CODA MAGAZINE

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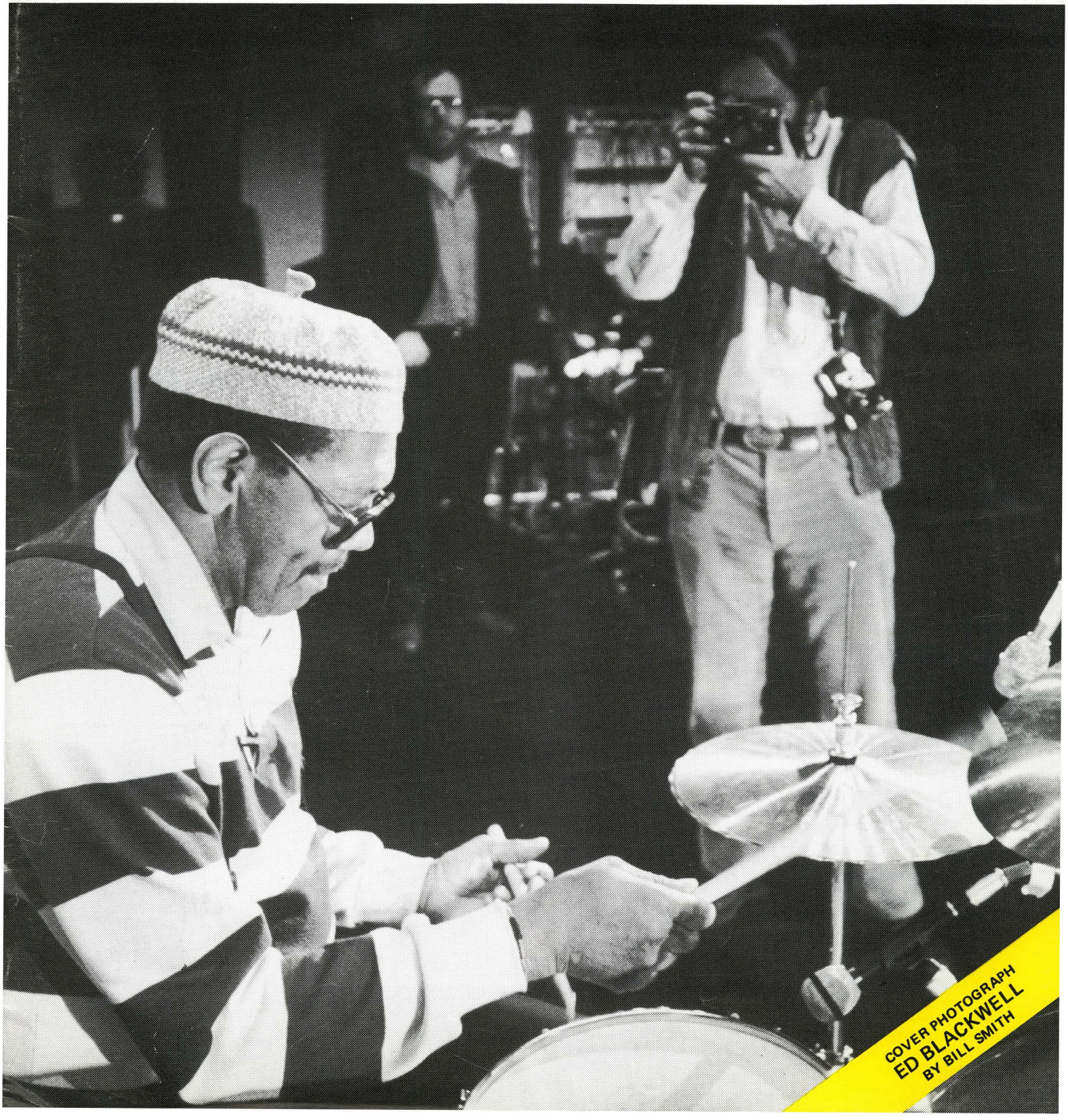

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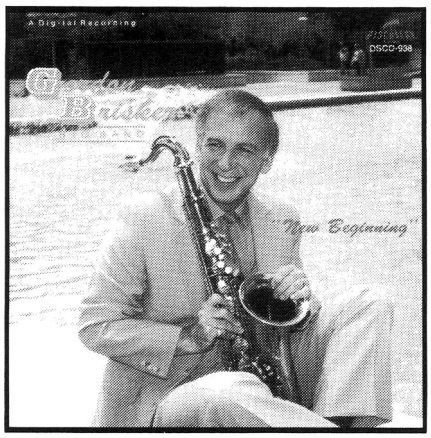

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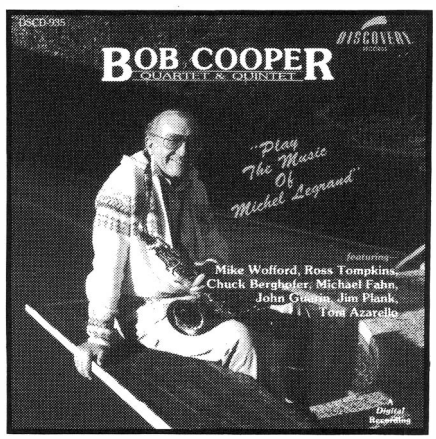

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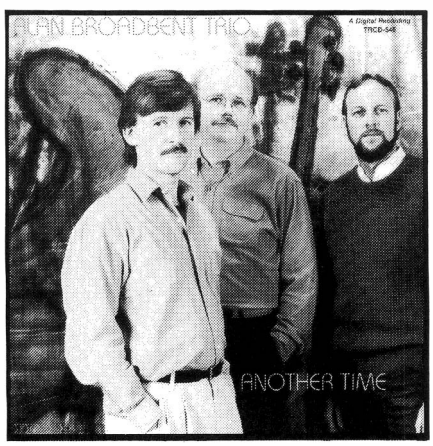

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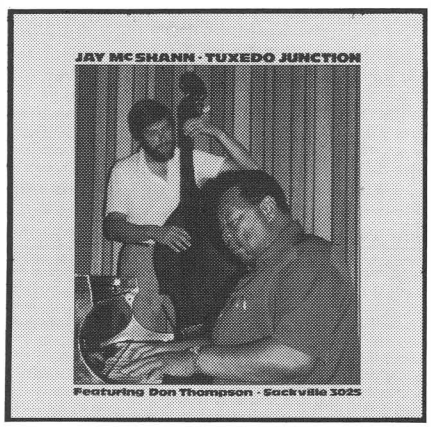

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EDWARD BLACKWELL * THE RHYTHM KING

Given that rhythm – especially that elusive but easily recognized quality called "swing" – is a sine qua non of jazz. Like Duke immortalized: "It don't mean a thing, if . . . ."

Given the fortunate and unique accident of history that places the Caribbean city of New Orleans within the geo-political context of the United States of America, and given that New Orleans is the only American city within which Black folk were "allowed" to openly perform on drums (cf: Congo Square), it is not surprising that New Orleans is noted for its drummers.

Given all of the above, one would think that drummers would be lionized within the world of jazz. Not so. But they ought to be.

The November 1987 Edward Blackwell music festival in Atlanta hopefully marks the beginning of full recognition for jazz drummers and their essential contribution to the music.

New Orleans born Edward Blackwell is widely respected among musicians and especially revered among those who love the music inspired and influenced by Ornette Coleman. Blackwell is a quiet, modest man who has recently suffered serious illness, and but nevertheless continues to create. During a drum workshop he announced his drummer's credo:

"My approach is about using space very effectively, almost like a horn player taking a breath. The main thing you have to think about is that whatever you play has to make sense. In other words, you want to use quality, not quantity. You can run sixteenth notes around the drums, but if it doesn't say anything, it's just sixteenth notes. But when you use space effectively it makes music."

Skeptical of myth-making, Blackwell does not claim to be a New Orleans drummer per se. "I would define myself as a drummer from New Orleans. The only way you can put a label like [a New Orleans drummer] on somebody is if you are referring to their hometown. You wouldn't refer to Max [Roach] as a Brooklyn drummer or Art Blakey as a Philadelphia drummer. So, I just define myself as a drummer from New Orleans.

"Of course, I think growing up in the culture that New Orleans has was a very big part in the way I approach the drums. For one thing, in New Orleans I was around a lot of music everyday, all the time. Music from the parade bands, music from gospel groups on Sunday that would set up on the corner with a tambourine, a guitar and a set of drums, music from all different aspects. Dixieland or whatever, rhythm and blues."

Assessing the spirit and contribution of Blackwell, Ornette Coleman said "Ed is probably the most leading rhythmic drummer that I've played with besides Denardo [Coleman] and Billy Higgins. Blackwell, Billy Higgins and Denardo, are for me the supreme concept of what is called time and rhythm. I don't think anyone can do it any better. Blackwell is a musician's musician. Anyone that plays with him will experience something that they have never experienced before."

Ornette's observation is based on more than the flattery of a leader for a favorite accompanying musician. Blackwell was present at the creation of Ornette's new music. With a quiet dignity that understands the difficulties he and Ornette suffered during the formative years, Blackwell recalls:

"I first met Ornette in New Orleans in late '49. I was with a rhythm and blues group called the Johnson Brothers and Ornette came through with a rhythm and blues group. At the time he was playing tenor. A trumpeter friend of mine, Melvin Lastie, brought Ornette over to the club and introduced him. In '53 Ornette went to L.A. [Los Angeles] from Texas. And as soon as Ornette got to L.A., we hooked up together and started living together and practicing every day. We did this until the early part of 1955.

"We stayed together, rooming together in one room. Sleeeping together in a big double bed. Getting up early in the morning, practicing, going to work, coming home, practicing, all day, just practice, practice, practice playing.

"Ornette and I worked out quite a bit of the music. He was writing the tunes and we would develop it together. We couldn't find a bass player who was ready to deal with the music. In fact, we'd go to jam sessions and the cats would walk off the stand. They wouldn't even attempt to try to play with him. But because we had been practicing every day as a duet, we would just go up on the stand and play our set."

Perhaps the best description of Blackwell's contribution in the rhythm section has been offered by bassist Charlie Haden. "He listens so intensely to everybody that he plays with. He makes what they play sound better. People come up to me after we play and tell me how great I sound and I say, 'well, it's Blackwell.' As long as Blackwell is playing, I just have to hold the bass – and he plays it for me."

More than any other drummer, especially in the context of new music (or "free jazz," or whatever you choose to call it), Blackwell plays rhythms. The beat is obvious, unmissable, and yet, the metronomic constancy of his rhythm-making notwithstanding, Blackwell plays as freely and as happily – there is passion, a passion rooted in a love of life – as anyone can possibly play.

Don Cherry loves the spirit of dance that pervade's Blackwell's rhythms. "Blackwell knows about dance. He used to dance in the street in New Orleans. And he has been to Africa, travelled all over Africa. And studied, really studied a lot. You would always know him with his practice pads, practising. That means as a person and as a serious musician he has been an influence on me, on how it takes practice. It's a joyful feeling playing with Blackwell and I love dancing. I feel that when he plays – it's dancing."

The element of dance noted by Cherry was a literal part of Blackwell's initial study of drumming. "My sister was a dancer in a floor show and my brother played piano and danced also. I was quite influenced mostly by my sister's tapping. I would hear her in the room practising her steps. The staccato of her steps always intrigued me. I would try to imitate it with a pair of sticks or something. That was about the beginning of it."

From tap dancing to trap set, Ed Blackwell is one in a very long line of important drummers. This line stretches all the way back to Sundays in Congo Square, and also includes accompaniment for expert tap dancers, and beating out rhythms in dance bands. From 1956 when he recorded with the American Jazz Quintet in New Orleans, on to recordings with the Ornette Coleman quartet and ensembles, the John Coltrane quartet, the Eric Dolphy/Booker Little quintet, Old And New Dreams, the David Murray quartet, and currently with Don Cherry in a quintet simply called "Nu," Edward Blackwell has been one of the most innovative and influential jazz drummers in post-sixties jazz.

While the new music influence and contributions of Max Roach, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams and other drummers are important, it is necessary to put into perspective that it was Blackwell who worked with Ornette and helped Ornette work out an entirely new direction for modern jazz. Moreover, Blackwell has never deviated from his chosen course.

Edward Blackwell, although not widely celebrated, is actually one of the major shapers of post-bop, new music.

Coda: You left L.A. and went back to New Orleans in the late fifties, and weren't on Ornette's first recording dates in L.A. and New York. Was there a reason you weren't on those dates?

Blackwell: No, Billy Higgins went with him. I joined Ornette in 1960. The reason was that when Ornette got ready to make his first recording, I was in New Orleans. He sent a ticket for me to come to L.A. to do the recording with him but I was in the midst of the American Jazz Quintet thing, so I just sent the ticket back. Billy had been around. He and Cherry had been listening to us play a lot, so the logical choice was for Billy to make it.

Billy continued with the band until Ornette got to New York. Then Billy had trouble getting a cabaret card. That's when Ornette called me again.

I really didn't want to leave and go back to California when Ornette first called me because we were developing the music with the American Jazz Quintet plus I had had quite a bit of California. I was a little disenchanted with it because of the reception we used to get with Ornette's music. But, when Ornette called me in 1960, I decided that was the time to leave. When I went up there was nothing different. It was Ornette's music. It was just like coming home.

Coda: What was it like working with Trane?

Blackwell: I recorded the "Avant Garde" album with Trane and Don Cherry. And, when Trane was at Birdland when Roy Haynes was with him, I would get to play a set or two. It was wonderful. Coltrane was another master innovator. It was as much fun playing with him as it is with Ornette or Don Cherry.

Coda: That "Avant Garde" album had an unmistakable Ornette Coleman sound to it.

Blackwell: John Trane was quite heavily influenced by what Ornette was doing. He and Ornette got to be very close. The irony of the thing is that when Coltrane was getting ready to form his group after leaving Miles, Trane was talking to Ornette. Ornette suggested me to Trane as the drummer. But then this other stuff came up with Billy and his cabaret card, so when Ornette sent for me I played with Ornette. Then Billy Higgins started with Trane. After Billy worked with Trane for a while, Elvin came on the scene. Then Billy went back to California with Monk, to San Francisco and they recorded out there.

Coda: You did an influential stint with Booker Little and Eric Dolphy.

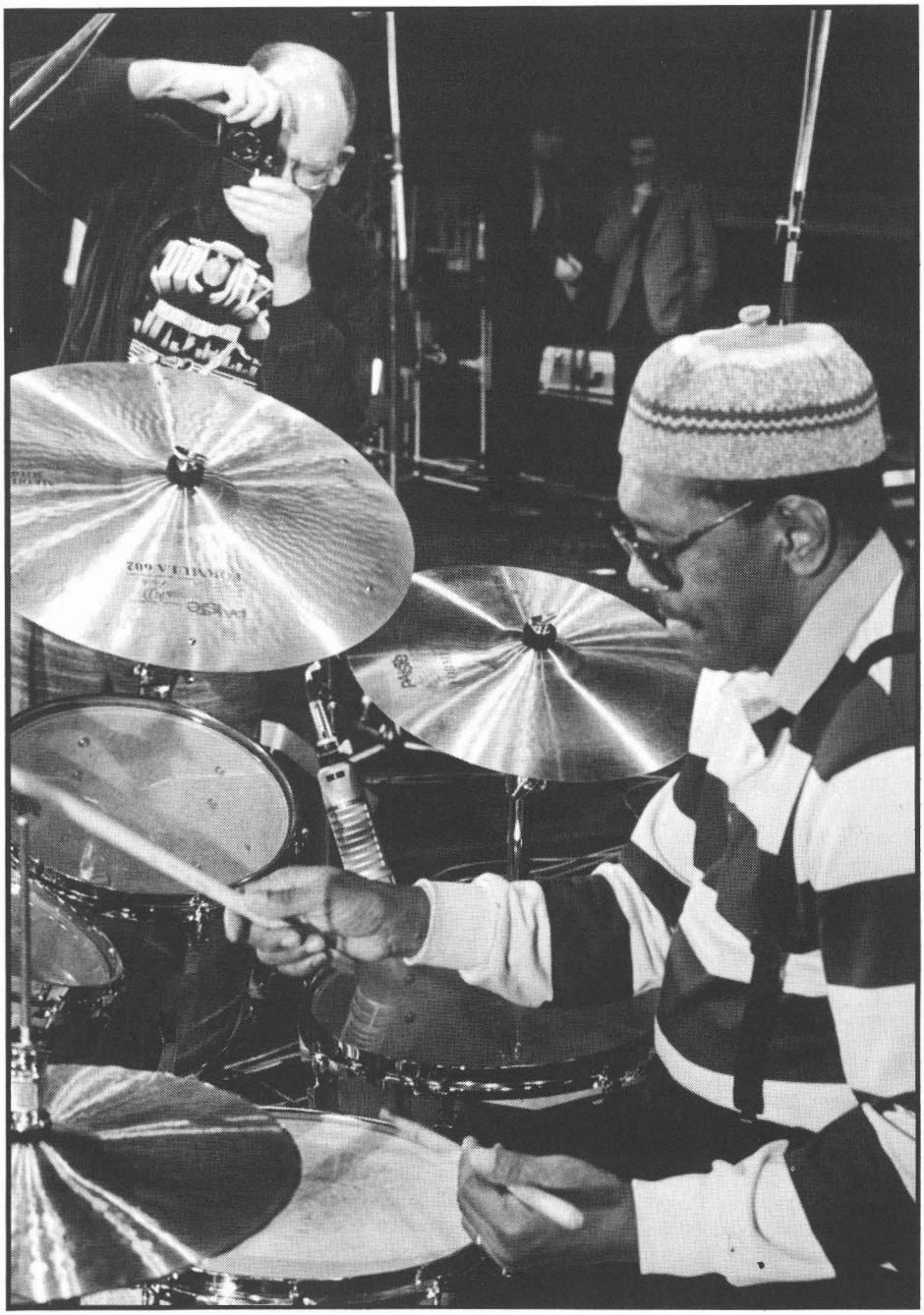
Blackwell: That was a very memorable time in my musical career. Booker and Eric, and Richard [Davis] were such beautiful cats. We were all under the influence of the music that Booker, Eric and Mal [Waldron] were writing. We had a great love for one another and it was just fun playing together.

Coda: It must have been important because in two weeks you recorded three albums together which had a big influence.

Blackwell: We did all of that the last night of the gig. We recorded every set the last night. We recorded all three sets. I still enjoy listening to those albums. I get very sad listening to that music and thinking about Booker and Eric. They were so real. There was nothing funny about them at all.

We had rehearsed quite a bit before the gig. We used to get in the Five Spot during the day before it opened. And all the rehearsals were fun. Everybody was always on time. We knew the gig was going to be a gas.

Coda: It's unusual for a group to have a big influence and only be together for such a short period as two weeks.



Blackwell: Yes, well I guess so. The little time we were together so much music came forth and so much love. It's not hard to understand why that group was so influential. Anybody who listens to that music can hear that this is something that should take your interest up for a while.

Coda: Max and Roy Brooks and some other drummers have been doing percussion ensembles. Have you thought of doing any of that?

Blackwell: We did a couple of concerts at the Public Theater in New York with a percussion ensemble. It was me, Dennis Charles, Sunny Murray and Steve McCall, four drummers. It was fun, but you know when I lived in New Orleans, drummers used to practise together quite a bit. I mean we had a heavy clique among the drummers. You would always see the drummers hanging out with each other.

Coda: Why do you think that happened in New Orleans?

Blackwell: I think it was the great respect that musicians had for one another. There was no such thing as any kind of animosity of one musician for another. Everyone had respect for what the other one's ability was and in that way it was very easy to communicate.

Coda: A lot of people say there is a thing about New Orleans drummers. They have that certain something in their rhythms. Do you hear that?

Blackwell: I don't hear it. But I have heard other people tell me that they hear it. I guess coming from there it's just like living with your kids. You never see your kids growing, but

ED BLACKWELL (Photograph by Patrick Hinely)

anybody else that sees them after a couple of years can see the difference but you never notice it. The same thing with the drumming thing. I've had a lot of people ask me about the New Orleans drumming thing and I don't know what to tell them. It's all part of the culture that influences you as you grow up and you can't help but be exposed to it.

Coda: How would you describe your style of drumming?

Blackwell: My style is to try to get quality from the things I play without having to over-exert myself with any type of useless energy.

Coda: You also use the cowbell quite a bit.

Blackwell: I have quite a few things I hear with the cowbell. I do a thing with the stick and the cowbell that's pretty nice. A Cuban drummer I met in Orlando, Florida in the early fifties showed me this rhythm with the bell. It's a very hip rhythm that sounds almost Brazilian. I also have a little opera gong from China that I use.

Coda: You do a lot of different kinds of rhythms, especially in the context of your duets with Don Cherry.

Blackwell: Whenever Don Cherry and I get together for a duet gig we also experiment with a lot of different rhythms. He's one of the most rhythmic trumpet players I ever played with. He has a real sense of rhythm, as does Ornette too. It's very easy to get into rhythms with him because he can adjust.

Coda: How do you pick up those different rhythms?

Blackwell: What can I say? I hear them. I try to retain them and try to develop them. I've been mostly influenced by African rhythms as a whole. The other things just come naturally.

Coda: Do you hear them by listening to records and tapes?

Blackwell: Well I played with a master drummer from Ghana up at Wesleyan University where I teach. I've also played with another drummer, a dance instructor, who is a master drummer. I worked with him when one of my students was doing his master's thesis. While I was working with him I got a real inside look at what African rhythms are about.

I've been teaching at Wesleyan since 1972. Most of the students I have now are very adaptable and it's a pleasure working with those students, even though teaching as a whole doesn't intrigue me too much.

Coda: You have worked and continue to work in many different contexts. Is there any one context you prefer?

Blackwell: No, not really. I don't have any preferences. As long as the music swings and I can dig it, I can work with it. No preferences. Fortunately I have been able to build my career playing exactly the music I want to play which makes it easy. There's a lot of love going into it.

Kalamu ya Salaam is the executive director of the New Orleans Cultural Foundation.

THE ED BLACKWELL FESTIVAL
High Museum of Art
Atlanta, Georgia
November 5-7, 1987

Few jazz artists have been honored with a festival in their name, much less players who have rarely functioned as leaders. But, thanks to Atlanta's Quantum Productions, it happened to drummer **Ed Blackwell**. The three day "Ed Blackwell Festival", held November 5-7, might also have been billed as the "New Orleans and Southwest Modern Jazz Festival", for it focused attention on one of the more often overlooked centers of modern jazz development. The events included a workshop/lecture by New Orleans' premier modernist and jazz educator, clarinetist **Alvin Batiste**, drum and bass workshops by Blackwell and **Charlie Haden**, and videos of Blackwell in performance with the David Murray and Mal Waldron groups.

Live music was provided on Friday night with a reunion of a little known but seminal 50's New Orleans group, the **Original American Jazz Quintet**, with Blackwell, Alvin Batiste, **Harold Batiste**, tenor; **Ellis Marsalis**, piano and **Richard Payne**, bass, augmented for the occasion by altoist **Earl Turbinton**. In the 30 years since the OAJQ was a working unit, its members have opted for a variety of forms of mainstream, avant-garde and non-jazz expression, and I am told that the concert reflected all those directions.

The main event was the final concert, featuring Blackwell with his frequent Southwestern colleagues Haden (from Missouri via Los Angeles), **Don Cherry** (from Oklahoma via L.A.) and Texans **Dewey Redman** and **Ornette Coleman**. The program promised "various combinations of these five musicians". In fact, what we got was a set by **Old and New Dreams** (Blackwell, Haden, Cherry and Redman) and one by what amounted to an Ornette Coleman acoustic reunion band (the same group with Coleman in place of Redman).

Despite his star billing, Blackwell was not extensively featured; both groups played the program one might expect, with a few short solos for the drummer. Much has been made by some critics of the shifting of the pulse in modern jazz from the drums to the bass, but the Blackwell-Haden rhythm section takes the opposite tack. One result is to emphasize that Blackwell is among the most "African-sounding" drummers in jazz. (The other candidate for this honor would be Art Blakey, who sounds nothing like Blackwell, reminding us that there are a lot of roots still to be tapped). Another "Old Dream" drifted to the surface when Cherry vocalized during the piano section of *Guinea*. It was at once Africa, the blues, "avant-garde" and some doo-wop kid on the corner.

Redman, especially, was in good form during the first set, but as soon as the Coleman group took the stage after intermission it was clear who the audience had come to see. (The concert was sold out almost a week in advance, and there were people at the door begging to be admitted.) Despite the overlapping personnel, and the affinities between Coleman and Redman, the difference in intensity between the two groups was striking. Old and New Dreams is almost a chamber group; what grabs your attention is the telepathic interplay among the members. Coleman, however, is a committed "hot" player, in whatever context. The telepathy remained, especially between Coleman and Cherry, but the volume went up and the southwestern blues reference became more overt.

In retrospect, Coleman has suffered the same sort of critical mishandling as Monk. Viewed from a technical perspective, as a skillled bebopper might, both present difficulties. The non-professional listener would be better served to read nothing, and go for the experience. For Coleman, like Monk, is a highly emotional player of disarming directness, and his solos almost always tell a story. Blues-inflected dirges yield to passages of pure sunshine. Bold, declamatory statements are followed by shy little creatures which skip apologetically by. For me, no saxophonist since Parker has made such effective use of dynamics.

In fact, all of these players are among the most unabashedly emotional in jazz. Bass players seem the most likely of all instrumentalists to be beaten up by their own technique, but Haden (who certainly has technique to spare) consistently communicates like few bassists since Oscar Pettiford. Cherry can make the simplest melodic idea sound like genius. On a calypso sort of tune which could have been written by Sonny Rollins, he outdid himself by half-timing his solo over Blackwell's cheerful hustling – a device I have rarely heard done effectively since Pee Wee Russell recorded *Since My Best Gal Turned Me Down* in 1946. On the same tune, Coleman sounded more like a real West Indian saxophonist than anyone I have heard in jazz, save Carlos Ward, who comes by it naturally.

While Coleman and Haden present furrowed brows and visages of intense concentration, Blackwell, Redman, and especially Cherry, often look as though they had mischief in mind. Aurally, the dominant impression is the one made on Pat Metheny on first hearing a Coleman group "In particular I was struck by how much fun it seemed that whoever these people were were having while they were playing".

The Atlanta audience felt that way, too, and vociferously demanded an encore. The group had saved their funkiest playing for this moment – on a groovy tune which seemed to relate to "Saints" like Miles' "One For Daddy-O". Blackwell tapped rhythms on the side of his snare, everyone swung, and we went home with laughter in our hearts.

– Bill McLarney

THEY CALL HIM MISTER CLEANHEAD

EDDIE "CLEANHEAD" VINSON'S STILL JAMMING THE BLUES

In the middle of a lung-bending falsetto during his now famous *Old Maid Boogie*, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson shouts: "You're twenty-five and still alive, but you never found a jockey who would let you ride". The Brunswick House crowd in Toronto chortle with delight.

It is the cathartic and genuine humour, the musical sensitivity, the way he boils the most universal concepts into lyrical simplicity, these are the characteristics that make the cleanhead man a living legend. Vinson's been doing it to death for decades. He's been doling out beef in a world that subsists on mock chicken loaf.

Prematurely bald, hence the nickname, Vinson was born near Houston, Texas in 1917. He is a marvellously potent combination of sophisticated jazzman in musical technique and raw bluesman in his sensibilities, humour, and love of life in its bitter-sweetness. As a vocal-instrumental performer he successfully bridges the cross-over areas of jazz, blues, R&B, and manages to appeal to a wide (including rock) audience.

Vinson's first important engagement was as a singer and instrumentalist with the Milt Larkin Orchestra during the 1930's. Then, he took his alto-sax, chrome dome and raucous blues singing to the Floyd Ray and Cootie Williams bands in the early 40's.

With Williams, Vinson made his mark as a popular and familiar figure, both in jazz and R&B circles. And he contributed numerous items to Williams' discography, including *Floogie Boo* and *I Don't Know* (now the theme song for Toronto's famous Google Dust Show), taking searing alto solos and humorous blues vocals to a new level of synchronic understanding.

The cleanhead man remained with the Cootie Williams Sextet & Orchestra until he was called up for the US Army in 1945. It was after he returned from his stint in the service that he put together his own 16-strong band which attained national success with *Kidney Stew Blues* and *Juice Head Baby*. In 1947, when many big bands were being dissembled for economic reasons, he followed suit and cut back to six men for touring purposes. After a moderate amount of success, and another album "Queen Bee Blues", the group disbanded and Vinson became a solo act.

Widespread popularity eluded Cleanhead until 1969 when, thanks to the efforts of bandleader-drummer Johnny Otis and Jay McShann, he was able to make his first European tour. During that same year he recorded "The Original Cleanhead" for the Flying Dutchman label, giving fresh touches to old and new numbers alike (viz, *Juice Head Baby, Old Maid Blues* and *Cleanhead Is Back*).

Vinson's re-emergence continued into the 70's, with ecstatically received performances at the Montreux Jazz Festival, as leader of his own combo (*You Can't Make Love Alone*), and as a feature soloist with the huge 26-piece orchestra assembled by Oliver Nelson (*Swiss Suite*). Also during this period he was assigned to some all-star recording dates like "Blue Rocks", where he shone equally in the company of such luminaries as Otis Spann, Joe Turner and T-Bone Walker. Perhaps, however, the single best example of Eddie Vinson's continued eminence as a bluesman/jazzman – from both in-person and recording standpoints – has been "Jamming The Blues", which documents yet another successful appearance at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1974. On this LP, his debt as an altoist to Charlie Parker is saluted nicely on Parker's *Now's The Time*.

Now in the 80's, the man with the glistening noggin is still going strong despite word he is gravely ill. If this indeed is the case, it is clear from his Toronto engagement at The Brunswick House that he intends to go out of this world blowing mellifluously into the night.

It's my firm and genuine belief that Eddie Cleanhead Vinson's final legacy and destiny is to be recognized as one of the individuals responsible for setting the music world straight; igniting the post-war urbicultural era. After the European societies duked it out over which of their respective cultures and folk musics deserved to be called "classical", along came the cleanhead man to stand them and their principles on their ear, with an ingenius mixture of jazz and blues so naked and precise that it makes all the previous status games appear puny and ridiculous.

Now we can hear *Old Maid Boogie* in its real terms: "Wake-up old maid! Don't you know your time has come!" It is both a crystal clear cassation to a moment in life, and a metaphoric paean for life itself. And they say, if you play the record backwards the hidden lyric echoes – "Roll over Mendelssohn and tell Paganini the news!". – *Lorne Foster*

EDDIE "CLEANHEAD" VINSON (Photograph by Mark Weber)

JACK DEJOHNETTE * LATEST EDITION

Drummers have been the most typecast practitioners within the jazz idiom: at best, models of exuberance; at worst, unimaginative timekeepers, they have usually been relegated to the role of "sidemen", whose purpose it is to fill up the background behind the melodic instruments. And therein lies the problem: because of its indeterminate pitch, the drum has never really been elevated to the level of the horns or piano.

Though there have been a number of distinguished performers on that instrument over the years, the label "drummer" always supercedes that of "musician", as if the former denotes something less than the latter. Until recently, once you were a drummer, you would stay one for the rest of your life. Apart from those who doubled their duties as miscellaneous percussionists – so they could just get away from the proverbial 'driver's seat' – very few drummers have sought to diversify their musical interests by playing other instruments.

Exceptions to this rule above have been and are still few: Max Roach (though recent and still sporadic on record), Joe Chambers and – more than any other – Jack DeJohnette. All three have had a long standing interest in the piano, not only as a melodic alternative or a percussive extension of their main activity, but more so as a tool for composition. And this could not be more true for the latter musician. In a recent conversation, he pointed out the following on this very topic:

Right now, I'm trying to gain strength as a composer and keyboardist. As a keyboardist, I don't mean taking out a trio on a tour, but I feel able to say more in the context of my present band, while utilizing a keyboard. In fact, people notice it more, because it is spotlighted in certain areas of the music, so I use it to enhance the compositions.

This experience of playing piano and drums in the same band has both an upside and downside to it. On the positive side he states:

To me, playing the piano has given me a bit of an edge, and because of that I know what I want to hear from a drummer. I know what it feels like to be a soloist within a rhythm section behind me. That has helped a lot too, because I have that experience of being a pianist in a trio with a drummer and bassist backing me up. So you see, I have it both ways of playing as much on top as on the bottom of the rhythm section.

But having it "both ways", he says, has an unwarranted side effect too: given the fact, that he cannot play both piano and drums at the same time, he can never reproduce in a live situation what he can do via overdubbing in a studio. And this may well explain why his present band, *Special Edition*, has only produced studio recordings since its inception in 1979.

Yet, this does not deter from the fact, that this band can still hold its own in person. In spite of this structural problem, Jack DeJohnette has worked out a way to bridge this gap within his own music. By listening to his latest offering on MCA Records (See Interlude), one will discover an element that best characterizes his present musical concerns. In talking about this record, he has indicated that the "*group's music is now more chordal and the focus has shifted to tighter arrangements and shorter compositions*". Moreover, he describes his latest outing as more "*lyrical*" and wants "*to bring out more of a softer side to his writing, without, however, leaving out the intensity*". But this added emphasis on composition does not resolve the gap between his drumming and piano playing, especially when he claims that his music is now more chordal.

Enter then Mick Goodrick, a guitarist. Indeed a perfect solution for his present musical interests: with this experienced player on board, Jack DeJohnette can have that chordal backdrop at all times, and especially in the concert setting. In that way, he can roam more freely between his drums and his keyboards and create more layers of sound as he so desires. By doing this, DeJohnette now comes back into the heart of the harmonic tradition of jazz, and the following statement tells us about his evolution in that direction:

As for my own development, I've gone from free-form open-ended playing to a more structural music, and this is the transition I have accomplished in the last few years. But I think you go back and forth between those two poles and you still try to get all of that in your playing at any given period. (...) So as much as possible, I remain eclectic in my tastes.

As for his concern with composition, one hears two distinct things happening in his new album; firstly, the derivation of new material to fit his present needs. On the latter option, he explains his decision as follows:

When you look at it, many musicians have reworked their material over time. Miles, Duke,

JACK DE JOHNETTE (Photograph by Werner Panke)

Monk, they did it all the time. To me, it is like a painting, or even a sculpture. (...) So as long as that happens, compositions do not get dated and they don't sound repetitious, as if it is just being done over and over again. In a way, it is like giving a new set of clothes to suit you at this or that moment. But it doesn't have to do with trends either, because trendiness is something here today and gone tomorrow. I would rather produce something of substance and enduring value than follow any passing fads.

To illustrate this process of reworking, two cuts receive new treatments, *Silver Hollow*, first recorded with his previous band, New Directions, is done in "*a more contemporary sound, closer to Sting or The Police*". Then, there is *Milton* (Nascimento that is) which is treated in a somewhat "*spacier*" way than on a trio recording he did of it.

As for the new material, some of it echoes previous compositions, like *Herbie's Hand Cocked*, which, in its opening theme, resembles *Ebony* (recorded on the "Inflation Blues" album). Far from this being a sign of redundancy, it is merely an indicator of a writing style; after all, even Mingus produced works that were related thematically.

Interlude

JACK DeJOHNETTE
Irresistable Forces
MCA Impulse 5992

Introduction / Irresistable Forces / Preludio Pra Nana / Herbie's Hand Cocked / Silver Hollow / 47th Groove / Interlude: Ponta de Areia / Milton / Osthetics / Conclusion*

DeJohnette: Drums, keyboards, percussion; Greg Osby: alto and soprano saxes; Gary Thomas: Tenor sax and flute; Mick Goodrick: guitar; Lonnie Plaxico, bass and electric bass and Nana Vasconcelos (as special guest)

New York City, January 1987

*On CD order varies and *Third World Anthem* is added as an extra cut.

Ever since its first release in 1980, Special Edition maintained a looseness in the charts coupled with strong but varying lineups from one album to the next. Because of the players involved, each album conveyed a degree of raw energy close to the level they could achieve in live situations. And it may be for those reasons that each new album is anxiously awaited for by most critics and fans.

Each new release always has a little more to offer, be it in the constantly changing personnel or in the material itself. This newest album goes one step further by presenting a complete new band and somewhat of a different sound in its overall concept. Both Greg Osby and Gary Thomas are newcomers on record, while Mick Goodrick is a seasoned pro, as is Nana Vasconcelos, and Lonnie Plaxico (of Jazz Messengers Fame) is another up and coming talent on the scene today.

For Jack DeJohnette, this band marks an important stage in his career, because one senses that it is *his* instrument rather than a collection of individuals under his leadership. As much as David Murray, Chico Freeman or Howard Johnson were strong musical personalities in his group, they remained distinct from it too by pursuing their own careers. Both of the reedmen here lack the profile of their predecessors, hence the possibility of building their careers through this band. Furthermore, the blend of youth and experience also enhances DeJohnette's chances of moulding a band in his own image.

Beyond these points, one can understand his emphasis on the 'lyrical' aspects, because of the leader's insistence on tighter compositions. The key of this album is the writing and all of the tunes are by the leader, except for the final cut, *Osthetics*, written by the altoist. Curiously enough, it is this last piece that is the most energetic of the whole LP. However, those fortunate enough to own a CD player will delight at an extended version of *Third World Anthem* featured on the "Album Album" release on ECM. Why then do record companies deprive those mortals with traditional record players from these added selections, which, more often than not, turn out to be the best tracks? But anyone with a little sense of marketing can figure that one out...

Unlike many drummer-led groups, where the leader flashes off his dexterity somewhere along the line, Jack DeJohnette circumvents the obvious, first by his writing, then by his keyboard playing. Though the latter instruments are prevalent on side one, he concentrates more on his drum set on the flip side, and that is where the music seems to be most effective by being less subjected to the piano's harmonic sequences. At times delicate, at times forceful, Jack DeJohnette's strongest suit, as a drummer, is his sense of dynamics, which surely has made him a popular choice as sideman over the years. But this quality is ever so present in this album, and never once does he try to overwhelm or to take over through his instrument.

As an accessory element to the album, there are three brief snippets featuring the drummer and his guest percussionist. These act more like hyphens that neither subtract or add anything to the remaining cuts. As he points out: *"To me, it is just like giving a concept to the album. An album is not just a blowing session in a studio; it is an audio-visual presentation and your imagination is the only thing that limits you. So I was just aiming at creating a conceptual thread and with Nana it worked out particularly well."*

Given the emphasis on the compositional part of his music, one feels that his writing is coming to a certain creative peak. But this is not so much a question of it being static or predictable, but rather one of achieving a level of instant recognition. In short: he has clearly found his own identity as a composer. Now he must keep on building on that terrain he has now claimed.

What remains to be seen, and to be proven, is how long this band can stay together in a very vicarious musical marketplace. Moreover, will each member assert his own individualism within the leader's own concepts: Both hornmen should be closely looked at in that sense, especially when the leader claims: *"These men* (as well as the bassist) *are the future of the music."* At this time nothing leads us to confirm or deny this assertion. But then, the confrontation with the unforseeable is what keeps alive this precarious, but resilient, art form called "jazz".

Considering the strategies used by Jack DeJohnette in this album, a few comments on the aesthetics of this music are in order. By wanting to focus on his activities as a composer, Jack DeJohnette is effectively trying to defeat the notion of drummer first, musician second, which was touched upon at the onset of this article. There have been in the past composer-drummers: some became better known for their writing than their drumming (like Denzil Best), while others have made it an occasional sideline (Max Roach), even though it is greatly overshadowed by their drumming prowess. But few have tried so diligently to make their way on both levels, and to be recognized as such. As a drummer, Jack DeJohnette's place is assured in the annals of jazz; but he also hopes to be more than that, namely, to be a musical stylist and not just a percussive one. And his own words sum up this point of view in a most succinct manner:

I have been getting a lot of feedback on my record from DJ's and musicians alike. They all tell me that the more you play this record, the more you hear different things. In fact, there is a lot of subtlety in it and over a period of time, you will find that it will grow on you. This record stands the test of repeated listening and that is what I meant about producing something of substance and enduring value. I just hope it sells.

Conclusion

The very last comment in his statement warrants also a brief observation. In a way, it is indicative of the values of today's musicians, who, more overtly than their predecessors, discuss freely of their music within the marketplace. And who can blame them for it. Still, commercial preoccupations and artistic merit have always had an uneasy rapport over the years. Despite the jazz fan's worries over artistic integrity, music is not only an art, but a business too. Even if everyone knows that, many of us do not like to talk about it.

In that perspective, one may ask if a funk beat, a reggae groove or the addition of synthesizers necessarily smacks of commercialism. The purists may frown, not because of those elements per se, but because their own experience instructs them to so react.

– Marc Chenard

THE AMSTERDAM OCTOBER MEETING

In Holland October is usually "Jazz Month", with all kinds of events scheduled to mark the start of the new season, such as concerts by Dizzy Gillespie and Herb Ellis. This year Amsterdam, the current "European Cultural Capital", featured a very special event: the Dutch Jazz Foundation organized the "October Meeting", an international summit of some of the top avant-garde jazz and improvising musicians. Not all of those promised showed up, but the lineup was impressive anyway; as a result Holland was treated to a series of exceptional concerts.

The BIMhuis featured a week of sessions with various combinations of musicians. One highlight was a percussion duo involving Han Bennink and Louis Moholo: although I am no fan of drum battles there wasn't a second in these twenty-plus minutes which wasn't truly exciting. As can be expected the other combinations varied from the good to the marvellous, but they always remained interesting, what with a guest list that included more than four dozen eminent names.

The Meeting also brought musicians together to discuss the future of jazz and improvised music. Panelists were Derek Bailey, Gerry Hemingway, George Lewis, Misha Mengelberg, Butch Morris, Cecil Taylor, and John Zorn. The topics covered composition versus improvisation, reflection versus action, and the sources of and influences on musical creation. Was improvised music moving to more composed directions?

Cecil Taylor was articulate and intense, objecting to the use of such culturally laden terms as "composition" and "improvisation". Improvisation is one form of composition, he said, but it just has not received academic recognition. Yet it takes years of training to understand the language of music and to acquire the ability to make musical statements that others can respond to. He raised more fundamental questions on the nature of musical communication and creation: what has experience taught us about the universe of sound? Culture and civilization have to do with the specific things of living that influence the process of creation; rhythm is the result of the way we were born. The prevalent aesthetic in the West severs the relation between thinking and feeling, but logic is the lowest form of magic. The division between the conscious and the subconscious is a nineteenth century concept allowing the debasing of the so-called "primitive". Instead one should train to achieve the state of active trance, and also study painting, poetry, choreography as other fields of magic to enrich one's particularity.

Misha Mengelberg felt that words always lag behind developments in musical reality; you may define words like improvisation and composition as you want to, but they cannot do justice to what is taking place. Reflection seems to be closer to composing, and improvisation to action. As a musician you learn something from musical history and you may choose to use elements from it for your purposes. Sometimes you may want to give it a chance and write it down, but at other times the less preparation the better. Thinking has to do with words, and in making music there is not much of this kind of reasoning going on.

Some people are writers, Derek Bailey stated, while others are players. "All the people I've admired have been players", he added. George Lewis clarified that in an improvisation the context influences the activity, as well as the associations from a given sound, such as a sax playing a chord. Use the input from the present situation to go into a piece; you get to know a lot about a guy by listening to him play.

As might be expected this panel hardly came to definite conclusions, but it certainly was interesting. Various styles sometimes appeared to clash: Cecil Taylor's intensity seemed somewhat alien to a more European style of calculated distance, for instance.

The absolute climax of the October Meeting was the final concert in the hallowed halls of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw. The evening started with a piece by Guus Jansen, on piano, and four trombone players: Lewis, Wolter Wierbos, and the German Bauer brothers. It was a worthy introduction to the evening. Next came a piece for a 20-man

HAN BENNINK (Photograph by Bill Smith)

orchestra, composed and conducted by Anthony Braxton. The piece, *Composition # 137*, was in his more formal mode, juxtaposing his solos with composite orchestral fragments. The work appeared cool, but fascinating in its intricacy.

The next composition, *Impromptu 2*, by Misha Mengelberg also was for large orchestra. It was conducted by Butch Morris, with Steve Beresford on the piano, as the composer did not perform. It was a very novel piece for Mengelberg, who had written it almost as a showcase for the "string section" of Maartje ten Hoorn, violin, Maurice Horsthuis, viola, Ernst Reijseger and Tristan Honsinger, cello, and Arjen Gorter and Ernst Glerum on bass, with Gerry Hemingway on percussion. It was a poetical and evocative, unusually accessible piece with marvellous solos by Beresford and Derek Bailey.

After the intermission Cecil Taylor's composition, *Coatlicue, 13 Heavens, 9 Hells, Lady of the Serpent, Skirt, Ritual Endless, or...* was true to his word. It started by a semi-danced stage entry by the musicians with Cecil dancing his way to the piano, accompanied by sound poetry. The band translated Cecil's piano style effectively into an orchestral mode, with magic solos by Cecil, and passionate exchanges between him and Tristan Honsinger on cello. Frank Wright was a prominent soloist; otherwise the performance was largely a terrific collective effort driven by Han Bennink's drums. The exit was as dramatic as the entrance, and closed off a unique event. As I overheard one radio commentator say: We did in Amsterdam what might be impossible in New York. Fortunately the whole evening was recorded on video. so you might yet get to see it.

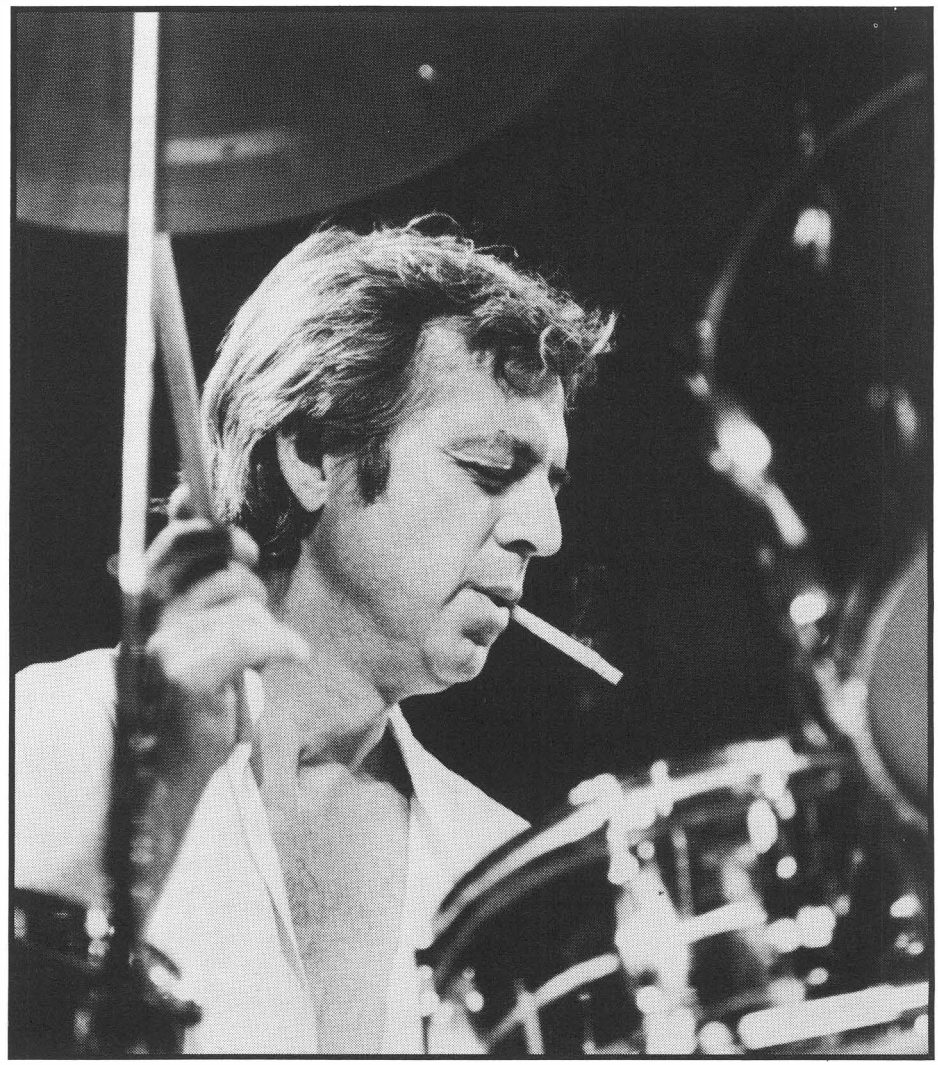
In retrospect this event was as characterized by those who were featured as by those who were not. Virtually all musicians were "acoustic" instrumentalists of a nearly "classical" type (with few jazz-funk guests). The new Ornette Coleman groups or the Arts Ensemble of Chicago would not have fitted in this gathering, although individual members might. In its selection the October Meeting reflected the Dutch avant-garde scene, and their recognized counterparts in other countries. Maybe this says more about the direction of improvised music in Holland than any explicit statement might. Quality is certainly not something one has to worry about.

Walter Schwager

CLAUDE RANGER * LE GRAND BATTEUR

Claude Ranger first heard Perry White in the fall of 1982. The young saxophonist, new to Toronto from Vancouver, was playing duets with a teenaged drummer, Graeme Kirkland, for passersby on Yonge Street.

Ranger sat in.



Years before, Ranger had played on the streets of Montreal with Brian Barley, the late saxophonist who remains the drummer's measure of all musicians. White, Ranger would soon say, was "another Brian."

Their meeting marked a turning point in Ranger's career. His band of 18 months had become the most significant working jazz group in Canada, and was beginning to receive commensurate recognition, culminating in performances at the Montreal and Edmonton festivals in the summer of 1982. Ranger, however, was moving very quickly: he had taken what started as a hard-bop band out into the realm of free jazz. His younger musicians – cornetist Roland Bourgeois, saxophonist Kirk MacDonald and bassist Marty Melanson – crossed the threshold behind him at an uncomfortable distance.

In Perry White, and in the teenaged reedman Rikk Villa, the trumpeter Michael White, the bassists Dick Felix and Mike Milligan, the trombonist Stephen Donald, the alto saxophonist Jonnie Bakan and the tenormen Phil Dwyer and Rob Frayne who followed White into or through the new band, Ranger had found musicians who were, if anything, out the door and long gone before him.

*

As he moved into his 40s, Ranger – long the *enfant terrible*, long the angry iconoclast – began to find himself a man of some influence.

He had always upset people. They could point to his deportment – to the cigarets that he chain-smoked and to the beer that he drank openly during a performance. But there was more to it than that. He was honest. He said what he thought, when he said anything at all. He did as he felt, played what he perceived the music needed, not what the other musicians – preferring a less challenging course – might have wanted. He was impatient. He was headstrong. He was not always in control. He had a reputation, not entirely unfounded, and it cost him work.

In his isolation he began associating with younger musicians, men whose place apart from the jazz establishment and whose musicial inclinations matched his own. Saxophonist Ron Allen was first, in 1980. Bourgeois, MacDonald and Melanson followed in 1981, and White *et al* in 1983. In three short years, Ranger had become a Blakey-esque figure on the Canadian scene. When Bourgeois and MacDonald, with their own short-lived sextet, stepped back and took another run in 1983 at the hurdle between hard bop and free jazz, a tradition was established.

Ranger could be quite pleased with himwere he inclined to think well of his efforts – were he inclined to take an overview of his career.

Such, however, are not the drummer's perspectives. The present is a constant search for something more, and more again, foiled by his ambivalence about his direction, and fueled by his creativity.

The past is an undefined proposition – a non-sequential collection of names and places, of longer and shorter engagements, of lesser and greater frustrations, lesser and greater rewards... the El Mocambo and the Casa Loma showbars in Montreal... Lee Gagnon, nightly at la Jazztek, from 1967 to '69... Brian Barley, concurrently, in Montreal coffeehouses and on Montreal streets... James Moody, Phil Woods and Junior Cook in Toronto at Bourbon Street during the early '70s... Sonny Rollins at a benefit for Ed Blackwell in 1974... Sonny Greenwich, Lenny Breau and Don Thompson, on and off, here and there... Thompson at the Laren Jazz Festival in Holland... Moe Koffman, from 1978 to '80, at George's Spaghetti House, the Monterey Jazz Festival and, finally, in Australia....

Fourteen records in some 17 years – from Lee Gagnon's "La Jazztek" in 1967 to Dave Liebman's "Sweet Fury" in 1984 – would serve as specific points of reference in his career, if Ranger had in fact kept all of them; if, in his anger, his impatience, his ambivalence and, of course, his transience, he had not left most of them behind.

*

The anger has largely passed. "I've changed a lot," Ranger said in 1981, not long after his 40th birthday. "I don't want to be angry anymore. I'm cool; I'm all right. I don't have time

CLAUDE RANGER (Photograph by Mark Miller)

for that anymore."

He remembered the younger Claude Ranger. "I wanted to play like a fighter. I wanted to play drums like..."' He made the sound of an explosion, as a child might. "Like kill everyone... but not really.

"To play like that," he continued, revealing something of his models and a little more of his self-image, "means to practise very, very strong, so you can really *hit*, so everything is strong. Like Elvin Jones. Elvin's wrists are big, so he doesn't have to work hard. But me, I'm not as big. Have you seen Max Roach? Max Roach's hands are like this! Now Tony Williams, he's little, like me. He has bigger arms, that's all. So I know it doesn't matter too much, but it used to bother me... being small."

If Ranger had stopped fighting, perhaps it was simply because the need to fight had passed. Rarely a party to the night-to-night routine of jazz, he had left the battlefield behind. Taking control of his own situation, he was able to determine his own levels, among them those that would contain his aggressions. When he held up a fist and exclaimed, "I want my band to sound like *this*," he was speaking only of power, respect and authority.

There is, nevertheless, still the ambivalence. "I never wanted to be a drummer. I just wanted to play music, and that was the instrument... I hate drummers! Sure, hate them, can't stand them. I prefer a band without drums... Drums are always in the way, *unless* they're Tony Williams, Elvin, Max Roach – *those* guys. I think there are too many bad drummers."

And still there is his impatience – with those, for example who do not understand his passion for the music or, further, his refusal to intellectualize that passion. "I'm not interested in jazz; I was never just *interested* in jazz. I love it... To me, my body doesn't want anything else. I will play anything, but it seems there is nothing else but jazz."

Again he returned to the younger Claude Ranger. "If it did not swing, if it was not together, if it was not *happening* – *any* kind of music – I did not like it. For a long time, I didn't know what it meant to have something 'happening,' to play with someone who *knew*."

*

Proof of his transformation would come in 1985, when Ranger was called back briefly to the work-a-night club scene.

Summers had been his busiest seasons for several years. The Canadian festivals, with their relatively enlightened perspective on jazz, quite readily found a place for the drummer's music, otherwise denied a forum in Toronto clubs. In the summer of 1985, his quintet – Perry White still, Steve Donald, Jonnie Bakan and Mike Milligan – had highlighted the Canadian presence at the Toronto and Ottawa jazz festivals in June and July, respectively; Ranger travelled alone to the Festival International de Jazz de Montréal to work with baritone saxophonist Charles Papasoff. In the summer of 1986 the band – White, Donald, Milligan and now Rob Frayne – played the Toronto and Montreal festivals, the latter as a finalist in the Concours de Jazz de Montréal, which offered Ranger a special jury mention for his drumming in lieu of the victory that the quintet deserved.

During the off-season in between, however, he was back at Bourbon Street – not with a Phil Woods or a James Moody but with a half-hearted Georgie Auld, the Canadian-born, swing-era tenorman who was playing out, and on, a 30-year-old reputation. Ranger also backed other visitors at East 85th through the end of 1985 – trumpeter Spanky Davis, guitarist Larry Coryell, reedman Gerry Niewood, trombonist Curtis Fuller and trumpeter Woody Shaw – proving again that few, if any, drummers in Canada swing as naturally.

Such work declined as the club scene waned through 1986, but a newly-sociable Ranger could still be found on an occasional basis in other Toronto musicians' employ – with the saxophonists Michael Stuart and Jane Bunnett, for example, and the guitarist Reg Schwager, all musicians whose vision of jazz corresponds in some way or other with his own. Only the Stuart group, however, approaches the emotional volatility and sheer power of Ranger's various bands. At that, Stuart's intense, devotionally expressive music, after the model of John Coltrane, is rather different than the free-spirited romps through which the drummer leads his own chargers.

Ranger's compositional references are few, merely fleeting moods and melodic flourishes designed to give way quickly to individual improvisations in which his soloists are free to do as they will – too free, perhaps, for musicians generally so young. Ranger fires their enthusiasm and indulges whatever might result. He does not promote discipline as such, he promotes free expression, although his moods and melodies are invariably evoked with a feeling for shape and dynamics that would do a chamber ensemble proud.

His own playing is orchestral, spreading a carpet of energy and texture beneath his players. From the quick, nudging bass drums and the light, insistent ride cymbal – both abstracted from the tradition of bop drumming – to the explosive snare rolls and the thundering toms, it does not swing as much as it builds, releases, and builds again.

With each release, he pulls the rug out from under his musicians, launching them farther still into their solos. Ranger's drumming makes the improvisational context so challenging – so immediate, so fast-moving, so swift to change – that there is not time to respond to it with anything other than absolute spontaneity. He in turn would accept nothing less, and his musicians are all the richer for meeting the challenge.

This article is excerpted from Mark Miller's new book *Boogie, Pete & The Senator.*

JAZZ LITERATURE

VARIOUS STYLES OF REFERENCE BOOKS REVIEWED BY CANADIAN WRITER JOHN SUTHERLAND

JAZZ: THE ESSENTIAL COMPANION
by Ian Carr/ Digby Fairweather/ Brian Priestley
Grafton Books, London. 1987.
(£18 - about $40)

THE GUINNESS JAZZ: A-Z
by Peter Clayton & Peter Gammond
Guinness Books, Middlesex. 1986.
(£10 - about $22)

THE ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAZZ
by Brian Case/Stan Britt/Chrissie Murray
Salamander Books, London. 1986
(£9 - about $20)

A recommended source for the following books is :
Collecting Jazz, 29 Birchdale, Dukes Wood, Gerrards Cross, Bucks., U.K.

Any book that makes an honest effort to broaden the understanding and appreciation of its readers has to be warmly received. The three books under consideration here, all British publications, achieve that goal in quite different ways.

Jazz: The Essential Companion, for example, is undeniably a biographical dictionary of jazz performers somewhat in the style of John Chilton's "Who's Who of Jazz" (Bloomsbury Bookshop, London), or Leonard Feather's "Encyclopedia of Jazz" (Bonanza Books, N.Y.); however, it extends their flow of detailed background information to include "...the whole spectrum of jazz... from Buddy Bolden to Courtney Pine", incorporating many non-American performers not found in other volumes, along with sample recommendations of the "subject's most representative recordings". It offers, as well, interesting definitions of various styles of jazz (bebop, cool, free jazz, jazz-rock-fusion, West Coast), geographical data on such centres of jazz as New Orleans, Kansas City, New York, Chicago, and developments in the progress of jazz along international lines (Russia, Australia, Japan). In addition, it grapples admirably with those ponderously complex boundaries of Dance Band, Folk music, Swing, Dixieland, and the Blues.

What makes this book even more appealing is that the three authors are themselves musicians, as well as writers with impressive credentials; moreover, each entry clearly identifies the author in question since "...for the purposes of this mammoth task, it was essential to divide the field into broad areas of responsibility"; hence, the reader is encouraged, if he or she desires, to take issue with details given or opinions expressed. I like this willingness to 'lay it on the line', so to speak; it tokens a necessary openness to a subject about which there is often disagreement, for the documentation of jazz, issuing as it so often does, from the memories of its performers or hastily recorded sources, is hardly an exact science. Ian Carr's introduction succinctly states the parameters which the writers have set out for themselves, and, in a beautifully expressed concluding paragraph, echoes one of those self-evident truths which cannot be stressed too frequently: "Now that jazz has a substantial history, it is important that enthusiasts and musicians have a clear understanding of it and a perception of the past as part of the present. Indeed, without a knowledge of the past we cannot properly understand the present.... And each new step, style or movement magnifies rather than diminishes the prime creators of jazz...."

At £18 (about $40), the book is a bargain for anyone truly interested in the subject.

Do you know what a goofus is? a rubboard? a Jazzbo? the Victor houseman mystery? Do you know where the Old Absinthe House was located? or the Onyx Club? the Dusty Bottom? the Six Bells? Are you familiar with the term hamfat? moldy fig? dicty? zydeco? Do you know how many American railroads are celebrated in jazz? Are you aware of the essential Histories of jazz music? discographies?

If all this puzzles but intrigues you, **The Guinness Jazz: A-Z** is a must. Reminiscent of Eric Townley's "Tell Your Story" (Storyville, Essex, England), it is a volume filled with fascinating information around which the music we call jazz evolved, complete with illustrations, photographs and maps to make the journey even more engaging. Though alphabetically organized for convenience of reference, it is a book of discoveries on almost any page you care to open; as well, there is an excellent index of the jazz musicians and singers mentioned in the book. Authors Clayton and Gammond, with their extensive backgrounds in all areas of communication, are fully cognizant of and conversant with the unique language and trends which have shaped the music. "There are omissions", state the co-authors, for "no reference book would be complete without errors and omissions... and the average user would in any case feel thwarted if he were denied the chance of catching the authors out".

Despite such admitted shortcomings, it is a book which must have been as much a joy to assemble as it is a delight to read.

The **Illustrated Encyclopedia of Jazz**, unlike the other books under scrutiny, offers not only selected autobiographical material on many prominent jazz figures and groups, but also comprehensive lists of available recordings by each. Discussions of these discs are thoughtfully woven into the fabric of each entry so that the reader is left free to make any selections he/she wishes based on the stage of development for that artist. It is a useful format, especially for those for whom jazz is still a relatively new experience and who seek to sample the results without shelling out an unwarranted amount of cash. Yet, the die-hard fan, too, is often afforded fresh perspectives on performers and their music. The three writers, with their considerable collective experience, seem suitably qualified to make these judgements.

This new edition (I have a 1978 copy) presents significant changes in order, it would appear, to keep up with the times. Some of them I find personally questionable. Though the number of pages remains relatively consistent with the earlier edition, many "new faces" have been granted wide coverage (Azymuth, Azimuth, Back Door, John Blake Jr, Brecker brothers, Chicago, Tony Dagradi, Earth Wind & Fire, Jay Hoggard, Bireli Lagrene, Manhattan Transfer, Zbigniew Namyslowski, Spyro Gyra, Trevor Watts, Annie Whitehead, et al), while "older influences" (98 in all from my original copy) have been relegated to a brief six-page appendix with the caption "Lack of space prevents us from includ-

ing a full entry on the following performers" such as Georgie Auld, Buster Bailey, Kenny Clarke, Vic Dickenson, Paul Gonsalves, Wardell Gray, Edmond Hall, Bunk Johnson, Jess Stacy, Dicky Wells – with, alas, Ralph Sutton disappearing altogether. One can sense the logic of this, I suppose; nevertheless, I am grateful to have both editions at my disposal, and could only wish that an expanded volume might have had room for both. In fact, there is a certain irony in Wynton Marsalis' foreword that speaks out so forcibly against the pitfalls of diluting the very substance of art in the name of change and "progress".

However, it is good to have a book such as this close at hand, for it keeps one in touch with the times. The photographs and the colourful reproductions of album covers make this an attractive package.

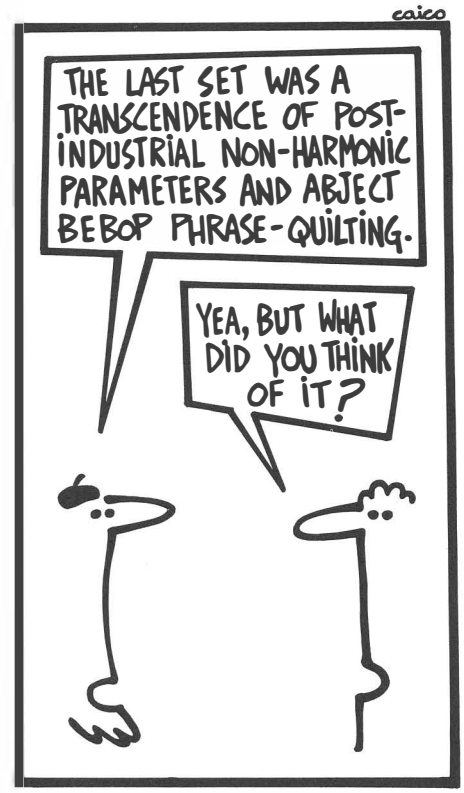
Emily Dickinson wrote: "There is no frigate like a book/To take us lands away...."; and if the book happens to be a good one on the subject of jazz, so much the better, for there are too few voyages available into that vast region. Here, at least, are three noteworthy sorties.

THE ESSENTIAL JAZZ RECORDS: VOL. 1 – RAGTIME TO SWING
Max Harrison / Charles Fox / Eric Thacker
Greenwood Press (1984) $39.95

I deliberately bypass books about music (or recordings) that bear such pretentious headings as "All time greatest...", "The best of...", or "The indispensable..." As a rule, they reflect popular rather than informed opinion, suffer from the sin of significant omission or, having avoided those pitfalls, chatter on aimlessly, flitting from one entry to the next with little serious insight or, at best, sustain only a marginal sense of continuity.

Here, at last, is a book that casts my reservations to the wind! It fulfils the promise of its title – and more!

The introduction to the text succinctly sets forth those principles governing the scope and intent of such a perilous undertaking: to "draw attention to the finest jazz that has survived", to "make the totality accessible and understandable", to "provide insights about other, quite different, forms of music", to "suggest the network of relationships.... which unite the many strands of this music." What is especially appealing is the honest admission that "disagreements occurred fairly often" among the three contributors, yet there was "no editorial attempt to suppress their expression in the text"; hence, the reader is encouraged



ultimately to "make his own evaluations". In addition, though the writers made every effort to make their compilations international by drawing examples from the widest possible sources and receiving the full support of European individuals and organizations, North American response was virtually non-existent. Is anyone really surprised by this?

The writers come well-armed for such an undertaking; their respective credentials speak for themselves. Max Harrison is music critic for *The Times, The Gramophone*, and a respected author on jazz. Charles Fox, jazz critic for the *New Statesman*, has run a weekly jazz program since the early 60s. Eric Thacker, a clergyman, has written for many prominent periodicals during his long-standing interest in jazz. Collectively, they are articulate and insightful, drawing upon a wide range of divergent personal experience, yet retaining a solid objectivity in assessing choices.

Though not intended as "a history" (Introduction), the format is sensibly developmental with sections on jazz origins, the 20s (New Orleans/non-New Orleans styles), European jazz, the influence of jazz on European composers (a brief but rewarding look by Harrison at examples drawn from Stravinsky, Martinu, Weill, Milhaud, Lambert, Bliss, et al), the 30s and swing, traditional survivalists/revivalists, and transitional phases to the modern phenomenon. By far the most comprehensive section is the 30s and swing, for the authors feel that, although the period has been "the focus of much energetic propaganda", it "has received little critical attention". The whole is well-documented, with easy reference to recording data, tune titles, an index of musicians, and related material in print.

Good music, like cream, rises naturally to the top. Though some might argue that such selections as Lovie Austin's Blue Serenaders (p. 67), Billy Banks' Rhythmmakers (p. 123), or Bob Crosby's Bobcats (p. 518) hardly make for "essential" listening, these inclusions are necessary in a contextual sense to a fuller understanding of the forces that shaped the music. Like most interested in jazz, I confess pleasure at seeing some of my own idiosyncratic choices suitably attended to: Jabbo Smith (p. 131), Herman Chittison (p. 477), Clarence Williams (p. 125).

The real joy of the book, however, lies in its application - putting on the recording, measuring your own response with the textual comment. I tried it, and found that even those sacrosanct opinions I have held for years concerning some artists and their work shifted somewhat. This is not the kind of book you read and shelve: it will be well-thumbed and annotated before you're through, whether you are a novice or veteran listener.

There are plans for a projected Volume 2: the Modern Period. If this book is an indication of the calibre of what may follow, it is indeed "... a consummation/ Devoutly to be wished..."

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC IN REVIEW

BUTCH MORRIS
Current Trends In Racism In Modern America (A Work In Progress)
Sound Aspects 4010

Frank Lowe, ts; John Zorn, as, game calls; Brandon Ross, g; Zeena Parkins, harp; Tom Cora, cello; Christian Marclay, turntables; Eli Fountain, vibes; Curtis Clark, p; Thurman Barker, marimba, snare drum, tambourine; Yasunao Tone, voice; Butch Morris, conduction.
The Kitchen, New York City, February 1, 1985

"Current Trends" was Butch Morris' first conduction in the United States. He describes conduction as "an improvised duet for ensemble and conductor". He uses a developed gestural vocabulary to signal what he wants to his players. Morris describes his conduction of a Beethoven string quartet:

> We really did some amazing stuff! We left holes open for improvisation, we played certain parts and improvised in between. Then I conducted the improvisation! I would instruct the string players to play legato, play pizzicato, play staccato...Play long lines, short lines, and so on. Sometimes the period of improvisation would be short, sometimes long; it would vary from one or two beats to an indefinite period of time. It was amazing – they hadn't thought about dealing with that music that way but they enjoyed it! (*Jazz Forum* 103, pp. 36-37)

Morris' comments on his conduction of David Murray's big band are also relevant:

> One of the members of the band or David may stress something in their solo that I kind of pick out and then I can cue a whole section of musicians – let's say the saxophone section or trumpet section – to repeat something he just said, so it's causing a transferral of an idea. So David may have stressed something in his solo and moved on to something else but I picked that out of his solo and transferred it to the section so you can hear the echo of something that has happened or that is about to happen because he may be moving on to the development of that phrase (which) can be important to the overall structure of the piece itself. (Bob Blumenthal's interview with David Murray and Butch Morris broadcast by National Public Radio, October 25, 1986.)

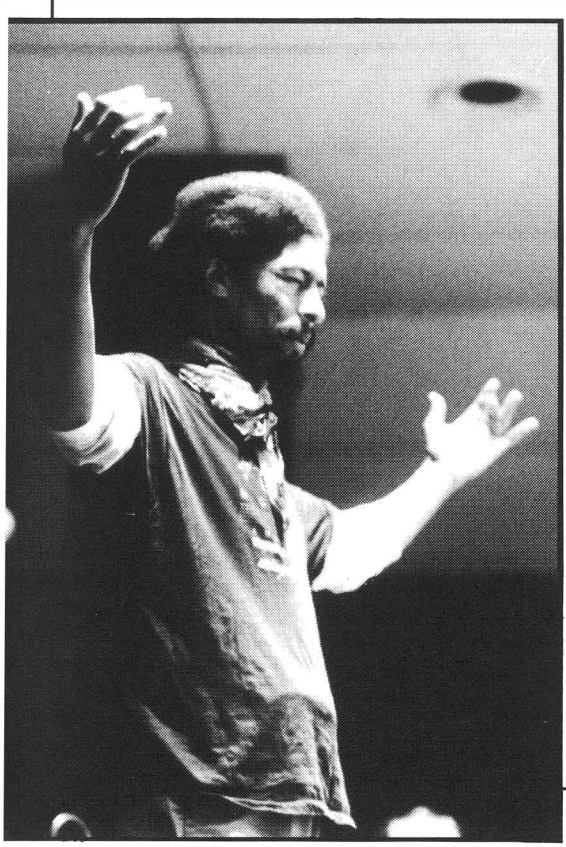
Morris has worked with Lowe and Zorn, and possibly others in the "Current Trends" ensemble for several years; one could expect Morris' conduction to be more detailed the more he has worked with his musicians. Imagine the possibility: a saxophonist plays a phrase Morris likes. He calls for a repeat; he calls for a marimba's echo, a harp's contrast. He calls for the phrase's fracture by another saxophonist. He speeds up the ensemble only to bring it crashing into a scratching turntable. I don't claim Morris actually works phrases like this, but it's possible.

Considerably more, or less, is possible, too. Perhaps a conductionist can work rapidly enough to shape everyone's lines. Another might prefer to leave some voices undirected. Differing ideas of development and flow are possible. One conductionist may conceive of ensemble exposition in nearly classical terms while another might be closer to a collage artist or cartoon musician.

Morris is puckish enough for the latter tendency to sometimes shine through, but darker developments of mood seem more prominent in "Current Trends". An R&B episode for the turntables occurs about fifteen minutes into the performance. This transition seems to me not abrupt but rather an extension of the lines that precede it. Other transitions introduce more contrast, but to my ears they exist within a larger plan Morris has in which he envisions sections and the shapes he wants to give them. He is often a patient shaper of the ensemble. Even in the busier moments he never loses sight of where he's taking the music, which is not to say he won't follow through on *what's happening now*. In the finest tradition of this music, conduction lets you have it both ways.

The main body of "Current Trends" (36:55, followed by a 10:30 addendum) begins and ends with Zorn shrieks. In between, the ensemble is often divided into sections: saxes, strings and percussive keyboards. A grounding line, repetitive, melodic or both is usually present, serving in a role conventionally given to a bass. Morris' use of percussive keyboards reminds me of Steve Reich's. The turntables are used for their textural or episodic content; the voice sounds more sparingly. Although the ensemble's sound palate is wide, the thematic developments give the listener something to latch onto. Over several months of listening, this record has grown on me to the point where I believe I hear more of the ensemble interaction each time.

In the radio interview quoted above, Morris cites practices of Horace Tapscott and Charles Moffett as seeds for his conduction idea. Nonetheless, Morris' use of conduction to attempt to expand an ensemble's possibilities of improvisational interaction is unprecedented. Its acceptance by the musicians' community will determine whether or not he succeeds. Meanwhile, *Current Trends* deserves the serious attention of anyone interested in the state of the art. – *Dale A. Smoak*



BUTCH MORRIS (Photograph by Gerard Futrick)

ERROL PARKER – LIVE AT THE WOLLMAN AUDITORIUM
Sahara 1014

The Dancer / Lament / Chega De Saudade / Baobab / The Taste of You / Three Blind Mice

Wallace Roney, Graham Haynes - Trumpet; Doug Harris - Soprano Sax; Steve Coleman - Alto Sax; Bill Saxton - Tenor Sax; Patience Higgins - Baritone Sax; Robin Eubanks - Trombone; Rory Stuart - Guitar; Kevin Harris - Electric Bass; Errol Parker - Drums

In spite of being snubbed not only by the jazz press, but by club owners and concert promoters alike, pianist, drummer, composer Errol Parker remains fiercely committed in his quest to gain for his uniquely personal music the exposure it so justly deserves. Like its immediate predecessor, Sahara 1013, this latest release features Parker's "Tentet"; his most potent medium of expression thus far. Pooling the skills of some of the "Apple's" brightest, young up and comers, this band rivals such similar sized ensembles as David Murray's Octet and Lester Bowie's "Brass Fantasy". An outgrowth and expansion of the smaller "Errol Parker Experience", the Tentet's additional horns provide a greater impact while also bringing into play a broader palette of colors and shadings. There is also an abundance of inspired, well constructed solo work examples of which include trumpeter Wallace Roney trading ideas with reedmen Doug Harris and Steve Coleman on the opening track and elsewhere, tenor saxophonist Bill Saxton's scorching eruption on *Baobab* and Rory Stuart's lush voicings on *The Taste of You*. However it is Parker's personality that still dominates this recording; his idiosyncratic drumming and bi-tonal polymetric inclinations

offering a bold, fresh, new perspective. On the Jobim classic *Chega De Saudade*, Parker reaches back into his heritage and injects a bit of North Africa into the traditional bossa nova rhythms. Wrapping things up is an ingenious rendition of the nursery rhyme "Three Blind Mice" replete with fine solos by saxophonists Doug Harris, Steve Coleman and Bill Saxton. This is an exciting, action packed disc which will hopefully help Parker attain a higher level of visibility on the current jazz scene.

– Gerard J. Futrick

MUHAL RICHARD ABRAMS
Colors in Thirty-Third
Black Saint BSR 0091

Drumman Cyrille; Miss Richarda; Munktmunk; Soprano Song; Piano-Cello Song; Colors in Thirty-Third; Introspection.
Muhal Richard Abrams, piano; John Purcell, soprano and tenor saxophones, bass clarinet; Fred Hopkins, bass; Andrew Cyrille, drums; John Blake, violin (cuts 4,6,7); Dave Holland, cello, bass (cuts 5-7).

ROSCOE MITCHELL QUARTET
The Flow of Things
Black Saint BSR 0090

The Flow of Things - No. 1; The Flow of Things - No. 2; Cards for Quartet; The Flow of Things - No. 3(Live).
Roscoe Mitchell, soprano and alto saxophones; Jodie Christian, piano; Malachi Favors, bass; Steve McCall, drums.

"The Flow of Things" and "Colors in Thirty-Third" are milestones for Roscoe Mitchell and Muhal Richard Abrams not because they are groundbreaking programs, but because the artists' roots in "Southside, AACM - USA," as phrased in Abrams' dedication, are prominently in the foreground.

Mitchell's album is rife with history. Respectively, *The Flow of Things* and *Cards for Quartet* explore the twin concerns of Mitchell's art – sound and space. *Cards...* and *Things, No. 3* were recorded at the AACM's 21st Anniversary Festival in 1986, a concert that featured the music of John Coltrane. Two later versions of the title composition are included, typical of Mitchell's career-long fastidiousness in presenting the evolution of a given composition. Additionally, *Cards* has appeared on previous Mitchell albums. Collaborating with Mitchell are Steve McCall and the under-recorded Jodie Christian, two of the AACM's co-founders, as well as AEC colleague Malachi Favors, who was also the bassist for Mitchell's earlier quartet albums.

Abrams' connection with his formative AACM years on "Colors in Thirty-Third" is less obvious, but still substantial. His dedication to most of the AACM's central exponents are coupled with their respective attributes as composers and improvisors, and, throughout a program that includes previously recorded compositions and new compositions in the major veins of his oeuvre, Abrams incorporates those qualities in a subtle, personal manner. While Fred Hopkins is the only AACM member performing on "Colors in Thirty-Third", the other members of Abrams' ensemble have noteworthy histories with pivotal AACM figures: Dave Holland with Anthony Braxton; Andrew Cyrille with Henry Threadgill, as well as Abrams; John Purcell with Jack DeJohnette; etc.

The net result of this historical grounding is two albums that have the resonance of the AACM's flowering. At the same time, these are deliberate, well honed, mid-life statements from market-wise artists. This is the late eighties, and no word-play texts or reverb effects are to be heard on Abrams' album; and, while Mitchell devotes two-thirds of his album to three readings of the same composition, the high-energy, free-music ambiance of *The Flow of Things* is accessible compared to, for example, the confrontative quality of *Nonaah*. These albums are among the most pleasurable ever released by Mitchell and Abrams.

"The Flow of Things" is about the closest Mitchell has ever come to a "blowing date." On the three takes of the title tune, Mitchell hovers over and soars about the groundswell of Christian, Favors, and McCall, his soprano buzzing like a zurnia (a Turkish double-reed instrument). His biting, circular-breath-generated attack alternates between thick trills, pedal-point phrases and long, bent tones. On the sparse *Cards*, Mitchell opens with an airy alto sound that gradually gains mass with judiciously employed reed effects. After numerous albums that confirm his importance as a composer, "The Flow of Things" is a refreshing reminder of Mitchell's prowess as an improviser.

"Colors in Thirty-Third" is one of the most well-constructed programs Abrams has ever recorded. Track by track, Abrams' deployment of materials and personnel gives the listener a fresh combination of voices and ideas. Abrams' affinity to the jazz continuum is in evidence; *Drumman Cyrille* intersects bop and Ornettish materials, with Cyrille's trap mastery as the pivot; Purcell's stripped down Dolphyesque bass clarinet brings the balladic *Miss Richarda* to a simmer; *Munktmunk* is a playful investigation of rhythm and close intervals that features Abrams and Purcell's tenor. On the remainder of the program, Abrams forgoes even obscure allusions to jazz's past, concentrating instead on rich orchestral colorations of a phraseology that turns on tension-filled rhythms and tart, tactically placed intervals. John Blake and Dave Holland deliver seamless performances; together, with Hopkins on the title piece and *Introspection*, they give Abrams' pallette more breadth and depth.

– Bill Shoemaker

BIG BANDS * ANATOMY OF A REVIVAL

THE BIG BANDS OF TODAY * INVESTIGATED BY WRITERS MARC CHENARD AND PETER STEVENS

"Will big bands ever come back?" Such was the question raised some thirty years ago on the cover of an LP recorded by Duke Ellington. In retrospect, there is no denying that the glory days of 'big band jazz' are a thing of the past, but the genre has not become an extinct species either. Even if one talked about their 'demise', the truth of the matter is that they have been recycled in a number of ways.

Historically, the focus of swing-era jazz was primarily one of entertainment. And what better way to keep the masses on their feet (literally) than through a big band. Like the crowds of dancers shuffling along, most orchestras were mainly staffed by anonymous personnels which were overshadowed by a star leader, be he a talented showman if not a gifted virtuoso.

But as a new social order was taking shape after the last World War, the big band's popularity was on the wane. Not only was it becoming more difficult to financially sustain 15 or so musicians on the road, but musical tastes were also changing, both in jazz as well as in commercial music. Up to that time, both of those styles enjoyed a peaceful coexistence, because each had – from a public point of view – a *perceived* entertainment value.

But as soon as the be-bop tide rolled in, jazz – or its practictioners more specifically – became aware of its own limitations as mere entertainment. Beyond all stylistic markers, be-bop pushed jazz into the realm of an 'art form'. And it is no surprise either, that in the ensuing years, many a (black) jazz musician has referred to the music as 'black *classical* music'. In essence, jazz would now be governed by its own aesthetic principles, rather than being content in paying mere lip service to public appeal.

Caught in the middle of this reordering of priorities, big bands started to look like musical dinosaurs: one after another these organizations were breaking up to the chagrin of their devoted fans. Even one leader later made the proclamation that 'jazz is dead', when, in fact, only big band jazz of the swing era was on the skids. In spite of all that pessimism, large orchestras were never wiped off the map, but were fewer and also, more distinguished.

From the late 40's on, those anonymous faces of the swing era found work in the studios, while the real touring jazz bands fostered many well known performers in their own right. Bands like Basie's, Herman's, even Kenton's in the early 50's, had become 'breeding grounds' for new talent. Because of their dwindling numbers, it was much more of a scuffle to get into one of these outfits, hence the need of 'having your chops together' as a reader and also as a soloist. At this juncture, some of the swing era bands persisted either as hold overs or else as forbearers of things to come.

In the former category, some became fixtures in the studios, a good example being **Les Brown's 'Band of Renown'**. Some 50 years after his entry in showbusiness, he has paved himself a comfortable haven in Hollywood, backing up comedian Bob Hope for more years I can think of. All of the hallmarks of yesteryear's jazz are evident in his golden anniversary LP *(Digital Swing* / Fantasy F-9650). With 13 cuts, do not expect much solo brilliance, but for nostalgia fans this is for you. In fact, others might find that some of the wrinkles have been smoothed over thanks to updated studio arrangements, very mainstream in content and not deliberately nostalgic as such albums often are. Nevertheless, this is still a showband at heart – and not a jazz one – which brings me to the following distinction between 'blowing bands' (the latter) and 'chart bands' (the former).

A good example of the latter would be the first **Basie** band of the thirties and even that of the Duke's. In fact, **Ellington** managed to balance both in a very unique way, that gave it both the sound and the personality. Moreover, his band contradicted the usual image of the swing era, because it went beyond showmanship to actually make lasting musical statements. Lest we not forget that the leader was also the band's main composer and, more importantly, he never wrote for instruments, but for people first. So it is no surprise that his band never had the 'anonymous face syndrome' that led to the breakup of most bands.

A recent album *(Live in the Uncommon Market* / Pablo 2308-247) gives us a sampling of mid-sixties **Ellingtonia** (No date given, but why then does Pablo insist on keeping us in the dark on such data?). Featured are many less known titles of the voluminous book (Bula, Silk Lace, Guitar Amour...) as well as three trio performances, two takes of 'The Shepherd' and one of 'Kinda Dukish', that he re-recorded for a trio set on Fantasy *(Duke Ellington The Pianist* / F-9462).

Throughout the music's history, one sees very few examples of bands whose stability was made possible through a devoted core of members. Apart from Duke Ellington, one often forgotten name is that of **Sun Ra.** Despite the outlandishness of the leader's presentations, he remains a dyed in the wool traditionalist and his latest release (*Reflections In Blue* / Black Saint BSR 0101) proves that too. Some Arkestra enthusiasts may be dismayed at the orthodoxy of the music, for there are none of the free for alls, but rather tightly written charts and well ordered solos. Yet, there is an omnipresent wit throughout, a kind of sarcasm that belies the written, as if they are aping such maudlin fare as 'Say it isn't so' or 'I dream too much', the leader crooning a tongue-and-cheek vocal on the latter tune. Even the picture on the album cover shows him with a slight smirk, which makes us believe that he is secretly enjoying some oblique joke, if not a send up of the traditional musical values.

And it is precisely on the traditional values of jazz that big bands have survived. As much as opera is the most conservative genre within the classical music field, so can it be said for big bands in jazz. But every rule has its exceptions, of course.

Gil Evans, for one, has pursued a very singular career as a writer, most likely due to his reputation as an 'arranger' rather than that of a 'composer'. Unlike the two previous leaders, Evans has never enjoyed lengthy associations with a core of faithful band members, at least up until the late 70's. Instead, he has managed to create his own sounds and textures by gathering together seasoned pros and total unknowns.

Over the last 15 years, his journeys into the world of 'orchestral rock' – for lack of a better term – have produced one of the curious musical paradoxes in the jazz world. His mastery of nuance and timbre remain breathtaking, yet there seems to be a constant clash with the heavy handed and often too predictable beat coming from the rhythm section. Both of his recent records on Blackhawk *(Live At The Public Theatre* / Vol. 1: BKH 525-1, Vol. 2: BKH 526-1) give us the impression of a man trying to defy his age by his music. Replete with synthesized sounds in the first volume, the second one gives more precedence to the horns, in particular a marvellous trombone solo by **George Lewis** on Mingus's 'Orange was the Color of her Dress'. Music aside for a moment, I find it very unnerving to hear so many fadeouts, which is even worse for a live recording. But these albums first appeared in Japan, so let us not fault Blackhawk for that.

As purveyors of the Jazz tradition, big bands have also become focal points for likewise-minded musicians in a given area. In this, today's orchestras remind us of the 'territorial bands' of the 30's, because they too operated within a certain area. But unlike those bands of yesteryear, they offer more of a creative outlet instead of being on the road and touring the dance hall circuit. Nowadays, there are an increasing number of these 'rehearsal bands', that play more for their own enjoyment than for any commercial gain. And not only are we talking about amateur bands, which have always been legion, but professional ones too.

One such aggregation is the **Either/Orchestra,** that hails from Cambridge, Massachusetts. For

lack of liner note information, one can only surmise that these are Berklee graduates and very talented ones at that. In this release *(Dial E* / Accurate Records Ac-2222), one is struck by the sense of empathy and looseness in this band. Moreover, there is plenty of space given for blowing, as is the case on 'December 17', which runs over 19 minutes. Overall, the music ranges from the orthodox and quasi kitsch reading of 'Doxy', to the facetious 'Brilliant Corners', to the genuinely well crafted original 'Nicole is always in Tokyo'. Because of their inclinations towards freer playing, this band steps out from the usual strictures of big band writing. Under the nominal leadership of tenor saxophonist **Russ Gershon,** this band sounds like a hybrid of European and American influences. An album that might leave you perplexed, but nonetheless intrigued enough to want to hear more.

Back in the 60's, the **Thad Jones-Mel Lewis** Orchestra had become a model for this new generation of 'territorial band', and even some 20 years later, Mel Lewis still leads his congregation out of the Village Vanguard for an occasional tour. Examples of this type abound nowadays: **Ernie Wilkins** and his 'Almost Big Band' in Copenhagen, the Canadian bands of **Rob McConnell** from Toronto and **Vic Vogel** from Montreal and, in the States, the list is far too long to enumerate.

One area, however, that has never had a short supply of Big Bands is California. Apart from all of the showbands, there are still a number of solid jazz bands, one of them being **Bob Florence's** Limited Edition. On their newest set *(Trash Can Alley* / Trend Records TR-545), the listener will hear a finely tuned orchestra staffed by some of the best white jazz musicians on the West Coast **(Bob Cooper, Kim Richmond, Lanny Morgan, Peter Donald** to name but a few). Under the leader's direction, this is a truly professional outfit and, in a way, one could call it the West Coast equivalent of the Mel Lewis band, because it too embodies those core values of swing, virtuosic playing, deft but very idiomatic writing. Yet, it would be difficult to identify this band in a blind fold test because of its very mainstream approach. As much as the tradition is an admirable part of the music's heritage, it is also a serious liability for those who remain faithful to it, which seems to be the case for most big band jazz.

Even if orchestras offer a rich possibility of sound combinations, they are basically limited by the writer's imagination. And the test for any band is: How will its music sound in twenty or thirty years? More than small bands, big bands are subject to styles, if not trends, and when they depend on these, rarely does the music fare well.

A recent release *(Terry Gibbs Dream Band – Vol. 2: the Sundown Sessions* / Contemporary C-7652) gives us such a 'blast from the past', so to speak. Back in November 1959, the vibist was fronting a band, which, for its day, exemplified the best of White-California Swing. First and foremost, this was an arranger's band, a 'charts band' to use an expression mentioned earlier; of the 10 cuts, only three exceed five minutes and no one ever takes a long solo either. Despite all of the recent critical acclaim given to the first volume – and a jazz critics Poll award of 1962 reprinted on the back of the jacket – this album gives credence to the 'perishable side' of big band jazz; it swings well, it's well played, but it is unescapably *dated*, both in overall sound and basic repertoire.

As much as the previous album bears the stamp of its time, a new LP by the *Blue Bird Society Orchestra (BBSO)* (Stash St-268) also does, albeit in a very different way. Musically speaking, we are shot back into a time warp to those days when 'swing was king', i.e. when it was nothing more than lighthearted entertainment. In the 80's, this is pure revivalism, reducing the music to pale anachronism. But it is also symptomatic of our times, in which historical consolidation betrays a lack of musical impetus. As a spinoff of the Widespread Jazz· Orchestra, the BBSO proves that an imitative view is a poor means of learning from it. But as is the case of all revivals, its most fervent exponents are always white musicians; in fact, you would not even find young black musicians showing such a narrow sense of history.

Yet another successful outlet for big bands are the colleges and universities. Given the structured nature of large ensembles and academic curriculum, the fit between the two has set the parameters for the new generation, namely, a formal and normative approach to individual development. School bands are by no means new, but their proliferation is much more recent. In effect, the number of band competitions and concomittant recording opportunities have raised the profile of these student orchestras.

In the past, such bands were confined to their campuses; nowadays, some of them even

tour! For instance, the *University of South Florida Jazz Ensemble* has all the trappings of a successful organization. *Sands of Time* (Mark College Jazz Series MCJS 20752) demonstrates, inspite of a flawless execution, the limitations of large ensemble writing. But one must be realistic and not expect the energy, drive and spontaneity of seasoned pros. In its genre, a most respectable band.

From this survey of big bands today, it becomes apparent that they represent a 'normative' approach to music. In contrast to small groups, where thematic writing is but a pretext for individual creation, large groups allow for solos as interludes between the written parts. In terms of identity then, the listener recognizes the band because of its overall sound rather than its individual voices.

Due to this emphasis on annotation, big bands are unavoidably more confining than their smaller counterparts, and it is in that way that they are 'normative', for they must achieve clarity before diversity in their presentation. Inasmuch as a good movie is dependent on the screenplay and its director, so is the band on its charts and its leader; be they superb actors or musicians, any production will fall flat if the dialogue (verbal or musical) is predictable or stilted. A good soloist can save the day for a small combo, but not for a big band.

– Marc Chénard

I've read the encomiums given by various people about a **Terry Gibbs** album recorded live in 1959 – **Dream Band (Contemporary C-7646)**. There's praise from Bob Florence (now he has a big band well worth listening to!) and Buddy Rich as well as from the band's drummer, Mel Lewis, who considers it the "best big band of its time".

And no wonder. This band sounds happy both in its music and in its banter and encouraging quips that pass around the bandstand. Florence talks of the band's "unrestrained joy". On the surface this band would appear to be simply another bunch of studio West Coasters but they have a healthy disciplined punch that doesn't stop them from letting loose. They play mostly old swing-era hits: *Opus One, Let's Dance, Don't Be That Way*. But the arrangements, particularly by Bill Holman and Bob Brookmeyer, give them freshness without losing that swingy tang.

Gibbs solos in his usual brashly extrovert high spirits and the other soloists provide clean and crisp bursts, over Lewis' impeccably driving drumming. Holman has a different medium tempo for *You Go To My Head*, an open-hearted *Stardust* with nicely scored saxes playing Billy Butterfield's solo from Artie Shaw's version and a good *After You've Gone*.

None of the pieces goes on too long though perhaps occasionally the music is slightly too frantic: *Jumpin' At The Woodside* gets away from them though the band handles the other fast tempos with ease. This band still sounds good a quarter of a century later – a treat for all big band fans.

Around the same time bassist Oscar Pettiford was running a big band and it's caught in live action on **Oscar Pettiford And His Birdland Band (Spotlite SPJ 153)**, a couple of broadcasts in 1957. Pettiford had assembled an aggregation with unusual combinations: only two trumpets, together with a sax section, the whole fleshed out with two French horns, the tinkly sprinkle of a harp and Pettiford's pizzicato cello. That would seem to give the arrangers a chance to do something different so there are pieces featuring the harp and French horns.

While it's not heavy on trumpets, the band gets up some snappy climaxes and occasionally the scoring (mainly by Gigi Gryce and Benny Golson) has interesting sax section bits but nothing much develops. While lots of upcoming musicians are in the band – Art Farmer, Donald Byrd, Gene Quill, Sahib Shihab, among others – the solos are not particularly probing though the players don't get much chance to spread themselves. Shadow Wilson's drumming bolsters the band so it has a driving forward momentum. Still, there's not a great deal of music here to judge the band by – Side 2 has only about twelve minutes of music, and a minute of that is devoted to the band's theme, already played twice on Side 1. All in all, this is a thin offering.

Pettiford turns up as a guest on a version of *Perdido* on **Duke Ellington: The 1953 Pasadena Concert (Crescendo GNP 9045)**. The Ellington band was perhaps still in shadow in 1953 but it produces a big sound on this album. But unfortunately much of the music is fluff and irrelevance.

The opening cuts of Side 1 are good: *The Tattooed Bride* has good piano, Britt Woodman's trombone and Jimmy Hamilton's clarinet, and that's followed by *Diminuendo/Crescendo In Blue* with the quicksilver slinkiness of Paul Gonsalves. Even *The Hawk Talks* is not too bombastic.

But from then on the album is almost all downhill – Ellington's embarrassing *Monologue*, a thrown away vocal by Ray Nance on *St. Louis Blues*. Much of Side 2 centres on the very ordinary singing of Jimmy Grissom (I've never understood Ellington's penchant for romantic and syrupy baritones) and the album closes with a medley, snippets of Duke's hits which might be acceptable at a concert in 1953 but is almost worthless on an album issued in 1986.

This album is only for avid Ellingtonians and even they will be disappointed, apart from the two opening cuts.

An Ellington-derived album with relatively undistinguished music is **Johnny Hodges' Castle Rock (Verve 827 758-1)**, a septet with front-line Ellingtonians and the drumming of Sonny Greer from 1951 and 1952. This is simple riffy jump music for the most part. Hodges has some neatly expressive solos, remembering his past on one occasion, playing the bridge of *Squatty Roo* as the bridge on *Globe Trotter* here. And it's good to have some Emmett Berry. On some cuts Nelson Williams plays strong brassy trumpet and Al Sears does his almost rhythm and blues imitation of Ben Webster.

It's a relaxed swinging session but nothing much develops on old Hodges standards: *Jeeps Blues*, and *The Jeep Is Jumpin'*. There is a little-known Ellington piece, *My Reward*, but the rest are forgettable bits, pleasant, swinging but essentially undistinguished.

An altoist who shows some Hodges influence is featured in mainly big band settings on **That's Earl, Brother (Spotlite SPJ 152) - Earl Bostic,** who's a player I know only from memory – his version of *Flamingo* was a big hit during my English adolescent days. Bebop was my music then, so Bostic's jumpy squealing I found laughable. Since then I've read, somewhat uncomprehendingly, about other musicians' admiration for his playing. And this album from the 40s goes some way to explain that admiration.

With his own big band and Lionel Hampton's (four cuts from each here) he shows a good sense of swingy playing, a bit swoopy like Hodges but sharper in tone, sounding more like Hodges' soprano but with something of Tab Smith's approach. He still falls into long flurrying flights, technically adroit but adding little value to his solos.

He seems to have arranged the material for his own band: *All On* is good swinging stuff, and *The Major And The Minor* makes good use of typical swing arranging. This piece is also done by the Hampton band. Bostic doesn't hog the solo spotlight except on *The Man I Love* which turns into frantic double time, pointing towards the infamous *Flamingo*.

Another frantic piece is Hampton's *Lady Be Good* with sax exchanges for Arnett Cobb and Al Sears, Bostic and Gus Evans. The other Hampton cuts have little Bostic – maybe he did the arrangements but the liner notes don't explain. And he doesn't solo much on four cuts by a Rex Stewart group which sounds like an earlier Ellington unit on two cuts. Stewart is in good form as are Tyree Glenn and Cecil Scott. I'm glad to have this collection for it gives some attention to the jazzier side of Bostic, though the music is uneven.

But there's no unevenness about the music played by the octet known as the **Paris Reunion Band** on **French Cooking (Sonet SNTF-945)**. The group has eight hard and direct swingers, all expatriates at one time or another, some still based in Europe. The music comes at the listener with a no-nonsense drive, the front-line pushed and prodded and punctuated by bassist Jimmy Woode, pianist Kenny Drew and little-known drummer Billy Brooks in this set of originals by band members. There's a very enticing tune by Woody Shaw, *Sweet Love Of Mine*, with riffy backgrounds to Shaw's bright trumpet, Nathan Davis' torrential soprano, Slide Hampton's broad-toned trombone. Drew's piano sets the group loose to romp through Dizzy Reece's aptly named *The Burner* – some clever written bits here though lots of room for

solos. The only piece approaching the ballad mode is the very tuneful *Waltz* by Hampton. Otherwise, it's powerful stuff and to take a cue from one of the titles, Johnny Griffin's *Callitwhatchawanna*, I call it highly charged jazz, broadly based in the modern idiom.

As opposed to the Paris Reunion Band's full-blooded approach, the scoring by pianist Pete Saberton on **John Williams Octet's Year Of The Buffalo (Spotlite SPJ 532)** has an uncluttered leanness though it descends into an occasional rhapsodic pretentiousness. This is sparse music, clean, almost West Coast in sound but with none of the Terry Gibbs' happy sound for it has some of that Mike Gibbs' weary melancholy about it, especially on *Snow Palace*.

These players are new to me apart from drummer Trevor Tomkins and trumpeter Henry Lowther. They all seem somewhat rigid; Saberton's piano and Martin Speake's alto on *FFRB* are good but the total effect is one of blandness with little rhythmic urgency, in spite of some playing around with rhythm and tempo. Too much of a muchness here, then, hovering around medium tempo, just middling music. And Spotlite does it again – another short side of music, as Side 2 has only about 13 minutes.

The shadow of West Coast music falls across another British recording: **Back Again (Choice CRS 6829)** but it is more in that outgoing and open style of the Terry Gibbs band. Veteran leader **Vic Lewis** has put together a big band of mostly young Brits to play a suite written by Shorty Rogers for his old sparring partner and named for him, Bud Shank.

I've always liked Rogers' work. His arranging for both big and small groups always packs a punch, with engaging lines and an unassuming swing (remember his tribute to the Basie band?). The four movements of the suite are hard and full-bodied, aided by Shank's alto, now fiercer and more biting. The opening ballad is especially forceful. One piece is a catchy blues with interesting dialogue for flute and Ron Matthewson's bass. Bill Holman turns up again with a fetching tune written and named for Rogers whose trumpet playing is always straightforward, sticking to the middle register, fluent with occasional oblique and flatted phrasing. Holman gives him plenty of room to weave in and out of the band, which throughout Side 1 plays splendidly.

Side 2 features the rhythm section with Shanks and Rogers recorded live. At this point in his career, just after his return to playing after a lay-off, Rogers needs a firmer framework – in his solos he falls into repetitive patterns, but Shank blossoms at length. He really digs into *My Romance*, chewing off choppy phrases, lengthening out ideas, chasing the beat, lagging behind, flurrying on, squealing, growling, all at a medium bouncy tempo, making for the best Shank I've heard in a long time.

So this album offers very good Shank and some straightahead writing in a solidly modern big band tradition. *– Peter Stevens*

OSCAR PETERSON (Photograph by Henry Kahanek)

SPONTANEOUS MUSIC ENSEMBLE

"...BEYOND OURSELVES AND INTO THE MUSIC"
– John Stevens, circa 1974.

Coda readers will be aware that the **Emanem** label has returned "with three classic records of improvised music..." (see, for example, Issue 216 (October/November 1987), page 38).

Two of these records concern material, released now (1986) for the first time, which documents a concert performance given at the theatre of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, (ICA), in London, England, some thirteen years ago (3rd February, 1974) by a **Spontaneous Music Ensemble (SME)** quintet. The musicians performing on this occasion under the SME collective name were, John Stevens on percussion "kit (which) comprised small cymbals and small drums with some bells and woodblocks" and cornet, soprano saxophonists Trevor Watts and Evan Parker, Derek Bailey, "who used an unamplified 19-string (approx.) guitar ... and a 6-string guitar with two pedal controlled amplification" and Kent Carter, who "used a double bass ... and a cello". The "Eighty-five Minutes" provided on these two records (Emanem "non-idiomatic and/or pan-idiomatic music series, music beyond the absurd division of the world into "classical" and "popular", numbers 3401 & 3402) gives us three "totally" free improvisations of forty minutes, thirty-five minutes "edited very slightly in order to remove some technical defects" and ten minutes each, respectively. The recordings were made by Martin Davidson in stereo, who also provides informative 1986 sleeve notes, from which I make certain indicated quotes; a Jak Kilby monochrome photograph of the musicians in performance illustrates the front cover of both these releases. "This concert is the only occasion that these five musicians have performed together" although "Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, John Stevens and Trevor Watts had been part of the SME for a few months in 1967, before the group reduced to the duo of Stevens and Parker. Then, from 1968 to 1976, Stevens and Watts were the only permanent members of SME"; however, "Bailey sat in ... from time to time".

In fact, it is these two names – Stevens and Watts, "best of friends since 1959" – which are most closely associated with the recorded output of SME, and of these two, John Stevens has been the single protagonist appearing in all the SME releases of which I am aware, which cover the period from March, 1966 to May, 1981. That we now have these new releases available from Emanem adds a considerable amount to the documentation of the work of SME and its moving spirit; and the music in its own right on these two discs is, to me, a fine example of creative music generated by musicians deeply involved in this form who, through years of dedicated playing, have mastered and delivered up to us for our delectation, the subtleties of its overall potential.

The first SME release was **Challenge (Eyemark EMPL 1002)**, recorded in March, 1966, some months after SME came into being at the Little Theatre Club in London. Titles such as *E.D's Message* and *2 B Ornette*, clearly indicate the direction from which the group was coming, and, while there is a considerable degree of spontaneity, premeditation remains a significant component. Stevens and Watts were joined in this session by Kenny Wheeler, flugelhorn, Paul Rutherford, trombone and Bruce Cale, bass (except for one track, where he is replaced by Jeff Clyne); incidentally, the third recent release by Emanem is a re-issue of Rutherford's 1974 solo trombone album, "The Gentle Harm of the Bourgeoisie", but that's another fine story...

Karyobin ("the imaginary birds said to live in paradise") was released in 1968 on **Island Hexagram ILPS 9079**, a long performance with spontaneity increasingly represented and requiring the full LP. Here, Stevens is joined by Wheeler, Parker, Bailey and bassist Dave Holland.

1969 saw the release on **Marmalade 608 008** (also on Polydor Standard 2384 009) of two versions of material credited to Stevens and vocalist Maggie Nichols entitled **Oliv**; the first version has three vocalists – Nichols, Carolann Nicholls and Pepi Lemer – with Stevens, Watts, Wheeler, Bailey, pianist Peter Lemer and, on bass, the late great John Dyani. Of this piece Stevens writes in his sleeve note, that it "was organised specifically for the performers. The performers were selected first and the organisation of the music came second, with the hope that they could contribute fully to the music as a whole and also retain their own individuality". Of the second version, which is by the quartet of Stevens, Watts, Nichols and Dyani, he writes that it "is more typical of present day SME music, in using the organised theme as a springboard for group improvisation and being performed by the group's regular members".

(Trevor Watts was leading a group under the name of "Amalgam" in the period 1967-1979; first recording, 1969. Stevens appears in some of the earlier releases of this group.)

1970/71 saw the release of some five SME discs, **The Source – From and Towards (Tangent TNGS 107)** recorded 70.1118, "composed by Stevens with the aid of a grant from the Arts Council of Great Britain; credit is also due to Trevor Watts for his assistance in organising the music". There are five tracks, titled *Expectancy, Birth, Thanksgiving, Time Goes On* and *You Know*. The SME of this event is a group of ten musicians, Stevens, Watts, Wheeler and Ray Warleigh, alto sax and flute, Brian Smith, tenor and soprano saxes, Bob Norden and Chris Pyne, trombones, Mike Pyne, piano, Ron Mathewson

and Marcio Mattos, basses. A poem by Anne Stevens is quoted: Time goes on / Life goes on / Forget / And be forgotten; the back cover illustration is a polychrome photograph (by Jak Kilby) of Louise Stevens at 3 months, while the 'envelope' drawing is by Richie Stevens (age 8) – a family event!

So, What Do You Think? (Tangent TGS 118), recorded 71.0127 became available in 1973, a lengthy quintet excursion (which sleeve note author Max Harrison describes as "completely improvised")through the lines of creation suggested by this very brief 'composition' by Stevens, undertaken by Messrs. Stevens, Watts, Wheeler, Bailey and Holland.

July, 1971 produced two releases, **SME + Bobby Bradford** recorded in London (England) on 19th, SME being Stevens, Watts, Nichols, Norden and Ron Herman, bass; references to 'Trane' and 'Ornette' appear in the material. **Birds Of A Feather**, recorded in Herouville, in Northern France, on the 27th and released on **BYG 529 023** has Stevens, Watts and Herman with Julie Tippetts (ex Driscoll), vocals and guitar; a version of *One, Two, Albert Ayler* is included on this release.

A further recording from 1971, probably from this summer period, is the 1982 release on **Affinity (AFF 81)** of *One, Two, Albert Ayler*, an extended version performed in Oslo, Norway which fills the LP; personnel as for "Birds Of A Feather". Anthony Wood provides the sleeve notes and points out that "John Stevens has always retained strong emotional and musical links with those who have influenced his musical thinking – Phil Seaman, Ornette Coleman, Ed Blackwell, Albert Ayler". Wood quotes Stevens – "I began to be influenced by Albert Ayler around 1967 when a friend brought a copy of "Spiritual Unity" (a 1964 recording released on ESP) from the States ... The freedom with which he (Ayler) played inspired the idea of a group of people playing together with such freedom. When Ayler asked me, (they met in Denmark in the sixties), if I could play 'one, two' to a very slow beat, I was reminded of Gary Peacock's free playing on the record which was static rather than forward-moving. *One, Two, Albert Ayler* is the result of these two influences. To impose a slow pulse on the musicians would have restricted their playing. I achieved the rhythmic discipline necessary by the use of deep breathing. The musicians only played or sang on breathing out, so promoting freedom and fluidity. They concentrated on the breathing rather than on what they were playing. Yogic-type exhalation, which must be slow and even, produced a good opening to the improvisation..."

In 1975 Emanem, production by Mandy and Martin Davidson, released **SME / Face To Face, (Emanem 303)**, being seven duo performances by Stevens and Watts recorded at the Little Theatre Club, London (73.1129, 1206 & 1214). "Face to face means exactly that", explains Stevens in his sleeve note. "When Trevor and I perform it we are seated to enable the drums and saxophone to be approximately on the same level. We face each other and play at each other allowing the music to take place somewhere in the middle. This is very much an outward process. We are trying to be a total ear to the other player allowing our own playing to be of secondary importance ... At this stage we are not aware of the total sound of the two players. When we arrive at hearing the other player completely and playing (almost subconsciously) for his sake at the same time, we then allow ourselves to bring into focus the duo sound ... From then on we start to converse naturally ... Free group improvisation is our aim, and a preparation piece like this is to aid us to achieve the concentration required for the best results. The actual process ... may only take a few seconds, but those few seconds are significant in getting us beyond ourselves and into the music..."

Chronologically, **Eighty-five Minutes** (that's five thousand one hundred seconds) is the next release...

On 25th January, 1975 Martin Davidson recorded a Victor Schonfield 'Music Now' concert at St. John's, Smith Square, London (with financial aid from the Arts Council of Great Britain). The material, credited to Stevens, was subsequently released by **A Records (A-003)** under the title **SME + = SMO;** SME was a group of ten – Stevens, Watts, Parker, Mattos, with Ian Brighton and Roger Smith, guitars, violinist Nigel Coombes, cellists Lindsay Cooper, Jane Robertson and Colin Wood. Eleven further musicians were added; SMO was the result.

(Stevens has also participated in 1972 (INCUS) and 1980 (FMP-SAJ) recorded and released performances by the London Jazz Composers Orchestra.)

(Also in 1975, Stevens was leading a quartet named 'Away', with Watts together with a guitarist and bassist (electric), which can be heard on **Vertigo 6360 131**. Three Stevens' compositions, also recorded in 1975, were released by **Vinyl (VS102)** under the title **Chemistry** with Stevens leading a quintet with Watts, Wheeler, Warleigh and Clyne, all known to SME.)

Some two years later another SME appeared on the Bailey/Parker Incus Label. **Biosystem (Incus 24)**, recorded 77.0628, features Stevens, Coombes, Smith and Wood, with five tracks short, medium and long, freely improvised.

(In the preceding year, "on The Longest Night of 1976", Stevens and Parker recorded at Riverside Studios, London, material from which were subsequently released eight tracks on two Ogun LPs (OG 120 / OG 420). Stevens contributes a short sleeve note which, inter alia, advises the reader that "Evan (Parker) and I are two of the most skilled interpreters (along with a handful of others including Trevor Watts, Derek Bailey and Paul Rutherford – all early members of SME) of this highly specialised form of improvisation of which this extended performance ... is an

JOHN STEVENS (Photograph by Bill Smith)

excellent example. One could say that the performers have been teaching each other to play this music and the music has been teaching us to listen. We are the originators and this is an example of its latest development. One could also say that Evan and I have been developing and pruning towards this since 1966...")

John Stevens' **Application Interaction And...**, recorded in August, 1978 and released on **Spotlite (SPJ513)** gives "three more (there had been a previous Spotlite release on which this writer has no current info) recorded examples of improvisations from this trio (Stevens, Watts and Barry Guy, bass) which allows ultimate freedom for the players as individuals and Collective stimulus from the interaction of three equal parts..." (from Stevens' sleeve note).

On 8th May, 1981, another concert, by "The SME + Orchestra" – this one at Notre Dame Hall, London – was recorded and released (again with Arts Council financial assistance) on **Sweet Folk & Country SFA 112.** The first side is devoted to a Stevens' composition for the Orchestra; side two has firstly a SME performance by Stevens, Coombes and Smith; secondly a piece composed by Stevens performed by this SME joined by Rutherford and Howard Riley, piano. The Orchestra = SME + Ms. Nichols, Watts, Rutherford, trumpeter Jon Corbett, Lol Coxhill on soprano sax, and Alan Tomlinson, trombone. This is the most recent recording date featuring SME of which I am aware; some sixteen months after this date, on the evening of Friday, 10th September, 1982 I was at the Theatre Arts Club, London, for a SME session with Stevens, Coombes and Smith, later joined by Tomlinson. This was the only time I heard live SME.

(In 1982, Affinity released **(AFF 101) John Stevens / Freebop**, sextet – Stevens, Corbett, Rutherford, Clyne with Gordon Beck, piano and Pete King, alto sax – recordings at the 8th Bracknell Festival of tunes by Stevens).

More recently, I have heard little of John Stevens. In March, last year (1986) he was responsible, together with Charlie Watts, for the "conception and production" of the Charlie Watts Orchestra Live at Fulham Town Hall delivering arrangements by the conductor, Alan Cohen, of six standards (from *Stomping At The Savoy* to *Flying Home*) and participated as one of the three percussionists of this 31-piece band. Amongst the other musicians involved in this event (available on **CBS cassette 450253 4**) familiar names in the context of this article are Ron Mathewson, Paul Rutherford, Chris Pyne, Evan Parker, Peter King and Ray Warleigh.

To my mind, John Stevens and SME – all those various musicians which it incorporated, and the spirit it promoted – have contributed significantly to the development of attitudes towards, and appreciation of, freely improvised music, notably in Britain, no doubt elsewhere: Long may it prosper! – *Roger Parry*

IN PERFORMANCE

NEW ORCHESTRA WORKSHOP FESTIVAL
Centre Culturel Francophone, Vancouver
November 25-28, 1987

In the face of the conservatism endemic to the Canadian jazz scene, the Vancouver musicians who are concerned with developing a more personal expression have adopted a cooperative strategy. The New Orchestra Workshop was originally formed in 1977 by pianist Paul Plimley, drummer Gregg Simpson, bassist L.S. Lansall-Ellis, brass player Ralph Eppel, and saxophonist Paul Cram. With only the inspiration of the legendary Al Neil, who tutored Simpson, the first edition of NOW produced many recordings and performances, the highlights being a collective recording entitled "Up Til Now" and Paul Cram's "Blue Tales in Time", the latter eventually released on Onari. The organisation lapsed after 1981, but in the past few years NOW has revived with a vengeance thanks to the energy of new members bassist Clyde Reed, guitarist Ron Samworth, and saxophonists Coat Cook, Graham Ord, and Bruce Freedman – Plimley and Simpson remain.

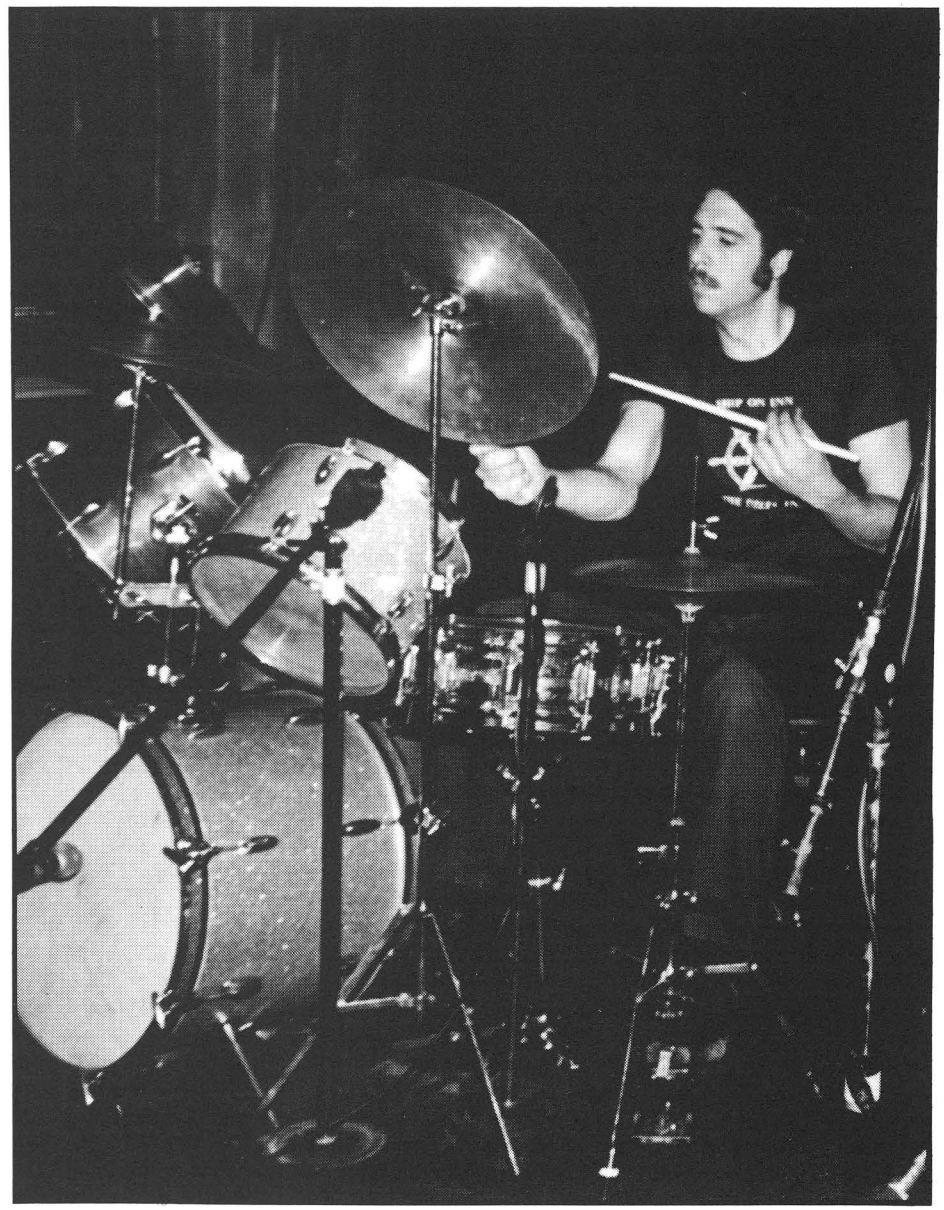
With the support of the Centre Culturel Francophone, NOW has mounted several concert series over the past few years. The latest culminated with a four-night festival at the CCF November 25-28. Unique to Vancouver among Canadian cities – and the eclectic and adventurous programming by the Coastal Jazz and Blues Society during their big-budget summer festivals certainly deserves some credit for this – the so-called boundaries between different styles of jazz remain exceptionally permeable. "Outsiders", the **Bob Murphy** Quartet, composed of studio players stretching out, appeared on the first night, and the **Philippe Lapointe** Quintet with their New York in-the-pocket style, opened the second night. I was unable to catch either, but from all reports, their more commercially-oriented styles were welcomed by audience and performers.

The **Coat Cook** Quintet opened the Thursday night with a set mostly of free improvisation. This is a challenging format for younger musicians, and at times a sameness crept into the middle of the pieces – didn't the last one sound like this too? Still, there were many rewarding moments provided by Cook, Samworth, and three newcomers to NOW - Daniel Lapp on trumpet, Scott White on bass, and Roger Baird on drums. Guest vocalist Kate Hammett-Vaughan stepped out from her usual torch-standards to provide several numbers with wordless vocals a la Jeanne Lee with Gunter Hampel.

That highlights one of the most exciting aspects of the New Orchestra Workshop – it provides performers with a supportive environment in which to stretch out musically. **Graham Ord** has spent time earning money in the studios and playing rock gigs, as well as being a member of Plimley's octet, but Thursday night found him for the first time leading a group performing his own music. His array of saxophones was joined by Baird and White for a varied set, all originals except for Jimmy Garrison's *Ascendence*. Interestingly enough, while playing soprano on that tune Ord avoided the Coltrane influence apparent in his tenor playing.

Friday night opened with **Lunar Adventures**, powered by the all-purpose rhythm section of Simpson and Reed. This is a very interesting group; I really haven't heard anything else like them. Though showing influences of rock, noise music, Celtic music, and harmolodics, they completely avoid fusion blandness. This night they took a few tunes to warm up – for their music to work Cook's saxes and Samworth's guitar have to be as telepathic as Ornette and Don Cherry. It's especially interesting to hear Simpson's high energy harnessed to the more structured demands of this music.

Reed and Simpson stayed on the bandstand as the rhythm section for **Paul Plimley**. Plimley seems to be moving into artistic maturity, the multitude of influences – particularly that of Cecil Taylor – melded into a seamless whole reflective of Plimley himself. Very intellectual, yet filled with passion, and always charged with that sly Plimley wit, the neverending flow of ideas encompasses the entire keyboard. Unfortunately, the piano at the CCF is poor, but with the busy yet supportive encouragement of Reed and Simpson, Plimley and the audience didn't seem to mind. They were joined by



GREGG SIMPSON (Photograph by Bill Smith)

former Montrealer **Robert Leriche**, now based in Paris, for several numbers. His spare measured style on soprano and alto sax proved an excellent contrast with the more ebullient trio. Whereas Plimley seems always to be searching for more to bring into his playing, Leriche has staked out a niche for himself and is content to explore that fully.

The final night's performances opened with the **Vancouver Art Trio**. Simpson and Reed joined by Bruce Freedman on tenor sax. This performance showed the trio branching out from their original Coleman- and Coltrane-influenced energy music into a more relaxed yet still intense feeling on some numbers. With this group, the rhythm section can concentrate more on providing a groove for Freedman, rather than constantly remaining alert to Plimley's unpredictability.

Next up was a new Vancouverite, drummer **Claude Ranger**, joined by bassist White and fellow newcoming saxophonist Rob Frayne, from Toronto. This was my first chance to see Ranger in person; this night he was concerned mostly with drums as pitch-producing devices, and with supporting the notes cascading out of Frayne's tenor. A fitting climax to the festival, joining together old and young, the new and the established. The number of creative improvisational musicians seems to have reached critical mass; with some recordings and more work on publicity, the New Orchestra Workshop could become a force on the national and international as well as the local scene.

– Scott Lewis

STRING TRIO OF NEW YORK
City Hall Theatre, Hong Kong
November 14, 1987
An Urban Council Presentation

John Lindberg, bass; James Emery, guitars; Charles Burnham, violin.

Hong Kong was fortunate to have the String Trio of New York perform here at the City Hall Theatre last Saturday evening (November 14, 1987). Whether Hong Kong deserved such a visit is another question, to which I will return later.

To accompany the performance, those who attended were provided with a free 10-page bilingual programme from which it could be determined that "this concert (found) the STNY winding up their tenth anniversary world tour, which has taken them throughout North America, Western and Eastern Europe, India, Israel, North Africa, and now East Asia".

The programme comprised two halves, each approximately of one hour, and presented five compositions in each half. The opener was *T'wixt C and D* by John Lindberg, "a piece written to evoke the feeling on New York City's Lower East Side". "Bassist/Composer John Lindberg has been active internationally since the mid 70's" and this piece appeared on general release (Area Code 212, BSR), recorded when the Trio comprised Lindberg, Emery, and Billy Bang on violin. The second piece, *The Wise Old Owl* was composed by current Trio violinist, Charles Burnham. *Anticipations*, by Lindberg came next, beginning "with a sound improvisation before hooking into various group melodic continuity. An ascending ensemble vamp is arrived upon which serves as the focul point for all the unaccompanied solo sections...before delving even further into a group sound improvisation..." For me, this piece was particularly successful. Next came James Emery's soprano guitar feature, *Texas Koto Blues*, which he wrote "inspired by the flavor and feeling of the special music which comes from the southern United States". Humour was an evident ingredient and "the middle of the piece settles into classic blues structure". The closing item of the first half was the lyrical "love song – a ballad...", *Multiple Reasons*, by Lindberg. "This is a soothing and pretty work which underscores the Trio's overall eclectic approach." To open up the second half, we had Emery's *Open Up*, an excellent composition "designed as a vehicle to set up a free flowing swing feel that propels an open ended violin and bass duet in the first improvisational section...followed by an abrupt switch to a rushed double time feel that provides the framework for a rapid fire guitar and bass duet". Second, "a colour piece", *Seven Vice*, by Lindberg, "the main focal point is the use of wooden implements by the three instrumentalists in pursuit of a specific, special 'forest' of sound". Third, Burnham's *The Low Fat Lullaby*, "a gorgeous melody with beautiful accompanying chord changes which push the Trio members to their melodic and harmonic best". The concert concluded with two Emery pieces, *Shadows In The Light* and *Ephemera Trilogy*. The former began "with beautiful melodic development as a springboard for an extended violin solo over a constantly stated modal center, held by guitar and bass...(leading to) an extended unaccompanied bass solo...followed by another melodic interjection leading to a guitar and bass duet..." *Ephemera Trilogy*, which, like *Open Up*, can be heard on BSR release *Rebirth Of A Feeling*, "serves as an outlet for three distinct solo departures, over three different sound textures (which) when all strung together (give a) result (which) is dramatic and exciting".

This was the first chance that I had had to hear this Trio Live, although I was aware of their nature through certain of their recording releases, and of other recorded performances in which John Lindberg in particular had participated – various Braxton Quartets, in duets with Braxton, in a trio with the late, much lamented Jimmy Lyons and Sunny Murray and, not least, with his own trio together with trombonist George Lewis and drummer Barry Altschul. This was a thoroughly enjoyable evening of interesting compositions designed to demonstrate the virtuosity of each member of the Trio and how successfully such virtuosity can be amalgamated into expositions of both fine solo and sympathetic group improvisations.

The Urban Council is to be congratulated on having brought this excellent group to Hong Kong, to introduce into what tends to be a middle-of-the-road cultural atmosphere, some other stuff which, while making perhaps greater demands of the listener, also provides a heightened degree of intellectual and emotional satisfaction. It is unfortunate, therefore, that the promotion of this event left much to be desired and that consequently, what should have been something of a local cultural landmark, was poorly attended, and ths Trio which "seeks to communicate to the widest possible audience while at the same time expanding the musical horizons of their listeners and themselves" was never really given the opportunity to fully generate "an exciting and warm evening of creation and communication".

While it may be true to say that Hong Kong is no longer a cultural desert, it is still a long way between oasis, of which this event was one; I look forward to many more in the future.

– Roger Parry

JEMEEL MOONDOC QUARTET
Hamilton College, Clinton, New York
October 31, 1987

Jemeel Moondoc, alto saxophone; Roy Campbell, trumpet; Clarence Lamb, tenor saxophone; Rashid Bakr, drums.

Originally billed as a quartet performance with bassist Tyler Mitchell, Moondoc actually showed with tenorist Lamb in place of Mitchell. Initially – I must admit – I was rather disappointed in this/"the" change in personnel. Yet – as the subsequent music proved – my perfidious fears were totally unwarranted. As a matter of fact, from the word "go," Moondoc and company presented an impressive and exhilarating display of post-"song form" musical expression (I should probably add, though, that Moondoc – at least on record – has never been as texturally daring as was this concert).

Moondoc began his presentation – billed, by the way, as a "Halloween Jazz Liturgy" – with an alto saxophone preface that, interestingly enough, made one wonder what Sonny Rollins would have sounded like if he'd played alto (no "sleight of hand" intended, by the way, to Rollins – seeing that that sentence is in the past tense). What was additionally significant, too, was the fact that while Moondoc's handling of the tonal and melodic content of his phrasings maintained Rollins' skepticism and ambiguity, his music remained aperturally relevant and musically comprehensible. (As a related note, it might be helpful to consider that Moondoc's alto playing – as well

as his writing – is somewhat of a cross between that of Ornette Coleman and Jimmy Lyons. Yet Moondoc's tonal and melodic gifts aren't as deliberate or as "conscious" as those of Coleman or the late Lyons.)

After Moondoc had finished his centrifugal solo introduction, the full ensemble of Lamb, Campbell, and Bakr joined him in a liltingly melancholic ensemble texture that served well the best features of all musicians. Campbell, particularly, played very well – both in his "solo" excursions as well as in the thematicism of ensemble playing. As a matter of fact, his ideas were considerably better developed than when I last heard him.

By the time the quartet began an arrangement of Mingus' *Nostalgia In Times Square* – re-inventing masterfully the hauntingly dry mocking humor so implicit in John Handy's and Booker Ervin's reading of the tune on Mingus' "Jazz Portraits" (1959) recording – certain speculative ideas concerning the ensemble's future course came to me. Firstly, one couldn't help but question the dubious notion that a forced atavisticism, infused with a revisionist mentality, can only yield predictable musical results. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the neo-traditionalist way of moving within Jazz – both the "classic" conservatism of, let's say, Wynton and Branford Marsalis, as well as the middle-of-the-road semi-avantgardist tendencies of Jemeel Moondoc and friends – must now be seen as only part of a much larger trajectory of improvisatory activity." A trajectory – I might hasten to add – whose intent and process *is now permanently internationalist oriented*.

What does all this, finally, have to do with Jemeel Moondoc's quartet performance at Hamilton College on Halloween night? Or, better yet: What does all this theoretical verbose have to do with the group's "future course"? Well, let's just put it this way (and I beg your indulgence for belaboring these points in this review, but I think they're important): If African-American traditionalist and neo-traditionalist "art" is seen in purely *mnemonic* terms, then improvisatory musical activity can probably best be assessed as a "device" for preserving the spoils of ethnicity. Now if the deal is to continually remind everyone – in the words of Houston Baker – that the "economics of slavery" still hold sway, then the proper strategy for those of both the conservative and middle-of-the-road semi-avant-garde camps is to come to some type of political and musical agreement, and soon.

Lastly, and reiterating: Jemeel Moondoc and friends played very well. – *Roger Riggins*

CAPP-PIERCE JUGGERNAUT
Allycat Bistro, Culver City, California
December 19, 1987

Southern California is blessed with an abundance of excellent musicians, gainfully (if anonymously) employed in the area's commercial music factories by day and thus able to present their considerable jazz skills for scale at night. Specific example: the Capp-Pierce ensemble, far beyond what one normally encounters in a small club located in a shopping mall next to a shoe store.

Leaders Frankie Capp (drums) and Nat Pierce (piano) were joined this evening by Med Flory and Joe Romano, altos; Red Holloway and Rudolph Johnson, tenors; Bill Green, baritone sax; Snooky Young, Bill Berry, Jack Lubbock and Jack Sheldon, trumpets; Garnett Brown, Mel Lonzo, and Buster Cooper, trombones; Ken Wild, bass; and Ray Pullman, rhythm guitar. With four shopping days until Christmas, the pairing of Rudolph and Red seemed particularly appropriate.

The Capp-Pierce ensemble is not given to innovation; the first set had no rock rhythms, no odd doublings, no electronics. Yet it would be wrong to think of the Juggernaut as one of those swing-era recreations, with a museum curator's approach to the old charts. This is living, breathing, fiery music, with enough punch to rattle the silverware.

Most of the band got a chance to speak their pieces during the long set. Joe Romano was featured on a *Lover Man* with altered changes; Bill Green switched to a curved soprano saxophone for a booting *New York Shuffle* with effective soprano-led saxophone sections. Med Flory worked his way through Benny Carter's ballad *Souvenir*. Red and Rudolph exchanged choruses on several blues, with Johnson occasionally firing some angular, post-bop lines. Buster Cooper closed out the set with *Things Ain't What They Used To Be*, adding an extended cadenza that included a topical quote from *The Christmas Song*.

Jack Sheldon deserves a paragraph of his own. The multi-talented Sheldon is an excellent trumpeter (although his solos in this set seemed a little aimless at times). He is also an accomplished vocalist, as he demonstrated on *Pennies From Heaven* and *Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me* in a unique style best described as the wino school of singing. Sheldon's sense of humor is especially original; a brief monologue between tunes included reports of his studies with the noted Chinese virtuoso Bix Beitawong, who teaches the technique of tongue fu.

The solo that stood out most from the evening however was Snooky Young's soft obliggato over *Lil Darlin'*. Capp set a perfect groove for the classic Neal Hefti chart, and Snooks crafted an elegant, understated solo which revitalized the old arrangement. Muted, at times almost inaudible, Young used a few choice notes to make a subdued yet strongly felt statement. It had the polish of time, the smooth inevitability of a solo built with thousands of choruses of experience.

The classic contours of Young's solo are a mirror of the band itself. Nothing much really new here; just classic, time-tested mainstream jazz, presented by players for whom this idiom is a native tongue. – *David Wild*

THE 1987 CODA MAGAZINE WRITERS' CHOICE

CANADA

MARC CHENARD (Montreal)

The Sonny Clark Memorial Quartet
Voodoo — Black Saint BSR 0109
Joe Henderson - The State of the Tenor - Blue Note BT 85123 (Vol. 1) BT 85126 (Vol. 2)
Trio Podium
Live in Montreal — Traction Avant 400
Either/Orchestra
Dial E — Accurate Records Ac-2222
Dave Turner
Cafe Alto — Jazzimage JZ 112
George Adams / Don Pullen Quartet
Song Everlasting — Blue Note BLJ 46907
Harold Mabern
Live at Cafe des Copains — Sackville 2016

HAL HILL (Toronto)

Art Farmer / Benny Golson
Back to the city — Contemporary 14020 (LP)
Bob Brookmeyer
Oslo — Concord 4312 (CD)
Mel Lewis - 20 Years at the Village Vanguard — Atlantic 7816551 (LP)
Joanne Brackeen
Fi-Fi Goes to Heaven — Concord 316 (LP)
Ralph Moore
623 C Street — Criss Cross 1028 (LP)
Henry Threadgill - You Know the Number — RCA/Novus 3013-2-N (LP)
Marion McPartland
Plays Billy Strayhorn — Concord 4326 (CD)
Don Pullen/George Adams
Song Everlasting — Blue Note 746907-2 (CD)
Flip Phillips/Scott Hamilton
A Sound Investment — Concord 4334 (CD)
Bennie Wallace - The Art of the Saxophone — Denon 33CY1648 (CD)

SCOTT LEWIS (Victoria)

Steve Lacy Sextet - The Gleam — Silkheart
Steve Lacy/Mal Waldron
Sempre Amore — Soul Note
Duke Ellington
The Blanton/Webster Band — RCA Bluebird
World Saxophone Quartet - Plays Ellington — Nonesuch
Vinny Golia Large Ensemble - Facts of Their Own Lives — NineWinds
Giancarlo Nicolai Trio - Goccie — Leo
Paul Cram - Beyond Benghazi — Apparition
Steve Turre - Viewpoint — Stash
Ganelin/Vyshniauskas/Talas - Inverso — Leo
Dave Holland Quintet
The Razor's Edge — ECM

JOHN NORRIS (Toronto)

Count Basie - Get Together — Pablo 2310-924
Ruby Braff - Mr. Braff to You — Phontastic 7568
Dick Hyman / Dick Wellstood
Stridemonster — Unisson DDA 1006
Steve Lacy - Only Monk — Soul Note SN 1160
Frank Morgan - Lament — Contemporary 14021

Dave McKenna - My Friend the Piano — Concord CJ 313
Jimmy Raney - Wisteria — Criss Cross 1019
Buddy Tate - Ballad Artistry — Sackville 3034
Tony Williams - Civilization — Blue Note 46757
World Saxophone Quartet - Live at the Brooklyn Academy of Music — Black Saint 0096

BILL SMITH (Toronto)

Oliver Lake - Gallery — Gramavision 18.8609-1
Anthony Braxton - Five Compositions (Quartet) 1986 — Black Saint 0106
Spontaneous Music Ensemble
85 Minutes — Emanem 3401/2
The Ballad Artistry of Buddy Tate — Sackville 3034
Rova Saxophone Quartet - The Crowd — Hat Art 2032
Cecil Taylor - For Olim — SoulNote 1150
Minton/Turner/Tomlinson/Davies
Ruff - The Ferals — Leo 138
Louis Sclavis - Clarinettes — IDA 004
John Carter - Dance of the Love Ghosts — Gramavision 8704

PETER STEVENS (Windsor)

Sphere - Live at Umbria Jazz — Red Records
Rory Stuart - Hurricane — Sunnyside
Fraser MacPherson - Honey and Spice — Justin Tim
Michel Petrucciani - Power of Three — Blue Note
Bob Brookmeyer Quartet - Oslo — Concord
Joshua Breakstone - Echoes — Contemporary
Michael Brecker — MCA/Impulse
Duke Ellington
In The Uncommon Market — Pablo
The Red Hot Ray Brown Trio — Concord
Bud Shank Quartet
Live at Jazz Alley — Contemporary

JOHN SUTHERLAND (Toronto)

Steve Lacy - The Kiss — Lunatic 002
Denny Christianson (Pepper Adams)
Suite Mingus — Justin Time 15
Pete Johnson/Earl Hines/Teddy Bunn
Mosaic 1-1119
Red Holloway
Red Holloway and Company — Concord 322
Gene Harris (Stanley Turrentine)
Trio + One — Concord 303
Marian McPartland (Gerry Dodgion)
Plays Billy Strayhorn — Concord 326
Dick Griffin
A Dream for Rahsaan — Ruby 771
Ted Brown
In Good Company — Criss Cross 1020
David Murray - New Life — Black Saint 0100
Steve Miller (Lol Coxhill)
Miller's Tale — Matchless 9
Harold Mabern - Joy Spring — Sackville 2016

U.S.A.

BRIAN AUERBACH (San Francisco)

Steve Lacy Sextet
Momentum — (RCA) Novus 3021
Cecil Taylor - For Olim — Soulnote 1150
Astor Piazzolla
Nuevo Tango: Hora Zero — American Clave 1013
Bill Dixon - Thoughts — Soulnote 1111
Paco de Lucia - Siroco — Verve 830 913
Jon Jang - Ballad or the Bullet — Asian American Improvisors 0001
Courtney Pine
Journey to the Urge Within — Island/Antilles 8700
David Murray - New Life — Black Saint 0100
Steve Lacy Sextet - The Gleam — Silkheart 102
Ornette Coleman
In All Languages — Caravan of Dreams 85008

BILL BESECKER (Buffalo)

Ornette Coleman
In All Languages — Caravan of Dreams CDP 85008
Bobby Previte
Pushing the Envelope — Gramavision 18 8711 1
Jazz Warriors - Out of Many, One People — Antilles/New Directions 7 90681-1
Sonny Rollins - G-Man — Milestone M-9150
Mal Waldron/Steve Lacy

STEVE LACY & STEVE POTTS (Photograph by Bill Smith)

Sempre Amore Soul Note SN-1170
Fred Houn and the Asian American Art Ensemble - Bamboo That Snaps Back Finnadar 90558-1
Sun Ra
Reflections in Blue Black Saint BSR 0101
Hamiet Bluiett
The Clarinet Family Black Saint BSR 0097
The Ganelin Trio
TTango... In Nickelsdorf Leo LR 400/401
John Bacon, Jr. - Multi-Jazz Dimensions Mark MC20872
Jane Ira Bloom
Modern Drama Columbia FC-50755

PETER S. FRIEDMAN (Rochester, N.Y.)
Favorite Compact Discs of 1987:
Duke Robillard - Swing Rounder
Count Basie Octet - Get Together Pablo
Frank Morgan - Lament Contemporary
Sphere - Four For All Verve
Miles Davis & Sonny Stitt
Live in Stockholm 1960 Dragon D.I.W.
Joe Henderson
State of the Tenor Vol. 2 Blue Note
Woody Shaw - Solid Muse
Wynton Marsalis
Marsalis Standard Time Vol. 1 Columbia
Michel Petrucciani - Power of Three Blue Note
Lee Konitz - Ideal Scene Soul Note

GERARD J. FUTRICK (Reading, Pa.)
Stephen Rasin - Q4 Unit Records UTR 4023
Henry Threadgill Sextet
You Know the Number RCA Novus 3013-1-N
Tom Varner - Jazz French HornNew Note 1004
Sonny Clark Memorial Quartet
Voodoo Black Saint BSR 0109
The Reggie Workman Ensemble
Synthesis Leo Records LR 131
Ike Quebec - Easy Living Blue Note BST 84103
Tony Williams - Civilization BlueNoteBT85183
Art Farmer Something to Live For: The Music of Billy Strayhorn Contemporary 14029
Andrew Hill - Shades Soul Note SN 1113
Kahlil El Zabar's The Ritual
Another Kind of Groove Sound Aspects 016

W. PATRICK HINELY (Lexington, VA)
Mose Allison
Ever Since the World Ended Blue Note 84015
Duke Ellington - The Blanton-Webster Band RCA 5659
Marianne Faithful
Strange Weather Island 90613
Art Lande
Hardball! Great American Music Hall 2702
Professor Longhair House Party
New Orleans Style Rounder 2057
Charles Mingus - New Tijuana Moods RCA 5635
Mike Nock & Frank Gibson Jr.
Open Door Ode 260 (New Zealand)
Oregon - Ecotopia ECM 1354
Michel Petrucciani
Power of Three Blue Note 85133
Norma Winstone
Somewhere Called Home ECM 1337

DICK NEELD (Menemsha, MA)
The Complete Keynote Collection Keynote 18PJ-1051-71
Count Basie - Get Together Pablo 2310-924
James P. Johnson
Ain'tcha Got Music Pumpkin 117
Coleman Hawkins and Red Allen
High Standards Jass 11
Warren Vache - Easy Going Concord CJ323
Terry Gibbs
Dream Band, Vol. 2 Contemporary C7652
Pete Compo
Live at the West End Cafe Bean 101
The Classic Jazz Quartet
MCMLXXXVI Stomp Off S.O.S. 1125
Buddy Tate - The Ballad Artistry Sackville 3034
Duke Robillard - Swing Rounder 3103

BILL SHOEMAKER (Washington, D.C.)
Muhal Richard Abrams
Colors in Thirty-Third Black Saint 0091
John Carter
Dance of the Love Ghosts Gramavision 8704
Art Farmer
Something to Live For Contemporary 14029
Gerry Hemingway
Outerbridge Crossing Sound Aspects 017
Andrew Hill - Shades Soulnote 1113
Dave Holland - The Razor's Edge ECM 1353
Music from the Nonesuch Explorer Series - Dances of the World Nonesuch 79167
Sphere - Four for All Verve 831.674.1
Mal Waldron/Steve Lacy
Sempre Amore Soul Note 1170
World Saxophone Quartet
Dances and Ballads Nonesuch 79114

TEX WYNDHAM (Mendenhall, PA)
The Grand Dominion Jazz Band - Don't Give Up The Ship Stomp Off S.O.S. 1139
The Sackville All Star Christmas Album Sackville 3038
Wild Bill Davison's 75th Anniversary Jazz Band Jazzology J-151
Bob Wilber - Dizzyfingers Audiophile AP-187
Sidney Bechet and the Blues Singers, Volume 1 Fat Cat's Jazz FCJ 013
Hot Cotton Jazz Band - That Handy Man HC-3
Marty Grosz Sings of Love and Other Matters Statiras SLP 8080
Bobby Hackett: Sideman - Volume One Fat Cat's Jazz FCJ 020 (cassette)
The Exciting Sax of Sammy Rimington Progressive PRO 7077
Turk Murphy's San Francisco Jazz Band
Concert in the Park Merry Makers MMRC-117 (cassette)

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Jeannie and Jimmie Cheatham
Homeward Bound Concord
Eric Dolphy - Vintage Dolphy GM
Donald Harrison/Terence Blanchard
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David Murray Octet - New Life Black Saint
James Newton - Romance and Revolution Blue Note
Errol Parker Tentet
Live at the Wollman Auditorium Sahara
Sonny Rollins - Alternate Takes Contemporary
Charlie Watts Orchestra
Live at Fulham Town Hall Columbia

International

J. HOSIASSON (Santiago, Chile)
Benny Carter - Wonderland Pablo 2310-922
Buddy Tate - The Ballad Artistry Sackville 3034
The Leaders - Mudfoot Black-Hawk 52001
Tony Williams
Civilization Blue Note CDP7/46752/2
Enrico Pierannunzi - New Lands Timeless 211
Various Artists The Greatest Jazz Recordings of all Time Franklin Mint 1-100
Various Artists The Complete Keynote Collection Keynote 830 121-1
Bud Powell The Complete Bud Powell Blue Note Recordings Mosaic 116
Thelonious Monk The Complete Riverside Recordings Riverside VIJ-5102-23
Charles Mingus The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady MCA Impulse 5649

ROGER PARRY (Hong Kong)
Jaap Blonk - Ursonate (Schwitters) BVHaast 063
SME - 85 Minutes Emanem 3401/02
Steve Lacy - Hocus Pocus Crepescule TWI 683
C. Taylor - Jumpin' Punkins Candid 9013
Togashi - Bura Bura Pan(J) 86101
Steve Lacy - The Gleam Silkheart SHLP 102
Ornette Coleman
In All LanguagesCaravan of Dreams CDP 85008
Cecil Taylor - For Olim Soulnote SN 1150
Braxton/Bailey - Moments Precieux Victo 02
Evan Parker/Barry Guy
Tai Kyoku Jazz & Now (J) 3

JASON WEISS (Paris, France)
Steve Lacy Sextet
The Gleam Silkheart SHLP-102
Pierre Dorge & New Jungle Orchestra
Johnny Lives SteepleChase SCS-1228
Ran Blake Quartet
Short Life of Barbara Monk Soul Note 1127
Ornette Coleman
In All LanguagesCaravan of Dreams CDP 85008
Kahondo Style
Green Tea and Crocodiles Nato 1279
Sergey Kuryhokhin
Popular Zoological Elements Leo LR-148
Zakir Hussain - Making Music ECM 1349
Craig Harris and Tailgaters Tales
Shelter JMP 870008
Bekummernis/Luc Le Masne
Le Cercle de Pierres Menelas MEN-002
Eric Watson
Your Tonight is my Tomorrow Owl 047
Steve Turre - Viewpoints and Vibrations Stash ST-2
Sun Ra Arkestra
Reflections in Blue Black Saint BSR 0101

FESTIVAL SCENES

JAZZFEST BERLIN
November 4-8, 1987
Philharmonic Hall, Delphi Theatre, Musical Instrument Museum, West Berlin

Attempting to comprehensively report on all 39 presentations of JFB '87 in a report of this length is about as easy as condensing the collected works of Shakespeare or Joyce onto a postcard, so this account is more day-by-day than blow-by-blow.

DAY ONE opened with **Michael Brecker's** band. Undoubtedly a credible and able tenor player, Brecker chose to spend most of his time on a prototype Steinerphone electronic wind instrument, for which a box of computer diskettes is as essential as a box of reeds. It's too early to tell if he's an innovator or merely a prisoner of the new technology. In any event, it's a solid quintet, all of whom probably sound better when they're not coming off a long and grueling tour.

Illinois Jacquet led a 15-piece band with Eddie Barefield also on tenor but primarily as press-gang leader. Other notable soloists were pianist Richard Wyands, trombonist Frank Lacy and energetic young drummer Eric Allen. Closing the Phil show were **Johnny Griffin and Joe Henderson**, their Two Tauri Band including Kenny Drew on piano, Jimmy Woode on bass and drummer Keith Killgo. The proceedings were democratically split among quartet settings for the tenorists and full-quintet playing, some of which evolved into the classic thrusts and parries of Herschel Evans & Lester Young, the most direct tribute of his program dedicated to Prez.

I walked in on a late show already in progress at Delphi, specifically a smoking duet between guitarist Kevin Eubanks and bass guitarist Victor Bailey of drummer **Terry Lynne Carrington's** quintet. They were at a circumstantial disadvantage as **Courtney Pine's** opening act, sounding rather pale in comparison, as anyone would.

Pine has only two speeds: ON and **ON**. He was already going full force before strolling out from the wings, dressed all in black, his tenor miked in the bell a la Sonny Rollins. He moved easily and confidently, a bottomless well of energy uncommonly directed for one so young. He tore up everything he touched, as close as anyone came all week to Coltrane. Pine incorporates plenty of squawks and bleats of the angry young black man into this style, but his message is more positive. He builds on that tradition as its proponents built on bop and swing. I was totally – and willingly – ravished.

DAY TWO began with what was billed as a solo piano concert in the museum which adjoins the main hall at the Phil, but was actually a duo concert, for **Sammy Price** had drummer Dino Newman (son of Fathead) chugging along with him.

Opening the evening tribute to **Duke Ellington** in finest familial fashion was son **Mercer** conducting the **Ellington Orchestra**, which still includes a few from the days of The Duke, and still carries enough credence of legend to draw in some toe-tapping cloakroom attendants, a sort of folk not known to budge from their counters for anyone more than half-mortal. The nature of mortality gave the overture medley's opening bars of *Things Ain't What They Used To Be* an intriguing ambiguity, but enough went on in the music to keep them from being a mere touring museum piece. Though the newest tune played dated from the 40s, it too came from the oeuvre which contains the limousines of workhorses.

First on the bandstand at soundcheck, filling the Harry Carney baritone chair, was Sayyd Abdul Al Khabyyr, who at one time or another has occupied all five of those front-row reed section seats. He is the only man who can make that claim, and did so with the same proud smile he used to introduce his son Muhammad, one of the band's trombonists. Mercer conducted, but played no trumpet as an endless cavalcade of subgroups or soloists came down front during every number. Anita Moore, a show in herself, sang three tunes. All in all, it was a fine show, evoking a great past without being trapped in it.

Then there was the chamber music equivalent of the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, the **World Saxophone Quartet**, who marched in already playing. They did not limit themselves to Ellingtonian pieces from their then most recent album, leaving the stage as they had taken it, continuing their collective continuum.

Finishing the Phil festivities were Finland's finest, the **UMO New Music Orchestra**, directed by **Esko Linnavalli**, with special guests Bengt Hallberg (whose *Episode Ducaux* was the only non-Ellington work in their program), Clark Terry, Norris Turney and Britt Woodman. The Ellington alumni were ably and amply set up by this first-class juggernaut to further polish those same solos they'd taken way back when.

Ornette Coleman was evidently Deity of the Week, making his concert at Delphi the social event of the week, judging from the number of champagne corks popping throughout a house packed in sardine fashion. This is a man who has stuck to his own vision through trials which would have broken Job, and this same music is as fresh today as it was 30 years ago, quantum leaps ahead of its time as Parker's music was before it.

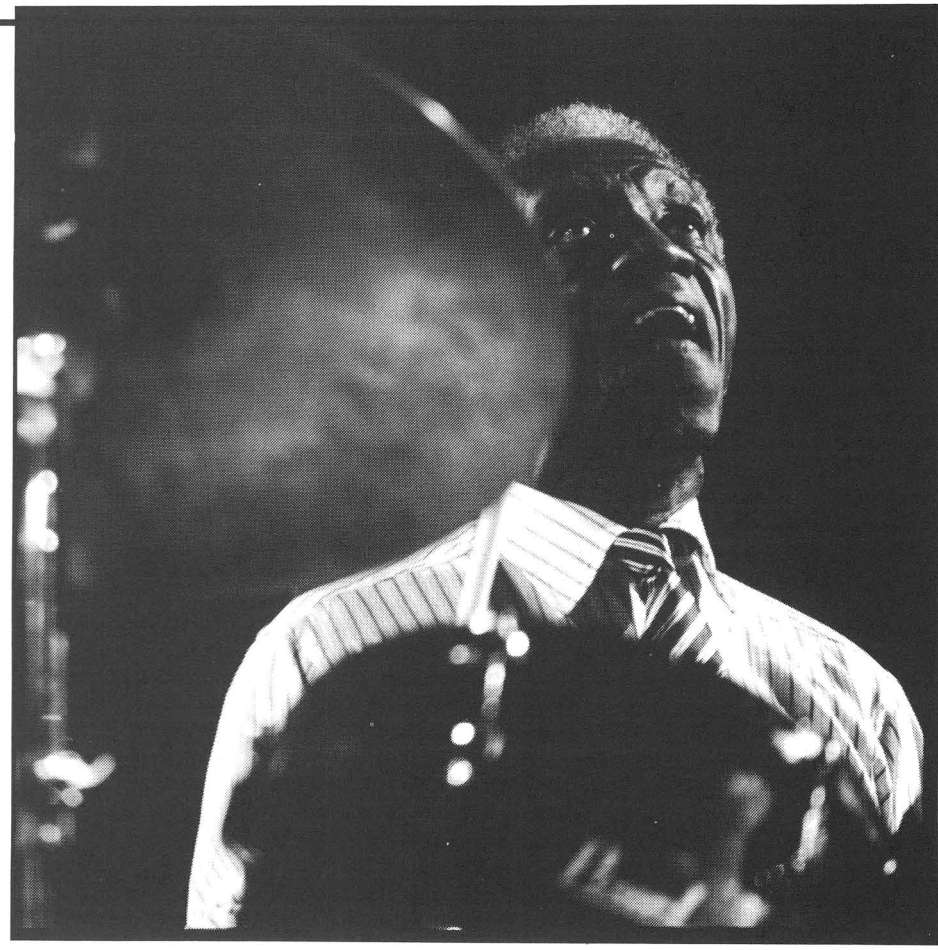
The interaction among Coleman, Don Cherry, Billy Higgins and Charlie Haden was a joy to behold, and looked to be as much a celebration on their part as that of the audience. Haden is the most narrative of them all, the pithiest of musical raconteurs, reducing his statements to their essence, drawing the listener in to his continuing story which encompasses every human emotion. For four men in their fifties, they certainly sounded younger, and made me feel younger too, which, with time, fewer things do.

Roman Schwaller's quartet with Mel Lewis followed, quite late, to a house which had suffered considerable attrition. I totally missed them, as well as the **20th Total Music Meeting's** opening night at the Latin Quarter, which featured big bands led by Butch Morris and Radu Malfatti. There is such a thing as overload.

DAY THREE couldn't begin with Anthony Davis' solo concert, as an illness in his family forced him to cancel. JazzFest's only no-show was poet Amiri Baraka, who was to emcee the evening Phil concert billed as the **John Coltrane Memorial**, the only one all week that didn't contain something known to be safe for old farts. Philadelphia's **Change of the Century Orchestra** opened, their premise being to explore and preserve Coltrane's music. They did more of the former than the latter, but pulled off a pleasing blend of both in *Africa*, encompassing solos as varied as the smoothness of Grachan Moncur III's trombone and Sunny Murray's close-to-the-edge drumming. Ted Curson was his fiery self, and vibraphonist Khan Jamal's *Lovely Afternoon* was as pretty as Odean Pope's *Out for a Walk* was adventurous. Pope conducted his own tune, with more success than the listed conductor/arranger, Romulus Franceschini, who seemed like Caucasian window dressing for this self-sufficient grouping. Their most mellifluous offerings were the three tunes with vocalist Leon Thomas, no stranger to the Phil stage. Of them all, he is easily the most attuned to Coltrane's spiritual dimensions.

Next was a group I would name the EEC All-Stars: pianist **Joachim Kuhn**, drummer **Daniel Humair** and bassist **Jean-Francois Jenny-Clark**. The pianist is a known stylistic disciple of McCoy Tyner but didn't limit himself to that bag. Humair has a rare gift for a drummer, the ability to keep a lot brewing without making extra noise. His solo with toy plastic hammers initially elicited laughs, but he built it far beyond mere novelty. Jenny-Clark is as versatile as any other bassist with four (or fewer names). Midway through their set they were joined by Californian **Larry Scheider** on tenor and soprano saxes, who proved the acoustic integrity of that huge room by filling it without the constant aid of a microphone, sounding apropos for the evening in beautifully torrential sheets of sound.

Sonny Fortune had the unenviable task of playing tenor sax and only tenor sax with **A Love Supreme**; his soprano and flute were quite



conspicuous in their absence, but his professionalism served him well, keeping him upright in those shoes no one can ever quite fill in the same way again. Elvin Jones was his usual explosive self, as was McCoy Tyner, though both sounded best in a duo rendering of *Naima*, with Jones limiting himself to mallets. He was truly sublime, nostalgic and timeless at once. Bassist Reggie Workman and trumpeter Freddie Hubbard rounded out the group.

Gil Evans led **Laurent Cugny's** 15-piece **Lumière** at Delphi much as he leads his Monday-night aggregations at Sweet Basil. He could make the Mormon Tabernacle Choir swing. **Schildpatt** followed them, in the wee hours, featuring hackbrett, a Swiss zither, and a special guest playing santur, a Persian version of the same axe. It was the week's world music, not to be confused with new age (too interesting), rock (too complex) or jazz (no blues).

DAY FOUR began at Delphi rather than ending there, with **Gunther Klatt and Elephantrombones.** He used the 'bone quartet as others might use a guitar or piano, but also gave each man room to put on a show, which they did. Klatt's tenor style reminded me a bit of Bennie Wallace, so it was no surprise to read in the program book (which contained many such tidbits) that Wallace's all-Monk album with Jimmy Knepper had been one of Klatt's inspirations in assembling this band.

Finishing the Delphi bill was **Tim Berne** with his quintet. Berne has his own alto sound, shrill and heavy at once, made stranger in combination with trumpeter Herb Robertson and cellist Hank Roberts. Some sort of circle has closed with the advent of music like this in New York – again. This strident style of ensemble playing was pioneered by Mingus, but had to go to Europe to flourish, at a time when Europeans were apologizing for not sounding like Americans, a practice they have now, for the most part, blessedly outgrown. So why is it so unlikely that Berne & Co. will ever flourish in the land of the free and MTV? Their beauty isn't pretty enough. They sound too European....

Oscar Peterson may be the closest thing going to Art Tatum, but **Adam Makowicz** has earned a seat in that same pantheon, which he proved in the museum around dinnertime. In his hands, ornamentation is an olympic sport. **Bob Mintzer's** 17-piece extravaganza opened the Phil evening, with the tenorist leading from his seat in the front row, popping up now and then to conduct. He's a solid player but the big surprise in the reeds was Bob Malach, a regular wild man, who emoted most and best.

Chick Corea's Akoustic Band (as if he needs a catchy name) reinforced my long-standing opinion that he sounds most like himself by himself. He's moved away from Debussy and closer to Bartok over the years (via Monk and Satie), but is no less melodically voluptuous, when he can be heard above the din. As perfect as they are for those busy moments Corea has always had, this bassist and drummer still fade in more often than out, even at those subtle moments when each piano note is an essay worth a thousand pictures. Corea can still have a rose in his teeth one instant and a grenade pin the next, and once he teaches those kinds when to *not* play, he'll have it made.

Heavier on technique and spectacle than innovative substance, **Maynard Ferguson's** 10-piece band closed out the Phil night. At 60, he still climbs easily where mortal trumpeters would require oxygen masks, and he fills his ranks by robbing the cradle, parading his catches like a collection of prized racing cars, taking each one out for a spin at full speed. Ferguson is totally extroverted, a wild and crazy guy, prancing across the stage like a pro wrestling ballerina. You can question the man's taste, but not his style. Even when he broke into his grammy-winner, the theme from "Rocky", I couldn't tear myself away. I had to see what he'd do next.

So it was late enough when I finally reached the Latin Quarter that **Maarten Altena's** 12-piece project and **Radul Malfatti's** 13-piece **Ohrkiste** had finished, leaving only a **Fred Van Hove** solo piano set for the final night of TMM-20. The lobby was packed for this last break, with many faces I've seen on other stages in Berlin and across Europe. How appropriate, considering my musical tastes, to belly up to the bar between Alex von Schlippenbach and George Gruntz, for a bottle of Berlin's finest brew. Where else, except for the backstage canteen at the Phil (everything from frankfurters to cognac, and delightfully cheap), could I turn around with my beer and almost spill it over Evan Parker or Paul Lovens?

These scheduling conflicts are JazzFest's only drawback, and may not be a problem for many, since the town seems divided into distinct trad- and avant- camps, but that doesn't allow for the rest of us, some of whom happen to enjoy both sorts of music. Trying to maintain neutrality in this ideological war of attrition is about as simple as trying to get by in any part of another island, Ireland, by refusing to be more specific than saying that one is a Christian. The politics are too byzantine for any outsider to understand, but I do hope both factions will figure out that they can accomplish much more by working with rather than against one another. Really – aren't there enough walls in Berlin already?

DAY FIVE started earlier than I did, with **Gyorgy Szabados'** solo piano performance at the museum, followed by **Borah Bergman,** whose set closed the series. The matinee at Delphi featured four bands, all of whom record for Jean Rochard's nato label. Of all the week's conceptual programs, this had the most subtle of unities. **Before My Times,** a sextet, opened, with Lol Coxhill repeatedly displaying his well-known ability to turn any

ART BLAKEY (Photograph by Patrick Hinely)

tune into an all-terrain vehicle. After closing their set with *What A Friend We Have In Jesus*, Coxhill explained their group name as a reference to their repertoire, adding that they don't play the old tunes in the old way because the original versions are so completely perfect in themselves.

Next up was **Deadly Weapons**, a quartet much closer to theatre than jazz, sort of like Celine's electronic cabaret. Steve Beresford was more sublimated than sublime with altoist John Zorn, an overamped synthesizer player, and a passable actress who unfortunately also attempted to sing. The lobby filled with those of us waiting them out, the bar doing brisk business.

Third on was the most traditional, a duo of reedman **Tony Coe** and pianist **Stan Tracey**. Coe is as good as the world's other hundred best tenor players, but I'd be hard-pressed to name six clarinetists in his league. Their repertoire was heavy on such standards as Duke and Monk, and their brand of chamber jazz was refined and refreshing.

The Melody Four played Delphi's finale, and grand it was. Their ambiance is somewhat like Before My Times, only looser, and with a repertoire which would make the name '*During* My Times' accurate enough to hold up in court. The tunes are merely excuses for a good get-together, covering the full spectrum from sweet to sour, and these fellows incorporate a hilarious brand of theatrics which transcends language barriers. Songs include the Marx Brothers' *Tenement Symphony*, a Monk tune, and *La Paloma*, complete with high melodrama, which segued into Mancini's "Pink Panther" theme.

Coxhill and pianist Beresford had an involved argument over the exact lyrics of *Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire* which would have made John Cleese roll in the aisle. Coe refrained from this particular repartee, though he got in on some of the others, more often serving as straight man, the anchor of any comedy team. Their particularly British brand of humour was best exemplified by a Christmas song Coxhill sung. I was laughing too hard to catch the title, but it had to do with Santa not coming to the house any more, since central heating had been installed. These three (that's right, The Melody Four is a trio. They have performed as a full quartet at least once, the time they chose their name. The fourth man is Yves Rochard, father of nato founder Jean, a vintner by trade and a fiddler by avocation. He only plays home gigs, and lives in a small village in France.) weren't JazzFest's biggest celebrities, but they'd be my candidates for most likely to be fun as dinner guests.

The Phil was somewhat tarted up for its finale, at the insistence of **Cab Calloway**, for his nationwide television broadcast. The added decor wasn't too far out of line for the opening act, **George Shearing**, whose pianism is as lush as you can get short of mush, like a French impressionist cooling off in the cocktail lounge after a steamy rendezvous with bebop.

Calloway covered his classics, *Hi De Ho* and *Minnie The Moocher*, and turned several completely forgettable pop tunes into spectacular experiences. He does not act his age. Daughter Chris was on the receiving end of the only mass display of bad manners all week, when she made the mistake of paying Barry Manilow a compliment while introducing one of his songs. She didn't bother to credit Jon Hendricks for *Gimme That Wine*, but after hearing her version of it, I don't think Jon would have minded maintaining his anonymity. Also in Calloway's troupe were the Williams Brothers, whose tap dancing routines give the impression that they have been exempted from the laws of gravity. Calloway's whole show was an entirely self-contained unit, a veritable revue, and somewhat of a relic, but still, it is to jazz what "Aida" is to opera.

Art Blakey and the latest edition of his Jazz Messengers capped things off, delivering the goods quite directly. They were an ideal closing act for a festival that intended to emphasize the trunk of the jazz tree, since so many new branches have first sprouted in Blakey's band, and this year's crop is certainly up to snuff. How does he keep finding them?

Heading backstage for one last beer about midway through Blakey's set, I saw his saxophonist, Javon Jackson, kneeling, coiled, near the television monitor JazzFest artistic director George Gruntz was watching. Jackson was following his cohorts' music like an athlete only momentarily out of the game, not knowing how long his respite might last, thus remaining on full alert, prepared to jump back in and keep the ball moving, no matter who might hand it to him from which unknown direction, and no matter how fast it might already be going. This may well be the object lesson of a tenure with Blakey, more to do with an attitude of readiness than with technique.

Gruntz looked more relaxed than I'd seen him since before JazzFest began, satisfied as well as relieved for a job not simply finished but for something done well. Washingtonian critic Royal Stokes says it best by calling Gruntz' approach to designing JazzFest poetic. Production manager Ihno von Hasselt brings all into the realm of possibility by raising the process of human orchestration to an art – two days after JazzFest had ended, who was on the phone with the airline, tracking down Blakey's lost snare drum? Ihno, of course, who oversees the year-round fine-tuning of his complex machine which, though it may run full force only five days per year, is durable as well as precise. – *W. Patrick Hinely*

RECORD REVIEWS

A BRIEF LOOK AT A VARIETY OF RECENT RECORDINGS BY CALIFORNIAN WRITER SCOTT YANOW

GREG MARVIN QUARTET
Featuring Susan Chen
Hi-Hat GM-1

317 East 32nd / Tuesday / Bongo Bop / I'm With You / Yesterdays / Breakdown In Mid-Summer July 14-16, 1986

Two of Lennie Tristano's former students are featured on this date, with different results. While tenorman Greg Marvin is very much in the shadow of Warne Marsh (not a bad place to start if he eventually chooses to develop his own personality), pianist Susan Chen has a different feel than Lennie did, playing Tristano's material in her own lighter style. Bassist George Mraz and drummer Akira Tana function in a much stronger (and more exciting) capacity than Tristano would have allowed, pushing Marvin and Chen to consistently creative improvising. One oddity: Both of Marvin's originals *(Tuesday* and *I'm With You)* are based on the same *Lover Man* chord changes.

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI
Power Of Three
Blue Note BT-85133

Limbo / Careful / Morning Blues / In A Sentimental Mood / Bimini July 14, 1986

On some of his solo records, Michel Petrucciani has had the tendency to get a bit rhapsodic and wander introspectively but on this live session the inclusion of guitarist Jim Hall lights a fire under the pianist, bringing out his best qualities. 3 of the 5 selections also include Wayne Shorter, who not only inspires the duo (especially on the calypso *Bimini*) but is pushed to play at a much higher artistic level than on his recent solo efforts for Columbia. Hall is marvelous throughout and is particularly inventive on *In A Sentimental Mood*, while the trio works together best on Shorter's *Limbo* (a tune that dates from the mid-60's Miles Davis quintet). Occasionally one feels the absence of a bass but most of the time the interplay on this date is close to miraculous.

MEL LEWIS ORCHESTRA
20 Years At The Village Vanguard
Atlantic 81655

All Of Me / Blue Note / Butter / C-Jam Blues / Dearly Beloved / Interloper / Alone Together / American Express March 20-22, 1985

The Mel Lewis orchestra has undergone a gradual evolution since its birth with Thad Jones as co-leader. Originally a solo-oriented platform for veteran stars, the Mel Lewis band today is a showcase for arrangers with the young and enthusiastic sidemen playing their often-difficult parts expertly. The orchestra's 20th anniversary record has charts from 6 different writers including Bob Brookmeyer, Jim McNeely, Bill Finegan and the late great Thad Jones whose colorful reworking of *All Of Me* is one of the highpoints. Of the other tracks, *Butter* is Jerry Dodgion's tribute to trombonist Quentin Jackson (not enough is heard from Ed Neumeister's close imitation), Finegan's arrangement of *C-Jam Blues* is based on a Dave McKenna piano solo, *Dearly Beloved* and *Alone Together* are features for Gary Smulyan's baritone and altoist Dick Oatts respectively while Brookmeyer's nearly 11-minute *American Express* swings hard while also displaying the influence of modern classical harmonies. All in all, this is one of the Mel Lewis orchestra's finest albums to date. Happy 20th!

WAYNE SHORTER
Introducing Wayne Shorter
Vee Jay SR 3006

Blues A La Carte / Harry's Last Stand / Down In The Depths / Pug Nose / Black Diamond / Mack The Knife Nov. 10, 1959

The reissue of Shorter's first album as a leader finds the 26-year old tenorman sounding a bit like Coltrane but displaying an original writing style. His five originals already possess an identifiable melancholy mood that would be part of most of his compositions in the future and they slightly stretch the limits of hard bop in that pre-avant garde era. The all-star quintet (Lee Morgan, Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers, Jimmy Cobb) had no member older than 30 (Cobb) yet all were on the verge of becoming major names. This was not their most significant recording but it permits the listener an early glimpse of Shorter and Morgan. This Vee Jay reissue is available through the Suite Beat Music Group (3355 W. El Segundo Blvd., Hawthorne, CA 90250).

CEDAR WALTON
The Trio
Red VPA 192

My Ship / Every Time We Say Goodbye / Satin Doll / Lover Man / Holy Land / Voices Deep Within Me March 28, 1985

"The Trio" traces the continued growth of Cedar Walton. Having long ago outgrown the label "bop pianist", Walton has become a complete player, sometimes a bit reminiscent in his chordal style of Oscar Peterson (although using less notes). Backed by the typically excellent playing of bassist David Williams and drummer Billy Higgins, Walton makes the most of a pair of overplayed standards *(Satin Doll* and *Lover Man),* creates memorable statements on the first two numbers and contributes a couple of worthy originals. An excellent example of modern mainstream jazz.

DAVE PIKE
Pike's Groove
Criss Cross 1021

Big Foot / Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most / You Are My Everything / Ornithology / Con Alma / Reflection In Blue / Birk's Works Feb. 5, 1986

Vibraphonist Dave Pike has not received much fame in the jazz world for 2 basic reasons: (1) Pike has been out of the spotlight, playing in Europe during 1966-73 and more recently spending a long period of semi-retirement in California. (2) The vibist sounds very similar to Milt Jackson. On "Pike's Groove" ("Bag's Groove?") Pike, backed by the superb Cedar Walton trio, romps through bop standards and plays sensitively on a pair of ballads in a style nearly identical to Jackson's. Unfortunately he does too much "singing along" with his solos

(a la Hampton) which is quite distracting. Otherwise this is an enjoyable if derivative session of swinging music.

BENNY MORTON AND JIMMY HAMILTON
Blue Note Swingtets
Mosaic MR1-115

My Old Flame / Conversing In Blue / The Sheik Of Araby (2 takes) / Limehouse Blues / Cherry / Rosetta / The World Is Waiting For The Sunrise / Wiliphant Winnie / Old Uncle Bud / Blues For Clarinets / Slapstick / Blues In My Music Room Jan. 31, July 27 and Nov. 21, 1945

Mosaic (197 Strawberry Hill Avenue, Stamford, CO 06902), the creation of Michael Cuscuna and Charlie Lourie, has made available an extraordinary series of box sets that document complete sessions by classic jazzmen. "Blue Note Swingtets" is a change of pace, a single LP (although packaged in an attractive gatefold package with extensive liner notes). Blue Note recorded relatively few small group swing sessions for in the mid-40's the label switched fairly quickly from traditional jazz to bop. The Benny Morton date features a trumpetless sextet with the ex-Ellingtonians clarinetist Barney Bigard and tenorman Ben Webster in peak form. After a dull *My Old Flame* and an interesting slow blues (with muted trombone in the lead), the band romps through 2 versions of *The Sheik* (great growls from Webster) and a single *Limehouse Blues*. Next, the group's pianist Sammy Benskin (23 at the time) performs four numbers (two previously unissued) on a pleasing trio session that displays his Wilson/Tatum roots with a touch of influence from the new bop music. The final part of this album has another mostly-Ellington crew (including trumpeter Ray Nance and Harry Carney's authoritative baritone) but clarinetist Hamilton's arrangements are overly ambitious and inhibit the soloists a bit. The "Blue Note Swingtets" is not the most essential of the Mosaic releases but still has many moments of interest.

SONNY ROLLINS
Alternate Takes
Contemporary C-7651

I'm An Old Cowhand / Come, Gone / Way Out West / The Song Is You / You / I've Found A New Baby
March 7, 1957 and Oct. 20-2, 1958

Although Sonny Rollins still is playing at a high level in the late 80's, many jazz listeners most prefer his undeniably brilliant performances of 30 years ago. Rollins reached one of the peaks of his career in 1957 when he recorded "Way Out West", a trio album with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne. Rollins' improvisations in this sparse setting were witty, quite original and unceasingly creative; happily the same is true of the unreleased "rejected takes". "Alternate Takes" includes a version of *I'm An Old Cowhand* that is twice as long as the original along with equally fascinating renditions of *Come, Gone* (based on *After You're Gone*) and the title track. Needless to say, the solos are completely different than on the originals. The remaining 3 tracks date from the "Sonny Rollins and the Contemporary Leaders" session. Sonny gets backing by a full four-piece rhythm section but still dominates on these rapid versions of 2 standards *(The Song Is You* is taken so fast that Sonny plays the melody at half speed) and *You*, the theme from "The Great Ziegfield". Overall, "Alternate Takes" is one of the most exciting releases of the past year, essential music for all jazz collections.

JIMMY RANEY
Wistaria
Criss Cross 1019

Hassan's Dream / Wistaria / Ovals / Out Of The Past / I Could Write A Book / Everything I Love Dec. 30, 1985

What type of music does one expect from the trio of guitarist Raney, pianist Tommy Flanagan and bassist Geroge Mraz? Subtle musical inventions that occasionally border on the telepathic and that's exactly what "Wistaria" contains. The three musicians work together as equals; in fact even if Raney and Flanagan were blacked out, this record would still be worth hearing for Mraz's driving basslines. The material, mixing together originals with a pair of standards, features appealing chord changes that are perfectly ripe for the melodic explorations of the trio. Their music swings so lightly that it's very easy to take it for granted, so crank up the volume and listen closely!

KENNY BARRON
What If?
Enja 5013

Phantoms / What If? / Close To You Alone / Dexterity / Voyage / Lullabye / Trinkle Tinkle
Feb. 17, 1986

Kenny Barron is best known for his talents as a bop-based pianist, formerly with Dizzy Gillespie in the 1960's and currently a member of Sphere. There is plenty of superior piano playing on "What If?" but just as impressive are Barron's 4 new compositions: The mysterious ballad *Phantoms*, the appealing title cut (built on an 8-note bass pattern and some odd accents), the tender *Lullabye* and *Voyage*, a driving number that Stan Getz recently recorded. Young trumpet great Wallace Roney and the fluent tenor of John Stubblefield (sounding a bit like both Wayne Shorter

and Clifford Jordan) take excellent solos on each of Barron's pieces. Cecil McBee's *Close To You Alone* is a thoughtful ballad for the trio and *Dexterity*, a piano-drums duet, displays how significant a string bass is to a small group. This highly enjoyable album concludes with Barron doing a wonderful imitation of Monk striding on *Trinkle Tinkle*. Kenny Barron's definitive album to date.

TED BROWN
In Good Company
Criss Cross 1020

Blimey / Gee Baby Ain't I Good To You / Lost And Found / Sir Felix / Instant Blue / We'll Be Together Again / People Will Say We're In Love Dec. 23, 1985

Ted Brown is one of the least known members of the Lennie Tristano school of jazz. An inventive and soft-toned tenor who recalls Warne Marsh (although with less intensity), Brown has recorded very little since the 1950's. Despite this, he sounds in his prime for this quintet date, playing in a style virtually unchanged since 1959. Backed by a fine trio (pianist Hod O'Brien, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Ben Riley), Brown and his soulmate, guitarist Jimmy Raney, swing hard but quietly on a set of common chord changes, often soloing together. Timeless music.

DEXTER GORDON
The Other Side Of Round Midnight
Blue Note BT-85135

Round Midnight / Berangere's Nightmare #2 / Call Sheet Blues / What Is This Thing Called Love / Tivoli / Society Red / As Time Goes By / It's Only A Paper Moon / Round Midnight 1985

As a movie, "Round Midnight" was the first to deal honestly with the jazz life. Although essentially a fictional story (mixing together incidents from the lives of Bud Powell and Dexter Gordon), the events depicted ring true; it all could have happened. Hopefully (but doubtfully) other jazz films will result. Isn't it about time for "The Jelly Roll Morton Story" to be filmed? Or imagine a movie set in the 1950's that includes such characters as Charlie Parker, Monk, Ellington, Miles and Lester Young as bit players! It'll never happen but it should.

There was a fair amount of good jazz in "Round Midnight" although few of the songs were performed in their entirety. Of the two different soundtrack albums available, "The Other Side" is superior to the earlier release "Round Midnight" (Columbia SC 40464), particularly on the 4 (out of 9) selections that feature Dexter Gordon. The opening *Round Midnight* also has Wayne Shorter's soprano and the basses of Ron Carter and Mads Vinding to recommend it. Dexter plays very emotionally on *As Time Goes By*, is fine on the medium-tempo blues *Society Red* (which also boasts Freddie Hubbard) and switches to soprano for *Tivoli*. The other numbers are less memorable with a straight Bobby McFerrin vocal on *What Is This Thing*, a *Paper Moon* that is a bit too modern for the movie, a routine Herbie Hancock piano solo on the second *Round Midnight* and some intense Hubbard and Hancock on the filler *Berangere's Nightmare # 2. Call Sheet Blues* is a ringer, a meandering ad-lib blues started by Wayne Shorter during a long wait on the movie set. "The Other Side Of Round Midnight" makes for a nice souvenir from the movie but any of Dexter Gordon's Blue Note albums from the 1960's are much more rewarding.

DEXTER GORDON
Gettin' Around
Blue Note BST 84204

Manha De Carnaval / Who Can I Turn To / Heartaches / Shiny Stockings / Everybody's Somebody's Fool / Le Coiffeur May 28-9, 1965

"Gettin' Around" was recorded during one of Dexter Gordon's infrequent visits to the U.S., having moved to Europe in 1962. The classic tenor was in a fairly lazy mood that day, playing material that mostly falls into the slow-to-medium tempo range with the assistance of young vibist Bobby Hutcherson, pianist Barry Harris, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Billy Higgins (who was on a Latin kick for this session). Much of the material is a bit unpromising, particularly *Who Can I Turn To* and Dexter's cha-cha *Le Coiffeur* but there are swinging moments, especially on *Heartaches* and *Shiny Stockings*, a tune that practically plays itself. Although not an essential record, it's good to have "Gettin' Around" back in circulation again.

AHMAD JAMAL
Digital Works
Atlantic 81258-1-G

Poinciana / But Not For Me / Midnight Sun / Footprints / Once Upon A Time / One / La Costa / Misty / Theme From Mash / Biencavo / Time For Love / Wave 1985

Most of pianist Ahmad Jamal's biggest "hits" were originally recorded before a live audience; this double-LP has Jamal revisiting some of his past successes as well as performing some of his favorite selections with his quartet in a well-recorded setting. Jamal's playing has changed a little through the years. He no longer leaves as much space and he incorporates occasional pop and light rock rhythms but his subtle and accessible style is still quite recognizable.

This twofer (a bit brief on time at 62:37) is a pretty strong example of his sound in the 1980's and should please Jamal's fans.

ROGER KELLAWAY
Ain't Misbehavin'
Choice CRS 6833

A Time For Love / Here's That Rainy Day / Ain't Misbehavin' / How Deep Is The Ocean / Blue And Green / Skylark Feb. 1986

Roger Kellaway's solo outing has a strange contrast of moods. The majority of the time Kellaway takes the ballads on a peaceful and wandering journey but surprising atonal outbursts and streaks of energy emerge for no particular reasons in surprising spots. It's as if the pianist wants to constantly remind listeners that he is indeed a virtuoso. *Ain't Misbehavin'*, which has Kellaway striding in two keys simultaneously, sounds particularly dumb although the other selections do have their interesting moments. There is actually much fascinating music on this album (particularly *Skylark*) but there are also many unnerving spots, so it is an album of limited interest.

THORGEIR STUBO QUINTET
Rhythm-A-Ning
Cadence JRC 86033

Rhythm-A-Ning / Swingin' Till The Girls Come Home / In A Sentimental Mood / I Love You / Moments Notice / Hot House Dec. 18, 1983

There is an intensity on this powerful set of no-holds barred bebop that one associates with New York City. Strangely enough it was recorded in the cool climate of Norway where one would instead expect ECM long tones; so much for stereotypes! Each of the performances are long (at least 8 minutes) and the solos are consistently exciting. Thorgeir Stubo brings to mind Barney Kessel and the other guitar stylists of the 1950's (Farlow, Herb Ellis, Burrell, etc.), Krister Andersson's tenor sometimes close to 1957 Coltrane and pianist Lars Sjosten is a master at stating a simple idea and then expanding it far beyond what one would expect. With the exception of *In A Sentimental Mood*, all of the selections are high-powered and even that Ellington ballad is given intensity. Those listeners tired of watered-down music and searching for the "real thing" should pick up this exciting set. (Available from Cadence, Cadence Building, Redwood, NY 13679)

DICK GRIFFIN
A Dream For Rahsaan
Ruby RRS-771

There Is A Time For Love / Darkness Of Duke / Come In And See / The Love Always Blues / It's About That Time / A Dream For Rahsaan Jan. 1985

Tributes to Rahsaan Roland Kirk are always difficult for who could imitate that dazzling stylist? No one else plays 3 saxophones at once with his facility, takes 20 minute one-breath solos of nonstop creativity or can improvise in every jazz idiom. Trombonist Dick Griffin, who was part of Kirk's unit during 1968-71, wrote all 6 of the compositions, which include a spirited blues *(The Love Always Blues)* and a Mingus-type ballad *(Darkness Of Duke)*. His occasional multiphonic chords recall Rahsaan but, despite the title, it's unfair to compare this album to a Roland Kirk recital. Taken as a modern mainstream date that features brief solos from the talented pianist Stanley Cowell and altoist Gary Bartz (who has been heard on records much too little in recent times), this is a satisfying effort.

ERIC DOLPHY
Other Aspects
Blue Note BT-85131

**Jim Crow / Inner Flight # 1 / Dolphy-N / Inner Flight #2 / Improvisations and Tukras* 1960 or *1962

Shortly before he departed for the fateful 1964 European tour with Mingus, Eric Dolphy left some private tapes with friends. Now, thanks to the persistence of James Newton, these unknown performances are available on "Other Aspects". There are two brief solo flute recitals *(Inner Flight # 1 and # 2)*, an exciting alto-bass duet with Ron Carter that is based loosely on *Lover (Dolphy-N)* and a rather dull matchup with tablas and tamboura *(Improvisations)* on which Dolphy's flute never really departs from the melody or overcomes some annoying Indian chanting. But the real reason to acquire "Other Aspects" is for the remarkable 15½ minutes of *Jim Crow*. A classical vocalist shares the spotlight with Dolphy and her wordless long tones are quite eerie. At first the singer alternates with Eric's alto before the inspired free playing of the unidentified pianist leads to a lyrical waltz. Dolphy's passionate percussive alto (those intervals!) is succeeded by some odd harmony between the singer and Eric's evil-sounding bass clarinet. Their interplay becomes very intense before Dolphy plays a pretty melody on flute for a surprise ending. This fascinating record is highly recommended.

ATTILA ZOLLER
Memories Of Pannonia
Enja 5027

Circle Waltz / Memories Of Pannonia / Beam Me Up! / Sophisticated Lady / Obsession August, 1986

Veteran guitarist Attila Zoller's sound is so

mellow and peaceful that it is not immediately apparent just how free his playing is from cliches, simple riffs or well-rehearsed licks. "Memories of Pannonia" is an excellent showcase of his playing for Zoller is heard on a couple of heated performances, a Duke Ellington ballad, Don Friedman's *Circle Waltz* and a lengthy but quite coherent group improvisation *(Memories)*. Bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Daniel Humair react quickly to each of Zoller's musical directions and Formanek takes several impressive if brief solos. It's a rather subtle record and will take awhile to grab one's attention (as is true of Zoller's style) but well worth close investigation.

STAN TRACEY ORCHESTRA
Genesis
Steam SJ 114

The Beginning / The Light / The Firmament / The Gathering / The Sun, Moon & Stars / Feather, Fin & Limb / The Sixth Day
Jan. 5-6, 1987

"Genesis" is pianist Stan Tracey's first big band album since 1969, his 15th for his label Steam (8 Hadley Vale Court, Hadley Road, New Barnet, Herts EN51Q4 ENGLAND) and a strong effort that is a bit influenced by Duke Ellington. Although ostensibly a "musical representation of the Creation as told in the first book of the Bible", the only real connection to Genesis are the songtitles. Secular swinging is the order of the day. Tracey's compositions often explore several chord patterns, developing and building to a climax. There are many excellent soloists in this 15-piece orchestra, particularly trumpeter Henry Lowther, the 2 altos of Peter King and Jamie Talbot, Art Themen's passionate tenor, guest Tony Coe's tenor and clarinet (which is quite explosive on *The Sixth Day*) and the leader. Tracey's percussive solos and chording is very Dukish although he has built his own style out of that influence. Tracey's writing is impressive whether for the more complex works or the shouting blues *Feather, Fin & Limb*. Highly recommended for those who enjoy driving big bands.

CURTIS CLARK
Amsterdam Sunshine
Nimbus 3691

Daniel / Amsterdam Sunshine / Peu de Sentiment / Thought Of One / Twinkle In The Old Man's Eyes / Portrait Of Judy / Flore / Thought Of One Nov. 1984

Pianist Curtis Clark's style is difficult to describe. Utilizing space in a similar way as Monk did (making every note count) and tossing in brittle phrases (like Ran Blake), Clark's playing is both thoughtful and a bit unsettling; one cannot predict his next movement with certainty. "Amsterdam Sunshine" consists of a pair of quintet selections (with altoist Michael Moore and cellist Ernst Reyseger), a workout for Clark's trio and four piano solos. The first, *Thought Of One*, is an answer to Thelonious' *Think Of One* and is a close approximation of Monk's style although the second version is more of a ballad. While *Flore* is a playful romp for Clark's trio, the solo *Peu de Sentiment* has silence being an equal partner with Clark's musical thoughts. Overall, "Amsterdam Sunshine" (available from Nimbus, Box 205, Santa Barbara, CA 93102) is an intriguing album that will grow in interest through repeated listenings.

JOHN RAPSON
Bu-Wah
Nine Winds 0118

Cruise / Weasel In The Contrabasses / Church Drone: Nothin' But The Blood / Alternates A/C / Clara Pearl / Mingus In F-Tone Jan. 25, 1986

Remember the days when avant-garde jazz was criticized for lacking humor? Trombonist John Rapson's "Bu-Wah" will never suffer from that accusation for on his diverse originals, a zany sense of humor is rarely far beneath the surface whether it be the eccentric melody of *Cruise*, the outer space bowed bass of *Weasel*, the remarkable imitation of an electrical current on *Alternates A/C* or *Church Drone*'s concluding free jam and false endings. There are many fine solos from the members of the octet, especially Vinny Golia (on baritone, soprano, tenor and flutes), bassist Ken Filiano and Rapson but it is the creative arrangements and colorful frameworks that make this Nine Winds release (P.O. Box 10082, Beverly Hills, CA 90213) quite memorable.

MICHAEL COCHRANE QUINTET
Elements
Soul Note SN 1151

Reunion / Tone Row Piece No. 2 / Bossa For Quintet / Elements / Song From Within / Proof Of The Pudding / Waltz No. 1 Sept. 23-4, 1985

Pianist Michael Cochrane's set of originals helps to revitalize the hard bop tradition and, as Art Lange remarks in his excellent liner notes, is at times quite reminiscent of Horace Silver. The solos by Cochrane, trumpeter Tom Harrell and tenorman Bob Malach are concise and full of ideas, each of the songs have their own personality and the ensemble sound of the quintet is quite appealing. The catchy melody of *Reunion* and the classic bop of *Elements* (based on *I Got Rhythm* chord changes) contrast with the complex harmonies of *Tone Row Piece No. 2* and the sensitive ballad *Song From Within.* A reaffirmation of the tradition, "Elements" is highly enjoyable and an excellent example of the talents of Michael Cochrane.

AROUND THE WORLD

CANADA – Michael Ondaatje's poem "The Man With Seven Toes" was adapted as a new-jazz song cycle by Victor Bateman, Paul Cram, Nic Gotham and Tom Walsh. Its premiere performance took place November 27/29 at Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille. The music was performed by an eight piece band.

Today's generation of jazz performers are finally beginning to obtain outlets for their work – and an audience eager to listen to them. Clintons (633 Bloor Street West) is the place to be Sunday nights while both the BamBoo and Sneaky Dee's are operating Monday nights. Expansion of these activities into other nights of the week is likely to occur shortly.... **Dewey Redman, Don Pullen** and **Vincent Chauncey** will be in Toronto for performances at the BamBoo February 24 with **Jane Bunnett's Quintet. Claude Ranger** will be an additional guest attraction. Everyone will then move into a recording studio for the production of Bunnett's first lp.

Roger Turner, Phil Minton and Bill Smith were at the Clinton December 8. The trio also performed together in Chicago.... George's Spaghetti House was the venue for **Reg Schwager's Trio, Crowd Control** (featuring Michael White, Brian Murphy, Roberto Occhipinti and Barry Romberg) and **Dougie Richardson's Quartet** in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Guitarist **Nelson Symonds** made a rare Toronto appearance with this sizzling quartet completed by organist **Kingley Etienne** and drummer **Greg Pilo**..... Cafe des Copains' Jazz Piano Festival introduced two new faces this fall. **John Colianni** is a young pianist with a distinctive touch and a diversified repertoire while **Barbara Sutton-Curtis** offered listeners a fascinatingly varied repertoire from the early years of jazz. **Kirk Lightsey, Barry Harris** and **Ray Bryant** were back again and **Wray Downes** took the music up to the Christmas break.... **Otis Rush's** explosive blues style made New Year's Eve a memorable experience at Albert's Hall.

Although a jazz holiday is one of the best ways to beat the winter blahs, Yvonne Seguin has cancelled her tour to the **9th International Latin Jazz Plaza Festival** in Havana,Cuba. **John Norris and Ted O'Reilly** will co-host a tour to the **Bern Jazz Festival** in Switzerland April 25 to May 2 (see advertisement elsewhere in this issue for full details).... **The University of Toronto Jazz Ensemble** under the direction of **Phil Nimmons** can be heard in concert March 26 at the Edward Johnson Building.

Andrew Homzy's Jazz Orchestra will be heard in concert February 12 at Montreal's Concordia University. The event will be highlighted by the premiere performance of Francy Boland's *Concerto for Jazz Orchestra*.

Tentative dates for Western Canada's summer festivals are: Calgary - June 18-26; Vancouver - June 24-July 3; Victoria - June 24-July 3; Saskatoon - June 30-July 3; Edmonton - June 30-July 10. Representatives from all events are supposed to convene in February to coordinate the booking of talent and other mutually beneficial arrangements.... Composer/pianist **Anthony Davis** will join the faculty of Banff Centre's 1988 Jazz Workshop which takes place between June 20 and July 15 under the direction of Dave Holland.

Fraser MacPherson is in hospital in Vancouver for the removal of a tumor from his lung. A benefit concert was held in Vancouver January 10 for the ailing saxophonist at the Hot Jazz Society's headquarters.... Justin Time recording artist **Oliver Jones** will have his "Live at Sweet Basil" recording issued in February. **Dave Young and Terry Clarke** worked with Oliver at Sweet Basil and the same trio will be back at the New York club July 26 to 31.

The 1988 Jazz Masters Fellowships were awarded to Art Blakey, Lionel Hampton and Billy Taylor by the National Endowment for the Arts.

James Graham, director of New York's Cover Magazine, expresses the feelings of all jazz people who came in contact with photographer **Bob Parent** over the years. As noted briefly in *Coda* Parent passed away July 5 from complications following surgery for a brain tumor.

"When I saw Bob in late June, he seemed to be coming back (no mean feat) but between the strength required to recover from a large tumor, the radical therapy he received, and then pneumonia, he was overwhelmed. Another round for death, but it was a fast round, and I don't think Bob wanted to drag it out.

"He left a vast legacy of photos, quite likely over 100,000 starting from the early forties. Your readers have seen them many times. The Sun Ra photo enclosed here was certainly not his last. I suspect there are many undeveloped rolls of film laying around his studio. His brother, Don Parent, is going to see to it that his work is preserved.

"Bob loved jazz at detriment to his health, his wealth, security, you name it. Never went to Europe for lack of cash. But that's the sign of the true lover is it not, to forget everything else in pursuit of the one. Bob certainly did, and I don't want to forget or mention the generosity that he showed people who shared his feeling.

"In *Cover* magazine over the course of the last year, and up until the time of his death, he wrote (or taped) some of the stories of a life in jazz. The project is unfinished."

*

Andy Laverne presented "Modern Jazz Piano Lineage" at Cami Hall on December 4.... **Bobby Hutcherson** and **Jay Hoggard** presented a vibraphone summit at Fat Tuesday's from December 8-13. Later the same month **Jane Ira Bloom** (with Fred Hersch, Ratzo Harris, Tom Rainey) was at the same club (December 22-27).... **Ran Blake, Rob Schneiderman, Muhal Richard Abrams** and the **Long Island University Big Band** were among those performing at the Jazz Center of New York in December.... **Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers** saw in the New Year at Sweet Basil. Following them were the trios of **McCoy Tyner** and **Cedar Walton** in January.... You can enjoy **Maxine Sullivan's** last recording ("Together" on Atlantic) as well as support her "House That Jazz Built" by sending them $10.00 at 818 Ritter, Bronx, N.Y. 10459 to the attention of Maxine's daughter Paula Morris. You'll receive the record and a tax deductible receipt.... **Mosaic Records** celebrated their fifth birthday December 10 with a party at Kee Wah Yen in Manhattan.

Jack Bradley produced a concert November 29 at Tara Dunfrey, Hyannis featuring Jerry Fuller, Tony Tomasso and John Worsley.... **SEMJA** (South Eastern Michigan Jazz Association), 207 S. Ashley, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 is a new organisation to promote educational and cultural programs relating to jazz in their community. They held a party December 13 at Ann Arbor's Bird of Paradise Jazz Club with music provided by Jim Dapogny, Peter Ferran and J.C. Heard. Two editions of their well-produced newsletter keeps members informed of jazz activities in the area.... WBWC-FM in Berea, Ohio saluted the music of **Stan Kenton** on January 2.

Tex Wyndham and his **Red Lion Jazz Band**, for over twenty years the Delaware Valley's leading Dixieland band, will make their first trip out of their home area next May when they will play the Sacramento (California) and Central Ohio jazz festivals on consecutive weekends (with a concert during the intervening week in Charleston, West Virginia sponsored by Charles McClave). The third commercial recording by **The Rent Party Revellers** (with which Wyndham plays cornet) is a cassette of the band's special show, "A Guide to Dixieland Jazz", which has been acclaimed at several national festivals. It is available from Dan Polin, 16710 16th Avenue N.W., Seattle, Washington 98177.

Jack Simpson reports that the **Clearwater Jazz Holiday** was very enjoyable. A surprise performer on piano with **Spike Robinson** was **John Williams** who is now a city commissioner in Hollywood, Florida! Williams was active in the 1950s when he recorded extensively with his own trio and as a sideman with many others.... **The One O'Clock Lab Band** celebrated 40 years of jazz at North Texas State University November 24 with an on campus concert. The

band was in Washington December 8-10 to perform at a reception prior to a Dallas Cowboys football game.

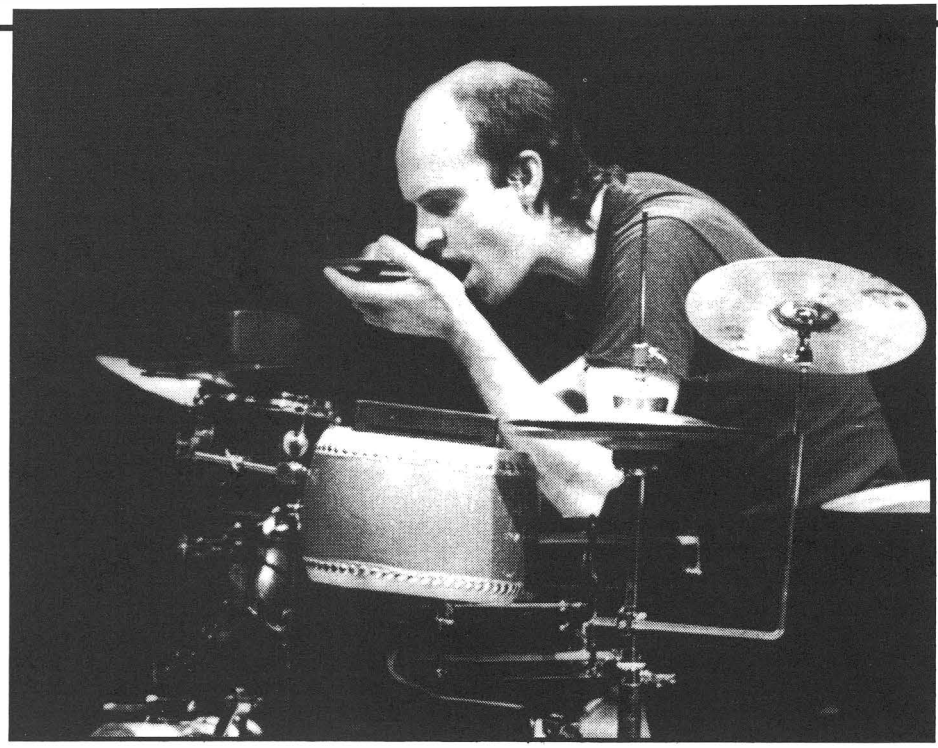
The Vienna Art Orchestra has published an attractive 82 page soft-covered book detailing band members and the orchestra's exploits over the past decade. The band made an extensive six week European tour in October/early November. They can be contacted at Graf Starhemberg-Gasse 20/5, A-1040 Vienna, Austria.... A 70th birthday party was held in Copenhagen for **Billy Moore Jr** – the general manager of the Ben Webster Foundation and noted composer and arranger.... **Courtney Pine** was best instrumentalist in the British Jazz and New Music Awards organised by The Wire in November.... Monaco's **International Competition for Jazz Themes** has a February 29 deadline for submissions to Secretariat du Concours International de Composition de Themes de Jazz, Academie de Musique Prince Rainier III, 17 rue Princesse Florestine, Principality of Monaco.... **Oliver Jones, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Monty Alexander** and **Lew Tabackin** were recent performers at Zurich's Widder Bar.

Bill McLarney is the most recent jazz listener to be disturbed by the writings of **James Lincoln Collier**. You can be sure there will be even more discussions once Collier's Ellington biography becomes widely circulated. Here are Bill's comments on the **Louis Armstrong** book:

"I have been annoyed by Jame Lincoln Collier's book "Louis Armstrong: An American Genius" *and* by most of the reviews of it, laudatory or otherwise, including Trevor Tolley's in the October/November *Coda*. I'm annoyed because everybody is talking about the wrong thing.

"The separation of "art" and "entertainment" is a uniquely Western distinction, so far as I know. I grant the intellectual usefulness of the distinction, particularly in this day when entertainers stand to make megabucks. But I have always thought that one of the great contributions of jazz and other African-derived musics to our Western culture was to blur this distinction. Instead of being thankful for this opportunity to escape from the stuffy air of the academy, our jazz critics apparently prefer to reinvent the dichotomy and use it to hound all black musicians into a paroxysm of self-consciousness by endlessly scrutinizing their performances for evidence of "tomming." Let it be found, and it can be used to dismiss not only the act in question, but a whole body of work.

"According to Collier, if Armstrong hit a series of high notes before a white audience he was "tomming." If a blues guitarist flaunts his technique in a similar way before a black audience it is presumably "folk art" – at least so long as he is not well paid. According to black critic Stanley Crouch, Rahsaan's prodigious technical and extra-musical feats demonstrated "traditional black audacity," but LeRoi Jones found them embarrassing. Who did you say was the authority on tomming?



"And what am I to make of Dizzy Gillespie's clowning? Does it render his big band records less "artistic", like Armstrong's post-1929 work? No wonder Miles Davis got in the habit of turning his back and not announcing tunes, etc. But what did he get for it? They accused him of trying to impress his white audience. Even when someone like Archie Shepp made his music overtly racial/political some called it "reverse tomming." Is it just possible that Armstrong, Kirk, Gillespie, Davis and Shepp were all being sincere?

"For me, Rahsaan expressed it best, when I interviewed him for *Down Beat* back around 1969. 'I'm just being myself. I don't tell my musicians they've got to entertain.... But I don't think they should feel a draft if I'm laughing and talking.... I'm going to be myself and I'm not going to have no musician with me who feels a draft about what I do as long as it doesn't affect his playing.'

"Not long ago, I went out to hear Paquito D'Rivera, who is not noted for his demure on-stage behavior. He was his exuberant self, and his antics, along with his incredible playing, seemed the perfect expression of Paquito. At the opposite extreme, no one ever made less concession to showmanship than Bill Evans, but his performances often achieved a level of theatricality through the sheer intensity of Evans' concentration on the matter at hand. I am sure both of these artists have had their painful thoughts about the art/entertainment dichotomy and reached their own decisions about stage presentation. How much harder, then, for a black musician, who is still expected to make a statement about the fact of being black. He can be certain that, no matter what the statement, someone will read it as 'tomming'.

"Returning to Louis Armstrong, I personally don't find all parts of his act entertaining (though I confess to a certain circus thrill on witnessing Velma Middleton do the splits – talk about audacity!). But unlike Collier, Tolley and myriad other critics, I think some of Armstrong's post-1929 *playing* is artistically great – independently of who or how he may have been "entertaining." Give me and Roy Eldridge credit for understanding that the same person can simultaneously operate at different levels on the art-entertainment continuum. Would that more critics acknowledged that reality."

*

The Council for Research in Music Education (University of Illinois, 1205 West California, Urbana, Il 61801) has published two bulletins (at $5.00 each) about "Research in Jazz Music Education": "The content of the articles ranges from philosophical foundations, to teaching materials, to an encapsulation of what we have learned from research in the jazz discipline". Of the authors, only **Martin Williams, Bill Dobbins** and **Lewis Porter** will be reasonably well known to the jazz community. The others are all associated with various universities. The press release, which summarised the content of the articles, had one glorious typographical mistake. Martin Williams may still be mystified as to the credentials of that classic jazz master Gletcher (sic) Henderson.... Saturn Communications (1642 66th Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11204) has published a 1988 International Blues Calendar.... Now available is the one hour documentary about **Charlie Parker** on Sony Video. It won the 1987 award for "Best Music Video, Long Form".

The October issue of *Jazziz* magazine contained an interview with Bluebird master-

ROGER TURNER (Photograph by Dennis Austin)

mind **Steve Backer** offering off the cuff comments about the company's reissue projects. The 3-disc CD (and LP box) of the complete Duke Ellington & Blanton-Webster Band which has been such a sonic disappointment to Ellington afficionados elicited this comment: "We've now redone the Ellington entirely, and the newly remastered version should be out around October. It will be the same package without the sonic mistakes (and without one musical mistake that drove me up the wall)." Two questions remain unanswered: How will the consumer know which version he is buying and will there be any kind of adjustment offered those who have already purchased the inferior sets. Can we expect RCA/BMG to recall them (as car manufacturers are now obliged to do) or at least offer owners the new discs at a reduced price. You can contact Steve Backer at BMG Music, 1133 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10036 USA.

Just out on **Alligator** are albums by A.C. Reed and The Kinsey Report.... **Arhoolie** records (10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, Ca 94530) has published their 1988 catalog ($2.00) and released a batch of ethnic music collections. Blues fans will want to check out Clifton Chenier's "Sings The Blues".

Blue Note Records has released its first Mose Allison recording "Ever Since The World Ended" – and it's a good one. The company has also recorded and released "Inferno" by Birelli Lagrene.... **Cadence** Records has issued lps under the leadership of drummer Abdul Zahir Batin, guitarist David Sidman, vibraphonist Joe Locke and drummer Jon Hazilla.... Germany's **CMP** Records has released "Seventh Heaven" by percussionist Glen Velez and "In Need Again" by Repercussion Unit.... **CBS** has re-released in CD format many of the outstanding CTI recordings from the early 1970s. ...**Fantasy's** second grouping of Original Blues Classics includes lps by Lightnin' Hopkins, Curtis Jones, Lonnie Johnson, Sonny Terry and Jimmy Witherspoon. There are fifteen titles altogether in this release.... "Double Image" is the title of the saxophone/piano collaboration between Frank Morgan and George Cables on **Contemporary**.... Guitarist Joshua Breakstone recorded a second Contemporary lp December 11 with Tommy Flanagan, Jimmy Knepper, Dave Shapiro and Keith Copeland. Look too for a collaboration between Tom Harrell and Swiss saxophonist George Robert on Contemporary.... There will be releases of 1970s sessions on **Pablo** soon by Roy Eldridge/Count Basie and Zoot Sims/Lockjaw Davis with Oscar Peterson.... New from **Gramavision** is volume two of Gil Evans' Sweet Basil collection, "Impala" by Oliver Lake (with Geri Allen, Santi Debriano and Pheeroan Ak Laff) and Bobby Previte's "Pushing the Envelope".... Germany's **Jazz Point** Records has added to the Steve Lacy discography with a collaboration between the saxophonist and sitar master Subroto Roy Chowdhury. Other Jazz Point releases are collaborations between Birelli Lagrene and Jaco Pastorius and between Larry Coryell and Miroslav Vitous.... The Minnesota Composers Forum has released "Free Fall" on its **Innova** label. It features the work of composers Steve Tibbetts, John Devine, Pat Moriarty, Mike Olson and Henry Gwiazda.... "Roots of Blue" is a piano/bass collaboration between Muhal Richard Abrams and Cecil McBee on **RPR** Records (P.O. Box 612, Times Square Station, New York, N.Y. 10108).... If you're looking for gospel records on **Savoy** they can be reached at 611 Broadway, Suite 418, New York, N.Y. 10012.... The Chicago group Mothra has released its self-produced cassette "Farewell to Manzanar". It's available by mail for $10.00 from **Mothra,** 1021 W. Newport, Chicago, Il 606571

Noted jazz writer **Albert McCarthy** died in London, England in early November.... Saxophonist **Willis Jackson** died October 25 in New York. He was 59. Saxophonist **Harold Vick** also died in New York November 13 from a heart attack. He was 51.... Bassist/composer **Slam Stewart** died December 10 in Binghamton. He was 73.... Saxophonist **Warne Marsh** died December 17 in Los Angeles while performing. He was 60.

– compiled by John Norris

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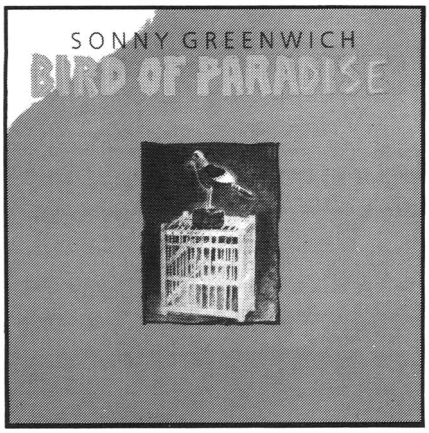
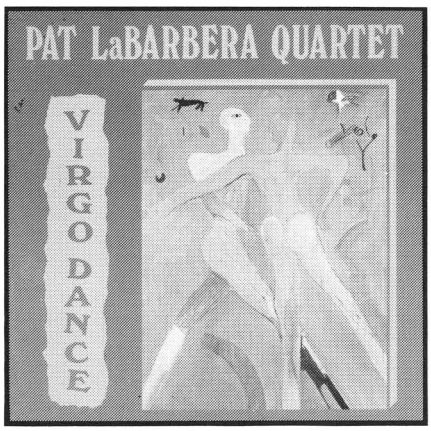


SONNY GREENWICH
"Bird of Paradise"
Justin Time JUST-22



PAT LABARBERA Quartet
"Virgo Dance"
Justin Time JUST-24-1

FRASER MacPHERSON
"Honey and Spice"
Justin Time JUST-23-1

JIM PEPPER
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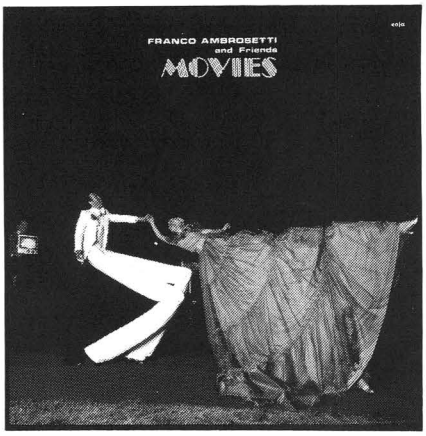
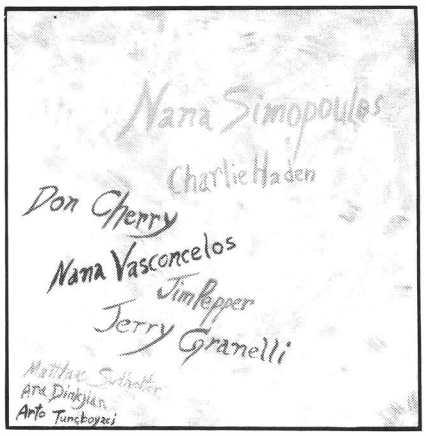
Enja 5043



FRANCO AMBROSETTI & Friends
"Movies"
Enja 5035



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"Wings and Air"
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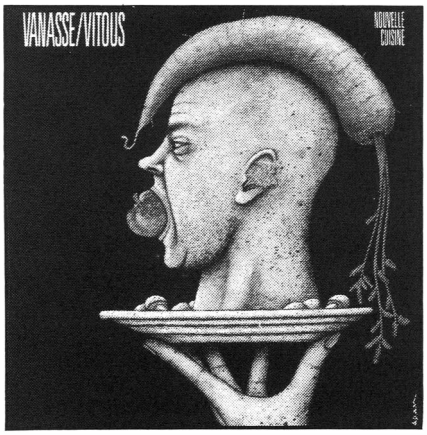

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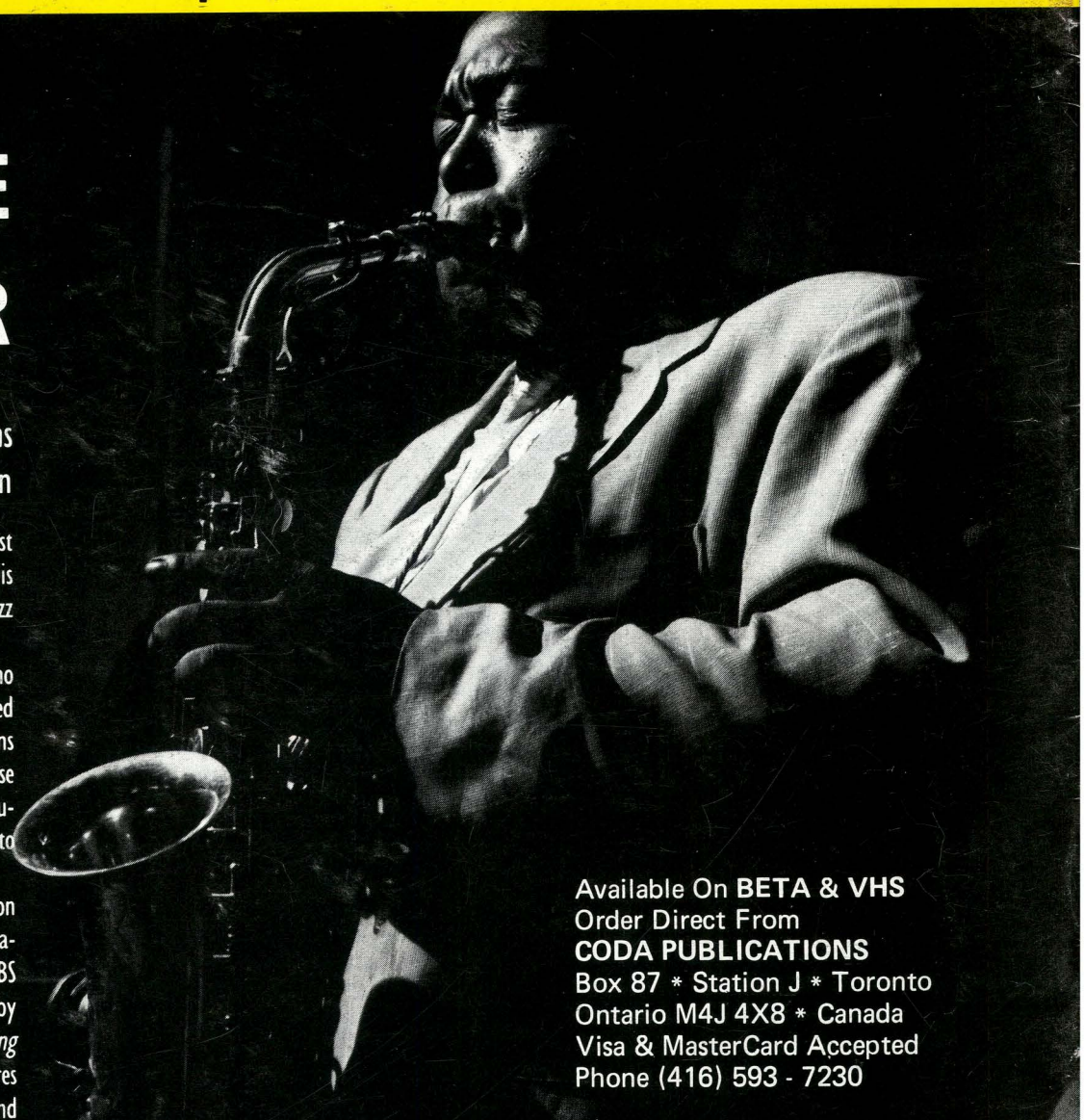
The Triumph of Charlie Parker



CHARLIE PARKER

Written and Directed by Gary Giddins
A Sony Video Software Co-Production

Charlie Parker was undoubtedly one of the most influential and remarkable musicians of this century. His daring innovations transformed jazz from a dance music to a concert art.

A musical pioneer on the alto saxophone, who rose to prominence in the 1950's, he created sounds that have been emulated by musicians around the world. This film on Parker, whose legacy is very much alive today with this documentary, traces his beginnings in Kansas City to his final years in New York.

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