CODA MAGAZINE

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WOODY HERMAN
BY CHUCK STEWART

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WOODY HERMAN

FIFTY YEARS LEADING THE HERD

The Woody Herman Orchestra is soaring. "Oh yeah!" Herman shouts out, as the trumpets dig into their material. "Hear ya baby!" It's a fresh, uptempo thing, and drummer Dave Miller's giving it a bit of a rock feel. Herman, standing in front of his fifteen young musicians, is positively beaming.

You look out at the crowd. A lot of young faces there. Most are clearly loving it. It's some of the older people down front — the gray-haired men and women — who appear lost this afternoon. Some of them no doubt haven't seen Woody Herman, or bought one of his records, since the summer of '42 or something, when they were young. Herman's ***not***, for the most part, playing things in this concert that they remember from those years. (And if he ***does*** play an occasional oldie, he ***doesn't*** play it the way it was played way back when.)

Maybe they're waiting for stuff that made the Hit Parade. But Herman offers instead Aaron Copeland's ***Fanfare For The Common Man***, which hardly brings back romantic memories for them. And now the musicians surge into Thelonious Monk's complex, intriguing ***Epistophistry*** — a new arrangement by a trombonist in the band, John Fedchock. This is music you have to ***listen*** to.

You can see the puzzlement on some of the older faces in the crowd. They don't understand why Woody Herman has to throw so much contemporary-sounding material at them. Why isn't he content to bring back sounds of the swing era? They had come to the concert, no doubt, seeking to recapture their lost youth. The thing is, Woody Herman never lost his.

Today, no less than when he started, Herman is a firm believer in the importance of letting the musicians in his band express themselves, of offering new material, and of trying new approaches. Herman has led one of the all-time great large jazz ensembles. And he has never sold out.

"Our band never really had 'a style,' Herman notes. "I've changed midstream many times over the years, and when you do that, you lose your audience for a while. And then you desperately fight to get somebody to listen to you. I think it's healthy, though. There are too many bands that just got into one bag and stayed there because it was comfortable, I guess. But I was never comfortable doing that."

What brought down most of the big bands, Herman says, was "a culmination of sameness and lack of imagination. All of them relying on what worked for them before. By the '60s, Duke, Basie and our band were the only ones that could still get anything going. All the rest of them were nice ghost bands."

The Woody Herman Orchestra, with only minor interruptions, has basically been an ongoing concern since November of 1936. Herman plans to officially mark his fiftieth anniversary as a bandleader with a concert in the Hollywood Bowl, which will hopefully include clarinetist Richard Stoltzman and trumpeter Wynton Marsalis as guest soloists. The concert will feature ***Ebony Concerto***, which Igor Stravinsky wrote for Herman in 1946, and a mix of old and new material.

Herman has no plans to retire. He's been on the road since boyhood, he says. At this point, settling down and actually ***living*** in a house, rather than in a series of hotel rooms, would seem foreign to him. Besides, it's simply too rewarding for him hearing his band night after night. Who knows, he adds, what sounds the next musician to join the band will have to contribute?

"I'm still struggling to find something that I feel will be better," Herman insists. "I'll probably go down swinging."

Herman was born May 16, 1913, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. "I worked actively in vaudeville when I was a little kid. I did my first tour at nine, and I was only a song and dance cat at that point. One of my big hits in vaudeville was a thing called, ***Oh Gee, Say Gee, You Ought To See My Gigi, From The Fiji Isles***. Then with the money I earned the first season, I got a saxophone and then later a clarinet," Herman recalls.

"My parents weren't in vaudeville but they were believers in it. They were great enthusiasts. However, when I announced (when I was about eleven or twelve) that I was leaving show business and was going to be a hot jazz musician, I think they both went into a dead faint. It was pretty shocking to them."

By fourteen, he was working as a musician in a suburban roadhouse. He heard on records popular jazz of the mid-'20s, such as that of Red Nichols and his Five Pennies, and the Indiana Five. But Herman was also intrigued by one upcoming stylist in music who at that time was not nearly so well-known as Red Nichols (particularly to youths growing up in the midwest): Duke Ellington.

"Right from the beginning, actually, I admired Ellington. I had records of his band when I was in high school. Yeah. It was then known as 'Duke Ellington and the Washingtonians,' and it was an eight-piece band. I was already influenced by Ellington's approach," Herman remembers.

Who were other influences, in the early years of Herman's musical career? "Some of the soloists who made big imprints on me, naturally were 'Pops' — Louis Armstrong — and the great new force on the scene at that time was Coleman Hawkins. And I think every saxophone player in the world tried to sound like Coleman. In the late '20s, early '30s. He was the biggest new influence, as far as new sounds were concerned. I was mostly a saxophone player: first of all, alto, and then later on as I got older, to be a teenager, that's when I switched to tenor. And I, along with millions of other guys, thought we sounded just like Hawk," Herman says.

"I was working professionally when I was in high school, first in a small band outside of town in a road-house, and then in my sophomore year I joined the most important band in the area: Joe Lichter's. It was a band made up of Chicago guys, and they were playing in Milwaukee in the local ballroom. I got the job, and I was far and away younger than the rest of the guys. There were guys in their 20s and 30s, and I was 14 I guess. It was a ballroom band, but we were always jazz-oriented.

"Then when I decided to leave school and leave home, I joined the Tom Gerun band, which was a San Francisco band, and they were playing the midwest at that point. And I joined them, and then later, Tony Martin was a member of the saxophone section (and also a singer), and Ginny Simms was the girl singer, at that point in San Francisco. And it was a show-biz kind of band; we were an entertaining group." Herman's success singing with Gerun's band brought him to the attention of Music Corporation of America (MCA), a major booking organization, which placed him (circa 1932-33) with Gus Arnheim's band, and then with Harry Sosnik's band.

"I eventually joined Isham Jones, and that was the most important band I had played in until then. He was a great songwriter and had very excellent players in the band. It was pretty much legitimate kind of dance music, but he also, for instance, had maybe a dozen arrangements in the book by Fletcher Henderson. He was not a narrow-minded musician. If a thing sounded good, he wanted to play it.

"Then he decided he had had enough. He was very, very wealthy and very successful by then (mostly as a songwriter), so he just wanted to try other things to do. He bought a huge ranch in Colorado and raised turkeys."

The Woody Herman Band began with a nucleus of young, hot players from the now-defunct Isham Jones Band. "There were actually five of us from his band, and then we hired other people. Because that's all the people we could get that were interested in what we were interested in. And we felt that we could play some blues probably better than anybody else. We called our band "The Band that Plays the Blues." The original guys all were stockholders. But later, as the army took players away, then I bought up the stock and eventually became the sole owner."

Herman featured himself mostly on clarinet rather than sax because the success of Benny Goodman had made clarinet suddenly "the hot American boy's instrument."

Herman says: "We had had small hits on the first band — stuff like ***Blues In The Night*** and ***Woodchoppers Ball***." Among other recordings of this first band (all on Decca) were ***Bishop's Blues, Golden Wedding, Blues On Parade, Amen*** and ***Who Dat Up Dere***. But in those years, the band was not as popular as, say, the bands of Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw, Count Basie, Duke Ellington or Jimmie Lunceford.

Herman began reorganizing his band during the recording strike of 1943-44. "I started to hire a different breed of player, and certainly a different breed of arrangers," Herman notes, in explaining the radical change in direction the band took.

"I was deeply influenced by Duke. Whether it shows or not, I was. I did get my own direction. That was, I guess, a case of having the right people on the scene at the right time. Ralph

WOODY HERMAN (Photograph by Gerard Futrick)

Burns (arranger/pianist) was probably as much responsible for a lot of our sound as anyone, and then other people came and started to contribute.

"We were getting all ready during the recording strike. We were working at it, developing ideas," Herman recalls. The band changed so dramatically that it seemed an entirely new unit by 1944. No longer was it billed "The Band that Plays the Blues." It had a clean, modern sound. It was the first Herd.

"Bill Harris came into the band around that time. The transition period started in 1944. So about '45, we were ready. Billy Bauer was in as the guitar player. And trumpet players we were getting by the dozen. In the '46 band — I already had Pete Condoli in the end of "The Band that Plays the Blues." I took him from Tommy Dorsey. Neal Hefti came in, the same time approximately, as Ralph Burns and Chubby Jackson (the bass player) did, from Charlie Barnet's Band and so on." (Other new talent in the band included Flip Phillips on tenor saxophone and sixteen-year-old Conte Condoli on trumpet. Dave Tough proved an ideal drummer.)

"Neal Hefti wasn't writing then much; he was just beginning. I think he wrote two tunes, the whole time he was in the band. One was ***Good Earth*** and the other one was ***Half Past Jumping Time***. Then he would contribute on a lot of stuff, like the trumpets would do — because a lot of our things were based on heads, and then the writers would bridge the gaps. In other words, when we ran out of gas, then they would write something and put it in the middle of a chart or something. And I was the editor. So our madness went together. I didn't write arrangements; I was an editor.

"The first big smash was in '45. That's when we switched to Columbia Records. And the whole band was completely different sounding. That's when we hit," Herman recalls. Numbers such as ***Apple Honey, Bijou, Blowin' Up A Storm, Goosey Gander*** and ***Wildroot*** went over with both the critics and the public.

"We made a big dent. And even though the big band interest was beginning to wane, we got the good out of it. Those were the two biggest years I ever had in my career: '45 and '46 — and it's all been downhill since," Herman says with a laugh.

Herman had his own radio show, his record sales were strong, and the future looked golden, when he announced early in '47 that he was retiring from the music business. The retirement didn't last long.

"I was going to try to spend some time at home," he explains. Home was in California with his wife, Charlotte and their infant daughter, Ingrid. "I lasted seven months, and then I reorganized the band. The first person I heard, that impressed me enough to really get turned on to say, 'Hey, I got to put together another band,' was Ernie Royal, a trumpet player. I heard him playing in a little group in Hollywood one night, and I said, 'If we can get that guy, we'll be OK."

Herman's second Herd (which he refers to as his "bebop band") included a hand-picked saxophone section consisting of tenormen Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, Herbie Stewart (whose chair would eventually be filled by Al Cohn) and baritone player Serge Chaloff. Getz and Sims were not famous players when Herman hired them. But Herman liked their sound (they both played in a similar fashion). Arranger Jimmy Giuffre fashioned some charts featuring three tenors and one baritone, the most famous of which was ***Four Brothers***. It was a different sound, a mellow, hip sound. the "Four Brothers" band was a tremendous critical success. Herman's bands since the late '40s have usually been critical successes.

But were they all financial successes? "No, we were losing money by the millions. In one year, I lost about $200,000, and in those days that was a lot of money. That was around the '47 band, the bebop band. That band was a complete loss as far as money was concerned. But we had great artistic success, so what the hell did we care? I was rapidly going in the hole already — and I've been in a hole ever since," Herman says with a laugh.

He reorganized again in '49. This Herd included such players as Shelly Manne, Gene Ammons, Terry Gibbs, Milt Jackson, Oscar Pettiford. Through the years, in one herd after another, Herman has repeatedly come up with great players: Urbie Green, Bill Chase, Don Lamond, John Bunch, Sonny Igoe, Richie Kamuca, Lou Levy, Shorty Rogers, etc.

In the early '60s, Herman led a particularly spectacular unit that featured Jake Hanna, Nat Pierce, Carl Fontana, and Sal Nistico. In the '70s, Herman moved more into fusion; in recent years he's pulled back more into the mainstream of big band jazz. He records frequently for Concord today.

But Herman has rarely achieved the commercial success many of his fans might imagine he's achieved. He says he's known for thirty years that he'll never be able to pay the back taxes and interest which the government maintains he owes. He adds he has no credit and no bank account, and hasn't for many years.

"But that doesn't faze me, because I didn't care about that. That wasn't important. All I want is money to eat and sleep and live as well as I can. But I do not care about anything else — only music. So I've led my existence. The one that suffers is my daughter — but she's mentally about like I am," Herman says. "The government's been on my butt for over twenty five years. The latest figure they gave me, sometime last year, I owned them a million, six hundred thousand dollars [in back taxes and interest] — right now. But, it just rolls off of me like water off a duck's back.

"Now, if I work for George Wein or anything, I say, 'Don't worry about it. Just get me as much as you can, and you pay all my living and you pay all .my transportation and you pay all my hotels, food — in other words, I don't want any of that responsibility."

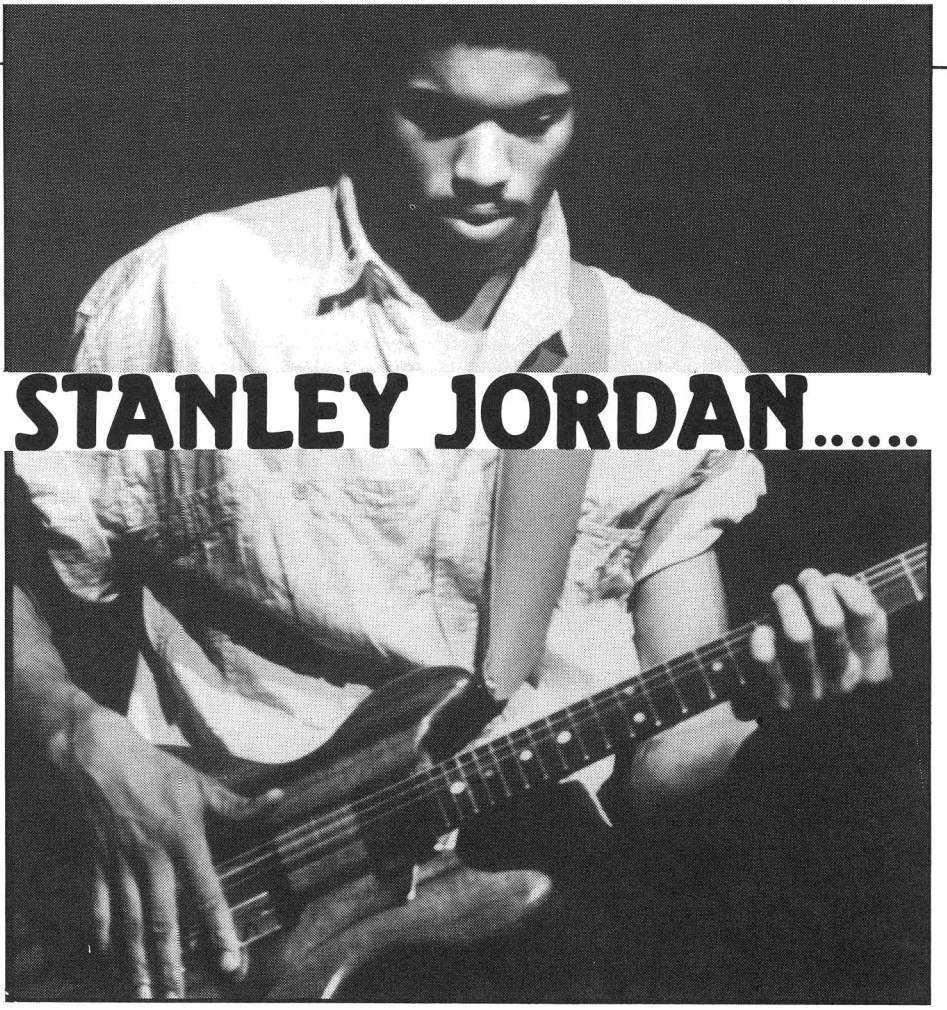
His main interest in life has been in maintaining the best possible bands, and he's never cared if he's shown a profit, so long as his bands have brought in enough income to keep going. When Herman dies, he says, the band will die with him. "My grandson's not interested [in taking over the band], and he's the only one I would allow to front it. That's the way it is." There would be no point in authorizing a "ghost band," Herman says, that would deteriorate from year to year.

Herman says that he has no one favorite band, when he looks back over the various editions he's led for fifty years. "No, I think every one of those bands had something to say. Right through the '70s, when we were into some form of fusion. Actually, we were more of a fusion band than people realized. But then when I reached a stone wall, I said, "Nah, we found as much as we're going to find here. So let's just now analyze and take the best of what we got."

The band always spotlights arrangements by its current members. Herman has no interest in re-creating anything exactly the way he played it forty or fifty years ago. The members of his current "Thundering Herd" (with the exceptions of saxophonist Frank Tiberi and trumpeter Bill Byrne, who have been with Herman since the 1960s) are mostly in their early '20s. "For the past fifty years, all my big bands have been made up of young people," Herman notes. "It's just that the coach got very old in the interim."

Sometimes Herman will break up the band for six or eight weeks, while he does things with all-star smaller groups, or takes a brief rest. Where do the members of the big band go in the interim? "They'll do whatever they can do. I might lose one or two or three, but they're all pretty dedicated, you know. They put up with my shenanigans."

AN ARTICLE BY CHIP DEFFAA



STANLEY JORDAN.....

It was one of the most eagerly-awaited concerts of the 1984 Kool Jazz Festival, and New York's Avery Fisher Hall was packed. The audience had come to hear Wynton Marsalis and Maynard Ferguson.

But concert producer George Wein had a surprise up his sleeve. He opened the program with an "unknown" – an unbilled added attraction by the name of Stanley Jordan, who stood alone on the great stage and, without fanfare, began gently touching the strings of his electric guitar.

John S. Wilson reported in the *New York Times* that Jordan "played an unaccompanied solo set that threatened to overshadow Mr. Marsalis and Mr. Ferguson before they even reached the stage.... ending in a dazzling cadenza that brought the audience to its feet with a roar of approval."

Jeff Levenson wrote in *Down Beat*: "Within 15 minutes he nailed down a following... he is a major talent."

Fred Goodman, in the *New York Post* declared: "He is destined to turn the guitar world on its ear."

And by early the next year, Hugh Wyatt of the *New York Daily News* was proclaiming Wynton Marsalis and Stanley Jordan the two most significant new jazz players to emerge in 20 years.

It is hard to believe that not all that long before Jordan's triumphant appearance at Avery Fisher Hall, he was a New York City "street musician," entertaining passers-by in Greenwich Village.

Today he records for the Blue Note label and he is a heavy draw on the concert and club circuit. And a performance by Stanley Jordan is unlike anyone else's in the world of jazz.

Eyes closed, a shy smile illuminating his boyish features, Stanley Jordan stands onstage at New York's Lehman Center for the Performing Arts. Both hands dart over the neck of the electric guitar. He doesn't pluck or strum the strings – he taps them. And from his guitar cascades a fantastic array of notes. High, clear, bell-like sounds, weaving in intricate patterns. A shimmering tapestry. There are moments, you think, when he sounds like two guitarists playing at once, moments too, when he sounds more like two harpsichordists. You are moved by the beauty of the sound, no less than by the melodic leaps of his improvising.

Jordan sways with the music he creates, in a kind of spontaneous dance-in-place. (He tells you later that moving with the music helps him to find the ideal notes as he improvises). Jordan's repertoire is nothing if not eclectic. He'll offer his own contemporary originals, such as an ebullient blues entitled *Fundance* or the African-inflected *Return Expedition*. He'll reinterpret familiar jazz pieces such as Thelonious Monk's *'Round Midnight* or Miles Davis' *Freddie Freeloader*. From a current pop favorite like Michael Jackson's *The Lady In My Life*, he can reach back to the haunting *My Old Flame* (which Sam Coslow and Arthur Johnston wrote fully 50 years ago). Jimi Hendrix's ballad, *Angel*, proves an effective vehicle for him, no less than Thad Jones' *A Child Is Born*. The high clear sounds Jordan produces seem to lend themselves to lyrical expression.

But it is Jordan's unconventional technique that awes the guitarists who go to see him. The fingers of Jordan's left hand play bass lines and chords; the fingers of his right hand tap out single note lines and arpeggios. The contrapuntal lines create a convincing illusion of two (or more) guitars playing at once. Jordan, 25, has created the most radically different sound on the guitar since Les Paul came up with the first multi-track recording, *Lover*, in 1948. Jordan expects to release a book on his technique in 1986.

Jordan says he hit upon his unorthodox approach to the guitar basically by playing the strings of the guitar as he had previously played the keys of the piano.

In his boyhood, Jordan notes, he played classical piano. He would never have dreamed then, he adds, that he'd someday be a jazz musician. He aspired then to become a classical composer.

Born in Palo Alto, California, in 1959, Jordan was evidently something of a child prodigy. He loved the piano, he says. "I could play and play for hours. I used to spend a lot of time composing. And that was my main thing. I've been composing since I was six. I did this one recital of a piece that I composed, when I was 10.

"I composed a lot of piano stuff that was sort of using Beethoven as a model. My mom used to always have the classical music station going, so I got a lot of exposure just from having the music around the house.

"I listened to people like Wagner, Stravinsky – mainly classical composers – and Prokofiev I liked a lot. And then, I started really checking out the blues when I was about 10 or 11. And that's when I starting getting interested in guitar. Because I was listening to more rock. And I was listening to a lot of soul music. And then, well, Jimi Hendrix was my main influence. And then Albert King, B.B. King, and I listened to a lot of blues.

"When I was about 14, I started seriously studying jazz, because although I had heard it for several years, I had never really tried to play it until then, because it was so complicated, and I never really felt like I was ready to check it out. So I finally felt like then was the time, and so

STANLEY JORDAN (Photograph by Gary Gershoff)

I went into an almost exclusive jazz phase. I didn't want to hear about anything else; I was so into just jazz. And I listened to people like Freddie Hubbard, Herbie Hancock, Miles, Coltrane, and on guitar, I listened to George Benson, Wes Montgomery."

As for the tapping technique, "I thought it up on my own. (I'm not saying I was the first person to do it – I wasn't – but it was original to me at the time). The reason I did it was that I was working on counterpoint. My goal was to learn how to compose good counterpoint, and be able to perform it on guitar. I was like 15. And so, just the desire to create more independent lines on guitar made me sit down and say, 'Well, how do you go about it?'"

In November of 1975, Jordan played his first guitar pieces using the tapping technique. "I have some tapes I made then – solo guitar." Jordan says that one guitarist was tapping 30 years ago, although Jordan was unaware of the fact until fairly recently. "A man named Jimmy Webster did this years ago. I just saw his book for the first time. And it's amazing because so many of the things that I've discovered over the years, he put right down in his book 30 years ago. It's called "The Touch System" and you can't find it anywhere; it's not in print. He demonstrated guitars for Gretsch, and his whole thing was tapping with both hands on the neck." Webster and no doubt others hit upon the tapping concept independently. But Webster's playing went basically unnoticed; it was not influential. Jordan is receiving acclaim today not just for his technique, but for the use he makes of it as a musician.

In Jordan's mid-teens, he began experimenting with unorthodox ways of tuning his guitar. He settled upon tuning his guitar in fourths, which simplified the keyboard for him and allowed him to play more chords. He tended to play mostly conventional-style guitar when playing with others, and to experiment with the tapping while playing solo.

"I played in funk bands with friends. And in high school I was in the jazz ensemble, the big band. And in college, I was in a couple fusion bands," he notes.

At Princeton University, Jordan majored in music. "I studied theory and composition with Milton Babbitt. When I'm improvising, I'm trying to think like a composer. In other words, I'm not just, you know, playing licks as they come to me, but I'm trying to construct a complete, coherent piece, even if it's improvised."

He also studied computer music with Paul Lansky at Princeton. Computers fascinated Jordan. "There were several devices I made, to help with the musical research I was doing. One was a programmable sequencer. You could store over a thousand notes and play them back frontwards, backwards, change the pitch independently from the tempo, and that sort of thing. Now I've got a Commodore 64, which I'm writing some software for, and I've expanded it beyond just the sequencer. What I'm working on is a complete music system. And the core of it is going to be a composition language, which will allow you to not only tell the computer, 'I want you to play *this*,' but you can say, 'I want you to play this *kind* of thing.' And then it will, at random, play examples of that kind of thing. Like, I've got it now where it can improvise on rhythms that you give it, improvise on chord progressions that you give it. What I'm trying to do is make a programmable jamming partner, that I can program to play all kinds of things that most people don't know how to play."

Jordan played guitar in a couple of popular bands, playing for parties at Princeton eating clubs and residential colleges. A highpoint of his Princeton career was being invited to join Benny Carter (who was teaching at Princeton that semester) and Dizzy Gillespie for a concert on campus in October of 1979. *The Princeton Recollector* reported that Jordan got the only standing ovation of the evening.

For his senior thesis, Jordan produced and recorded a concert at Murray Theater. Jordan hoped to produce a record album from this tape and other tapes he had made while a Princeton undergraduate.

"I wanted to have my album out right away – by the end of the school year. Then I realized there were a lot more things I'd have to learn, to really put out an album. So I ended up finishing up the album about a year after I graduated," Jordan says.

"I decided to make my own album so I could get a start. I wanted to go into making albums, but there's so many things that make it complicated. You have to have a record contract, you have to find the right record company, and you have to make a presentation so that they know what you're about. And I didn't see all those things coming together any time soon." Jordan's first album, "Touch Sensitive" was self-produced.

"I was living by gigging and playing in the streets. I made most of my money outdoors. At the concerts I'd go to, nobody had heard me. How am I going to get a gig if they don't know who I am? Well, I really had a good time," he recalls. "I was travelling with a friend and business partner, Don Dixon. And we just accepted it as a challenge. We'd crash festivals and things. We'd go to the festival and we'd try to scheme for how to get me up on the stage.

"We did the Atlanta Free Jazz Festival in '82. We just went there and drove in, told the guy we were with the band. And we had the equipment in the car so he believed us. And we talked to the stage manager. And my friend said something like: 'This guitar player is really happening, you should hear him.' So he found me a place to plug in, and then I played for all the people behind the stage, in between the set changes. Then I just started asking people, 'Well, hey, I'd really like to play up there, on the stage!' So then they finally let me do it. We went to a few places like that. I'd play and Don would sell my records."

Jordan sometimes played on a street-corner in Greenwich Village. His sidewalk gigging got him at least one real booking. "I met Pat Kenny and ended up playing Kenny's Castaway. He saw me on the street, on Bleeker Street, and said, 'Hey, I own a club,'" Jordan remembers.

"I used to hang out in the Village and jam in some of the clubs. At the Blue Note, I jammed with Ted Curson. I jammed at 55 Grand Street a lot." He met Art Blakey, Freddie Hubbard, Philly Joe Jones, Bill Evans, and many other notables there. "And they all helped really. It was like a big family," he says. So when Jordan finally auditioned for George Wein in 1984, although he was an unknown as far as the general public was concerned, he had a lot of respected older jazz artists already rooting for him.

The Kool Jazz Festival debut was followed by Jordan's European debut at the Montreaux (Switzerland) Jazz Festival. He received a solo booking at New York's Village Vanguard and became the first artist signed to Bruce Lundvall's recently-revived Blue Note label.

Jordan has two guitars which he uses, he notes: "A Travis Bean and Ibanez. The Ibanez has been modified for me. They've created a damper that can individually damp each string. That means that I don't have a lot of open strings, if I don't want to. But I can decide which strings should be played as open strings, and which ones will be damped. I haven't modified the Travis Bean. I found that for some reason, open strings vibrating isn't as much of a problem with this guitar. The single most important thing, for playing the way I play, is you have to have low action. If the strings are real close to the frets, then all you have to do is just tap real lightly and you can get real clear, clean tones."

Jordan has been touring heavily since the release of his first Blue Note album in February, 1985. He's very glad for the Blue Note contract, he adds. "I'm working with all these people who really know the business stuff, so now I can just concentrate on the music," Jordan says. "And *that* I really like." – *Chip Deffaa*

PAUL DESMOND

AN APPRECIATION OF THE ALTO SAXOPHONIST BY TED GIOIA

Some pundit once remarked that the most telling thing about Jane Austen was the fact that she never mentioned the French Revolution in her writings. A similar perspective could be applied fruitfully to the study of musicians. Indeed the most definitive thing about many a musician's style is not so much its positive virtues, but what it excludes.

In the case of saxophonist Paul Desmond, one never needed to look far to find these omissions. The bebop cliches, the obsession with playing fast, the memorized licks which characterized jazz saxophone playing in the post-Charlie Parker era - all of these were noticeably absent in Desmond's music. As Brubeck once mentioned, with no slight intended: "Paul's big contribution is going to be that he *didn't* copy Charlie Parker." *(Downbeat*, September 15, 1980)

A comparison between Desmond and his contemporary, Charlie Parker, is illuminating. Parker, one of the most brilliant improvisers in the history of jazz, was at his best when the tempo was fast and the chord structure was complex: his virtuosity delighted in musical obstacle courses such as *Ko-Ko* or *The Hymn*.

Desmond, in contrast, seldom played at very fast tempos, and when he did one sensed that it was done unwillingly. Not that his technique was not equal to the task; rather it was Desmond's over-riding concern with creating a melodic and thematically organized improvisation that led him to eschew the facile glibness of many of the beboppers. Unlike those players of lesser talent who follow a credo of "let your fingers do the walking," Desmond played a thinking man's jazz with solos that often made punning reference to other compositions and improvisations. On an early recording of *You Go To My Head*, for example, Desmond inserts a quote from a Charlie Parker blues in the midst of a most un-Parker-like passage. In other contexts he would incorporate long extracts from Chet Baker or Gerry Mulligan solos into his own improvisations.

Desmond, born less euphoniously as Paul Emil Breitenfeld, claimed that he came upon the name Desmond while paging through the phone book. The remark is appropriate. For an improvising artist such as Desmond, the spur-of-the-moment decision is the basis of all he does. Let musicians who are careful and methodical in their creative impulses become composers; improvisation, by rights, should be reserved for the impetuous and free spirited.

This casual attitude went beyond Desmond's choice of a name. At its worst it encouraged a pronounced habit of procrastination, and Desmond was a procrastinator of almost legendary proportions. For years he spoke of writing a book about his experiences with the Dave Brubeck Quartet. Only the title *(How Many of You Are There In the Quartet?* - according to Desmond, a favorite question of stewardesses) and one very funny chapter ever emerged. (*Punch*, January 10, 1973.) Among his other intended projects was an idiom in which he planned to play each song in the style of a different alto player.

Perhaps the latter idea was only offered as a joke. With Desmond one could never tell. He once told an interviewer that he wanted his alto to sound like a very dry martini; whether his music attained this lofty goal is open to discussion, but of the dryness of his humor there can be no dispute. The humor figured prominently in his music – a rarity in modern jazz, where the artists' self-conscious seriousness and the concert hall atmosphere of even nightclub performances casts a somber aura over most of the music. As his close friend, jazz critic Nat Hentoff, wrote (*Village Voice*, Nat Hentoff, August 22, 1977):

> *At times Paul was the wittiest of improvisers. His ear was extraordinarily quick and true, his mind moved with eerie swiftness. He could take a phrase that someone had played earlier or a musical reference that a friend in the audience would understand and insert it into his solo. He'd build on that phrase until he had turned it inside out and seven other ways. Usually this kind*

DAVE BRUBECK & PAUL DESMOND (Photograph by Hal Hill)

of quoting is trickery, but Paul made it cohere. In his music, as in his life, the absurd cohabited with the familiar.

For much of his 26 year career, Desmond found his musical skills overshadowed by the work of his long-time friend and collaborator Dave Brubeck. Brubeck, who studied with Darius Milhaud in the late 1940's, was a pioneer in the synthesis of jazz and classical music - his piano work featured dense harmonies, a studied sense of rhythm, and the use of elements seemingly alien to jazz such as the twelve tone row and odd time signatures.

Yet Desmond was the unsung hero of the Brubeck Quartet; even more than the group's leader, Desmond was instrumental in shaping the ensemble's distinctive sound. His lyrical tone was immediately identifiable and his ingenious compositions (most notably the group's biggest hit *Take Five*) were an important part of the band's repertoire. Although not a student of Milhaud's, Desmond was involved with Brubeck's experimental work from the start. His affinity for classical music was also revealed in other ways - most markedly in his intonation, which was remarkably pure, especially when contrasted with the "dirtier" sound favored by many of his contemporaries.

In the midst of a period in which cool jazz and West Coast jazz were increasingly the scorn of jazz critics, Desmond embraced both with a vengeance. Desmond was well aware of what passed as fashionable in jazz circles; commenting on Bud Shank, a fellow Californian (although one transplanted from Ohio) Desmond said: (*Downbeat*, October 16, 1958) "I sympathize with him because I have the same problem in my occupation, which is the problem of one who is sort of raised in the atmosphere of cool jazz trying to sound hostile enough to be currently acceptable."

In another interview he elaborated: (*Downbeat*, September 15, 1960, p. 7.) "The things I'm after musically are clarity, emotional communication on a not-too-obvious level, form in a chorus that doesn't hit you over the head but is there if you look for it, humor, and construction that sounds logical in an unexpected way. That and a good dependable high F-sharp and I'll be happy."

The virtues Desmond enumerated are easy enough to list, but maddeningly difficult to attain. Desmond's dissatisfaction with his own playing frequently came to light in many of the interviews he gave over the years. As Lee Konitz, a contemporary who shares many similarities with Desmond, commented: "I feel that Paul has experienced greatness, and once this feeling of playing what you really hear has been felt by a player, it's difficult to settle for less than this."

One senses that towards the end of his life Desmond came closer than ever to realizing this goal. His last recordings reveal an artist who is at peace with himself and who knows with a dogged assurance what it is he wants to express. The ravages of lung cancer may have lessened his stamina and shortened his phrases, but if anything this led Desmond to be even more refined and thoughtful in his playing.

The sardonic humor, however, remained. One wonders what to make of the cover of *Live*, the last album he lived to see released. Desmond is pictured seated alone in a club at closing time - the chairs are stacked on the tables, and Desmond is packed to go with a suitcase, or perhaps his saxophone case, at his side. The artist is smoking a cigarette, although even then he must have known he had only a short time before lung cancer would take its final toll. Another detail: if one looks closely, one notices little skulls and crossbones on Desmond's suspenders. These details, combined with the album's ironic title and Desmond's grim smile are powerfully unnerving.

The music inside, however, is every bit as beautiful as the albums' cover is morbid. His solo on *Wave* could be a textbook example of solo construction, each chorus outdoing the previous one in inventiveness and incisiveness. Elsewhere, on his own composition *Wendy* or in his closing chorus on *Manha de Carnival* Desmond plays as well as at any point in his career. This is the music of a master.

The end is approaching fast. His last appearance in a recording studio was for friend Chet Baker's debut album with the Horizon label. He had been slated to play on the entire album, but had the stamina to record just one track before begging leave to go home and rest. Although he had rarely played in the preceding months, his tone was as pure as ever and his short haunting solo is as fitting a closing statement as any artist could wish to make.

His were the legacies of a man immersed in music. Desmond's piano, left to Bradley Cunningham, now graces Bradley's in New York, and has acquired a reputation as one of the finest nightclub pianos in jazz. His alto was left to Brubeck's son Michael with whom he shared a special closeness. Yet these pale beside his legacy to jazz fans through his many records and a few - too few - short writings. Desmond, a West Coast musician at a time when that was virtually synonymous with being unfashionable, had his ashes scattered over Big Sur country near his birthplace in San Francisco.

MUSIC IN THE TRADITION

It is hard to imagine the enormous energy which emanated from the original King Oliver band of 1923. The music comes to us dimly through the grooves of hopelessly inadequate recordings and yet the originality of the band's music, its distinctive skills and sheer heady drive have captivated listeners since the first release of those Okeh and Gennett records. The impact is clear when one listens to those who sat alongside the bandstand and absorbed the message firsthand. All who heard King Oliver seem to agree that Muggsy Spanier, for one, completely mirrored Oliver but even the best of Spanier's bands never came close to the kind of ensemble playing personified by Oliver's 1923 two cornet group (with the youthful Louis Armstrong). By the time Spanier recorded his classic Ragtimer records in 1939 for Bluebird the Oliver approach would seem to have been modified permanently.

No one could have foreseen the indirect impact of Oliver on musicians outside of Chicago. And yet, only three years later, the Lu Watters band emerged from obscurity in San Francisco with a style based entirely on the concepts of King Oliver's recordings. It was the first conscious effort at recreation in jazz music and showed that part of the music had already become history.

Recreation, reinterpretation and stylistic similarities have been with jazz since that time. It is an integral part of the music performed today on a worldwide basis and now encompasses most styles of the music.

Almost since its inception jazz had been heard and incorporated into the popular dance band music of Europe but it was only after the second world war that a new generation of musicians emerged – those who were specifically performers of jazz. Neither Humphrey Lyttelton nor Johnny Dankworth were viewed with much favour by the music profession but it is their music which has survived the passage of time far better than Sid Phillips and Harry Parry.

A Tribute To Humph (Dormouse DMI), a recent reissue of Humphrey Lyttelton's earliest Parlophone recordings, confirms this view. It covered an eight month period when the band recorded thirteen titles and this lp has a bonus of previously unissued takes of *Irish Black Bottom* and *Come On And Stomp Stomp Stomp* as well as both versions of *Careless Love*.

The ensemble principles of the King Oliver band dominate these recordings but they are not copies of the records. Somehow, these musicians, so far removed from the source, have captured much of the essential spirit which gave the Oliver band its elan. Lyttelton's cornet playing lifts the ensemble with its drive, its rhythmic thrust and its distinctive tone. He really leads the band with tremendous gusto and even at this stage had already developed a flair for organizing the music in an interesting way. Each piece of music has its own approach and character. You can hear the influences – Oliver, Armstrong's Hot Five/Seven – but Lyttelton managed to create a band which had a sound of its own – just as Kid Ory was able to do when he came back to bandleading the mid 1940s.

It has always been argued that these so-called "revivalist" bands didn't swing. It is true that few of the musicians in the rhythm sections had developed the harmonic and rhythmic skills necessary for performance with later jazz stylists. But the musicians who worked with the original bands in the twenties didn't have these skills either. Lyttelton's band didn't have the rhythmic "snap" so noticeable in Kid Ory's band but drummers of the calibre of Minor Hall were not to be found everywhere. Still, this band's rhythm section fulfilled satisfactorily the needs of the idiom within which everyone was working and when they meshed together (as in *Hopfrog*, for instance) you can gain some idea of the lift that was possible.

The uniqueness of the early Lyttelton band was the use of two clarinets (Wally Fawkes and Ian Christie) – it gave the band a different ensemble dimension as well as additional textural option, the outstanding solo qualities of Keith Christie (idiomatic perfection allied to an outstanding technique) and the imagination of the leader. Lyttelton really understood the essence of the music and he brought to this band (and all subsequent ones) a vision which was rooted in his conviction about the fundamentals, regardless of the style he was working within.

The only disappointment in this release will come to those anxious to replace their aging 78s. The sound transfers have lost the "fat" sound so characteristic of the originals and there are other technical flaws in *Come On And Stomp Stomp Stomp, Hop Frog, Snake Rag* and *Snag It* which are not on the originals. Those titles included in the Parlophone reissue ("Best of Humph") from a few years back do not fare so well here.

It is to be hoped that sales of this recording will encourage Brian Hainsworth to continue his planned project of issuing all of Lyttelton's Parlophone recordings up to the spring of 1957 when the band metamorphised itself into the more "mainstream" idiom.

This direction can be discerned from the band's latest release, **It Seems Like Yesterday (Calligraph 01)**, with Wally Fawkes back as a special guest. Later influences on Lyttelton's musical world – such as Sidney Bechet and the "Creole Tinge", Buck Clayton and Duke Ellington can be heard poking their heads around the corner in this latest offering, the first by his current band with Pete Strange as chief arranger. Perhaps because the album is designed to feature Wally Fawkes' clarinet there is a preponderance of freely improvised ensembles rather than the more formal arrangements which over the years have created a different texture to Lyttelton's bands.

All of the tunes were written by Lyttelton except for two by Fawkes (including a new version of his delightful *Trog's Blues*) and one each by Pete Strange and Mick Pyne. It's a tough assignment to record all this material on one day but Lyttelton enjoys the luxury of a permanently organized ensemble and presumably some of these pieces would have been performed before being commited to record. In the earlier days when only two or four selections were recorded at a session it was axiomatic that the more frequently the band performed numbers in public the more likely they were to appear soon on record!

Once again, Lyttelton has taken advantage of the instrumental variables within his band to offer us music which is constantly shifting in its focus. One of the more delightful numbers is the title track. Here, in an evocation of the spirit of Mezzrow/Bechet collaborations there are clarinet duets between Humph and Wally as well as between Bruce Turner and Johnny Barnes and the melody is intriguingly set up over a Creole pulse.

The attractiveness and inherent melodic richness of Lyttelton's tunes make them much more than harmonic/rhythmic lines for improvisation and those represented here all have a special character. A small repository of his tunes can be found here and on his Sackville lp ("Humphrey Lyttelton In Canada") – hopefully both will reach a wider audi-

DON EWELL & KID ORY (Photograph by Floyd Levin)

ence than has hitherto been the case. The leader's chops (sometimes a little suspect) are in admirable fettle here – listen to the sensitive, heartfelt reading of Mick Pyne's *Blue Blow Blew*. Lyttelton's trumpet is always taut, emotionally sharp and tinged with the blues. It's one of a number of outstanding moments in this exceptional recording.

KID ORY's focus as a bandleader was more stylised than Humphrey Lyttelton but they both share some of the same qualities. They have a point of view and know how to best demonstrate their ideas with the talent available. The basics of Ory's style are defined in the exemplary series of recordings he made for Crescent Records in 1944/45 which have been reissued on Good Time Jazz (**Tailgate – GUJ 12022**). Ory, of the same generation as King Oliver, redefined the ensemble spirit of New Orleans in those sessions. His later recordings for Good Time Jazz retained this approach with only slight modification. By 1953, when the first of two sessions by band were made with Teddy Buckner on trumpet, it was becoming harder for Ory to maintain a band of musicians who believed in his ideals. So some kind of compromise was necessary and solo space began to increase. Each piece still had an arrangement – a shape – which some 30 years later still breathes with a freshness scarcely imaginable when one considers a repertoire which includes *South Rampart Street Parade, St. James Infirmary, Bill Bailey* (a masterful version), *Ballin' The Jack* and *Aunt Hagar's Blues*.

Eight of the twelve selections on **This Kid's The Greatest (Good Time Jazz 12045)** feature the volatile trumpet of Teddy Buckner. He has a great sound and these recordings are the finest he made. He punches out the ensembles, is appriately dirty-toned in *St. James* and light and strutting in *Bill Bailey*. His horizons are held in check by Ory but he gives the music an incandescent edge not possible in the four selections with Alving Alcorn. These were made in 1955-56 but not used in the fine lps by the band which made **Kid Ory 1954** and **Kid Ory 1955 (GTJ 12004, 12008)**.

Ory's flair for dynamics was never used to better effect than in these 1953/54 sessions. Minor Hall's wonderful drumming drives the band and his section cohorts (Lloyd Glenn, Julian Davidson, Ed Garland in 1953 and Don Ewell, Julian Davidson, Morty Corb in 1954) fit together to produce an elastic yet firm rhythmic base for the band.

Ory, in the 1950s, was still able to find fresh ways to perform music which, by then, had become a stereotype. On their

good days the disparate styles of Louis Armstrong, Eddie Condon and George Lewis could produce exciting music but the ritualized ensemble chorus, solos all round and a final ensemble chorus was rapidly becoming a nadir for a music which had earned its derogatory title of "dixieland."

Occasionally a gem will slip through the cracks and **MARTY GROSZ' I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music (Aviva 6004)** is one of those which almost makes it. The guitarist must wonder sometimes whether he arrived from another planet. The world is full of electrified monsters while he rhythmically strums chords four to the bar and picks an occasional solo on his acoustic guitar. It is an art which once was an integral part of jazz in the hands of Lonnie Johnson, Eddie Lang, Teddy Bunn, Dick McDonough and Carl Kress to mention only a few. Now there is only Freddie Green still strumming away in his light, laid back manner and Marty Grosz, whose strumming is more affirmative, more on top of the beat but admirably suited to the interpretation of the music he loves – the world of Fats Waller. There's a further irony in that his style evokes remembrances of Waller's own guitarists – Al Casey and John Smith – and yet Casey no longer plays that way with the Harlem Blues and Jazz Band!

Marty's arrangements for the octet are in the style developed in the 1930s by small jazz groups. Neat, uncluttered arrangements of popular songs which are designed to emphasize the solo qualities of the participants. The sessions issued under Teddy Wilson and Lionel Hampton's leadership are the standard by which others are judged.

The principal soloists on this occasion are trumpeter Jimmy Maxwell, reedman Leroy Parkins (on clarinet and bass saxophone) and Dick Meldonian (soprano and tenor), trombonist Bobby Pring and Dick Wellstood at the piano. Grosz has chosen well from among the available talent and each musician plays his role well but, apart from Wellstood, the extra dimension (the originality) of a major soloist is missing.

The repertoire contains such Grosz specialities as Fats Waller's *Lonesome Me, I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music* and *Junk Man* on which he sings his inimitable variant of Waller. Throughout his guitar work sparks the ensemble. It is a rare art to play this way with so much lift and the distinctiveness of the band's sound owes much to its leader's own playing.

Serenade To A Wealthy Widow, You Are My Lucky Star, Cactus Charlie (Grosz original), *When Day Is Done, You Called It Madness, My Old Gal* (Maxwell original) and *California Here I Come* (a good feature for Wellstood's distinctive piano) complete the selections in this unusual and interesting recording.

By the time King Oliver recorded in 1923 his band had developed beyond the music's beginnings in New Orleans. Oliver's repertoire was dominated by multi-strained tunes from the ragtime era and the blues. Three years later Jelly Roll Morton recorded his classic sides for Victor – all of which were complex arrangements of similar structured material.

Twenty years later jazz historians found that a different, indigenous jazz style was being played in New Orleans by musicians who were contemporaries of those who headed north in the 1920s. The music performed by these men was rarely organized in the same kind of way. The blues still formed the nucleus of the music but popular songs with simple harmonic patterns and spirituals were also a major part of the repertoire. Their music was designed for dancing rather than listening. Solo skills were undeveloped but ensemble variations could keep a piece moving for as long as there were dancers on the floor.

This was home-grown music in an urban setting. It paralleled the growth of the blues singer/instrumentalist, Cajun, Tex-Mex and other regional folk and country musics. It had remained locked in time and was relatively untouched by outside ideas of progress. It suited the needs of the community it served – those who were poor, uneducated and isolated from the wider world.

All of the recordings of this music were made by enthusiasts – amateurs whose dedication surpassed their expertise and pocketbooks. In the process they captured the sounds of a music which was to maintain its integrity and honesty for only a few short years. By the middle 1960s it was gone completely even though the survivors were still playing as best they could. Their music had become a tourist spectacle rather than neighbourhood entertainment. It no longer "expressed the quintessential soul of his (the musician's) culture and community" (Alden Ashforth writing about Emile Barnes).

Bill Russell was the first to record this music in any depth. His American Music recordings contain the essence of Bunk Johnson's recordings as well as the best work of George Lewis and Jim Robinson. In the early 1950s Alden Ashforth and David Wyckoff came to New Orleans and recorded several sessions. A few tantalizing examples were included in the Folkways "Music of New Orleans" series. The remaining music seemed destined to remain in obscurity.

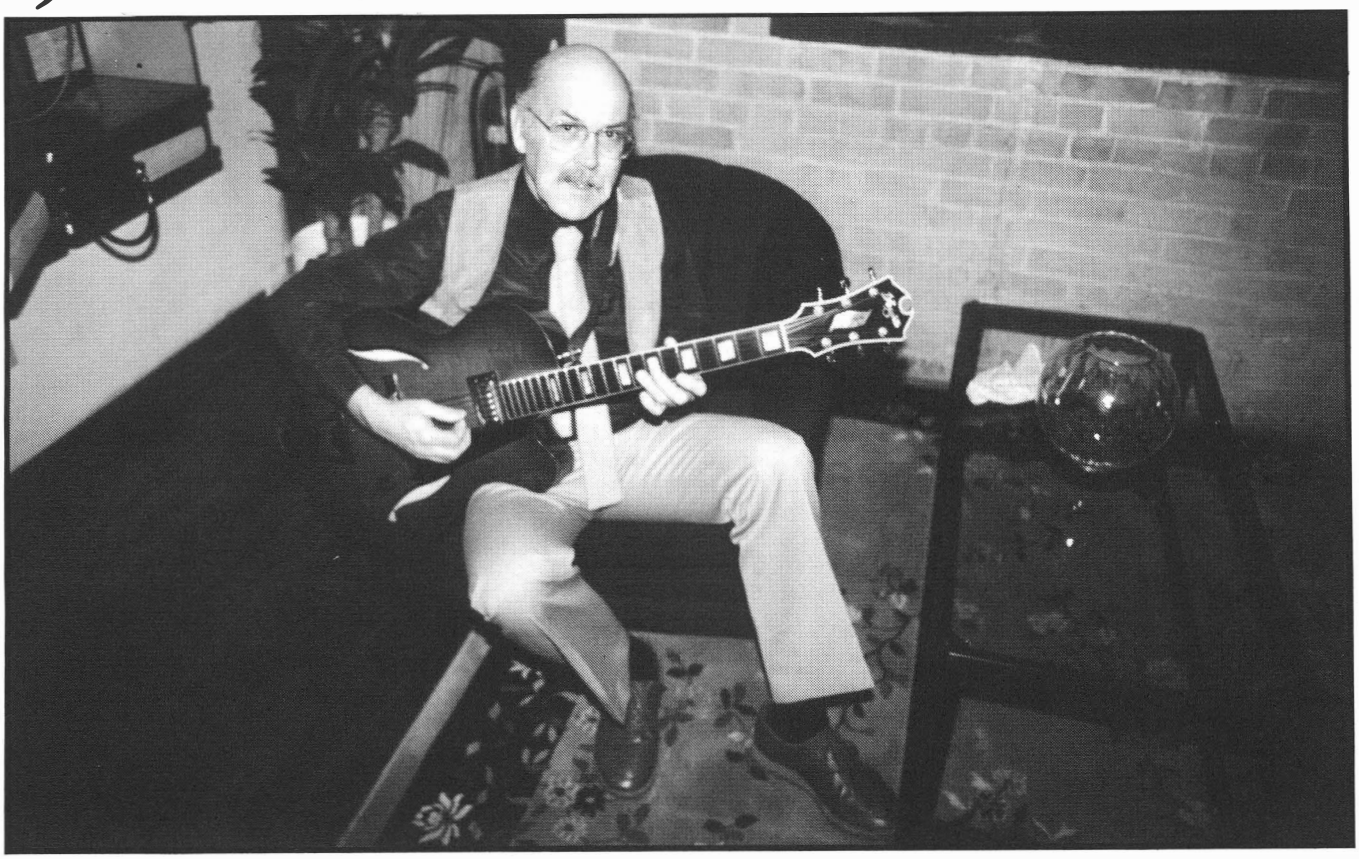
Now, more than thirty years later, and long after interest has peaked in its historical aspects, Folkways has issued three volumes of this music. **Emile Barnes: Early Recordings Volume 2 (Folkways 2858)** contains unissued alternate versions of tunes from a 1951 session (the originals can be found on **Dauphine Street Jam Session – Folkways 2857**) which showcases the clarinetist with trumpeter Lawrence Toca and trombonist Harrison Brazlee. Side two contains the music from a session which took place the following year with Charlie Love on trumpet. The music from each date is similar. It has an unhurried, relaxed air to it – perfect for dancing. The musicians stay close to the melodies of the tunes and create a unique sound, without pretension or guile.

The **First Kid Clayton Session (Folkways 2859)** was also made in 1952. Most of the musicians on the session were a decade younger than those on the Barnes date and there is a different feel to the music. Even though it would be impossible to identify this as being from anywhere other than New Orleans one can hear more devices from the wider world of jazz. Solos occupy more space and the music is more flamboyant. Clayton is an exciting, if somewhat undisciplined, trumpeter who only got to record once more in the 1960s for Grayson Mills and the music is similar at each session. On both occasions the clarinetist was Albert Burbank – who has the same kind of hard tone as Emile Barnes but sounds totally different. He is easily the best musician at this session and his playing has the kind of intensity which made Johnny Dodds so distinctive a player. Trombonist Joe Avery, like Harrison Brazlee and Albert Warner (of the Jazz Information Bunk Johnson session from 1942), is a fundamentalist whose capabilities are even more limited than Kid Ory and Jim Robinson.

All these recordings capture the indigenous drumming style which was developed in New Orleans. It was the basic way jazz drummers performed until Jo Jones and Sid Catlett began to change things around. Cie Frazier (the best of those drummers who remained behind in New Orleans), Albert Jiles and Alec Bigard demonstrate the style quite well at these sessions but they can't compare with Minor Hall's work on the Kid Ory recordings or with Baby Dodds (*the* drummer of this school) and Zutty Singleton.

These two Folkways lps fill a large gap for the New Orleans enthusiast. The only other recordings from this period were those made by Ken Colyer (in 1953) when he visited New Orleans. The trickle became a flood in the 1960s when Grayson Mills (Icon), Herb Friedwald (Riverside) and Barry Martyn (MONO) recorded extensively. *– John Norris*

JIM HALL · A Musician's Musician



Jim Hall has been a professional jazz musician for almost thirty years. In the late 1950s he worked with the popular Chico Hamilton Quintet which featured reeds, cello, guitar, bass and drums, and with the Jimmy Giuffre Trio. During the 1960s he was heard with Ella Fitzgerald, Yves Montand, Lee Konitz, Red Mitchell, Art Farmer and Sonny Rollins. Jim Hall has never been a major stylistic innovator, nor has he ever ridden a wave of popularity as have such guitarists as Wes Montgomery through technical virtuosity, George Benson through commercial crossovers, or John McLaughlin or Larry Coryell through jazz-rock fusion. Rather, through years of exceptional work, including duets with Ron Carter and Bill Evans, and his own trio, Hall has become known as a "jazz musician's musician." A lyrical interpreter of the song form, comfortable in a wide range of styles, always faithful to his own high standards of group sensitivity, musical imagination and good taste.

For several years Jim Hall steadily employed Toronto musicians Don Thompson and Terry Clarke in his trio. Recently in Toronto to play duets with bassist Steve La Spina during the Stage Door Cafe's short-lived jazz policy, he was interviewed by Ted O'Reilly on CJRT-FM. The interview opened with a comparison of Hall's duo with bassist La Spina, and his long association with Ron Carter.

JIM HALL: Steve is really a challenge to me. He's such a good soloist and he's still looking for things on the instrument. He's a young guy; almost between the rock musicians and the jazz musicians in age. Whereas Ron is marvelous in another sense. He's a fantastic accompanist and so he has a great sense of form. But Steve kind of provokes me: if he can play that on the bass then I ought to be able to play that on the guitar.

TED O'REILLY: *I really think that you're the only person out there doing these kinds of duos and yet you've done them with lots of people now. I think the first duo record I heard was with you and Red Mitchell. Now you've done one with Ron. Have you recorded with Steve La Spina yet?*

We haven't recorded. As a matter of fact we have a trio with a drum player called Akira Tana who isn't all that well known yet. He works with The Heath Brothers and Art Farmer. He's from the west coast. His parents were born in Japan and he was born in Los Angeles. So generally we work as a trio. There's a club in New Jersey right across the river from Manhattan called Struggles, which is a good name for a jazz club. It's open on weekends and we're going to work there.

Most recently I was in Sweden doing some workshops with Swedish guitar players, who fortunately speak English pretty well. I guess it's a kind of second language over there. And I did a couple of concerts with Red Mitchell, who lives in Sweden most of the time. And Ron Carter and I were doing a number of things together for a while. We went to Spain, we went to Greece. We played in New York a bit. I sort of looked on it as, or *had* until this week, two different things. When I work with Ron it's generally in a duet situation and with Steve it's been a trio situation with Akira Tana. So, I'm just trying to do the same thing only a little better every day. I have a small view point I guess, but it seems to work best for me.

I think that's an ideal viewpoint espec-

JIM HALL (Photograph by Bill Smith)

ially when one is at a level that you are already. It must be hard to find things to improve on.

Well, believe it or not, I have a lot of basic technical things about playing the instrument that I've kind of lagged behind on. I have developed a style of playing that requires a certain kind of technique and other things I've let slide. A lot of the younger players are playing the instrument so well that it's an inspiration to me to try and pull my technical playing up to that level. But without losing what I imagine is a kind of identity. I hope that by getting my chops better it will make it possible for me to get to musical things that I can *hear* but I can't quite execute. A sort of parallel in a different way, for me, is Pat Metheny. He's all involved with electronic stuff, but knowing him and hearing him, I know that he's really after some music with all that. He's not like a rock band with rockets going off. He's really trying to find musical reasons to use electronic devices.

I notice that you're using a foot pedal for the first time.

Bob Brookmeyer wrote his first big orchestra piece, for me and a symphony orchestra. We taped it over in Sweden – the Swedish government helped out with the financing and Swedish Radio. It couldn't have happened in the United States: we have better things to do with our money, like making bombs and things. That stuff has got to come first, before people, right? So, anyway, Bob had me using three foot pedals: a distortion pedal a wawa pedal and a chorus, which gives it a sort of an ethereal sound. They really came in handy because it gave me different ways to play against the orchestra, or with the orchestra but I had never used any of them. One I liked and I used it quite a bit, the chorus. So, that's how I got started in that – it was Bob's fault. I looked like Fred Astaire; I had to step on different pedals and sometimes I'd get the wrong one.

Did you surprise yourself in liking it? You were quite prepared to not like it, obviously, if you hadn't tried it in all these years.

Yes. I think I was prepared not to like it. Since that time, that's been a couple of years now, I notice that more and more people whom I respect are using a lot of different electronic devices. For instance, Steve La Spina has a couple of them for his bass. One of them adds an octave above what he's playing and it's really effective in certain spots. As long as it's not overdone. I try to use the foot pedal effect the way I remember Duke Ellington's band using mutes. I mean, ideally that's why I would use it. Usually, I would just use it for one chord or one eight bar section. I think if used sparingly, and again in the service of music, it's all right.

You mentioned Pat Metheny. Are there other young players around that are interesting to you?

Yes. There's a guy named Bill Frisell who works with what you'd call the avant garde players. I hate titles, but they're playing differently. Bill is marvelous with electronic devices. He's a beautiful accompanist; there's sort of an ethereal sound to his playing. And there's another guy called Michael Hedges, I think that's his name, who's from California who plays really nice. And then there's a really nutty English fellow named Fred Frith. I don't know him personally but his music is really nutty and I like it. It's just completely different from what I do. It's just sounds that he gets out of the guitar.

What about Stanley Jordan, who seems to be a fascinating young player?

He's unreal. Yes, I forgot about him. I've never heard him in person, nor have I heard him for more than one or two tunes on television or on the radio but he's really opened up a whole new area I think. He's incredible. And he really seems like a nice young guy besides, which for some reason is important to me. I like that. He's a good representative for us guitar players. What he's really done is to open up a whole area of using the right hand differently. He plays the guitar almost like a piano. He actually plays melodies with each hand but he neither uses a guitar pick nor does he use classical technique in his right hand but he sort of hangs the right hand over the neck of the guitar and plays it like a piano and does the same thing with his left hand. I hate to watch him but it sounds beautiful.

We were talking about your trio with Don Thompson on bass and Terry Clarke on drums, and you were saying that you found it a little hard, when Don went with George Shearing, to get that feeling again.

Yes, that's true. I went through a number of bass and drum combinations and Don and Terry just worked so well together and had been together for so long that we did things without having to talk about them. But on the bandstand it just came naturally. I got spoiled, I guess, to put it succinctly. I think it's possible that this new trio I have might end up like that. And maybe even going a little further, as far as the musical stuff that I was talking about before.

Is it harder working with younger musicians or easier?

It's harder in that I have to become a leader whereas with Don and Terry, technically I was a leader but they really knew what to do. So that part's a little different. If I work with Ron Carter, I think that we really respect one another. It's very hard to turn around and say "Play four!" or something to Ron because you feel like you should go through his secretary or his manager first. So we have a nice mutual respect, but the guys I'm working with now are both young and very gifted and they're still looking for new things all the time. I can practically say anything and they'll try it. Take a chance. And that's really one of the main reasons, if I run down a checklist, that I'm still travelling and playing jazz. It certainly isn't the appeal of loading instruments on airplanes and being in strange hotel rooms, it's the chance-taking that's a really big part of it for me. It's part of the fun to do that and to include an audience in it; I really enjoy that. Ideally I think what I like to do is start something almost banal and get the audience involved; and then I find that if you get an audience on your side you can take them pretty far out, to some place they may never have been before, and they'll go along with you. So the point for me is not to alienate an audience but to allow them to sort of be a part of the process. And the same with the trio: I just found the best players I could and I try to pay them as well as I can and just let them play, and try different things. And that's really why I'm still playing music. It's like composition without writing it down.

Does it ever feel like you have to pull the music out of yourself? Or is it a natural thing to do?

It starts out feeling like an unnatural act and then after my hands and my brain get warmed up, if things are going well, then it's more as if the music is going through you, and so that you're not actually *doing* it. Which also makes it possible to say about oneself: "I had a good night": it isn't really bragging, it just means that you finally got out of the way. It sounds a little spiritual and I don't mean it that way but it's almost like the music is already there and if you can just loosen up, or whatever... tighten up, then it will come out by itself. So no, I don't have to pull the music out. If I get in with a bad rhythm section then it's all over. Then I do have to pull it out and that's another reason that I don't do odd record dates for people anymore, because it becomes a job rather than a pleasure. I'm in sort of a spoiled brat situation because I can get the players that I want generally. Occasionally I get fooled but I've been pretty lucky that way. I mean, Bill Evans, that's not a bad accompanist.

One of the things that is most delightful for me when I hear you play is that

you bring all of your experience into it. Sometimes you're just playing like Freddie Green, nice rhythm guitar. There are some people who insist on their way to play and play that way. But you're willing to do anything to make it work, it seems.

I actually enjoy playing rhythm guitar. It's a good feeling physically, sort of like jogging or something, and Freddie Green is my absolute idol that way. As a matter of fact I wrote him a fan letter. He was coming to Japan about three years ago for the same promoter that I had, and I was just about to leave Japan so I wrote him a letter which said in essence, "I've always told everybody how much I loved your playing and it occurred to me that I never told you" so I did. After that we ran into each other at the North Sea Festival I think (but this is a long answer to your question) and I said to Freddie, sort of half-jokingly over breakfast – we had breakfast together because we hadn't seen each other more than five or six times over twenty years – "Do you have any fatherly advice for me?" "Yeah," he said, "Always pack your suitcase the night before and always leave your uniform on top." So, I've taken that to heart.

Freddie was and is kind of a hero of mine. I always wished that I could do that. I try to listen; that sounds like a truism, musicians are supposed to listen, it's an oral artform. But a lot of them don't really. I keep the volume down, I hope, to a point where I can support the other guy. I'm very conscious of that, the group playing. And some of that came from working with Jim Giuffre, who was marvelous about all that, and some of it came from just being hollered at. "Don't play so loud!" or "Do something different!" or "Play better!" or whatever.

Why do you play guitar rather than any other instrument?

There was a guitar player in my family, my Uncle Ed, who played the guitar and drank. So, I thought I would try it. And I got part of it right – the drinking I never got together. So there was a guitar around and I used to hear him playing. He would have been rich and famous if he had been born fifty years later. He was a good, sort of a country guitar player and singer. So there was a guitar around and I decided, or my mother decided maybe, that I might like to take guitar lessons when I was ten. But I actually feel myself more as a musician than as a guitarist and I tend to listen that way. It's almost a split personality. I can listen to a guitarist and be completely overwhelmed as a guitar player by how great he plays, but then as a musician I might be bored after five minutes and want to leave. I hope that I have a kind of happy medium in my own playing.

What do you listen to yourself, if you're at home sitting around and you reach for some records or tapes?

I listen in the car a lot, to the car radio, and I have a classical station, WQXR in New York, that I listen to a lot. Then there is a jazz station from Newark, WBGO; some of their programs are terrific. I heard a whole program of Louis Armstrong the other night which was all having to do with things that Louis had written and played on and it was just great. In any case, I'm a big fan of silence I find, as I grow older. I really value silence. I go through phases where I do listen a lot though. About a month ago I was listening to Duke Ellington's band on cassette from the late thirties and early forties. Just gorgeous stuff. I would just play it over and over. And on the jazz side of it, if I listen to the radio, sometimes I'll jump up and get my guitar and play along with it. I keep saying this and I hope it's true, but I'm open. If I hear somebody that interests me... I guess that's the thing: it has to interest me. A lot of times I watch these rock video shows with the sound off, because I like the visual part a lot. And the people look as though they're saying something very profound and deep and then I turn the volume up and they aren't really saying anything very much at all except at about a three-year-old level. And there are some rock guitar players that I've heard whom I like and I really don't know their names. I'm pretty ignorant in that area.

I've picked up a few sort of technical tricks from watching and hearing rock players but generally I listen to... well, here's a good example. My wife and I went to hear the Vienna Philharmonic about a week ago and they played Mozart's *G Minor Symphony* and they did *The Firebird Suite* of Stravinsky and then Brahm's *First Symphony*. By that time my ears were wiped out anyway. And then as an encore they did *Tales From The Vienna Woods* which was gorgeous, to hear that orchestra play it. So I like that sort of thing and then I go to new music concerts. Bob Brookmeyer has become really keen on new music, that's the direction he's going. A couple of other friends of mine are composers. So I just try to stay open to things, but generally it's more classical music or silence that I listen to.

This interview was originally broadcast in its entirety on CJRT-FM on October 8, 1985. Transcribed by Maureen Cochrane and edited for publication by David Lee.

New Sounds For Oldies

King Oliver springs to life through the murky grooves of a 1923 acoustic recording, playing as you never heard him before with his Creole Jazz Band. The later electrical recordings of Louis Armstrong, Henry Allen, Jelly Roll, Bix and Tram; the bands of Fletcher Henderson, Ellington, Luis Russell and others, sound even better than when they were first put down on scratchy wax discs in the late 20s and early 30s....

All this and more by way of Australia, which has become the center of jazz record resuscitation through the efforts of a jazz-loving audio specialist/broadcaster named Robert Parker. Called by the Australian music press "the best acoustic laundryman in the business," Parker applies the most up to date electronic techniques, along with a keen ear for jazz, to transfer old 78s into digital stereo with painstaking care. The results are startlingly evident in a series of releases by Australian ABC Records called **"Jazz Classics In Digital Stereo,"** as well as some Australian RCA releases, which give fans a rare opportunity to hear jazz performances as they might have sounded in the recording studio.

Before you purists wince at the word "stereo," let me point out that Parker, more than most, is fully aware of the horrendous results of previous attempts to reissue jazz in hi-fi (like the MCA jazz reissues). I have heard the ABC/RCA digital pressings and, believe me, they are worlds apart.

Further, I played these lps to several jazz authorities in the U.S. and, with one exception (he didn't care for the 'echo'), they were as enthusiastic as the Australian jazz critics. They feel that this is the way to go for future reissue programs.

(There is a possibility that some of these records will be available in Canada. U.S. fans within range of PBS jazz station WBGO, New Jersey, might shortly hear cuts from these lps, compared with other reissues and the originals).

Comparison is the keynote. Comparing some of these cuts with those on the Time-Life Giants of Jazz, Smithsonian and Franklin Mint reissues (which use the latest techniques to eliminate scratches, etc.), it's strictly no-contest. Compared to the Parker digital versions, numbers like Morton's *Doctor Jazz* (1926), Dodds' *Too Tight* (1927), Louis' *Alligator Crawl* (1927) and N.O.R.K's *Mr. Jelly Lord* (1923 with Morton), sound positively "flat."

ABC's first release **"Jazz Classics in Digital Stereo Vol. I: New Orleans"** came out in January and sold more than 7000 copies in two months – this in a country with a population less than New York State, and with possibly fewer jazz fans. Demonstrating the possibilities of digital transfer, the numbers range from a 1913 O.D.J.B. recording of *Clarinet Marmalade* (one of the earliest jazz recordings), to the relatively better recorded Armstrong-Hines *Weather Bird* (1928) and Bechet's 1932 *Sweetie Dear* – which positively leap at you. Individual soloists stand out in band numbers like *Franklin Street Blues* by Louis Dumaines Jazzola Eight (1927) and *Damp Weather* by Jones & Collins Astoria Hot Eight (1929), one of the first jazz "location" recordings.

But the most convincing factor is *Sweet Lovin' Man* by King Oliver's Jazz Band (1923), employing the same 78 used by Brian Rust in the Parlophone lp reissue some years back. (Parker gets his 78s from various sources, including Rust). Where previously the band sounded flat, with Oliver and Armstrong barely distinguishable, the depth given by digital stereo makes each musician stand out. You have some idea why Oliver, at the time, was King.

Not all the transfers are equally effective, but this is due to the poor recordings of the originals. Some too exhibit a distinct "echo" that seems to disturb at least one jazz authority.

"Volume II: Chicago," a test pressing of which I received this week, confirms the promise held by Volume I. Titles range from the familiar Morton *Sidewalk Blues*, Bix-Tram's *Singing The Blues* and Carol Dickerson's *Savoyageurs Stomp* with Louis, to *Milenberg Joys* by McKinney's Cotton Pickers (1928) and Ma Rainey's originally poor recording of *Hear Me Talking To You* (1928).

But the clincher in any argument has got to be Parker's latest work for Australian RCA – an album of **Duke Ellington**. RCA used some of the best recording equipment of the time, from the mid-1920s on, and this, added to digital transfer (all from original 78s) makes it the best Ellington reissue anywhere – from *East St. Louis Toodle-oo* (1927) to the complete *Black Brown & Beige* (1944). The dazzler here is *In A Mellotone*, from 1940, which sounds like a live performance. An earlier Parker-RCA of **Glenn Miller** is also vastly superior to the recent Bluebird reissue.

For the technical-minded, the hardware Parker uses for his "laundering" ranges from some fifteen different styli (to find the best one for a particular record groove) and a battery of filters (notably a Packburn Audio Noise Suppressor) to graphic equalizers and stereo synthesizers which separate individual voices and "thrust" the sound forward. The polished-up signal is recorded digitally into videotape, avoiding the peak-level harmonic distortion found in1/4 inch magnetic tape. The digital signal is mastered directly onto disc, one generation away from the original 78.

Parker explains the failure of earlier lp reissues: "In those days to remove surface noise meant literally lopping off the top and bottom of the sound wave." The result of this audio emasculation was a muddy sound with the frequency response of an average telephone... More recent lp reissues, while eliminating the clicks, remained as dead as most of the musicians who played on them.

More than anything else, Parker depends on his own ear for sound to get the best out of each individual performance, spending sometimes weeks on a particular side, orchestrating his equipment like a maestro, until he's completely satisfied. "And I'm constantly improving with every 78 I transfer," he says. Though American recording companies, so far, have turned a deaf ear to all this. Tone deaf, that is.

– Al Van Starrex

KING OLIVER & HIS CREOLE JAZZ BAND

JAZZ LITERATURE

LESTER YOUNG * COLEMAN HAWKINS * COUNT BASIE * REVIEWS BY AL VAN STARREX

LESTER YOUNG
by Dave Gelly
Hippocrene Books, New York. $6.95

LESTER YOUNG
by Lewis Porter
Twayne Publishers, Boston, Ma. $18.95

In 1955, ten leading critics voted Lester Young one of the five most important musicians in the history of jazz, and 100 leading jazz musicians voted him "Greatest Tenor Saxophonist Ever." Yet, since his death in 1959, some of that adulation seems to have diminished, particularly among younger generations of musicians. Two new books on this tenor titan (along with a spate of Lester Young reissues, outtakes and unissued sides) should go far toward rectifying matters and restoring Prez's prominence in the jazz pantheon.

Dave Gelly, a popular British jazz and pop critic and musician, who also plays tenor saxophone, is particularly effective in explaining Lester Young's music in layman terms. In his brief (94 page) mini-biography, he states that Prez (the name given Young by Billie Holiday) was beyond question a radical and original thinker and a massively influential one. "Unlike Monk, he didn't create a sealed-off style which few were tempted to emulate, or gather around him a tiny school of acolytes, like Lennie Tristano. He stands firmly in the mainstream of jazz history, and as (English critic) Benny Green puts it, 'he did nothing to corrupt the harmonic innocence of his times'. What he did was to see shapes as innocent harmonies that no one else could see, until he showed them...."

Throughout his career, from his brilliant first recordings with Basie and the Kansas City Six sides (which have the best examples of Lester's clarinet playing) and his magical collaboration with Billie Holiday to produce masterpieces of jazz art, to the tortured utterances of his last recordings, Lester Young's music "reflected the soul of a vulnerable, complicated, gentle man." After leaving Basie, for instance, Gelly notes that if Lester's sound and phraseology no longer expressed the buoyant optimism of former years, "it was probably because he no longer *felt* optimistic or buoyant."

It was the music of an older, more wary, more introspective man: Traumatic experiences in the U.S. Army (he served ten months in detention barracks for drug possession and related 'crimes') on the other hand, failed to destroy his spirit, but sadness and langour, drink and despair, for a variety of reasons, finally did him in. Over the couple of years leading up to a nervous breakdown in 1955, for instance, Lester's records, says Gelly, "seem more than ever like dispatches from the Front. Sometimes the news is bad, sometimes it is quite good, but morale is clearly slipping."

By 1950, it seemed like almost every young tenor player in the world was trying to play in Lester Young's style, directly from the master, or through his growing army of imitators. But imitation, in this case, instead of being flattering to Young, only hurt him, because these young lions were echoing his own younger self. "Laboring as he was to articulate the emotions of middle age," says Gelly, "he must have found the sheer energy of the sleek young men unbearable." To Lester, such imitative performances were a cruel ever-present reminder of his youth. "They're picking the bones while the body's still warm," he remarked at the time. As a result his playing became more and more introspective, though he was still capable, from time to time, of producing music of monumental beauty and peerless form.

Lewis Porter's study of Lester Young is far more ambitious and concentrates mainly on Prez's music. An assistant music professor at Tufts University and an active jazz saxophonist and pianist in the Boston area, Porter has produced the first detailed analysis of Lester's style (including meticulous annotations of 34 of Prez's greatest solos), *at different stages of his career*. This is significant, because part of the controversy surrounding Prez was his inconsistency.

Many critics dismiss the large body of Young's work made after 1941, and particularly in the 1950s, when he was sometimes in poor health and played less than brilliantly, in favor of solos he recorded from 1936 (his debut year) to 1941 – when nearly every solo was a gem.

But Porter casts Lester Young in a new light, convincingly demonstrating that Prez created powerful and splendidly beautiful music *throughout* his career. While Lester Young's music obviously *changed*, he states, it did not *deteriorate*, as is sometimes assumed. "There is no question that he was not as consistent in later years as before, but he was still capable of marvelous things."

Porter shows how Prez modified certain aspects of his style, such as tone quality and the ways he tied his ideas together, during three distinct stages of his career – 1936-1942, 1945-50, 1950-59, with the most drastic changes occuring between 1942 and 1945 and around 1950.

But while Young's style changed, he notes, certain musical concerns remained constant: "Young's constant preoccupations with structural unification, openness of tone, relaxed swing, and singing melodies, made Lester who he was despite the different methods he used to achieve the goals during each period. These are the four omnipresent areas in which his genius shone brightest."

In analyzing Prez's work, Porter examined all of Lester Young's recorded solos, including bootlegs and some unissued private tapes, before subjecting thirty-four of Prez's greatest solos to a battery of analytical procedures, including computers.

While this may be heavy stuff for some readers, it should open the eyes and ears of fans to Lester's timeless music. By the end of the book, the author states confidently, "the reader will be able not only to hear aspects of Young's style as they changed over the years, but also pick any particular year and summarize what qualities characterized Young's music at that time."

Porter's biographical data goes beyond Gelly's sketchy account to include copious and unexpurgated quotes from Lester's last known interview, in Paris one month before his death, liberally sprinkled with four-letter words. (Young's speech was not offensive, however. 'Lester Young's flow of obscenity was magnificent,' the Rev. John Gensel, spiritual advisor to the New York jazz community, is quoted saying. 'Nor was it really obscene, because it was not aggressive and was said as his personal poetry.')

These final statements, along with the musical evidence of his later work, indicate that Prez was well aware of the changes of his style and was in control of them. As Lester told Francois Postif, in his last interview, "I get all kinds of insults about (mimicking) 'You don't play like you played when you were with Count Basie.' ... They get all trapped up, they go, '*Goddam*, I never heard him play like this!' That's the way I *want* things, that's modern, dig?" Prez also indicates that he was consciously experimenting with his tone: "I've developed my saxophone to play it, make it sound just like

an alto, make it sound like a tenor, make it sound like a *bass*, and everything, and I'm not through working on it yet."

In the light of Lester's words, states Porter, it makes no sense to suggest that his style changed only because he was emotionally depressed or because he was no longer able to play in his early style, or some other such apology. Young wanted to change.

Lester Young died in a hotel room in New York, where he had been drinking steadily between bouts of illness. The tragedy of Lester Young's art, states Dave Gelly, was that it was entirely true to itself. "He had called it 'telling your story,' and he told the story with such honesty and candor that even the worst parts were plain for all to hear."

Because Lester Young's impact was so great, states Lewis Porter, understanding his music should help jazz scholars as well as fans to understand much of jazz since his time. But even if Prez had not been such a great influence, particularly on musicians like Charlie Parker and John Coltrane, who enjoy a wider following among today's younger players, his music is worth studying for itself. "Lester Young may have become an unhappy person, but he did not leave us unhappiness."

COLEMAN HAWKINS
by Burnett James
Hippocrene Books, New York. $6.95

If anyone deserves a jazz biography it's Coleman Hawkins. But Hawkins, whose name is synonymous with jazz saxophone playing, was a man of few words - he expressed himself mainly through his music, which has withstood fashion and fad - so precious little of what the Hawk thought has appeared in print.

Thus this 90-page mini-biography by British writer Burnett James, if only an extended sketch, is both welcome and invaluable, particularly in view of a tendency, in some circles, to downplay Hawkins' contributions to jazz music in favour of stylists of the "cool" and other schools.

Hawkins of course didn't "invent" jazz saxophone playing, James points out. There were other saxophonists around during his youth - each making a contribution, as Hawkins himself freely admitted and even asserted, against the exaggerated claims made on his behalf - semi-legendary figures like Stump Evans, Happy Cauldwell, Prince Robinson. But Hawkins also agreed when pressed that he did evolve a genuinely new style and, in the twenties, was already playing in a distinctive manner different from the others.

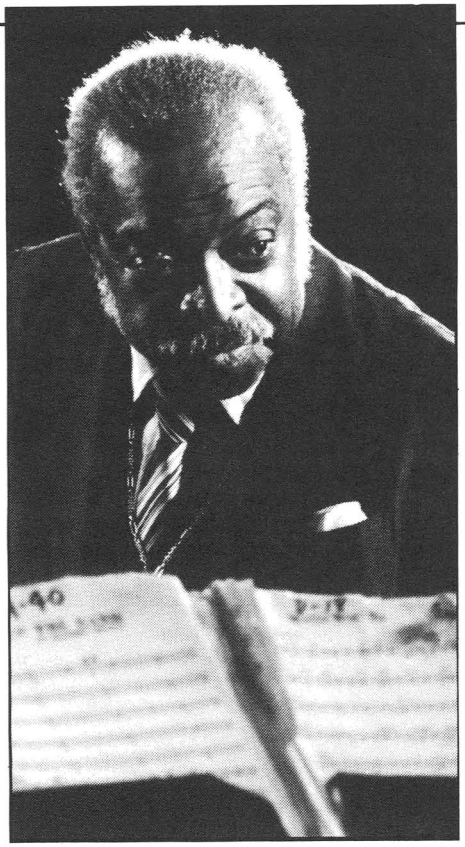
Hawkins dominated the jazz saxophone scene in the twenties, when he was the leading light (along with, at one time, Louis Armstrong) in the Fletcher Henderson band; the thirties, which saw his magisterial sojourn in Europe (when he made those classic sides with Django Reinhardt and others) and his triumphant return home; to the forties and the Bebop era, when he didn't go "totally out of fashion" as James suggests, but was very much en rapport with progressively younger musicians' ideas, as demonstrated by his recordings. The fifties saw Hawkins at his most prolific, on bandstand, in jam session or recording studio. He was still a force to be reckoned with in the sixties, though he neglected his health and literally starved to death, having apparently lost all interest in food - though not in his music.

While there is a tendency to compare Hawkins robust style unfavorably with that of Lester Young, James points out that Lester's style was in most respects complementary to Hawkins' rather than antagonistic to it. "Where the antithesis lay was with some of the white saxophonists who began to set the tone and ambience, whose playing went absolutely against the grain of all that men like Hawkins, Hodges, and Charlie Parker, had achieved and stood for, for the big sound, the full-blooded approach to life and art." Some of these others, James goes on, "eschewed the forthright assumptions and often sounded like maiden ladies doing embroidery..."

Explaining Hawkins characteristic "big sound," James states that it was a product of the deliberate attempt to alter the basic tonal structure of his instrument beyond the thin, nasal "natural" tone as it's inventor Adolfe Sax conceived it (and as players of the later "cool" school favored it). This was necessary because of the saxophone's harmonic limitations, adds James, going on:

"All styles of musical performance, in whatever area, are closely linked to tonal resource and individual sound. As with all major performers, Coleman Hawkins' sound is an essential part of his overall style and manner. It is closely related to what he did and how he played as his harmonic and rhythmic sense."

Throughout his career Hawkins produced many of the classic performances in jazz, becoming himself an American classic, one of a handful of outstanding jazz soloists. Above all, in musicianship as well as in personality, Hawkins represented class. As tenorist Paul Gonsalves is quoted saying: "I called him the 'Duke Ellington of the saxophone'. His style seemed more musical than that of other tenors, a kind of classic way of playing. I admired Lester Young, but Coleman Hawkins was *it* for me."



An opinion shared, no doubt, by a majority of musicians as well as fans of this kingpin of jazz.

GOOD MORNING BLUES
by Count Basie - as told to Albert Murray
Random House, New York. $19.95

Throughout his career as quintessential big bandleader and supreme jazz catalyst for nearly half a century, Count Basie was hardly known for his volubility - at least in print. His comments, when they did appear, were usually wry, pithy and to the point. But toward the latter part of his career - actually while his train from London to Liverpool, on one of his innumerable international gigs, was passing backyards strung with laundry, which reminded him of his New Jersey childhood, Basie grew nostalgic and decided he would like to put some of his reminiscences into print. A collaboration with Albert Murray, author of the indispensible and entertaining black history "Stomping The Blues," followed, lasting six years and right up to Basie's death.

The result, just published, is a fascinating document of black show-biz in the 20s, the big band scene in the 30s and 40s, and throughout it all the contribution made by the nomadic tribe of professional black musicians to American culture. Basie, first as a pianist, then as bandleader, performed in every corner of the U.S. before fame took him abroad ... from small town vaudeville houses to big city entertainment palaces, Basie has been there and his account (as told to Murray) of his life in music is as compelling as his leadership of his band, in its various editions.

The early years, as Basie tells it, are undoubtedly the most fascinating part of this lengthy (388 pages) saga. Born in Red Bank, New Jersey, the son of a caretaker of an estate and a laundress, Bill Basie was infused with dreams of travelling the world with a show business troupe - circus, minstrel show, anything. A terrible student, but drawn to the piano (at 25 cents a lesson), Basie set off to achieve his show business goal by sitting in on piano at a neighborhood movie house. Pretty soon, while still in knee pants, he was playing ragtime at local dances, fish fries and pig roasts with his own pickup group that included, at one time, Sonny Greer. (Basie's ambitions of playing drums were demolished by Greer, with his dazzling skills even then.)

New York drew Basie like a magnet, and there, while still in his teens, his dreams of going on the road were realized when he joined a vaudeville troupe as pianist (Fats Waller was a predecessor) in the so-called Columbia Wheel (circuit) that took him and his boyhood friend Elmer Williams on sojourns all over the country.

Back in New York, at the height of Harlem stride, Basie served his apprenticeship with the likes of Willie The Lion Smith, James P. Johnson and Fats Waller, who also taught him to play theater organ. Before long, Basie was back on the road, this time with Gonzelle White and her jazz band on the infamous black T.O.B.A. (Theater Owners' Booking Association a.k.a. Tough on Black Asses) circuit. It was to bring him, one midsummer morning in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in contact with the music that would change his life - an intimation of the powerhouse swing that would one day become his signature - the music of the Blue Devils. Entranced by the band, the likes of which he had never seen before, Basie was soon to join the Blue Devils, with help from his friend Jimmy Rushing. Then, in a bold step, he "connived" his way into the even more famous Bennie Moten band. ('Bennie was a hell of a good piano player. He could play all kinds of stuff that I wasn't even about to tackle. But I have always been a conniver ... and began saying to myself, "I got to see how I can connive my way into that band.") Basie's experiences with the Moten band, including his first recording dates, led to his developing his own group, the Three, Three and Three (three trumpets, three reeds, three rhythm) in Kansis City, circa 1935-36. But, contrary to some reports, he did NOT take over Bennie Moten's band after Bennie died.

Basie also sets the record straight about his name: he called himself Count Basie while he was with the Blue Devils and was billed as such when he briefly led the Moten band - at least three years before a Kansas City radio announcer supposedly hung that name on him, to fit in with titles like Duke Ellington, King Oliver, Earl Hines. By 1935 he was calling his band Count Basie and His Orchestra and the band, thereafter, was part of himself ...

The second half of Basie's book is a meticulously researched (by Murray) gig-by-gig, session-by-session account of Basie's prime years with the band in its various eras, its brilliant sidemen - Lester Young, Herschel Evans, Hot Lips Page, Buck Clayton; the amazing rhythm section of Jo Jones, Walter Page, Freddie Green and Basie ... the magical collaboration with Billie Holiday; the parade of distinguished vocalists, beginning with Jimmy Rushing, one of the original Blue Devils, and continuing with Joe Williams, Sarah Vaughan, Helen Humes ... food for a dozen books, maybe, but in this instance a narrative pared down to bare documental bones. For Basie, being somewhat of a private man himself, sheds little light on the lifestyles of his famous musical collaborators, on or off the bandstand, eschewing the "juicy details" fashionable in current autobiographies in favor of judicious praise where praise is due.

Modest, in a sly sort of way, Basie is lavish in his praise of those colleagues whose musical skills he considered superior to his ... and he went out of his way to avoid tangling with the likes of Fletcher Henderson, Art Tatum, Earl Hines, the Savoy Sultans (including its current evocation under Panama Francis) or his hero Duke Ellington, on a competitive basis. When Fletcher Henderson invited the young Basie to sit in with his band once, Basie took one look at the complex sheet music on the piano and stayed out. ('The band played some hard keys. I guess that's why it sounded so good ... that was the last thing I wanted to get tangled up with.')

Referring to his reluctance to discuss personal relationships, Basie acknowledges that "I know that you can get away with putting almost anything in a book these days. But I don't want any more outhouses in mine than I have already put in here ... People have been doing very well by my music up to now without all of that! Because that's not what it's about. All you have to do to start getting with it is pat your feet."

Basie is gone, but you can still pat your feet to his inimitable music, while rekindling memories of one of the great swing bands of all time with his book. Like Basie's laid-back leadership of his band, whatever edition, his autobiography is much understated – but how it swings!

COUNT BASIE (Photograph by Brock May - Outside Exposure)

BOXED SETS FOR COLLECTORS ONLY?

Boxed sets, like a Rolls Royce, represent the ultimate in lp collecting. They gather together, in complete or comprehensible form, the important recordings from the past by great artists.

The approaches to this format vary with the seasons. Particularly valuable are the overview collections such as Time Life's Giants of Jazz, where they draw on the recorded resources of various companies in the presentation of their version of the essential statements by an artist. At the other extreme comes "The Complete...." French CBS carried to absurd limits with their 10 record sets of Count Basie — which includes almost as many unissued alternates as it did the versions issued originally. Fantasy has made a specialty of issuing for the first time whole sessions from the Riverside era of the 1960s which the artists originally rejected for a number of reasons. This is documented in the mammoth set of Bill Evans recordings now out in a deluxe eighteen record box.

These collections provide the listener with instantaneous access to the recordings of important artists. In a sense they are archival documents rather than a commodity which is used continually for pleasure. Art lovers collect expensively produced books containing the works of important artists but they hang on the wall (originals or facsimiles) those they particularly like.

The Complete Blue Note Recordings of Sidney Bechet (Mosaic MR6-110) contains all of Bechet's Blue Note material. His first session was made in 1939 and the last one was made in 1953. The musical gems come from the earlier sessions (1939-1945) when Bechet was also recording extensively for RCA Victor. The consistency, imagination and sheer musical wealth of that period has given us some of the most outstanding recordings in the history of this music. The gems of this Blue Note collection are ***Blue Horizon*** (a 1944 date with Sidney De Paris, Vic Dickenson, Art Hodes, Pops Foster, Manzie Johnson), ***Quincy Street Stomp, Weary Way Blues*** (with Albert Nicholas), ***Blues For Tommy, Pounding Heart Blues*** (Port of Harlem Seven with Frankie Newton and J.C. Higginbotham — and already reissued on Mosaic 1-108), and the 1945 sessions with Max Kaminsky and Bunk Johnson. Another highlight is the quartet session (March 27, 1940) which followed behind the commercial success of his solo interpretation of ***Summertime*** the preceding year.

The 1945 session with Wild Bill Davison works well — with both horns intertwining in exemplary fashion. ***Shine*** and ***Memphis Blues*** are especially attractive.

The second half of this box set contains material recorded between 1949 and 1953. The performances are generally very good but the music lacks thought in its preparation and organisation. All the sessions are "jammed". Wild Bill Davison is on cornet for three dates and Sidney De Paris and Jonah Jones take over for the final two sessions. Jimmy Archey's forthright trombone is featured in the last three sessions with a variety of rhythm section accompanists. The repertoire is standard traditional fare and for the most part it is the contributions of the individual musicians which lift the level of the music beyond the ordinary. The most cohesive moments occur in the session with Jonah Jones where the trumpeter brings out his best Armstrong phrases and plays them with unusual flair and vitality.

But the magic is to be found in the earlier sessions — music which deservedly sits alongside the Victor sessions, the HRS date with Muggsy Spanier and the best of the King Jazz dates with Mezz Mezzrow. Special mention should be made of Max Kaminsky's darkly etched trumpet work on ***Jackass Blues*** and the amazing contributions of Sandy Williams to the Bunk Johnson session. His trombone work is a perfect foil for Bechet and his growls and smears give the ensembles the same unity he gave to the Victor date with Sidney De Paris.

Puerto Rico is an unissued title from the Bunk Johnson session and there are eleven previously unissued alternates. Only Josh White's ***Careless Love*** is new to lp and, contrary to Max Harrison's liner notes, Bechet backed blues singer Trixie Smith in a 1938 session. Other gremlins in the notes have Wild Bill Davidson for a couple of paragraphs and it is Dan (not David Allen) who compiled the "Bibliography of Discographies Vol. 2 - Jazz". Harrison also ignores the Time Life essays in his bibliography.

The Time Life set, by the way, is the best way to have an essential representation of Bechet's recordings. Once you've been touched by his genius you will be ready for the more detailed coverage of his music in sets such as this.

The Complete Edmond Hall / James P. Johnson / Sidney De Paris / Vic Dickenson Blue Note Sessions (Mosaic 6-109) is an unwieldy way of describing the contents of a musically exhilarating collection of music by some of The Giants of Jazz — even though Time Life only managed to bestow this title on James P. Johnson. This six record set presents, complete, the results of sessions by Edmond Hall (four), James P. Johnson (three), Sidney De Paris (two) and Vic Dickenson (one) recorded for Blue Note during that label's explosive expansion in the 1940s. Both Edmond Hall and Sidney De Paris rarely had opportunities again to lead a band in the studio and these sessions contain the choicest representations of their art.

All but two of the sessions were recorded between 1941 and 1944 — a period of artistic maturity for these exceptionally gifted musicians whose expression, while rooted in the music's origins, had been taken in another direction through the rhythmic and harmonic changes of the 1930s. You can hear the way in which the musicians use both the melodies and the chord changes in the construction of solos which become original musical statements.

Edmond Hall's four sessions as a leader feature him in entirely different settings. In 1941 he participated in a session which was entirely built around the blues and showcased Charlie Christian (on acoustic guitar — his only recordings in this vein) and Meade Lux Lewis (playing celeste). All four compositions are eloquent testimony to the participants' virtuosity within a theme which is the epitome of jazz expression but in some ways the curious nature of the celeste and the choking of Christian's electricity makes the music less than it could have been.

In comparison, the 1944 date with Red Norvo and Teddy Wilson works better. Once again the blues form the basis of the material but the rhythmic balance is better and Hall is magnificent here. It was this session which led to many people feeling he was a clone of Benny Goodman but the only similarity between the two clarinetists is their instrumental virtuosity. Their phrasing, expression and conception are different. The sextet date with Harry Carney and Benny Morton has its moments but the band fails to coalesce completely. The unusual instrumentation gives the ensembles an attractive texture but the musicians do less with the material than would seem possible. Both Carney and Morton have exceptional solo moments — especially in ***Beamin' And Steamin'.***

The final Hall date is a compromise between the revived demand for traditional New Orleans music and the small band arrangements loved by all the best musicians to leave New Orleans and make their mark on the music in the 1930s (Hall, Red Allen, Sidney Bechet, Louis Armstrong). Even here they transform ***High Society*** and ***Royal Garden Blues*** into frameworks for their own devices. But it is the two slow blues which are the outstanding performances (***Blues At Blue Note, Night Shift Blues***). The interlocking balance between Hall, De Paris and Dickenson is marvelous — something they showed again seven months later at a De Paris session (with almost the same personnel) where the final ***The Call Of The Blues*** eclipsed easily the cliches of ***Everybody Loves My Baby, Ballin' The Jack*** and ***Who's Sorry Now***. The performances are attractive and the musicians make valid statements.

The contrast between that session and De Paris' 1951 date is traumatic — rather than

dramatic. The approach is neo-New Orleans – as defined by the revivalism of the 1940s (a la Bunk Johnson, Kid Ory, George Lewis) and the music is rhythmically stiff, harmonically static and compositionally within the ragtime/marching band orbit. Clarinetist Omer Simeon and trombonist Jimmy Archey are admirably suited to this approach but De Paris is subdued. The rhythmic freedom he needs is not present with a rhythm section which is rooted in Jelly Roll Morton's world but minus the shifting syncopations which made Morton's music so miraculous.

This set finally restores to circulation James P. Johnson's wonderful piano solos recorded at two sessions in 1943. Artistically they are among the best examples of his craft. Johnson, who was as much a composer as he was a player, had a highly refined sense of organisation and it is apparent in his arrangements of ***Backwater Blues*** and ***Arkansas Blues***. Even the boogie woogie pieces (which were not part of his own musical world) are well organised and effective. Outstanding are his own pieces – ***Mule Walk, Carolina Balmoral*** and ***Gut Stomp***.

The first of Johnson's two band sessions is one of the best of the decade. De Paris and Dickenson join Ben Webster in a front line which gives richness to three more of Johnson's compositions – ***Blue Mizz, Victory Stride*** and ***Joy Mentin'***. As good as those performances are (especially Webster's playing on all three) pride of place must go to the reworking of ***After You've Gone***. It's a gem.

This is the place to mention the key role played by Sid Catlett. He is one of the music's great percussionists. His sense of swing (as opposed to time) is evident on all four of the sessions he participated in with these musicians. His playing on this James P. Johnson band date is a definitive example of his art.

Dickenson shines in all the different roles he is given, whether it's ensemble trombone parts or solos in the various bands, but his own session, which dates from 1952, captures the full range of his virtuosity. This is the work of a mature, fully developed artist. His conception for ***Tenderly*** and ***Gettin' Sentimental*** are magnificent while ***In A Mellotone*** is an ideal rhythmic vehicle for the trombonist. The session is completed with two versions of an aptly titled original – ***Lion's Den***.

The rarity of the Dickenson session – never issued on lp – is reason enough to obtain this set but nearly all the music is of an extraordinarily high quality. Its release in the past has been haphazard and the remastering here has restored the sonic balance of the original masters. The unissued alternates are an added bonus – especially as performances vary considerably in some cases.

The set comes complete with an illustrated booklet outlining the careers of the leaders as well as information on the sessions. It should be pointed out that the identification for the picture of Sidney De Paris and Benny Morton has them reversed. Morton is on the right and dressed with quiet elegance!

Mosaic Records are available by mail (in limited editions) from 197 Strawberry Hill Avenue, Stamford, Ct. USA 06902 – or write them for a free catalog.

Billie Holiday on Verve 1946-1959 (Verve 3480/89) is a ten record set, manufactured in Japan, which comes close to being a "state of the art" presentation of invaluable historical material.

The ten records collate all of Holiday's studio sessions made for Verve between 1952 and 1957, the MGM sessions with Ray Ellis' orchestra (her final recording session) and concert performances at Newport and Carnegie Hall, with JATP in 1946 and The Seven Ages of Jazz in 1958. Also included are four previously unissued titles (***You Better Go Now, You're Driving Me Crazy, There Is No Greater Love, I Cover The Waterfront***) from a 1947 JATP concert and the original 78 version of ***Autumn In New York*** which has never been on lp until now.

This set documents the final years of Billie Holiday's career. She had returned to recording within the compatible framework of top quality jazz musicians and the benefits are obvious to all except those who believe that Billie Holiday only sang well in the 1930s. She sings a cross section of some of the best constructed popular songs of the century with the individuality of interpretation which gives them a life of their own. This last decade of Billie Holiday's life was tormented but her depth of expression had never attained such a high level before. After hearing her versions of these songs it is difficult to imagine another singer handling them as well.

While the tonal quality of Billie Holiday's voice gradually slipped through the decade from the ebullient clarity of the 1952 date with Charlie Shavers, Flip Phillips and Oscar Peterson to the world weary strain of the last sessions it matters little in the end. She always sang with passion, conviction and rhythmic ease.

The 1956/57 sessions with Harry Edison, Ben Webster and Jimmy Rowles contain the best examples of Billie Holiday's work from this decade. Originally issued as ***All Or Nothing At All, Songs For Distingue Lovers*** and ***Body And Soul*** the material is presented here in chronological order and is an overwhelming musical experience. These recordings contain the essence of Holiday's art.

The various live sessions are a bonus rather than a significant addition to the overall picture. Billie Holiday's public performances, like so many musicians, were recycled versions of her familiar repertoire – one which her public wished to hear constantly. The decision to place these live sessions at the end of the set makes sense and is a better arrangement than that of the presentation of this material in England in the 1970s on ten single lps. More recently much of the same music has been widely available on twofers from US Verve.

Significant improvements in the sound and the quality of the Japanese pressings makes this a particularly attractive way to acquire this material. The box includes replica prints of the David Stone Martin illustrations from the original lps as well as a 40 page booklet which includes information in both Japanese and English and the lyrics of the songs. Best of all is the detailed discography which improves upon all the previously published volumes. It covers the singers' entire career and presents the information in a clear fashion.

Box Sets can be an art unto themselves and this one is one of the best examples of the genre. It's a marvelous way to explore the world of Billie Holiday – who was without peer as a jazz singer.

MUDDY WATERS: The Chess Box (P-Vine PLP 6040-6050) contains all of Muddy Waters'

single (78 and 45) Chess recordings as well as the music issued on the Big Bill Broonzy lp. In addition there are a great many titles not issued originally. Most of these have appeared on various bootleg lps or the Genesis Box set but this is the most complete documentation of Muddy Waters' Chess recordings yet issued. Sound quality and production is excellent (except for a few tracks with more than a reasonable amount of surface noise) and the music is absolutely wonderful. Hearing all this music in sequence is a revealing experience. It shows that Waters' greatness rests in his earlier period (1947-1954) when he sang his own songs and emphasised his deeply etched Mississippi Delta bottleneck guitar style. The music haunts you with its deeply personal, emotional pull.

The music changed radically after the arrival of Otis Spann. Muddy played guitar less and the music became rhythmically more straight forward. The band swung with a great deal of fervour (especially with Francis Clay on drums) but the music became less personal. Muddy's great hits of 1954 (***Hoochie Coochie Man, Mad Love, Just Make Love To Me***) were a summation of all that had gone before as well as providing the impetus for Chess to find a formula for the music. The later recordings deteriorate sharply — many being a parody of what had gone before. Fewer and fewer of Muddy's own compositions were recorded and even those which are credited to him are usually new sets of lyrics to melodies which had been successful for him in the past.

Muddy Waters established his reputation playing the profoundly personal and moving rural music of the Mississippi Delta. His second phase (1955-1960) was an urbanised adaptation of the classic Bluebird style of Sonny Boy Williamson and Big Joe Williams which owes ***its*** inspiration to the kind of music played by Sleepy John Estes and Hammie Nixon in Brownsville, Tennessee, in the early 1930s. What is apparent from these recordings is that the band style established by Muddy Waters has become just about the only way the blues are played today. In this sense Muddy shaped the future of the blues as indelibly as the early jazz creators of the 1920s (and Eddie Condon) did with traditional (dixieland) music and Charlie Parker did for the bebop style.

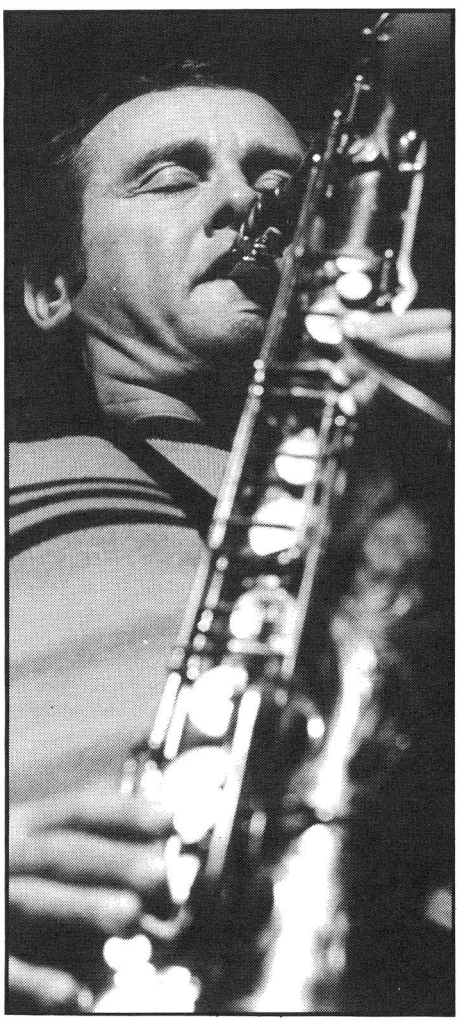
Listening to all eleven lps at one sitting is an overwhelming experience and this box set is an essential purchase for anyone seriously interested in Muddy Waters' music. But it is also apparent that "The Best of Muddy Waters" — the original Chess lp from his singles — is still the lp to get if you wish to hear the essence of Muddy Waters' music. ***— John Norris***

STAN GETZ
The Girl From Ipanema The Bossa Nova Years
Verve 823 611-1

BILL EVANS
The Complete Riverside Recordings
Riverside R-018

Paranoia sets in when I'm faced with boxed sets. It's OK when it's just a matter of three albums, like the first Keith Jarrett set but it gets out of hand for me when it's over three. I find it difficult to separate in my mind all the different cuts and I become obsessed with the idea of coping with all the music and reaching some conclusions about it, slotting pieces in my mind so I can return to them. But normally I become overwhelmed by the amount of music in a boxed set. It's bad enough when I plough my way through the five albums of the Getz set but then I have also listened my way through these eighteen albums of Bill Evans, in one sense a marvelous experience, in another paranoia-inducing of the most horrendous kind, for even now after months of listening, all the cuts still tend to run together in my head. I still don't feel I'm sufficiently acquainted with these cuts over a period of time (even though I've known much of this music over the years). After all, there are about fifteen hours of music here — and now I'm supposed to make some critical sense of the music.

Of course, boxed sets can also be very convenient. Many are well packaged with informative booklets, discographical information, photographs, reminiscences, anecdotes. They gather the pertinent inclusive recording careers of musicians, perhaps key developments in chronological order, complete with some alternate takes. That's obviously an asset with the Evans set for it brings together all his Riverside recordings as leader (with one additional album on which he was a featured sideman with Cannonball Adderley) and these were key years for Evans, so that one can follow the emergence of his individuality, his discovery of new ways of dealing with the trio format with the famous Evans-La Faro-Motian group, his underrated ability as pianist with horn players, his approach to playing unaccompanied — a bonus of this box is that it includes two albums of solo piano never before released. Incidentally, it also includes some other unreleased material with alternate takes from some classic Evans sessions.



The Getz set is easier to deal with, the music all of a piece, documenting an interesting, if basically minor movement in jazz, the bossa nova craze in the early 60s. South American rhythms and instruments of an immense variety are now assimilated into jazz, and samba is just one side of that tradition. But this collection serves to remind us of a time when jazz, however soft, was well up in the pop world.

The whole bossa nova trend should remain salutary to all jazz listeners, for it should remind us of the vagaries of our tastes and of that public out there (not a mass audience, perhaps, but larger than most of us suspect) which is ready for a more exhilarating music than pop can give them without necessarily wanting to be stretched to limits all the time. The bossa nova hit at a time when many turned away from the atrocities done to melody by rock, the violence done to instruments and the human voice, to become interested in a quieter melodic music that also had as one of its centres the acoustic guitar and softly brushed rhythms. We should also remember that bossa nova jazz was probably also latched onto by peripheral jazz listeners who were unhappy with the new rebels in jazz itself, the Coltrane Quartet beginning its long frenzies, and the free players breaking through chord changes and usual melodic structures. Bossa nova perhaps kept some of them within a jazz ambience so we should be thankful if that happened without suggesting that jazz necessarily should have gone entirely in this direction. In our ceaseless search for probing innovation growing out of what we each conceive is the real jazz tradition, we sometimes forget that jazz is probably the last stronghold of meaningful melody in twentieth century music.

And certainly the Getz bossa nova collection provides lots of melody, though it is wearying to listen through all the five albums one after the other. The samba form doesn't offer much variation, at least in these versions — it sways and swings gently in an understated fashion but the impetus behind it is subdued. Occasionally Getz boots out full-bloodedly but there are no other substantial soloists. The South Americans involved — Jobim, the Gilbertos, Bonfa — have little intrinsic flair for jazz though they provide a sweetly dancing background. For the jazz listener, the bossa nova makes its point best when Getz is in the company of players experienced in jazz: on the one album here arranged for big band by Gary McFarland, and a side and a half at the end of the collection with pianist Steve Kuhn, George Duvivier, Dave Bailey, some South American percussion and Laurindo Almeida's acoustic guitar. Almeida is not an improvisor but he's been around jazz more than the other South American guitarists on the other albums included here, even more, possibly, than Charlie Byrd, who was in partnership with Getz for the beginning of the bossa nova recordings. It may be that by the time Getz made this last album

STAN GETZ (Photograph Jorgen Bo)

of bossa nova, he was more thoroughly comfortable in the idiom to realize just what he could do in a loose jazz vein. The comfort and authority of his playing may have come from the support he felt from jazz musicians. Yet that assurance diminishes in the closing three cuts of this collection, previously unissued, of live performances of bossa nova hits with his working group (the one including Gary Burton) plus the Gilbertos. While the audience welcomes the opening bars of ***Quiet Nights*** and ***The Girl From Ipanema*** with applause, these versions are very indifferent. Getz is languid, nothing spurs the group on, Joe Hunt's drumming is dismally flat-footed. One gets the feeling that by this time the bossa nova movement is played out.

The Evans set is an entirely different matter — pianistic riches galore here. But as I said earlier, I find it difficult to summarize this big slab of music. It's certainly true that, listened to chronologically as it is arranged in sequence in the set, one can sense Evans' growing maturity and assurance. What one notices in continued listening is the persistence of the Bud Powell influence. It's evident in the very first album but it surfaces throughout and then flashes out in a quite volatile manner in his stunning solo version of ***How About You?*** near the end. Then on the final album there's some pure Powell in the trio version of ***My Heart Stood Still***, though of course more and more of the Powell ambiance is filtered through Evans' own harmonic trends and left-hand comping. The right hand lines show Powell, though again the linearity and teasing out of some phrasing is pure Evans.

To attempt meticulous criticism of such an amount of music is too daunting, so I can list only some of the ways this boxed set can be listened to, together with some observations about Evans and his piano principles.

1. It's almost a cliché of jazz criticism that Evans invented a new way of approaching the trio format with the famous LaFaro-Motian team. The famous Village Vanguard albums are here, of course, with a few alternate takes — exhilarating, novel, fine music. But I think sometimes this trio stands in the way of our hearing other sides to Evans. It's this trio that stands at the back of the main attack against Evans — that he's too lyrical, with not enough swing or punch, reflective rather than exciting. Certainly the fingering and chording have less power than Powell, even though he was a main influence on Evans. Still, this boxed set, with its variety of trios, shows different sides to Evans. He can play driving piano — his favourite drummer was Philly Joe Jones, and the sides with Jones are essential to an understanding of the swinging side to Evans. Jones is an exemplary drummer for the pianist, a hard swinger who retains a lovely precise crispness. It makes me wonder what Evans would have sounded like if Roy Haynes had ever been a member of his trio. And this box reminds us, with the use of Philly Joe Jones in the trio, that Evans hasn't always required quietly subtle drumming like Motian's. Besides Jones and Motian here, there's Connie Kay, subtle in a different way, with some of Jones' crispness, on one of my all-time favourite Evans' sessions, featuring Cannonball Adderley. Later, of course, though not represented here, there were such hard drivers in the trio as Jack De Johnette and Joe La Barbera. In this box, there's also Larry Bunker, solid, perhaps undistinguished, though he plays good heavy brush-work.

And bassists. From the beginning with straight bop walking from Teddy Kotick, there are those big-toned, bouncy players like Percy Heath and Ron Carter, and, to my mind, the best bassist with Evans along La Faro lines, Chuck Israels. Later, the big-toned bass sound merged with La Faro inventiveness with Eddie Gomez and Gary Peacock among others, though again they are not represented here.

2. The Adderley album I've mentioned is a fine example of Evans as sideman. Complementary to Cannonball's swagger, Evans has a great time, as he does on albums here featuring splendid Freddie Hubbard and solid Zoot Sims. Now there are three blowing swingers and that should allay any suspicions about Evans not being a swinger because he doesn't take a back seat in these sessions.

3. The album featuring Sims is devoted entirely to Evans compositions. Generally speaking, a lot of critics focus on Evans as the interpreter of the standard song, and it is true he spends much time refurbishing, polishing, refining, re-ordering songs, and to some extent rescuing some songs for jazz purposes. But he is also an interesting composer, not in too obviously a catchy way — ***Peri-scope*** is perhaps his catchiest tune — but his lines are always engaging (at this point let me recommend an album by British musicians devoted to Evans compositions: "Seven Steps To Evans" on MPS — that shows how the tunes work in a group context). The Sims album, according to producer Orrin Keepnews, had to be patched together. That shows sometimes but it has plenty of lively moments.

And it's great to have together here Evans' lingering over a couple of chords on ***Some Other Time*** and hear them developed as ***Peace Piece.***

4. Evans plays a lot of ballads throughout this set to illustrate his lyricism. Even the early albums show that extraordinary searching quality as he investigates the melody. Often he sounds as if he's sticking too closely to the original tune but he is generally moving harmonies around, sliding from key to key, indulging in darker chording even as he extracts the right sweetness from the melody. Take, for example, his version of ***Young And Foolish*** — there's subtle shifting of key but more important is the contrast he embroiders around the tune by picking out single insistent notes in the right hand while registering full chords with the left. These, in turn, become insistent chords, though not in a really percussive way, and that insistence moves into tone clusters in the right hand to overpower the single notes.

5. There are two albums of unaccompanied piano. Martin Williams in his usually incisive notes to the music, maintains that these constitute the most naked playing Evans ever recorded. I'm not sure just what he means by "naked" here — for me, Evans always kept his guard up. Some things slipped through but on the whole, even as Evans sends out his beguiling melodies, something is held back. And that may be part of his style, creating a tension even in the most lyrically emotional playing. That's also part of his emphasis on standards. Once the form of the song is accepted, then there can be concentration on finding a style in itself, then seeing how far the style can be stretched while keeping within the limitations of the form. Perhaps that's what Williams means, for certainly these solos are the freest playing I've heard from Evans. All those shifts of keys, rich harmonies, long linearity crop up here, together with an examination of tempo — his solo version of ***All The Things You Are*** is incredible in its motions of tempo and rhythm. In most of these solos, Evans breaks down normal segments, fragments the tunes, using space, pause, silence, yet never losing touch with the tune. In a sense the tunes no longer matter — one runs into another on occasions. Yet, paradoxically, the melodies themselves remain clear in outline.

6. The booklet with this boxed set is good. I've already mentioned Williams' notes on the music. Orrin Keepnews gives a commentary on all the sessions, the discography gives a rundown on all the tunes in their original albums and re-releases. The booklet has good photographs as well. It also has a double spread of photographs of the covers of the original albums. What strikes me about most of them is that they are portraits of Evans himself, somewhat strange in view of the fact that I see Evans as essentially a retiring person. But the lighting is so arranged that half his face is always in shadow — a metaphor for what I consider the intrinsic element of Evans' style, something I hinted at earlier. Evans never finally revealed all of himself. He retains a kind of luminous mystery in his playing. That's the inherent tension in his playing, perhaps a conflict within himself to try to be open and yet hang onto the sanctity of the self. This tension may give him his swing because the listener becomes conscious that something will break through at any given moment. Sometimes it does, then it's covered with chords or a dazzling run. Yet the music rarely comes across with any edginess — it's all carried out with aplomb and an almost rigidly correct verve. Evans' music for me is essentially oblique (and I don't mean that in any perjorative sense). He stares out at you without actually looking at you, but he's looking at something far more interesting over your shoulder. If you turned to look, it will disappear but he has caught it in notes that slide away quickly from your grasp, and his. If you listen to him carefully, you'll always be in a position to catch glimpses of what he is seeing there and translating into music.

This box offers us the chance to feel that mysterious presence behind us. Martin Williams states in his notes that Evans is the most important white jazz musician after Bix. I don't agree with that. Certainly Evans is a great jazz musician but the very obliqueness that constitutes the centre of his style prevents him from reaching to the pure clarity of Bix, the robust readiness-for-everything of Teagarden, the spilled profusion and brash, almost vulgar flights of Goodman, to name just two others.

But this box of eighteen albums is a stunning chronicle of a great jazzman. Williams sums the music up at the end of his notes: "There have been times when, hearing Bill Evans, I have thought: this music, so emotionally unprotected, so completely exposed in its feeling — take it into the real world and that world will crush it and crush the men who made it. Perhaps, after all, that is what happened. But what a heritage he left us."

A good segment of that heritage is here in these albums. ***— Peter Stevens***

THIS IS WALT DICKERSON

At age 55, vibraphonist **Walt Dickerson** is essentially ageless. Although he feels a very clear mission in life, he is in no hurry. Although he has produced at least seventeen albums as a leader in the last 25 years, he is perhaps the least known acknowledged master musician working today. Although he has at least one major European record company eager for another session, he is waiting for an offer closer to home. Although, when presented like this on paper, Dickerson might seem somewhat contradictory, there is no contradiction evident in the music, and an impressive self-containment manifest in the man.

In conversation, Dickerson is extremely congenial. He declines to comment on questions requiring specific dates, won't reveal his age, and says that his music deals with the potential of things rather than the way things are. As a Black man playing improvisational music in America, he does not emphasize the African roots of the music, but rather speaks of the universality of music, and its need to represent "all the strains of mankind." He is engaged in "a pet project" of cataloguing the various colorations of music available on his instrument and their "healing" relationship to various maladies.

Walt Dickerson manifests a great spirituality and a great confidence that our planet "is going through the final stages of change from a war-like planet to a planet of peace." He brushes aside all "prophets of doom," seeking "a complete saturation" of himself and his music with this evolutionary process and "the constructive side of things." He brought that totally positive attitude with him to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he and Andrew Cyrille performed as a Great Duet for the New Mexico Jazz Workshop, Inc. This conversation took place in Albuquerque in November of 1985:

"Many instruments were present in my home when I grew up in Philadelphia. It was just a natural thing to pick up an instrument and play it. There was a piano. There was a mandolin. There was a guitar, a violin, a trumpet, many of the drums, and there was a xylophone.

"My father sang in the church choir and my mother played the piano and sang. My oldest brother was a concert violinist, and I remember being influenced greatly by him and by his dedication to music, his hours of practice, the excellence that he strived for. He lost a finger on his left hand during military service, ending his musical career.

"My second brother was a concert pianist and singer who performed as part of the band on the Arthur Godfrey radio show for nine years. My third brother played trumpet and guitar. He was very talented, but he was lost at sea during military service. I, too, did my tour of duty in the American army, and that's why it's important that in discussing with you the ups and downs, especially for an artist, that it be viewed from the proper perspective, as opposed to the stereotyped imagery that many people, particularly Americans, seem to have about the music commonly called 'jazz,' which we know to be American classical music.

"As a child, I flirted with instruments, taking a fancy to one at a particular time, or maybe two, splitting my time. It was just to play the things I was hearing at the time on the instrument, rather than really studying the instrument or becoming involved with the techniques of the instrument as such.

"I became very attached to the vibraphone in high school. My mother gave me a lot of valuable time in conversation concerning my dedication and approach to the instrument and inspired me quite a bit with affection for the instrument. My father was very strict about the dedication a person presented to his instrument. If you thought enough to purchase an instrument, then obviously you should be dedicated to it. He saw time spent with the instrument as a prerequisite, which I am thankful for to this day."

After high school, Dickerson went to Baltimore, where he attended Morgan State University and studied at the Peabody Conservatory with a percussionist from the Baltimore Symphony. He had begun playing the vibraphone publicly within six months of his initial fascination with the instrument, and was fortunate to find at Morgan State an instructor who was sympathetic to his needs:

"Dr. Strider was familiar with the music, an admirer of Ellington, and he played beautiful progressions on the piano that may have been too creative for some other members of the faculty. I had developed by that time a need for self-development. I was more or less autodidactic, so I always reserved a section of time for creative things that would come to my mind in conjunction with academics, giving them what they asked for.

"I already knew the frustration of the artist who goes and tries to absorb the academics, but negates the natural in the process. So it was like a dual approach when I went to school. I wanted to give back to Morgan State, in excellence, what they gave to me and to, in turn, continue to probe that which was necessary in my creative sphere.

"These, of course, were the formative years, and in Baltimore there were house sessions in the evenings where we could play together for hours with whoever was there. This was a very exciting time when paths would cross with almost all the musicians who were playing at the time.

"I was transferring the music of various instruments to the vibraphone at that time. I feel that I began playing music when the doctor spanked me on the bottom, but my earliest influences on the vibraphone were, without doubt, Art Tatum, Bud Powell, Thelonious Monk and Charlie Parker. I was fortunate that some of the faculty at Morgan State recognized this and encouraged me by coming to the clubs where I performed on weekends. The club owners were older entrepreneurs, but they seemed to genuinely appreciate a young talent, and I was able to play almost every weekend."

Completing his formal studies in 1953, Dickerson served a tour in the army and returned home in time for a deeply spiritual and formative experience: "Right after I got out of the army I asked where Bird was performing, and they told me he was performing in Baltimore at that time. I took the train to Baltimore, and as I was approaching the club, Mr. Parker said to me, 'Walt Dickerson, I'm glad to see you,' and gave me a very warm embrace. I never understood how he knew who I was, since I had never met him before. That was shortly before the end, and I never saw him again."

Shortly thereafter, Dickerson met his future wife, Elizabeth. Although he has little to say about the late '50s, Liz cheerfully commented, "We took a honeymoon to California and stayed four years." While in Los Angeles they met Eric Dolphy, Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry. Dickerson played club dates, he says, "as much as I wanted to."

Moving to New York City in 1960, Walt had an established reputation among his peers. Elizabeth recalls an early club date in New York where Coltrane and Dolphy (and occasionally Ornette and Cherry) would come in every night from their own gigs nearby: "John and Eric would always say, 'Walt, you've *got to* lighten up!' "

Dickerson attributes his ability to enter a recording studio as a leader only three months after arriving in New York to "The words spoken by John Coltrane and Philly Joe Jones to the powers that be, concerning my presence in New York. When given the opportunity to record, I always worked to record with people worthy of more exposure, like Sun Ra; likewise Andrew Hill; likewise Andrew Cyrille; likewise George Tucker, Abdul Malik, and Austin Crowe ('an amazing talent') and later, Richard Davis. Basically, that was the philosophy behind my choosing certain individuals to record, and I felt it was my responsibility to do so."

Although Dickerson has yet to record with a horn player, he has played with many, and describes Parker and Coltrane as the two major influences on his music. He also mentions horn players as influences on his playing in the early '60s:

"Eric Dolphy was around and, of course, Miles was in the thick of things at the time, and Cannonball. It was a very fertile period as far as musicians were concerned. I was attached to them from the standpoint that we were about the same thing and we were colleagues, but I always chose to go my own way. I was never one to be part of any clique as such. I had a row to hoe, my vision was different, and I chose those who I wished to play with, and

traveled my path always."

Regarding his departure from New York at the height of his acclaim from *downbeat* and other commentators, Dickerson says: "There is no deeper meaning than the love of family and the desire to grow with and be more part of the family. I didn't see New York as being the place for our children, so we moved to Willow Grove (Pennsylvania). It was not a difficult decision to make."

Dickerson refuses to choose among the (six or seven) albums produced between 1960 and 1965, saying he would like to see all of them back in the catalog: "They represent periods of time. They are expressions from one end to the other of what an artist goes through: the birth pains, the striving for perfection, meeting the various challenges, trying to ascend the creative heights, and in the process realizing even more who you are in conjunction with all that is about you. Extracting the beautiful things from all that and rejecting all other things, insulating oneself from the deluge of negativism in order to grow enhances the creative process within the artist."

Dickerson refuses to comment upon his musical associations of twenty-five years ago, and refrains from anecdotes, with the exception of his meeting with Parker. Of Coltrane, with whom he played in the 50s, and for whom he clearly has a great devotion, he says only "Love remains supreme, a most powerful message." **He means, among other things, that** "those voices are never forgotten, and I hear them, and many times they come through me.

"It is a proven phenomenon that these voices are always with us. It is a matter of being in tune and being receptive to them — then the voices sing again and again and again. You can hear these voices coming through various performers, and if you were to ask them, sometimes they couldn't tell you exactly who was coming through, but they knew at the time that someone else was coming through, and that it was beautiful while it was coming through."

Between 1965 and 1975 Dickerson refrained from recording, but toured Europe several times, attracting an enthusiastic following, and played "intermittent college dates." **He developed a technique of stripping, whittling, and soaking his mallets** "in order to hear a certain plushness, as opposed to metallic sound, that I strive for." **He also learned to meditate:**

"I have been meditating daily for many years, and assimilated knowledge in many areas led me to that. Early on I dealt with stress with an external approach, but later on I learned the value of internalizing and redirecting the stress, as opposed to being victimized by the stress. It is a matter of repelling those forces that surround us daily. It is very important to recognize these forces so that one can build a barrier against them and be about what one is about with the greatest ease and effectiveness.

"Meditation is a prerequisite to performing. State of mind and relaxation are both very important. The opening of one's creative processes is very important in preparation for a performance. These are areas, again, that in academia are discussed minimally, if at all, but they are so very important in the development of an artist. This is a discipline that I take unto myself.

"Usually when one meditates there is an inference of some type of philosophical leanings, as such, but I've been stripped of those types of camouflage and I'm thankful. It's purely an individualistic approach to communicating with the creator, minus any formalized or traditional approach. Wherever we are, Elizabeth and I both meditate, and it's beautiful, it's exactly what it is supposed to be from the standpoint of a direct line of communication being established.

"Meditation is first a conscious process, a 24-hour a day discipline, which even takes over in your subconscious during moments of sleep. After this is practiced for a period of time, it becomes automatic and a one-ness process as part of that individual."

As one would expect, music and meditation are closely related for Dickerson: "Our responsibility as artists is to share this process with the public because it is such an important part of the human development process. Knowledge carries with it an awesome responsibility as well. Those intermediaries, to bring this about, must be made knowledgeable of what the process is all about, and what it entails.

"It's more than music. It supersedes music, it also encompasses music, but it enhances life. The most important thing, it raises the level of life, and when the intermediaries realize this, they in turn realize the responsibility of their position. When in turn this inevitable process comes about, we will have the most vibrant society. Music enhances the life of a society.

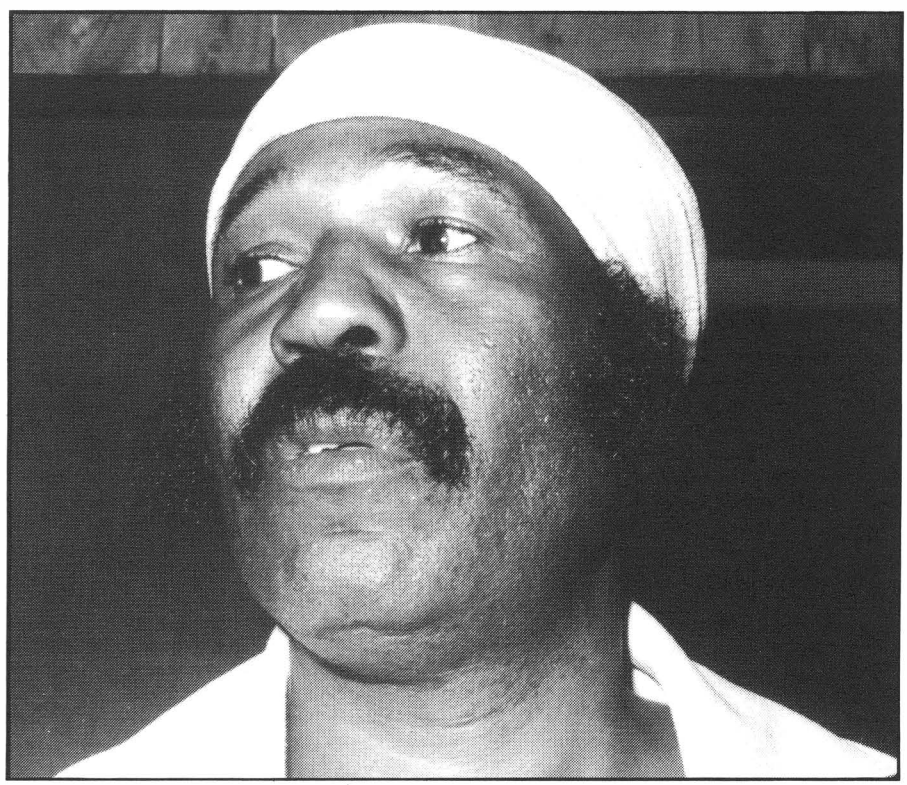
"Quite naturally in other societies you are aware of the prides, the hopes, the dreams, the aspirations, the goals within that society. People share these things in most societies, and this is a part of that which they aspire to. It's strange that it's so difficult for Americans to see the importance of sharing music. What about a project in that direction?

"Since you seem to be about the work of raising the consciousness of the public, why not experiment with using music itself to raise that consciousness? I'm not just presenting this as food for thought. What is necessary to make any project a success in America is the input of dollars, the allocation of funds to make this experiment a reality. I would almost guarantee a 70% success ratio if we let the message fall on people's ears, in hopes that they would pick it up, and get in touch with you, or someone like yourself, and get the ball rolling in various areas.

"I forgive people for the limitations of their minds, but once again, let's be about the business at hand. I don't engage in vituperation, or point fingers, because that is not part of the positive and constructive nomenclature of things. But we ask those in good faith and good consciousness to look at what we are saying and study it, think about it, and then perhaps share our point of view.

"If there are any questions about the mechanism to bring this about, let's sit down and talk with the powers that be. I truly believe that when people sit down in good faith to discuss something that is so necessary for the development of our country, I think that things which others consider unattainable become quite attainable. You see, I have that confidence in the human sphere. It is something I have had to work on through a series of events and life cycles to come to this point, which is a very beautiful perspective."

As his performance in Albuquerque clearly showed, Dickerson is an extremely emotive and emotional performer: "Feeling is a major part of performance because, if it doesn't invoke feelings, then what is it? But performance, of course, itself involves many things. It involves nuances, number one, and it involves technical



WALT DICKERSON (Photograph by Nils Winther)

facility, number two, and above all in the creative process is the listening to what's coming through your auditory processes at the time.

"Listening to oneself is most important, as opposed to superimposing the music consciously. Withdrawing and listening to oneself and allowing one's self to be taken over in that sense. This is not the 'normal' state of existence, but rather a very special and enchanting state. Sometimes it's mystifying. Some things mystify you while going through, and sometimes you wish you could recapture what you just experienced or played, but you can't.

"It's an evasive process; otherwise it would be just like turning on a faucet of water, and wouldn't that be oh, so lovely! Fortunately, or unfortunately, whatever the case might be, it's just not that easy. Sometimes there are pictures, images, or clusters coming through which are not easy to recall.

"The feelings vary with each performance. One prays for the appropriate feelings, but when they are not right, just relax, and take deep breaths. If you become too intense things cannot come through, so you have to relax. For me, the exaltation experienced in creating music is not complete without a receiver who shares that exaltation, who completes the cycle of exaltation and gives it back to me."

Dickerson returned to recording in 1975 with the highly acclaimed album, "Peace." Subsequently, he has recorded eight additional albums for Nils Winther and SteepleChase Productions in Denmark. In 1982, he recorded his latest album, "Life Rays," on the Soul Note label. Giovanni Bonandrini has asked him to record again for Soul Note, but Dickerson wants to stay closer to home.

"In 1975, Nils Winther was calling persistently, because it was widely known that I was working on a motif for peace. My experiences with SteepleChase and Soul Note, as with Prestige, MGM and Audio-Fidelity, have been worthwhile experiences, because you learn how to extract the good from those experiences and move ahead.

"Realizing where you are in time, and what should be done at this point in time in order to further the proliferation of the music where it is needed is important. This music was born in America and it's needed in America for the uplifting of American life. The answers to many of the social problems that exist can be found in greater exposure to the music.

"At this point in time I am interested only in an American company, because this is where I wish to spread the message to achieve the desired impact on what is going on worldwide. I am looking for a company that will put what is necessary, namely money and public relations, behind the artist to guarantee that which we know to be on the other side. It is not a difficult thing to do, but it requires the conviction of the powers that be to put the monies necessary behind it, because I believe, as you believe, that the public is certainly not as unintelligent as certain powers that be would like to think of them as being.

"If the same corporate energy was invested in this music, as it is being invested elsewhere, the return to the corporate efforts would be as great. If they want to sell it, they can sell it. Take the music as it is, and then use your marketing skills, your PR skills. The music does not need to be altered one iota! It's just that the other ingredients must be put with it package-wise in order to guarantee it its success.

"An American recording opportunity will come, but you're on the side of time when you know better than to push it. It must be in America. I choose to see things from the standpoint of the benefits derived from the art and what must be done in a collective effort to infuse that music into the strata of our society. That is my primary focus, and my energy is directed in that direction, as opposed to spreading my energies in other directions.

"The main focal point is to address the grievances that exist and raise the level of our society, whereby America will be viewed from a different and more wholesome perspective by everyone from the outside, by all the nations of the world as they now exist. It's so important in the scheme of things how we are viewed from abroad."

While waiting for an opportunity to record in his own country, Walt Dickerson continues to compose and improvise: "I write music regularly in the sense of motifs on tape. I find that it is easier for me if I tape the line when it is there, and then put things together over a period of time.

"The element of improvisation is most important. You find that you don't have a great variety of musicians to draw upon when you are in this sphere. There are many great musicians who can draw things together from a rehearsal formula, but what I strive for most is done best when there is a chemistry that exists between individual musicians more from an improvisational standpoint than from a rehearsal standpoint.

"My emphasis is on certain individuals because of the chemistry that exists, as opposed to their abilities as musicians as such. The premise of the music is creativity, improvisation, as opposed to the perfection or the reproduction of a particular composition. Of course, the standards were part of growing up, but now I strive for the creativity of improvisation."

Although he has never recorded with larger than a quintet (with two drummers), Dickerson has "a desire for an effect to be achieved with a larger group, including human voices, also improvising, based upon sketches." **In fact, he would like to record two albums in the next year, one for twelve pieces, including voices, and one for trio.**

In the meantime, he and Elizabeth continue to live comfortably with their four children on an acre of land with an apple orchard in Willow Grove: "The family is the strongest unit in the fabric of American life, and the most important vehicle to be a part of. Family life only enhances creative powers."

He speaks of "a beautiful kinship that will last forever" **with Andrew Cyrille, and continues to refine his skills:** "There is so much to be done on the instrument with two mallets, so many worlds to conquer with two mallets. I use three or four mallets on occasion, but there is really too much to be done with just two, in my approach, that it leaves hours of practice necessary, and certain disciplines as far as sticking technique is concerned."

He sees a world "when things are as they will be" **and Cyrille can be** "on Broadway with a show built around him and the drums. It would be such a fascinating show that it would have just about an endless run.

"The sincere people will be in the vanguard of things, and they will hear and they will listen, and we will be about what we are supposed to be about, our responsibility to uplift the American society. This is both a moral and a personal obligation.

"In any field that you could imagine America has the potential to climb to the pinnacle of achievement. There are so many geniuses who walk about as untapped resources. The worst thing a person can do is not to live up to their full potential."

We had nursed a couple of glasses of red wine through a Sunday noontime interview, and I asked Walt if he was a church-going man. "Someplace it reads like this," **he said,** " 'Where two gather together in my name, there I am also.' That is the church. So, yes, I have been in service with you here today."

Laughing his gentle and genuine laugh, he concluded: "You see, we don't have to go looking for a lot of things that we go looking for. We carry them with us. And the more cognizant we are of them, the more we welcome their presence. Obviously, it is inevitable."

Roy Durfee is a freelance arts and environment writer currently residing in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

WALT DICKERSON DISCOGRAPHY

"This is Walt Dickerson", New Jazz 8254 (w/ Cyrille)
"A Sense of Direction", New Jazz 8268
"Relativity", New Jazz 8275, (w/ Cyrille)
"To My Queen", New Jazz 8283, (w/ Cyrille)
"Jazz Impressions of Lawrence of Arabia", Dauntless DM4314/ST6313, (w/ Cyrille)
"Unity", Audio Fidelity AF2131/AFSD5131, (w/ Cyrille — re-released 1978 Chiaroscuro CR2011)
"Impressions Of A Patch of Blue", MGM 4358, (w/ Sun Ra)
"Tell Us Only the Beautiful Things", Why Not PA7118, (trio w/ Cyrille, Wilbur Ware)
"Peace", SteepleChase SCS 1042, (trio w/ Cyrille & Lisle Atkinson)
"Serendipity", SteepleChase SCS 1070, (trio w/ Rudy McDaniels, Edgar Bateman)
"Divine Gemini", SteepleChase SCS 1089, (duo w/ Richard Davis)
"To My Queen Revisited", SteepleChase 1112, (quartet w/ Albert Dailey)
"Landscape With Open Door", SteepleChase SCS 1115, (duo w/ Pierre Dorge)
"Visions", SteepleChase SCS 1126, (duo w/ Sun Ra)
"To My Son", SteepleChase SCS 1130, (trio w/ Andy McKee, Jimmy Johnsun)
"I Hear You John", SteepleChase SCS 1146, (duo w/ Jimmi Johnsun)
"Shades of Love", SteepleChase SCD 17002, (solo)
"Life Rays", Soul Note SN1028, (trio w/ Cyrille, Sirone)

(Dear Readers: If you value this great music, please write Fantasy Records, 10th and Parker, Berkeley, California 94710, and ask for re-release of the New Jazz records!)

(For booking information, contact Class Acts, P.O. Box 40219, Albuquerque, N.M. 87196)

Aspects Of The Jazz Trumpet Tradition

WINGY MANONE
Volume 4
Little Gem 1073/384

This lp is presented as Volume 4 in what is, I suppose, a series chronologically documenting sides under the nominal leadership of New Orleans trumpeter/vocalist Wingy Manone. On this platter we get a generous 19 cuts, covering all Manone sides per Rust from 9/13/35 through 3/10/36 inclusive, including both versions of ***I've Got A Note***. The product is breezy pop-oriented small band jazz, each incorporating one of Manone's bawling, raspy, good-natured vocals, offering within about four choruses a few hot solos and some biting, stompy ensembles. Sidemen among the various dates include several big names: **Matty Matlock, Joe Marsala, Jack Teagarden, George Brunies, Eddie Miller, Nappy Lamare, Carmen Mastren** and **Ray Bauduc**.

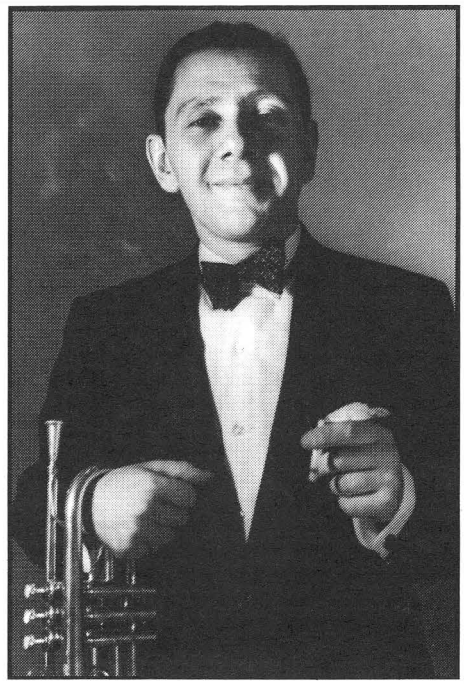
Manone was talented, though within a limited scope. While his lead lines are forthright and his singing ingratiating, they can't carry a full 19 performances. Fortunately, on most sessions, the others were given time in the spotlight, usually for half-choruses. They responded well to the unpretentious, free-wheeling nature of the goings-on, with Tea, Marsala, Miller and pianist **Gil Bowers** showing to good advantage. The rhythm swings hard; Bauduc, present on the majority of the selections, is particularly effective at urging things along via a well-chosen assortment of rattles and thumps. Further, the band often tosses in attractive little surprises in the form of sudden breaks, brief head-arranged passages, shifts in dynamics, etc.

Manone moves into more prominence in the later tracks. For example, the four from 1/28/36 are novelty/hokum workouts on trivial pop ditties leaving no room for Brunies (in his only appearance) to do much playing. Still, nearly everything has its moments including, on 3/10/36, some of the hardest-edged, hottest, most twisting Miller you'll hear. Besides, a chronological study by definition is supposed to be comprehensive, even the weaker efforts being of interest to the completist who wants to get a perspective on an artist's entire body of work.

Keeping in mind that these issues were designed to appear a few at a time over several months and not back-to-back on one disc to be heard at one gulp, I can forgive the repetitive aspects here and respond to the respectable amount of really worthwhile sounds in these grooves. If a present-day combo had the strengths of one of these romping Manone outfits, we'd all be rushing out to hear it. Price and address are not available to me, but this album justifies a reasonable fee from your favorite specialist dealer. — ***Tex Wyndham***

RUBY BRAFF / DICK HYMAN
Fireworks
Inner City IC 1153

Consummate artists in the best jazz traditions, Ruby Braff and Dick Hyman have been playing as a cornet-piano duo in concerts for nearly a



RUBY BRAFF (Photograph by Jack Bradley)

decade. The result, as might be expected, is music of the highest quality, rooted in tradition but never bogged down by it, full of little surprises that keep audiences alert while satisfying body and soul....

This particular occasion was a concert at New York's New School in November 1983 that was recorded off-the-cuff, as it were, by the school's audio-visual engineer, using a single microphone. Fortunately for all concerned, the quality of sound was good enough for Inner City Records to release the highlights on this disc.

Music for the occasion was divided between Gershwin, Tschaikowsky, and traditional (if you can call a saccharine-free ***Sugar***, taken at a reflective clip, tradition), with Gershwin predominating. An aura of Armstrong-Hines' ***Weatherbird*** prevails throughout, not unintentionally (the album title "Fireworks" is another Armstrong reference), but each man is his own master, and both communicate on the same musical wavelength. As Hyman says in his liner recollections: "When we play we talk to each other musically... one of us tells the story... the other supports or comments on it..."

Braff, ever inventive, lyrical, adventurous, sails through ***Somebody Loves Me***, with Hyman filling in with Shearing-style frills. Braff then tears up ***Lady Be Good*** from her sweet underpinnings, and plumbs the harmonic depths of ***Bidin' My Time. They Can't Take That Away From Me*** is taken slow and easy, with Hyman sparkling on Hines' tempo-fracturing lines. ***Lisa***, a piano solo, demonstrates Hyman's farflying skills — this time in flights of Tatum-esque fancy.

The surprise is ***Swan Lake***, which is as close to ***Weatherbird*** as you can get (it was arranged and adapted by Hyman and Braff) but coming off more like ***St. James Infirmary Blues*** — I'm sure Louis would have loved this! The traditional ***High Society*** is given some new highlights by the always inventive and pyrotechnic (that's "Fireworks" for you!) team, with the aforementioned ***Sugar*** a tasty dessert, for a well-balanced bill of fare. — ***Al Van Starrex***

HUMPHREY LYTTELTON
In Canada
Sackville 3033

Trumpeter, composer, bandleader and all-round jazzman Humphrey Lyttelton isn't particularly well known in the U.S. But, across the Atlantic, he was one of the major catalysts in the development of jazz in England, and a favourite with trad and mainstream fans all over Europe.

American fans may remember him accompanying Sidney Bechet with his band on some London-cut Savoy sides (originally Melodisc in England) that have stood the test of time. More recently, Humph (as he is affectionately known) toured Australia with the Graeme Bell band, playing the music of Louis Armstrong — one of the major influences in his own trumpet style. He has also written two books on jazz — ***The Best In Jazz, Vols. I & II***, based on programs he did for the BBC — that amply display his jazz erudition. So, musically at least, this album may come as a revelation to some.

For Humph has continued to develop, transcending traditionalist roots (but not forgetting them) to evolve with a style of playing full of musical clarity, blues form and easy-going swing. Ruby Braff might be a close comparison, but Humph is his own man.

Apparently Lyttelton is no stranger to Canada, having paid several visits with his band. On the most recent of these (for the Molson's Harbourfront Jazz Festival, 1983) he got together with expatriate Jim Galloway (who once worked with him in an Edinburgh jam session) and top Canadian jazz musicians Ed Bickert (guitar), Neil Swainson (bass) and Terry Clarke (drums) to perform, over two afternoons, this album of Lyttelton originals.

The arrangements (all worked out in the studio) display an easygoing swing, three numbers in particular (***Spraunсy***, ***Rain***, ***Leisure Palace***) reminiscent of small group Ellingtonia at its "sprauncіest" — a Humph word, coined by a band member, denoting "a particular sort of elegance that hovers between the immaculate and the flamboyant." Galloway's brawny baritone sax adds much to the flavour.

It's A Thing and ***Squiggles*** are catchy exercises that display the group's all round improvisational skills. Humph's open horn sings with clarion strides (and Buck Clayton-like clarity) on a bluesy ***Looking For Turner*** and ***Lady Jekyll And Mistress Hyde***. The latter echoes the ***Lazy River*** Humph did with Bechet back then, with Galloway's soprano sax providing the perfect complement.

The two leaders combine clarinets in a catchy ***Caribana Queen***, for a zesty tribute to Bechet's creole tunes and the West Indian musicians Humph performed with often in the fifties. Its irresistible rhythms should whet your appetite for everything else in this excellently produced album. If you like small group swing at its best — this is it. — ***Al Van Starrex***

Jazz On Compact ⊙ Disc

The compact disc is the most significant technical breakthrough in recorded sound since the introduction of the microgroove record in the 1950s. Its acceptance by the public has already outstripped the capabilities of the industry to service their needs. Only the extremely limited production facilities will delay the demise of the lp as ***the*** storage form for recorded sounds.

The major benefits of the CD parallel those which hastened the demise of the 78 in the 1950s: superior sound quality and design usage which fits the times.

The compact disc, which is smaller than a "45," is read by a laser. Gone forever is surface noise; the clicks, pops and other irritations of the conventional disc. The music sounds as good as the tape prepared for production of the disc, regardless of where the CD is manufactured. The demand for qualified sound restorers will assume greater importance in the jazz world as the popularity of the CD spreads. The major part of the music's legacy was recorded for 78 or on analog tape. The digital process used with the compact disc cannot eliminate totally the inherent disc and tape sound of these original masters but remarkable results can be achieved with the right amount of care and dedications.

In most cases a CD will sound better than an lp issue of the same material but there are exceptions. The margin of improvement varies considerably. The sloppily mastered lp versions of most Pablo lps makes the CD a vastly superior sonic experience. The difference is less in the case of the Japanese remastered Blue Note and Verve lps. Poorly recorded music, especially of recent vintage, does not show much improvement on the CD.

The CD was developed for the classical market and has best served, to date, listeners of that idiom. More than sixty minutes of music can be stored on a disc — which is one-sided — and the kind of distortion inherent in so many lps is totally absent from the CD. The CD player is designed to play the music in any pre-programmed sequence and remote controls on many modes make listening to music a true armchair experience! One of the major drawbacks of current CD production is that most jazz CDs are facsimiles of the original lps and little attempt has been made to utilize the extended playing time of the CD. This situation is unlikely to change until production has reached the point where the consumer can be highly selective with his purchases.

Newly recorded jazz CDs do show some concern for the needs of the listener. **Joe Williams'** Grammy winning Delos production "Nothin' But The Blues" has several extra tracks. The same is true of the **Modern Jazz Quartet's** "Together Again," recorded for Pablo at the 1982 Montreux Festival and the CD version of the **J.J. Johnson/Al Grey** Pablo production of "Things Are Getting Better All The Time" has an extra selection.

But in all too many cases the CD duplicates lps with less than 45 minutes of music. It's something musicians and producers will have to consider for the future. All CDs should contain at least an hour of music.

The newness of the technology has created extraordinary difficulties for recording companies. The system was developed by Philips/Polygram and Sony and their commitment has given them a tremendous advantage in the early stages of this transformation. Until 1985 they were one of the few manufacturers of the discs. That is slowly changing as more and more companies scramble to obtain a share in the undoubted wealth which will come. But the complexities of the manufacturing process and the high rate of rejection make CD production an expensive operation.

It was only in 1985 that the major US companies woke up to the fact that the CD was here to stay and might, in fact, play a major part in their survival. The weight of their demands has already made it less likely that the selection of jazz titles in the CD catalog will expand very rapidly. It is even less likely that many of the new jazz recordings — now made almost entirely for small independent companies — will be available on CD until all the proposed plants are on stream. This may take three to four years. Only those companies who already have access to the manufacturing process will be able to maintain some semblance of a release schedule.

In the short term this means that most jazz CDs will be reissues of existing lps. It also means that worldwide demand will far exceed the supply. Availability of titles will be unpredictable. Recently published listings of jazz CDs in France (Jazz Magazine), the U.S. (East Side Digital) and Japan list many titles which are impossible to find. All three listings contain titles which the others omit but more than ninety percent of the selections are common to all three catalogues.

These listings define jazz in its broadest terms. At least 25% is music which most readers of this magazine would not consider representative of the music's traditions. A major part of the listing is filled by the Pablo and Polygram (Emarcy/Mercury/Verve) catalogs but there is a healthy selection of material from the Black Saint/Soul Note catalogs as well as a good representation from the Denon, Enja and ECM catalogs. A wide range of material is also available on Vogue. The French company has released music by such diverse artists as **Sidney Bechet, Clifford Brown, Count Basie** and **Muddy Waters**. At least thirty well known Prestige/Riverside titles have recently entered the marketplace. These are all Japanese manufactured items being distributed by Fantasy in the U.S.

Vintage jazz has little representation on CD. The most notable exception is the German Teldec Commodore issues of **Billie Holiday, Coleman Hawkins** and **Jelly Roll Morton**. All three benefit from the excellent remastering of the material for release on lp but there are subtle improvements in the sound quality of the CDs. It gives the music a fuller, richer texture — closer to the reality of the music.

Preparing 78s for release on CD will be an expensive proposition so it is unlikely that much of the material will be available for some time. The most remarkable breakthrough in sound restoration of 78s is the work of Robert Parker in Australia. He has been digitally reprocessing the music and the results are startling. His work was mentioned in ***Coda*** two years ago when cassette copies of some of his radio programs made their way across the ocean.

Early attention focused on his ability to create a stereo effect but this now seems a secondary consideration. His work with the Sony PCMF1 has transformed old 78s into modern sounding pieces of music. He has managed to bring out much of the tonality of the music buried in the old recordings. This music no longer sounds like archival documents. It has the texture, vitality and presence of more modern recordings.

Three volumes of this music: "Jazz Classics in Stereo" have been issued in Australia on Festival Records (L38149, L38266, L38212) and more recently the same three volumes have been issued in England (on BBC Records). Each volume purports to represent the style of New Orleans, Chicago and New York in the 1920s. All three volumes, in reality, encompass a cross section of jazz music from that period. Many true classics are included — all the music will be well known to collectors. Some of the results are astounding. The restoration work on **King Oliver's** Okeh recording of ***Sweet Lovin' Man*** reveals for the first time with any degree of clarity the intricate ensemble playing while both **Ma Rainey's** ***Hear Me Talking To You*** and **Bessie Smith's** ***Lock And Key*** give greater dimension to their majestic voices. This is not the place to debate the choice of material (it would be just as easy to produce an equally extensive choice of alternate performances by some of the same players) but it is worth noting the absence of any examples of Jimmy Noone, Sam Morgan or The New Orleans Wanderers in this collection. Excessive echo mars some of the selections. It's hard to determine whether this is Parker's responsibility or whether this occurred in transferring the material to lp. It's disappointing, therefore, that this material is not yet on compact disc. I can't wait to obtain Robert Parker transfers of the King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Johnny Dodds, Sidney Bechet, Duke Ellington and Earl Hines classics in CD format!

Polygram's repackaging of Verve material on CD is making available again material which has only been on Japanese lps in the recent past. **Bill Evans'** "Conversations With Myself" (Verve 821.984-2) is an excellent example of what can happen. The three overdubbed piano lines have much more clarity than on the conventional lp. It gives a fresh perspective to the quality of this piano music. "Night Train" (Verve 821.724-2) has always been one of the most successful of **Oscar Peterson's** lps. The blues-flavoured repertoire brought out a simpler, more direct conception with the trio concentrating on generating a great deal of swing and lift. The performance always seemed marred by the irritating sound of Ed Thigpen's cymbals. The CD redefines the balance and the result is an excellent performance, which is greatly enhanced by the CD format.

"Coleman Hawkins encounters Ben Webster" (Verve 823.120-2) is another marvelous Verve

session which has more appropriately been entitled "Blue Saxophones" in subsequent reissues. The rich tone of both saxophonists is dramatically captured in this CD. ***Blues For Yolande*** will reach out and grab you and then take you on a trip which contains the essential ingredients of great jazz. These men personify the music's essence. What a disappointment it is to find that Polygram didn't include ***Maria*** and ***Cocktails For Two*** from this session. They have been incorporated in most reissues despite being originally placed on another lp by Norman Granz in the 1950s. Another essential purchase is the **Art Tatum/Ben Webster Quartet** collaboration (Pablo J33J 20034). The music jumps out of the speaker at you in this CD version. The sound quality is astounding for music recorded in the mid 1950s and makes the lp versions completely redundant. The original Verve lp was always full of surface noise while the Pablo remastering took all the edge off the music. Now, on CD, it is completely restored.

The glittering purity of **Clifford Brown's** trumpet is enhanced on the CD version of "Clifford Brown with Strings" (Emarcy 814. 642-2). The lyricism of his conception was never better shown than at this session even though the string writing is as unimaginative and unnecessary as that created for Charlie Parker during the same decade. It just seems like so much unnecessary baggage. But that trumpet playing resonates with freshness.

Other Pablo CDs which will delight listeners with their improved sound quality are many of the **Count Basie** piano sessions. Norman Granz' commitment to record as much of Count Basie's piano as possible in the 1970s is a major contribution by a producer who provided the motivation for the artistic stimulation of the artist. "For The First Time" (Pablo J33J 20051) set the whole process in motion and the CD version is particularly crisp and clean. It emphasises the interaction between Basie, Ray Brown and Louis Bellson. Even better are the improvements in "The Timekeepers" (Pablo 3112-43) where the definition between **Basie** and **Oscar Peterson** is better and the annoying prominence of John Heard's bass has been adjusted to create a session of undiminished pleasure. Much improved, too, is the sound on **"Basie and Zoot"** (Pablo J33J 20016). It gives greater presence to the playing of Basie and Sims and allows the listener to hear their interaction with much greater detail.

"Ella and Louis" (Verve 825.373-2) and **Billie Holiday's** "Songs for Distingue Lovers" (Verve 815.055-2) are among the vocal classics of all time. They define the art of jazz singing and both their voices and the accompaniment (by outstanding jazz artists) are enhanced by the CD format. At 54 minutes running time, the Ella/Louis issue is better value than the Holiday which has a meagre 33 minutes of music. More than an hour's worth of music from these same Holiday sessions with Harry Edison, Ben Webster and Jimmy Rowles can be found on "The Silver Collection" (Verve 823.449-2).

Both **"Art Pepper + Eleven"** (MVCD 805) and **"Sonny Rollins:** Way Out West" (MFCD 801) are outstanding examples of what can be done with the technology. Both these sessions were excellently recorded for Contemporary Records in the 1950s. Les Koenig's consistently high standards touched both the music and its production. His tapes gave Mobile Fidelity the chance to reprocess the music with startling quality. They are the equal of many digitally recorded sessions of the 1980s.

The CD format is designed to work best with the digital technology of today but this doesn't always mean the music is better. **John Lewis'** version of "J.S. Bach Preludes and Fugues" (Philips 824.381-2) is a beautifully produced curate's egg which fails to satisfy either the jazz or classical listener. Lewis gives the music a different rhythmic feel to Glenn Gould but he doesn't perform with the same kind of authority. The piano sound is rich and mellow in Lewis' recording but "African Dawn" by **Dollar Brand** (Enja 3112.10) not only has a brighter piano sound but features a performer whose music resonates with vitality and the imagination which jazz listeners are always seeking out. ***Children's Corner, The Sunshine Of Your Smile*** and ***Just You Just Me*** are additional selections not found on the original lp version of this outstanding solo performance.

Landmark, Orrin Keepnews' new label, has produced some interesting music which is now finding its way onto compact disc. "Keys to the City" (Landmark VDJ-1019) is an excellent showcase for **Mulgrew Miller** — a young pianist who has made his mark with Art Blakey. The CD does little to improve the muddy recording quality of the original studio sound. The Japanese-produced CD also draws attention to another shortcoming of many CDs. The printed information is often inadequate or, as in this case, only printed in Japanese. Ira Coleman and Marvin "Smitty" Smith are the bassist and drummer but this information is not given in English. Only Mulgrew Miller's name and the tune titles are bilingual.

The CD is here to stay. The convenience of the format, the overall improvement in sound quality, the attractiveness of its packaging in the plastic "jewel" case and the relative indestructability of the disc all add up to a product which is far more than a gimmick. Once the manufacturing wrinkles have been eliminated the CD will become the dominant format for storing recorded sound. Newly produced lps will become a thing of the past but it will be at least a decade before anything like today's wide choice of recordings from all periods of jazz find their way onto CD.

— John Norris

AROUND THE WORLD

CANADA — A broad cross section of contemporary jazz styles will be showcased this summer at Du Maurier's International Jazz Festival in **Vancouver**. Four different series, at the New York Theatre, Robson Square Cinema, Expo Theatre and Western Front will surely satisfy the listening desires of those concerned with the music's present state. Among those appearing are Jan Garbarek, Ornette Coleman, Roscoe Mitchell, Abdullah Ibrahim and Ekaya, and The Ganelin Trio (New York); Bill Frisell, Kenny Wheeler, Tim Berne, Leroy Jenkins, Jane Ira Bloom, Oliver Jones (Robson Square); Miles Davis, Wynton Marsalis, Tito Puente (Expo); Ran Blake, Jay Clayton, Bill Smith Ensemble, Steve Lacy (Western Front). The festival runs from June 24 to June 29. In addition to the above event the Peter Appleyard All Stars appear June 28 at the Hyatt Regency's Ballroom.

Toronto's Du Maurier Festival, to be held in various locations during the same period is less focused — and relies more heavily on what is known as contemporary crossover music and/or local bands who have yet achieved a wide reputation. Much of it is only marginally acceptable as jazz. Mel Torme, Boss Brass, Phil Woods (June 24); VSOP (Hancock, Branford Marsalis, Al Foster, Ron Carter) and the Michel Petrucciani Trio (June 27) are at Roy Thompson Hall. Toshiko Akiyoshi's Orchestra and Paquito D'Rivera share the stage at the Toronto Convention Centre June 26 with Monty Alexander's Quartet and the Peter Appleyard Band in the same location the following night. Stan Getz's quartet share the spotlight with Don (D.T.) Thompson's Quintet June 28. David Murray, Craig Harris/ Ronald Shannon Jackson, Time Warp, Claude Ranger, Don Pullen/George Adams are at Basin Street; Ran Blake, Bobby Enriquez, Connie Crothers are at Bourbon Street. There are singers at Garbo's, blues bands at the Rivoli and the Pinetree, funk at the Bamboo and Toronto's new wave at Lee's Palace. And that's it!!

The newly reorganized **Gotham City** recorded two nights of music May 14 & 15 at Queen Street's Squeeze Club for future release on lp.... **Woody Herman** celebrated his 73rd birthday May 16 with an old fashioned dance date at the Palais Royale. See elsewhere in this issue for important news about the growing campaign to assist the veteran bandleader's problems with the U.S. tax department.

The University of Toronto's Jazz Ensembles (under the direction of **Phil Nimmons**) presented their final concert of the season March 22 in the MacMillan Theatre. The Jazz Vocal Combo won a gold Standard Award at the Ontario Vocal Jazz Festival and were scheduled to head west for the Canadian Stage Band festival in Vancouver.

Upcoming at George's Spaghetti House in June are Moe Koffman, Joe Coughlin, the Wray Downes/Dave Young Duo and Bill King.... Freddie Stone, Bill Smith, David Prentice and George Koller were featured in the first of a series of concerts at the Parasol Arts Centre on April 17.... The **Michael Stuart** Quartet were at the Music Gallery April 29. Don Thompson (piano), Mike Milligan (bass) and Claude Ranger (drums) worked with the saxophonist. **Time Warp** and the **Rob Frayne/ Jeff Johnson** Duo were at the same location May 9/10 with the saxophone quartet of Paul Cram, Rob Frayne, Nic Gotham and Jonnie Bakan featured May 16 under the group name **Solar System. Gunter Christmann** and **Torsten Muller** (in cooperation with the Goethe Institute) were at the Music Gallery May 21.... Saxophonist **Maury Coles**, with synthesizer player Paul Snyder, has opened a Saturday night series in the Subway Room of the Spadina Hotel. "RIM" - a Room for Improvised Music - will feature the duo with a different guest each week.

The Molson Jazz Club continues its Sunday evening activities at Harbourfront. The Archie Alleyne Quartet, The Swing Club Four, The Jazz Corporation, The Norman Amadio Quartet and The Rainbow Gardens Orchestra are scheduled for June. Headliners for the Molson Jazz Weekend July 11-13 include Wild Bill Davison, Dan Barrett, Keith Ingham and Milt Hinton who will be working with saxophonist **Jim Galloway**.

Cleo Laine and Johnny Dankworth and Woody Herman are among the artists scheduled to appear at Roy Thompson Hall next October.

Ian Bargh substituted for **Jay McShann** for the second part of the Kansas City pianist's two week gig at Cafe des Copains. An adverse allergy reaction forced McShann to head home early. He promises to return in the near future. Upcoming this summer at the Cafe are Art Hodes, Barry Harris, Dick Wellstood, Don Friedman and Junior Mance.

The University of Toronto Community Radio station received one of the last available FM licences in the area and promises a healthy amount of jazz programming in its new schedule. They expect to be on the air in September.

For up to date information on jazz activities in the Toronto area you can now phone **"Jazz Watch"** at 463-2314 and listen to a pre-recorded taped rundown of the week's events.

Baritone saxophonist **Pepper Adams** came to Montreal in February to record with **Denny Christianson's Big Band**. The forthcoming Justin Time lp is built around an extended composition dedicated to the spirit and memory of Charles Mingus. A full page article in the Montreal Gazette on April 19 is a glowing tribute to Adams and to the efforts of the musicians involved in the recording project. Veteran jazz commentator Len Dobbin recently celebrated his fifth year of writing "Jazz Notes" in the Gazette and his eleventh year as host of his Sunday night radio show.... The Andrew Homzy Jazz Orchestra was presented in concert

NIC GOTHAM (Photograph by Mark Miller)

May 16 at Concordia University.... This year's spectacular Montreal Jazz Festival will be held from June 27 to July 6. The festival's office is at 365 rue Ste-Catherine ouest, Suite 301 and the phone number is (514) 871-1881.

Guitarist **Garrison Fewell**, who spends most of his time teaching at the Berklee College of Music, made a return visit to Quebec City's Hotel Clarendon from May 21 to 25.... **Halifax's** radio station CKDU-FM, broadcasting from the campus of Dalhousie University, stepped up its commitment to jazz programming in January. New programmers include Robin Shier and Brian Turner.

Jazz Calgary presented the Bob Erlendson Octet April 12 at the Delta Bow Valley Inn. Paul Horn and Larry Coryell were also in Calgary (April 6) for a concert at the Jubilee.

Expo '86 has provided the impetus for the Pacific Jazz & Blues Festival in **Vancouver** at the end of June as well as many other events. The festival's organisers have been presenting a series of events leading up to the festival. Joanne Brackeen (March 30) and Emily Remler (April 13) were followed by the dynamic duo of Peter Brotzmann and Han Bennink on April 29 at the Western Front.... Walter Zuber Armstrong will be heard in concert July 5 at the Robson Square Media Centre.

— compiled by John Norris

BOSTON — Although the members of Percussion Discussion, Eli Fountaine, Yvonne Garner, Jay Hoggard, Karim Abdul Rahkman, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Warren Smith, and alto saxophonist Steve Coleman, nearly outnumbered their audience at Tufts University on March 4, they played one of the most enjoyable concerts I've heard in a long time. They may not play often enough in public, but the smooth execution of the compositions, which required band members switching among several instruments, and group rapport, showed they rehearse often. That kind of professionalism, which puts music before fame, finance, or audience size, is all too rare. The emotional and musical affinity of the group members created dense but orderly ensemble passages. No one got in anyone's way, and the music was clear, dignified, and swung like mad. But individual contributions can also be singled out. Jay Hoggard's solo on Rahkman's ***Waiting For You***, Fountaine's traps solo on Coleridge Taylor Perkin's ***Witch Doctor***, and Warren Smith's tympani work, which is more subtle, controlled, and musical than any percussionist I can name, were among the many outstanding contributions of the night. Coleman, during the tunes on which he played, was icing on the rich, thick cake. He floated lyrically overhead, rather than burrowing into the rhythmic ground beneath.

Brass player Hugh Ragin made an extremely rare appearance at Charlie's Tap on March 15 and 16 with bassist Leon Dorsey, and drummer Thurman Barker. They played tunes ranging from jazz standards like Horace Silver's ***Song For My Father*** and Ornette Coleman's ***Lonely Woman*** to Ragin's own compositions. Ragin is a thinker. His solo on ***Song For My Father*** juggled phrases of varying length, timbres which ranged from growls to sweet and pure, and he even threw in a quote or two. He gets a big, fat bottom register and a July 4th sparkler high range from the trumpet. His compositions display the same passionate deliberation that his solos do. ***Elements*** has four contrasting sections, one for each of the ancient Greek elements, air, water, earth, and fire. Barker and Dorsey, using all their imaginative resources, rose well to the structures' challenges.

Pianist Geri Allen and band members Anthony Cox on bass and Terri-Lyne Carrington on drums held high spirited three way musical conversations at Charlie's Tap on April 4 and 5. Allen, already an accomplished pianist, has a dark sound which can suddenly brighten, a terse sense of melody, and a keen understanding of rhythm and space. Carrington was crisp, flexible, and full of ideas. Anthony Cox keeps getting better and better. His solo spot during the second set Friday night was remarkable. This was a very mature evening of music, full of enthusiasm and life, from young players.

Bassist Reggie Workman's intriguing, all star quartet, with Joseph Jarman on reeds, Marilyn Crispell on piano, and Andrew Cyrille on drums, provided another highlight of the busy spring schedule at Charlie's Tap on April 18 and 19. These four strong individuals, who had never played together before as a unit, worked together exceptionally well. Everyone contributed original tunes. Jarman's ***One South***, a freely swinging, uptempo number, Crispell's moody ***Chant***, Cyrille's ***5432***, and Workman's multi-sectioned ***November 1st***, were the highlights. The second set featured a Coltrane medley with Jarman featured on ***Dear Lord***, Crispell on ***After the Rain***, Workman on ***Wise One***, and Cyrille on ***Coltrane Time***. This band should stay together and record.

Thurman Barker's trio at Charlie's on April 25 and 26 consisted of Rob Schwimmer on keyboards, Dan O'Brien on bass, the leader on traps, marimba and glockenspiel, and special guest Sam Rivers on tenor and flute. Barker's own music displays and unexpectedly lyrical side. On the set opener, Barker stated the introductory melody on marimba. Schwimmer provided lush accompanying chords and runs while O'Brien bowed and plucked counterpoint. The swinging midsection reminded me of Chick Corea's early trio work, like ARC, but with more muscular drumming. ***Hocus Pocus***, another Barker original, was more agitated and fragmented at times, but also had contrasting passages. Sam Rivers raised the energy level several notches when he joined the band for the second half of the set. With seeming nonchalance, Rivers tossed off lightning runs and acid shrieks on tenor, darting figures on flute, then reminded us of his roots with a version of ***Stella by Starlight***. Barker, apparently still charged up from two weeks in Europe and New York with the Cecil Taylor Unit, delivered a long, loud, energetic, but finely detailed and structured traps solo between Rivers' tenor and flute solos.

There was enough good music in the Boston area in the past two months to keep any jazz lover happy as a clam at high tide. Among the highlights were the David Murray Quartet on the first weekend in March, the Jaki Byard trio on March 7 and 8, Third Kind of Blue on March 21 and 22, and the Paul Motian quintet on April 11 and 12, all at Charlie's Tap. Cyrille, Hopkins, and Threadgill on March 4, Joe Morris trio with Thurman Barker on March 5, Joanne Brackeen and Eddie Gomez on March 12, Lee Konitz trio on March 13, Barry Altschul quartet with Ray Anderson, Marty Ehrlich, and Mark Helias on April 2, Bobby Watson quartet with Curtis Lundy on April 15 and 16, and Red Rodney Quartet on April 30, all at 1369 Jazz Club. The Willow presented Freddie Redd with Sonny Fortune on March 2 and 3, Shock Exchange on March 7 and 8, and James Williams quintet on March 31 and April 1. On April 17-19 Jay McShann and Major Holley appeared at the Starlight Roof, followed by Ran Blake's quintet on April 24-26.

— Ed Hazell

HARTFORD — Lately I've heard a surprising amount of first-rate music in Middletown, a community noted for its lack of night life.

Tenor saxophonist David Bindman presented a particularly exciting set February 28 at Middletown's Russell Library. Using a septet that included Thurman Barker and Royal Hartigan doubling on drums and marimbas and trombonist Bill Lowe doubling on tuba, Bindman realized his darkly ethereal compositions throughout fluid shifts of textures, time signatures and skillful use of Ghanian rhythms.

Bindman also played in Wesleyan University's February 22 Black Composers' Concert, which featured Bill Barron's ***Untitled Suite for Big Band*** and Bill Lowe's ambitious ***Reb!*** A work that deftly blended Wesleyan's orchestra, jazz band and two choral groups into a single musical entity, ***Reb!*** communicated a powerful spiritual message even though the Crowell Concert Hall's acoustics smothered much of the work's spoken text.

Middletown bassist Joe Fonda teamed with saxophonist Tom Guralnick April 17 for a unique concert at the Russell Library. With his tenor and soprano and an elaborate array of mutes, home-made reed instruments, and digital delay devices, Guralnick began his solo piece with blurting saxophone phrases that outlined areas of textural emphasis, then elaborated on them by improvising fresh lines over playbacks of preceding passages until the live work and the recorded work alternated leads. Fonda followed with an adventurous solo improvisation that explored a variety of extended bass techniques, including de-tuning his E string to create a gravelly, rumbling sound. When the two texturalists joined in a duet improvisation, Fonda's probing lines linked with Guralnick's soundbursts to create a kaleidoscope of fascinating tone colors.

Bindman, Lowe and Fonda provide the bulk of Middletown's club music, as well. Bindman and Lowe comprise the front line of Sweet Rainbow, a quintet that alternates with Joe Fonda's trio at La Boca. Sweet Rainbow's music communicates an off-the-cuff freshness reminiscent of Mingus' Candid recordings. Fonda's trio of Tony Purrone and Steve McCraven communicates a screaming funkiness.

Fonda replaced McCraven with Ed Soph and added Bill Barron for a weekend engagement at Waterbury's Hillside Restaurant early in March. Soph's subdued drumming nicely complemented Barron's subtlety while Purrone and Fonda's intensity brought out the saxophonists's aggressiveness. Although the musicians' group had never played with Barron before, they quickly established the rapport that enabled them to perform Barron's sophisticated compositions with skill and sensitivity.

Barron also travelled to Hartford to play in the 880 Club's All Star Jazz series April 17 and to sit in at the club's March 6 benefit for Pepper

Adams. Despite undergoing treatment for cancer, Adams played with a wit and vitality that attested to his will to live.

Trumpeter Claudio Roditi displayed a remarkable ***joie de vivre*** in his April 10 visit to the 880 Club. The congas of guest Tony Gonzales added latin spice to the cooking of Don DePalma's house trio. Sitting in with Roditi, Lalo Conversano displayed some fluid chops on fluegelhorn and Hartt student Bill Fluker held his own in heavy company.

Larry DiNatale's quintet plays at the 880 Club every Wednesday with a front line of George Sovak and Steve Davis. Davis, a freshman at the Hartt School of Music, is a promising trombonist. Lee Callahan, who performs with DiNatale, fronts the fine quartet that plays Saturday evenings at the Club Car.

While Hartford's club scene experienced a surge of activity, the Hartford Jazz Society suffered a two-concert slump. The normally hot Joe Henderson served a lukewarm set to the Jazz Society March 9. Although he caught fire halfway through his last set, he offered the audience too little too late. Fortunately, Joanne Brackeen shrugged off a sluggish start to play some inspired solos with Henderson's quartet. March 23, Shirley Scott suffered a similar lack of energy, as well as technical problems with the organ provided for her. Jay McShann, however, performed at the level Hartford listeners have come to expect. The exuberance of his April 20 outing touched everyone in the audience. Major Holley, the bassist with McShann's trio, displayed one of the juiciest tones I've heard anywhere.

April 27 Harold Holt staged a memorial concert for his late wife. His guest artists were Arthur and Red Prysock ... Sonny Rollins performed March 15 at the University of Hartford ... The Jazz History Narration Performance series continues to tour Hartford area public schools. The Emery Smith Quintet frequently provides the music for the series.

— Vernon Frazer

PHILADELPHIA — After providing an outlet for many of the top names on the current jazz scene throughout most of last summer and into the fall, "Curtains" drew the final curtain on its Wednesday night jazz policy with the coming of the new year. However, the overall scene in this neck of the woods remains in a reasonably healthy state, and with the coming of the warmer weather, the pace is just beginning to pick up.

The Painted Bride as always has done its fair share of bringing in the likes of vibist Khan Jamal, Don Cherry's group (Carlos Ward, Mark Helias, Ed Blackwell and Nana Vasconcelos), Don Pullen's new quintet, the Butch Morris Octet and the Reggie Workman Ensemble. Their Sunday afternoon solo piano series has included Sun Ra, Ran Blake and Cecil Taylor.

Saxophonist Joe Sudler's "Swing Machine" continues to use the Chestnut Cabaret as its base of operations. Trombonist Al Grey and trumpeter Clark Terry were the latest names on a growing roster of heavies who have been featured with this exceptional aggregation. Also at the Chestnut Cabaret in recent months have been fusion masters Stanley Clarke and Joe Zawinul.

Making his first Philadelphia appearance in 23 years, Johnny Griffin was at Grendel's Lair April 28 followed by Benny Wallace on May 5th. Other happenings at Grendel's Lair have included the Phil Woods Quintet, Dizzy Gillespie featured with Jerry Gonzalez and the "Fort Apache Band", guitarist Joe Pass, Doctor John and George Coleman with a well oiled rhythm section consisting of Harold Mabern, Jamil Nasser and Idris Muhammad.

Jules' supplied the backdrop for vocalists Little Jimmy Scott and Arthur Prysock who had brother Red's combo in tow. Also organist Jack McDuff made in infrequent stop off at Jules' the weekend of April 18-20.

The Jazz Live Series at the Afro American Cultural Museum opened with a tribute to Duke Ellington by Sun Ra and his Arkestra on April 25. Other upcoming events at the museum include visits from native sons Benny Golson and Jimmy Heath. Haverford College hosted Jemeel Moondoc on April 18, followed by keyboardist Lyle Mays on April 25. Mellon Bank is sponsoring the Mellon Jazz Festival scheduled to take place at various Philadelphia locations June 14-22. Dedicated to the late legendary drummer Philly Joe Jones, the festival will consist of concerts and events at such sites as the Academy of Music, Penn's Landing, the Warwick Hotel and Strawberry Square. Among the impressive line up are Miles Davis, B.B. King, Lionel Hampton, Abdullah Ibrahim, Mel Torme, George Shearing, Oliver Lake, Randy Brecker, Red Rodney, Khan Jamal, Ray Bryant, Doc Cheatham, Jimmy Witherspoon and a host of others.

In Harrisburg, Pa., saxophonist Al Cohn was the guest of The Central Pennsylvania Friends of Jazz as were pianists Phineas Newborn Jr. and Adam Makowicz performing as a duo. The Friends of Jazz annual festival will be held June 27, 28 & 29 and sports The Paris Reunion Band, George Coleman, Astrud Gilberto, Al Grey-Buddy Tate, Joanne Brackeen, Ira Sullivan, Rufus Reid, Joe Diorio and many more.

The Allentown based "Improvco" has again moved its performing space, this time to the "Open Space Gallery" at 808 Hamilton St. On April 27, they were responsible for the highly energized, incredibly zany hi-jinx of the Peter Brotzman-Han Bennink Duo. May 18 marked the appearance of "Voice Crack" (Andy Guhl and Norbert Moesland) and on June 8 a double bill consisting of the duos of Roger Turner and Phil Minton and Gunter Christmann and Torsten Mueller.

In the Reading area, the Berks Campus of Penn State University presented saxophonist, composer-arranger Bill Kirchner in mid-February. Best known for his two fine nonet dates on Sea Breeze Records, Bill was backed by the rhythm section from his last record "Infant Eyes" Sea Breeze SB2017. While the mood remained rather subdued, the overall performance was extremely satisfying. Soul Brother #1 James Brown found time to bring his funky brand of R&B to the Giegle Complex of Reading High School on April 13.

Two records were inadvertently omitted from my "10 Best List" in the February issue of Coda. They were Khan Jamal's "Dark Warrior" on Steeplechase Records and George Coleman's "Manhattan Panorama" on Theresa Records.

— Gerard Futrick

SAN FRANCISCO — February 27 Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers with Terrance Blanchard (trumpet), Donald Harrison (alto sax), Jean Toussant (tenor sax), Mulgrew Miller (piano)

and Lonnie Plaxico (bass) stormed into the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco for three nights. I heard this same group about a year and a half ago and the growth was astonishing. Take five young, gifted players and put them through the Blakey University and his advanced program and the results heard this evening were a combination of tightness of ensemble play, loose flowing ideas in the solos, generally a flawless performance.

March 2 back at the GAMH for an evening of electronic and acoustic duets between Brazilian master Egberto Gismonti and his accomplice Nando Carniero. The first half of the evening had Gismonti at grand piano with a Prophet 5 synthesizer resting on top of it. Carniero was on the other side of the stage manning a complex Oberheim synthesizer control unit that included programs for transcription, rhythm mixes, overlays and the control of at least five other smaller keyboard units that separated them. With this set-up Gismonti was able to actualize a full orchestra of shifting melody, harmony, rhythm and improvisation. Though the music was fully satisfying, I still would like to hear the same music played by an orchestra of living musicians. The second part of the evening was a set of duets for Gismonti's ten and twelve string guitars and Carniero on six string classical style guitar. Most beautiful!

March 13 over in the east bay at the Oakland/ Berkeley border Yoshi's, a marvelous japanese restaurant/ sushi/ oyster bar, has expanded their music policy to include "international name" performers. This evening was Milt Jackson/Ray Brown Quartet with Mickey Roker and Gene Harris. I was greatly impressed by the care the proprietor has put into making this room a place to listen to the music without the usual problems one experiences at many jazz clubs, where the emphasis is on selling drinks rather than presenting music. This is truly a labor of love. The pay-back was having a line out the door of patient fans with money in hand, waiting for an open seat. The music was outstanding, this quartet setting, for 'Bags', is a way to open up and stretch-out. The introduction to the tunes alone were worth the evening. Especially powerful was a Monk medley of ***Straight No Chaser, Round Midnight*** (a duet of vibes and bass) and ***In Walked Bud***. If you are a musician reading this, Chuck LaPaglia books this room.

A brief note off the subject is Francesco Parra's film "My Son Che" which premiered at the San Francisco International Film Festival in March. This is a must see, with Che's father Don Ernesto holding court in his study reminising about the life and work and inspiration of his son.

Every Sunday at Bajone's in S.F. Flip Nunez (piano/vocals) with his quartet of Jerry Gilmore (reeds), Paul Van Wageningen (bass) and Seward McCain (drums) present a balanced evening of music, straight ahead with a peripheral view to the edge. Over at Yoshi's Ed Kelley plays a set with his trio (Herbie Lewis, bass and Eddie Moore, drums) and then opens it up for a jam session. Whichever side of the bay you are on, these two on-going events are the closest thing to socialized medicine we have in the bay area.

Wednesday April 23 Koncepts Cultural Gallery opened their doors again (after being quiet for some time) with Cedar Walton, Buster Williams and Billy Higgins. They had been in the area performing with the Timeless All-Stars (add Harold Land and Curtis Fuller). The intimate, 90 seat setting is a perfect way to experience these players. The room was soul'd out (and sold-out) for both sets. In this setting it was very clear (again) that innovation and invention is the rule in this music. The music was mixed with originals, some standards and a surprise visit by vocalist Fay Carroll.

Another film drop in, though more in line with the subject: Bill Smith and Ron Mann's ***Imagine The Sound*** was presented April 28 for one night's viewing. This film, a documentary with Cecil Taylor, Bill Dixon, Archie Shepp and Paul Bley is a must for all interested in this music and is a good way to be introduced to it, if you are just discovering it.

On Tuesday night April 29 at Yoshi's Masahiko Sato and Hozan Yamamoto (piano and Shakuhachi, respectively) presented a program blending song based improvisation with spontaneous composition. I was amazed to hear them open their set with Paul Simon's ***Scarborough Fair*** (not an overwhelming choice for improvisors) and make it work. Sato has studied deeply all forms of western piano music and has a real feel for the blues form. Yamamoto, playing two lengths of flute, brought the unique sound of traditional Japanese music to this improvisational setting. Both men are from Japan. I first became familiar with their music on an LP called "Three Masters" with the drummer Masahiko Togashi. During the evening they kept returning to the more lyrical elements of the jazz tradition, the song form. They were also well versed in the gospel music "spiritual" elements in the music.

In the wind for the summer: Ornette Coleman, Steve Lacy, McCoy Tyner and Jackie McLean and hopefully, a number of surprises.

— Brian Auerbach

As we go to press
we are saddened by the news that
alto saxophonist Jimmy Lyons
succumbed to cancer
on May 19th.

AN APPEAL

This year **WOODY HERMAN** celebrates his 50th anniversary as a bandleader. We should all be thanking him for everything that he has given to people with his music. He is not only a great artist but also a man of great integrity and honesty, and it is heartbreaking to see him suffer such grief at such a late stage of his life.

Leading a band has been and still is the most important thing in life for Herman, but it has never earned him a lot of money except for 2 or 3 years in the 1940's when big band music was most popular. During that period he was able to buy a home, which was his only financial security. Now, however, that home has been auctioned off for unpaid taxes and Herman still owes the U.S. government one and a half million dollars, which he can never hope to pay. Any royalties he receives are immediately confiscated and at the age of 72, he must work every day merely to survive.

He has carried this terrible burden for more than 20 years because a former manager whom he trusted completely gambled away money that should have been used for taxes and didn't file any payroll returns for the band for three years. Herman never knew this was happening until the government charged him personally with taxes on the entire band's income for those three years. According to U.S. tax law, it didn't matter that he was unaware of what had been done and was actually convicted of a crime by his manager. He was held responsible for this huge debt which has been increased by penalties and interest for the last 20 years.

This has been emotionally devastating for Herman, but nevertheless he is fighting to get back his home or at least to receive a compromise from the government that will allow him some financial security. He thinks he has been treated very unfairly by the American government despite a lifetime of hard work and his tremendous contributions to the world of music and to his country as an ambassador of American jazz.

With this letter we start a worldwide campaign to collect money to help Woody Herman. Let us restore his faith in humanity, let us show him that we love and respect him.

As the government would probably confiscate any funds put into his name, the money should be sent to his daughter Ingrid Herman-Reese (his wife is no longer alive). With the money Ingrid Herman-Reese will try to save her father's original home or to buy him another one.

Contact: Ingrid Herman-Reese, Gilmore Commercial and Savings Bank, 6291 West Third Street, Los Angeles, California 90036-3199, U.S.A., Special Account Number 04361.

— Jazz Podium

ODDS & SODS

The latest reincarnation of the **Newport Jazz Festival** is now reality. The JVC Jazz Festival will take place between June 20-29 in and around New York. The number of events has been scaled down due to the unavailability of Carnegie Hall this year but a feast of music is being offered the jazz listener. Highlights include a solo piano series at the Bruno Walter Auditorium. Barry Harris, Ellis Larkins, Dick Wellstood, Andy Laverne, Mulgrew Miller, Steve Kuhn, Ray Bryant and Dorothy Donegan are the featured pianists. More piano music will be heard at Waterloo Village June 21 under the musical direction of Dick Hyman. Derek Smith, Bob Winter, Joanne Brackeen, Art Hodes, Jimmy Rowles, Ray Bryant and Dick Wellstood will be featured. There's to be a tribute to Wild Bill Davison, concerts by Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Mel Torme and George Shearing as well as an Ira Gitler produced salute to Ben Webster, Johnny Hodges and Harry Carney. Full program information is available from P.O. Box 1169, Ansonia Station, New York, N.Y. 10023 USA.

Things don't look quite so good for the Greenwich Village Festival. Dewar's has pulled out of its sponsorship and at this writing no replacement has been found.... **Sweet Basil** continues to set the pace for jazz night clubs in Manhattan. The Cecil Taylor Unit worked the club in April and they were followed by McCoy Tyner, Pharoah Sanders, Paul Bley and a

cooperative group known as "The Leaders". Musicians involved are Don Cherry, Arthur Blythe, Chico Freeman, Kirk Lightsey, Cecil McBee and Don Moye.... Pianist Bill Mays is firmly established in New York with duo gigs at Angry Squire, Knickerbocker and Bradleys. He also led a trio and quintet at South Street Seaport for a spring Jazzfest.... **"The Group"** made its debut appearance May 3 at Greenwich House. Ahmed Abdullah, Marion Brown, Sirone and Andrew Cyrille are the featured performers.... The Rory Stuart Quartet were at First on First May 10.... Jane Ira Bloom was at Symphony Space on May 20.... WKCR Radio celebrated the music of Cannonball Adderley and Miles Davis in May with extensive programming of their music.

Mona Hinton, as co-executor of the **Count Basie** estate, is forming a "Count Basie Circle of Friends" to support the continuation of the Basie tradition and the Count Basie Jazz Youth Program. For more information write Mona Hinton, 173 - 05 113 Avenue, Jamaica, N.Y. 11433.... Now's the time to start planning your September visit to New York for the 5th Jazz Times Convention. It's the one event which draws people from all segments of the jazz community together. This year's convention is being held at the Roosevelt Hotel from September 4 to 7. For further information write Ira Sabin, Jazz Times, 8055 13th Street, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

Aardvark, the contemporary jazz orchestra directed by Mark Harvey, did a quick spring tour which took them to New York. They were back home in Boston for a concert May 9 at MIT's Kresge Auditorium with Jaki Byard as special guest soloist.... "Synthesis", a performance piece created by **Reggie Workman** and **Maya Milenovic**, was performed May 8 at the Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center.... June 14 is the date of **Clarence Gatemouth Brown's** American Music Festival '86 at Mineral Springs Family Playground in Stafford Springs, CT. The event is a benefit for muscular dystrophy.... Herbie Mann (June 22), Dave Brubeck (July 6), Dizzy Gillespie (July 20), Les McCann (August 3), Charlie Byrd (August 17) and Ramsey Lewis (August 24) are all signed for the summer jazz series on Martha's Vineyard.... Even Burlington, Vermont is to have a jazz festival. **Ella Fitzgerald** and **Abdullah Ibrahim's Ekaya** are the headliners for the event scheduled for June 12-15.... The Central Pennsylvania Friends of Jazz in Harrisburg, Pa. presents its Summer Jazz Festival June 27-29 at the Penn Harris Convention Center, Camp Hill, Pa. The Paris Reunion Band, Al Grey/Buddy Tate and Joanne Brackeen are the headliners. For more information phone 717-732-5877.

The New Art Percussion Ensemble under the direction of **Bill Lewis** performed at Philadelphia's Walnut Street Theatre March 15.... Still to come in the African American Historical and Cultural Museum's summer jazz program are concerts by **Ekaya** (June 20), **Horace Silver** (July 23) and **Benny Golson** (August 8).... The groups of Sonny Fortune and Khan Jamal will be appearing at the Brandywine River Museum June 21.... The second Capital City Jazz Festival was held in Washington, D.C. June 5-8.... Jazz events this summer at **Artpark** (in Lewiston, N.Y.) include the Jazz Tap Ensemble, Oscar Peterson, Mel Torme, Herbie Hancock, Ahmad Jamal, and the Great Swing Reunion (Teddy Wilson, Benny Carter, Red Norvo, Dave McKenna, Remo Palmier, Milt Hinton, J.C. Heard, Billy Butterfield).... This year's Conneault Lake Jazz Festival is to be held August 22-24. A recreation of Pete Kelly's Big Seven is one of the highlights. Also scheduled to appear are Scott Hamilton, Bud Freeman, Johnny Mince and Joe Wilder. Full details from the Allegheny Jazz Society, 283 Jefferson Street, Meadville, Pa 16335.

Barrett Deems and Danny Williams were the guests of **Tom Saunders** for a concert April 6 at Randy's in Lincoln Park, Michigan.... Pianist Bess Donnier is resident at the Hotel Pontchartrain Garden Court Restaurant. For more information on the activities of Bess Donnier and other Detroit area musicians you should read **Noteworks**, a newsletter available from 6653 Andersonville Road, Waterford, Mi 48095.... Jazz for Life is an organisation founded at the University of Michigan to help poverty stricken children in the area. Their first concert took place April 14 and featured **Dizzy Gillespie.**

Barry Harris (April 22) and **Jim Hall** (April 29) completed the lecture series at North Texas State University. Mark Murphy was also on campus for a performance with student musicians April 28. All nine bands in the jazz studies program took part in the spring concert April 1.... The Colorado Dance Festival presents "Fascinating Rhythms: A Jazz Tap Celebration" June 23-July 5 in Boulder/Denver. ...For news of jazz activities in Phoenix, Az you should become a member of Jazz In Arizona Inc., P.O. Box 13363, Phoenix, Az 85002. A monthly newsletter and regular concert activities are all part of the organisation's program.

Frank Morgan's quartet was joined by pianist Milcho Leviev at Hop Singh's in Los Angeles on April 18.... The Johnny Otis Show was at Fullerton's Dal Rae Restaurant on May 10.... KJAZ's 3rd annual Spring Swap and Festival took place April 6.... Following a period of inactivity the **Rova Saxophone Quartet** returns to performing June 27 when they share the stage with **The Ganelin Trio** in the Green Room of the War Memorial and Performing Arts Center.... Blues singer **Margie Evans** has a feature part in "From Here to Maternity," a new full length comedy-drama.

Wegiel Tours (1985 Main Street, Springfield, Ma 01103) is coordinating groups who wish to join the jazz cruises on the S/S Norway in October.... **Face The Music Productions**, 41 N. Moore Street, New York 10013 (212-226-7889) is a new booking/public relations firm organised by Marie-Claude Nouy and Joanna Fitzpatrick. They represent Geri Allen, Ray Anderson, Tim Berne, Randy Brecker, Steve Coleman and other musicians now making a mark on the scene.

Jazz festivals proliferate: The 22nd annual Classic Jazz and Ragtime Festival takes place June 8-15 in St. Louis; the La Crosse Great River Festival of Traditional Jazz takes place August 8-10 in La Crosse, Wi.; The Jazz Party is the title of the second weekend jazz bash in Minneapolis September 12-14 showcasing the talents of 24 individual jazz greats.

Pianist John Hopkins, guitarist Henry Donjeany, bassist Bob Rickards and drummer Oliver Jackson worked with blues and soul singer Rozay at Jaylins Club in Bern recently. Monty Alexander appeared at the now open-now closed Widder Bar in Zurich.... **Jazz Forum's** Jazz Photo '85 exhibit is on display at this year's Northsea Jazz Festival (July 11 - 13). The 1986 competition deadline is September 15. Photographs should be sent to Jazz Forum, Nowogrodzka 49, 00-695 Warsaw, Poland.... A competition of a different kind takes place in September in Belgium. It's a jazz contest for youth orchestras and the event is held in Hoeillaart near Brussels.... **Max Roach** has a park named after him in Brixton — in London's Lambeth borough.

More festival dates (both past and future): Barbados' second Caribbean Jazz Festival took place March 29-31 with Ellis Marsalis the featured headliner; the second Incus festival of improvised music was held May 12-18; The Willisau Festival took place May 15-19 but will revert to its late summer schedule in 1987; The Salzburg festival was held March 13-15; Groningen Jazz Festival was held April 11-12, Roma Jazz (a first for the city) took place May 8-11; New Jazz Festival Moers was held May 16-19; Jazz East-West '86 is in Nurnberg (West Germany) June 11-15; New Orleans in Lugano takes place June 13-15; The Montreux Festival dates are July 3-19; Pori Jazz '86 (Finland) is July 5-13; Spain's San Sebastian Festival is July 22-27; The Lieksa Brass Week in northern Finland convenes for the week of July 26-August 3; "Voices and Sounds about Monk" is an international seminar which takes place August 26/27 in Pergine, Italy.

"Delaunay's Dilemma" is the title of Charles Delaunay's autobiography — only published in French for now... Link House Books in England has published "The Jazz Singers" by Bruce Crowther and Mike Pinfold.... **Bill Smith's** "Imagine The Sound" is now distributed in England by Cadillac Distribution, and in the USA by NorthCountry Distributors.... "Music Theory for Everyone" is a new book by Frank Leanza and Leonard Gallo; "Songwriting" is a complete guide to the craft by Stephen Citron; Greenwood Press has just announced a discography of Spike Jones recordings. Also coming from them is Chris Sheridan's long awaited **Count Basie** discography.... Down Home Music publishes a useful listing of blues recordings which is more than just a catalog. It's available from 10341 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, Ca 94530. A detailed catalog of the first 100 recordings on the Stomp Off label is now available.... Erik Raban announces that the first volume of the long awaited revised and updated edition of Jepson's Jazz Records should be out later this year with the next two ready in 1987.

New releases from the Fantasy conglomerate include ***new*** recordings on Contemporary by Bud Shank, the Snooky Young/Bob Cooper Sextet, Shelly Manne and Terry Gibbs. Dave Frishberg is recording a studio date with Marshall Royal and Plas Johnson while Mulgrew Miller is working on his second Landmark album. Already out is "The Intimacy of the Blues" — 1967 and 1970 small group recordings by **Duke Ellington**. 15 new limited edition OJC's are in production for summer release. Claire Austin, Gil Melle, Barbara Lea, Teo Macero, Webster Young, Betty Roche, Lem

Winchester, George Lewis and Ernie Henry are the esoteric choices this time around.... The **Kronos Quartet** has recorded an album of **Bill Evans** compositions with special guests Jim Hall and Eddie Gomez. There will also be a 12-disc box documenting Bill Evans' years at Fantasy..., Xanadu promises to sue anyone who bootlegs material from the many small labels to which they own the rights.... New twofers from Polygram by George Shearing and Art Tatum were released in April.... **Justin Time** Records has new releases by **Oliver Jones** and the **Montreal Jubilation Gospel Choir** as well as a quartet date by the **Alex Dean** band.... Stash Records has come up with some unissued **Charlie Parker** recordings — "Bird on Tenor 1943," a duet date by Gene Bertoncini and Michael Moore; a Jaki Byard small group date and an lp tribute to the music of Rahsaan Roland Kirk.... **George Wallington's** "Symphony of a Jazz Piano" is only available on compact disc from Denon in North America.... **Cadence Jazz Records** has released a quartet recording by Alan Simon as well as "Bordeto Jam", an all-star session of contemporary improvising artists which includes Milo Fine, Jim Sauter, Donald Dietrich and Toshinori Kondo.... Bassist Arni Egilsson's "Fascinating Voyage" was made in Los Angeles and also features Pete Jolly, Ray Brown and Jimmy Smith.... The Howland Jazz Ensemble has issued its first recording.... San Francisco singer Jenny Ferris has issued her own recording. "Not So Long Ago" is on Erik Records, 1925 Pierce Street, # 6, San Francisco, Ca 94115..., Vocalist Julia Steele has released an lp with instrumental support from **Panama Francis' Savoy Sultans.** "In the Company of Julia Steele" (Dery 3002JSA) features the singer in a program of swinging standards. No source address is given but it is probably available directly from the singer at 38 Forster Ave., Mt. Vernon, N.Y. 10552.... Trumpeter **Guy Fricano** has released a new big band record on Forever Jazz Records (P.O. Box 426), Dolton, Ill 60419). The major part of the record consists of Fricano's own compositions and arrangements. It gives a different slant to contemporary big band approach.... The **Walter Thompson Ensemble's** new release on Dane Records is called 520 Out. ... Jerry Valburn has released on Honeysuckle Rose Records some 1941 Benny Goodman titles featuring **Sid Catlett**.... **James Cotton's** newest Alligator lp is a big band session recorded at Biddy Mulligan's in Chicago.... England's JSP Records has issued lps by Piano Red and Jimmy Dawkins.... Theresa Records is preparing a new lp by **Nat Adderley's** Quintet. The label has now secured European distribution and manufacture through Bellaphon.

Blues harmonica player **Sonny Terry** died March 10 in Mineola, N.Y. He was 74.... **Ernie Williams** died in Kansas City January 27 at the age of 81.... Banjoist **Johnny Bastaple** died December 5, 1985 from a car accident. He was 56.... Harpist **Dorothy Ashby** died April 13 in Santa Monica at the age of 53.... Pianist **Fred Hunt** died April 25 in Weybridge, England. He was 62.... Songwriter **Harold Arlen** died April 23 in New York. He was 81. **Benson Curtis**, longtime supporter of traditional jazz in Southern California through his radio shows, died late in April.

— compiled by John Norris

European Record Companies

MINOR MUSIC
Tannschachstrasse 3,
D-7502 Malsch 3, West Germany

An exciting new record company has come out flying this year with four fine releases of new music. German producer and promoter Stephan Meyner decided to take matters into his own hands, after "seeing how badly the recording situation is for many extremely talented artists." Meyner intends both to find new talent, such as pianist Geri Allen who has released two albums already with the company, and to present artists who are poorly underrecorded, such as Julius Hemphill whose new quintet has relased a powerhouse album that recalls his work from the "Dogon A.D." days. The albums all show the highest quality in digital sound recording, pressing and cover art.

Geri Allen has appeared on the music scene almost like a revelation in the last couple of years, whether with bands led by such folks as Lester Bowie or on her own. Her premiere album, **"The Printmakers" (Minor Music 001)**, presents her in a trio with Anthony Cox and Andrew Cyrille; the range of styles that inform her playing, with a musical attitude proferring both love and strength, place her among the more vibrant artists carrying the jazz tradition forward. This album is especially a warm series of celebrations and dedications in honor of friends, family and musicians who have marked her. They should be proud to find themselves there. On her solo album, **"Home Grown" (Minor Music 004)**, Geri Allen shows once again that there is no typecasting her very personal style, even the two Monk compositions come out with her stamp: which is to say, she knows what she's about. She seems at once to be able to spill over the keys with a free mercurial abandon, and yet to anchor each tune in a solid rhythmic and melodic soulful identity. She is definitely among the most interesting pianists to emerge in years.

Another highly dynamic pianist, Amina Claudine Myers presents her trio of Thomas Palmer and Reggie Nicholson on **"Jumping In The Sugar Bowl" (Minor Music 002)**. From the charging rhythms of relatively straight jazz tunes, such as the title piece (inspired by a childhood game of the same name) and ***Cecil B***, to the more contemplative ***Mind Chambers*** and her searing organ work on the bluesy ***Cameloupe***, Myers shows just how closely she works her roots in the black American music tradition. Particularly in her vocal embellishments, she sounds like the church never really left her soul, though on the pop-ish ***Another Day*** where she actually sings lyrics, she may have done better to spice it up a little. Still, as the roots so the branches, and where Amina Claudine Myers holds a meeting one can't help but listen.

Julius Hemphill's quintet, the JAH Band, opens their live Willisau date, **"Georgia Blue" (Minor Music 003)**, with a lush mellow blues that is so beautiful it gives this listener goosebumps at every playing. This dynamite band follows with a version of ***The Hard Blues*** that recalls the leader's original recording of the tune, yet it is a surprise to realize there is only one horn here, Hemphill's; Nels Cline's solid, gutsy electric guitar work holds all the body of a second voice, while his solos burn a new texture into Hemphill's music. Moreover, the use of two percussionists, with Jumma Santos on congas and Alex Cline on drums mostly (and it's good news to see that the Cline brothers are getting heard beyond their native Los Angeles), responds well to the inherent power of Hemphill's ideas, supported alternately by the force and restraint of Steubig's bass. This album is unquestionably one of Hemphill's finest, kicked to an invigorating close with his classic ***Dogon II***. Julius Hemphill is an international treasure!

Upcoming releases on Minor Music include a special duo date by guitarists Vernon Reid and Bill Frisell, produced by David Breskin. Also, there will be a quintet date with Amina Claudine Myers, guitarist Jerome Harris with a quintet, a trio of John Purcell, Anthony Cox and Ronnie Burrage, as well as, happily, a second album of the JAH Band. The catalogue will soon be available on compact disc too, starting with the Amina Myers Trio album. May Minor Music prosper and be heard.

LE CHANT DU MONDE
24 Rue des Amandiers,
75020 Paris, France
Distributed in England by Harmonia Mundi, 19-21 Nile Street, London N17 LR; in the United States by Harmonia Mundi, Box 64503, 2351 Westwood Blvd., Los Angeles, Ca. 90064.

A record company to accomodate all our moods and tastes, all the people we are, Le Chant du Monde is a worldly harbor of the heart. Far and away ***the*** most important label of world music, they have for fifty years been demonstrating the power of music in their ever ranging, ever keen catalogue. From ethnic and traditional music to popular song, from transcultural pioneers to the special series featuring different instruments, as well as in their classical list, Le Chant du Monde is a highly valuable force in the crossing of cultural borders.

Their biggest collection is in what the French call ***varietes***, popular song mostly, plus show tunes and other occasional music. Among recent releases, Carlos d'Alessio's exquisite record of music composed for Marguerite Duras' films, **"India Song" (LDX 74818)**, has created the biggest stir. Long awaited, since the film of the same title ten years ago, the record nearly sold out its initial run the first day. D'Alessio's music is an aromatic blend of cultures and continents that recalls some forgotten voyage, a lost joy left out of the catalogues of our memory, precisely because it is unidentifiable. His is a thoroughly international sound. An Argentine who spent the 1960s in New York experiment-

ing with tape recorders, doing happenings, and weathering a gracefully brief stint in commercial music, d'Alessio has spent the 1970s and since in Paris, where he soon became known as Duras' composer and also for his theater music, frequently with the Groupe Tse. Le Chant du Monde has also just put out a record of d'Alessio's theater music, **"Luxe" (LDX 74852)**, which includes the reissue of work from the Groupe Tse's piece of the same name.

The company is faithful to its name — the song of the world — especially in its list of popular song artists. Among the most exciting of these is the Angolan singer Bonga and the Haitian actress and singer Toto Bissainthe. An effervescent full-hipped swing carries Bonga's tunes, as on the recent **"Sentimento" (LDX 74843)**, with his splashing harmonica style highlighting the dance. On Toto Bissainthe's **"Haiti Chante" (LDX 74799)**, Haiti is brought to us in a repertoire of new and traditional songs alive with the bewitching rhythms and melodies of that island universe; in her 45 rpm single for the company's splendid series of lullabies from around the world, her Haitian children's songs are almost scary they're so attractive. From Martinique, painter and percussionist Henri Guedon has recorded several records of original Antillaise music for Le Chant du Monde, including his latest, the bouncing yet sophisticated **"Afro Temple" (LDX 74815)**. The company has also put out many records of important South American artists, including the Argentine guitarist and singer Atahualpa Yupanqui, the flautist Una Ramos, who plays the quena and panpipes of his native Andes, and the Chilean mother of the new song movement in that continent, Violeta Parra. And all around the Mediterranean singers have recorded with the company, from Lluis Llach in Catalan Spain, Giovanna Marini in Italy, and Theodorakis in Greece, to Cheik Imam in Egypt and across the rest of North Africa. Domestically, the company's *varietes* artists are also ethnically diverse, from the Occitan singer Claude Marti to the African-mixed group Zaka Percussion, besides the classic French cafe-theater song from as far back as Arletty's old recordings. For the young guitarist Pierre Bensusan cultural pluralism is the very fabric of his music; his album **"Compilations" (LDX 74808)** breathes Celtic, Flemish and Turkish influences, plus a few, floating through unknown places.

A new series initiated by Le Chant du Monde is devoted to the masters of flamenco, and the first two records so far (reissues of long out-of-print material), by Pepe de la Matrona **(LDX 74829)** and El Nino de Almaden **(LDX 74830)**, are each an absolute knockout. No debate on the meaning of *duende* or *cante jondo* (deep song) is needed after listening to these records. These men definitely have the spirit. The company's goal with this collection, which will eventually include 15 to 20 titles, is to offer for the first time out of Spain recordings by the music's purest practitioners, each album dedicated to a single artist. Several other flamenco records were already in the company's collection, as part of other series, mostly with the excellent guitarist Pedro Soler, who accompanies the above artists and has made two fine solo albums.

Le Chant du Monde has long been directly interested in music at its sources. Over a dozen albums of field recordings the world over have been co-produced by the company, in collaboration with the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and the Musee de l'Homme, while their series of French traditional music has half a dozen titles. Through their interest in contemporary performers of traditional music, they also developed a special collection of records focusing on individual instruments. French, Celtic, American north and south, as well as African percussion instruments are featured, and some jazz records once were too, with Steve Lacy's album "Points," showing the finest soprano saxophonist at work, and Kent Carter exploring the bass on "It Will Come," but both are now out of print.

The company's other largest collection is in classical music, with special attention to Russian composers and interpreters. As the exclusive representative in France of Soviet recordings, they have put out most of Shostakovitch's work, as well as that of Khatchaturian and Prokofiev, in addition to the great Russian operas and ballets. They have also recently issued a ten-record anthology of the instruments and voices of the people of the U.S.S.R., as well as a series of works by lesser-known Russian composers. The company has specialized too in the work of contemporary French composers, from Milhaud and Poulenc to the first record by Xenakis and beyond.

One could complain that Le Chant du Monde doesn't cover certain areas of the world sufficiently, or that they don't pay enough attention to improvised musics perhaps. But what they do put out, much that any other label wouldn't know how to find room for, enriches us immeasurably. And how lucky we feel to learn that there is more, ever more music in the world.

NATO
1 rue des Tanneurs
72430 Chantenay-Villedieu

Nato is hot. The cats at Jean Rochard's place are full of bright new music, sounds to play with, let your mind roll. Nearly ten new releases in the first half of this year, what a gas. Rochard's got courage.

A lively quartet of horns on Radu Malfatti's **"Formu" (Nato 175)** lifts and folds the music with a tension that is nearly tactile. Not tense except in its fluency of time, held together by that invisible bridge between the improvised and the composed. Features Malfatti and Johannes Bauer on trombones, and Dietmar Diesner and Heiner Reinhardt on soprano saxes and clarinets. Wow.

The Maarten Altena Quartet's instrumentation on **"Miere" (Nato 235)** is equally challenging: Altena on bass, with Maud Sauer on oboe, Paul Termos on alto sax, and Wolter Wierbos on trombone. How do you balance that, where do you put the top or bottom? Which is part of the point in semi-free ensemble playing as practiced especially in Europe, less of an anchor sought than of something that holds. Again, the tension, how it holds light. More spaces on this album, much quiet playing, all underlined, stitched and drawn out by the bass. The music holds.

Horns toujours on Fred Van Hove's **"KKWTT" (Nato 355)**, a long composition in several parts, for brass quintet and improvised piano. Van Hove's quicksilver playing teases and charms the horns, stamping out widely various terrains. From inside the piano even, he seems to pluck the brass voices into being. Hard to grasp the piece as a whole at first, it keeps moving.

On **"Barium Circus" (Nato 382)**, Denis Levaillant has put together a riproaring band. With the leader on piano, there is Kenny Wheeler on trumpet, Tony Coe on saxes and clarinet, Yves Robert on trombone, Barre Phillips on bass, and Pierre Favre on drums. This group juggles and flies, does back flips and ogles the moon. In fact, the music is not so circus in the end, these musicians just really like to play.

On **"10:02" (Nato 439)**, Lol Coxhill's lush, sinuous and daffy sax is teamed with the sonic landscapes of ace recording engineer Daniel Deshays, who doubles here as a metamorphic musician of electronics. No time to lose, this is high speed travel on Coxhill's ninth date for Nato. The mind opens its doors, memories float out like strange birds. Coxhill talks right through his own overdubbed horn duet on ***Tea For Two*** and it works! He's a funny guy.

Of course, there's always room for Alterations. In **"My Favourite Animals" (Nato 280)**, you don't know where this quartet will turn next. Like a poet's theater of musical threads, Alterations is a constant regrouping of elements and instruments, with Terry Day on percussion, piano, trumpet and reeds; David Toop on flute and guitar; Peter Cusack on guitar and bouzouki; and Steve Beresford on nearly everything. They know how to paint with the most diverse sounds, hearing (and singing) their way through one crazy bestiary.

In a truly hip world Kahondo Style's **"My Heart's In Motion" (Nato 469)** would be the hit of the year at least. The group includes Peter Cusack again, plus Clive Bell, Max Eastley, David Holmes, Sianed Jones, Stuart Jones, Alan Tomlinson, and Kazuko Hohki's vocals that enchant with a sort of Japanese duende (Andalusian soul, magic). Kahondo Style often sounds like a small village orchestra in an odd way, rippling with an unidentifiable ethnic lyricism. There are traces of Greek, Russian, Japanese, jazz and European influences, but a lot of others, with a mixing of instrumentations to match. The imagination embodied by this group is one of the most encouraging signs in new music today. My own favorite is the title tune: at the height of summer I had to play it every day.

Nato never fails to provoke — but not aggressively. A bold undertaking it was to present Ulrich Gumpert's renderings of **"Trois Sarabandes et Six Gnossiennes d'Erik Satie" (Nato 410)**. Gumpert, who is a noted interpreter of Eisler and Weill as well as of jazz, went back and really considered Satie's original instructions for his piano pieces. The compositions on this record are performed at half the speed they're usually heard, more reflective, brilliant and shimmering, with an intimate poise. Satie specialists have praised these interpretations; Gumpert lets the music float more. And how it does.

If it weren't for the music in these albums, I'd put them up on my wall (if I had the walls). Pierre Cornuel's bright resourcefulness matches the music each time out, with cover art that tells you stories. I wish Nato a long life. They've put out 32 records so far already.

— Jason Weiss

BLUES

A COLUMN BY DOUG LANGILLE

First we have a most welcome return to vinyl from Chicago's leading proponent of the old Elmore James centred Chicago slide school. Although **Johnny Littlejohn** has continued to ply his art, he hasn't had a North American LP release since the 1973 Al Smith production on ABC. Mind you, there have been French and Japanese releases that have not seen wide distribution. Through these lean years his best release has remained Arhoolie's much respected 1969 LP "Johnny Littlejohn's Chicago Blues Stars" (1043).

His current "So-Called Friends" (Rooster Blues Records R2621), however, sets a new high water mark for his fans. The Rooster budget must have been blown on this one. Littlejohn is comfortably set in a full, muscular production with 3 tenors, 2 baritones, trombone, trumpet, and an occasional soprano. Rhythm section participants include guitarists Eddie Taylor or Larry Burton, pianists Lafayette Leake and Allen Batts, bassist Aaron Burton, and drummer Casey Jones.

This is some hot session with Littlejohn turning in strong vocals, and alternating his lead work between stinging slide and more B.B. King inspired single note work. There is lots of variety in tempo and arrangements. Real stone blues surface in titles like ***Lottery Blues*** and ***So-Called Friends***. There are titles like ***Bloody Tears*** and ***Chips Flying Everywhere*** (of the Rollin' and Tumblin' persuasion) that Littlejohn has waxed before. Some really interesting titles have been penned by Aaron Burton - ***I Felt So Good, Lottery Blues, Seven Day Blues***, and ***Two Way Streets***. The last two would definitely fit into the stylistic repertoires of Eddie Clearwater and Lonnie Brooks, respectively. In addition there is a monstrous reading of B.B. King's ***Just A Little Love*** providing a platform for the less appreciated, yet very aggressive, single note side of Littlejohn's guitar, plus nice solo space for trombonist Bill McFarland and pianist Lafayette Leake. The fat horn line gets to blow en masse as well.

A real Eddie Taylor presence is evident on ***She's Too Much***, and just to keep the program honest with slide fans, there's the compulsory, full-speed slide instrumental ***Take One***. While there is plenty here for slide fans, there is enough variety to catch more general urban blues aficionados. "So-Called Friends" should be a contender for at least one Handy Award. The fat horn section is a treat, and certainly not at odds with Littlejohn's aggressive electric approach to the blues. It is quite a disarming surprise to hear a soprano sax solo follow an Elmore slide introduction. Highly recommended.

Also from Rooster Blues comes **Luther "Guitar Jr." Johnson**'s "Doin the Sugar Too" (R7607). In Canada this is under the same title on Stony Plain Records (SPL 1088), and on Blue Phoenix in France.

Luther Johnson, one time member of the Muddy Waters Band, has the driving, economical sound of Magic Sam down tight (Sam being a major influence). It is a soulful, choppy one guitar shuffle sound over keyboards, bass and drums. This is the basis of Luther's Magic Rockers' sound, and his touring format when economics negates second guitar and/or sax. The utilitarian format is especially effective on shuffles like ***Doin' the Sugar Too, You Were Wrong, Bad Boy*** and ***I'm Ready***, and the stretched out reading of Otis Spann's blues ***I Need Some Air***.

Aside from Luther's driving rhythm-based guitar, this sound relies on Ron Levy's effective organ and piano work. Levy turns in some hot organ on a number of shuffles and some sympathetic piano on the piano/acoustic guitar duet blues ***Early Morning Blues***. A nice, clean pre-war sound. The Roomful of Blues horn section boosts the Magic Rockers on four of the ten cuts to give a fuller R&B sound. This addition is especially good on Luther's soulful reading of Magic Sam's ***Hard Times***.

The variety is certainly here, ranging from relaxed, pre-war guitar/piano duets through to soulful shuffles with a 5 piece horn section. This also goes out highly recommended.

"False Accusations" (Stony Plain SLP 1087 in Canada, and Hightone 8005 in the U.S.A.) by **The Robert Cray Band** cannot be pegged as a blues LP. I do not know if the term "crossover" would apply, but guitarist/vocalist Cray has certainly made a departure from his blues roots into a funky, poppish sound. This well-crafted and thought out sound with Cray's guitar plus keyboards, bass and drums has become a distinctively Robert Cray Band sound. It is very infectious, sharply punctuated by Cray's stinging blues guitar.

For this particular release a tenor and trumpet were added for a tasty effect on several numbers. A second guitar and bass were added on one cut for added drama. There is nothing heavy handed in the production here. Just straightahead music.

With a prevailing theme of infidelity and broken relationships, this release is not exactly entertainment. From ***Porch Light*** through ***I've Slipped Her Mind*** to ***Payin' For It Now*** there is an underlying current of loss. The killer is ***Sonny*** in which a returning disabled Vietnam vet, finds that his best friend took extra special care of his family in his absence. There are some really crafty lyrics and arrangements here by Cray, Dennis Walker and one D. Amy. All of which are dramatized by Cray's lead guitar. If you are not one for sudden depression, get this one.

With "Bringing It All Back Home" (Stony Plain SLP 1089 and Rounder 2050) **Johnny Copeland** has broken out of a bit of a production rut. Recorded in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, this LP is a fusion of Texas urban blues and West African high life/juju music. Copeland fronts a rather large studio assembly of American and African musicians, including several percussionists, reed and bass players, and a real rhythm guitar player. The results are quite satisfying. His raspy vocals and biting lead guitar work are comfortably surrounded by soothing, layered rhythm patterns.

The program starts with ***Kasavubu*** - the West African equivalent of ***Sweet Home Chicago***, and runs the gauntlet of improvised instrumental jams to a shouting blues in the form of ***Same Thing***. Of the instrumentals, ***Ngote*** is the most satisfying to my ear and of the timeless variety perfectly suited to those slow, late night drives in a steady rainfall. As a bridge between Side One and Side Two there is some peaceful, incidental instrumental work by Djeli Mousa on the kora.

To my taste this LP works well. Copeland really fits into this setting. He seems so comfortable. It is also nice to find him out of the formula production mold that seemed to be cast for him by the three earlier Rounder productions.

Also from the Rounder/Stony Plain connection comes **Stanley "Buckwheat" Dural**'s latest zydeco offering in the form of "Waiting For My Ya Ya" (Rounder 2051/Stony Plain SPL 1091). Aside from accordion, Buckwheat plays piano and electric keys. Backing is from his road band of the day (April 1985) with guitar, bass, trumpet, rubboard and drums. Like his first Rounder release, this collection showcases a tight, full-throttle, contemporary zydeco sound with Buckwheat stirring up elements of cajun, soul, island sounds, and New Orleans R&B. A real highlight of the set is Buck's driving approach to the Dirty Dozen Brass Band's ***My Feet Can't Fail Me Now***. Highly recommended as an antidote for low spirits. If you get a chance, make sure you catch Buckwheat and his Ils Sont Partis Band live. They're oh so hot!

Also of a hot quality is Alligator's "Showdown" (AL4743). What you have here is a bit of a modern Texas blues supersession featuring **Albert Collins, Robert Cray and Johnny Copeland**. Collins and Copeland came out of the same Houston bar scene, while Cray fits in as a Collins understudy.

This trio dishes up some hot lead guitar and vocals over a hardcore 'Gator rhythm section featuring Casey Jones, Johnny B. Gayden and Allen Batts. Highlights include the downhome Texas ambience of ***Bring Your Fine Self Home*** featuring Copeland on vocals and Collins on harp and a ripping guitar solo, plus the respectful reading of Hop Wilson's ***Black Cat Bone*** with Copeland and Collins sharing vocals and trading off some razor sharp licks.

Albert's reading of Ray Charles' ***Blackjack*** offers a grandstand climax allowing each guitarist to etch a final, distinctive solo signature statement onto vinyl. Also Cray's two featured vocals seem to be much more upbeat in content than the prevailing mood on his own recent release.

All three artists really seem to feed off their mutual appreciation of 'no compromise' electric guitar blues. There is certainly a party/jam atmosphere enhanced by some good Gator production. And as with my remarks on Copeland's recent release, it is a treat to catch Copeland out of his standard Rounder production model.

IN PERFORMANCE

NEW MUSIC AMERICA '86
Houston, Texas
April 1986

New Music America '86 came to Houston the second week of April with attractions ranging from a parking garage group hum-in and sonic experiments in the Astrodome to more conventional performances of all varieties of new music. Timed to coincide with the Houston Festival '86, the activities of NMA were unfortunately somewhat obscured by all the hoopla surrounding the sesquicentennial observances of Texas' independence from Mexico (including the mega-watt musical laser show put on by Jean Michel Jarre). Oh well, we were consoled in knowing that even the end of the world would have to take a backseat to celebrations of Texan pride.

The jazz component of the festival was ably represented by a series of four noontime concerts at downtown corporate plazas, the idea apparently being to turn the heads of some office workers who wouldn't otherwise be exposed to the music. The strategy seemed to bear fruit as chance encounters with one band brought repeat listeners to the succeeding concerts. The flipside to this accessibility was the sometimes annoying interference from traffic and the susceptibility to weather disturbances, but in all cases the show went on regardless of obstacles.

The String Trio Of New York led off the week's events with a set at the Tenneco Plaza. If any band could have profited from a more intimate setting, it was these guys. Some of the more delicate music was scattered by the wind or obscured by traffic noise, though there was occasional serendipitous interaction with squealing bus brakes. The Trio played a sampling of tunes from a just recorded album for Black Saint as well as a couple of older compositions from the "Rebirth of a Feeling" recording.

The eclecticism of the String Trio of New York is the product of the distinctive contributions of each of its members. Violinist Billy Bang has his roots in the Stephane Grappelli/ Stuff Smith bag and his writing is accordingly spritely and droll. His solos are given to pastiche, hopping from one theme to another in acrobatic fashion while referring to the entire history of the music. John Lindberg is a technical master of the bass, employing a wide range of contemporary methods: snapping strings, tapping the fingerboard, beating out rhythms with pencils and any other object at hand. His compositions are tightly structured chamber pieces tending toward the ascetic. James Emery's darting chromatic flurries on guitar weave throughout, bridging the upper and lower ranges of the other strings. His own ***Texas Koto Blues*** was a favorite with the crowd, with Emery sending up the blues tradition on slide ukelele.

The next day's concert brought the happy time roots music of Olu Dara and the Okra Orchestra to the First City Tower Plaza. The Okra Orchestra mingles such diverse influences as gospel, the blues, ju-ju, urban pop, caribbean music and outright funk into a steamy blend of undeniable dance music. The group has Dara on cornet and vocals and Henry Threadgill on tenor fronting a monster rhythm section of two guitars, bass, drums, congas, and synthesizer. It's refreshing to hear Dara and twin - guitar band counterparts like Ornette's Prime Time and Oliver Lake's Jump Up acknowledging the entire spectrum of Black Music while rendering moot that artificial distinction between the "serious musician" and the "entertainer". It's all just music to Dara, who proved quite capable as a showman, bantering with the audience, relating a funny story about a trip to the movies with his younger brothers (both in attendance) and playing some mean cornet. He even managed to coax the more retiring Threadgill into singing backing vocals on ***Your Lips Are Juicy***. Threadgill was more at home on tenor though, with some muscular blowing that betrayed his blues and gospel heritage. For all the clowning, the emphasis was on the music, with everyone contributing hot solos and Threadgill and Dara doing fine ensemble playing.

On Wednesday the Leroy Jenkins Mixed Quintet made an appearance at the 1600 Smith Street Building. A heavy downpour shortly before noon sent everyone into the marbled confines of the bank's lobby where the concert went on as scheduled. The modified wind quintet had Jenkins on violin and viola, Marty Ehrlich on bass clarinet, John Clark on horn, J.D. Parran on Bb clarinet and Robert Dick on flute (having played a recital of contemporary flute music the day before). The entire performance consisted of Jenkins' powerful "March Winds", a ten part chamber suite that spanned an emotional range from frantic to reflective. The music was minimally notated with indications for instrumentation, tempo, and general shape of the sound with the specific realization left to the performers. The composition alternated full quintet improvisation with trio and duo ensemble sections, pairing violin and bass clarinet, horn and clarinet, and flute and horn. At one point midway, Jenkins signalled the players to circulate through the audience, taking advantage of the confused sonic space with its muddled reverberation to create music that was truly interactive with its environment. In the course of the performance each of the players had an extensive solo opportunity, and while all were impressive, Clark was especially outstanding in a solo that seemed designed for the vaulted lobby, with its lyrical leaps and liberal use of overtones. "March Winds" concluded with a fully notated blues dirge that was a fitting resolution to the passion which preceded it. The audience was very appreciative of music a little more challenging than it might have expected, and if any were disappointed they concealed their feelings with enthusiastic applause.

The final concert of the noontime series featured the John Carter Quintet with Don Preston on synthesizer, a provocative collaboration I was unfortunately unable to attend. Scheduling preparations are already under way for the New Music America '87 festival in Philadelphia. With a little foresight it shouldn't be any trouble at all to match this year's stellar line-up, or even exceed it. Here's hoping.

— Steve Hahn

11TH INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
Bern, Switzerland
April 23-27, 1986

The quality and diversity of music presented at this year's festival is a tribute to the performers and the organisational abilities of the festival committee.

The three opening nights provided the momentum in the build up towards the climatic weekend events with the Oscar Peterson Trio, Milt Jackson and an all-star package of veterans presented under the banner of "The Wonderful World of Chicago Jazz".

Koko Taylor and Albert Collins got things under way. High energy modern blues was show-

OLU DARA (Photograph by Marco Di Francesco)

cased by two very well coordinated bands. The music reflected the dual influences of the post war Mississippi and West Coast (Texas) traditions but at no time introduced anything fresh or imaginative to the music's spectrum. But the performances by both groups were outstanding.

The string sound of Milt Hinton, Stephane Grappelli and Ron Carter provided an intriguing contrast in acoustic sounds on the second night. Understatement was the key to all of the night's music. Hinton, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli and drummer Jake Hanna offered spontaneous interpretations of a wide variety of songs and their music was fresh and stimulating. Grappelli is a master - but his performances offer little contrast for the listener. Ron Carter's music was the most formal of the night - a chamber presentation of contemporary music designed to showcase the virtuosity of the leader's piccolo bass in a variety of settings. Sir Roland Hanna, bassist Leon Malleson and drummer Louis Nash completed the quartet who executed well their leader's tightly controlled music.

Chick Corea's Electric Band is the antithesis of everything the Bern festival represents but the keyboard virtuoso has his following and they were rapturous in their support of the music. Watching the performance later that night on TV was an interesting contrast to the high decibel level of the actual event. The music was as repetitious and as uninteresting as that offered by Joe Haider's big band - a multi-national aggregation assembled to play Haider's music. The solo strengths of Benny Bailey, alto saxophonist Dick Oatis and trombonist Bart Van Lier were the bright spots in a performance where the collective strengths of the band failed to gain much momentum - even with Mel Lewis in the drum chair. A better idea of the solo capacities of these musicians was evident at the late night jam session in the "Barrelhouse".

Eighty year old Wild Bill Davison and seventy five year old Yank Lawson are masters at the art of lead trumpet in a six piece traditional (dixieland) jazz band and they served notice that despite advancing years and the occasional failing of the chops that they can still hold a band together. They were the musical sparks in two contrasting groups assembled for this event and a series of concerts which took the packages as far as Munich, Germany. Bob Wilber directed the first band with trombonist Bill Allred, cornetist Warren Vache (sharing the spotlight with Wild Bill) and a rhythm section of Dick Wellstood, Bucky Pizzarelli, Milt Hinton and Jake Hanna. The second Band was fronted by Peanuts Hucko and included Danny Moss (tenor), George Masso (trombone), Ralph Sutton, Jack Lesberg and Gus Johnson. The Sutton/Johnson combination was rhythmically aggressive and their duet feature was a special highlight. The music of these bands was only a frame, however, for the two piano presentation by Dick Hyman and Dick Wellstood who performed sensationally - both at this concert and later at an even better concert in Baden (Switzerland) where they were more audacious in their interpretations of basically a set repertoire. Maxine Sullivan's charm and exquisitely balanced singing was the final icing in a particularly successful presentation.

Oscar Peterson's trio shared the stage with Milt Jackson on the final night and the program lived up to the billing. Sensitivity was evident throughout the performance by Peterson. He paced the music intelligently and seemed to be searching for fresh ways to interpret the material. His fills behind Milt Jackson were always tastefully handled and the vibraphonist was in top form.

Festival bonuses included the traditional Sunday morning concert at the Kornhauskeller where both bands from the Saturday concerts sounded much more relaxed. The balance of the music was better without the elaborate sound systems so prevalent in modern concert halls. For once, too, the gospel concert lived up to the reputations of it's performers. The Dixie Hummingbirds represent a continuous line in the development of gospel music over the last 60 years. They remain unaffected by the passage of time and the commercialisation of the music. Their acappella singing was sensational while their intricate arrangements and extraordinary voice control was a moving testimony to the virtuosity of gospel artistry at its best. The complexities of their rhythms and the subtle shiftings of time reduced the obligatory audience handclapping (around the beat rather than accenting it) to the point where the musical qualities of the performance could be fully experienced.

The Bern festival remains a warm, reasonably balanced jazz festival despite the growing exposure it has received through television coverage. Like Pori and Molde it has retained its charm and avoided the growth malaise of so many events.

— John Norris

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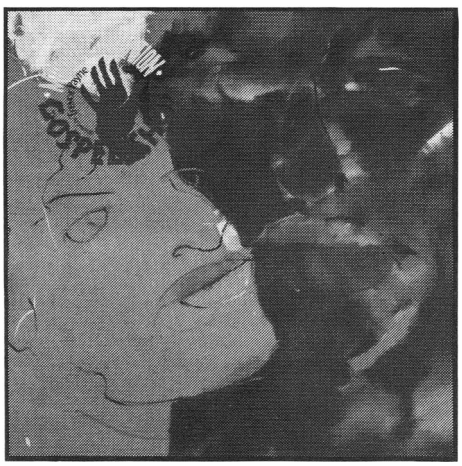

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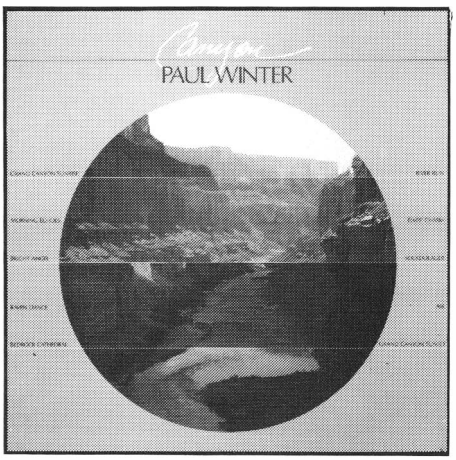

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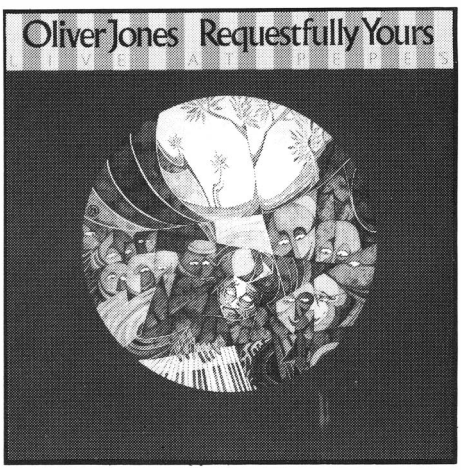

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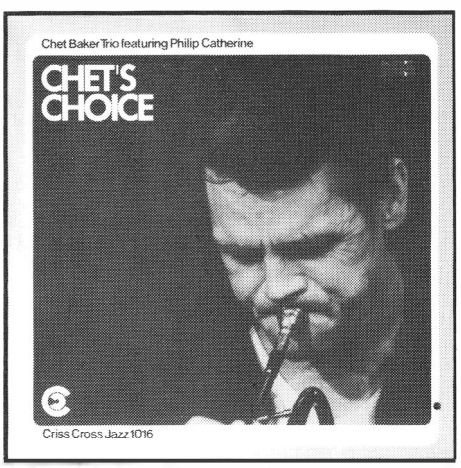

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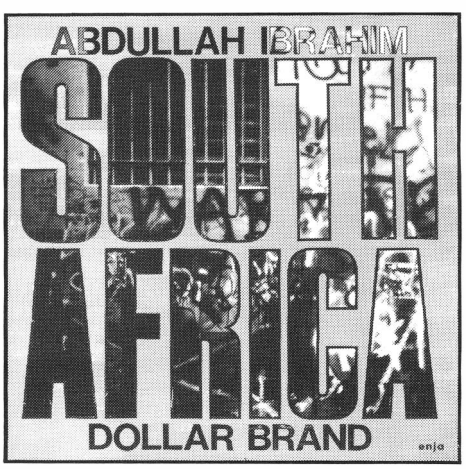
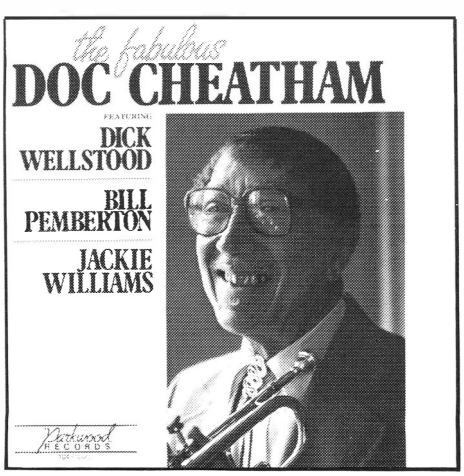
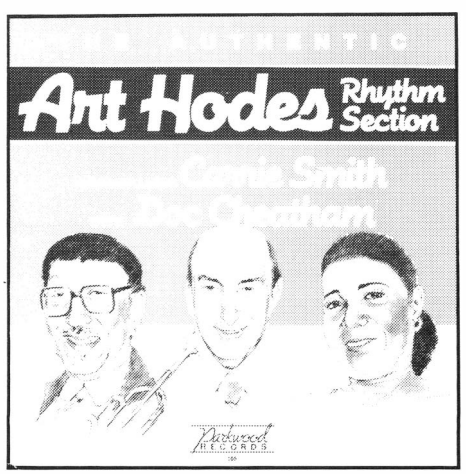
"Chet's Choice"
Criss Cross Jazz 1016



ABDULLAH IBRAHIM (Dollar Brand)
"South Africa"
Enja 5007 (Digital)



"THE FABULOUS DOC CHEATHAM" with Dick Wellstood, Bill Pemberton, Jackie Williams
Parkwood 104



"THE AUTHENTIC ART HODES RHYTHM SECTION" with Carrie Smith & Doc Cheatham
Parkwood 106

JOHNNY O'NEAL with Dave Young and Terry Clark
Parkwood 105

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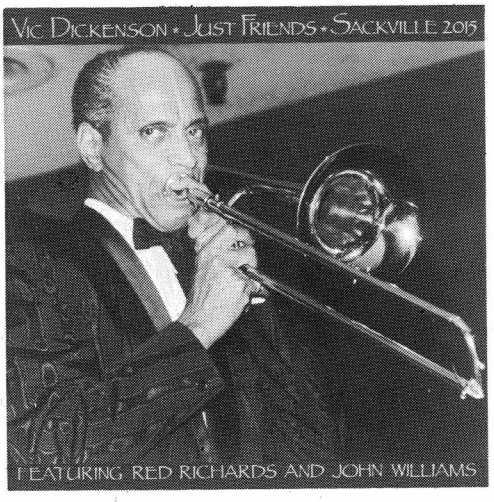
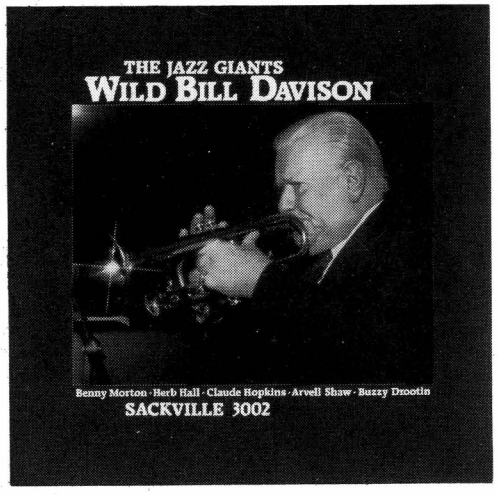


VIC DICKENSON * JUST FRIENDS * SACKVILLE 2015

Featuring Vic Dickenson (trombone and vocals) * Red Richards (piano) and John Williams (bass)

Performing - On A Clear Day You Can See Forever, What A Wonderful World, How Many Times, Once And Only Once, If I Could Be With You One Hour Tonight, Bye Bye Pretty Baby, Runnin' Wild, Taking A Chance On Love, Memories Of You, Sweet Sue, Here Lies Love, Me And My Shadow.



WILD BILL DAVISON AND THE JAZZ GIANTS * SACKVILLE 3002

Featuring Wild Bill Davison (cornet) * Benny Morton (trombone) * Herb Hall (clarinet) * Claude Hopkins (piano) * Arvell Shaw (bass) * Buzzy Drootin (drums).

Performing - Struttin' With Some Barbecue, Black And Blue, Dardanella, I Would Do Anything For You, I Found A New Baby, Blue Again, I Surrender Dear, Them There Eyes, Yesterdays.

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