendium. At one extreme is the bobby, heavily African “Zimbabwe” and at the other, “Forbidden Places.” The latter calls to mind Muhal Richard Abrams’s mystical *Levels and Degrees of Light* album, with Buckner crooning wordlessly above shimmering cymbals and Barker’s meticulously agile mallet percussion. What isn’t mellow jazz is evocative impressionism (including one delicate piece by Crispell), and though the disc is unevenly recorded, Barker’s elegantly intuitive precision shines through every cut.”

**Kyle Gann**, *Village Voice*



**Voyage** | Uptee Records (1987)

“Outside-looking jazz, both electric and acoustic, comes from drummer/percussionist **Thurman “T-Bird” Barker’s** debut as a composer/band leader. The title cut starts things off surging electrically forward, driven by T-Bird’s propulsive stick work and James Emery’s barn-burning guitar. By contrast, the second cut features keyboardist Rob Schwimmer’s grace-with-power tinkling as the band leader goes back and forth between marimba, gongs and traps. “Hocus Pocus” anchors the second side as bassist Alonzo Gardner riffs on the upright. Though not quite on a par with, say Jack Dejonette’s recent electric/acoustic effort, T-Bird and his fellow bandmates manage to concoct a pretty good improvisational casserole.”

**Tom Cheyney**, writer for *LA Weekly* and other publications

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## PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

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■ **Thurman Barker Quartet** | Chicago

“It’s hard to remember a more combustive combination of drums and guitar than the one unleashed Saturday at the Velvet Lounge by **Thurman Barker** and **James Emery**. If comparisons to Billy Cobham and John McLaughlin in the Mahavishnu Orchestra didn’t quite fit, the unison volleys, streaming fluidity and rhythmic sizzle of these seasoned collaborators didn’t discourage them, either. Barker has the rare ability to make thunder intimate. If there is an art to playing softly with intensity, there is also an art to playing loudly with restive ease, and he’s got it. With his sweeping, circling, note-springing attack, he created a kind of seductive safety net for himself and everyone around him. A master melodicist, he added color and texture on vibraphone.”

**Lloyd Sachs**, *Chicago Sun Times*



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## PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

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*Performance Reviews, cont.*

■ **Thurman Barker Trio** with guest artist **Sam Rivers** | Boston

“For the show’s first half, **Thurman Barker** proved he’s become one of the most astonishing, inventive drummers in jazz. He’s that rare combination: a drummer of both raw muscle and fierce intelligence. He makes time, counterpoint and rhythm serve as the glue that holds the sound together, much like a pianist would use melody. Although he often switches over to marimbas for a tune’s softer portions, his drum solos are equally musical: they move along like compositions. Barker has created a trio approach of perfect equality, with each instrument constantly reacting to the subtleties of the others. This delicate balance was broken by the addition of veteran saxophonist **Sam Rivers**. As a saxophonist is apt to do, he overpowered the quartet. And his bellowing free-form eruptions seemed far less interesting than Barker’s fertile synthesis of many musical ideas.”

**Daniel Gewertz**, *The Boston Herald*

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■ **Sam Rivers Trio** with **Thurman Barker** | Bard College

“Bard faculty member **Thurman Barker** is responsible for this extraordinary concert. It was Barker who anchored some of Rivers’ most compelling trios over the years, the most impressive of which matched Rivers and Barker with our own musical giant, Saugerties bassist Dave Holland. That trio equaled the near-legendary Ayler trios with Gary Peacock and Sunny Murray, and the explosive Archie Shepp Trio with Murray and Henry Grimes. The Bard gig provides a very rare opportunity to hear the music from the source. Thurman Barker, who’s previously brought Marilyn Crispell, Warren Smith and Jane Ira Bloom to Bard, has once again booked a significant artist to appear in our valley; the college should recognize that he’s done for improvised music what Leon Botstein has done for the classical repertoire in our area. Barker is the most visionary of presenters and deserves great support for his enlightened efforts.”

*Woodstock Times*

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■ **Cecil Taylor Group** with **Thurman Barker** | San Francisco

“What a treat! Not only are drummer Rasheed Bakr and bassist Lisle Ellis in pianist Cecil Taylor’s group which opened Tuesday at Yoshi’s – also on stage, front and center, is the remarkable, brilliant and empathetic percussionist and marimba player **Thurman Barker**. And although Taylor even as a soloist can be, and usually is, among the most inventive, fascinating and frustrating keyboardists of our time, his whole musical universe seems to expand with the addition of Barker, who has played with him sporadically for a number of years. The addition of the mellow-toned marimba, especially when Barker uses two mallets in each hand, creates another “keyboard” in the group – a sound, a timbre that can (and does, in Barker’s hands) weave in and out of Taylor’s astonishing piano lines. The mixing of rhythms, of counter-melodies, of harmonic patterns between Taylor and Barker is provocative, exciting and often surprising.”

*The San Francisco Examiner*