CODA MAGAZINE

THE JAZZ MAGAZINE * ISSUE 195 (1984) * THREE DOLLARS

BUDDY TATE * JAY McSHANN * CHARLES FOX * BILLY ECKSTINE * NELSON SYMONDS
MEL LEWIS * BLUES * RECORD REVIEWS * AROUND THE WORLD

cover photograph
BUDDY TATE
by Bill Smith

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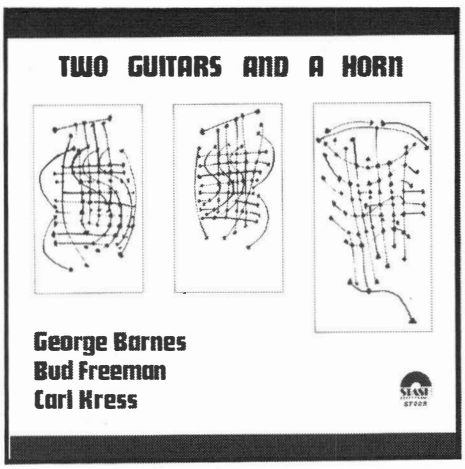

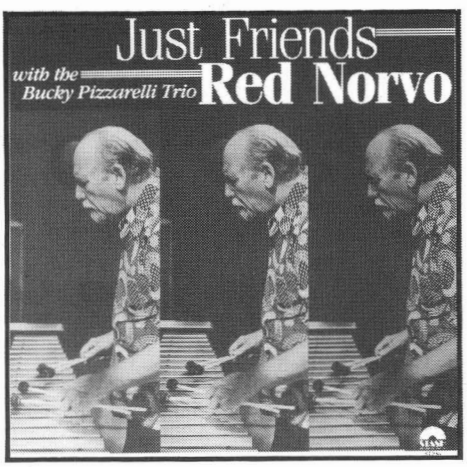

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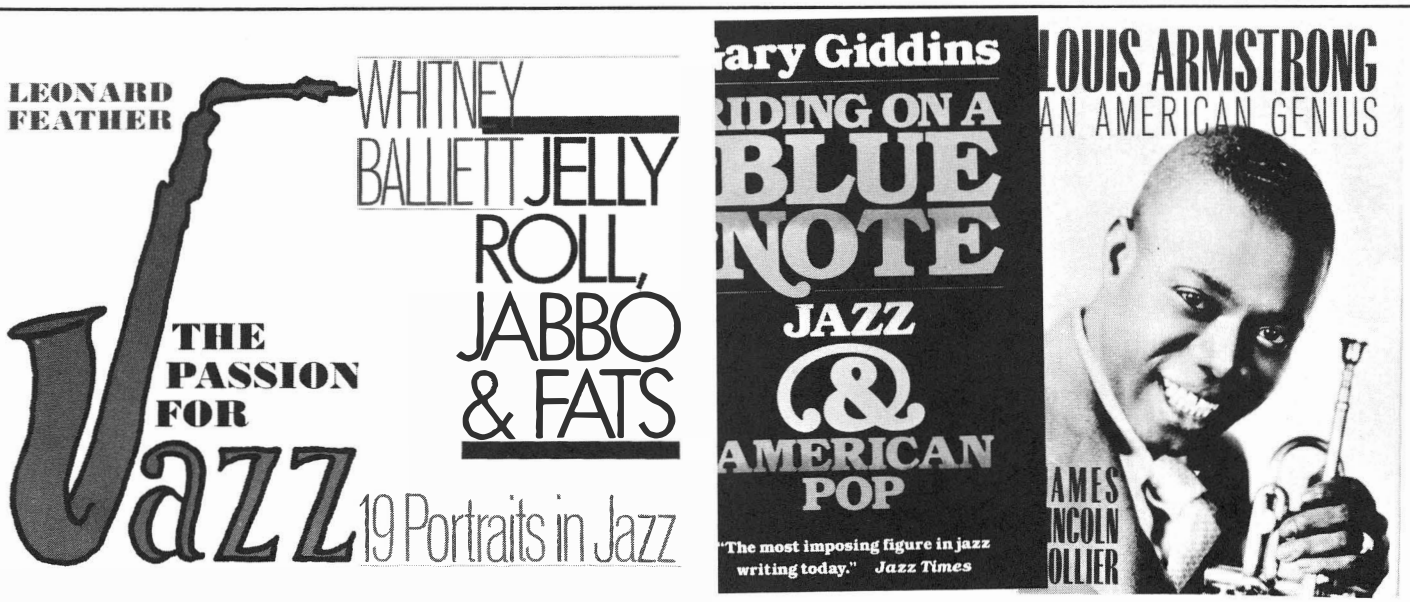

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164/5 (February 1979 - SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE, COUNTS AS 2 - Jeanne Lee, Gunter Hampel, Lester Bowie, Hank Jones, Vinny Golia, Nick Brignola, Red Holloway)
163 (October 1978 - Henry Red Allen, Frank Lowe, Albert Nicholas)
161 (June 1978 - CODA's 20th Anniversary issue: Julius Hemphill, Doc Cheatham)
160 (April 1978 - Willem Breuker, Joe Pass, Enrico Rava, European record labels)
159 (February 1978 - Randy Weston, Milt Hinton, Blues News)
158 (December 1977 - Joseph Jarman, Eddie Durham, Bobby Hackett)
157 (October 1977 - Bobby Bradford, John Carter, Chet Baker, Butch Morris)
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155 (June 1977 - George Lewis, Lloyd Glenn)
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CODA MAGAZINE

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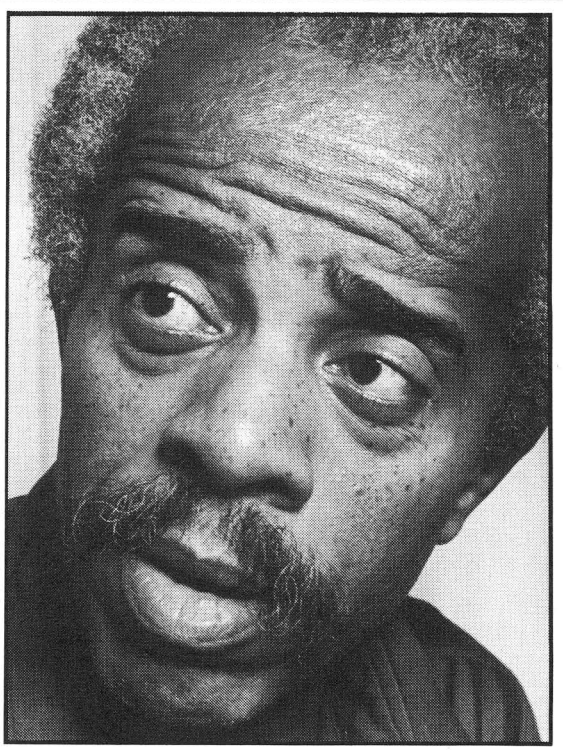
In The Next Issue

The next issue of CODA will feature bebop pianist BARRY HARRIS being interviewed by Toronto jazz deejay Ted O'Reilly.
Our Philadelphia correspondent Gerard Futrick talks to vibist KHAN JAMAL.
The new harmolodic music of drummer RONALD SHANNON JACKSON is investigated by Jim Macnie.
Bassist FRED HOPKINS is interviewed by Canadian bassist David Lee.
And we take a look at jazz Red Hot and Cool — views about our art behind the Iron Curtain with Rova Saxophonist LARRY OCHS being interviewed by William Besecker about his recent trip to Russia.
Plus surprise short features, record and book reviews and news from around the world.



BARRY HARRIS (photograph by Jørgen Bo)

Buddy Tate · The Texas Tenor

Buddy Tate's tenor saxophone sound is one of the most distinctive in a music where individuality is a chief aim and attribute. His sound and style were already established when he began recording with Count Basie in 1939. It was the final step in an apprenticeship which had begun in his home town of Sherman, Texas in 1925 when, at the age of eleven his brother gave him his first instrument. At the age of fifteen he was a member of Troy Floyd's band in San Antonio and he gained further experience with T. Holder and Nat Towles before he got the call to join Count Basie as Herschel Evans's replacement. Buddy Tate had worked alongside Herschel Evans in the Troy Floyd band and they were two of the earliest saxophonists to establish what has become known as the "Texas Tenor" sound.

Buddy Tate remained with Count Basie until 1949 where he shared solo honours with fellow tenor saxophonists Lester Young, Don Byas and Illinois Jacquet. He then branched out on his own and for more than twenty years was leader of a very successful band at New York's Celebrity Club. In the early sixties he began touring Europe with Buck Clayton and this has developed into a major part of his present activity. He now spends more than a third of the year working in many different settings in such countries as France, Germany, Switzerland and Great Britain. In fact, Buddy Tate epitomises the inveterate road musician. He is always on the move, working with a wide variety of musicians and constantly reaffirming his status as one of the definitive stylists.

The Celebrity Club played an important role in the lives of jazz enthusiasts in the fifties and early sixties. It was one of the few spots in New York where the kind of swinging music epitomised by the original Count Basie band was still being performed on a regular basis. It was also one of the few spots left where the music still fulfilled a functional role for dancers. Following the demolition of the Savoy Ballroom it was one of the only spots to regularly present music in keeping with Harlem's tradition as a music centre.

The Celebrity Club became a mecca for visiting European jazz listeners who were made aware of the activities of Buddy Tate's band through the pages of Jazz Journal and The Bulletin of the Hot Club of France. Only a handful of New Yorkers were intrepid enough to make the journey to 125th Street in Harlem, but the visitors from abroad were ecstatic about the possibilities of hearing music which was rarely heard below Harlem. For many of them it was the only possibility of hearing what Hugues Panassie had termed "The Real Jazz."

The musicians probably viewed it less philosophically; it was a steady gig during a period when the demand for their services had fallen so low that many of them had been forced to seek day jobs. Some of them had retired permanently from music.

The Celebrity Club audience, also, were not concerned with the niceties of the jazz fraternity. They wanted to be entertained and the Buddy Tate band was the best around.

Buddy looked back recently on those years and gave some insights into the working situation and how it developed and changed.

I first thought about starting my own band during the late forties when I was still with Basie. I would be able to play more and choose the things I wanted to play. But I didn't really plan it.

When I left Basie I had a small five or six piece band and the first job we played was at the Baby Grand at 125th Street and Saint Nicholas Avenue. We played a few other dates including a trip to Cleveland but it didn't last too long. We had made a record for Willie Bryant called "Swingin' With Willie". And Ray (Willie's associate Ray Carroll) and Willie had a radio show and used the record for his theme break. After that I started to get calls.

I first worked at the Celebrity Club in Freeport, Long Island, out there where I live, and I thought that it was out of the world. I went to work out there with a band by the name of Ted Fields. He had been in Europe for years, he was a big name over there, but they had to come back when the war broke out. One night the owners, Irving Cohn and Julie Fleitman, came to me and said, "This club — The Celebrity Club — that I have in the city, how would you like to work there sometime. I think the band has been there a little too long, they've been there seven years, but they never are all there. Sometimes just three or four of them come at night, and this is an eight-piece band. Sometimes when they come, some of them are back in the band room and they never get on the stand. Would you be interested?"

I went to work down at the Savannah Club, that was like a small Cotton Club, same style. The band was led by a lady bass player by the name of Lucille Dixon. One day, two or three months later, the owner of the Celebrity Club called me. "You know I'm going to get rid of this band. Are you ready to come in?"

Now I was working, so I wanted to know for how long. So he says for as long as you want to stay. I got to thinking. Now here some cat's been here for seven years, doing everything wrong, and if I take a band in there and do it right, I'll probably be in there from now on. That's just the way it really happened. I organized my band, and we went in, in 1950, and I came out in 1971. And that was the Celebrity Club All Star Band. That's the way it happened.

The original band had Pat Jenkins, Ben Richardson and John "Shorty" Haughton (trombone), Skip Hall (piano), Flat Top Wilson and Fats Donaldson (drums). The rhythm section got changed around but the front line remained the same except for Eli Robinson becoming the trombone player. We just played everything impromptu when we got on the stage at first but gradually put a book together. Eli Robinson did most of the arranging. He was always bringing things in and was very fast. If I needed something in a couple of days he could do it. Before he was in the band Skip Hall wrote our arrangements. He was a beautiful writer, could make six pieces sound like forty, and wrote fast like Eli. Every week he'd write four or five charts so we'd rehearse every Thursday and it didn't take long before the book started getting thick. There were also contributions from George Kelly and Ben Richardson.

In later years we'd rehearse Fridays before the gig. Maybe from 8:30 to 10:30 p.m., and then start working at 11 p.m. Rehearsing keeps you together even if you just sit and talk over things. There were always ways to improve arrangements we were already playing and the guys would suggest different things. You just can't beat those rehearsals and having a steady personnel. You could bring someone else in and pay him twice as much but it doesn't mean a thing. If you've got the same people and they know what they're going to do it means everything in the world. It's just like a big family.

Originally we were playing more jazz than in the later years at the club when we had to play all the latest dances such as the boogaloo, the twist, because if you don't the younger people will just sit down and look at you. So our book eventually contained several of the latest things and only occasionally could we put a jazz number near the end of a set. It became a bad part of the job eventually, because a lot of times my friends came down to hear jazz and playing for the dancers you just couldn't do it.

Outside organizations would hire the club for special events and as we were the house band we were part of the package. They had the same system at the Savoy on Sundays and an organization might be lucky enough to get a top band like Basie up to a certain time if it were resident.

We worked at the Savoy for a while as the house band as well. It was a funny situation. Mr Buchanan, the owner of the Savoy, wanted us to play there and we wanted to because it was an early night affair and we would get a chance to play the more swinging things in our book. There was a big fuss between the owners of the clubs. My boss said, "You wait till I see this guy. I don't understand why he wants to take

BUDDY TATE (photograph by Bill Smith)

my band out of here." So I said, "Look, this is nice for both of us. I can go up there for a few months and then come back down here. All you fellows have to do is get together." Finally I got them together and Mr Buchanan came down to see Mr Cohn and they talked. But they didn't come to an agreement ***that*** day and so Mr Buchanan said that he had to go up and see him — real gangster style! So finally I got Mr Cohn to go up and see him and they got together.

I worked at both clubs until the closing of the Savoy in 1957. We would work five nights a week at the Savoy while at the Celebrity we would usually work Thursday through Sunday in those days but later on it was just the week-end unless there was a holiday on the Monday.

The band got a chance to become popular because of all the people attending the Celebrity Club. We would be asked to go out and play for clubs whose membership was too large for them to hold their affairs at the Celebrity Club once they learned it was possible for us to do this. My boss and I had a very good understanding.

We usually used seven men with a singer but, in New York, some halls have a minimum requirement which can go up to twelve. I never played under seven unless it was a wedding at the Celebrity Club where I would work with the rhythm section but I never accepted any outside engagements for less than the full band. In the larger halls I would use Buck Clayton, Dickie Wells, Earle Warren — fellows who had worked together for a long time with Basie and know how we do things and fitted in very well.

The Celebrity Club was the last place to have a house band of that size on a regular basis in New York and many organizations wanted us for their dances. Many times Milton Larkins enlarged his band and went out because he and I had much the same kind of band. A lot of times they would take him because we split our bookings when there were two or three offers for the same night. Then I would also recommend somebody else who I thought could do a good job.

There are so many people who make the mistake of hiring a name musician who once played with Basie or Calloway for these affairs. These clubs would have a committee of five or six people who would decide what band they wanted. Sometimes they would get the worst band because the guys hadn't played together and were not organized. I really brought that point out when I was trying to get a price out of them because they wanted to hold onto their pennies. I'd say, "Look, you have to pay any band scale so wouldn't it be better to pay a few dollars more for a band which you know is organized and will do a good job for you." You really had to get on to them because some of the clubs made a lot of money on those dances and didn't want to pay nothing. They'd tell you, "We'd like to give you more but this hall is costing us $1100.00." So I'd tell them, "The hall! Who's going to play the music!" At some of those dances they charged six to eight dollars a couple and they got a thousand people in and then charged eight to ten dollars apiece for the tables. They made money!

The social organizations we played for represented all ages but there were some which were entirely of the younger generation and they wanted you to play ***all*** night! They also wanted to hear all the latest records. Sometimes I felt that was a night when I wanted to

be off! Often we were hired for that type of organization because of our reputation. They could sell tickets for a dance if we were playing!

The band was always fairly good and was well liked by adult groups. We played waltzes, calypsos and were prepared for any type of thing at those dances.

Knowing Buddy Tate for the last fifteen years or so has helped me put into historical perspective a style of music, a slice of life if you will, that I had not the opportunity to experience at first hand. Although one can indeed feel the power of those days listening to recordings, I doubt what one hears is even a minute part of the live reality. There are many stories concerning the adventures of the touring musician, and the following two, one about the humourous results of an accident, and the other relating to the difference in the style of travelling, are just a small insight into the life style of one Buddy Tate.

Buddy was preparing to leave for a European tour with a large band that included Harry Edison, Joe Newman, Ed Lewis, Hal Abrams, Curtis Fuller, Eddie Durham, Preston Love, Earle Warren, Haywood Henry, Skip Williams, Nat Pierce, Eddie Jones and Freddie Green, when the following incident took place.

There were five pieces of steel about an inch thick, and they were on a chair, and over that was a sheet. Just a plain bedsheet. I was reaching up for a bag, and I did not see that, I didn't know the steel was there. If I had known that, I would have gotten my foot out of the way. But I reached for the bag, the bag fell on the chair and it knocked all of that steel on my foot. Right across my big toe, I knew it was broken. About an hour before plane time. I went on and caught the plane to Paris and then on to Nancy (France). The next day, right after the rehearsal I went to the hospital. The French doctor said, "Break two, Monsieur Tate," which meant it was broken twice. He put it in a big steel cast, you should see me wobble as I walked. It had a big ring under my foot. So every day I had to go and have the dressing changed, and I'm on a tour of one-nighters. Five days later, when I arrived in Paris I went to an American hospital, and they told me they could take that stuff off and wrap it differently by putting some steel between my toes, and wrapped it, but still I could not wear a house shoe on the whole tour. We went to Spain, and came back to Madrid. You know where you go through the security check to catch the plane. Man, I rang those bells like Santa Claus. I was ringing and ringing and ringing, and the security police says, "Metal! Metal!" He stripped me, everything, took my rings off...then I walked through again and I'm still ringing. I'm holding the plane up. Everybody in the band came back to find out what's going on. He's saying, "Metal! Metal!" and I'm saying, "Man, you've undressed me, you want me to put off everything I've got on." We never did find it, so he finally just says, go, go, go. So now I'm wondering what's making me ring. Two hours later, on the plane, I'm thinking what the hell's that ringing on me. I had forgotten that I had this steel between my toes.

Travelling these days usually means airplane trips, and because of this modern necessity, much of the historical glamour has disappeared. Travelling with Count Basie then was quite a bit different.

BILL SMITH: In the big band days of Basie, on the road so to speak, you travelled on buses and trains?

BUDDY TATE: Yeah, on buses and trains. Never did fly — just trains and buses. But I tell you, do you know I liked that better. I like trains and buses better than flying. I'll tell you why. With the bus, once you get your bag out of the hotel and put it on that bus, it's on there until the next gig, the next hotel. You don't have to be bothered with handling your luggage. With the train, Basie would rent the whole car, and it would be hooked on to the back. We always had our bed. We would stay in bed sometimes all day. They had to put us on the end of the train, because things were going on, so that there was no way anybody could walk through. It was more convenient. With the bus, Basie would rent it for a whole tour, it was just for us. Maybe thirty days — for thirty one-nighters.

I thought that all being together, all the time like that, made us become like a family. It put us closer together — we were gathered there all the time, more than we were with our families. Really. That was day after day — year after year. We didn't take the train nearly as much as the bus. We would leave New York sometimes, and go out and do 30-35 one-nighters, and that bus would be with us all the way. Then of course there were more places to play. We played theatres, a week or two at a time. Then there were ballrooms, and sometimes we used to play six weeks at one place. Basie's band was very popular. Los Angeles — Avedon Ballroom — one month — leave there and go to another ballroom right in Los Angeles. There were more places then. We are talking about the late thirties through until the fifties, when the big bands started to fall apart. We had a ball team. What would make it so nice, maybe we would be in Atlantic City, and Harry James was playing the Steel Pier and we were playing the Paradise, and we would all play music all night. The next morning we would all be out on that ball field. Some of the guys would still have hangovers, but we would just get out there, and work it in that sun — running. It was lots of fun. Get some exercise. We had our uniforms — everybody had their uniforms.

Now is quite different for you to tour. You go off to some city and play with people that you have never even heard of.

Sometimes I go to places and only one can speak just a little English. I get there maybe an hour or an hour and a half before gig time, and I've got to go in to see what we can play, that we all know. It's always standards, or something like that. Then maybe one man, the drummer, can't speak a little English. So he says you tell me and then I'll tell him.

Doesn't this lower the quality of the music, because you have to play with strangers all the time?

Well, sometimes, and sometimes you can find good players. One thing I can say about players like that, is they are always trying, and sometimes it works out better with a person that's interested in trying to do, than some guy who says "I got it made and I don't care." I've had players that were not known, but they played good and they were sincere and you enjoy playing more than with some primadonna. I would much prefer to have my own band, it's always much better. Clubs don't want to afford to bring a quartet, they just pick the best local musicians and hire them. The only worry you have is if they don't play good.

You enjoy this kind of life, travelling all over the planet?

No, not too much. Not really. It's become an economic necessity. I don't get as lonely since Al Grey and I have been working together, since the death of his partner Jimmy Forrest. You can get so lonesome sometimes, when you are away. Three weeks is long enough for me. But I used to take two to three months travelling in Europe, but I don't like that, not now.

There is no possibility for you to do two decades in New York in one place.

I don't think so now. I don't know anywhere where anyone is doing anything like that, unless it's a pianist. I don't know anyone who has played one place for twenty-one years. Vincent Lopez played the Hotel Taft, but that still goes back into the big band days.

Are you surprised that writers, especially European writers, write about you in this kind of star way. The soloist.

Well, it's a nice feeling, I'll put it that way. It's great to be treated like that. I don't think of myself as a star. I think it's just having been out there so long, it's a matter of years. Mostly all my pals have gone on and I'm about the only one that's still around, playing in my style.

The reason that I'm pursuing that is because that nowadays in popular music, which we agree you were doing thirty or forty years ago, with those bands, is that performers get to be twenty years old, and they automatically assume it's time for them to be a star. It's a very common attitude even among young jazz musicians.

It's great if you are accepted as a star by other people, but thinking it yourself is a different ball game.

Other people have to think you're a star, because when you really face it you have to be accepted by other people, and I've been fortunate. People know me because I've survived. God bless.

THIS ARTICLE / INTERVIEW WAS PREPARED BY JOHN NORRIS AND BILL SMITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY BILL SMITH.

BUDDY TATE (photograph by Bill Smith)

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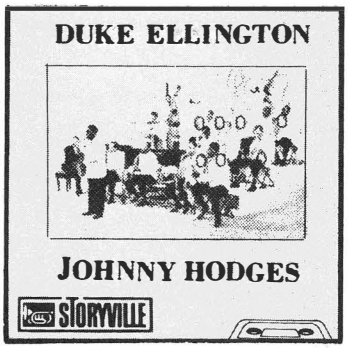

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JAY McSHANN

This short conversation with the ever-approachable Jay McShann was triggered by my interest in the career of tenor saxophonist Hal Singer who was at one time a member of the pianist's fine big band. Aside from telling me what he remembered about Hal's arrival in the band, Jay also added a few comments on other topics which are worth preserving here.

Hal was with Tommy Douglas. I think I sent Gus Johnson and Gene Ramey down to catch him. I believe we were in Kansas City too. Tommy was nice enough to let Hal leave with our band.

Hal always had a gutty sound. That's the first thing that gassed the cats and of course, the cats told me. 'Man, he's got that tenor sound.' So I said, 'Well, get him.' See, I knew of Hal. We were from the same state but we had never worked together before. So that was our first chance to work together.

I don't remember who it was he replaced in my band. This was after I came out of the Service. During that time the big bands were under pressure... he'd worked with Nat Towles. We used to battle Nat's band... we'd have battles of bands out there. Yeah, old Nat... Mister Five By Five. He was massive, you know.

I understand Nat went back to playing the bass (later) but I never got a chance to catch him playing the bass. His big band always had good arrangements and he had a good brass section, good reeds too. In fact, I can remember one time when I first got organised I went up and stole about five guys from Nat. I went up there from Kansas City. I was listening to the musicians and they were sitting down to the Blue Room and guys were sitting in. If I liked the guy, I'd send the waitress over there, bring him over and then I found who I wanted. Next morning, we left town. Some of the guys owed Nat a little money but we worked that out.

Nat didn't feel too much about it. He wasn't crazy about the idea, not at all. The thing about it was, he felt pretty secure because the guys owed him money but I had the money to give them to pay it (laughs). *So that's how we worked it.*

Those days must seem now like another world altogether.

Oh, all that was the greatest fun in the world. The greatest thing. The guys were always in a hurry to go to work. They wanted to play... they wanted to get on the stand to blow. Eager to go... It's missing now... it's different today. There's still guys that's eager to play but it's a little bit different. When you had the big bands creating a lot of sound, you had a lot of different personalities, you could hear it in the guy's playing.

What about your old sidemen, people like Orville 'Piggy' Minor?

Yeah, Piggy's still around and I think Buddy Anderson, my old trumpet player, is back playing his horn again. Of course, they told Buddy at one time not to play. He had TB but he's straight now. He was playing organ and piano for a long time but I understand he's back playing trumpet. Back then, he was doing the thing that they talk about with Miles, he was into that thing, Buddy was. Buddy used to get Diz... he didn't have the chops that Dizzy had but he would tell him to come over. He'd say, 'Go get your horn' whenever Diz would come to Kansas City... 'We're going up to the Grove.'

I was talking recently with Big Chief Russell Moore, the trombonist (since deceased), and he was telling me about the 'spook breakfasts' in Kansas City. Do you remember them?

Sure. Like, here in London, for instance we might have a spook breakfast at Pizza Express this morning, next morning we'd have it at Ronnie Scott's, next morning at Pizza On The Park, next morning somewhere else. All the musicians from all the rest of the clubs in town would go to where the spook breakfast was. So everybody comes in to relax. They didn't worry about music because all the musicians were there. Entertainment, they had plenty entertainment. Everybody just fell in. It was no format, maybe one of the guys, MCs, might get up and start talking. A lot of times people would be in town — you didn't know it but they'd be at the spook breakfast. That kept a lot of things. Even musicians from the white swing bands, whenever they were in town, when they got through playing they'd find out where the spook breakfast was, there's usually somebody that knows.

Of course, Kansas City doesn't have any of that today. It was a marvelous period. The situation was that the town was open. That makes a big difference. So when the town's open, everybody's coming there. Everybody wants to check it out. All the babes, all the pimps, the gamblers, see what I mean. You got those night-lifers there. That's action. Just like musicians would be sitting on the bandstand, maybe four or five gamblers come in the club... by gosh, we gonna play the gambler's tunes, the tunes the gamblers like, 'cause we know that's a money tune (laughs)...

Did you ever come across the Gene Coy band?

Oh yes, Gene had a good band. He was a helluva drummer. Last time I saw Gene was when we played a one-nighter in Bakersfield, California. This was when Jimmy Witherspoon was with us. Didn't have a chance to talk to Gene as we had to leave right after the show. He ended up in Seattle.

Wasn't there a connection with Howard McGhee?

Sure, Howard was with Gene at one time. But Howard and I met for the first time in Eddie Hill's band. We were touring down around New Mexico and one time the whole band got drunk. When Howard and I saw this we decided we wouldn't ride with those guys so we went out and hitched a ride into Albuquerque. This was about 60 miles away and we were still laughing when those cats limped into town so many hours later.

With your lengthy career and all your memories, you really should be working on a book about your life. Have you thought to do this?

Well, I'm working on it. It takes time and the old clock rolls along but I have a collaborator and I'm hopeful.

Postscript from HAL SINGER: *Tommy Douglas was one of the greatest alto players that ever lived. I was with his band when Jay came for me. Tommy said, 'I won't stand in your way, you go ahead.' He didn't demand notice or anything. In those days, between the musicians and the Union, it was all based on friendship. A man wouldn't stand in your way if you had the chance of making progress. It's not like that now.*

Views From The Keyboard

ENGLISH WRITER PETER VACHER TALKS WITH TWO PIANISTS

CHARLES FOX

Most jazz enthusiasts make use of discographies if only to establish the personnel of a favourite recording. Others, and I'll confess that I'm one, take particular delight in scanning these listings to chart the musical or career progress of an individual artist. Some names remain forever obscure but others come off the page in the best possible way, by appearing in person as performers. One such is Charles Fox, the Saint Louis pianist, known for sessions with the young Dexter Gordon (on Dial) and then with altoist Chris Woods and the late tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest (reissued on Delmark).

Fox debuted on the European Festival circuit last year with the Clark Terry All-Stars, having earlier toured England separately with the trumpeter's regular quintet which included another old associate in Chris Woods. He later journeyed to Europe again, this time with Terry's big band, telling me that this flurry of activity derived from his lifelong friendship with the amiable Terry, now musically renewed: *I wouldn't come out for anybody but Clark. He and I grew up together in Saint Louis. We were in the Boy Scouts. I remember when they first gave him a bugle*, he laughed.

And we all know what happened after that. Fox's own early kickoff more or less paralleled that of Terry. *I started when I was about 11 years old. By 14 years old, I had been on tours with a 17-piece band. That was with Glenn Bowden, in 1935. When I was 16 I went out with Kid Lips Hackette and then at 20 years old, I joined the Ernie Fields big band. He headquartered out of Omaha, Nebraska, and no, he never went on to New York. He didn't need to — it was a very good band and it worked all the time. We made $25 a night with that band and that was good money for those days.*

At 21, the pianist joined the Army, emerging in 1946: *After I got out, I worked with various bands, Dexter Gordon, Charlie Parker and Clark Terry. Just band to band. During that era, most had gone to small combos. It was beautiful.*

Fox's own playing style is a pleasing amalgam of the bopper's harmonic vocabulary with the conventions of swing. He often uses the locked hands technique to build rhythmic momentum and is rewardingly individual in his

choice of passing chords. Incidentally, he rejects any idea that bebop was esoteric. ***No, I won't accept that charge. I think it had developed, that's all. I'm playing the same things now that I was playing 40 years ago. Seemingly the more you enable yourself to do, through your thinking, the more it comes out like so-called bebop. I don't really know what that name means. We just say 'music.'***

In appearance the archetype quiet American, Fox is soft-spoken and undemonstrative, preferring to take life pretty calmly. He was resident in New York for a lengthy period, heading a trio and palying with all the top people before returning to his home town in 1965. Sidelined with a stroke, Fox was away from music for seven years but counts himself lucky to have recovered and resumed his career.

He reminisces readily about his early days in Saint Louis — it seems that he appeared with all the greats — and mentions engagements with legendary early jazzmen such as trumpeter Dewey Jackson and the riverboat bandleader Fate Marable. ***I worked with Fate when I was 13 years old. He'd drink whisky by the water glass and then he'd be too drunk to play so I would play for him. This was with the big band and with the small group too***, he explained.

These days, Fox particularly enjoys the chance to play the educator's role, often performing with Terry on campus. ***I would think the music of the sixties and seventies is forced on the people through the media. They don't get to hear jazz. We do concerts for a lot of kids and they say, "We love it, we didn't know music like that existed." There's no exposure, they may get it in movies and TV as background music but they don't realise it's jazz. Black culture is the only real culture America has, and they throw it away, because of prejudice. Years ago, it was all right as long as you stay on your side. Now, it's all together, so the difference is there and they can freeze you out of the mainstream of income and that freezes you out of life. A lot of good jazz musicians in America didn't have the chance to fully develop because they spent their lives working at some other trade that they despise. Right now, America's exporting jazz musicians. Look at the revenue that would come into the country by keeping them here. We just need more exposure***, he emphasized.

The diagnosis may be familiar but in Fox's view all is not yet lost. ***A lot of musicians never have the opportunity just to completely let go. The thing with jazz is that you're always reaching to do something different, a new way of expressing yourself. I'm still searching, and I'm 62. It's out there somewhere!***

As to the future, I always say that jazz won't go away. You can't kill it. No man can fight the truth.

JAY McSHANN (photograph by Gerard Futrick)

JIM GALLOWAY

Thou Swell
Sackville 4011

This is the fourth record on Sackville to feature the talents of Jim Galloway, and the second on which he has been paired with Jay McShann. And it may well be that this particular recording is more truly representative of Jim Galloway's musical personality than any of his previous recorded work. Galloway plays here with a consistency and a sense of refined abandon indicative of an accomplished musician playing at the top of his form, which, by the way, is hardly a commonplace occurence. But then, the pairing of two musicians like Galloway and McShann is hardly commonplace either; McShann, you see, is the ***catalyst*** of this session. Or, as Galloway himself has put it: "Jay can throw something at me and it works. There's a funny sort of wavelength that goes between us (***Coda*** 189, page 10)."

That musical telepathy is in evidence throughout the eight tunes that make up this collection, the album being, in actuality, a dialogue between these two principals, with support and interjections from Sackville stalwarts Don Thompson on bass and Terry Clarke on drums. Indeed, with all due respect to Galloway, McShann enthusiasts should consider this as one of the pianist's major recordings of this period, along with all the other releases on which he has appeared for the label. This is at once a Jim Galloway record and a Jay McShann record. And given the warmth and generosity of Galloway's musical nature, that is as it should be; no swollen, prancing egos here.

All the material is appropriate, consisting of standards from the twenties and thirties, plus Duke's ***Black Butterfly***. The Ellington piece actually comes as something of a relief from the determinedly 'mainstream' bent of the bulk of this collection of tunes, for while they are all superior, well-constructed songs, they can hardly lend the aura of freshness that one always hopes to find in a new release such as this. Could it be that the years of playing for club audiences who "know what they like, and ***like what they know***" have tended to restrict Galloway's choice of material to the more familiar, to the easily recognisable? Or is it simply due to the circumstances under which this session was recorded, McShann and Galloway having a limited amount of material in common?

Whatever the case, the issue of major importance on a record such as this is the level of sheer musicianship, and there are certainly no deficiencies to be found there. McShann positively attacks ***Sweet Sue*** and ***Thou Swell***, setting a killer pace that Galloway thrives on; ***Humoresque*** is transformed into a blues/stride romp; and the three featured ballads ***Someone To Watch Over Me***, ***Just A Gigolo***, and ***I Only Have Eyes For You*** pulsate with Galloway's clear-toned soprano rhapsodizing. This music is consistent yet inspired, civilized yet exciting, and often marvellously exuberant. In a word, straightahead. Admirers of either Jim Galloway or Jay McShann or ***both*** will not be disappointed. ***— Julian Yarrow***

A previous interview with Jay McShann, in which he talks about Charlie Parker, Nat Towles and his Kansas City days can be found in ***Coda*** no.181 (December 1981), still available at $3.00 postpaid for a single copy.

The Jay McShann/Jim Galloway record, "Thou Swell," is available for $9.00 postpaid from Sackville Recordings, Box 87 Station J, Toronto, Ontario M4J 4X8 Canada.

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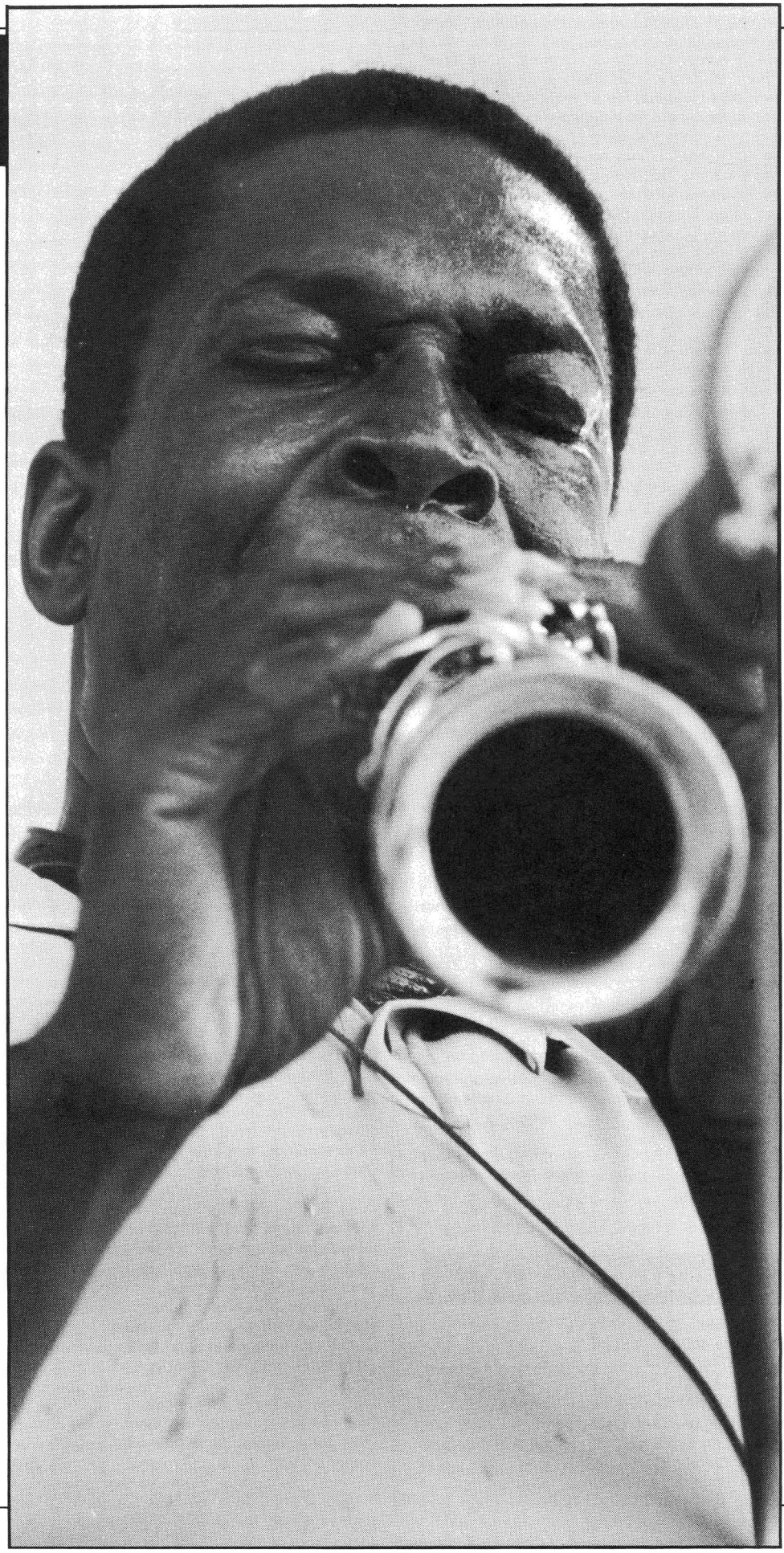
Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young are the acknowledged roots from which have sprung the various branches of the tenor saxophone. Their creative imagination touched their contemporaries as well as future generations. Today there are musicians using some of their devices without understanding the source but this is not the case with the saxophonists under consideration here — most of whom have recorded recently.

Joe Thomas is the senior member and belongs to the same pioneering generation which produced Bean and Prez. He was the tenor soloist with Jimmie Lunceford where his big-toned, melodious statements were one of the principal assets of that band. However, he did not have the kind of improvising originality which marks the major voices of the music. Later he enjoyed success in the early fifties when his big tone was used for the honking, instrumental R&B music so popular at that time.

Elements of both these periods of his career are evoked in his second LP for Uptown.



Several of George Duvivier's charts for the R&B band (***Raw Meat***, ***Tearing Hair***, ***Star Mist***, ***Jumpin' Joe***, ***Dog Food*** and ***Backstage At The Apollo*** are from this period) were transcribed. There is a new version of ***What's Your Story Morning Glory*** (one of Thomas's showcases with Lunceford) and a vocal version of ***If I Could Be With You***.

Reassembled for the occasion from the old band were trumpeter Johnny Grimes, trombonist Dicky Harris, and bassist George Duvivier. Haywood Henry (baritone sax), Jay McShann and Oliver Jackson (or Jackie Williams) complete the personnel in this well-crafted and authentic-sounding music. It evokes an earlier age rather than being a fresh statement by these veterans. Perhaps, considering the repertoire, this was intentional. Unfortunately, only when McShann solos does the playing vibrate with the immediacy of creative, expressive ideas. Thomas does not have the skills he once had (although this is far superior to his earlier LP for the same label) and neither Grimes nor Harris are major soloists. They sound most comfortable, in fact, on ***Star Mist***, where all the music is probably written. The ensembles suffer, too, from the lack of bite a well-rehearsed band would give so it's a pity they couldn't have worked together for a week before the recording.

The conviction of the participants transcends these limitations in giving a period feel to this music. Just as in the case of Panama Francis's Savoy Sultans fresh dimensions have been given to music once consigned to the archives.

Neither Flip Phillips nor Eddie Lockjaw Davis concern themselves with the intricacies facing Joe Thomas. They both like to stand in front of a rhythm section and unleash several choruses of improvisation on comfortable harmonic progressions. They each owe a debt to Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster but long ago established their own identities. They also seemed, over the years, to have a certain glibness to their playing but perhaps this was due as much to the quick-thinking ease of their creative processes as it was to their ability to cruise in automatic.

Age and experience have not slowed them down but they usually omit the excesses which gained them notoriety in their youth. Phillips, for instance, rarely uses the hysteria which made him the idol of JATP (well-documented in the recently reissued Verve LPs) and he shows the richness of his tone, the elasticity of his phrasing and the depth of his approach in these two recent releases. Once you get beyond the dumbness of the cover and its relationship to the repertoire, "Flipenstein" is a well-balanced collection which shows us all facets of Phillips's playing. Five of the eight selections are riffs concocted by Phillips or pianist Lou Stein which are excellent vehicles for the musicians. There's a delicately balanced version of ***Ghost Of A Chance*** as well as Larry Clinton's ***Satan Takes A Holiday*** and Cy Coleman's ***Witchcraft***. Michael Moore and Butch Miles complete a unified quartet.

The Swedish LP is controlled more by the texture of the accompanying musicians. The rhythmic stiffness of the band makes Phillips's lines flow less gracefully but he still manages to impart enough of his personality to ensure that his individuality is apparent. Vibraphonist Lars Erstrand and pianist Claes Crona share the solo work with Phillips but lack his skills as an expressionist. European musicians, in general, play from a pre-ordained determination rather than hearing the inner subtleties of the ebb and flow of improvising musicians. Outstanding, in this collection, are Phillips's ballad renditions of ***Poor Butterfly*** and ***It Might As Well Be Spring***.

Lockjaw Davis always seems to be in a hurry. Even when he plays a ballad there is a charged urgency to his playing. This is apparent when listening to either of these recently-recorded LPs from Europe. In "Land Of Dreams" he is working with a Viennese rhythm section while in "All Of Me" the musicians are Danish (with the key exception of Kenny Drew). Both these recordings are exceptional examples of Davis's playing even though it could also be stated they are typical. The Viennese session has greater variety of tempi, an idiomatically good guitarist in Karl Ratzer and a cohesive yet anonymous rhythm section. Davis's playing is particularly expressive and overall it seems to have the edge over the SteepleChase session despite the better credentials of the Danish band.

The Danish session captures Davis at his exuberant best as he manhandles in his own way such standards as ***All Of Me***, ***I Only Have Eyes For You***, ***There'll Never Be Another You*** and ***That's All***. The session is completed with ***Comin' Home Baby***, ***Four*** and ***Funky Fluke***. The tenorist doesn't get funky at all and the rhythm section sails serenely on but lacks personality. Kenny Drew solos effortlessly but there are no spaces in bassist Jesper Lundgaard's lines while drummer Svend-Erik Norregaard underlines the concerns expressed recently by Horace Parlan. His playing is metronomic but lacks the shading, accents and dynamics which contribute so much lift to the music.

Lockjaw Davis's best record of the past decade remains "The Heavy Hitter" (Muse 5202) but both of these records are superior examples of his recent playing.

Paul Quinichette was as close to a Lester Young clone as anyone and the qualities and limitations of his abilities are well captured in a Prestige session from 1957 with John Coltrane which was originally released as "Cattin'." ***Exactly Like You*** is a solo vehicle for Quinichette full of Lester Young devices but lacks the spiritual essence which made Young so magnificent. Three Mal Waldron originals and another standard (***Sunday***) are the material utilised by the musicians for the remainder of the date and neither saxophonist is memorable. The best aspects are the ensemble lines created by Waldron and the pianist's own solos.

By December 1958 Coltrane had really found his direction, and his final session (December 26) for Prestige contains the elements which were soon to have such a tremendous impact. Both ***Bahia*** and ***Goldsboro Express*** are full of the coherent yet charging lines which were to become the hallmark of Coltrane's improvisational direction. This is especially true of ***Goldsboro*** where Paul Chambers and Art Taylor drive the saxophonist through the kind of convolutions which were to reach a peak several years later. ***Time After Time***, ***Then I'll Be Tired Of You*** and ***Something I Dreamed Last Night*** have the lyric quality which made Coltrane's later LP ("Ballads" — Impulse 32) in the same vein so beautiful. In some ways these performances are even better: Red Garland's piano lines are more linear than McCoy Tyner's but the conciseness of the Impulse session is here replaced with lengthy solos from piano, bass, and, on ***Tired*** and ***Something***, by trumpet. Everyone (Jepsen, Wild, Ruppli) agrees it is Freddie Hubbard on ***Tired*** but only Wild even notes the presence of a trumpet on ***Something***. The original Prestige release of most of this session ("Bahia" — Prestige 7353) says that Wilbur Harden is the trumpeter and Jimmy Cobb is the drummer on this one tune. It seems more likely that this information is incorrect and that Hubbard is the trumpeter. The arrangement of solos on both these ballads is the same right down to the trumpet tag at the end! The compilers of this repackage and annotator James Isaacs totally missed the presence of trumpet on ***Something*** and the solo, while executed better than the one on ***Tired***, does not have enough individuality to make identification easy. This reissue complements the earlier "Stardust Session" (Prestige 24056) which reassembled music from another session scattered over several LPs.

Stan Getz made more from Lester Young than most of his contemporaries and has developed and changed over the years into a major stylist. This latest example of his newfound joy in the repertoire which made him famous was recorded in Stockholm during an early 1983 tour with Chet Baker which took the group to Holland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Most of the concerts were recorded for radio use so this LP may be a representative example of the music they performed. All of the tunes are familiar standards for musicians of Getz and Baker's generation (***Just Friends***, ***Stella By Starlight***, ***Airegin***, ***My Funny Valentine***, ***Milestones***, ***Dear Old Stockholm***, ***Line For Lyons*** - short version) and they get respectful interpretations from both horn players but there isn't much fire in their solos. The rhythm section of Jim McNeely, George Mraz and Victor Lewis lays down a smooth carpet — helping give the music a graceful flow.

Baker shares the billing and justly so. His precise articulation and personalised phrasing is a reminder of the stylistic aptness Baker brings to this music. He also is a player of ***music*** rather than a mechanical technician. The haunting wistfulness of his singing (***Just Friends***, ***My Funny Valentine***) is magnified in his trumpet playing. He and Getz sound good together but I suspect other concerts from this tour may have caught the intensity of these players better.

— John Norris

RICHIE COLE / ART PEPPER

And Return To Alto Acres
Palo Alto Jazz 8023

Richie Cole, Art Pepper (saxophones); Roger Kellaway (piano); Bob Magnusson (bass); Billy Higgins (drums).

Return To Alto Acres/Things We Did Last Summer/Art's Opus No.2/A & R/Palo Alto Blues/Broadway. (recorded February 18, 1982)

This record has a good feeling to it. The pro-

JOHN COLTRANE (photograph by Joe Alper)

ceedings begin with Richie on baritone sax and Pepper playing clarinet on the title track. The late Art Pepper was having a good day. He sounds much better here than on recent record dates with Sonny Stitt or Joe Farrell. And I was particularly impressed by the way Cole handles the big horn. Far too few baritone players are playing these days while tenor players number in the hundreds.

Richie then presents a sensitive ballad rendition of ***Things We Did Last Summer***. He avoids some of the cutesy things he sometimes does and blows straight-ahead jazz on this and every number. Pepper's composition ***Art's Opus No.2*** is up next with both sax players taking solid alto solos.

Side two starts off with a Cole piece called ***A&R***. Richie is on tenor sax on this one — he plays nicely, but shines more brightly on alto and baritone. Art Pepper takes the solo honors on this tune. ***Palo Alto Blues*** pairs Pepper's alto with Cole's baritone. Both horn players demonstrate that they can blow the blues with spirit and Kellaway plays his best solo of the day. Both front line players return to altos for the final number ***Broadway***. It gives us a perfect ending to an inspired record date. My only regret is that Art Pepper didn't play the tenor on at least one number. I always dug his gutsy tenor playing on the 1960 Contemporary recording "Gettin' Together."

The rhythm section grooves all the way. Bob Magnusson has a big tone and a fine choice of notes. Smiling Billy Higgins kicks things along in a most swinging manner. Roger Kellaway is a piano player with a distinct identity — I wish he played on more jazz records of this type. Not only do they play well as individuals, but they form a cohesive unit.

A delightful record album that features five strong players who are all in top form.

— Peter S. Friedman

LAJOS DUDAS

Monte Carlo
Ravan 1005

Lajos Dudas, clarinet; Attila Zoller, guitar; Bert Thompson, bass; Kurt Billker, drums.

Urban Blues / Rumpelstilzchen / The Gambler / Sunday Afternoon / Mistral

"Monte Carlo" marks Dudas's third album as a leader and contains his award winning composition ***Urban Blues*** which received first prize at the 11th International Competition for Jazz Themes in Monaco in 1982. He was also nominated in 1983 for ***The Gambler***, another piece to be found on this current release. Educated at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest, he is a well-schooled musician who apparently has mastered the tools of his profession. While he possesses an overwhelming abundance of technique, he never flaunts it capriciously, but instead utilizes it in a skillful, intelligent manner. Also playing a significant role here is guitarist Attila Zoller, whose wide-ranging versatility stretches from the commercial inclinations of Herbie Mann to the more exploratory avenues he has traveled in the company of pianist Don Friedman. This is a smooth, well-integrated unit not at all reluctant to dig in and mix it up. The ensemble work is sharp and precise with Dudas and Zoller at times revealing an almost telepathic ability to function as one mind and one voice. On the surface the clarinet/guitar combination has a light, airy, almost whimsical feel, but underneath there is a warm, glowing, slow burn. In fact on ***Mistral***, the last track on side two, the heat is turned on considerably. Special note should also be made of Thompson's clean, articulate bass lines which figure prominently in this active, conversational context. Drummer Billker is firm and steady but never obtrusive. Together these four men are capable of generating a lot of excitement. In all a very satisfying experience.

Rayna Records, Nuestr. 26, 4040 Neuss 1, West Germany. *— Gerard Futrick*

ENJA RECORDS

GENE AMMONS

Gene Ammons In Sweden
Enja 3093

EDDIE LOCKJAW DAVIS

Digital Recording
Enja 3097

In one sense the seventies marked an important watershed in jazz's struggle for economic survival. While the music remained an American art form, the recording of it increasingly became a European affair. By the early eighties the quantity and quality of releases from such outfits as Enja, SteepleChase, MPS, ECM, Black Saint/Soul Note and Hat Hut/Hat Art matched that from any comparable group of American independent jazz labels. Further, by investing in contemporary jacket art, quality inner sleeves and, most importantly, decent vinyl and pressings, these European recording houses unilaterally upgraded the art of merchandising jazz.

The two releases under review here typify the kind of live mainstream jazz recordings regularly produced by the Europeans. In this instance Horst Weber and Matthias Winckelmann of the Enja label present two of the finer practitioners of tenor saxophone: Gene Ammons and Eddie Lockjaw Davis. The Ammons date comes by way of Swedish radio which taped Jug at the Ahus Jazz Festival in July 1973, just one year before the saxophonist's untimely death; the Davis recording is from a performance at the Domicile (Munich) in February 1981.

Jug and Jaws, like their distinguished colleagues Sonny Stitt, Dexter Gordon, Lucky Thompson, Charlie Rouse and Wardell Gray began their careers just as the big band era was coming to a close and the bebop revolution was taking off. So each man's style signifies a unique blending of the sounds of the early tenor giants (Hawkins, Young, Webster, Berry, Evans, etc.) and the modern vocabulary of Parker and Gillespie. Both musicians project a commanding sound, but whereas Ammons's tone is hard and his phrasing laid-back, Davis's voice is rough and his rhythmic sensibilities exuberant. In spite of, or perhaps because of, their checkered careers in big bands, R&B groups, organ trios and tenor duos, both men remained consummate masters of their craft as these fine documents of their mature work illustrate.

Pianist Horace Parlan solidly anchors the rhythm section on both dates, and his earthy, chordal piano style is an important ingredient throughout whether the mood is spirited or mellow. As for the repertoire, it couldn't be more familiar: Ammons features ***There Is No Greater Love***, ***Billie's Bounce***, ***Polka Dots And Moonbeams***, ***Lover Man*** and an ***I Got Rhythm*** number entitled ***Ahus Jazz***; Davis performs ***I'll Remember April***, ***Young Man With A Horn***, ***What Is This Thing Called Love***, ***Broadway***, ***But Beautiful*** and ***Jaw's Blues***.

If you haven't got any or many records by either saxophonist, you certainly can't go wrong with these two releases; both imports are well worth the extra bucks you will undoubtedly have to pay at your local record store. However, if you must choose between the two, I recommend the Ammons date. The rhythm section has more presence. *— Peter Danson*

KESHAVAN MASLAK

Big Time
Daybreak D 005

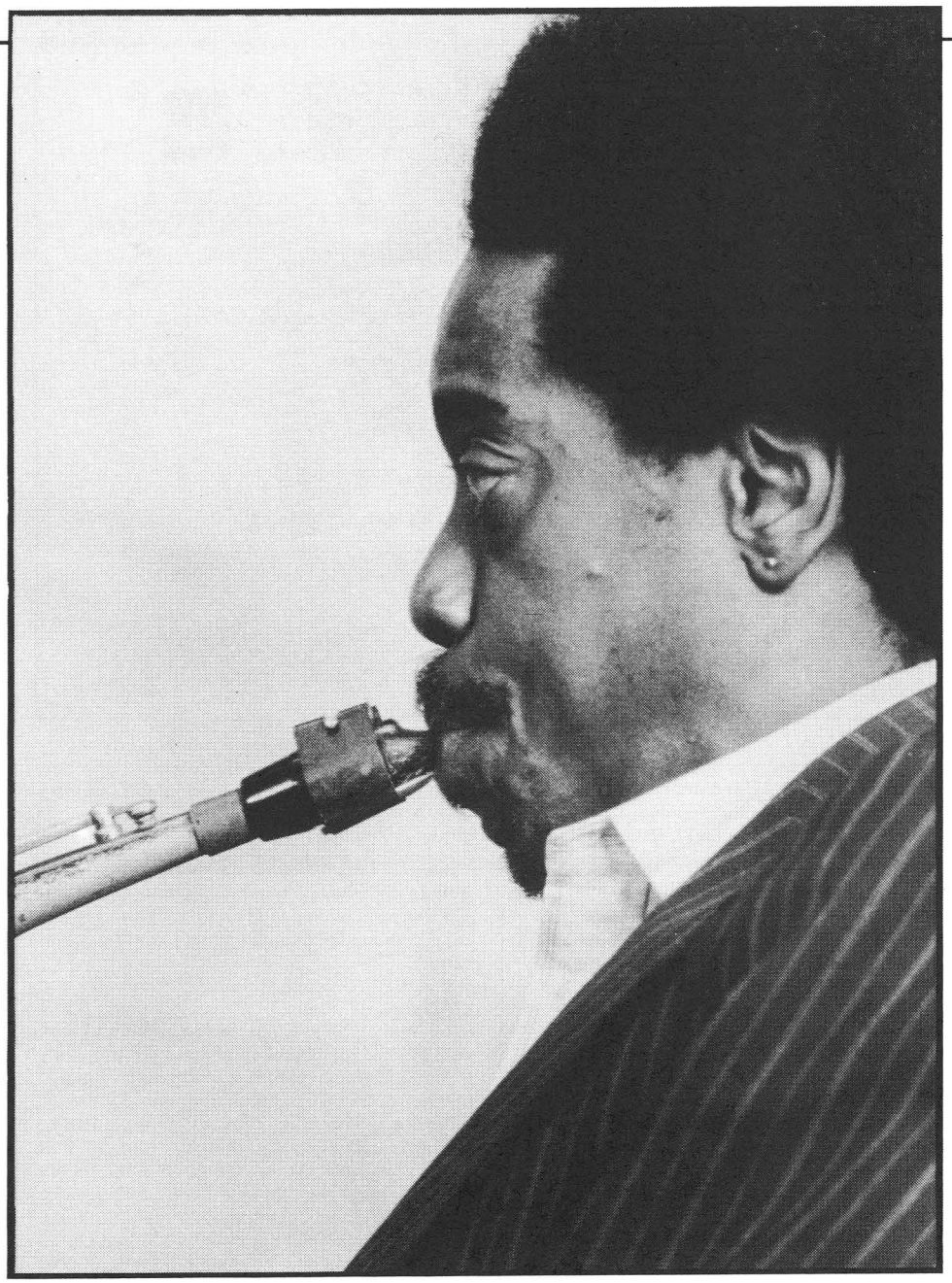
Keshavan Maslak, alto and tenor saxophones; Misha Mengelberg, piano; John Lindberg, bass; Charles Moffett, drums; Ray Anderson, trombone on last track only.

Mr. Moffett/You'll Love It/2300 Skiddoo/Big Money Cha Cha Cha/Big Time/Big Heart/You Left Your Big Shoe At My House

In live performance, Keshavan Maslak will often resort to bizarre, ridiculous antics which really have little if anything to do with the further enhancement of his music. But make no mistake, when he bears down he can be a compelling player as much of his previous recorded output has proven. "Big Time" adds more testimony to his considerable skills as both instrumentalist and composer. With the exception of pianist Herbie Nichols's catchy ***2300 Skiddoo***, all the material is original and bears the resilience to stand up under repeated listening.

Maslak's muscular tenor is showcased on the short but effective opener ***Mr. Moffett*** and again on the zany closer ***You Left Your Big Shoe At My House*** which also benefits from the blustery trombone of Ray Anderson. In fact it is a pity that Anderson is only present on the last track, for the extra horn does add more color and dimension to the total sound of the ensemble.

The rest of the action is centered around Keshavan's sharp, biting alto which is backed by a very capable crew that includes Dutch pianist Misha Mengelberg who is probably best known for his work on Eric Dolphy's "Last Date", and more recently for his appearance with Steve Lacy and Roswell Rudd on the excellent "Regeneration" (Soul Note SN1054). Bassist John Lindberg and drummer Charles Moffett are certainly no strangers to Maslak since both of them have been previously involved with him on various other projects. Moffett's crisp, snappy drumming is especially



bracing and makes you wish he'd show up a lot more frequently on record than he has in the recent past. If you already have been keeping tabs on Maslak you'll most certainly want to check this one out. If not, this is a very good place to start.

Daybreak Records, PO Box 7734, 1117ZL Schiphol, The Netherlands. — ***Gerard Futrick***

JEMEEL MOONDOC

The Athens Concert
Praxis CM 107

Recorded at the Praxis Festival in Athens on March 7, 1982, this album reveals the Jemeel Moondoc Quartet in excellent form. Moondoc (alto) and Roy Campbell, Jr. (trumpet and flugelhorn) play well throughout as the major soloists; bassist Jay Oliver and drummer Stephen McCraven support them ably.

The first tune, ***Konstanze's Delight***, is especially effective because of its dynamics. Oliver begins with a dirge-like melodic statement, whereupon the others add intermittent honks, squeaks, bells, and bits of melodic lines until the two horns take the theme from the bassist. First Campbell and then Moondoc break dramatically from the long introduction's mood, although each returns to it ultimately. Of the two, Campbell is the freer, and Oliver and McCraven respond accordingly. They also reflect the leader's slightly more restrained playing. But while Moondoc exercises more control than does Campbell, he is certainly no less inventive. One of his engaging techniques is to play an eddy of notes in the middle register before ascending, at which point he shifts into more linear statements, only to climb in the register once more. Then, at the end of his solo, Campbell joins him briefly. They descend to the quiet melody but engage in some frenzied improvisation before returning finally to the tune's original mood. On this performance, intellect and emotion are masterfully balanced.

There is nothing subdued about ***Judy's Bounce***, a jaunty piece on which all four musicians solo. Campbell is first, on flugelhorn. He begins fairly straightforwardly but becomes freer later. Moondoc joins him for a restatement of the theme and then swaggers into his solo, which might be termed free lilting. Next comes Oliver with a pleasant but conventional bass statement; then McCraven, with some intense, musical drumming (in fact, McCraven is superb throughout, although he is overrecorded). This attractive piece concludes with some spirited improvisation by Moondoc and Campbell.

This album contains forty-two minutes of substantial music by Moondoc and his group, which is emerging as one of the major aggregations of its idiom. — ***Benjamin Franklin V***

ROLAND KIRK

Now Please Don't You Cry Beautiful Edith
Verve (French) 2304.519

Roland Kirk (tenor saxophone, flute, manzello, strich, clarinet); Lonnie Smith (piano); Ronnie Boykins (bass); Grady Tate (drums).

Blue Rol/Alfie/Why Don't They Know?/Silverlization/Fallout/Now Please Don't You Cry Beautiful Edith/Stompin Ground/It's A Grand Night For Swinging

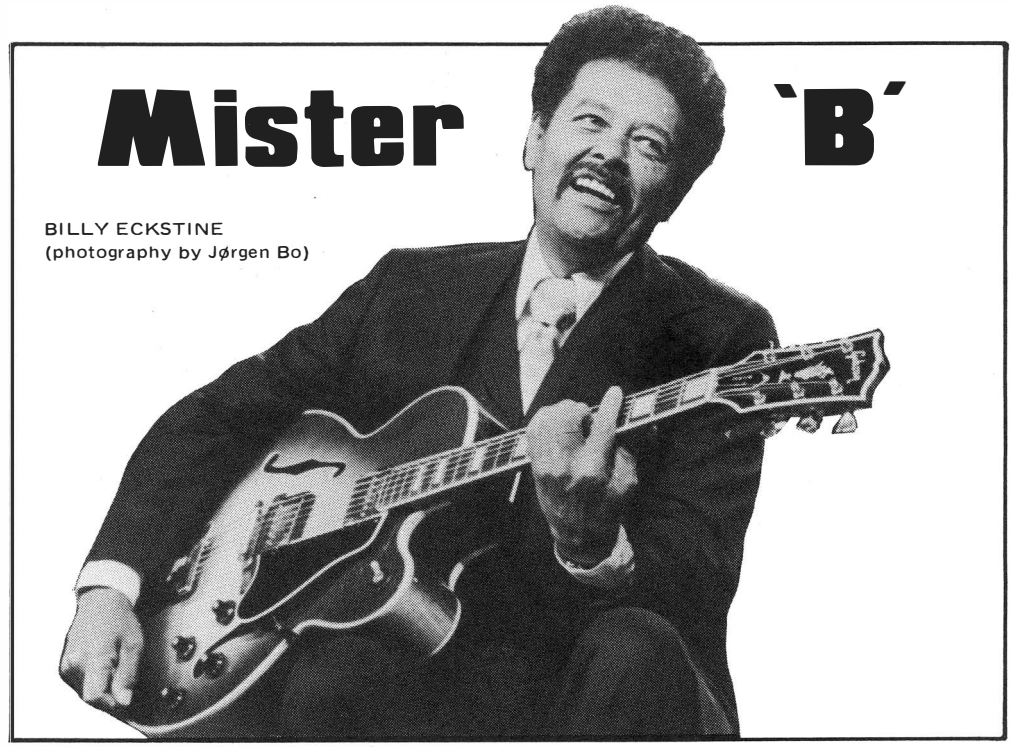
After being unavailable for quite some time, it's great to have this record back in circulation once again. Originally released in 1967 on the Verve label, and now reissued with its original cover by French Polydor, it ranks alongside "Rip, Rig & Panic" and "Bright Moments" as some of Roland Kirk's best recorded work.

Right off the bat this session starts to click with ***Blue Rol***, a hip, swaggering blues featuring some warm, reedy, New Orleans-inspired clarinet from the leader who switches to tenor and then back again to clarinet. In fact throughout the date he frequently changes horns almost instantly and without ever losing a beat. On ***Alfie*** Kirk shows his ability at transforming an otherwise trite, lackluster tune into a touching, noteworthy performance. Here his tender, passionate tenor hits home without lapsing into any needless sentimentality. Other highlights include the Latinesque ***Why Don't They Know?***, the lively and fun-filled ***Fallout*** complete with multiple horn riffs, siren and more stomping tenor, and on Billy Taylor's ***It's A Grand Night For Swinging***, there is an invigorating dose of Kirk's agile flute work. To be totally honest, there is hardly a weak spot on the entire album.

Credit must also go to the first-rate rhythm section comprised of Lonnie Smith's bright, shimmering piano, the sadly neglected and underrated Ronnie Boykins whose firm supportive contribution makes his untimely death all the more lamentable, and "Mister Taste," Grady Tate, a drummer who always knows how to take care of business. If you missed this one the first time out, don't let it slip through your fingers again. — ***Gerard Futrick***

JEMEEL MOONDOC (photograph by Vid Ingelevics)

Mister 'B'



BILLY ECKSTINE
(photography by Jørgen Bo)

Billy Eckstine, who was affectionately known as "Mr. B," was born in Pittsburgh in 1914 and grew up in Washington. In 1944, after becoming a feature attraction with Earl Hines, he formed his legendary bebop band. The following interview deals with that period. From 1948 on Billy Eckstine concentrated on the commercial world of ballad singing and became very popular, producing several hit records; one that I remember (with Sarah Vaughan) was entitled *Passing Strangers.* — *Bill Smith*

DOUG LONG: Were there influences, either instrumental or vocal, that influenced your style of singing?

BILLY ECKSTINE: I enjoyed Pha Terrell, who used to sing with Andy Kirk's band. He was one of my early influences. Also during that time, as a heavy baritone, I enjoyed Bing Crosby. There were quite a few people who were early influences. Paul Robeson was probably the biggest influence on me.

D.L.: When did you first start singing professionally?

B.E.: About 1934, when I was going to school. I started singing and working in little clubs after school at night. I've been singing practically all my life. I used to sing in the church choir when I was around eight years old.

D.L.: Was that when you started singing in clubs back in Pittsburgh?

B.E.: Pittsburgh and in Washington, DC, where I was going to school. In 1934 I won an amateur show in Washington — oddly enough, imitating Cab Calloway. Then I went back to Pittsburgh during the summer and worked around Pittsburgh in little clubs.

I sang with a band in Washington, Tommy Myles' band. Some of the great players that came out of that band were Trummy Young, Tyree Glenn, Jimmy Mundy, Elton Hill. As a matter of fact, Jimmy Mundy wrote some of the same things that later Benny Goodman made famous, like ***Madhouse*** and ***Swingtime In The Rockies*** and all that; we were playing those back in the mid-thirties with the band in Washington when he was with us.

Then I had a little band at the Savoy Ballroom in Pittsburgh for a while. Then I sang with a college band in Washington — Bob Smith's Collegians — at Howard University. And then the Hardy Brothers' Band.

At that time, see, big bands were the thing. In those days it was very rare that you'd see a small band.

In 1938 I left Pittsburgh and I was working in Detroit at a little club. A fellow here in Chicago who produced shows here at the Club de Lisa came there and heard me and asked me if I would come here and work, so naturally I did. I was trying to get to Chicago, anyhow.

B.E.: I was here working at the Club de Lisa — it was at 55th and State — for about a year and a half, and Budd Johnson, the tenor saxophonist, who was a dear friend of mine, he tried his best to get me with Earl Hines's band, so he finally had Earl come up to hear me, and Earl took me with the band then. That was right here in Chicago, because they were working at the Grand Terrace Cafe.

D.L.: I've heard that there was a problem when you were moving from the Club de Lisa to the Grand Terrace to work with Earl Hines involving gangsters or something.

B.E.: Well, that was grossly exaggerated. They didn't want me to leave at the Club de Lisa...

D.L.: The gangsters?

B.E.: Well, the people that owned it. They didn't want me to leave, and so I told them I wanted to go with Earl Hines so I could make records. And I told them that in case it didn't work out I'd come back there. And as it was, Earl broke up with his manager, Ed Fox, and I did go back to work in the Club de Lisa right after, and then I went back with Earl when he started the new band.

D.L.: How did the recording of ***Jelly Jelly*** come about?

B.E.: We recorded it right here in Chicago in 1940. We had done four sides, and there was time left for another side, and so the record executives asked Earl if he had any blues. On the road I'd been singing ***Joe Turner's Blues*** and things like that. So Earl said, "do you have any original blues that you can write?", so I said, "well, I'll go out," and while Budd Johnson was getting the orchestration together, the background together, I went out in the studio, out in the front in a little reception room, and within twelve minutes I'd written it. No problem at all — it just flew. Just came right out.

D.L.: You like singing ballads better than the blues, though, don't you?

B.E.: Oh yeah. Well, blues are beautiful. I love blues if something means something to the blues. But just to constantly sing the blues... I'm fundamentally not a blues singer, I'm a ballad singer. But I like to sing anything — I think a singer should sing anything, I don't like categories. I don't think you should categorize anything. Because when you categorize something, then you automatically ostracize someone who doesn't enjoy that type of thing. I think it's better to say you're a singer who can sing the blues, who can sing this, who can sing that, but mainly you're a singer. If somebody is walking down the street and, say they don't like jazz, and there's a sign out there, "Ella Fitzgerald — Jazz Singer." Well if they don't like jazz, they're not going in to see her. You know? And that's terrible, you see, so why not just put "Ella Fitzgerald, Singer," and let them choose what they like and what they don't like.

D.L.: Were you a part of getting Charlie Parker into the Hines band?

B.E.: Oh yeah. I got him into the band, definitely. He was working at Clark Monroe's Uptown House in New York, and I got him in the band. We needed a tenor player. Budd Johnson had just left the band, and so we got Bird to come in on tenor. Then when I started my band he came with me.

D.L.: How did you decide to leave the Hines band?

B.E.: Well, I had been there for four years and I'd done just about all I could do with Earl's band at that time. I wanted to go on my own. As a matter of fact most of the guys that were in Earl's band at that time I had gotten them in the band, like Dizzy and Bird and Sarah and the different ones like that. And we wanted to play, more or less, the newer type of music at that time, which is now modern jazz, bebop, whatever they want to call it. When I decided to get my band together, I made Dizzy the musical director and we tried to contact all the guys who were playing in that style at that time. We were all young fellows at the time, and we started the band then mainly to play what later became modern jazz.

D.L.: Did Earl feel like he was being ripped off, losing band members to Eckstine?

B.E.: No, no, no, it was never a case of that. Earl and I have always been dear friends all along.

D.L.: When you left the Hines band in September of '43, did you leave with the thought in mind of starting your own big band?

B.E.: Well, yeah, indirectly. I was gonna do it, but first I went down on 52nd Street, I worked on 52nd Street until I could get my mind together as to what I wanted to do, and to pick out the different agent or the right type of agent that would be able to progress my band. John Hammond sent me over to Billy Shaw, and Billy Shaw was the one who started booking my band.

D.L.: One thing, when I stop and think about getting a bop-oriented band together in '44, a big band yet, it seems incredible. How did you talk Shaw into letting you do something like

that?

B.E.: He had nothing to do with it. He booked it.

D.L.: He just booked it?

B.E.: That's right.

D.L.: And you did what you wanted.

B.E.: Yeah, yeah. Because, frankly, at that time agents didn't know what it was, they didn't know. He was mainly selling me on a vocal side, me with my band. That's what we did, Sarah and all, but we were singing in a modern jazz idiom.

D.L.: Did Charlie Parker enjoy playing with a big band as opposed to small bands?

B.E.: Well, Charlie, I think, enjoyed my band more than any big band he had been with, 'cause Charlie mainly loved to play with a small band 'cause he could improvise, he was freer. But in my band he was very free also, because that was the style that we played — we had freedom, though it was in a big band style.

D.L.: I know on the records, the things that have come out on Savoy, most of the songs are featuring your vocals. When the band played concerts, did it feature the soloists more?

B.E.: Oh yes! The reason why was, it was during the war, World War Two, and we were on a small label, and the powers that be at the company there, their philosophy was, if you put a nickel in the juke box and it said "Billy Eckstine," you expected some singing, they didn't expect an instrumental. So what I would do, I would write some of those things like ***Blowing The Blues Away*** and things like that that I wrote so as to feature the guys in the band, you know. And just put a couple of blues choruses on it and then feature the guys in the band.

D.L.: Blow Mr. Gene...

B.E.: Blow Mr. Dexter, yeah. Those were the reasons for ***Lonesome Lover Blues***; things like that featured Dex, and ***I Stay In The Mood For You*** featured Dizzy, and that's the only way I could get them on.

D.L.: Did you want to record more instrumentals?

B.E.: Oh yes. Well, a lot of things I have in my home are airchecks of the band when we used to do broadcasts, and there are a lot of instrumentals there. A lot of great instrumentals that never have been released.

D.L.: On the back of one of your albums, John Litweiler quoted you as saying you had the best big band ever assembled.

B.E.: That's right. I can say that now. Because I would say that my band, instrumentally, and the Ellington band, the original Ellington band, were the two best bands I ever heard. And then following that would be the Lunceford band. But my band, I can say it now without any fear of ego, we could get it on when we wanted to.

D.L.: Have you ever thought about having another big band?

B.E.: No, no, no. This is not the time for it. It's too hard, the travelling facilities now are too rough, it costs so much to move an aggregation like that with 22 guys, my God. It's too hard. When I gave it up, that was it. I gave the library to Dizzy and the music stands, everything. I didn't even want to see any parts of it, I just gave it to Diz, when he had his band.

D.L.: What caused the band to break up?

B.E.: Well, we were too new. We were really too new. People didn't quite understand what we were doing. We knew and the musicians knew that would come. Musicians would always be packed in the place listening. But it was just too new for the general populace. It was too strange for them. And now they've finally caught up to it.

D.L.: When you first broke up the big band, I think it was around early '47, did you have a regular small band you worked with after that?

B.E.: Yeah, I went out to California, and I organized a small band just to do some dates out there. I had Al Killian on trumpet, Wardell Gray on tenor, and Sonny Criss on alto, Chuck Thompson on drums, Shep Shepherd on bass, and Hampton Hawes on piano. Just six, seven pieces. We just used that up and down the Coast. It was organized not to stay together, it was just to fill out some dates I had out there that I couldn't get out of.

D.L.: So that broke up in about spring of '47?

B.E.: Oh yeah. It didn't stay together any longer than about two months, something like that.

D.L.: Tell me about Wardell. I love his tenor playing.

B.E.: Oh, Wardell was a fine musician. Great musician. Very very schooled musician. Good alto saxophonist and a tenor player, good tenor. He was a very good musician.

D.L.: How did you get Gene Ammons in the band?

B.E.: I got Gene right here in Chicago. He was just coming out of DuSable High School, and he came with us. He was playing with King Kolax and he came with me from that band. Dexter Gordon was playing with Louis Armstrong's band when I got him. When I first started out I had Lucky Thompson and Dex took Lucky's place.

D.L.: Was he playing the same style when he was with Armstrong?

B.E.: Oh yeah, but Dexter was more Lester Young oriented in those days, he played more like Pres, and then in my band he started getting his own style.

D.L.: One thing that always strikes me as a paradox about Bird — obviously he was committed to music, but on the other hand he missed so many shows and that sort of thing. When he was with Hines and with your band, do you feel that he was really serious about being a part of the band?

B.E.: Well, I know in my band he definitely was, because he used to love the band, because we were playing what he wanted to play. It was built around that style of playing of everybody at that particular time, so I'm quite sure he enjoyed playing with the band. But Bird had the wanderlust — he was not a person who would stay anywhere long. Possibly because of his addiction and his illness that way. But, you know, you couldn't hold Bird accountable for a lot of things, because he wasn't his own self — I don't imagine anybody would be. But he enjoyed playing with the band, because he was with all the guys he liked to play with.

D.L.: They kind of looked up to him?

B.E.: Well, you know, it's a funny thing — everybody looked ***at*** each other, not ***up to*** each other in those days, because everybody was playing the same way, everybody was pioneering. Bird, of course, was one of the leading pioneers, he and Diz. But everybody in the band was..like, they loved Jug, they loved Dex, they loved Sonny Stitt, Leo Parker, all of the guys, they enjoyed ***each other's*** playing. We were all equals in there. There was always a ***musical director*** — Dizzy was the first musical director. After Diz left to form his own band, Budd Johnson was the musical director. Jerry Valentine... There were no "leaders" as such. When I wasn't on the stand, Diz would take over the band, would do the stomp-offs and things like that. But leaders — no.

D.L.: When your band broke up in '47, you set out as a single...

B.E.: Uh-huh, yeah. Well, see, MGM was starting a record label then, so I was signed with them, I was the third person signed with them, and I was signed either with my band or without her. And so, you know, as I said earlier, pioneering the progressive sound, you know, you ran into a lot of stone walls. So I just decided to do it by myself. And I've never been sorry for it.

D.L.: I was told to ask you about Billie Holiday.

B.E.: Well, she was my baby, I loved Lady. She was one of the beautiful people, you know. Don't get me wrong — the picture "Lady Sings The Blues" was a great vehicle and was carried out great by Diana Ross. But it wasn't the Billie Holiday story. Because the thing I resented with "Lady Sings The Blues" was that after you left the theatre, all you remembered about Billie Holiday was that she was a dope addict. And that's the last thing you should remember. They never brought out her beauty, the musicianship and the creativity that she had. That was never scratched on, you know, and to me that's what Billie Holiday was about. We were dear friends. It didn't carry out the image that I think Billie should have had.

D.L.: I understand a lot of people deserted her around the late forties after she was through with her sentence.

B.E.: Well, they weren't there in the first place. You know, any time you get somebody who deserts...they'd never felt for her right in the first place. People that she loved and people that loved her never did desert her. We didn't desert her, because Lady was one of a kind.

D.L.: I understand now they're talking about a movie on Bird; you can imagine what that'll...

B.E.: Probably have Clint Eastwood play the part.

D.L.: Is there still something left musically that you want to do?

B.E.: Well, yeah. I'd enjoy writing for pictures, things like that. I imagine I'd like to do that. You know, music is so full of surprises, there's so many things that you don't really know that you want to do until you're in the throes of doing them. And I think I would enjoy doing some picture work, writing, something like that — orchestrating. I'd enjoy that, I think. But I don't know, maybe I wouldn't...

D.L.: You'll just have to try it.

B.E.: Sure, like George Burns says, "Give me a place to flop!"

The preceding interview took place on March 18, 1981 at Rick's Cafe Americain in Chicago.

RELEVANT BILLY ECKSTINE RECORDINGS

Under his own name:

"Mr. B and the Band" (1945-47) Savoy 2214
"Billy Eckstine Sings" (1945-47) Savoy 1127
"Together" (1945 live broadcasts) Spotlite 100
"Greatest Hits" (1947-54) MGM (E) 2353.071

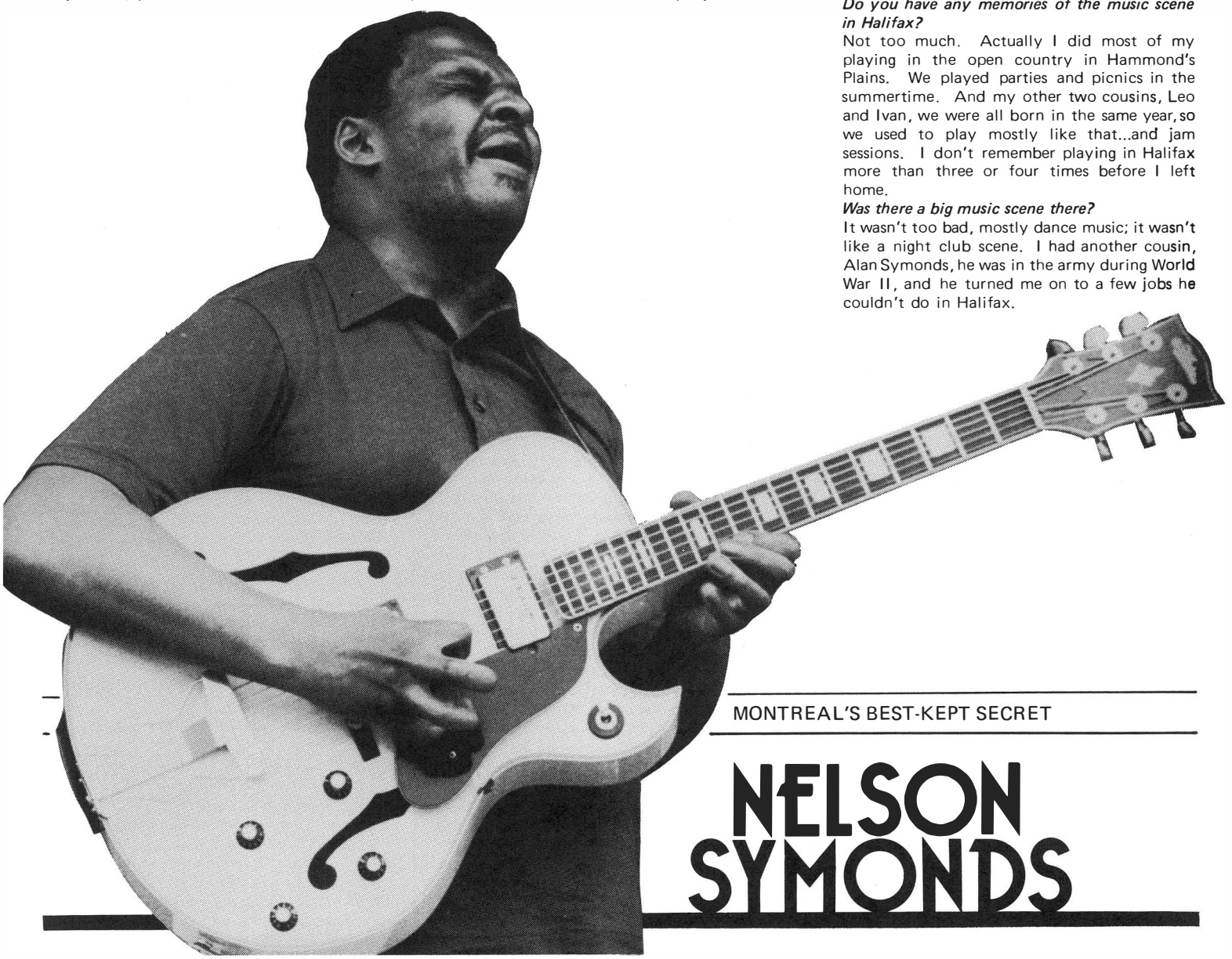
Under other musicians:

Earl Hines Orchestra "The Father Jumps" (1940-42) RCA Bluebird AXM2–5508
Dizzy Gillespie "The Development of an American Artist" (1944) Smithsonian P-13456

(Note — none of the above albums duplicates recordings on each other)

MONTREAL'S BEST-KEPT SECRET

NELSON SYMONDS



NELSON SYMONDS (photograph by Peter Danson)

It seems every North American city has its legendary players who rarely record or play outside their home base. Montreal is no exception to the rule. If you have read Coda in the past twenty years, you will know two guitarists, Sonny Greenwich and Nelson Symonds, fit the local "legendary" bill.

Symonds's story begins in Hammond's Springs, eighteen miles from Halifax, Nova Scotia. Born in 1933 of West Indian ancestry, he was introduced to instrumental music by relatives on his maternal side at the age of nine. In 1951 his uncle John called for him to play weekend dances in the northern Ontario industrial community of Sudbury. In 1955 he began a three-year stint with an American carnival which toured throughout the South. It was during these tours Symonds had an opportunity, among other things, to witness the exciting Memphis guitar scene.

At the end of the fifties he played in a host of local rhythm-and-blues bands in Quebec before settling in Montreal where he had an opportunity to back visiting American singles Jimmy Heath, Art Farmer, Benny Golson, Roland Kirk, Booker Ervin, Cecil Payne, Jackie McLean and Sonny Red. By 1963, after Rene Thomas finished his five-year Montreal residency, Symonds was acclaimed the town's senior guitarist (apparently with Thomas's blessing). Alan Offstein's impressions in Coda at the time explain why this was the case: "Nelson's style is hard, brutal and demanding. He spared neither himself nor the other musicians, insisting that every ounce of talent, energy and sincerity be delivered... He plays chords just as rapidly as he does single notes, counters lyrical phrases against fiercely rhythmical chord patterns, and achieves effects seldom produced from a guitar." (Coda, June/July 1966, p.34). Len Dobbin commented, "All the musicians who have played here [The Penthouse] or come to listen have gone away talking about Nelson." (Coda, Aug. 1963, p.6). Two such musicians were Wes Montgomery and John Coltrane who dropped by during their gig at the Jazz Hot in 1965.

In the following interview Symonds relates many of the episodes in his fascinating career, including encounters with Roland Kirk and Brother Jack McDuff, plus his stirring association with local pianist Jean Beaudet.

PETER DANSON: *Could you talk about the black community in Nova Scotia – what was it like growing up in the thirties and forties?*

NELSON SYMONDS: Well, I left home in '51 at an early age, and I really didn't go anywhere outside my home...maybe to Halifax and a few other places in Nova Scotia. My father ran a sawmill, made barrels and boxes, and we had a farm, but just for our own use.

Were towns outside of Halifax racially mixed back then?

No, they weren't too mixed. It was segregated in a way, but you couldn't say it was like the southern United States.

Do you have any memories of the music scene in Halifax?

Not too much. Actually I did most of my playing in the open country in Hammond's Plains. We played parties and picnics in the summertime. And my other two cousins, Leo and Ivan, we were all born in the same year, so we used to play mostly like that...and jam sessions. I don't remember playing in Halifax more than three or four times before I left home.

Was there a big music scene there?

It wasn't too bad, mostly dance music; it wasn't like a night club scene. I had another cousin, Alan Symonds, he was in the army during World War II, and he turned me on to a few jobs he couldn't do in Halifax.

I guess the radio was an important source of music.

For me it was...I listened to the radio in general. Sometimes you would hear clasiscal music in the morning. I didn't even know what it was. Then they had special programmes on, like the Nat Cole Trio. I remember that being on every week. We used to wait for that. We used to listen to...Fats Waller. Other than that, songs on the hit parade, you know.

So in a sense Oscar Moore and Irving Ashby were your first influences.

Johnny Miller on bass, Nat King Cole and Oscar Moore, and then Irving Ashby later.

What was it about their playing that attracted you?

Well, the only thing I can say about it is that I heard some of those tunes, like on the hit parade, heard them commercially, and, I mean, it was a little different with them. You could hear the melody of the tunes, then the improvisation caught my attention. That was the thing. I didn't know what it meant then, so what I used to do was try to follow it.

Were your uncles and cousins moving in that direction as well?

Yes, they were...I think it was just a natural thing then. Uncle John was a saxophone player and Uncle Freeman played banjo. And Ivan's father, Lawson, was one of the great guitar players..not improvisation-wise, but background-wise. He studied with a guy from Germany, I think his name was Steve Hackendorf, I'm not sure. But he never liked to improvise...the Freddie Green type. Uncle John used to improvise a little bit.

So you could exchange ideas.

I never really got a chance with those guys. The only thing I learned from all of them was to sit down and listen to them play. I started the banjo, I guess, when I was about nine. Uncle Freeman gave me a beautiful four-string banjo, and I fooled around with that for a couple of years. Then I fell in love with the guitar. And when I started to really get into wrestling the guitar, Uncle Lawson sort of retired, so I tried to get him to teach me. After that, I just went ahead and tried to learn things by ear. In fact, it took me until I got to Sudbury that I got to even know the difference between a minor seventh and a dominant seventh.

Was it in Sudbury that you began to listen to jazz on records?

Right. That is where I first heard Barney Kessel. Funny thing, I heard guys like Barney Kessel, Jimmy Raney, Tal Farlow, Chuck Wayne before I heard Django Reinhardt or Charlie Christian. So after Oscar Moore, it was Barney Kessel. He was on an album, I think the Lionel Hampton All Stars, and played on *The Man I Love*.

So it was a question of hitting someone with a good record collection.

Exactly, plus going into record stores, you know.

That is an activity that doesn't really go on any more — people going into record stores and hanging out and listening to records on the turntable.

It's not the same thing now. We used to do that. Before, they played the whole record for you. I remember Jazz at the Philharmonic on 78s, and you had to buy three records for like a whole album. And they would pretty near play the whole album before you would buy it. And that included everybody in the store. I used to look forward to that after work.

Did people like Kenny Burrell, Wes Montgomery and Grant Green come later?

I heard most of those guys after I really started playing jazz myself, and I didn't really start on a legitimate jazz gig until 1958.

Before that, in the mid-fifties, you were in a carnival.

From 1955 to 1958. I don't consider that a jazz gig, although I learned a lot about jazz on that show. I met a lot of people and I got a chance to play with different people.

Would that be in the context of being in a certain town and visiting some after hours places?

Exactly. In fact, the first year I went on the carnival, I met B.B. King in Dallas, although he's from Memphis originally. He came out and heard me play. And then the next year, he came into town and woke me out of bed as if I was family. He wanted to hear me play again. I met people who were in his band, like Fred Ford, a baritone/tenor player, Herman Green, Billy Harvey, people from Memphis. We always had something to do.

Can you think of others?

I met George Coleman in Memphis before he left home. In fact, he worked with us a few days on the show. Charles Lloyd — I didn't really meet him that well. Blue Mitchell — he played with us when we were in Florida.

Did you have a bit of a reputation at that time?

Well...you see, most of the guitar players down South were into the blues..which was great — there's no doubt about it. But they didn't know too many standard tunes. So some of the saxophone players would say, "Man, it's nice to play with you." I got a chance to play tunes like *All The Things You Are*, *Body And Soul*, *Cherokee*, *Sophisticated Lady*. I met an old guy, Hank O'Day, in Memphis; one of the old saxophone players. He came and wanted to play with us.

Did you meet any guitarists, apart from B.B. King, who really knocked you out?

A guy by the name of Ford Reed. Another guy, Pat somebody, who used to be with Bobby Blue Bland. I met Calvin Newborn, Phineas as well, T-Bone Walker...

They say he was the first to plug in the guitar.

That's what I heard. I don't really know because as far as I was concerned, I was just meeting those people off the top. Pee Wee Crayton was another one. They used to have a thing in Memphis, "The Battle of the Guitars," him and Calvin. It was something else.

Did you have reservations about being in the South?

Well, you know, that coloured thing... But I had that explained all season. I guess everybody else on the show was American, except me and my uncle John (who went the first year). They kept on trying to tell us, "You know, this isn't the same...there's a difference between down South and Canada." Well, it didn't take us long to learn. You see the signs.

The main thing about joining the show was the idea. It wasn't how much money I made, but surviving and doing something that I loved to do, play. I couldn't figure out why people didn't want to practise or rehearse. I couldn't understand that at all. It was great for me to be on my instrument seventeen, eighteen hours a day. And it happened, when we went to Dallas especially, they would put in a call for us to be at the fairgrounds at eight o'clock. So they put in a call for everybody to be up for seven o'clock or seven-thirty. I said, "They must be kidding." But eight-thirty, nine o'clock, the grounds were full, until twelve at midnight. And I went through sixteen, eighteen days of that, about sixteen to eighteen hours a

day. You might have a little breather in the afternoon, it might slack off, but it was a joy to me to just get a chance to play. And all I had to do was play my instrument. Really!

Was the musical format somewhat restrictive?

No, it wasn't because I got a chance to learn show tunes. I could always identify with them because I did a lot of standards.

Was the carnival mixed?

It was in a way, but our show was a black show. And there were no problems racially on the carnival, whether we were in Dallas or elsewhere. Naturally, we weren't allowed to get involved with the ordinary customers, but the other people on the show had a good rapport with everybody. Oh yes, everybody was tight. They stuck together like a family.

I understand you received offers to join organ trios?

I was loyal to Mr. Taylor, the owner of the show. I tell you, in the wintertime it was a different thing: you may work two or three days a week. Most of the people that were on the show, like in Dallas, they had 35 or 40 people on the whole show, a big show, most of the people would be gone after that fair. Then they would cut the show down to play little theatres and night clubs and everything. A few times I was stranded; once in Savannah, Georgia. Not stranded, but we weren't working that much and I hooked up with some guys. This guy had an organ trio in downtown Savannah, and I could have stayed there. I had the same kind of offer in Pensacola, Florida. This was a mixed group too. First time I had ever seen a white guy play in a black group...and that's a long time ago, around '56 or '57. So, it happened in a few places where I could have stayed. Birmingham, Alabama: I had a couple of offers there. But I figured I owed those people a lot. I mean, I wasn't making that much money, but it was something I wanted to do. They gave me a chance to really play my instrument. And I left them in good faith. You know, I didn't run off and leave them.

There is a famous Minton's story where you sat in. Wasn't it very difficult to do that? Not just anybody who came to town could do that, and you were a youngster at the time.

That was 1955, the first year I was on the carnival. There was a guy by the name of Jerome; I never knew his last name. Little Jerome, he kept telling me, when we were up here in Canada, "Wait 'til I take you to New York, man, I want the guys to hear you." He kept telling me this all along. So, finally, we went to New York. That was the only time I was in New York; only one time in my life. They put us in a hotel in Harlem, me and my uncle, and left us there stranded for about two days with nothing to eat. And we didn't know anybody. And I was scared. I heard rumours about people having their instruments stolen, so I was not going to be fooling around on the street. Finally, we got together and made enough long distance calls to Long Island, until the King finally came and got us. The owner of the show, Mr. Taylor, lived in Long Island. He said he was away booking or something, you know, but I heard he was at the race track. Anyway, finally, when we got settled in Long Island, Jerome started telling me again because he used to go to the clubs. He knew everybody at Birdland, the Apollo Theatre. I didn't believe it. Finally, he said, "Man, I'm going to take you to meet Jerome Richardson, Hank Jones, Wendell Marshall and Shadow Wilson." I said, "That'll be nice." So, he said, "Man, you'll have to bring your guitar." But I said, "Man, I don't want to do that." He insisted, and they let me play. Hank Jones wasn't there that night, though. He was making a recording. I never did know the piano player's name.

It came out pretty nice. I wasn't used to playing with a piano and bass because on this show we never had a piano or bass. Just guitar, drums and the horns. It was a different thing. I didn't know how to lay out. I didn't know exactly what to do. But, anyway, they let me play. I remember playing two tunes: ***I Remember April*** and ***All The Things You Are***, and then I...cooled out. Then, in came the guys later on from Birdland: Thad Jones and Frank Foster. I had a party.

When you returned to Canada and started playing regular jazz gigs in '58, you eventually settled in the Montreal area. Is that when you first met Rene Thomas?

Exactly. Rene was playing mostly at the Little

NELSON SYMONDS TRIO — Nelson Symonds, Charlie Biddle, Pierre Duchesneau (photograph by Henry J. Kahanek)

Vienna. He came down to catch us at the Vieux Moulin, my first jazz gig. He used to come down, and finally they let him play. Then I used to go listen to him at the Little Vienna. He was playing with Freddie McHugh and Pierre Beluse. It's too bad he had to die. That was the only mistake Mark [Miller] made in the book [Jazz In Canada: Fourteen Lives; University of Toronto Press]: Rene wanted me to come to Europe, not New York. The last time I saw him I was in Val Morin at Uncle Charlie's place. This man came to Montreal and he wanted to know where Nelson or Biddles was. Finally, somebody told him, and he had somebody drive him up there on a Sunday morning. First time he came, he didn't have his guitar with him. He said, "I just wanted to know where you guys were and when I come back again, I may come up and play." "Well, you're welcome, man." Really. When he came back the next time, he played with us all night.

In 1960, you went off with Dougie Richardson to join Roland Kirk in Milwaukee.

I didn't exactly join Roland Kirk. We went there as part of a group, The Stablemates. After the job was over there at the Vieux Moulin, we were there for nine months, I guess. Chet Christopher (alto sax) was with us, Dougie and Charlie Duncan. Roland came by. Charlie Duncan's brother, James Duncan, was playing at another club, and he called up Fletcher Barnes, the owner of the club, and said, "Man, have you heard of Roland Kirk? This man plays three horns at once." We didn't know that. So, anyway, he sent Roland down; somebody brought him down. Roland sat down; we met him and everything. Then we went and played and acted as if we didn't want him to play. I wasn't the leader, so I didn't say anything at all. Charlie Duncan was the leader then because we were in Milwaukee. Finally, he called everybody over. Roland was telling them, "I am not a rhythm and blues player, man, you know. I am a jazz musician, man. I am not going to mess with what you guys are playing." So we felt sorry for him. I mean, I am thinking like everybody else. So Chet and Dougie said, "Okay, well, I'll tell you what we're going to do. We're going to play a couple of times with the group when we go on, and then you play something with the rhythm section because we don't want to stretch out the tunes too long." Then we changed our minds and let him start with the rhythm section. This man calls ***Straight, No Chaser***. What's the point about being fast. Nice tempo and everything. After the melody, he said, "Go ahead, Symonds." And you know how Roland is! I started playin,' and after two or three choruses, 12-bar choruses, I heard this chant behind me with these horns. I knew it wasn't Chet or Dougie because they weren't there. The man scared the death out of me! I played an E chord, then laid out. And he started playing. Oh, did it ever burn on us! And the man hired him right away for the weekend. So what we would do then is play two or three tunes with the group, and then Roland would play with the rhythm section to finish the show. Boy, I'll never forget that experience because I was saying to myself, "He better be ready, you know, he got to be ready to play, man." I'll tell you, he turned out to be one of my greatest friends: yeah, Roland. Funny thing, we finally got together. The whole group used to start the whole set together because we all lived upstairs over the club. They had a big flat up there, and after three or four weeks me and Dougie started rehearsing with him. Then Chet. We started learning some tunes from him. He started playing our tunes. So we sort of stuck together after that. We were there about nine months and he was there for about the last three or four months.

Of course the other trip into the States was with Brother Jack McDuff. You went to Buffalo for ten days to replace Eddie Diehl.

Yeah, that was 1963. But Diehl didn't leave. McDuff had given him notice because Eddie Diehl was supposed to go with Slide Hampton. In fact, he was still with us until George Benson started after that. But when I went down there, I went more or less to see if I could learn some of the tunes. I didn't take my guitar because I knew it was going to be a problem with Immigration if I took an instrument across the border. I think I had a good chance of making it with the group, but it all comes down to getting a visa, you know. So Eddie let me use his guitar, and then a couple of the kids there, after they heard me play, they would loan me their instruments to practise with. McDuff had a little portable organ in his room which he used to show me the parts. And I learned about, I guess, ten or eleven arrangements in that time which I had to play harmony parts on and some melody. Harold Vick was with him then, playing tenor, and George Dukes on drums. He didn't press me too much. He wanted me to hear those things and see if I really liked it. As I said, the main problem was getting a visa because when I went to Milwaukee all I needed was a temporary visa. I was only working one place.

Listening to McDuff's music from that period, it seemed to involve a lot of hard, driving accompaniment, which, amongst other things, is an important part of your style today. Does the intensity of your playing date back to the McDuff experience?

In a way. It really goes back to the carnival thing. I mean, playing like that came natural to me. I know that I always wanted to play hard like that. On the carnival, if you didn't swing, if you didn't play with feeling, the people would tell you. They would let you make an honest mistake on the show; a cutoff after eight bars, they wouldn't mind that so much. But they didn't like anybody who just came there to put in the time. That was the main thing. And I was so happy to play.

Then I met people along the way. Roland Kirk, for instance, told me, "Symonds, never lose your fire, man. Whether you're going to be a star or not, it doesn't make any difference. The main thing is that you play with a lot of enthusiasm all the time." I like to be that way. I like everybody around me to be enthusiastic about playing.

I think that organ group with McDuff was a natural thing. I really got complimented down there; mostly on my comping, more so than my solos. I didn't have my own box anyway, and it's pretty hard to play on someone else's instrument, especially when you solo. But I got most of my compliments down there from playing behind the organ. I really pushed him out of town. He had to come in, you know. Not only that, I knew a lot of tunes as well. We were on the bandstand and called standards right away and cooked on them. I had a nice time down there.

You were telling me that Benny Golson was an important figure for you.

Discipline-wise, yes. I was playing with people like Benny Golson and Art Farmer up here, because I was at Lindy's then. That was a different kind of thing...we named our first jazz group The Stablemates, as you know, so Benny Golson sent us some tunes — ***Along Came Betty***, ***Fair Weather***, ***Blues March***. But anyway, ***I Remember Clifford***, I hadn't learned that until later. So, we finally were doing that with our group. We had harmony parts with the two horns and the guitar. I really thought I knew that tune. But I was sitting down one time practising ***I Remember Clifford***. They had this big front room upstairs (at Lindy's) for the guys that would come up. And I came to a part of the tune where I played a minor seventh to dominant seventh, flatted ninths. I heard someone coming down the steps. And just as soon as I played that flatted ninth chord, there's this knock on the door: "Symonds, that's not right, that's thirteenth, flatted ninth." And Benny Golson came through the door. He was very disciplined like that with all his music. He didn't care how you voiced a chord, but if you were supposed to have a plain minor, he wanted a plain minor. He didn't want a minor seventh, flat five, like a lot of guys do. If you're into the recording thing, I guess, and into the disciplined part of it, it's not done that much. And Art Farmer was the same way. Jimmy Heath...in different ways.

You worked with Jimmy Heath at the Tete de l'Art.

That was the first 'name' player I really played with up here. Playing with Roland Kirk, we

already had our own group together. That was different. Here there was a trio. I was shaky. Biddles called me up and said, "I got this job with the trio." I said, "Man, how can I play with a trio." I got spoiled after I got off the carnival; always had a piano player. But it was a different thing. We started, and as you know, later on, we played opposite Bill Evans for two weeks in 1963 at the Penthouse with Biddles and Charlie Duncan; Bill Evans, with Gary Peacock and Paul Motian. This is when I got tight with Rene Thomas in a way. Rene was playing around the Tete de l'Art opposite J.J. Johnson. They were off on a different night than us. And Rene came around and wanted to play with Bill Evans. And they asked him to play. But Gary Peacock told us before, "Man, I don't play time." He was telling us that all week. So Rene came off the bandstand saying, "Nelson, man, I can't play with Gary Peacock... Gary Peacock should know the way I play. I'm a straight-ahead player." So, I said, "Don't worry about it. You gonna play with us, man." So, he played with us for the rest of the week... we had a ball, two guitars.

At that time, were you really fond of Bill Evans?

When I first started listening to groups, I really listened to guitar players only. But then after my first jazz gig, I started to listen to all the instruments: Bill Evans, Charlie Parker, Clifford Brown. I wasn't narrowed down to the one instrument. Believe me, before I started playing jazz, I was really into the Barney Kessel thing so bad. It got so bad that if I didn't hear him play a tune, I didn't hardly know how to play it myself. But I found as I started to play jazz, I could identify with all the instruments. It made it much easier. I played opposite Bill Evans for two weeks over here, and I am going to tell you the truth, very seldom did I go out of the club when they came on. I always found a place in the club and never was going anywhere. I can remember those two weeks. I never left.

In all the years you backed American singles, did you ever encounter ego problems?

No. I had problems with one guy, I think, that came up here, and he apologised. I think he died...a guy by the name of Sonny Red. The first time we played at the Tete de l'Art he came up here like he was in the bushes and nobody was going to be able to play up here. And we weren't using a piano. So when I started soloing, after he finished playing, he wanted to play the piano. So Biddles told him, "Man, don't go fooling with that piano. You came up here to play your horn, man. You don't need no piano, and it isn't in tune anyway."

When we played with Jimmy Heath, the week before or after, it was so different. In fact, at first he used to tell me in the daytime, "Brother, you should go ahead and play, man." I said, "Yeah, man, but people come to listen to you." He said, "Don't worry about it, man. I don't work like that." So, then, he made it a point. He used to get off the bandstand, after he had finished, and he would get down there like he was a conductor, like he was one of my fans in the audience. He made me play over my head. I never felt that good before playing with somebody. Benny was like that, but less boisterous. Art Farmer. Those guys would always make a point of saying, "You should stretch out a little bit more because you're welcome." I never had a problem with the ego or star thing at all. But, I mean, I wouldn't wear out my welcome. I made sure that I wouldn't overplay or play too long. And I feel the same way now. Even when I'm playing with my own group, I like everybody to feel at home.

Was Herbie Spanier as crazy as they say?

Yeah, he was crazy in a way, but he was a type of guy who could bring the best out of you. One time he called me up to play with him [at the Little Vienna]. He didn't show up, and I had to start with the trio. I wasn't used to playing just with guitar, bass and drums then. I was ready to play behind him, play background, and then play my little solo and everything. But he did it in such a way, I couldn't get mad. Herbie was alright. I didn't understand him at first because he was the type of guy who would walk in off the street with his horn and he would be gone just as sudden. He was one of the greatest players, one of the great Canadian musicians. No doubt about it.

Was the Black Bottom (1964-1968) a special club with its chicken wings, black-eyed peas and rice...?

Yeah, it was special in a way. It was unbelievable how it took off. We started there: Charlie Duncan, Noble Samuels and myself. From the first night that place never went down. Of course it was small. Charlie Burke owned it. He used to work on the railroad. A lot of stars used to come down there and eat. Miles was up here with Herbie, Tony and Ron, and he came down. He was in the kitchen and Biddles came in after we finished, I guess, and spoke to him or something. Miles acted like he didn't want to know anything. So, anyway, a little later, when we came back again, Charlie Burke's brother, who worked in the kitchen, said, "You know Miles?" Biddles said, "Yeah, I know him, but I don't give a fuck if I meet Miles Davis or not, man. I just spoke to that little motherfucker a while ago." Really! Miles turned around with all that grease eating, saying, "I didn't mean nothin.'" That was too much.

You also mentioned Elvin Jones sat in with you.

Yeah, Elvin came down and played with us. You know, it's a funny thing about Elvin. I was listening to one of the albums Trane and them made, I think it had ***My Favorite Things*** on it. And the organ player that was working with me at the time, I was trying to tell him, "Man, I don't know if I can play with Elvin Jones or not. I have never heard him play anything straigh-ahead, you know." So, when Elvin and them came into town, he came down to the Black Bottom. We started playing ***Confirmation*** with Freddie McHugh, there were two bass players, and Sonny Greenwich sitting in. Sonny and I each broke a string. This man [Elvin] opened up on us. It was unbelievable. He came on and ate that tune up. Beautiful.

Your role in the local jazz scene has been very important, particularly in building up young talent. Jean Beaudet immediately comes to mind. Has he been the most rewarding player you have helped along?

Yeah. The man, Mr. Rockhead, said to me (once), "Now, I know I would like to add another piece to your group. I think you're working too hard. I know naturally, if I wanted to have another piece, I would add a horn. But I know you'd rather have a piano player. That would help you more." And believe me, I had only heard Jean play once in my life. I played with him one time. He came up north and I think we only played a couple of tunes together. I knew right away. So, when he (Mr. Rockhead) said, "Do you have anybody in mind?" I said, "Yeah, I have a kid." Maybe I thought I was taking a big chance. But the funny thing about Jean, he used to come down to Rockhead's all the time when he was in town, and he knew there was no instrument there to play. Sometimes he would be sitting in the corner, man, I wouldn't see him. He would sneak in. I took that into consideration as well.

When I first heard him, he was playing free. It seems that since he has been with you, he has learned an incredible number of standards. Plus, he plays them so differently. He always seems to be challenging himself.

He's got big ears. He's got a lot of talent. Not only that, he's doing something he really wants to do. He isn't doing it just to prove something. He really got my tunes together, standard-wise, man, and really played them. The main thing is, Jean is the type of guy who really wants to get within himself. Of course, all of us are influenced by somebody on our instrument one way or another. But I think Jean Beaudet really wants to be himself as a player. He likes other players, but he's not in awe of name players, like some of the young kids are. You see, once you start doing that (being in awe of name players), it takes you a long while to turn yourself around as an individual. I mean, I went through that. And I think Jean has taken what I have been trying to do to heart. The reason why I know this is because Jean would be playing some of those tunes with me which he didn't even know the melody too good. And I would give him the changes, and he would sit down and play on the tune just as melodic as I would. So, I mean, he has to be himself because he never heard anybody else play the tune. And he always has that freedom on any tune. It's a pleasure to get a chance to play with Jean, any time. Jean Beaudet will never let you down. I mean, he's always going to be trying to play.

Did you ever work with Sadik Hakim when he lived here?

Yes. On the last set at the old Black Bottom, Dougie Richardson and Clayton Johnston, the drummer, left (leaving Biddles and myself). They had another gig, a commercial gig. Well, I can understand that, you know. So, we got Sadik and Bernie Primeau, and then Norman Villeneuve later. Then we went to the new Black Bottom in Old Montreal. Sadik was there. We only stayed there for about a month, then we went to Man and His World in 1968 for a couple of months. That was nice. When we left we went to the Penthouse, but we couldn't use the four pieces...Sadik was here in Montreal before I ever came. He never had many jazz gigs. Nobody did really.

Isn't it reassuring that Canadian guitarists — Sonny Greenwich, Ed Bickert, Peter Leitch, Lorne Lofsky — have finally come to the fore?

I have only heard Lorne Lofsky a little bit. I caught him on the Bob McLean Show. Peter Leitch, well, I knew him when he was just about starting up here. I met Sonny on my first jazz gig. We used to do a lot of playing. He used to come down to the Black Bottom and play. Ed Bickert, I met him once or twice. I mean, some people may say he's conservative, but, man, I think the man is one of the greatest players. He always has something in reserve when he plays. You can tell he always has something left. Very heavy player chord-wise, voicing-wise. Very methodical player. As far as the guitar is concerned, he's one of the greatest players. So is Sonny Greenwich in a different way.

THE GERALD WILSON ORCHESTRA (Los Angeles, October 25, 1981) — Gerald Wilson; Harold Land Jr. (piano); Roger Hogan, John Stephans, Hank De Vega, Jerome Richardson, Bobby Bryant Jr., Harold Land (soloing), unknown baritone, John B. Williams (bass); Garnett Brown, Jimmy Cleveland, Thurman Green, Clay Lawrey, Maurice Spears (trombones); Paul Humphrey (drums); Shuggie Otis (guitar); Oscar Brashear, Ray Brown, Bobby Bryant, Frank Szabo (trumpets). [Photograph by Mark A. Weber]

*BIG BANDS * BIG BANDS * BIG BANDS * BIG BANDS*

Big bands continue to be in demand. Musicians enjoy the experience of playing in them and listeners still thrill to the power and precision of an orchestra. But a big band is not a viable travelling entity today even though a few continue to struggle with the economic realities of such enterprises. So, to all intents and purposes, big bands exist within their own communities as a vehicle for the committed musicians, arrangers and leaders who care enough to make the necessary effort to keep such enterprises together.

BIG BANDS

JIM HOWARD/PAT SULLIVAN

Stairway Down To The Stars
PJS Records WRC1-2536

VIC VOGEL

Big Band
Spectra Score SS-1706

GERALD WILSON

Jessica
Trend TR-531

DIZZY GILLESPIE/THE ORCHESTRA

One Night In Washington
Elektra Musician 60300-1

Recordings are a document of these efforts and, in some cases, are showcases for imaginative writing and for exciting performances of fresh material. All too often, though, these regional bands fail to give the listener anything he hasn't heard before.

All of the bands under consideration have something vital to offer the listener. Both Gerald Wilson and Pat Sullivan are writers of densely textured music. Wilson's skills are well known, of course, and his latest recording is chiefly notable for ***Jessica***, the title selection, and ***Blues Bones And Bobby***. Both these compositions continue the tradition established by Wilson in the sixties but the balance of the music is less personal. There are workmanlike arrangements of three Ellington standards (***Love You Madly***, ***Sophisticated Lady***, ***Don't Get Around Much Anymore***) and a less-than-satisfying attempt to make something of ***Getaway***, a trivial piece of popular music. Gerald Wilson, of course, has access to major jazz soloists and Harold Land, Snooky Young, Gerald Wiggins, Ernie Watts, Bobby Bryant and Oscar Brashear make the music a personal statement. To get the essence of Gerald Wilson today you should obtain "Lomelin" (Discovery DS-833). The music on "Jessica" is a bonus.

The Howard/Sullivan organisation is dominated by Pat Sullivan's writing. This is definitely an orchestra where the composer/arranger's influence is crucial. ***Stairway Down To The Stars*** is a suite in three sections which evokes the tonal images of John Coltrane as recalled by Sullivan from his visits to the Village Vanguard, during the pivotal period of Coltrane's career. The solo work by Leo Sullivan (tenor and soprano sax) is full of Coltrane's tempestuous intensity but lacks the originator's controlled passion.

Conversation is a typical Gordon Delamont composition and the angularity and abstraction of the work is well-delineated in the opening out-of-tempo section performed by trumpeter Howie Satov and alto saxophonist Pat Perez. The piece, however, deteriorates into an empty display of high energy from the two horn players over the voicings of the orchestra at a tempo where there is much energy but little flow. The alto saxophone then returns for a more lyrical, more coherent statement which

brings this many-dimensioned piece to a successful conclusion.

The Dance And The Romance Go On Forever is written in a style which has only emerged in the past decade. It owes more to contemporary popular music than jazz in its rhythmic feel, harmonic textures and structural lines. It locks the soloist into directions which can at best be termed impressionistic and at worst can be described as exercises.

The music is excellently performed by a well rehearsed orchestra under Jim Howard's direction. It is a worthwhile addition to an orchestral tradition which reaches back to Gil Evans's explorations for Claude Thornhill and continued by such diverse orchestrators as Bill Russo, George Russell and Phil Nimmons.

Vic Vogel leads a jazz ***band*** rather than an orchestra. His organisation is dedicated to the essential elements of a big jazz band: driving ensembles, exciting solos and a joie de vivre which lifts the listener through the intensity of the performance. This recording was made at the 1982 Montreal Jazz Festival and captures a performance by one of the ***hottest*** jazz bands since Woody Herman's 1963 band raced around the country on all cylinders. Vogel's band doesn't have the polish of Herman's band, but then Vogel's only performs occasionally. There is no denying the spirited thrust of Bud Powell's ***Tempus Fugit*** (featuring the contrasting alto saxophones of David Turner and Janis Steprans), ***Blues No.2*** (with a vigorous solo from baritone saxophonist Jean Frechette), the brief performance of J. J. Johnson's ***Say When*** and ***Take the A Train***.

Altoist David Turner is the band's most impressive soloist. He has the same kind of "singing" quality as Johnny Hodges, Sonny Criss and Charles McPherson even though he doesn't sound like any of them. ***Ballad For Duke*** is a marvelous showcase and the best writing by Vogel on this album but ***Vanessa***, the other solo feature for Turner comes a close second.

The passion and intensity of jazz music reverberates continually throughout the Vogel band. It infuses the performance with tension, dramatic grandeur and rhythmic freshness to lift the music beyond the ordinary. It also shows that the Vic Vogel band is beyond being either an escape hatch for studio musicians or a learning experience for up and coming technicians. This is a real ***jazz*** band with the soloists to support that statement.

Much of the same kind of heady excitement was generated in Washington in 1955 when Dizzy Gillespie agreed to perform with ***The*** Orchestra at one of their regular Sunday sessions. This workshop orchestra had functioned since 1951 and was composed of skilled musicians who, once a week, responded to the challenges of playing superior arrangements. On this occasion Dizzy had dug up some of his big band charts including Chico O'Farrill's ***The Afro (Manteca) Suite***. Both orchestra and guest acquitted themselves in grand style in a concert brimming with energy and spiritual playing. Dizzy, of course, was at the peak of his powers during this period and responds enthusiastically to the rhythmic bite of the band. Both ***Hob Nail*** and ***Wild Bill's Boogie*** are Buster Harding charts which give Dizzy plenty of opportunities to solo at length. ***Caravan*** and ***Tin Tin Deo*** are further excursions into Dizzy's latin-tinged music before the program ends with some further variations on the blues (***Up 'n' Downs***).

The electricity of this special occasion — the return of Dizzy to performance with a big band after several indifferent years with small groups and JATP — may well have spurred the trumpeter towards organising another big band in 1956. We are fortunate that Bill Potts recorded the music in satisfactory fidelity and that now, after all these years, the music has become widely available. It is a significant addition to Dizzy Gillespie's discography and wonderful music. ***— John Norris***

SUN RA / SALAH RAGAB

The Sun Ra Arkestra Meets Salah Ragab In Egypt Plus The Cairo Jazz Band
Praxis CM 106

This recording was made in a Cairo studio in May 1983, a year when the Arkestra spent much time in Egypt. If the music on this album is an accurate indication of the band's live performances, it regularly delighted the Egyptians. Here the rhythm is deep and compelling, with Salah Ragab's congas augmenting the drumming of Eric Walker, Chris Henderson, and Claude Broche. The major soloist, of course, is John Gilmore, who plays as well as ever.

The Arkestra plays on two tunes only, both of which are Ragab originals. The first, ***Egypt Strut***, is derived from Lee Morgan's ***Sidewinder*** and Juan Tizol's ***Caravan*** and reflects how most of us would likely think an Egyptian struts. Only on this tune does Sun Ra solo extensively, and twice he does so effectively with the rhythm section. In fact, his solos frame the entire performance. Gilmore is the other soloist.

As Ragab captures a slice of Egyptian life in ***Egypt Strut***, he interprets another subject with ***Dawn***. The band riffs practically throughout, with a bass clarinet, a bassoon, and a tenor soloing at different times to suggest the day's awakening. The soloists are of secondary importance to the composition. A delicate flute introduces and concludes the piece.

Sun Ra and the Arkestra indeed meet Salah Ragab on this album's first side, where Ragab serves as both composer and conga player. But neither Sun Ra nor any of his musicians appears on the second side, which contains three more Ragab compositions, two played by the 17-piece Cairo Jazz Band and one by a quintet. Ragab leads and drums with both groups.

The Cairo Jazz Band is no Arkestra, but it is worth hearing. It is something of a mixture of Gerald Wilson and Charles Mingus. ***Ramadan*** begins with the musicians chanting, followed by Sayed Ramadan's bongos. Soon the band enters instrumentally and plays well, with the trumpet section being notably strong. Its other selection, ***A Farewell Theme***, is similar in conception to ***Dawn*** in that it is a riff. Here the soloists are Khamis El-Khouly (piano), a trumpeter, and a saxophonist. The ending is effective. The dynamics there are superb, with gratifying solos by a trumpet and a trombone, with some alto and tenor interplay.

The other tune, ***Oriental Mood***, features a quintet of piano, bass, percussion, piccolo, and bamboo flute. It is a jaunty, pleasant composition, with hints of Paul Desmond's ***Take Five*** from the pianist.

This album adds two substantial recordings to the relatively slim Sun Ra discography and introduces Salah Ragab as composer and leader to a wide audience. It should not be overlooked. ***— Benjamin Franklin V***

BLUES

A COLUMN BY DOUG LANGILLE

Seattle bluesman **ISAAC SCOTT**'s **"Big Time Blues Man" (Music Is Medicine MIM 9054)** is quite a pleasant surprise. His earlier output on Red Lightning and Solid Smoke, both cut live, presented Scott as a hard-edged urban bluesman in the Albert Collins vein. Here, Scott is done justice in a well-produced soul/blues package and presented as a much more relaxed urbane stylist. He works in some tasty lead guitar over nice rifting horns, solid rhythm and churchy organ, rounded off with some Little Sonny-style blues harp. His gospel roots are clearly exposed in his interpretation of the Lennon-McCartney classic ***Help***, plus originals ***Let My Mind Roll On*** and ***Feast Goin' On***. The interest of blues fans should be held with ***Seattle Blues*** and ***Standing On The Outside***, while shake your bootie types should get down with ***Moonbelly***.

With something for everybody, "Big Time Blues Man" is a classy release and highly recommended. Contact First American Records, 73 Marion Street, Seattle, WA 98104 USA.

Also on the soulful side is **Z.Z. HILL**'s latest release **"The Rhythm And The Blues" (Malaco 7411)**. Hill has spent years paying his dues, and it has only been in the last couple of years that he has been a commercial success. Hill can best be described as a bluesy, soul/R&B vocalist in the Johnny Taylor/Bobby Bland vein. Appropriately, there are popular, situational themes such as ***Outside Twang***, ***Someone Else Is Steppin' In***, and ***Open House At My House***. Koko Taylor's ***Wang Dang Doodle*** gets a fresh airing and the soulful ballad side is covered off by ***What Am I Gonna Tell Her*** and ***That Fire Is Hot***. On the trite, teeny side is ***Your Gonna Be A Woman***.

Overall, a well-produced set with strong vocals by Hill, hard, punchy backing, and catchy themes. Don't let the backup vocals and strings frighten you off. Good contemporary R&B.

For the hardcore there is **JOHNNY COPELAND**'s **"Make My Home Where I Hang My Hat" (Rounder 2030)**. Riding up there in first class with his first Rounder release ("Copeland Special"), the objective is straight-ahead urban blues and jump. No electronic keyboards, strings or backup vocals — just a heavy serving of Copeland's biting, electric blues guitar and charged, gritty vocals. Copeland fronts a tight four-piece rhythm section along with trumpet, trombone, tenor, alto and baritone. Really sharp horn arrangements — good solos, interplay and punctuation. The program is made up of mostly originals, including hard-hitting blues like ***Honky Tonkin'*** and ***Make My Home...***. On the jump side there are pile drivers like ***Boogie Woogie Nighthawk*** and smokers like ***Devil's Hand*** and ***Natural Born Believer***. Copeland's a creative writer. Plenty of good stuff here — highly recommended.

In keeping with high energy, Houston blues we turn to **ALBERT COLLINS**'s new one **"Don't Lose Your Cool" (Alligator AL4730)**. This is his fourth 'Gator release, and far superior to his last live one (AL4725). I feel it generates the same high level of energy as his first (4713).

For this outing, Albert is joined by past, present, full time and part time Ice Breakers. Included are Casey Jones, Larry Burton, Johnny B. Grayden, A.C. Reed, Abb Locke, Dino Spells and Chris Foreman — as solid a unit as you'll unearth anywhere. Albert burns. The old Imperial sound is there with Foreman's organ, along with some periglacial horn solos from Reed, Locke, and West Coaster Spells.

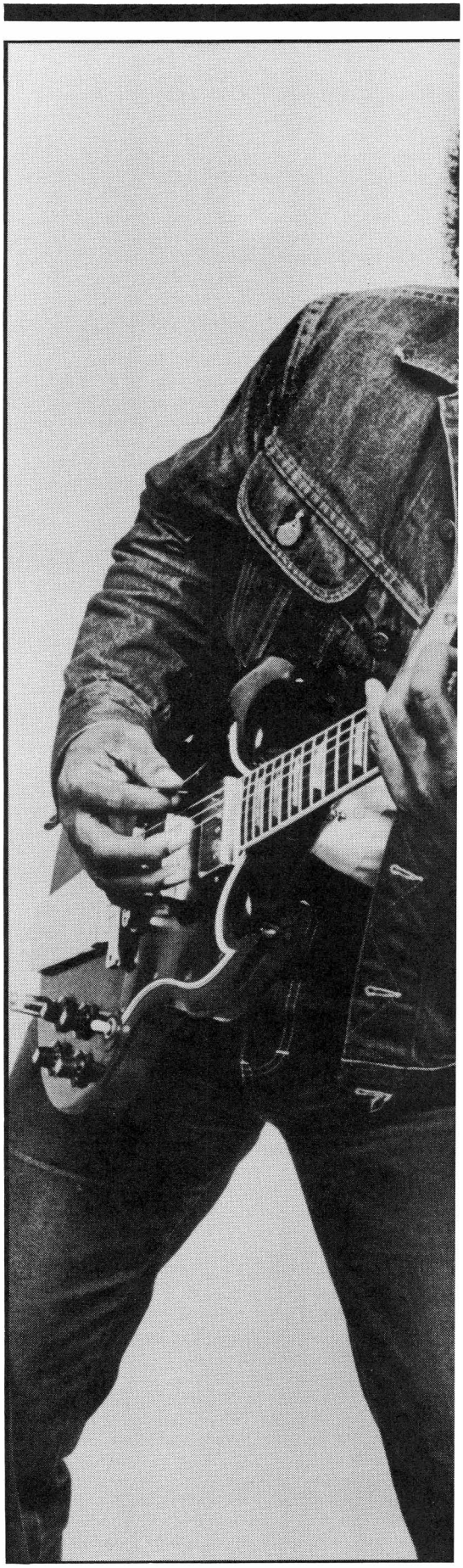
The repertoire is out of Albert's blues roots trunk. Tribute is paid to Percy Mayfield in the haunting ***My Mind Is Trying To Leave Me***, to Guitar Slim with ***Quicksand***, and his old Houston crony, Big Walter Price, with the express lane scorcher ***Get To Gettin'***. The Master of the Telecaster also revives a past instrumental hit in the title tune. He really cooks on this one. Albert and Alligator sure did renew my interest in the cool sound with this release.

Before going on, a pause for a few notes on the recent activities of individual Icebreakers. **A.C. REED** has taken a holiday from the band, and has put out a single and LP on his own **Ice Cube** label — **"Take These Blues And Shove 'Em" (1057)**. **CASEY JONES** has gone his own way, trying to market his vocal and arranging talents. He also has a funk single out and a soon-to-be-released LP entitled **"Still Kickin"** on his own **Airwax** label **(AW3839)**. **ABB LOCKE** has also put out a single on **Rooster (R49)**. The mid-tempo, tenor lead instrumental shuffle ***Cleo's Back*** is complemented by a mid-tempo blues vocal, ***Blues Party***. Both feature superb guitar by **Otis Rush**. Ice Cube, Airwax and the Locke single are all available from Rooster Blues Records, 2615 North Wilton Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60614 USA or P.O. Box 148, London W9 1DY, England.

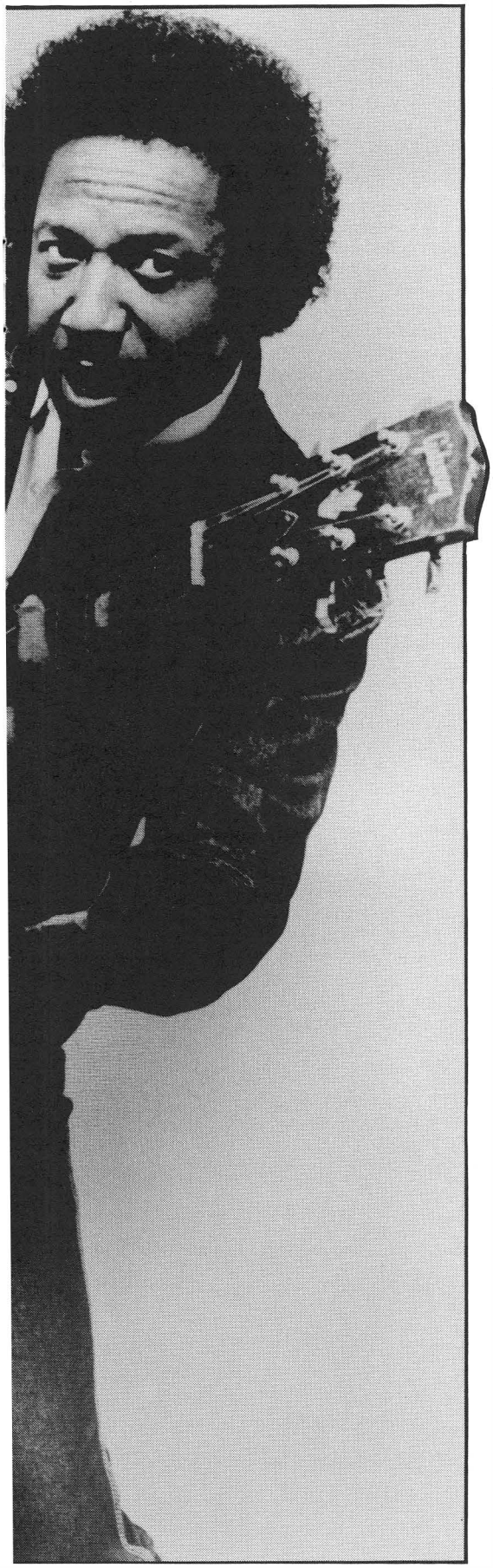
Next along is a new Alligator release by the Zydeco king, **CLIFTON CHENIER — "I'm Here" (Alligator AL4729)**. This is Clifton's first comeback LP after a temporary illness-forced retirement, and features his 1980's variant of the Red Hot Louisiana Band. Aside from veterans Cleveland Chenier on rubboard and drummer Robert Peter, Clifton has assembled a relatively young band, including his son C.J. on alto (and accordion in live gigs). Included are tenor and trumpet (Tex/Mex on the Bayou). With the emphasis on a get down, good time, the sound is quite contemporary — bayou funk. No Cajun root music here. Clifton's new sound is reinforced with titles like ***Zydeco Disco*** and ***The New Zydeco***. Blues are laid down on the scorcher ***Eighteen Long Years***.

"I'm Here" presents a far-from-retired Clifton Chenier pumping out strong bluesy accordion and vocals. His band cooks, and the new sound demonstrates a departure from the 60s/70s zydeco sound that proponents like Buckwheat Dural so aptly adopted during Clifton's short retirement. "I'm Here" is a good complement to any well-rounded Chenier or zydeco collection.

Continuing in the bayou vein there is **LONNIE BROOKS**'s cookin' new release **"Hot Shot" (Alligator AL4731)**. At the front end there are warm, convincing vocals and burning lead guitar from Brooks. Backing comes from his smoking road band at the time of the recording (spring 1983) — Ken Sajdak (keyboards), Dion Payton (guitar), Lafayette Lyle (bass) and Perdis Wilson (drums). Abb Locke sits in for two. The emphasis is on hot bar jumpers. There are vibrant interpretations of



LONNIE BROOKS (photograph by Steve Kagan)



some obscure gems like the J.B. Lenoir tune ***One More Shot***, and the Carter Brothers Jewel release ***Wrong Number***. The bulk of the program is made up of Brooks originals including remakes fo earlier singles ***Mr. Hot Shot*** and ***Family Rules***. The latter cut has a real swamp ambience. Actually Lonnie seems to bare his Louisiana roots more than on previous 'Gator releases. This is quite evident in some of his guitar phrasing and in themes such as his own ***Brand New Mojo Hand***, and the Otis Blackwell composition ***Back Trail***. Lonnie Brooks remains one of my favourite contemporary Chicago bluesmen, and I strongly urge that you not only buy "Hot Shots," but also hustle Lonnie a gig in your home town. You won't be disappointed.

MAGIC SLIM and the Teardrops have become the model for tough Chicago blues bands. Their sound is loud, rough and raunchy. Although best live in a neighbourhood bar such as Florences, **"Raw Magic" (Alligator AL4728)**, for a studio recording, adequately captures the staple, gutbucket essence of the Teardrop sound.

Slim's vocals are strong, and while he is not the most technically astute guitarist, he can certainly cut a charged, jagged swath through the hardcore, utilitarian ensemble work of Teardroppers Junior Pettis (guitar), Nick Holt (bass) and Nate Applewhite (drums). Don't underestimate these guys. One minute you're boppin' along to a medium tempo vocal, next minute Slim et al have swept you into a high octane emotional crest. Note the interpretation of Muddy's ***You Can't Lose What You Never Had***. This climax building approach is incorporated into the bulk of the remaining cuts, which I might add are long enough to allow a long, slow rise. There is some good material here. I particularly like ***You Can't Lose...***, Slim's sincere rendering of ***Ain't Doing Too Bad***, and the originals ***Why Does A Woman Treat A Good Man So Bad?*** and ***In The Heart Of The Blues***. The latter one really smokes. For the rockers there's ***Mama Talk To Your Daughter*** and the ever-funky ***Mustang Sally***.

"Raw Magic" is drawn from two Isabel release cut in 1980, and represents good, hard contemporary rollin' and a tumblin' Chicago ensemble blues in the loose spirit of the Houserockers.

This is a good time to slip in a mention of **Rooster Blues Records'** EP **"Magic Slim and the Teardrops" (R707)**. The basis here is a reissue of Slim's classic out-of-print Mistreater 45 including the instrumental tour de force ***Teardrop*** and Lillian Offit's ***Wonder Why***. To sweeten the deal a Junior Pettis vocal ***If You Asked Me*** from the same original early seventies session is thrown in. A definite must for electric blues fans. Also note that as this review is being prepared, Rooster has issued a Magic Slim LP. Hopefully we can have a look at it in a later issue.

The latest release from Alligator is at the opposite end of the Chicago blues spectrum from Magic Slim. **"Playin' For Keeps" (AL 4742)** presents **LARRY "BIG TWIST" NOLAN and the Mellow Fellows** in an exciting R&B program co-produced by Gene Barge and M.F. guitarist, Pete Special. For those unfamiliar with Twist and his big band, they have two previous Flying Fish LPs to their credit, and a large and loyal following in the Chicago/Mid-West region. Their formula for success sets Twist's husky baritone vocals in front of a tightly-arranged band featuring Special's hot lead work and a full complement of brass and reeds. Twist travels with three or four hornmen.

On "Playin' For Keeps" Twist is backed by eight pieces with a program that starts off with an all-out ***300 Pounds Of Heavenly Joy***, and includes a steamy swamp/funk reading of Tony Joe White's ***Polk Salad Annie***, and a punchy interpretation of ***Pouring Water On A Drowning Man***. There are nine vocal tunes in all, with my favourite being the Barge/MF original ***I Brought The Blues On Myself***.

To date this is Twist's best LP. There seems to be a bit more gritty, growling conviction in his vocals, and the band with the addition of Luther Allison alumnus Sid Winfield on keyboards has definitely got the burner up a notch or two. A class, well-produced and engineered R&B package and recommended to blues fans who want big band blues without the strings and L.A. tinsel. Alligator records are well-distributed, and can be obtained directly by writing them at PO Box 60234, Chicago, Illinois 60660. At least ask for a free catalogue.

Now for something completely different — an acoustic LP by **JIMMY RODGERS** (né Lane), and **HIP LANKCHAIN** (né Lankchan). On **"Stickshift" (Teardrop 2002)** each artist has a side dedicated to their vocals, while both team up to lay down some relaxed, interactive guitar duet work. The product is very pleasing. Hip draws from traditional and stock blues sources with the likes of ***Blow Wind Blow***, ***I Don't Know***, and ***Don't Your Peaches Look Mellow***. Jimmy relies more on original Southern themes packaged in titles such as ***Floating Bridge*** and ***Dorcie Bell***. There are ten vocals in all. Each projects a laid-back, back porch warmth that is radiated through a professional studio sound quality.

Jimmy and Hip are currently touring together in an electric ensemble including ex-Houserocker **Ted Harvey**. I hope that they incorporate this acoustic duet work in their show. It works on wax, and would likely be a marketable departure from the straight ensemble fare.

Now for an LP that I have received criticism for neglecting to date. Way back in 1981, Nighthawk Records released a superb **HENRY TOWNSEND** LP entitled **"Mule" (Nighthawk 201)** and drawn from a 1980 session. Henry Townsend was a central figure in the rich Saint Louis prewar blues scene, and, I might add, is still active today. He is best remembered as a guitar accompanist on classic 1930/40 sides by Walter Davis, Roosevelt Sykes, John Lee Williamson, etc., plus his own feature sides from the late twenties and thirties (available on various Mamlish and Yazoo anthologies).

On "Mule" Townsend accompanies his vocals primarily on piano, playing in a style similar in spirit to prewar Sykes and Davis. He plays some guitar, and is joined by Yank Rachel on guitar or mandolin for a few. His wife, Vernell, takes vocals on two cuts ***Tears Come Rollin' Down*** and ***Can't You See*** — the latter being a vocal duet.

From this release it is apparent that Townsend is still a competent player, good vocalist and creative song writer. With the exception of a few cuts, the bulk of the material presented was improvised in the studio. I particularly like the guitar duet stuff ***Talkin' Guitar Blues***, and the two sides with Rachel on mandolin — ***Dark Cloud Rising*** and ***Things Have Changed***.

Again superb, soothing acoustic blues. Good value with thirteen cuts and a playing time of over forty minutes. Well recorded and well worth picking up from Nighthawk Records, PO Box 15856, St. Louis, Missouri 63114.

HORACE TAPSCOTT

The Tapscott Sessions (Vol. 1/2)
Nimbus 1581/1692

Volume 1 – ***Jenny's Spirit's Waltz/Speedy Mike/ Mother Ship/This Is For Benny/Alone Together/ Haunted;*** Volume 2 – ***Struggle X/Many Nights Ago***

Though Horace Tapscott appears to have been active on the Los Angeles jazz scene for well over twenty years, he remains, unfortunately, a 'buried treasure' for most jazz fans. In fact, Cecil Taylor and Sun Ra are veritable public personalities compared to Tapscott. None of the major jazz magazines seems to have warranted him interview space; in the light of what I am hearing on these 1982 recordings, that is a pity. Even as a vehicle for the development of such prominent players as Arthur Blythe, he deserves, in my opinion, much wider acclaim than he has apparently been hitherto granted. The album liner notes, noteworthy for their paucity of information, shed little light on the man; the single photograph is shadowy and suggestive only.

The double record set affords good opportunity for the listener to hear the pianist in a wide range of tonal explorations. To say that he is capable of the introspective sensitivity of Bill Evans, the spareness of Monk, the dynamic surge of McCoy Tyner, the melodic simplicity of Ellington, and the dense complexity of Art Tatum may sound like extravagant praise indeed; however, he remains distinctly and uniquely himself, fashioning here a music often alluding to dark, untapped places, yet of great sonorous beauty, as fresh and ingenuous as an Henri Rousseau oil painting.

Many of the pieces evolve from simply stated themes or melodies, structuring themselves carefully around that central core (***Speedy***), or extending melodic lines against a patterned rhythmic backdrop (***Mother***). ***Benny*** is a gorgeous ballad captured in alternating rises and falls of emotional intensity; ***Haunted*** reflects the mood indicative of its title, a concept developed slowly in low register and, perhaps, the most Evans-like number. ***Jenny's*** reveals Tapscott's chordal power, sudden jabs at the keyboard shredding the loose drift of the waltz until the sudden descent into calm restores the harmonic balance. ***Alone***, the only standard on the two albums, probes the melody, crisp single notes sharply in contrast to little Tatum-like runs branching out to produce a memorable interpretation.

Struggle X (subtitled ***An Afro-American Dream***) is the most adventurous work, covering almost two sides of Volume 2. It engenders a blend of many moods from deep melancholy to unheralded joy to raw anger. Keyboard and strings are employed with startling effects; strong chordal clusters swell at times amidst a clash of plucked wires, dark and ominous, accented by penetrating left hand rhythms, only to fade into the gentle tinkle of some music box dream. It is, in its entirety, a personal journey, but one without a fixed destination as suggested by the open-ended finale.

Tapscott is an artist who can no longer be ignored. These recordings, in part, are a testimony to that. Listen and judge for yourself.

– John Sutherland

LEROY JENKINS

Mixed Quintet
Black Saint BSR 0060

ANTHONY DAVIS

Variations In Dream Time
India Navigation IN 1056

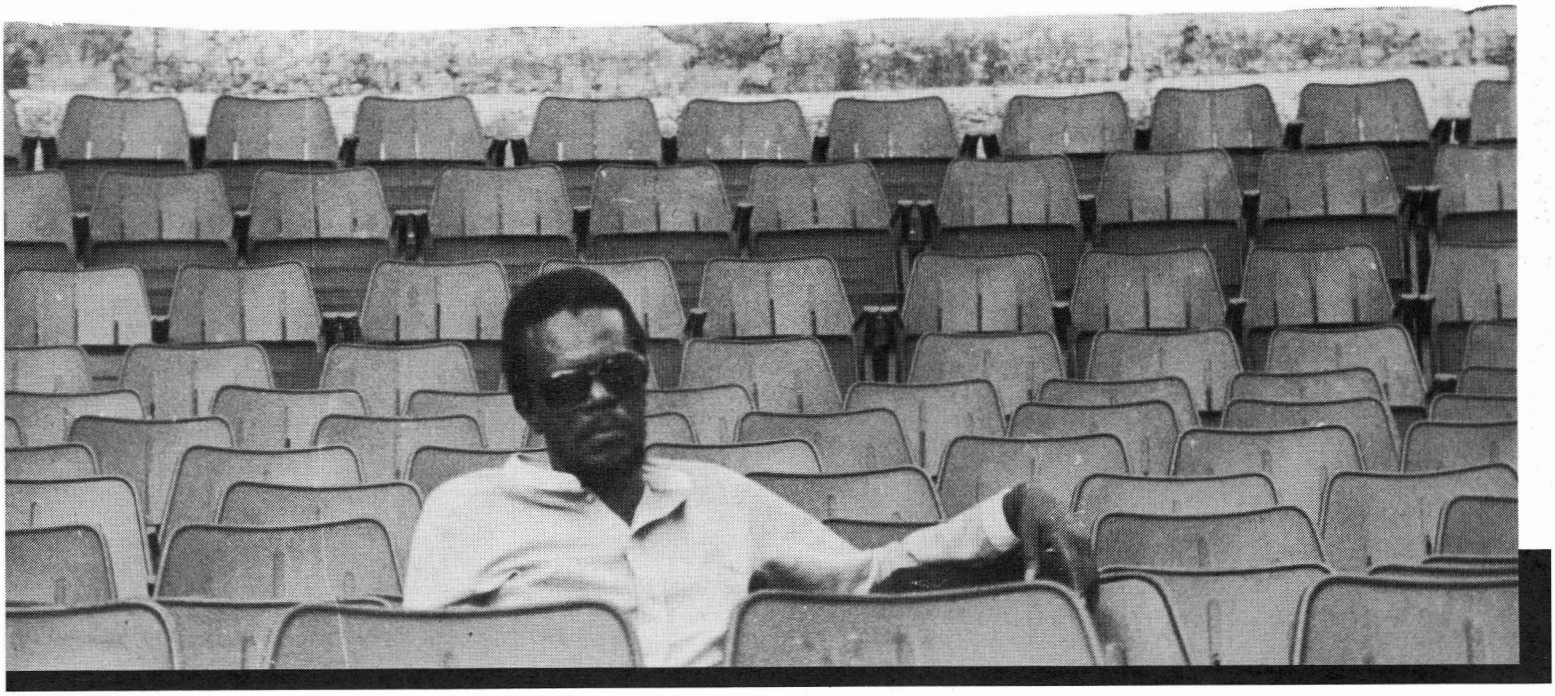
The art of extended black composing has been a tradition ever since Ellington took pen in hand. Duke's many suites and Sacred Concerts stand as some of the finest writing American composers have presented. Part of the legacy of improvising within structured pieces of music has been updated of late with recent recordings by Leroy Jenkins and Anthony Davis.

Jenkins has been one of creative music's primary player/composers for the last fifteen years. His body of work with the Revolutionary Ensemble, Creative Construction ensemble and various projects under his own name have widened the scope of what contemporary black composing has become. On his latest record, the writing for his mixed quintet (J. D. Parran, Marty Ehrlich, James Newton, and John Clarke) is solid proof that extended composition is enjoying a higher visibility of late.

With Jenkins's astute overlay of textures, the instruments form a sound so seamlessly welded that they come across as new music tone poems. The compositions (almost twenty minutes long each) manage to weave a pattern that shows the strong points of both the quintet as a unit, and the individual players as soloists. Flowing ensemble passages are delicately linked with different ideas from each of the musicians. The natural interplay stems from a jazz background, and Jenkins's ideas have never come together better (or been recorded better). It's the strength of the compositions themselves that makes this album one of his best.

In conjunction with the Jenkins release comes the latest recorded work from Anthony Davis. During the last three years Davis's music has been pointing itself toward a goal of specific design. His "Wayang" series and the ***Still Waters*** piece from the "I've Known Rivers" album have utilized his theory of "pulse" (employing a repetition of notes to propel the music) and a successful culmination seems to be here in "Variations." Both the title piece and ***The Enemy Of Light*** offer the soloists ample space to shape the music, but Davis's writing is so directed that the sense of structure is what stays in the listener's mind.

In a 1980 interview with Bill Smith, Davis said that this idea "is important, my ultimate goal is that when someone hears the music, that it just sounds like one piece of music, and there is no big division between what is on the page and what is actually heard." And what is actually heard on "Variations" is hot. The blustering forays by George Lewis and the most polished reed work that J. D. Parran has put on record shimmer together. Combining the



HORACE TAPSCOTT (photograph by Luigi Zanon)

string work of Rick Rozie and Abdul Wadud was also a good idea. Together they maintain the earthy drones that are necessary for a substantial bottom. Longtime Davis associate Pheeroan Ak Laff shifts gears with ease throughout both pieces. Even the pianist's ensemble playing has aligned itself with the strong compositional strength of his past work.

Even though some critics are slagging the encroachment of 'classical' elements in contemporary jazz, worry not. Written music this adventurous should be applauded and welcomed as part of the tradition. — *Jim Macnie*

PIANISTS

OSCAR PETERSON

The Trio
Verve 2304.194

WYNTON KELLY

Blues On Purpose
Xanadu 198

HAMPTON HAWES

Live at the Great American Music Hall
Concord 222

DAVE FRISHBERG

The Dave Frishberg Songbook, Volume 2
Omnisound N-1051

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

Owl 025

Oracle's Destiny
Owl 032

BORAH BERGMAN

A New Frontier
Soul Note 1030

MARILYN CRISPELL

Rhythms Hung In Undrawn Sky
Leo 118

What better Christmas package could one anticipate than eight such recordings of intriguingly diverse styles spanning two decades. The very fact that such variable approaches can co-exist yet continue to please and excite listeners speaks well not only for the vitality of jazz but also for its continued survival despite the many transformations it has undergone over the years.

It is good to have the Peterson trio recording for Verve available once again. Ray Brown and Ed Thigpen are consummate artists, and their shared empathy radiates warmth and excitement. What more can be said of Peterson-out-of Tatum? He ranges over the entire keyboard at a dazzling clip, shifting time and mood easily. The session is a typical blend of ballad (***In The Wee Small Hours, Night We Called It A Day, Whisper Not***) and infectious bounce (***Never Been In Love Before, Chicago, Billy Boy***); even the occasional Peterson patter (the Glenn Gould of jazz!) is caught in transit. One senses that this most prolific of all jazz pianists could go on forever in his fugal-like play with thematic extensions, especially in such rolling, up-tempo numbers as ***Sometimes I'm Happy***. And, since the 1960 date of this performance, he seems to have done just that.

Wynton Kelly, who died in Toronto in 1971 just a few months short of his fortieth birthday, was an interesting amalgam of funky blues and Bud Powell-influenced bop, yet with a Teddy Wilson-like sophistication in extolling such influences; ***Somebody's Blues*** exemplifies here both traditions. Though an excellent accompanist, as evidenced in earlier recordings with Miles Davis (1959-1963), Sonny Rollins (1956), and Dinah Washington (1958), he led his own groups successfully from the early fifties on, cutting many memorable sides, especially those with Wes Montgomery for Verve in 1965. Paul Chambers and Jimmy Cobb are familiar cohorts for Kelly, and they join him here in live, unreleased performances at New York City's Half Note from the same period. "The trio ran on well greased rails" (liner notes), and the group's interaction on ***Another Blues***, a romping, swinging number, highlights this characteristic admirably. Like Peterson, or with flashes of Tatum, he could devise a series of rapid glissandos to tickle the imagination (***Old Folks***); yet, with the same inventiveness, and always melodic, he could capture and sustain the most delicate of moods (***If You Could See Me Now***). Though the sound quality on the recording is variable, and the extraneous club noises occasionally creep in, the session is a worthy one for any collection.

My favourite Hampton Hawes recordings remain the three "All Night Sessions" for Contemporary back in 1956. Hawes, out of the late forties Parker and Powell school of hard bop, tinges his playing with a down-home bluesiness traceable back to his roots in gospel and spirituals; the result is a daring, ebullient style at his best, a blend of powerful rolling chords and dashing keyboard flights, still very much in the boppish mode (***Fly Me To The Moon***). In response to audience encouragement on this 1975 date, ***Sunny*** finds him in a much more playful mood, full of wonderful embellishments and rhythm changes. With a lifestyle tragically set for self-destruct, Hawes played everything as though it were his final performance. He is stated to have wished "to make music so beautiful it's like hugging in the forest at night;" this certainly reflects the fervour and intensity so characteristic of his playing. Witness here his three-part suite for solo piano (***The Status Of Maceo***), a moving journey through "forests" of powerfully conflicting emotions — subtle and tender at times, direct and emphatic on occasion — as though he wished to encompass everything that had been said and thought of at the keyboard. Three years later, he was dead, leaving behind a legacy of recordings not to be missed by any ardent fan of jazz piano. This is one of those records.

There is Dave Frishberg the piano player; as well, there is Dave Frishberg the vocalist and songwriter. The former hails back to the mid-fifties, accompanying the likes of Carmen McRae, Odetta and Dick Haymes, sitting in with Krupa, Webster and Freeman; the latter has had his compositions performed by such illustrious singers as Cleo Laine, Blossom Dearie, Anita O'Day, Irene Kral and Sue Raney. My initial contact with the piano player was made when I purchased a 1977 Concord recording titled "Getting Some Fun Out Of Life," an exuberant, good-natured treatment of some old swing tunes; the title number itself seems to capture Frishberg's philosophy in a nutshell. It's reflected in this album. However, I'm not as certain that, as the liner notes point out, he falls into the void created by the passing of such formidable songwriters as Hoagy Carmichael, Johnny Mercer, Harry Warren or Lorenz Hart, though he may, indeed, be the forefunner of a revivalist breed of popular balladeers, lyricist-entertainers long out of vogue. The voice does have that gravel-throated quality of Hoagy (***Oklahoma Toad***) — or Chet Baker — or Mel Torme with a bad cold on an off day. Yet, if you like flashes of originality (***Dodger Blue***), heart-warming sheer good fun (***Useless Waltz***) and mild social satire (***My Attorney Bernie***), this is an album for you. I prefer Dave Frishberg the piano player.

With the final three artists, I feel like one who has opened a Christmas present only to discover that he is not quite sure what it is he has received, There is, at least, the excitement engendered in facing the unknown.

Michel Petrucciani is a young and very much rising star in Europe; his North American credibility has yet to be widely established, though I understand that efforts are already under way to remedy that. If these albums offer any foretaste of things to come, recognition should be swift and lasting.

The first album is in trio setting with J. F. Jenny Clark (bass) and Aldo Romano (drums), recorded in Holland in 1981. For of the six compositions are originals by Petrucciani and Romano; a melodic core is at the heart of every number. I was impressed by the cohesiveness of the group, by the strength and freshness of their individual solos; but it is with Petrucciani himself that the real element of surprise lies. He displays the energetic dynamism of a Joanne Brackeen on ***Hommage a Enelram Atsenig*** and Ray Noble's ***Cherokee***, where his dexterity is truly phenomenal (look out, Oscar!). With ***Days of Wine and Roses***, he captures the understated, introspective, polished precision of a Bill Evans. And the subtle intricacy of a Tete Montoliu takes shape on ***Christmas Dreams*** and ***Gattito***, both interchanging instrumentalists in a linear approach against an overlay of counter-rhythms.

This is not to suggest that Petrucciani is some Frankensteinian patchwork of such notables; comparisons are inevitable in order to put the unknown into some meaningful context. He is very much his own stylist. Nevertheless, the second album, a solo performance from

PIANO VARIATIONS

Paris in 1982, gives special dedication to Bill Evans, an obvious influence on this artist, as he was on so many others. All of the works are originals, but in the Evans idiom; four of the five are fashioned with ballad-like building blocks of harmonic sound, and would readily test the abilities of some sensitive lyricist (not Dave Frishberg, please!). Only ***Amalgame*** presents, with its persistent chordal pattern, a faster tempo, reminiscent, at times, of the free-spirited wheeling of a Keith Jarrett; the warmth and tenderness of the rest sent me off to my Evans collection for an hour with ***Song For Helen, For Nenette*** ("New Conversations," 1978), ***Never Let Me Go*** ("Alone," 1968), and ***Peace Piece***, that extended improvisation on two chords. The affinity of feeling between the artists is certainly there. I would think that it is time to run a feature article on Petrucciani. Inevitably, it must happen.

With Borah Bergman's "New Frontier" album, I find the parameters of my understanding immeasurably narrowed; my plight is not made any easier by the liner notes' suggestion that Bergman's playing expresses "urgent thoughts that are hard to articulate in plain discourse." Undoubtedly Bergman dances to a different drummer from what I have hitherto been listening to on these recordings. It is a surging, energetic music by a two-handed explorer of the 88's (I'm almost certain he must have more keys on ***his*** piano that that!), and it truly defies musical boundaries. Bergman views the piano as a miniature orchestra," and, like Shakespeare's Bottom, he plays all the parts; the result is startling — an edgy music; full of bristling sounds and fleet-fingered arpeggios. In my whimsy, I tried to imagine what a duet with Cecil Taylor would be like, but I couldn't handle it; mind you, Cecil and Mary Lou Williams did it, surely out of mutual respect, and were really worlds apart. I find performances such as this a hard listening experience; but listen I do, with a certain degree of fascination, if for nothing else than the spirit carving out new musical territories. However, I suspect I'm destined to wait for the surety of road signs and other recognizable amenities before I undertake to pursue such a daring venture willingly.

Marilyn Crispell's offering is in much the same vein as Bergman's, but is more accessible, with greater variations in intensity and moments of diminished density from the roller-coaster of ideas. Whereas Bergman is a builder, with an angular and coarse-grained solidity about his music, Crispell is a weaver of notes, painstakingly meticulous in her design. For me, there were snatches of moments from a Don Pullen concert, a Paul Bley taping ("Imagine the Sound"), or a Dollar Brand in one of those transitional mutations from melody to melody. Titles suggest an interesting alloy of the apparent (***Love/Sadness***) and the fanciful (***Archaic Visions/Rhythms Hung in Undrawn Sky***). I liked the bell-like configurations that pervaded ***Visions***, the interesting admixture of contrasting passions meted out on ***Love***, the elegiac nuances of the sound poem ***Sadness***; in fact, the poetic lines which grace the back cover ("...violent flowers...sleeping inside dark cells...") might readily serve as a mirror through which to view the music and its performer.

In retrospect, it has been a rewarding twenty years of creativity experienced in less than six hours of listening. I feel a little like a time traveller, moving forward apprehensively, yet looking back fondly with a sense of pleasurable familiarity. I guess that is what jazz, among other things, is all about. ***— John Sutherland***

WYNTON KELLY

CECIL TAYLOR / DONALD BYRD-GIGI GRYCE

At Newport
Verve (J) UMV-2564

These 1957 Cecil Taylor performances with Steve Lacy, Buell Neidlinger and Dennis Charles provide the clearest aural link to the jazz heritage of which Cecil is such an important part. The lyricism, rhythmic angularity and unadulterated swing still makes this music a joy to listen to despite the tremendous development of Cecil's music in the past twenty-six years. The spirit of Monk and the roots of jazz permeate this music and it is regrettable that these are the only examples of this quartet's music. Steve Lacy, at this time, was so in tune with Taylor that the musical empathy between them is often uncanny.

Side two offers us three further selections by the short-lived Jazz Lab of Donald Byrd and Gigi Gryce in front of a pick-up (but cohesive) rhythm section of Hank Jones, Wendell Marshall and Osie Johnson. Gryce was one of the more thoughtful composer/arrangers of that time and his organisational skills are evident in both ***Batland*** and ***Splittin'***. ***Love For Sale*** is a straightforward vehicle for extended solos by the horn players and Hank Jones. The competence of the music is never in doubt and the shortness of Gigi Gryce's career makes any reissue of his playing valuable. However, this music does not have the uniqueness which makes the Cecil Taylor performance so important.

The Taylor selections were previously reissued by Verve as part of a two record package called "Masters Of Modern Piano" (Verve 2-2514) but the technical quality of the sound on this reissue is a definite improvement.

— John Norris

DAVID LOPATO

Giant Mbira
Lumina 009

Magdalena/Fast/One For Olivier For Muhal/ Dear Sphere/Blues For Bley/Gazing At Mies V./ Giant Mbira (solo piano)

Lopato is a many-faceted artist; his compositions on this album well reflect his diversity and skill, making this recording a delightful listening experience. The numbers suggest a spirited freedom of expression built around prominent influences but endowed with distinctively personal stylizations.

Magdalena and ***Gazing*** are beautifully casual melodic statements, loosely structured in form, halting and fragmented at times, introspective in feeling; one can conjure up touches of Bley or Monk, even an early Corea. ***Fast***, however, seems to possess more traditional roots in the manner of a Wilson or Hines, almost stride-like with its deft left hand rhythm, a gentle lagging

behind the melody sometimes reminiscent of Garner. ***Bley***, as well, though it begins with free-running harmonies, is eventually tempered by a James P. brand of straight ahead energy. ***Sphere***, dedicated to Monk (as is the entire album), offers a bouncy series of melodic runs.

The two most challenging pieces, ***Muhal*** and ***Mbira***, are remarkably different in technique and appeal. Though the references are clear enough on the former (shades of Messiaen's ***Catalogues d'Oiseaux*** – with some pretty frenetic birds here!), the composition is densely laden with extremely complex tone clusters and chording, making it quite a departure from the unrestricted free-flowing works that make up most of the recording. The real highlight of the album is appropriately left to the last, commencing with a haunting, bell-like pattern laid down against what seems to be stringed accompaniment; I had to check the jacket again to be sure: "The music on this album was recorded in real time, without tape manipulation." It is an infectious African rhythm of the kind often heard on Dollar Brand compositions – repetitive, captivating, incessant; minimal changes are introduced progressively and subtly, the whole driving towards a powerful climax.

Remember the name – Lopato. He is a talented musician with vision, roots and a promise of something further that will undoubtedly be fresh and exciting.

I like the marketing job that Lumina Records has done in putting this before the listener. It is well-packaged and conceived; also, the sound reproduction is excellent.

– John Sutherland

DAVID THOMAS ROBERTS

Pinelands Memoir And Other Rags
Euphonic ESR-1224

Coda typically reviews albums in the older styles only when they appear to offer something special – examples include reissues or new discoveries of important historical material, new recordings by established veterans like Wild Bill Davison or issues featuring latter-day practitioners of widely-acknowledged or world-class calibre such as Bob Wilber. By that standard, ragtime pianist/composer David Thomas Roberts might not yet be eligible, even though there is a respectable body of ragtime insiders proclaiming him as contemporary ragtime's finest composer. Yet, in a majority of the eleven tracks on this collection of piano solos performed and composed by Roberts, he unfolds melodies that remain in the memory and communicate directly with the emotions. That talent is rare enough, I think, to support notice here.

Some of Roberts's works are more rhythmic than melodic, for example ***Madison Heights Girl***, ***Hattiesburg Days***, and ***Kreole***. These are the relatively conventional cuts, very much like the early folk rags that provide Roberts's main springboard, bouncing along on a light, accurate oom-pah underneath an active, highly-charged treble. However, in works like the reflective, dramatic, Latin-tinged ***Fredric And The Coast*** or the deceptively simple, seamless, songlike ***Muscatine***, Roberts demonstrates that he has melodies in him that hold the listener's ear and evoke a fairly broad mixture of conflicting feelings – hope, longing, wistfulness, triumph, and others. He brings these out effectively, with attention to dynamics and to elaboration via modified scoring on repeats.

Spearheading the LP is Roberts's masterwork, ***Roberto Clemente***, a haunting and evocative tribute to the deceased baseball player. Although not yet published commercially, it has attracted a considerable following among ragtimers, having not only already been previously waxed by another pianist as well as scored for, and performed at festivals by, a jazz band. This acclaim is fully deserved as the rag develops impeccably from its tender, evocative opening phrase through four superb strains into a stirring finale. Whatever one's basic jazz preference, a person would have to be hard-hearted indeed to sit through this one without being touched at least a little.

I suppose it's time to return you to ***Coda***'s more customary fare of the more modern styles. However, if you want to learn what can still be done with the basic ingredients of the "new" music of eight decades ago, this is a fresh and interesting album worth its $8.98 price. Add $2.00 outside the US ($1.00 stateside) and write to Euphonic Sound Recording Co., 357 Leighton Drive, Ventura, CA 93001.

– Tex Wyndham

THE GREAT JAZZ PIANISTS

by Len Lyons
New York: Quill (paperback), 1983
321 pages

The format of the book is appealing. Following a brief Preface by the author, in which he quite plainly sets out his rationale for the contents of the book, and a 36-page "Survey of the Jazz Pianists and Their Tradition," the text offered is made up of a series of personal interviews culled from Keyboard, Down Beat and Musician magazines though sometimes supplemented and revised. To all of this is appended a discography covering those artists who are not considered in the interviews, each of those concluding with its own select discography.

If any criticism is to be advanced, it is certainly not at the expense of Len Lyons's credentials. He has been closely identified with the jazz scene for a number of years, and has gained respect as a writer, critic, producer and performer (studying improvisation and theory with Lennie Tristano). Nor can the style of the writer be faulted; it is highly entertaining, replete with interesting sidelights and provocative ideas. What does stick in one's craw is the implication of the title itself. It is the suggestiveness of that title which must bear the brunt of any reproach.

The most controversial and limiting word in that title has to be the definite article, "The." I mean, it treads on the toes of knowledgeable jazz fans, is anathema to them; for what true jazz aficionado doesn't, rightly or wrongly, tenaciously hold his opinions sacrosanct? Despite Lyons's prefatorial argument that "...decisions must be made and adhered to, if only to preserve adequate space for the major figures" (page 10), he has already threatened the jazz fan before ("The 101 Best Jazz Albums"), and now he's at it again. It presupposes a point of view based on a dangerous premise, and, though he may indeed have his "own love affair with jazz piano and its artists" (page 11), so do most of us. Hence, in the word "The," with its air of finality in affixing such terms as "legendary," "major," "best" or "essential," the gauntlet has been cast and the challenge must be addressed.

Where, for example, might one find the likes of Kenny Drew, Junior Mance, Horace Parlan, Sadik Hakim, Dodo Marmarosa, Dollar Brand, Al Haig, Don Pullen, Andre Previn and Dolo Coker? Why is such minimal coverage afforded Ray Bryant, Tommy Flanagan, Tete Montoliu, Roland Hanna or Jess Stacy, when so much attention is granted to such peripherally "great" figures as Marian McPartland, Ramsey Lewis, Billy Taylor, Toshiko Akiyoshi and Ahmad Jamal? Why does the introductory Survey fail to mention Herman Chittison, Frank Melrose, Sammy Price, Don Ewell and Cliff Jackson?

It is easy enough to see the controversy engendered in that choice of title. The tragedy lies in the detraction that ensues from an otherwise worthwhile contribution to jazz literature. And, heaven knows, we need a solid heritage of the written word on jazz.

Change the titles, Len. "Great Jazz Pianists" and "101 Jazz Albums: A History Of Jazz On Records" are really what it's all about. Then we can all relax, and concentrate on books that should "increase the understanding, appreciation and enjoyment" of jazz. *– John Sutherland*

AROUND THE WORLD

CANADA

The changes predicted in the last issue of ***Coda*** are now a reality with Bourbon Street announcing a change in policy, Lytes closing and George's Spaghetti House struggling. For more than a decade the scene has been quite stable but 1984 looks like the biggest shakeup since the days of the demise of the Colonial and the Town Taverns. These changes, while severe, are a reflection of changing attitudes and tastes rather than the demise of the music. Audiences are always changing. Probably less than ten per cent of any generation of listeners remain active throughout their lives. Most, if they continue to listen, stay home with their records. Periodically they lament the demise of one of their favourite watering holes but the reality is that clubs only stay in business if people come out and support the music. But changing audiences mean changing tastes. What was worthwhile in 1974 is not necessarily what listeners want in 1984.

There will be new clubs to pick up the slack but in the meantime Bourbon Street is trying to overcome its financial difficulties, its antiquated premises and tired music policy with a summer-long presentation of Toronto jazz talent. What makes it different to other places is that the music is being rotated on a two-nightly basis. Many of the bands will also have their first opportunity at performing in a major downtown jazz club. It remains to be seen whether this is an effective proposition. But at least it will be different. There will be changes in the physical appearance of the club and a more relaxed attitude has been promised towards those who come specifically for the music.

The rumour mill continues to predict that there will be other spots before long. Hopefully they will not make the same kind of mistake that The Colonial made in its one-week abortive attempt at jazz. No publicity, no big names and a hefty cover charge for musicians who are working all over the city, guaranteed failure before most people were even aware that there had been an attempt to revive the club's former image.

Contrary to the doom and gloom of the city's daily newspapers and the people they chose to interview (reporters, it should be pointed out, miss more spectacular events than the ones they cover). Some events have attracted turn-away crowds. **McCoy Tyner**'s one-nighter at the Colonial was spectacular. **Red Richards**, **Barry Harris**, **Ralph Sutton** and **Ray Bryant** all had them jammed in at the Cafe des Copains while **Jay McShann**'s one-week stint at the Chick'n Deli was the biggest draw at that club in a year. Down on Queen Street some of **Bill Smith**'s multi-media events have been attracting turn-away crowds and the Sheraton Centre is always jammed on Saturdays for **Jim Galloway**'s Quartet.

Quality, it seems, has its own rewards.

A major international festival for traditional jazz enthusiasts has been organised for this summer. The event takes place June 27 to July 2 with the **Chris Barber** Band and noted soloists **Doc Cheatham**, **Kenny Davern**, **Jim Galloway**, **Fraser MacPherson** and **Beryl Bryden** the head-

BARRY HARRIS (photograph by Jørgen Bo)

liners. Such well-respected traditional bands as England's **Ken Colyer** and **Merseysippi** bands, France's **Hot Antic Band** and the U.S.A.'s **Black Eagle Band** are among those who will perform in participating clubs and the various rooms of the downtown Holiday Inn. It is a major undertaking, a first for Toronto, and is underwritten in part by Molson's and by British Airways.

The Cameron House focused attention on some of the city's most dynamic improvising musicians during Saturday afternoon events in March. **John Oswald**, **Bill Smith**, **Maury Coles**, and **Steve McCaffrey** started the series March 10 with special guests **Barre Phillips**, violinist **David Prentice**, cellist **David Lee** and drummer **Greg Kozak**...**Mel Torme**, **George Shearing** and **Don Thompson** were at the Imperial Room of the Royal York from March 12 through March 24... Bassist **Barre Phillips** was artist in residence at the Music Gallery during February and March. **Tim Brady** and **Claude Ranger** gave concerts and the **CCMC** now perform regularly on Thursday nights...Albert's Hall is still the place to be if you listen to the blues. **Eddy Clearwater** and **Larry Davis** were there in February and **Koko Taylor**'s dynamic group was in action the week of March 19.

Barry Harris talked at length with music students at York University during his two-week stay at Cafe des Copains. His many students were also in attendance most nights trying to discover the secrets of his effortless approach to jazz piano...The **Aaron Davis** Sextet, the **Geoff Young** Quartet and the **Chris Chahley** Nonet have given lunchtime concerts on campus since the beginning of the year while downtown at Hart House on the campus of the University of Toronto **Dave Young**'s Quartet and the **Phil Nimmons** Quartet are among the groups carrying the message to those wanting to listen.

International recognition of **Ed Bickert**'s talents will escalate in 1984 following his signing a recording contract with Concord Records. "Bye Bye Baby" is the title of his latest for the California-based label on which the guitarist is joined by Dave McKenna, Steve Wallace and Jake Hanna. Ed Bickert will also appear on two new Sackville releases this year, "Humphrey Lyttelton in Canada" (Sackville 3033) and "The Ballad Artistry of Buddy Tate" (Sackville 3034), scheduled for release in April and June, respectively.

Oscar Peterson has prepared eight programs for the CBC's Arts National's Friday Night under the title "Jazz Soloists." Peterson will play records, reminisce and occasionally make a point at the piano. The series commences March 16 and is heard at 9:30 p.m....The pianist will also be performing this summer at Roy Thompson Hall for two nights with the **Modern Jazz Quartet** (June 22, 23) as part of Toronto's International Festival...The Ragtime Society (P. O. Box 520, Station A, Weston, Ontario M9N 3N3) held its first mini-bash of the year on February 18 at Korenowsky's...Brian Turner is programming some of the Time Life "Giants Of Jazz" sets in his Saturday night "Jazz Anthology" show (10-11 p.m.) on CFMX-FM (103.1)... Percy Dallmer reports that there is considerable jazz activity in the Guelph/Kitchener area, much of it organised by the Golden Triangle Jazz Club. Gord Field is the voice of jazz in the area on CKLA...This year's Canadian Collectors' Congress is being held in Montreal on April 28. The location is the United Services Club, 1195 Sherbrooke Street West. Further information is available from Trevor Tolley, RR 2, Williamsburg, Ontario K0C 2H0 (phone 613-535-2011)...**Stuart Broomer** and **John Mars** are releasing some of the music recorded in concert July 24, 1983 at Lynnwood Arts Centre, Simcoe. The record will be available from Ugly Duck Records, Box 1583, Brantford, Ontario N3T 5V6.

Cleanhead Vinson, **Joe Pass** and **Larry Coryell** were at Montreal's Rising Sun club recently and **J.R. Monterose** is scheduled to be at L'Air du Temps April 26-29...Guitarist **Peter Leitch** is on tour in Western Canada April 3-16 with bassist Neil Swainson and drummer Terry Clarke. They will be in Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Calgary, Victoria and Nanaimo. The tour is funded by the Touring Council of the Canada Council... **John Abercrombie**, **Julian Priester**, **Don Thompson**, **Dave Liebman**, **Jay Clayton**, **Kenny Wheeler**, **Eddie Marshall** and **Dave Holland** are the faculty for this summer's Jazz Workshop at Banff; July 23 to August 10 are the dates of this year's proceedings...**Lew Tabackin** took a trio to the February 23 session of the Victoria Jazz Society whose address is P. O. Box 542, Station E, Victoria, BC V8W 2P3.— *John Norris*

AMERICA

BOSTON — The post-holiday season has found Boston's Modern Productions continuing their aggressive booking policy. They presented **Tabu Ley Rochereau and L'Orchestre Afrisa International** at the Channel and **Chick Corea/Gary Burton** (with a string quartet) at Symphony Hall. Rumours are that they will also present Ornette in town soon. The blues scene has been heavily active with **Albert Collins**, **Koko Taylor** and **Son Seals** all playing Jonathan Swifts. **Buddy Guy and Junior Wells** roared through a night of shuffles at Lupos Heartbreak Hotel in Providence. Also in Rhode Island **Skeleton Crew**, Fred Frith and Tom Cora, enlightened a large crowd of fans at the Living Room. Their equally run project is largely structured, although some improvising takes place. Cora's romantic cello playing was a revelation. Opening was a string duet by **Joe Morris and Lowell Davidson**. The Cambridge guitarist placed high-octave pointillistic figures over the bowed bass tones (and overtones) of Davidson. Their set of spontaneous improvisation was engulfing. Also in town for acoustic guitar duets were **Larry Coryell and Vic Juris**. Their set included high-speed dramatic runs, and a brightly-ringing flamenco piece. By the time you read this, the Boston Globe Jazz Festival should be in full swing. Highlights are **McCoy Tyner**, **Sonny Rollins**, and the **Art Ensemble**. — *Jim Macnie*

CHICAGO — The sixth annual Jazz Institute of Chicago Jazz Fair commandeered four floors of Chicago's Blackstone Hotel on January 30 and helped the six hundred or so folk in attendance chase away Windy City winter chills. Beginning at 6 p.m. in the downstairs Jazz Showcase a continuous musical fair 'backdrop' was provided by **Marty Grosz** and the **Frank Chace-Dan Shapera** Trio, as well as (also making use of the upstairs Crystal Ballroom) **Bebop Sam Spaceship Love**, **Bill Porter**'s seventeen piece Big Band, the **Fred Anderson** Quartet with **Lester Lashley**, the **Laurel Masse** Band and as the piece de resistance, the **Art Hodes** Blues Workshop. In addition to the energetic sounds, jazz movies, videotapes and exhibits abounded (best of all, sixty-four fest patrons joined or rejoined the JIC at the door).

In more straightahead Chicago club news, Joe Segal's Jazz Showcase (after recovering from the Jazz Fair bash) more than held its own during traditionally slow early year months with a variety of local big bands including ex-Toshiko/Tabackin trumpeter **Buddy Childers**'s eighteen piece big band (Childers has recently located in Chicago for the time being), **Bob Stone**'s Big Band and the **Tom Hillard**-directed Chamber Jazz Octet. As for March, Segal will let rip again with major acts such as **Milt Jackson & Ray Brown** (with Mickey Roker and Cedar Walton), a **Shelly Manne** trio, **Richie Cole** and Alto Madness, and **Eddie Harris**.

The Piano Man on North Clark Street played host to a weekly venue of jazz acts including **Marshall Vente's Project 9** with Anna Dawson, pianist **Joan Hickey**'s Quintet and the **Henry Johnson** and **John Campbell** Quartets. Meanwhile, the **Judy Roberts** Band checked into grotto-esque near-northside subterranean jazz haunt, The Bulls, February 15-18, ex Herman/Kenton trombonist **Bob Porter** (who totes Tommy Dorsey's mouthpiece) continued to lead his Friday and Saturday night Jazz Ensemble at Blondie's on North Rush Street, stylist vocalist **Cheryl Berdell** turned up with a tuxedo-attired backing trio at Manhattan (a thirties style art-deco imbibing/dining spot on Rush Street just north of Blondie's), west suburban Fitzgerald's played host on Sundays to the **Jazz Members Big Band**, as well as weekday jazz-oriented acts like a flutist **Michael Mason**-led group and **Juggular** (an increasingly popular local group that, oddly enough, features juggling along with its music) and Rick's Cafe Americain ushered in **Paquito D'Rivera** for a two-week stint in early February (minus regular keyboardist Carlos Franzetti, Paquito was joined by local piano honcho Howard Levy, who also managed several riveting jazz harmonica solos during the stay — to Paquito's nodding approval), **Laurel Masse** (January 10-24), the **John Young** Trio (January 24-28), pianist **Dorothy Donegan** (February 14-25) and pianist/composer/singer **Dave Frishberg** February 27-early March. Upcoming acts April-June at Rick's will include **Jimmy Smith**, **Mose Allison**, **Astrud Gilberto**, **Woody Herman** and 16-piece band, **Stan Getz**, **Stanley Turrentine**, and **The Platters**.

Across town at George's, the music menu lay silent during winter (not so, however, with the food-oriented one), but will revive jazz matters in early March-July with a weekly line-up set to feature **Gary Burton**'s Quartet (with hot Boston-based pianist Makoto Ozone), **Sheila Jordan/Harvie Swartz**, **Barney Kessel**, "Wild Man" **Bobby Enriquez**, **Ahmad Jamal**, **Stephane Grappelli**, **Herb Ellis**, and **Horace Silver** (now, if

only the average jazz fan could afford George's stiff cover charge/drink minimum fees)...**Count Basie** cancelled a February 25 Rosemont Horizon engagement with Sarah Vaughan and band due to illness, drummer **Barrett Deems** celebrated his 71st birthday with an eight p.m. to midnight March 3 jazz party at Andy's (his usual evening performance haunt when not turning up at Rick's or the Jazz Showcase), the 16th annual Midwest College Jazz Festival featuring top college and high school jazz bands and combos took place February 24-26 in the Hammerschmidt Chapel on Elmhurst College's campus in suburban Elmhurst (guest artists included **Terry Gibbs**, **Ashley Alexander** and **Frank Mantooth**), **Gary Burton and Chick Corea** appeared with a string quartet at the Park West February 8, as did the remaining **Crusaders** (Joe Sample, and Wilton Felder, here along with Ndugu Chancler), February 19 and **Angela Bofill**, February 17.

As for blues news, a Sunday, February 12 "Benefit for Theresa's, Part II" was held at B.L.U.E.S. At The Earl for Theresa Needham, who hopes to reopen her legendary blues club at a new locale in the spring. Appearing on the benefit bill which lasted from 5 p.m. to 4 a.m. were **Magic Slim & The Teardrops**, **Jimmy Dawkins**, **Jimmy Johnson**, **Louis Myers**, **Billy Branch**, **Sunnyland Slim**, **Byther Smith and The Nightriders** and many more. The 23rd annual University of Chicago Folk Fest, held in the University's Mandell Hall, featured blues artists such as **Mama Yancey** and **Erwin Helfer**. Heavyweight R&B man/Alligator recording artist **Big Twist** continued to rip up the Chicago club scene with his Mellow Fellows (a Chicago Tribune newspaper article in late February listed Big Twist as the biggest Windy City club draw going; Koko Taylor turned up in second place). Look for Twist (aka Larry Nolan) to tour Europe this summer. Texas "Telecaster-Master" **Albert Collins** turned up on a double bill with harpist **James Cotton** at the Park West February 10 to kick off a Midwest/East Coast tour for his new "Live in Japan" Alligator album. Highlight of the concert was a guest appearance by old Beaumont, Texas playing pal **Johnny Winter** for a few electric songs onstage during the second Collins set (Winter was in town waxing a new Alligator LP). Talk about endurance, Collins revealed between sets he had driven from Amarillo, Texas all the way to Chicago that day for the gig. Lastly, in a baffling, deeply disappointing February 18 outing at the University of Chicago's Ida Noyes Hall, much-heralded Texas blues sensation **Stevie Ray Vaughan** and his Double Trouble band tried to cook, but seemed fatigued and never really pulled things together (no vocals — one of Vaughan's raucous powerhouse strengths — at all until halfway through the show!), A local, expectedly crazed and boisterous blues act, **The Duke Tomatoe Band**, opened Vaughan's set that night. Also, Black History Month was celebrated in February with a February 4th boogie woogie concert at the Chicago Public Library's Cultural Center featuring pianists **Blind John Davis**, **Joe Willie "Pinetop" Perkins** and **Erwin Helfer**. — *Joe Carey*

DETROIT / ANN ARBOR — On a Saturday afternoon in late February we had a long and pleasant conversation with Clarence Baker, owner and operator of Baker's Keyboard Lounge, which is fifty years old in May. We sat around the long, curved bar designed in 1958 by Blain Ford to resemble a piano (an inspiration for Liberace's piano-shaped pool) while Clarence talked about the music and its musicians.

In a business in which longevity is normally measured in months, Baker's fiftieth birthday is a unique event. It may or may not be the world's oldest jazz club, but certainly it's the oldest to occupy the same location for all five decades, and the only one to boast a continuous jazz policy for those many years. Clarence's father Chris opened the club as a beer and sandwich shop in 1934. Clarence took it over in 1939; he's sold it twice, but each time he wound up buying it back.

The club seats only 99. Its ceiling is lined with acoustic tile from Italy; the walls are lined with flannel. Tilted wall mirrors allow the pianist's hands to be seen by all in the rectangular main room. The walls around the piano-shaped bar are filled with photos and a few drawings of a half century of the best of the music.

Still. it's the ever-changing vintages that have filled Baker's richly-designed flask which most warmed the blood on that cold Saturday afternoon. Imagine the sound (to borrow Bill Smith's felicitous phrase), if you could somehow take down the lining from the walls and wring it out, releasing the music that has soaked in over the years. Miles Davis, Clifford Brown with Max Roach, Art Tatum, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane, Wes Montgomery. George Adams, bent back like a pretzel, burning up *Impressions* with McCoy Tyner. Pharoah Sanders, Teddy Wilson, Cannonball Adderley... the list goes on and on.

Clarence has many memories, but a few favorite anecdotes. Sonny Stitt, whom Baker considered one of the masters of the saxophone: "Sonny Stitt in most of his years was quite a drinking man... he came in this time, coming to work, loaded. Got this tiny black poodle in his arms. And he says, 'Clarence, I want you to meet Jazz.' And he holds up this little black poodle. I said, 'Say, that's a damn cute dog, where'd you get Jazz?' He says, 'Somebody gave me Jazz. Jazz is my companion now, I'm going to carry Jazz everyplace I go.' So the first set he left Jazz out in the dressing room and Jazz being a puppy did his business in the room. And we'd put different stuff down in case any mice or anything came in. And I said, 'Two things, Sonny, now who the hell is going to clean up' — and Sonny's not about to clean up, so I had to clean up after Jazz. I said, 'If you're going to leave Jazz in there he's going to have that dressing room smelling like a toilet and he's going to get into some of that exterminating poison we've got and he's going to be long gone. You'd better find someplace else for Jazz.' I look up the next set Sonny's sitting down playing, blowing away on the horn, he's got Jazz in his lap. That little puppy is looking up at Sonny and listening to the music and thoroughly enjoying it. And he did that the whole gig, every set that poodle was in his lap."

Art Tatum: "This is the last place Art ever played, you know. Art was quite ill when he came here. He was booked in Cleveland the week before he was supposed to come in here, and he couldn't make the gig, he had to cancel it. He stayed at the Book Cadillac in those days, and he was so ill he couldn't leave the room; he had all his meals up there and the doctor would come up daily. He was supposed to do three sets a night which he couldn't physically do, and we cut it to two sets. He had a trio at that time. He finished the engagement and was supposed to go to Washington, but he just couldn't go up there. He went to California and he died shortly thereafter... before that he used to play here a couple of times a year, and he helped to pick out the piano." The piano, a seven-foot Steinway, is tuned frequently and is in better shape than the usual nightclub keyboard.

Baker is optimistic about the future. He hopes to make the summer of this anniversary very special by coaxing back such people as Art Blakey, Oscar Peterson, Dizzy Gillespie, George Shearing — the performers who contributed to the club's past, even if they can only stop for one night (no one has yet been signed, however). **Betty Carter** will be the featured performer during the September Montreux/Detroit Kool Jazz Festival; last year's appearance by Elvin Jones during the festival kept the club packed for each set.

Happy Birthday, Clarence.

On January 27 we caught a special Eclipse concert which reunited pianist **Toshiko Akiyoshi** with drummer **J.C. Heard**. It seems that thirty years ago Heard's band offered Akiyoshi her first professional gig (in Japan). Bassist Jeff Halsey rounded out the trio. Toshiko was suffering from the flu, and her playing was not quite up to its best, something that was only noticeable in the evening's Bud Powell context. The first set started with a ***Count Your Blessings*** that switched from Richie to Bud in the solos, and included Akiyoshi's ***Remembering Bud***, and Powell's ***Tempus Fugit***. After an intermission, the short second set featured ***Con Alma***, a version of ***Come Sunday*** marked by solo stride piano, and an unidentified Bud Powell tune. Heard was most enjoyable, urbane, impeccably dressed, never at a loss for something to do. An interesting concert.

In February, Eclipse had guitarist **Vernon Reid**, and in March **Dewey Redman** was to lead a quartet and **Henry Threadgill** a septet to include Craig Harris, trombone; Olu Dara, cornet; Fred Hopkins, bass; Deidre Murray, cello; and Pheeroan Ak Laff and John Betsch, drums. On April 7 the season will close with **David Grisman**.

Over at the Detroit Institute of Art the Jazz at the Institute series will get under way on May 18 with the **Louis Hayes** Quartet, scheduled to include James Williams, piano; Bobby Watson, saxophones; and Clint Houston, bass. Other concerts booked for the series at press time included **Randy Weston** in duets with **Roy Brooks** on June 1; **Ron Carter** in a duet with either **Jim Hall** or **Cedar Walton** June 8; a **Jay McShann** trio featuring **J.C. Heard** June 15; **Charles McPherson** July 20; and **Oliver Jackson**'s Quartet August 3. It's worth noting that the Institute concerts are taped and rebroadcast on National Public Radio. — *David Wild*

HARTFORD — February 11 at Wesleyan University's Crowell Concert Hall, **Bill Barron** and **Bill Lowe** led their quintet of Fred Simmons, Wes Brown and Ed Blackwell through one of the most varied programs I've heard in years. Lowe's composition ***Where Is Mudd*** reached from New Orleans marches to the modern-day vanguard. ***Moose The Mooche*** and ***Wee Dot*** exemplified the music of the Bop and post-Bop eras. Barron and Lowe even performed a state-of-the-art improvisation with an Apple computer which Ron Kuivila programmed to play back as many sounds as it could assimilate from

Barron's soprano and Lowe's tuba. The concert demonstrated that contemporary musicians can perform with greater versatility than the labels they labor under would suggest. Barron, especially, is underrated as an improvisor and composer; his solos are fresh, relaxed and cogent, his improvisations rich with melodic invention, harmonic sophistication and rhythmic buoyancy. Unfortunately, the hall's acoustics drowned the magnificent sounds in echoes, giving the otherwise appreciative audience a frustrating answer to the question posed by Lowe's composition.

February 4 at Trinity College's Hamlin Hall, **Eugene Chadbourne and Shockabilly** employed a more drastic approach in demonstrating the scope of their talents. The concert/dance sponsored by the Hartford Foundation for the Advancement of the Arts showed that Chadbourne remains an iconoclast's iconoclast and a heretic's heretic; once at the cutting edge of the jazz vanguard, Chadbourne has transposed his aural radicalism to the forefront of New Wave music. His band's night-long medley of pop tunes — revamped beyond ready recognition — ranged from Paul Simon to Buddy Holly. Splicing the tunes with frenetic DJ raps and Frank Zappa sound effects, Shockabilly created a meld of sounds that defies any attempt to describe it. With his sidemen's help, Chadbourne breaks down the distinctions between life and art, then leaves the perplexed but appreciative listeners to redefine the relationship between the two as they discern rhythms among the random shuffle of feet leaving the concert space or in the foot pedal's click at the water fountain.

February 10 at University of Hartford's Millard Auditorium, the youthful quintet of **Phillip Harper**, trumpet, **Antoine Rooney**, tenor, **Joe Diamond**, piano, **Nat Reeves**, bass, and **Winard Harper**, drums, appeared in concert. Although I wasn't able to attend, I've heard the musicians enough at the 880 Club to know that I missed an event worth hearing.

Tom Chapin made a whirlwind tour of the area, appearing January 6 and 7 at the Hillside in Waterbury, January 8 at the Arch Street Tavern and January 12 at the 880 Club. Except for the 880 Club engagement, where he played with the house rhythm section, the altoist's sidemen were Reeves, pianist Mark Templeton and drummer Emmett Spencer.

Chapin's appearance at Arch Street was one of the last performances in the club's Jazz Alive series, which terminated because of poor attendance. **Joe Fonda**'s trio of pianist Kent Hewitt and drummer Tod Strait also performed before the Sunday night series ended.

DePalma's Rockinghorse Cafe continued to provide Monday night rehearsal space for **Chick Chicetti**'s big band, which also performed in the club's Tuesday night guest series. Other artists featured in the guest series in January and February were **Slide Hampton, Clifford Jordan, George Coleman** and **Ted Dunbar**.

The 880 Club, Hartford's reigning hot spot for jazz, concluded its Wednesday night Jazz Singer series February 8 with **Carmen Lundy**. **Gwen Cleveland**, the duo of **Bob Stoloff and Max Rapkin**, and **Leslie Delehanty** (with drummer Bob Kaufman) sang with the trio of series coordinator **Kent Hewitt**. Stoloff and Rapkin drew raves for their inspired scatting from 880 owner Al Casasanta and a scintillating review from Hartford Courant jazz reviewer Owen McNally. Sheila Jordan was scheduled for January 18, but a severe snowstorm arrived before she could leave New York.

The 880 Club's All Star Jazz Series continues to thrive on Thursday nights, however. **Bill Saxton** blew with the house rhythm section of Don Depalma, Nat Reeves and Mike Duquette January 5. Chapin, **Junior Cook** and **Mark Whitecage** rounded out the January schedule. When Junior Cook had to leave the gig early, the club's young turks proved to be ample replacements. A group including **Joe Diamond** and the **Harper brothers** treated the audience to a tricky arrangement of *A Night In Tunisia*: a melody statement played at a breakneck tempo led to choruses in a funky medium groove while punctuating horn riffs threatened to release the building tension with an up-tempo chorus that never came. It would appear that the new generation has staked its claim to hipness. **Kenny Garrett**, an outstanding alto player, appeared at the club February 2. Vibist **Dean Carbone** and guitarist **Randy Johnston** followed him on successive Thursdays.

Street Temperature heated up the 880 Club every Friday in January and February, except January 20 when **Chico Hamilton** made a special appearance. **Connie DiNatale** sings with Matt Emirzian's quartet every Saturday. **Tiny Joe** hosts the club's Sunday night jam sessions, where **Joe Fonda, Johnny Grieco, Ralph Duncan** and **Mark Templeton** frequently sit in. Late in February vocalists **Dianne Mower** and **Al Wilson** joined Tiny Joe in some loose, delightful scatting.

Wilson Place has suspended its Sunday night jam sessions temporarily. New Year's Day, however, the club featured a group led by drummer **Walt Bolden**. The club continues to host the Artist Collective's Mast Jazz Cocktail Sip, which featured **Amina Claudine Myers** with the Paul Brown quartet February 19.

New Year's Day, pianist and jazz educator **Emery Smith** performed at the Fine Arts Museum in Springfield, Massachusetts with Ralph Duncan, bassist Earl Womack and vocalist Darlene Francis. January 17 Smith appeared at the Craftery gallery with Womack and saxist-flutist **Joe Kaercher**. He also played the Steak Clubs in Vernon and Windsor Locks with alto saxophonist **Harold Holt**.

As well as teaching improvisation at the Artists Collective, Smith toured the Hartford public schools as part of a Jazz History series narrated by TV journalist Adrienne Baughns. Baughns chronicled the history of the music through Dixieland, Swing, Bebop and the Contemporary era. Smith led the Swing ensemble. **Eddie French** led the Dixieland ensemble. The outstanding pianist and composer **Kalim Zarif** directed the Bop and Contemporary ensembles.

In its January meeting, the Hartford Jazz Society presented organist **Jimmy McGriff**, whose ten-piece unit was a veritable swing machine. The **Toshiko Akiyoshi-Lew Tabackin** quartet appeared February 12, with bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Jeff Hirshfield.

— Vernon Frazer

NEW YORK — To open a minifestival entitled "Music Is An Open Sky," held at Sweet Basil on Sundays and Mondays through March for the second year, **Leroy Jenkins**'s 'Sting' played on January 2. Sting now has a young drummer, Kamal Sabir, and their drive is getting stronger and more straightforward, pushed heavily by his powerful rhythm, while very many of Sting's characteristics in sound reported in previous issues are being maintained.

January 8 and 9, **Oliver Lake** brought in his new quintet with Anthony Davis, Kevin Eubanks, Fred Hopkins, and Billy Hart. It has been some time since Oliver Lake last played in this area for most of his recent activities seem to have been devoted to Jump Up (which played at the Irving Plaza the night before this engagement). Anthony Davis had always created some brilliant moments with Oliver Lake whenever they played together from the so-called "loft jazz" period. And this occasion again proved that they had not lost their affinity. I had been very anxious to see/hear how Kevin Eubanks would respond to this setting, and he adapted excellently by playing bursting solos with many quick passages in a bit of a sustained tone while slightly holding himself back at times when backing others. Oliver Lake himself, with his piercing tone as usual, fully unfolded his style of angular phrases with clear-cut edges. A few tunes seemed to have reflected his experience in the other area and were very effective. A nice duo with Anthony Davis was featured and it definitely was an excellent unit with great potential.

Primitive World, an anti-nuclear jazz musical in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by **Amiri Baraka**, was presented January 15 thru 21. **David Murray** supplied the music and the cast of himself, **Amina Myers, Leroy Jenkins, Akbar Ali, John Purcell, Steve McCall, Wilber Morris, Janice Robinson**, and **Baikida Carroll** was under the direction of John Vaccaro. The musical quality meant a great deal in this play and it led to a strong finale of half-hour-long music. Some of the musicians surprised me with their acting and it was a fine presentation considering the limited capacity of a club (i.e. lighting, stages, sound systems, and all the factors involved) to produce a play which would very easily conflict with and/or be unnecessary for its own operation.

Dewey Redman presented his quartet at Carnegie Recital Hall January 21 for a concert, "Themes And Things," as a part of the New Jazz series which has already billed John Carter, James Newton, Hamiet Bluiett, and others. His unit this time was Leroy Jenkins, Reggie Workman, and Michael Carvin, and he specialized on

SONNY STITT (photograph by Siegfried H. Mohr)

clarinet (playing neither tenor nor musette) in this new suite-type composition. The sound led by his darker-toned clarinet sometimes recalled a New Orleans ensemble and there were sections for each musician to solo extensively.

On January 29, **Jemeel Moondoc**'s sextet with Roy Campbell, Ellen Christi, Rahn Burton, William Parker and Ed Blackwell played at Sweet Basil. They performed new material along with repertoire already recorded on their previous albums. The following week, **Anthony Braxton** made a rare club appearance there with his quartet of Marilyn Crispell, John Lindberg, and Gerry Hemingway. The quartet started with an up-and-down-the-scale motif which was alternately kept by at least one instrument with the other(s) improvising on it, and then gradually developed into different areas. It was apparent that Marilyn Crispell and John Lindberg were impressively getting to be a very important factor in Braxton's music today. To say nothing of each element such as steady support behind solos/leads, resourceful solos, etc., they as a whole are now forming an excellent cooperative for musical expression using a language set by Braxton, who played freely on several instruments — not that huge assortment he would sometimes prepare — of which soprano was the most impressive this time (at least to this writer), fully exhibiting his own distinctive style.

The Cooper Union has been presenting a variety of people at the Great Hall this spring. Recent concerts (all free) included the **String Trio Of New York** on February 10, **David Murray** solo on the 13th, and **Akbar Ali** solo on the 14th. Although the String Trio had been inactive for some time due to the schedule of the musicians involved, they started working together again and actually just came back from a mini-tour of the West Coast. Each member has been involved with a variety of projects and those experiences seem to be putting in a lot more input to make their collectivity more resourceful. John Lindberg covered a wide range of expression on bass, from strong 'walking' to hitting strings with a stick, and each tune nicely reflected the characteristics of its respective composer.

David Murray appeared and walked on the stage from side to side while blowing lively powerful lines out of his horn. He started the second set with ***Body And Soul*** and finished up an encore with ***Flowers For Albert***. It has been quite a while since he last played a solo concert in Manhattan and his solo now was given more sense of (apparent) structure by constructing it a bit more around his compositions, still unrestrained and maintaining a lot of freedom. In his "From Beethoven to Be-Bop" concert the next day, Akbar Ali lectured for the first set quoting many examples on his violin. For instance, he played a bebop solo over the original melody hummed by the audience which he had led for the first chorus. He went back on the stage for the second set to perform fine solos.

The **George Russell** big band played for the second week of February at Sweet Basil. The personnel was basically the same to the one that had played at Entermedia last November with many young musicians, except for the addition of Stanton Davis on trumpet. Every night was divided into an hour-long ***The African Game***, his most recent suite-type work, a medley of his major compositions in historical order, and a set of newly-arranged standards and some others. The ensemble was very tight and Russell's conducting was even visually impressive. The following week, **Abdullah Ibrahim** brought in his new big band there featuring Carlos Ward, Ricky Ford, Dick Griffin, Cecil McBee, and others. The orchestra did not play any complicated charts like Russell — however, it was very effective utilising Abdullah Ibrahim's very bounce and the essence of his original compositions as well.

Lester Bowie made an unusual club appearance a week later with a group including magnificent Malachi Favors and Phillip Wilson. David Peaston, who only sang a song per set, was overwhelming with his deeply gospel-rooted performance. The **Michele Rosewoman** quartet featuring Rasul Siddik, trumpet, also played on the 13th.

The **Tim Berne** quintet played on February 17 and 18 at Roulette which originally had been scheduled as a double bill with the Vinny Golia saxtet. On the 24th there, John Zorn, Ned Rothenberg and Jason Hwang were featured in **Gregg Bendian**'s (percussion) ensemble along with dancers. **George Lewis** presented his work for trombone and live electronics at Carnegie Recital Hall on the 25th with Earl Howard and John Lindberg. On the 26th at Manhattan Healing Arts Center, **Masakatsu "Mabo" Suzuki** assembled his group with Takehisa Kosugi, William Parker, and Rashied Ali. Parker's aggressive bass dictated the bottom, both in walking and bowing in his unusual style, while Suzuki and Kosugi laid out fragmental lines/sounds with Rashied Ali challenging steadily in the back.

The **Butch Morris** Ensemble, this time with Billy Bang, Terry Jenoure, violin; Deidre Murray, cello; Bob Stewart, tuba; Curtis Clark, piano; Eli Fountain, vibes; Jean-Paul Bourelly, guitar; and Steve McCall, drums, performed at Sweet Basil on February 27. Morris's music is very carefully textured by effectively exploiting this unusual instrumentation, and requires a lot of attention and effort from the musicians. It is an ambitious project and most of the musicians responded nicely. The rhythmically fresh guitar of Jean-Paul Bourelly and the strong tuba of Bob Stewart were particularly noticeable.

. Finally, the name of **Craig Harris** was credited by mistake for **Ray Anderson** when reporting about the Henry Threadgill sextet in my last column. I had seen Craig Harris playing there very often then and his name came out almost unconsciously when I was writing it. I sincerely apologize to all the people involved and also appreciate the kind advice made.

— Kazunori Sugiyama

MODERN JAZZ QUARTET

Blue Note, New York City

MJQ (John Lewis, Milt Jackson, Percy Heath and Connie Kay) made a rare ten day appearance at New York's theatrical Blue Note — attracting standing-room audiences each night. Certain evening performances were recorded live, to be released later in Springtime on Pablo.

This music continues to be brought forth with delicacy and grace — subtleties exploding with passion — gentle touches... In ***Nature Boy***, Milt Jackson's vibes suspended over insistent tempos, seemed as though heavenly inspired. ***The Walking Stump*** combined West Indian rhythmic play with qualities of Asian temple-bells...

John Lewis introduced *Milano* as "a very beautiful new arrangement of one of our compositions," — soft tender melodic touches — each note as a crystallized memory of what has been — yet offering a promise of what must be.. eternities viewed clearly — although envisioned through thousands of veils..

Such standards as *Willow Weep For Me, Come Rain Or Come Shine* and *True Blues* were presented with new variations on the themes — music exploring soaring sensations, although based in tantalizingly earthy environments.

MJQ will be on tour in Japan for the next several months, before returning to the States.

— Flora Wilhelm

ODDS AND SODS

Abdullah Ibrahim (**Dollar Brand**) and his wife Sathima are owners of Ekapa Records which has released several albums of Sathima's music. Now they are expanding their horizons. Three new recordings were introduced February 14 at Sweet Basil in the afternoon before the debut of Abdullah's new orchestra. "Memories And Dreams" features Sathima while "Ekaya" is the first recording by the new orchestra. The final album is duets by the pianist and Carlos Ward recorded at Sweet Basil...**Oliver Lake** performed solo saxophone February 18 as part of a program at the Public Theater...**Steve Cohn**, who plays piano and shakuhachi, appeared at Seventh Avenue South February 29 with Reggie Workman and Chuck Fertal, and **Robert Previta**'s Quintet was at Eric the same night...Jazztime '84 was the name of an event held at the Beacon Theatre March 17 with an all-star 20 piece band which included **Jon Faddis, Randy Brecker, Marv Stamm** and **Nick Brignola**. The event, which included dance and song, was videotaped...Sweet Basil's March and April presentations continue their thematic concepts. Resident in March were the **Buddy Tate/Al Grey** Quintet, the **Joe Newman** Quartet and the **Johnny Coles/Frank Wess** Quintet — all musicians associated with Count Basie. Sunday evenings in April will focus on Duke Ellington in a variety of ways. Musicians involved include **Lew Tabackin, Norris Turney, Britt Woodman, Harold Ashby** and **Wild Bill Davis**.

The International Art of Jazz Inc is a non-profit organisation which takes jazz to many of the suburban communities surrounding New York. They recently organised seven Black History Month programs in Suffolk, Nassau and Westchester County libraries. Blues singer **Gwen Cleveland**, saxophonist **Charles Williams** and pianist **Eddie Heywood** were participants in this series. Cornetist **Dick Sudhalter** took part in another of the organisation's events February 12 in Garden City and the music is also being taken to Suffolk County schools in a ten-week series of workshops...**Jeanne Lee** is conducting seminars March 5 to April 23 at Eden's Expwy, 537 Broadway...The Creative Music Foundation (PO Box 671, Woodstock, NY 12498) is running a six-week fall session.

The Artie Shaw band has been revived under the leadership of **Dick Johnson** and already has a full datebook for its spring tour. The band is in Montreal March 3 and Boston March 16. **Herb Pomeroy** has recently reformed *his* big band and has lined up several engagements in the Boston area...Pianist **Bob Winter** is now resident at Devon On The Common, 150 Boylston Street in Boston...The **Sheila Jordan/Harvie Swartz** Duo shared the stage with **Mark Harvey and Aardvark** March 10 at New England Life Hall...**Bob Moses** has become a part-time member of the faculty of the New England Conservatory.

Jazz will be a featured, but scattered, attraction this summer at Artpark in Lewiston (near Buffalo). **Charlie Byrd, Herb Ellis and Barney Kessel** (July 3), **Mulligan/Getz** (July 5), **George Shearing, Marian McPartland, Adam Makowicz** (July 8), **Carmen McRae/Joe Williams** (August 7), **Art Ensemble of Chicago** (August 29) and the **Modern Jazz Quartet** (August 31) are among the attractions...Rochester's WRUR Radio has increased its coverage of jazz by an additional twelve hours a week...421-2266 is the Hotline number in Cleveland, Ohio...**Jimmy Heath, Mundell Lowe** and **Sonny Rollins** are in Cleveland April 13 for a festival and June 7-10 are the dates of the annual Kool Festival.

Roscoe Mitchell's Sound Ensemble was in Detroit February 25 for a concert at the Detroit Institute of Arts...**Marshall Vente**'s "Project Nine" was at Chicago's Jazz Showcase January 20-22...Nat Hentoff was the first speaker in a lecture series at North Texas State University with Nat Adderley, Michael Brecker, Marvin Stamm, Dave Leibman, Ron Carter and Elvin Jones as other participants in the series...The **New Orleans Rhythm Kings** participated in the first Natchez Jazz Festival last November 26... This year's New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival runs from April 27 through May 6...**Dizzy Gillespie, Danny** and **Blue Lou Barker, Tommy Flanagan** and **Jon Hendricks** are among the jazz performers at this year's Spoleto Festival, to be held early June in Charleston, S.C.... **Art Hodes** was in Denver January 28 to perform in concert with the Queen City Jazz Band at the new Zeno's Club...San Francisco's Bon Voyage Travel is organising a trip to Montreux and North Sea Festivals...The **Blue Wisp Big Band** made its West Coast debut February 3/4 at Carmelo's. Their performance was recorded by Mopro Records for future release...The **Bob Florence** Band played this year's Grammies show...The official Olympic Jazz Festival takes place August 2-5 at the John Anson Ford Theatre. A twenty-piece band will be resident and such illustrious Hollywood residents as **Shorty Rogers, Bill Holman, Benny Carter, Benny Golson, James Newton, Harold Land** and **Bill Watrous** will be featured. The orchestra will be under the direction of **Tommy Vig**...**Jay Clayton** and **Bert Wilson** have guest appearances with Seattle's **Composers and Improvisors Orchestra**. Clayton was there March 7 and Wilson is scheduled for May 5.

London's National Film Festival was the site of a five-night festival of jazz films produced originally and shown by the BBC under the banner of "Jazz 625." These tapes were supposedly erased years ago but that information was erroneous. Ben Webster, Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, MJQ, Brubeck, Dizzy Gillespie, Art Blakey, Benny Golson, Tubby Hayes and Duke Ellington are among the featured artists...**George Russell** was in Vienna January 28 for a concert at the Vienna Music Gallery...**John Carter, Dino Saluzzi** and **John Lindberg** are among the performers at this year's Salzburg Festival April 6-8...A Free Music Workshop took place February 15-19 at Berlin's Akademie der Kunste. Musicians included **Butch Morris, Garrett List, Kent Carter, Tony Oxley** and **Richard Teitelbaum**... The 15th International Jazz Week in Burghausen, West Germany, took place March 21-25. **Joe Viera, Sun Ra, Art Blakey, Abdullah Ibrahim, Hank Jones** and **Johnny Griffin/Arnett Cobb** were some of the groups who performed... Nurenberg's Jazz East West takes place July 5-8...Spring activity in Italy includes concert series in Reggio Emilia and Bologna featuring **McCoy Tyner, Phil Woods** Quintet, **European Workshop** band including Tony Oxley, Stan Tracey, Gerd Dudek and Alan Skidmore in March; **Lee Konitz/Martial Solal** (April), **Jay McShann/Buddy Tate** and the **Sackville All Stars** (May 3 and 4) and **Dollar Brand/Max Roach** (May 23)...Jazz & Altro is a parallel series being held in Reggio Emilia, Bologna and Ravenna throughout the summer...The Third Festival of Terrassa was held between February 28 and April 11...This year's Pori Festival is being held July 12-15.

Ebbe Traberg and Ib Skovgaard have compiled a new Sonny Clark discography. "Some Clark Bars" is an attractively-printed 44-page booket which contains a biography and discography. Cost, including shipping, is US$8.50 from Forlaget MM, Frederiksberg alle 60B, DK1820 Copenhagen V, Denmark...John Tchicai's recordings are documented in a booklet entitled "Guidebook." The saxophonist is also organising an international music meeting and course at Holbaek Art High School between July 22 and August 4...Information on Finnish jazz recordings since 1970 is included in a booklet compiled by the Finnish Jazz Federation, Box 54, 00101 Helsinki 10, Finland...The Indiana Historical Society has given a grant to John Edward Hasse to research and compile a book containing the best work from Indiana's golden age of ragtime.

Beehive Records is back in action with new releases from **Roland Hanna** and the New York Jazz Quartet in Chicago and an LP entitled "Hyde Park After Dark" with **Clifford Jordan, Von Freeman, Cy Touff** and **Norman Simmons**. They have also issued a limited edition LP of unissued tunes from some of their sessions. This is only available from Beehive, 1130 Colfax, Evanston, IL 60201...**Susannah McCorkle**'s newest Inner City LP is called "The People That You Never Get To Love." New from Palo Alto are LPs by **Victor Feldman** and **Richie Cole**. Also due are LPs by **Elvin Jones, John Abercrombie** and **David Friesen**...ITI Records (PO Box 2168, Van Nuys, CA 91404) has released LPs by **Ruth Price**, a trio featuring **John Heard, Tom Ranier** and **Sherman Ferguson** and a duo recording by **Bill Mays** and **Red Mitchell**... **Sphere**'s latest Elektra/Musician release is called "Flight Path"...**Lew Tabackin, Joanne Brackeen, Eddie Gomez** and **Roy Haynes** join **Freddie Hubbard** on his Atlantic LP "Sweet Return"... New from ECM are LPs by **Jan Garbarek, Terje Rypdal, Kenny Wheeler** and **Dave Holland**... Cat 'n Hat Records has produced an LP by bluesman **Johnny Heardsman**...Contemporary Music Services has the debut LP of **Russ Vines and the Contemporary Music Ensemble**...Some rare Otis Spann sides have been packaged by JSP Records...FMP's final release will be "Pica Pica" featuring **Peter Brötzmann, Albert Mangelsdorff** and **Gunter Sommer**. FMP terminates its operation March 31 but is trying to make arrangements to keep available the recordings it produced through a West German distributor... **Detail** is the name of a group featuring **Johnny Dyani, Frode Gjerstad** (reeds) and **John Stevens**. Their initial LP is now available on Impetus Records...Unit Records is a new Swiss company who have released three LPs of contemporary music performed by Swiss musicians (Unit Records, c/o Remsol AG, Saarerstr 43, CH6300

ANTHONY BRAXTON and JOHN LINDBERG (photograph by Cecco Maino)

Zug, Switzerland)...Fantasy is releasing some of their long out of print blues albums in an Original Blues Classics series. A further twenty titles in the jazz series will be available in April.

Noted bandleader and pianist **Claude Hopkins** died February 19 in a New York nursing home at the age of 80. *— John Norris*

A sad note from Hawaii, where singer **Ethel Azama** died March 5 of a brain aneurism at age 48. Ethel was one of the jewels of Honolulu's small jazz scene. In a world where talent is rewarded Ethel would have sung seven nights a week, but recently she worked only sporadically; her last gig was at Bagwell's with pianist Rich Crandall and bassist Byron Yasui. Ethel had two albums out in the early sixties and toured with Mel Torme. More recently she worked in a variety of settings, fronting trios, with the late pianist Ernie Washington, with singer Jimmy Borges, and with trombonist Trummy Young among many others. She had a rich, smooth voice, a surefooted sense of time and great swing. She will be missed.

— David Wild

CLAUDE HOPKINS 1903-1984

The recent death of pianist/bandleader Claude Hopkins at the age of 80 severs a link with one of the last of the pioneering bandleaders who helped develop this aspect of the music in the early 1930s. His band was never as spectacular as Duke Ellington or Fletcher Henderson but it was a solid outfit which catered more for dancers. The band always had good musicians and recordings and films document some of its achievements.

Claude, like other East Coast pianists (Ellington, Cliff Jackson, Eubie Blake), had his own way of approaching the instrument. It was different to the virtuosity of the New York ticklers but, in its own way, was an arresting conception.

In his later years he was active at The Metropole with Red Allen and others as well as continuing to lead bands of his own. In this capacity he came to Toronto several times with The Jazz Giants and his piano set the tempos and direction of the band's familiar repertoire. His geniality and warmth endeared him to many and his piano gave a special flavour to the Sackville LP by The Jazz Giants and Herb Hall's "Old Tyme Modern". He also recorded a set of introspective solo performances which was released under the title of "Soliloquy".

His last real activity was a few years ago when he went to the Nice Festival and recorded for Black And Blue. His last years were spent quietly in a New York nursing home. He was one of the true pioneers of this music — as a performer and as an organiser. *— John Norris*

HOLLAND

The January issue of the Dutch jazz magazine *Jazz Freak* carried the news of yet another car accident that claimed the lives of a number of jazz players.

Five jazz musicians were the victims of a traffic accident in Holland, on the evening of November 26 last — **Jeff Reynolds, Joep Maessen**, **Rob Franken**, and **Harry Miller**. Maarten **van Norden**, although injured, was the only passenger to survive the accident.

They were returning from a concert with the Willem van Manen Springband, when a freak gust of wind swept their minibus off the road, against a tree. As a result two musicians were killed instantly, and of three severely injured survivors two succumbed to their injuries later.

Jeff Reynolds was a trumpet player, born in Glasgow, who played with Johnny Dankworth and Maynard Ferguson before moving to Holland in 1978. There he quickly got accepted as a lead trumpet player, and ended up in a number of jazz groups. Joep Maessen was a Dutch bass trombonist, who had also received a great deal of recognition in Dutch jazz circles. The piano player, Rob Franken, was a well-known soloist and sideman, who accompanied many visiting jazzmen. He recorded with Toots Thielemans, Herb Geller, Philip Catherine, and a number of Dutch jazz musicians, such as the van Rooyen brothers and Piet Noordijk.

The last musician claimed by this accident, Harry Miller, was a bassist born in South Africa in 1941. He started out playing rock and roll in his country of birth, but after his arrival in England in 1961 he soon moved into leading modern jazz groups there. He played with the pianist Stan Tracey, and in various formations led by Mike Westbrook, John Surman, and John Warren. He also played in Spear with Dudu Pukwana, in Centipede with Keith Tippett, and in other groups associated with Bob Downes, Chris MacGregor, Alan Skidmore, Kenneth Terroade, and Arman Ratip. After 1977 he settled in Holland, where he found a warm welcome. Here he recorded "In Conference" with Willem Breuker, Trevor Watts, Keith Tippett, Louis Moholo, and Julie Tippett, in 1978. At the moment of his death his second record, on the Varajazz label, was ready to be launched.

The Dutch jazz scene has lost a number of major jazz players, whose contributions as jazz musicians, workshop leaders, teachers and human beings will be sorely missed.

— prepared and edited by Walter Schwager

A LETTER

Dear Bill Smith,

Just read your last issue of ***Coda*** (194). I am asking you for two corrections:

HARTFORD — Jeanne Lee: the composition and arrangement of ***Journey to Edaneres*** is by Gunter Hampel (it is the same composition as ***Serenade to M.B.*** on my big band LP "Cavana." Edaneres is Serenade spelled backwards). I had written that piece for the vocal summit.

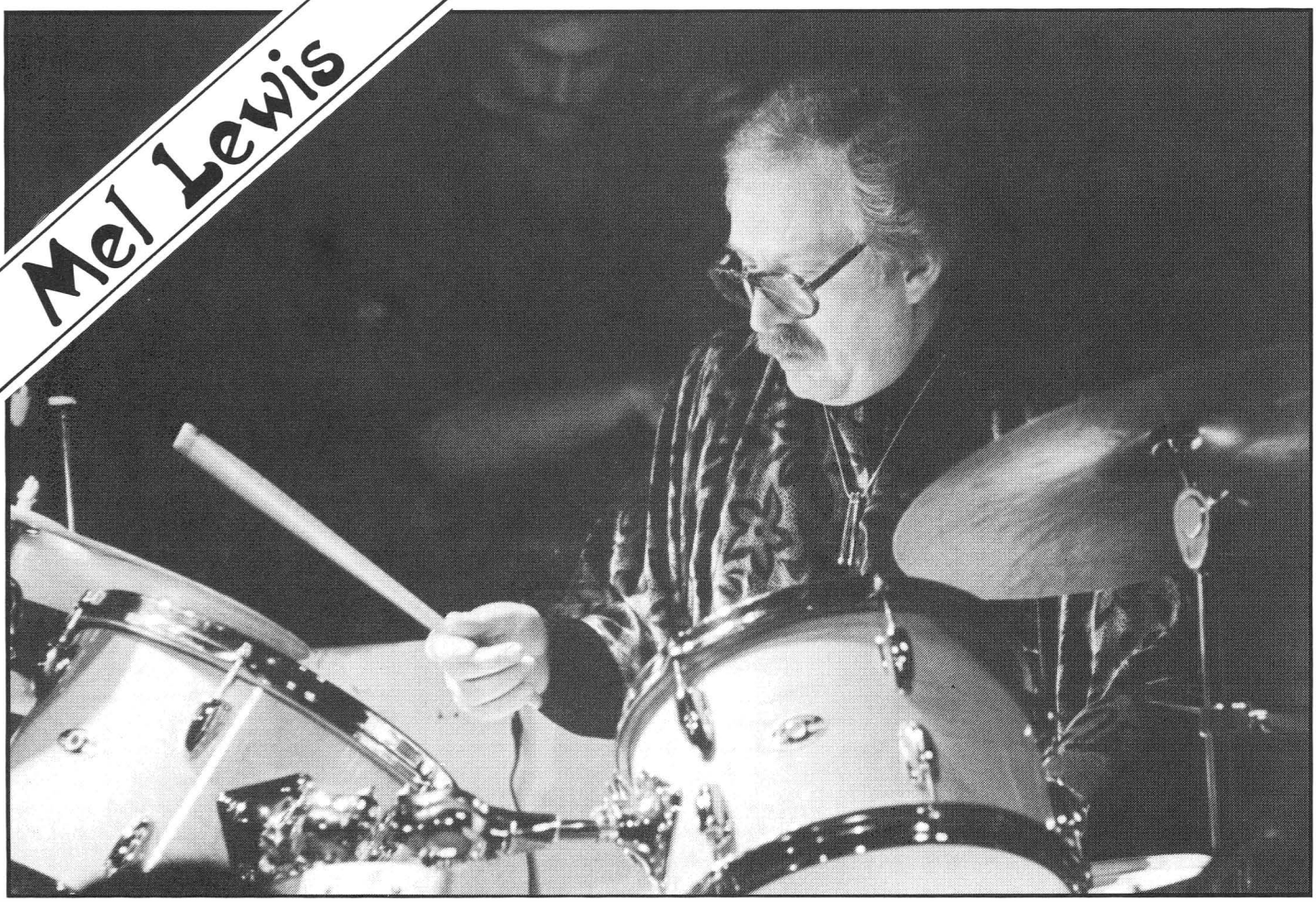
BERLIN JAZZ FEST — Some Ellen Brandt wrote about my All Star 83 performance "we didn't offer anything but money music." The difficult Berlin audiences loved my music and asked for encores in the concert, I had musicians and critics from all different heritages congratulating me about my music.

I don't mind if someone has nothing more to offer than an opinion and says this and that bullshit, but could you please explain to me, and probably to your readers, what the discrediting comment "money music" ***means***. We all saw it as a new step into further explorations of playing music ***together***. And that was Manfred Schoof, Albert Mangelsdorff, Marion Brown, Perry Robinson, Jeanne Lee, Thomas Keyserling, Barre Phillips, Steve McCall and myself. I am really sick and tired in losing credentials through mindless writing, especially when it comes to ***Coda*** magazine, which I had held as a magazine which was writing on ***all ways*** of musical styles.

Best regards,
Gunter Hampel
February 27, 1984
211 E. 11 St., no.2
New York, NY

HARRY MILLER (photograph by Jak Kilby)

Mel Lewis



Mel Lewis, internationally acclaimed bandleader, master drummer, and for nineteen years, leader of the band appearing regularly at Max Gordon's Village Vanguard, celebrated this anniversary with a somewhat extended engagement at the legendary jazz room. Many celebrities in the world of jazz were part of the overflowing audiences each night.

Mel speaks with quiet intensity of composer-arranger Bob Brookmeyer. "He's a genius...I've given him my orchestra... he's asked me to be his drummer — his interpreter... when he writes music, and thinks of how it will feel and sound, he hears me — always..."

Bob Brookmeyer independently speaks of his thirty-two-year musical relationship and friendship with Mel Lewis in much the same way — as a gift to be shared between them. Their music, brought forth together, bears all the theatrical components of fine drama — bridged by a remarkable series of tonal effects, extending from the most simplistic and tender, to massive statements of harmonic complexity.

Their process of creating music is carefully described by Mel, beginning with the moment when Bob will bring in a newly-written composition. "As we start rehearsing, Bob may start hearing notes or phrasings he wants to change — or he may hear eight bars of background he doesn't want, or eight bars he wants to write. At our next rehearsal, Bob will tell those players who have changes, "I've put in new notes on your charts, but left the old notes visible, because we may go back to them." Later on, we'll play it in front of the Vanguard audience. He may have new thoughts on chords, changing lines, new passages... the process may go on for weeks.., it never ends... we often could be playing different harmony than in the recordings..."

The latest album, "Mel Lewis and the Jazz Orchestra — ***Make Me Smile*** and Other New Works by Bob Brookmeyer" on Finesse Records, contains all original Bob Brookmeyer compositions, with the exception of ***My Funny Valentine***, the Richard Rodgers/Lorenz Hart classic. The recording was made live in concert at the Village Vanguard.

The whole album, including the title cut, ***Make Me Smile***, featuring the impassioned alto saxophone solos of Dick Oatts, offers music in startlingly new directions — pure jazz of a greater intensity — jazz of today — of now. It is stirring to hear primitiverhythmic sounds juxtaposed upon groupings of mechanized layers of existence.

My Funny Valentine, spotlighting Tom Harrell on flugelhorn, Dick Oatts on soprano sax and Kenneth Garrett on alto sax, is played with burning intensity and deep respect for this only jazz 'standard' on the entire album. ***McNeely's Piece***, written by Bob Brookmeyer expressedly for Jim McNeely's piano artistry, gives the listener over fifteen minutes of exquisite multitonal moods.

Mel Lewis considers the members of his Jazz Orchestra as being a close family. "We are not only dealing with ensemble playing, we're dealing with individual emotions... these are guys who don't just turn it on and turn it off. These are real jazz players... their whole mood — their daily lives — are what we'll get on the bandstand... if they're having problems, we'll hear it and feel it... But that's when the family takes over — guys will go to each other and help. We have that in this band... they respect one another and everybody cares... I just hope — I could keep this band forever..."

Since 1979, Mel Lewis's albums, each representing special musical periods of his life, are fortunately available. They include "Naturally" on Telarc Records, considered an innovation in digital recordings, and nominated for a Grammy; "Bob Brookmeyer, Composer-Arranger" on Gryphon, marked the new beginning of Bob Brookmeyer's musical collaboration with Mel Lewis, and was also nominated for a Grammy, as well as Bob Brookmeyer's arrangement of ***Skylark*** on side 1 of the album; "Mel Lewis Live At Montreux," an exploration into the compositions of Herbie Hancock as arranged by Bob Mintzer — inspired and musically electrifying; and "Mellifluous" on Gatemouth, presenting Mel in a quintet setting out of his Jazz Orchestra, with Marc Johnson on bass, Jim McNeely at the piano, John Mosca on trombone, and Dick Oatts on alto and soprano saxes and alto flute. The vital potency of this music comes through as another form of distilled power and beauty based on Mel's larger jazz ensemble.

A profile by Flora Wilhelm

MEL LEWIS (photograph by Gerard Futrick)

RECORD REVIEWS

ELLA FITZGERALD

Fine and Mellow
Pablo 2310.829

Harry Edison, trumpet; Clark Terry, trumpet, flugelhorn; Zoot Sims, Eddie Davis, tenor saxophones; Tommy Flanagan, piano; Joe Pass, guitar; Ray Brown, bass; Louis Bellson, drums.

This album reaffirms two central facets of the mainstream jazz tradition: the blues and the jam session. There is a symmetry about this group and their performances that brings form to an otherwise informal atmosphere and the result is a marvellous collaboration.

The title track, Billie Holiday's ***Fine and Mellow***, is a leisurely yet intense blues that reveals the octet at a collective peak. Zoot Sims adorns Ella's expressive vocal with interweaving melodic lines and produces comparable obbligatos on ***In the Mood for Love*** and ***The Man I Love***. Sims's sweet melodic solo on ***Ghost of a Chance*** contrasts with the gruffer wailing of Eddie Davis who breaks things up with charged solos after Ella's vocals on ***Fine and Mellow*** and ***Rockin' in Rhythm***. Davis reveals his sensitive side with his coda to ***Ghost of a Chance*** and his obbligato behind Ella's vocal on ***Polka Dots and Moonbeams***. Both tenor players blend well together on the coda of ***I'm Just a Lucky So and So***, when they riff out in unison behind an exuberant Ella, who is heard at her best here, scatting with easy invention and that mood of exhileration so characteristic of her singing.

The trumpet players, Harry 'Sweets' Edison and Clark Terry, are also well matched and their vocal styles can be compared on the rollicking ***Rockin' in Rhythm*** where they exchange exuberant phrases. 'Sweets' Edison plays well on mute at this session, particularly on ***I'm Just a Lucky So and So*** (which features Terry on flugelhorn), ***The Man I Love*** and ***Ghost of a Chance***. Clark Terry delivers forthright solos on ***In the Mood for Love*** and ***I Can't Give You Anything But Love***, where he also shares an uptempo scat duet with Ella.

The rhythm section is in control throughout and provides a flexible spine for the music. Tommy Flanagan is a model of elegance, good taste and restraint, although he takes a welcome piano solo on ***Rockin' in Rhythm***. He blends well with Joe Pass on ***Round Midnight***, adding delicate fills behind the guitarist's accompaniment. It's amusing when one realises that Flanagan is gentle and restrained where Monk would have been boisterous.

Joe Pass surprises with his accompaniment on ***Fine and Mellow*** where his feeling for the blues groove is a delight. He gives a typically brilliant performance on ***Ghost of a Chance***, where he shares obbligatos with 'Sweets' Edison, who continues the same melodic line, interweaving a lyrical counterpoint around Ella's vocal.

Ray Brown on bass is outstanding and time and again Louis Bellson lifts the beat and the tempo to breathe fresh life into such overworked standards as ***I'm in the Mood for Love*** and ***The Man I Love***. Brown and Bellson dominate the latter ballad, after Tommy Flanagan's elegant piano introduction, they pick up the tempo gradually, alternating behind Ella, joined by the full rhythm to back Edison on mute, until Sims enters when the tempo accelerates to reach a climax. The song concludes with a joyful improvisation, when Bellson, Brown and Ella interact on a prolonged up-beat fade-out.

The symmetry of this entire session is exemplified by ***I'm in the Mood for Love*** which ends as it begins with Ray Brown's bass supporting Ella's assured vocal (until a sudden conclusive blare by the horns). Her vibrato and tremolo are controlled here to produce rich effects. From the beginning to end this is music that is cohesive, impassioned and adventurous: sheer delight. ***— David Lewis***

JOE TURNER

Blues Train (with Roomful Of Blues)
Muse MR 5293

It's been a long road, as the song says, all the way from the legendary Twelfth Street joints in Kaycee's Pendergast heyday some fifty years ago to Carnegie Hall with Pete Johnson to R&B chart success in the fifties to present day work as guest artist with the Blues/Jump band Roomful Of Blues. But if Joe Turner, now in his seventy-third year and increasingly frail, has seen a lot of mileage he is only the richer for it. The essence of Joe Turner has been, so to speak, 'distilled' over the years until a very high proof — but very smooth — artistic substance has resulted. Listening to Joe Turner in his present state is like drinking a very fine old bourbon. It doesn't burn like cheap rye — it's just as powerful, mind you, but it's something to be savoured, to be valued, not only for the kick but also for the taste. Joe Turner has taste, more taste than he has ever had.

It is somewhat paradoxical then that a singer of such subtlety and sensitivity should find himself in such an indiscriminately 'hard sell' atmosphere as is provided by Roomful. The record is suitably straightahead, the band swings, the solos are good, the material (mostly Turner originals and standards) is appropriate, and Al Copley's fine Otis Spann-like piano romps all over the place. But some of the band's insistent riffing is annoyingly harsh — they simply push too hard for the way in which Joe Turner is currently singing. What we have here is an artist of major significance accompanied by what is essentially a very competent bar band (with the possible exception of Copley); the band's two featured instrumental tracks only serve to illustrate the point — this is music to drink beer by. Now I've got nothing against bars and beer, and it's a fact that artists such as Joe Turner have largely spent their professional lives in bars (Turner, of course, started as a singing bartender), but that doesn't mean to say they ***belonged*** there. Roomful belongs there.

The really inspiring thing about this record is Turner's absolute conviction, which at this stage of the game is something of a miracle, especially considering the state of the man's health. What is not so inspiring is the extremely derivative nature of Roomful's soloists. Guitarist Ronnie Earl Horvath trots out the Otis Rush-B.B. King sound on ***I Know You Love Me***, while Al Copley, good as he is, relies a trifle too heavily on Huey 'Piano' Smith and Professor Longhair on the instrumental ***Last Night*** (which is too close for comfort to Little Richard's ***Lucille***) and Pete Johnson and Albert Ammons on ***Crawdad Hole*** and ***I Love The Way My Baby Sings The Blues***. These are marvellous craftsmen when they are at their best, but the masters have done it already — ***make it new!*** And while it may be a real thrill to find someone who can play like Pete Johnson in this age of Boogie Woogie neglect, it is inevitably a bigger thrill simply to listen to Pete Johnson's own recordings, no matter how hard they may be to find.

To his credit, producer Doc Pomus has introduced new material in the shape of the title track, ***Blues Train*** (which Turner, with his characteristic individuality, insists on calling ***Blue Train***) and ***I Love The Way My Baby Sings The Blues*** (which is actually a reworking of Turner's record debut ***Goin' Away Blues***).

It's a good record; it swings all the way. It's certainly better than the recent Pablo fiascoes of the past decade. I suppose what we're looking for is something as tightly constructed, as 'classic' as 1956's "The Boss Of The Blues," yet as 'new' as this release. It could still happen; team Turner with Jay McShann or even Sammy Price and a suitable rhythm section and sublime music could result. But there isn't much time....

If the ideal doesn't come to pass, then the real will do. This is Joe Turner at his very best, in a convivial setting. It would be a terrible shame if it were neglected. ***— Julian Yarrow***

DAVID HOLLAND

Life Cycle
ECM 1238

Life Cycle — Inception / Discovery / Longing / Search / Resolution / Sonnet / Rune / Troubadour Tale / Grapevine / Morning Song / Chanson Pour la Nuit (solo cello)

This is another of those recordings that defies definition; that is not meant as a disparagement, for Holland is a remarkable musician within or outside a jazz context. This is music in its widest interpretation — personal, without parameters of expectation.

Though many large aggregations employed the cello as a contributing factor to big band adventures in sound (Boyd Raeburn, Stan Kenton et al), only with the likes of Oscar Pettiford and Harry Babasin in the fifties did the instrument begin to assume a legitimacy as a solo vehicle in jazz. Today, in the hands of players such as Abdul Wadud, David Eyges, David Lee and Holland, the cello has become another means to extend the boundaries of what most conveniently call 'jazz.' As Wadud so aptly expressed it: "I hear the cello as being percussive, chordal, linear, in a group improvisation

context, and capable of many effects. In short, I hear it as an 'instrument' and not as the accustomed sweet sounding instrument which tends to stifle a whole new world of music" (Bishara 101 – liner notes, 1977).

All compositions are Holland originals, and the titles, suggestive as they are, have led this reviewer to conjecture on the performances in the light of them. ***Sonnet***, for example, capturing lyrically a briefly inspired moment, does produce its appeal within a very restricted framework; whereas ***Rune***, an admixture of mini-melodies, is discursive and polyrhythmical, as undecipherable as some puzzling Germanic rune itself. ***Troubadour***, richly comic in feeling at times, is replete with the gentle pipings often used to embellish the mediaeval storyteller's tale; and strongly punctuated notes are set against scored layers of resonant sounds on ***Grapevine***. ***Morning Song*** and ***La Nuit*** are appropriately and delightfully contrasts. The former echoes cries to awake like urgent birdsong at daybreak, in mood not unlike the introduction to the Ornette Coleman composition of the same name recorded some seventeen years earlier at the Golden Circle in Sweden, the latter maintains an aura of tranquillity from start to finish. The playing throughout is exemplary.

Side one is an extended composition in five parts titled ***Life Cycle***. The opening movement (***Inception***) is powerfully stated, warm yet assertive, while the playful meanderings followed by tremulous cries from the cello in its lower register token the joy of ***Discovery***. The third facet, ***Longing***, is captured in the plaintive strains of the instrument, and the urgency of ***Search*** is revealed in short, sudden changes in tempo and timbre. The final section, ***Resolution***, offers bold, deft phrasing of the bow summed up in a strongly rhythmical plucking of strings, by far the most jazz-oriented portion of the work. Such description hardly does justice to the piece which must be heard in its entirety to be fully appreciated. Profoundly classical in concept, it is a first-rate composition in any musical sphere. And Holland, though no Rostropovich or Starker perhaps, proves he is a skilled craftsman as well as an articulate spokesman for new ideas.

I certainly enjoyed this recording, recommending it especially to those with a penchant for the cello. The customary high calibre of ECM engineering is also an enhancement.

– John Sutherland

MAX ROACH QUARTET

In the Light
Soul Note 1053

In the Light/Straight No Chaser/Ruby My Dear/ Henry Street Blues/If You Could See Me Now/ Good Bait/Tricotism

Kenny Clarke, Art Blakey and Max Roach, drummers who figured prominently in the bop explosion of the late forties and early fifties, have surrounded themselves with players the names of which read like a who's who of modern jazz. Roach, who credits much of his early percussive technique to Jo Jones (doesn't everybody?), has perhaps, unlike Clarke and Blakey, linked his musical statements over the years closely to the ever-changing social issues in America; there appear to be no such intended alliances here, only four good players "having a conversation," a concept Roach apparently prefers to playing "jazz" or "black music."

If you liked "Chattahoochee Red" (Columbia 37376 – recorded 1981), you'll enjoy this session as well; the same performers shape the music imaginatively and excitingly.

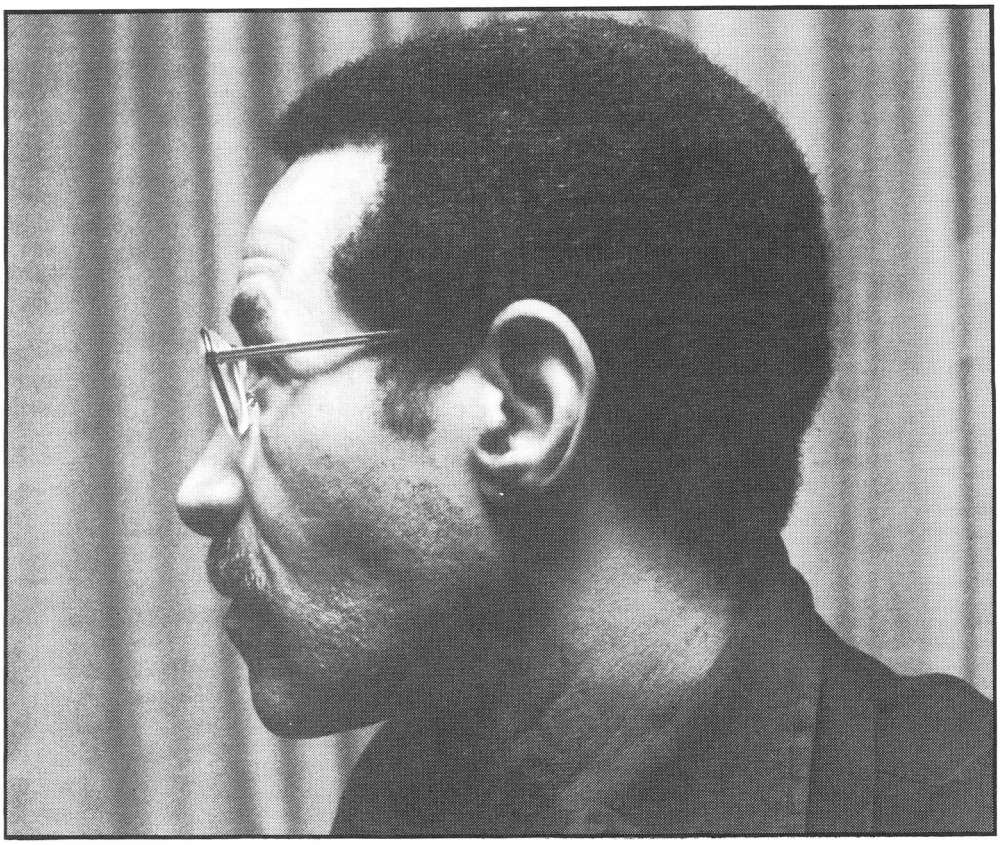
Cecil Bridgewater is clear, brittle and articulate on trumpet; tenorman Odean Pope, robust and reedy, displays the raw edge of a Sonny Rollins tempered by lyrical flights reminiscent of Coltrane. Together, they fashion some marvelous pairings, notably in their lead-reversing textural clashes on ***Chaser***, and on ***Good Bait*** with Bridgewater's delicate shadings set against Pope's sorties into the lower register of the sax. Each is featured in what is ostensibly a trio setting. Bridgewater, on flugelhorn, offers us an appealingly gentle rendition of ***Ruby***, while Pope captures the lyrical beauty inherent in Tadd Dameron's ***If You Could See Me Now.***

Of course, all this is orchestrated against the omnipresent drumnasticks of Roach who shows, as always, an adeptness for accentuation that has few rivals. Exploratory in his break on ***Straight No Chaser***, imperceptibly subtle in changing tempo (***Ruby***), slow and deliberate on ***In the Light***, feathery with finesse on ***Tricotism***, pumping and driving on ***Henry Street Blues*** – he has it all, without ever seeming to intrude.

Calvin Hill is no slouch either, showing not only that he is attuned to the players and the session, but also that he is capable of fine individual efforts; he and Pope afford a lovely opening duet on Pettiford's ***Tricotism***, while his strong walking bass infuses energy into ***Henry***.

The absence of a piano for this quartet recording is of little consequence. Both the recording itself and the performances are top notch.

– John Sutherland



MAX ROACH (photograph by Cecco Maino)

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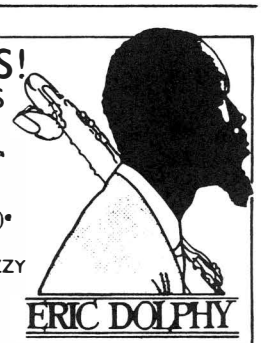

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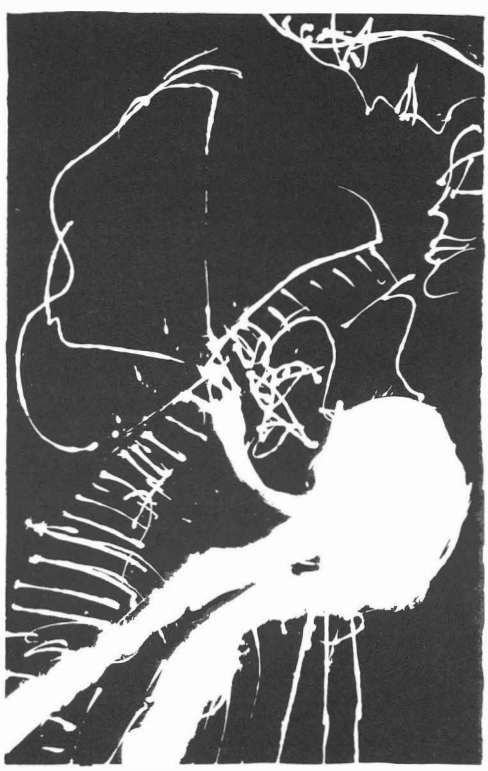

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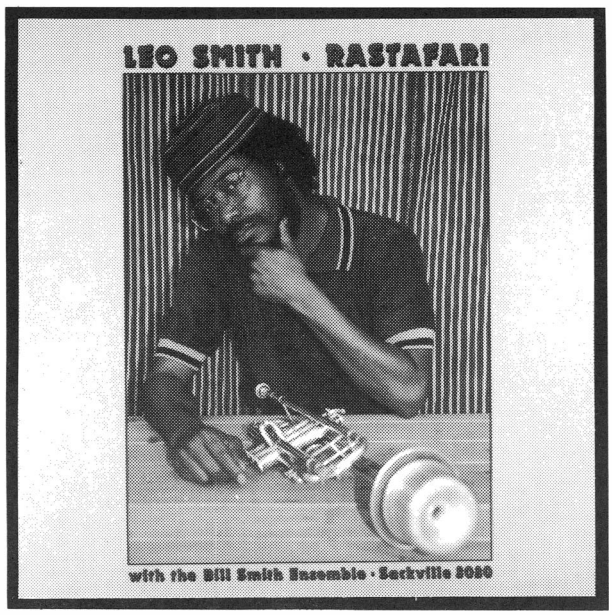

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Leo Smith — trumpet, flugelhorn, percussion and harmonica; David Prentice — violin; Bill Smith — soprano and sopranino saxophones, alto clarinet; Larry Potter — vibes; David Lee — bass and cello.

Side One — *Rastafari — Rituals*
Side Two — *Madder Lake — Little Bits*

Recorded Sunday, June 12th, 1983, by Phil Sheridan at McClear Place Studios, Toronto.

Leo Smith is "one of the unsung heroes of American music." It is the kind of remark one can skim over half-consciously for a few reasons. Like "the Sun is hot" or "Mars is far away," the statement is so direct that it is innocuous. Also, "hero" is a status so trivialized in media-saturated cultures like the United States that anyone who brings a cat down from a tree or shows a young person how to throw a curve ball qualifies.

While Smith is a rarity among artists, his art has the common grounding in life experiences. In this regard, the unique mixture of blues, jazz, and world musics that are to be heard in Smith's music reflect an exceptional life, not simply a thorough education. Like any artist, Smith's life and work is analogous to a journey; yet, Smith's is anything but typical.

Smith considers the album to be a cooperative effort — it is Bill Smith, wearing his producer's hat, who made "Rastafari" 'a Leo Smith record' in a respectful gesture. It is obvious upon hearing "Rastafari" that Bill Smith, David Prentice, David Lee, and Larry Potter can not only cogently co-create with a major figure like Smith, but inspire him as well. An inspired Leo Smith is to be heard throughout "Rastafari:" ruminating about the spaces of the title piece; singing in the shimmering light of Prentice's *Madder Lake*; exhorting the madness of war in Bill Smith's anti-war statement, *Rituals*; and bantering throughout *Little Bits*, the saxophonist's portrait of his daughters. In turn, "Rastafari" is an inspiring album. This should not be surprising, as inspiration is the function of the hero; and Leo Smith is a hero of American music. — *Bill Shoemaker*

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Junior Mance — piano; Martin Rivera — bass.

Harlem Lullaby — Girl Of My Dreams — Prelude To A Kiss — Come On Home — For Dancers Only — Run 'Em Round — Summertime

Recorded Sunday, July 3rd, 1983, by Phil Sheridan at McClear Place Studios, Toronto.

Junior Mance has been working professionally since he was a teenager in his native Chicago. His early experience helped to shape the uniqueness of his piano sound and gave him the resources from which he built an enviable reputation as one of the better pianists to grow out of the bebop revolution of the forties.

He grew up in an environment where he was surrounded by the sounds of jazz music. "Both my parents were very fond of boogie woogie and bought all the records so as a kid I was listening to Albert Ammons, Meade Lux Lewis and Pete Johnson as well as lots of blues singers so subconsciously I realised that was the direction I wanted to go in." The influence of that music has never left Junior Mance — the blues are a major part of his musical language and the nuances of those sounds recur constantly in his music.

Over the past twenty years Junior Mance has concentrated his energies on the performance of songs where the arrangements evolve naturally over a period of time. Each tune has a definite shape within which there is ample room for variation. He usually works together with Martin Rivera — a bassist who seems to be intuitively on the same wavelength as the pianist. In fact, many of their recent collaborations have been in a duo setting. They continue to perform regularly in New York, primarily at the Knickerbocker and the Village Gate — and regularly makes swings through Europe and Japan. The joy which can be heard in Junior Mance's playing is a reflection of his philosophy. Junior Mance is one of the masters of the art of playing the blues within the jazz tradition. His music is a continuing seminar on the essentials of jazz piano.

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