CODA MAGAZINE

THE JOURNAL OF JAZZ AND IMPROVISED MUSIC * ISSUE 220 * JUNE/JULY 1988 * THREE DOLLARS

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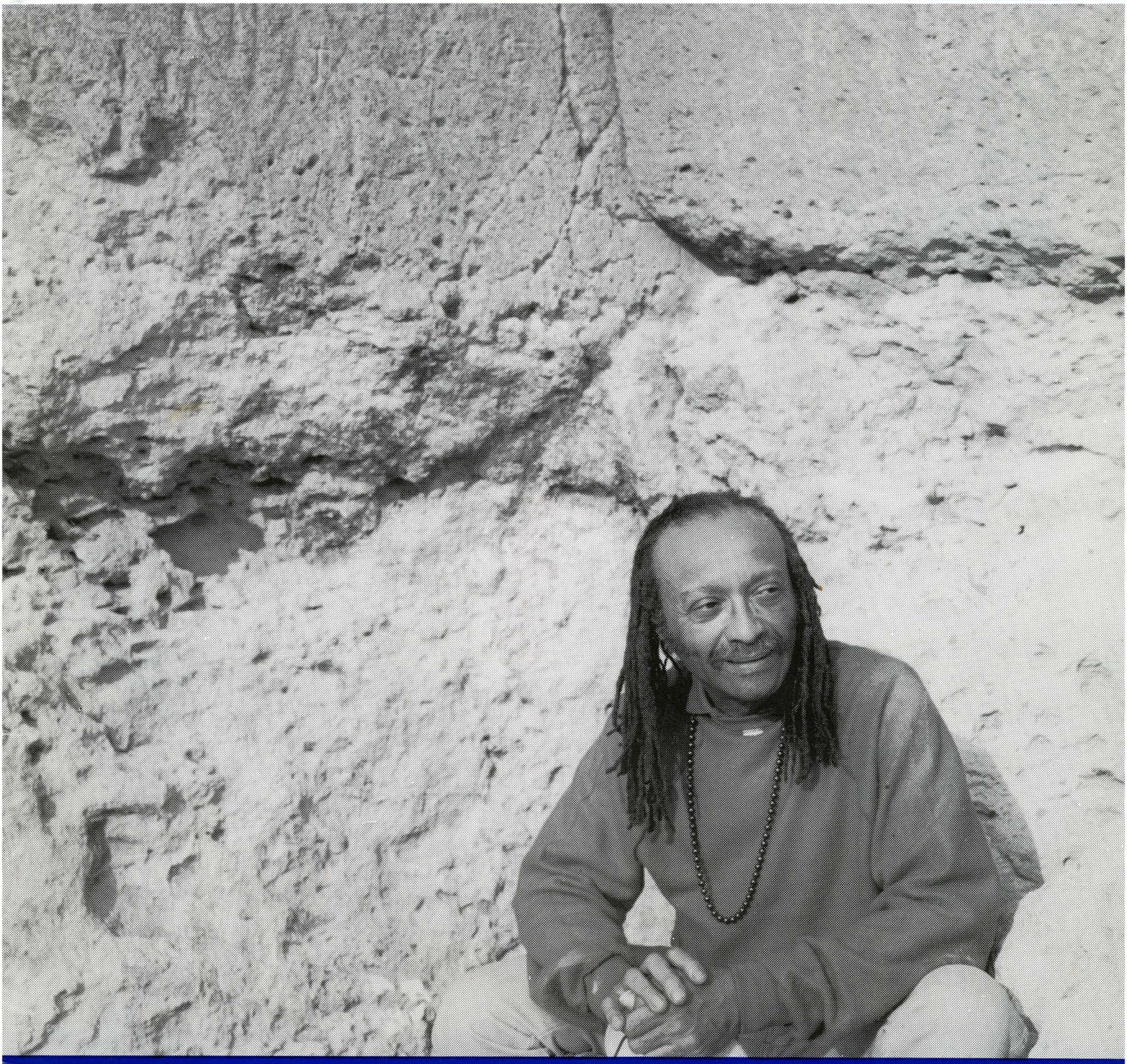

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CECIL TAYLOR
BY KELLEY KIRKPATRICK

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CODA MAGAZINE

PUBLISHED CONTINUOUSLY SINCE 1958 * ISSUE NUMBER 220 * PUBLISHED JUNE 1ST / 1988

BILL SMITH (Editor - Art Director - Publisher) * JOHN NORRIS (Publisher - Administration)

CODA PUBLICATIONS * BOX 87 * STATION J * TORONTO * ONTARIO M4J 4X8 * CANADA

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: *Coda* publishes six issues per year. Rates for a one-year subscription are as follows: **CANADA - $18.00 / U.S.A. - $18.00 in U.S. funds / ELSEWHERE** (except U.K.) - **$21.00 Cdn. First Class Mail Rate** (available only to Canadian & U.S. subscribers) - **$24.00 in the currency of the subscriber's country. Air Mail Rate** (not available in Canada or the U.S.A.) - **$30.00 Cdn. UNITED KINGDOM** - Subscriptions are payable to our U.K. agent, Miss Rae Wittrick, 33 Winton Lodge, Imperial Avenue, Westcliff-On Sea, Essex, England. The yearly subscription rate is **£ 12.00 surface, £ 19.00 air mail. PLEASE ENCLOSE PAYMENT WITH YOUR ORDER.** Payment from outside Canada can be made via International Money Order or bank draft. We accept U.S. cheques, but require 50¢ additional to cover bank charges. We also accept **VISA** and **MASTERCARD** by mail (send your card number, expiry date and signature) or by telephone (please give your card number, expiry date and address) 24 hours a day — (416) 593-7230.

CODA MAGAZINE is published six times per year, in February, April, June, August, October and December, in **CANADA.** It is supported by its subscribers, and by its advertisers. We also gratefully acknowledge the assistance of **The Canada Council** and **The Ontario Arts Council**. Second class mail registration number R-1134. For availability of current and back issues of *Coda* on microfilm, contact University Microfilms, 200 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106 USA, or Micromedia Ltd., 158 Pearl St., Toronto, Ontario M5H 1L3 Canada. Indexed in *The Canadian Periodical Index* and *The Music Index*. Printed in Canada. Typeset by Nightwood Editions. ISSN 0820-926X

Distributed in Canada by the Canadian Periodical Publishers Association (CPPA).

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CECIL TAYLOR MUSICIAN POET DANCER

It only takes a few groups of people who are possessed – and I think of music in terms of possession and trance – to frighten a great many, but also to keep the music alive and healthy. In my lifetime, it has been difficult, but it's getting better. It saved my life. I know that.

– Cecil Taylor, Banff 1985

ARTICLE BY TORONTO WRITER MARK MILLER PUBLISHED ORIGINALLY IN BANFF LETTERS (1986)

Cecil Taylor, beach hat pulled low to the frame of dark glasses as a kind of theatrical mask that he would rarely remove, took a quick, gestural puff on his cigarette. The pianist had been talking for an hour or so on this Thursday afternoon in July about Duke Ellington and Billie Holiday, about the mythologies of jazz and the realities of the black experience, about Banff's mountains and New York's bridges, about poetry and ballet, about the fallacy of composition and the immediacy of performance, and particularly about the work at hand – the preparation of his orchestral music with members of the Banff Jazz Workshop for a concert the following night.

"Do you know what I saw this morning?" he asked, voice changing suddenly, tempo quickening. "I don't know *what* it was, I tell you. Just about, you know, a quarter of a block from where I'm going to turn into my little cabin, there's this animal with these *things*."

He seemed excited by the memory. "I don't know, was it an elk or something?"

Yes, he was told. There are many in the area.

"Listen," he replied, resisting the notion that this revelation might be commonplace, "I've just come from New York which, after all, we know is the centre of the world's information. *I'd* never seen an elk before. And that elk certainly had never seen *me* before, at that point, as it nibbled those greens.

"Instant recognition on both parts," he continued. "As far as that animal was concerned, I was from outer space. And from my point of view, 'What's this? *This* is from outer space.' So we looked each other in the eyes. We *both* backed up.

"I'm sure it thought, 'He's probably got a shotgun...' "

No, Taylor was corrected, this is national park. They are protected.

"And *I* thought," he pushed on, " 'he's probably going to charge at any moment.' So I said, 'Wait a minute, it's not going to end *this* way ... Listen, *you* got it ... *I'll* walk over here...' "

Cecil Taylor in Banff was Cecil Taylor somewhat out of his element, a New Yorker spending a week in the great outdoors, yes, but also an iconoclast among those who would worship icons – moreover an iconoclast who is himself an icon to some, but not to most of the Banff Jazz Workshop's students. They looked in awe in another direction, "right down the hall there," as Taylor identified it just a little derisively, having heard them "playing those licks" – the same licks that are an extension of the very music, bebop, that he turned away from so dramatically 30 years ago.

Jazz was playing itself up a blind alley until Taylor and a few others around New York in the mid-to-late 50s headed over the walls of rhythm, harmony and structural concern that those musicians before them were building ever higher. In characteristic leaps and bounds Taylor, trained at the New York College of Music and the New England Conservatory and briefly apprenticed to swing musicians Oran (Hot Lips) Page, Johnny Hodges and other lesser figures, would eventually clear the obstructions altogether.

Once free, he did not look back for a long time. He toughed out a career where he could find it – first as an obscure leader in a few New York clubs, then in Europe, and eventually as a celebrated musician on the international concert stage. In 30 years there would be just enough recordings of the Taylor Unit and of Taylor solo to document the evolution of his music, but hardly enough to suggest that he has been in any way a popular figure in jazz or any other sphere.

The intensity of Taylor's performances is taxing, intimidating – at times frightening. Moreover the energy, the fists and the forearms obscure the links in his music to tradition. There are specific elements of Monk, and of Ellington before Monk, in Taylor's piano playing, and of Ellington in his ensembles. There are, generally, elements in his music of everything from the most fundamental of blues to the most advanced ideas of the conservatory.

But Taylor works at far enough of a distance from the known that the borders between idioms are blurred – not just within jazz, but in music, and then not simply in music but in pure performance. He works with dancers, taking commissions from Alvin Ailey and Mikhail Baryshnikov. He writes and reads poetry. He has made both dance and sound poetry a part of his own presentations. His concerts are ritualistic. They have a physical energy, a transcendent emotional power and a supporting intellectual rigor that is, in total, unmatched in jazz.

In the main, the jazz world did not move immediately to keep up with him. Far easier it was to dismiss or ignore his music than to come to terms with it. To a degree this has changed, but such early disdain might well have broken a lesser artist. Jazz is not a national park. The musicians are not protected.

"The same attitude that shaped the conservatory has shaped bebop," he commented, of the strain in his relationship with his peers in jazz. "I've been fortunate enough to continue. People now say hello, and I immediately acquiesce to their acknowledgement. That's when I talk about basketball and baseball, and it's very effective just for that moment."

He had little need to talk sports in Banff, although boxing served him as a useful analogy on more than one occasion. Taylor clearly enjoyed himself – both the setting and the project. *All* the world's a stage, only the scenery changes, and if Taylor isn't onstage, he is, by nature, watching closely from either the wings or the house. Generally at Banff the stage was his – informally, for three evening rehearsals with 22 of the workshop's musicians and for three noon-hour lectures with the workshop's full population, and formally, for a closing concert Friday at the Margaret Greenham Theatre. He played his several roles – musician, poet, dancer – and he played them in many moods.

"I love actors and actresses," he admitted, when the capricious nature of his own performance over the previous days had been duly noted, "so that's part of it. And it is also the totality of each day, because this *is* draining; you have to find ways to go back to your room and pull it together."

Draining, indeed. Taylor's daily routine included three to four hours alone at the piano to prepare for the solo half of his concert, and another four and a half hours with the workshop's musicians to *create* the orchestra music that would complete the program.

He taught the ensemble his music "from the ground up," as one participant, Texas guitarist David Phelps, put it; "not going around with mimeographed lead sheets, but giving us our notes – *serving* us our notes," as another guitarist, Ohioan Rick Peckham, suggested, sounding a little awed by the humility of the process.

Taylor worked from a sheaf of dog-eared papers wrapped in torn plastic and carried around in a leather, drawstringed bag. The process went like this....

"Okay, saxes, will you add these notes please: E, down to B; A down to G.

"Trombones – C# , up to B, down to G, up to F# .

"Basses – E up to, up to D, up to C# , B natural...."

And so it went, dictated line by line until every section had its part – reeds (four), brasses (three trumpets, two trombones), basses (three), guitars (four), percussion (three) and voices (three). The musicians wrote the score in their own hand, notating the rhythmic values of each short, teetering phrase as Taylor played it over at the piano a few times. He might offer additional verbal instruction, something like "Saxes, play that first phrase like a roller coaster" or, "I want you to create a mountain of thought in just one sound."

The process was repeated frequently, pain-

stakingly, and not without some confusion, and the piece grew little by little, episode by episode, unit by unit. Ultimately, he would ask for xeroxes of each part as the musician had written it – this, together with a personal statement of what the musician felt to be his or her own "most outstanding personality trait."

No real sense of the music's larger shape was apparent until well into the rehearsals. As the sun set slowly behind the mountains late each night, the light gradually dawned on the musicians: Taylor wasn't really giving the music shape at all, just the merest of outline, leaving it to them to fill in the missing dimensions. He was working at two levels simultaneously, handing around his notes and, with each and every one of them, delegating a little piece of creative responsibility.

"Once you have the material, you can adjust it [according to] how you feel about it," he advised at one point.

And, "You've got all that material, so use it. You can switch the order – just don't hesitate."

And, again, "There are only four *real* notes in what you have; you'll have to find out which ones they are."

Taylor's terms of reference were intentionally vague, and initially they brought him skepticism. In the absence of a clear direction, he asked implicitly for his musicians' trust. But the focus of that trust shifted gradually: as the proffered responsibility was assumed – by an emboldened few at first, and then by the rest, following their peers' lead – it became a question of whether the musicians trusted themselves.

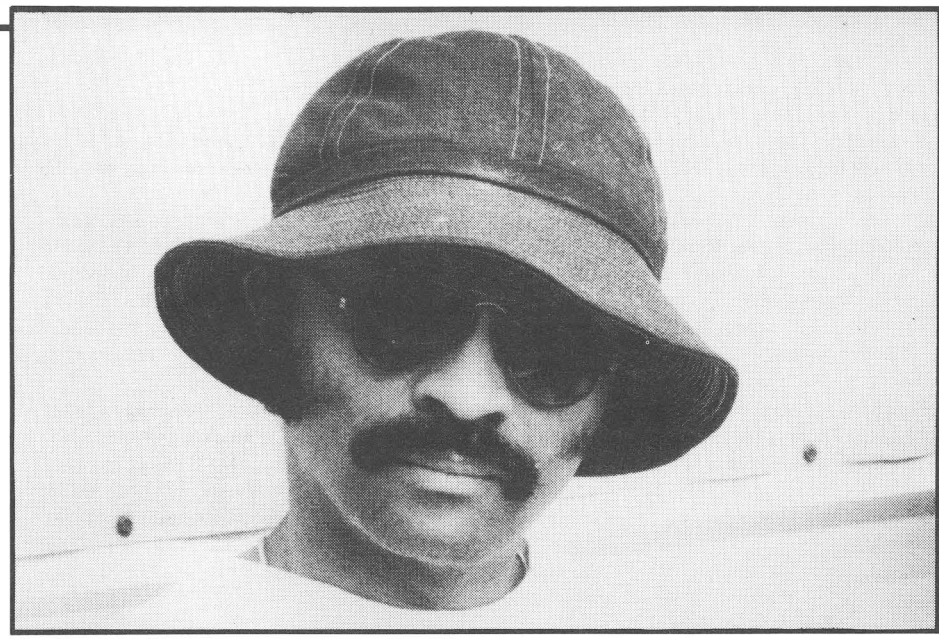
Taylor had taken Duke Ellington one further. The orchestra is my instrument, Ellington used to say. The orchestra is *their* instrument, Taylor now seemed to be suggesting.

The Vancouver bassist Lyle Lansall-Ellis later observed, "The beautiful thing about the way he works is that he presents a situation and then says, 'OK, what are you going to do with it? It's *your* music.' "

Another participant, New York saxophonist Andy Middleton, spoke in one of the common sessions of Taylor's "landscapes of color," adding, "The way I see it, he never knows how it's going to come out, he just gives us the map."

A third, the Vancouver vocalist D.B. Boyko, commented, "You don't distrust him, you just keep in mind that he's always curious about what he's doing..."

At first Taylor played the observer. His instructions delivered, he moved outside the oval formed by the instrumentalists and singers in the rehearsal room and took his place by the door or – back to the world, figuratively speaking – by a southerly window, smoking continuously and moving interpretively from time to time. He was, by turns throughout the rehearsals, quiet and talkative, intense and relaxed, excited and reserved, wry and serious.



Slowly he let the music out of his control. As it began to carry itself, he joined in at the piano, playing a sketchy sort of accompaniment, stopping often to listen, but giving away nothing behind beach hat and dark glasses.

The formalities started to break down. The musicians were on their feet, making the first tentative, self-conscious moves out of their prescribed positions, just as Taylor requested. "First you have to lose your inhibitions," he said, "and one way you do that is by starting to move." A trombonist used the bell of a tenor saxophonist's instrument as a mute; an alto saxophonist used the body of the trombonist for the same purpose. Full sections began to interact, physically at first and then musically. With each successive run-through, many of the musicians invariably wound up in a loose cluster around Taylor at the piano, as if pulled to him by some invisible force.

From one day to the next, the pieces seemed to change and grow – to transform – *between* rehearsals. Refinements were added, roles were altered. Discussions continued among the musicians, Taylor now just an equal among them. By the sound check prior to the concert, the discussions were held almost oblivious to the pianist, who stepped forth only here and there with a word of arbitration.

The transfer of control was complete. Taylor would retain only the element of surprise.

"YOU KNOW," Taylor commented, with the rehearsals behind him and concert still ahead, "I don't think I'd ever want to be considered a composer."

It was one of several themes running through his conversations the entire week. He would never quite complete a definitive statement on the subject in any single sitting; those who would follow his words, no less than those who would play his music, need be patient in the knowledge that, digressive though he may be, there is logic, there is direction, and there will be shape.

"You see," Taylor continued on this particular occasion, typically digressive, "the thing is this: even in those hallowed temples of Western Music, John Cage is thought of as a major contributor – I was in New York and went to a rehearsal at which he was admitted to the club: it was a Stravinsky festival at Philharmonic Hall when certain luminaries were asked to come and do certain things for little Igor, and John was included – and, you see, John says in *Silence*, [that] up through the 19th century, composers wrote what they heard. After that, they wrote to hear what they wrote...

"To sit down and write a piece of music," he observed, "and to ask musicians to perform that music under the same directorial tutelage that Handel gave his musicians, seems to me to be rather questionable in concept. So that's why yesterday's rehearsal was so important. It was obvious – and this had been building up in two days, three days, right? – that everybody was not sure where the *stuff* was. They were getting a little cranky, you know. So, they were told certain things today. Specifics. *"This is..."* Because, once again, yesterday was very important for *me* in terms of what *I* learned about the nature of what I'm doing, you see. And you also learn that by seeing *where* it puts people in relation to *how* they function."

This is, in other words, the 20th century. The atom bomb, he would remark more than once, has been dropped; "the dynamic of the relationship between human beings has changed." Taylor thus chooses, as Ellington in his way chose before him, to celebrate rather than regiment the individuality of the creative spirit. To "compose" music, he would suggest, is to deny that individuality – "You write it for everybody, no matter what everybody's individual thing is."

He took up the argument again in one of his lectures. "If you sit down and write a piece of music, to say to people coming from

CECIL TAYLOR (Photograph by Bill Smith)

different areas, 'No look, you must play it this way', seems to me to be an easy way out, a way to control the immensity of the different kinds of intelligences that are coming to spend some time with you."

His quarrel with composition went further, to the very concept of notation that he has rejected in favor of oral transmission – in the long, practical tradition of black folk music, sustained conceptually in modern jazz by Ellington and by those, like Charles Mingus, who followed his lead.

"What is that you're reading?" he asked rhetorically, during a lecture. "What *are* those notes? Does the music exist in those notes, and is that why you want to play it? Or does it exist because you *heard* somebody play something that touched you, and you *had* to go and find that instrument?

"When you're reading the note ... how are you going to feel that note in direct relation to the making of sound – the making of sound just because you want to surrender to it, because you want to be *surrounded* by it. So, now, if you can read the note, is it pretty? I mean, don't they all look more or less alike? And you are told, 'You must be able to read the note.' What that does is take your eye and puts it *there*; it decimates your ability to absorb sound, because of the unnatural position of your body. If you went to the idea of music because of the sound, then you're simply wasting your time and diminishing your spirit if you're going to start looking for notes to give you something more than the recapitulation of stuff that's been going on for a long, long, long time."

There can be, by the very nature of Taylor's methodology, no recapitulation in his orchestral music, although there is, he admits, recurrence. Indeed, the element of recurrence interests him greatly.

"You know – I said this to someone the other day – Somerset Maugham was reported to have said, 'If you're lucky you find one story and you rewrite it for the rest of your life.' Okay, I've been thinking about that for a number of years. And I have found one story that I have, but I have been consciously working on developing some others.

"That's why I want [the musicians] to write all that music. I have an idea. I'm really not into cataloguing each performance that I do, but I write a new version of one piece, and you know, its development comes more or less in increments. After five years, you see, 'Oh, I've made this much ground.' "

"Like an inchworm," suggested Lyle Lansall-Ellis, who was in fact present five years before at another Taylor orchestra workshop in Woodstock, NY.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," Taylor responded. "Exactly. *Exactly*."

The sign was in a kind of free verse. Taylor might have seen a certain irony in its message, had he known the sign was posted in the lobby of the Margaret Greenham Theatre on the night of his concert.

It looked like this:

Warning!!
This concert will be loud.
Extreme sound pressure levels may be injurious to your health.

He had chosen *Voices (Cun un un an)* as the title for the four pieces that he and the workshop had developed together. The individual pieces, "Ymana (rayless ones)", "light (stilled)", the sound poem "Owner of the Winds (voices)" and "Cun un un an", would be presented as a suite.

And there was something else about *Voices*, mentioned almost as if an afterthought at the final, noon-hour rehearsal. "This is, for me, a very important piece", he advised, rather vaguely, "because it is in homage to certain aspects of my family background. All of the material, the specific material, is from the lore of the Indians."

The allusions to his ancestry (maternal, one generation removed) would be much clearer the following night; the two versions of "Owner of the Winds" printed on the concert program, one for the three vocalists and one for voice and piano, sounded a pantheistic note appropriate to his material, and perhaps also to the glorious setting for his week's project.

The concert was neither the climax of, nor anti-climax to, Taylor's project. It was simply another part of the creative process that he had initiated five days before; it in fact signalled an arbitrary end to both the process and the project. Had there been a second performance, the music no doubt would have evolved still further.

So fully had he given the music over to his musicians that the concert could, and effectively did, start without him. As Lyle Lansall-Ellis led the bassists in the opening notes of "Ymana", Taylor stood partially hidden behind the piano, beating on the raised lid. As the ensemble eased into its parts, he slipped onto the piano bench and began to play – not *with* the orchestra but against it, around it, above and below it. The figures that he had taught the musicians and that had blossomed, and continued to blossom, in their hands, were now the springboard for his improvisation. Cecil Taylor to the second power.

The solo performance that followed put the dimensions of the orchestra's achievement in perspective. Taylor reprised "light", reversing its transformation, taking it *back* to its modest origins before expanding it once more, this time with the keyboard as his orchestra – 88 voices to be selected, delineated and blended by a single mind.

His solos, however, were set in a different, more specific context: Taylor began offstage, as he often begins solo or Unit performances, with an extending vocalization; part chant, part song, part Indian ceremony, part Japanese theatre. The ritual had begun. He moved to, and around the stage, ankle bells accenting the graceful unorthodoxy of his movements. The brilliance of his dance was a revelation to the musicians who had worked at his side for the previous five days and now sat before him in the audience.

To the piano now, and he played five pieces and several playful encores, employing call and response patterns of calm motifs in alternation with pummeling, steel-fingered improvisations that blurred notes, clusters and lines into one compounded voice singing a soaring melody all of its own.

And what, Cecil Taylor was asked on that Thursday afternoon in July, would he deem his *own* most outstanding personality trait?

"The belief," he said finally, and softly, after some deliberation, "that you must aspire to greatness, and that you must love the people who you recognize are great, because they touched you. And there are a lot of people who are very good. You respect them. But the mountains, the highest mountains – Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, they're the highest mountains, you know, the *highest* mountains."

He was nearly whispering.

The years would seem to have changed Taylor. There was a time, a volatile and political period, when his music, then at its most intense – its most possessed – was seen to mirror Black anger at its deepest in America. Even now he would not let the absence of Black musicians from the Banff Jazz Workshop go unremarked. Nor would he allow a suggestion that the passing years have moderated Black passions to go unchallenged.

"I wouldn't be so sure that there's less anger in the air," he cautioned. "The political climate would make the price for manifesting that anger much more costly than in 1968. A lot of people who got the publicity are either dead or in jail – or millionaires. So it is a different period now, but still there are things about this time that are, I think, an escalation of the more unfortunate aspects of that time."

Taylor, clearly a survivor, is vitally alive. He is free to travel the world, and now on the momentum of his own hard-won celebrity. And if not a millionaire, he is at least lately the owner of a brownstone in Brooklyn. He was pan-handled on his doorstep recently. "I know now," he commented, thinking back on the incident, "that what I can do is do music, and write some poetry. Social worker, I'm not. But the larger ramifications of music mean that you can perhaps have a positive effect..."

And the larger ramifications appeal to Taylor, now philosophical, now almost reverent in his views. "The older I get," he observed during one of his lectures, "the more I understand that – and this is the point – music is just one of the manifestations celebrating the poetry as it exists all around us..."

"Obviously." he said at another juncture, "music saved my life. Obviously, music has also made it possible for me to think that, if I should live to be 90, then *that* will be the time when I will be the most human ... and also the most worthy ... to look at these mountains."

CANADIAN JAZZ ON RECORD

PETER LEITCH
Red Zone
Reservoir Records RSR 103

PAT LA BARBERA QUARTET
Virgo Dance
Justin Time Records JUST-24-1

VANASSE/VITOUS
Nouvelle Cuisine
Justin Time Records JTR 8406

MALLET BUSTERS
Jazzimage JZ 103

DAVE TURNER
Cafe Alto
Jazzimage JZ 112

GUY NADON
et la Pollution des Sons
Jazzimage JZ 110

TRIO LORRAINE DESMARAIS
Jazzimage JZ 100

LORRAINE DESMARAIS
Pianissimo
Jazzimage JZ 109

LORRAINE DESMARAIS
Andiamo
Jazzimage JZ 106

TRIO JON BALLANTYNE
Jazzimage JZ 111

TRIO FRANCOIS BOURASSA
Reflet 1
Jazzimage JZ 102

PAUL CRAM ORCHESTRA
Beyond Benghazi
Apparition Records A-0987-8

While a substantial number of European and Japanese imports are readily available stateside, it appears somewhat odd that with the exception of labels like "Sackville" and more recently "Justin Time" most recordings by Canadian jazz artists rarely if ever find their way south of the border. An unfortunate situation indeed, since this current batch of releases reveals a thriving and widely diversified hot bed of musical activity centered around an extremely talented and dedicated group of individuals who deserve to be heard by a much wider audience.

Originally from Montreal, **Peter Leitch** now makes his home in New York, a city that has played a key role in his ongoing development as a top flight jazz guitarist. Having previously recorded in Canada for "Jazz House" and more recently for the Dutch "Criss Cross" label, "Red Zone" marks his second U.S. release, the first being "Exhilaration" (RSR 124). Steeped in the venerated tradition of Charlie Christian and well versed in the basic language of modern jazz, Leitch is building on a sturdy foundation. An intelligent choice of material and personnel contribute to the unpretentious, no-nonsense appeal of this latest date. The title cut jumps off at a brisk pace propelled by the relentless swing of pianist Kirk Lightsey and showcasing some fleet fingered fretwork by the leader. The excitement is heightened by a succession of exchanges with Marvin "Smitty" Smith; one of the most in-demand young drummers on the New York scene. Taken at its customary ballad tempo, *My One And Only Love* is handled with care. Leitch's short, solitary introduction gives way to a trio rendition highlighted by bassist Ray Drummond's big toned, melodic solo and Smith's deep, cushiony brushwork. The quartet returns for a solid workout on *Speak No Evil*; the first of two Wayne Shorter compositions contained in this collection. Leitch's moody *Urban Fantasy* is memorable for its clever use of diverse rhythmic and harmonic elements and his affection for Monk is represented by *Off Minor*; a cooker that affords all hands a chance to have their say. *Rio*, the second Shorter piece included here closes side two. In a laid back Latin vein, it is a duet featuring Lightsey and Leitch who switches to acoustic Spanish guitar.

Moving in the opposite direction, reedman **Pat La Barbera** who hails from Mt. Morris, N.Y. has been a Canadian resident for quite a spell. His early association with drummer Buddy Rich's big band and a lengthy affiliation with Elvin Jones have enabled him to earn the kind of respect and admiration that is acknowledged regardless of where one chooses to reside. A well conceived, middle of the road blowing date, "Virgo Dance" La Barbera's latest combines a few hearty jazz staples with two of his originals and one by pianist George McFetridge. The slightly Latin feel of Wayne Shorter's *Footprints* allows La Barbera's tenor (the liner notes erroneously state alto) to soar with ease over the rhythm section, a marked Coltrane influence still present in his playing. *Miles Ahead* is taken at a leisurely, medium pace as Trane's grip eases consid-

LORRAINE DESMARAIS (Photograph by Mark Miller)

erably on Pat's soprano work. Throughout there is a major league type backing supplied by McFetridge, bassist Neil Swainson (also heard to good advantage on Leitch's Criss Cross outing) and drummer Greg Pilo. Always a masterful ballad player, La Barbera lends a personal touch to *I Fall In Love Too Easily*, turning it into an emotionally heart rending statement. *Eiderdown*, one of bassist Steve Swallow's most popular tunes ignites into an inspired run through before bringing side one to a close. The jaunty *Alhambra* moves under a full head of steam while *Once Around The Sun* is a glowing tribute to McFetridge's daughter. The title selection, a high spirited waltz provides an appropriate ending to a most enjoyable session.

"Nouvelle Cuisine" teams vibist **Jean Vanasse** with premier bassist **Miroslav Vitous** for a series of playful and refreshingly uninhibited encounters. Tending to his duties as chairman of the jazz department at the New England Conservatory have somewhat curtailed Vitous' own forays into the jazz milieu of late and it is good to hear him get a chance to stretch out in such an unfettered situation. Unlike so many of today's ill prepared trips to the studio where there is a tendency to rely on hastily thrown together material, the format presented here is tailor made for its participants. Vanasse's general approach smacks of Gary Burton, but his bold, percussive attack, keen sense of dynamics and inventive solos transcend mere comparison. Although the repertoire is broken into individual tunes, there is a seamless quality to this music that allows it to flow with a smooth and unimpeded continuity. Tight unison passages merge with a lively and intricate mingling of ideas as both men skillfully alternate the roles of soloist and accompanist. Darting effortlessly from pizzicato to arco, Vituos' bass lines dance and swirl, prodding Vanasse to a highly motivated level of performance. Despite the rather grotesque cover illustration, this is a tempting morsel well worth savoring.

The vibraphone also figures prominently into the scheme of **Mallet Busters**; a group using vibes and marimbas as its front line instruments. Side one however is built around a guest appearance by the multi-talented Don Thompson. Spotlighted on acoustic bass, he is joined by Arnold Faber and Allan Molnar (vibes and marimbas respectively) for a round of perky collaborations that manage to sizzle at a comfortably subdued level of intensity. Thompson never ceases to amaze, his virtuosity and inventiveness having been previously tapped by such illustrious and diverse leaders as John Handy, Paul Desmond and George Shearing. The quintet sans Thompson takes over on the flip side, their intelligent blend of acoustic and electric instruments creating a bright, joyful effervescence that is at once uplifting and quite delectable. Both Faber and Molnar are commendable soloists as are guitarist Greg Stone and bassist Mike Farquharson who is adept at harnessing the unwieldy nature of the electric bass guitar. This record invites attentive listening as well as offering a pleasurable background.

In an era when basic proficiency is hailed as profound artistic achievement and mediocrity threatens to reign supreme, a musician the caliber of **Dave Turner** is a rare and valued commodity. An altoist out of the post-Parker mold, Turner is a well rounded player whose broad, expressive tone and commanding technical facility are used with the utmost taste and discretion. Since his recorded output thus far has been to say the least rather scant, "Cafe Alto" presents the ideal opportunity to sample his wares. Buoyed by a tight, responsive rhythm section (Andre White, piano; Michel Donato, bass; Jacques Masson and Peter Magadini share the drum stool), Turner swaggers confidently through the title piece. On the Billy Strayhorn classic *Blood Count*, his dreamy lyricism and lush tonal inflections stir up images of Johnny Hodges. *Streets*, an easy romp by trumpeter Charles Ellison hits a comfortable groove while the simmering Latin flavor of *El Frijol* leaves one with a hot spicy after taste. It should be noted that Turner's cohorts are all exceptional soloists as well as dependable section mates. A minor mix up occurs on side two. The tune listed as *Mr. J.C.* is actually the standard *If I Should Lose You* and Billie Holiday's *Don't Explain* is replaced by what appears to be another original. Of course this in no way detracts from the overall excellence of this exquisite recording.

According to the liner notes, drummer **Guy Nadon** is one of Montreal's legendary jazz figures. A 1949 duel with Buddy Rich at age 15, subbing for Elvin Jones at a local club, and being recommended by Louis Bellson for the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra are all cited as examples of his considerable prowess. On the evidence of this record, Nadon is a phenomenal percussionist with chops to spare. Centered around his flamboyant style, the music for the most part is warmed over hard bop taken at a variety of tempos including odd time signatures and seasoned with a dash of funk for good measure. In fact the inclusion of electric piano and bass make the session sound a wee bit dated. The septet manned by competent pros has a full, rich sound and the solos are respectable if unspectacular. (Reedmen Yannik Rieu and Jean Lebrun stand out from the pack.) Nadon's wit is brought to the fore on the humorous *Sheik Of Araby* where he works out on a home-made kit consisting of tin cans and other various found objects. There are times when the leader's over busy drumming tends to detract from the efforts of his fellow players, but on the whole everything works out fine. It would be interesting to hear Nadon in much more challenging surroundings.

Another Montreal native with a bright musical future is pianist **Lorraine Desmarais**. Formal classical training at the university of Sherbrooke and time spent in New York studying with Kenny Barron on a Canada Council grant have contributed immeasurably to her continuing growth as both composer and performer. Of the three LPs included here, "Trio Lorraine Desmarais" JZ 100 is her first and has the distinction of receiving the 1985 FELIX AWARD as that year's best jazz album. In the company of Michel Donato (along with Don Thompson and Dave Young, one of Canada's foremost bassists) and drummer Camil Belisle, Desmarais lifts the spirits with a set made up entirely of originals. Her concept draws on Hancock, Corea, and to a lesser degree Kenny Barron, however, there are numerous indications that a voice of her own is gradually taking shape. Given ample opportunity to unwind, Donato and Belisle distinguish themselves admirably. Incidentally, all three Desmarais records have excellent sound quality and generous playing time.

A solo recital, "Pianissimo" JZ 109 was recorded in concert at the 1986 Montreal Jazz Festival. Here Desmarais deviates from her usual practice of recording original material exclusively. Bringing a different slant to Thad Jones' *A Child Is Born*, she also breathes new

life into such tired old warhorses like *Take The A Train* and *All The Things You Are*. Performing solo is the true acid test for any musician and Desmarais' success at maintaining her composure throughout this entire album is the mark of a true artist.

The trio reappears for "Andiamo" JZ 106 this time joined by percussionist Don Alias. Again the emphasis is on Desmarais' compositions. Everyone is in top form including Alias whose percussive wizardry brings a measure of rhythmic and textural diversity to the otherwise straight ahead nature of the trio. If you have an opportunity to obtain any of the Desmarais records, by all means do so.

A product of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (not exactly a spawning ground for major jazz talent) pianist **Jon Ballantyne** studied at Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music and also spent three years at North Texas State University. His highly polished technique, firm but sensitive touch, and natural sense of swing supply the basis for a mature, confident approach to the keyboard. "Trio Jon Ballantyne" his debut recording, dishes up a tasty menu of standards and originals. A Tynerish *Old Devil Moon* gives way to a delicately crafted *Round Midnight* followed by a spry reading of *But Not For Me*. Of the Ballantyne charts, *Blues For Duke* and the reflective *Miss U. Miss Q.* are the most outstanding. Ballantyne's partners mesh to form a rock steady pillar of support. Bassist Jim Vivian excels at laying down a forceful beat while also getting off several praiseworthy solos. World renowned drummer Terry Clarke should need no introduction, his list of accomplishments and associations being too numerous to mention. Judging solely on the merits of this album, it would be safe to say that Ballantyne can look forward to a long and richly rewarding career.

"Reflet 1" features the **Francois Bourassa** Trio. Sporting a degree in composition from McGill University, Bourassa is currently working on a masters degree in jazz at New England Conservatory. All of the music contained on these sides is credited to Bourassa and much of it reflects his fondness for European Impressionism, namely the works of Ravel and Debussy. This is not to imply however that this program is watered down or lacks a jazz feeling; quite the contrary. This is a tight knit trio and its members are capable of generating a good deal of energy. Also having a positive impact is Bourassa's adroit use of shading and contrast. Here quiet introspection coexists with full throttled flights of fancy. Bass and drum chores are handled by Yves Boisvert and his brother Guy who are both enrolled in the jazz program at Concordia University. Favoring the upper end of his insrument, bassist Yves Boisvert's affinity for Scott La Faro nicely complements Bourassa's penchant for Bill Evans. A discerning drummer, Guy Boisvert does a great job in the driver's seat as his thrashing, flattering brushes effectively stimulate his fellow colleagues.

Vancouver saxophonist, composer, arranger **Paul Cram** is probably best remembered for "Blue Tales In Time" a 1981 release on Onari Records. "Beyond Benghazi" his latest outing is one of the most inviting recordings to come my way in quite some time. Unencumbered by the rigid harmonic structures that domiate some of the more popular forms of jazz, Cram's compositions break out of the accepted norms of tradition and into a much freer realm of time and structure. To interpret his music, Cram has assembled a stunning nine piece band whose sheer exuberance and power tingle the nerve endings. A guest appearance by fellow saxophonist Julius Hemphill is an added bonus, his searing, white hot alto cutting through the ensemble the way an acetylene torch cuts through finely tempered metal. Not to be outdone, Cram unleashes his brawny tenor on three cuts and makes sure everyone else gets a piece of the action. When it comes to individual solos, there are no weak links in this chain. John Gzowski's stinging guitar heightens the tension while bassist James Young and drummer Richard Wynston ensure a sound rhythmic foundation. If you take your listening seriously, you owe it to yourself to seek out a copy of this record. – *Gerard J. Futrick*

Reservoir Music, 276 Pearl St., Kingston, N.Y. 12401

Justin Time Records, 5455 Pare St., Suite # 101, Montreal (Quebec) Canada H4H 1P7

Jazzimage is distributed by: CBC Enterprises, P.O. Box 500, Station A, Toronto, Canada M5W 1E6

Apparition Records from Coda Magazine, Box 87, Station J, Toronto, Ontario, M4J 4X8

CECIL TAYLOR IN SANTA FE

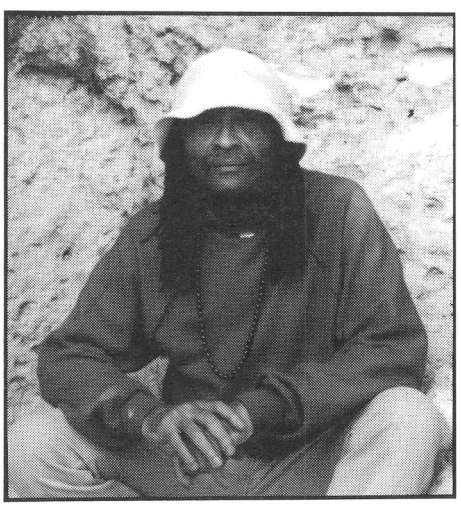
If Cecil Taylor is aware of his double role as icon and iconoclast of contemporary music, he doesn't let on. Indeed, his openness to all around him would seem to belie either classification. Coming off the plane for his New Mexico encore last September, he seemed both dapper and demure. He was carrying one of the heaviest bookbags – actually *full* of books – I had ever handled. While awaiting one of a continuous succession of fruit salads, this one at the airport restaurant, we began a short-term musical association and, perhaps, a long-term friendship.

This man who was simultaneously reading a William Kennedy novel, Jean Cocteau's diaries, Charles Gallenkamp's book on Maya, and a text about Sufi architecture, asked if I was familiar with the works of Barry Lopez! Over the course of four days we would discuss dance (Ballanchine/Baryshnikov), film (Robbe-Grillet's racism at Cannes; Maya Deren), politics (the Iran-Contra hearings; South Africa), music (from Stravinsky to Ellington), books *(The Education of Sonny Carson)*, Arshile Gorky, and the art of the Sun Dynasty. We would also explore Cecil's Native American roots (on his mother's side), and share the world premiere public performance of **Corona**, a work-in-progress for the Kronos Quartet.

Having read interviews in which Cecil seemingly cut the questioner to shreds with his irony, I was still feeling tentative about my own position as host, and concentrating on business as Cecil munched melon and strawberries. The piano, he said, didn't really need to be tuned before he played it. He encouraged me with a smile, however, to have it tuned afterward! And he asked, especially, that a piano be available to him each day of his stay, including the two days after his performance.

In September of 1987, and in Santa Fe as the opening artist in the New Mexico Jazz Workshop's Tenth Annual Guest Artists Series, Cecil was returning to the daily practice of music after a long hiatus brought about by the passing of Jimmy Lyons the previous year. The **Corona** performance at St. Francis Auditorium in Santa Fe was to be solo, but he was already looking toward the next week's rehearsal of The Unit at his home in Brooklyn. He was feeling, he said, "the responsibility to create a musical environment in which the luminescence of one such as Jimmy Lyons can be heard ... to liven up to the spirit of the man I played with for 26 years."

Subsequent conversation made more clear Cecil's personal sense of loss. There's nothing he loves more than playing with people, he says, but it had taken him over a year to reconstitute The Unit without Jimmy. Even so, current members were compared to the ideal: Jimmy's "extraordinary peace" found partially in William Parker, his ability to work the band found in Mel Lewis/Thad Jones veteran Earl McIntyre.



Given Cecil's insistence that music is a living idea rather than written work, the chemistry of The Unit is clearly all-important. Referring to **Corona**, perfected before our ears that weekend, Cecil spoke of playing music until it "rings", and only then committing it to paper for the likes of Kronos. My efforts to draw Cecil into a mystification of his process failed: "It's like a man who can make shoes making shoes. Music is just another manifestation of life."

Life, to Cecil Taylor, is clearly a very rich experience. And he samples it avidly, although not always with approval. Santa Fe cuisine was rejected more than once, while Albuquerque airport fare passed muster. In retrospect, the way in which he purchased white socks and body oil in Santa Fe shops for use in his performance seems more ritual than afterthought. Whether or not Cecil has read J.E. Lovelock's *Gaia*, he understands the notion of being part of a larger organism: "I have no idea what form is, but I know what I do in my life."

The man who travels with thirty pounds of books falls asleep in front of the television set at night, catching up on all the cable TV that still hasn't reached Brooklyn. An early riser, even so, Cecil also seems to thrive after dark. In fact, he refused to be impressed by the extraordinary opportunities for solitude offered by New Mexico, telling me that New York City itself has a landscape, and that 2 a.m. in Central Park provides a powerful privacy which contributes to his music, as does late afternoon sunlight on his piano at home.

As the weekend progressed and we shared another evening of cigarettes (his) and *cerveza*, Cecil began to seem to me a bit of a Brooklyn Woody Allen, in love with New York and its history of political and cultural diversity, a raconteur of range and insight, only occasionally extremely wry. Broaching the notion, I received the response that he had seen only *The Front* and had not liked it. (Actually, *The Front*, in which Allen appeared as an actor, was made by Martin Ritt and falls outside the body of Allen's own work. Even so, Cecil's antipathy discouraged my pursuit of the comparison.)

Obviously a man of conviction and compassion, Cecil ultimately had few harsh words for anyone. A few people were dismissed with only a word ("Herbie Hunchback", "Stanley Crunch") while others, like Mingus, whose bandleading style Cecil likened to "an act of male castration", were mentioned more than once. Mentioned most often, and always with respect, were Horace Silver and Duke Ellington.

Cecil speaks often of "the tradition of Ellington, Lunceford, and Armstrong," and most often about "the sound" achieved by Ellington, whether using the piano as an orchestra, or the orchestra as a piano: "He would just point and a musician would create this remarkable sound". While calling Bill Dixon the supreme voice on his instrument, Cecil frequently praises Miles Davis for "a new concept beholding to the order of Ellington".

The man who early-on was credited with (or blamed for) efforts to meld

CECIL TAYLOR (Photograph by Kelley Kirkpatrick)

Bartok and Stravinsky into jazz improvisational form, speaks now of "the incredible resonance" of Horace Silver's right hand and the sonority achieved in Silver's playing. While confessing to "much time spent with Stravinsky, some time spent with the scores of Boulez", and a familiarity with Ligeti and Xenakis, he reiterates his triumvirate of influences as Ellington, Silver and Monk. Repeated visits to the opera have not shaken his belief that Billie Holiday ("the key"), Betty Carter ("the greatest since Billie") and Aretha Franklin are "very serious forces of musical creation".

As an eavesdropper on an extended conversation between Cecil and Santa Fe composer/publisher Peter Garland, I was impressed with Cecil's eagerness for dialogue, even regarding something he could dismiss with the aside: "That whole European mystification about composition makes me retch. First, you make up a theory, then you talk about beauty and form". Lost on the fringes of an erudition about Stravinsky and Schönberg which I do not share, my non-technical mind was buoyed by Cecil's remark that "everybody knows what Schönberg thought, but does anyone know what he felt?" Feelings are at the heart of Cecil Taylor's music.

So, how does he feel about never playing what he calls "the Art Blakey circuit?" In a word, (mine, not necessarily his!), reconciled: "Jimmy always wanted to work more, but as I get older I find both more and less reason for anger. Should I indulge those feelings at my present ~~age, there~~ would be no coming back."

At age 55 (this year), has Cecil Taylor, homeowner, landlord, and keeper of pets (an Akida, two cats, four kittens) become himself a pussycat? Or was my initial impression of him, based upon reputation, published accounts and existing music, misguided? Cecil, who has a tendency to talk around direct questions, addressed this one most directly:

"Creating music is no longer about making it difficult, but rather about making it easy to play. When you're young and you've got muscles, you must show people what you can do. At first, composing music is fine, but then you realize you need to make a living doing it. When you are young, you think you know everything, but as you get older you realize it's only just beginning. Even though I've had only two gigs in New York this year, I love to be alive just to see the beautiful faces of people in that city."

Even so, Cecil, whose poetry has appeared in print on several album jackets, and whose performances now fully incorporate both dance and voice, has been unable to overcome "the absolute disrespect" which he sees offered to poets in America. As a result, his poetry and prose remain largely private, even while his music continues to come in nearly electrical surges. Music itself is often the object of disrespect by journalists not up to the task of comprehension. David Bell of the *Albuquerque Journal*, for instance, characterized Cecil's performance of **Corona** as "fast, loud and unrelenting", confessed to being "puzzled", and devoted four paragraphs to the composition of the audience.

The performance in question occurred in the Museum of Fine Arts immediately adjoining the Santa Fe Plaza and consisted of Cecil's body movements, vocal sounds, and skillful manipulation of a Beckstein concert grand piano. The proprietors of the instrument, seated in the front row, were admittedly aghast at the energy with which Cecil approached the keyboard and related hardware with forefinger, fist, forearm and open hand. The audience, described by Mr. Bell as "culturati and trendy young folks", saw fit to call for six encores. The event was recorded for subsequent broadcast on American Jazz Radio Festival.

Only the following day, while touring Tsankawi Ruins near Bandelier, New Mexico, did Cecil confess to the terror implicit in each new performance situation: "I prepare the material and then before the performance I'm always terrified that I haven't prepared enough. Sometime I literally curl up into a ball. But then, always, when I really get into the performance I don't want to stop."

Something similar could be said about Cecil's conversational habits. Once begun, conversation is a font which resists closing. The last night before the airport we talked of Cecil's favored vocalists (Lena Horne, Charles Aznavour, Shirley Bassey), pianists loved (Walter Davis, Hank Jones, Kirk Lightsey, John Hicks), and pianists appreciated (Kenny Kirkland, Geri Allen, Joanne Brackeen, Tommy Flanagan, Mulgrew Miller). He spoke again of the tradition of Fats Waller and Horace Silver, and the neglect of that tradition by Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea and others. He recalled "when Phillip Glass would have been happy to be Archie Shepp's piano player", and his own glory time when he took an 8-person Unit into the New York club Lush Life for 8 weeks in 1982.

He laughed about meeting Ornette and Denardo backstage at a Grateful Dead concert last year, and expressed anger at Alain Robbe-Grillet's refusal to seriously consider Dexter Gordon for acting honors at the Cannes Film Festival. He still seemed piqued that Max Gordon had tried to pressure him into a solo format years ago at the Village Vanguard and had in fact fired him for showing up with Jimmy Lyons and Andrew Cyrille. He had kind words, however, for remembered company in the Vanguard's kitchen, and spoke in awe of Monk's ability to command an entire room's attention with but one unimaginable chord.

It was the last night especially that reminded me of the raconteurship manifest in Woody Allen films like *Radio Days* and *Broadway Danny Rose*. It seemed as though Cecil could go on forever with tales of New York, from the Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra of 1948 ("one great postwar band") to the pleasures of present-day Brownie's at Ave A and Tenth Street.

Finally, however, his focus was on the future, the coming west coast tour with The Unit, a European tour, a festival in Montreal, more gigs in his hometown. His eagerness at approaching new work with new people was evident in his regular references to the upcoming week's rehearsals. Although I was unable to keep my appointment with The Unit in Santa Cruz the following month, friends who were there tell me the Spirit of Jimmy Lyons shone brightly. I never would have doubted it.

Roy Durfee is Executive Director of The New Mexico Jazz Workshop Inc. For program or membership information write: NMJW Inc., P.O. Box 1925, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103, USA.

MISHA MENGELBERG * OFF MINOR

THE BRILLIANT DUTCH MUSICIAN IS INTERVIEWED BY AMSTERDAM WRITER WALTER SCHWAGER

Misha Mengelberg was born in Kiev, Russia, where his father, a classical composer, worked in the film industry before political events forced his return to Holland. Mr. Mengelberg is among Europe's foremost pianists and improvisors; together with Han Bennink he has been leading the Instant Composers Pool (ICP), one of Europe's most prominent groups of improvisors, for over twenty years, which may well be a record. Recently Misha Mengelberg has been playing the music of Thelonious Monk and Herbie Nichols with ICP and a smaller group of musicians; these projects have gathered rave reviews internationally.

This interview took place in Amsterdam, in March of this year. It was conducted in Dutch and translated by the interviewer.

Walter Schwager: *The shift from jazz to improvised music in Holland, when did it take place and how did it happen?*

Misha Mengelberg: It can't be dated exactly; it needed a kind of critical mass to bring it about. I was already busy doing a kind of free improvisation in the Fifties, playing on my own and trying to find people to play with. That is important, working together with other people. Of course improvising on your own can be done quite well, but that's like composing: you're making all the decisions on your own. In improvising, if you're working with forceful personalities, there are a number of compositional plans that are colliding, and you've got to make something of that somehow. That's the challenge. That's why improvisation remains interesting, that has not changed. But it was very difficult to find improvisers in those days, and people who knew improvisation were not interested in free improvisation, only in jazz. Jazz is the only living improvisational music that exists in our urban industrial culture. That's why it connected in Europe, everybody wanted to do that as well, it was interesting.

The only real challenge was jazz and the idea that you had to change that music did not occur to most people. Some people were interested in it, here and in the States, such as Lennie Tristano. In the early Fifties I heard him. I thought that's nice and harmonically more interesting than standard jazz. The tidal waves of dissonance couldn't get high enough for me: I grew up with Schoenberg and Stravinsky, and the harmonic systems of jazz I didn't find too interesting. Then I heard a couple of musicians I thought much more advanced: Ellington, Monk, and that's how I got into this music.

I only started to care about bebop much later. To be able to play with others I started orienting myself towards jazz, which I did find very interesting. Fantastic dynamics. The feeling of the moment itself was strongly stressed, very different than things I was accustomed to until then. I was used to thinking in musical curves but that disappeared due to jazz. The moment itself could be made very interesting, and I thought that was a very important achievement. But only in the early Sixties I got to know some people that were open to something more than jazz, those same harmonic structures, and I really got into that then. It still lasted until 1964-65 before I found people that were doing something new that had some force and expressiveness. Just experimenting isn't good enough. I had played with Han Bennink a lot already and he was quite ready for something new: we started with Willem Breuker, Bergeijk.

There was nothing else to do but play bebop. If you wanted to play with half-decent musicians there were only beboppers left, and it was so important to me to play with others that I adjusted. I didn't think I was playing very well in those days, especially in the Fifties, I remember stomping my feet merely to keep the beat. That really didn't work, so I gave it up. If I don't have the same sense of rhythm as those fantastic Black guys that have been doing that all their lives, maybe I should stop trying so hard. The peculiar thing was, as soon as I gave it up I started to swing a bit, that's how I left it. That's necessary, I think. You can't learn to swing. If you give up trying to swing, maybe that's when you'll succeed a bit.

The next generation arrived that wanted to do something else, they already heard us playing weird, not exactly bebop. We stated at the time as a sort of verbal justification, that we have an entirely different background than the people who created jazz music: European traditions, totally different sources. The most important thing was to consider our own identity as improvisers and to start improvising from our own backgrounds. To do that we had to abandon the jazz tradition first. That same tradition reentered through a backdoor in my case, because I studied that tradition intensively and it became part of my background too; I don't think you can claim ownership of mental productions.

So it was partly dissatisfaction with the structures of bebop, but also an attempt to come to terms with the European background?

That differed for different people in Europe. I think Derek Bailey decided in those days never to do anything anymore that resembled popular music in any way, as he had to do that for Radio Sheffield for years. That's quite understandable, but I hardly ever had to play for money, apart from an unsuccessful stint as a restaurant musician, but they complained I didn't play enough notes. But for other people it was a much more radical decision than it was for me. Since my youth I have always been improvising, it was just a natural extension of those activities.

Did you study composition?

No, music theory. I thought it was boring to have to bring in little pieces to have checked, and I could always discuss any pieces I wrote with Kees van Baaren, as a personal favour. It was in those days I discovered that there is not much of a difference between composing and improvising. Until then I had thought: improvising fits into one category, it has nothing to do with the writing down of notes, the making of wonderful serialist pieces. Then suddenly it was no longer true. It was one of those accidents: I heard Cecil Taylor play a small piece on the radio, and I thought I had written it. A cluster piece I had written, *Piano Piece #4*, only clusters. Cecil Taylor was kind of playing my piece, and he did not deal with music paper at all. Since that time I have abandoned the distinction between composing and improvising: it is arbitrary and has nothing to do with musical results.

I always thought I was a bit cuckoo in those days. I loved Dada, the nicest art movement that is also an anti-art movement of this century, but there never was

MISHA MENGELBERG (Photograph by Bill Smith)

any really nice Dada music, none with quality. The first composer to make Dada music was John Cage, but he always talked about Oriental wisdom. But it seems Taoism contains a lot of Dada elements: lots of gratuitous destructive elements, no reasons given, but also constructive elements, gestures related to nihilism. Those attracted me, and still do. None of that cause-and-effect stuff, referring symbols, etc: I find it tiresome. Useless to justify all your actions, leave it to musicologists and critics.

What interests you in current European music?

About nothing. It's all nice until Webern and Messiaen, I can still grasp their musical impulses. I went to Darmstadt in the Fifties, Stockhausen, Boulez, to see the people who made the headlines. I only liked John Cage, but he was laughed at a lot in those days. A very German public of experts was laughing sheepishly during his piece. I have a lot of difficulty with that whole European tradition. Wonderful music, take Mahler, but rhythmically it's dead. Sound fields drifting by like little clouds. But the young guys after the war made it a kind of hectic drunkard's game. Always irregular, and as a result totally predictable. Like somebody who just woke up from a catatonic stupor. I have no objections to it, for about two minutes, but you can only treat very limited subjects. But those guys think very differently: read Stockhausen about it. The intelligent human of today cannot stand stupid repetitions, that's for primitives. I just think it's suspicious; certainly Stockhausen is. They all were devoted believers in that kind of stammering, and I never saw anything in it. I disagree with very large parts of contemporary music. Their starting points I find uninteresting.

That's when the American school arrived: Cage, Earl Brown, a few more, and they had very different views: they left large holes in their music. I also met them in Darmstadt, and if I had to choose I'd rather pick them. But they totally denied jazz and that wonderful improvised music that originated in their country. Cage thought it was unimportant. Morton Feldman thought improvisation was childish. That's a kind of blindness I don't understand.

Charles Ives?

He's extraordinary, obviously. Admirable, delightful. He's written a lot of very boring music, but his Concord Sonata, early string quartet. Incredible, a giant.

Back to improvised music and jazz. What interesting things are happening in Europe at the moment?

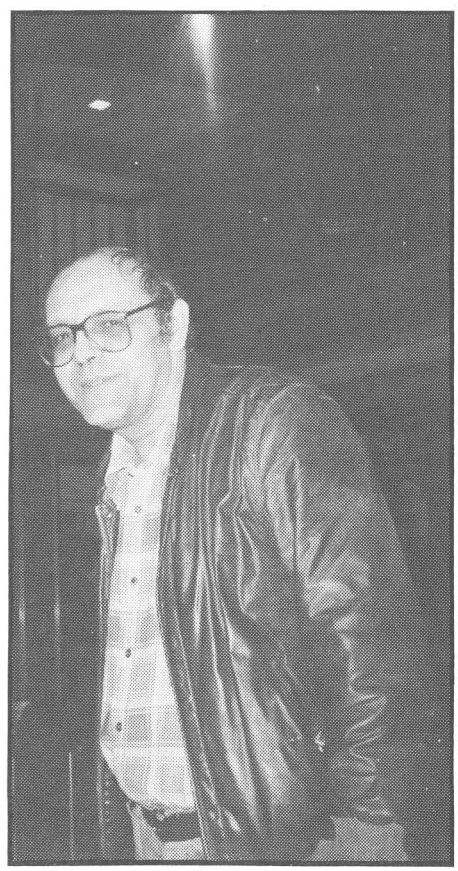
There seems to be a trend towards the combining of improvisation and composition, or the mixing of taped or computerized material. I think that that's going to happen more and more in the future. Classical composing behind a desk, writing down notes to have interpreted by nice obedient slaves, that's not going to last. I think that lordly attitude is going to disappear out of necessity. Composing is going to be more like a craft where in cooperation with others, other improvisers, you're going to make plans that leave a lot open.

If you look at the current musicians, I know you like Braxton...

Braxton is extremely interesting. I like to listen to John Zorn, Evan (Parker), Derek Bailey is fantastic...

How's von Schlippenbach?

Sure, he has been very systematically getting people from everywhere to play together with or without formal rules, especially in the Seventies. Most of the new big names I really can't get very enthusiastic about.



If a young musician comes to study with you, what do you advise them to study? Theory? Technique? The tradition?

That depends on the person, of course. What do they want, what don't they? What can they do? Take Ab Baars, a member of ICP I really appreciate, he can really invent things out of the blue, but I bothered him for two years with Monk progressions; he found fantastic solutions. But I don't advise people to study material that is not going to be useful to them. I think playing bebop is not going to be any use to anybody at this moment, to make that a lifelong career for a musician seems to me to be a bit depressing. It happened to be my own situation in the Fifties, that was the only way I got to play with others, it was the only thing around. But I don't think people have to learn those chord schemes by heart. How's the bridge in *Darn That Dream*? But I have to admit, it's good material to study.

How do you see the future of ICP, after twenty years. You sounded a bit blue in some interviews around the anniversary.

I think it's just starting, I'm just getting up on it. I spent sixteen years or so on that band, and I never got it close to where I wanted it to be. I always had to take control, which I thought was a sign of failure. When you've worked with people for some time they should know what should happen. I think things are happening now. If you listen to the tape of our last English concert you'd probably agree with me. Sometimes I don't take part here, but the people are doing things I totally agree with.

To what extent did Monk and the Nichols project help to get things going?

Both of them helped. Most of the band members did not know these traditions, and it is not just those traditions but the contributions of these two within them. All professional musicians, improvisers, have to know them. They are very important, significant moments of twentieth century music: Ellington, Monk, Nichols. That's one of the great defects of nearly all contemporary composers. Those partitions, this is jazz and that's serious music, that's totally irrelevant, only useful to consumers.

Everybody loves Monk these days, although they pretty him up a lot, but how do you see Nichols?

Monk has a totally different idea of possibilities. Nichols is interested in very

horn-oriented things, Parker, Armstrong, continuity, movement, jazzy. Monk gives the impression of composing static scenes, a musical sculpture. Nichols is open to options, change.

Monk's pieces give the impression of being finished, you can hardly change a detail, a rhythmical pattern. But do you see Nichols as a key figure?

You can hardly compare them; there is no world champion jazz. I think Nichols could have been more significant for the developments to follow, one of the reasons things got into a bit of a jam in the sixties with things like Ornette Coleman's double quartet. That left too many things open, formally. Everything is form, but how efficient is a form, how is the economy of expression, that's the question for composers. Those forms were still in flux, and left unfinished. Maybe the task was too difficult. Leaving chaos in a state of chaos can work, if you can get a bearing on its elements. I find those aspects in Ives, but in a much more elaborate state. I think that historically those problems arose and could not be avoided.

What do you mean, a more efficient composition? Form?

You have to have some idea of where things are going. Tempo: open; key: unspecified; no agreements on coordinated actions. What's left? Everybody starts somewhere, and you get a complex of subtle social networks. Piet and Jan play together, Kees and Henk and Arthur also have something going, because they still pick something like a tempo or a beat. Those things change, Jan becomes dominant. It becomes rule by force, often rule by volume. Those things can be seen in the double quartet, and after you noticed it's a bit of a jungle, that's all you can say.

But the double quartet had a structure, solos of a certain length...

Yes, but you could see the trends coming: abandoning all the formal structures that had shaped jazz. It was a clear reaction. It's like Derek Bailey refusing to play in C: he tries to avoid it at all costs. But from its opposite you can exactly deduce what he is trying to avoid.

But after 25 years the double quartet probably sounds a lot more classical than it did then.

Sure. But what I did like in those days were pieces Cecil Taylor was doing with a group of people in New York, prompted by Gil Evans. The nicest pieces for a large band in those days, but everything was directed by Cecil. He wrote a couple of lines, themes for people, that's what they played, Cecil decided if they played. Totally classical stuff.

The aesthetics of that music has become totally acceptable. If in twenty years you look back at the aesthetics of current ICP music, how would you describe it?

With all music, as with all art, there's a period that it's dangerous, but that inevitably passes. What is the oldest dangerous art piece? That Marcel Duchamp picture with a safety pin?

It still gets people mad?

Yes. But what else? Schoenberg? Webern? Accepted, totally classic, by a small public, but in principle it is totally safe. What I like about this ICP music? You hear them telling a story, you move in a structure from point A to point B, there is a development, exactly the opposite of what John Cage was saying, but if you can reverse it it already becomes amorphous. But the means of this composition traverse tonality and atonality, they concern associations arising from tonal production. These are sounds that can only be produced by people who know their instruments perfectly, and thus say something about the person playing. That way composing is short-circuited as an expression in sounds of a group of people. It's like you don't write down notes for them, but you insinuate a train of thoughts into their minds.

Which they transform effortlessly into sounds?

By them, in their turn. I don't even want to state I have done it all, but I have had a certain influence. It's like sorcery: I let people do things their own way, but I give them a couple of impulses, but is hard to reconstruct.

With ICP I write a number of little pieces for the players, marches, and so on, and they play with it.

I read that a musician in a fight once told Ellington that he was a compiler, not a composer.

I'd be pleased to be called a compiler instead of a composer. But Ellington let his musicians react to his ideas, and then standardized them. I don't do that, I just provide some ideas and sketches.

I also think ICP concerns a certain ideal sound: it's all acoustic, some kind of sonority. I don't think you like electronic sounds much.

That's not right, I used to work in a computer sound workshop. But I hate everything that comes out of a speaker, it all sounds cheap, awful, old science fiction sound tracks. I prefer Evan Parker to any sound generator, filter, etc. All that sound sampling from parrots to bulldozers sound worse than a sparrow on a windowsill. All that electronic sound production.

Any personal solo record plans?

I hope to make a solo record one day, but I am trying to postpone it. One of these days ... I like soloing once in a while, but then I feel I can spend my time better by working out something for six clarinets or whatever. Soloing is composing.

Yes, but there is this romantic tradition of the piano soloist, who lords over his instrument.

Let's not create any misunderstandings. I am a rotten piano player, I can play some of my ideas, but I have no technical pretensions. Any music school student plays better than I do.

Your timing is in the tradition, but you also add something to the tradition, and in your chording as well.

But that is because I studied music theory, and I thought a lot of American players kept their chord structures rather rudimentary, no flexibility. Only a few, like Bud Powell, add something to it and immediately stick out. So that's easy for me.

You're too modest, you do add something to Monk and Nichols.

I'm not in the least modest, but I don't think I'm a piano player. I have confidence in some of my ideas. Nichols was a terrific piano player, who deserves to get recognized for his worth. It's time we realized who were in the pantheon: Monk, Parker, Nichols, maybe Gillespie, Navarro. It's a shame the American system never even permitted Nichols to play his music with a small band, like we do, five or six horns.

RECENT RECORDINGS

"Extension", The ICP Orchestra performs Herbie Nichols (ICP 025) Cassette
"Regeneration", with Roswell Rudd, Steve Lacy, Kent Carter and Han Bennink Soul Note 1054
"Change of Season", with Lacy, George Lewis, Aarjen Gorter and Han Bennink Soul Note 1104

THE PIANO IS THE EGO

COUNT BASIE / Get Together / Pablo 2310.924
Ode To Pres / Basie's Bag / Swinging On The Cusp / Like It Used To Be / My Main Men / Pretty Time (recorded: 1979)

COUNT BASIE / Basie / Pablo 2310.920
Put It Right Here / By My Side / Blue Chip / Fancy Pants / Hi-Five / Time Stream / Samantha / Strike Up The Band (recorded: 1983)

COUNT BASIE / OSCAR PETERSON / Yessir, That's My Baby / Pablo 2310.923
Blues For Roy / Joe Turner / Teach Me Tonight / Blues For C.T. / Yessir, That's My Baby / After You've Gone / Tea For Two / Poor Butterfly (recorded: 1978)

OSCAR PETERSON FOUR / If You Could See Me Now / Pablo 2310.918
Weird Blues / L'Impossible / If I Should Lose You / If You Could See Me Now / On Danish Shore / Limehouse Blues (recorded: 1983)

RAY BROWN TRIO / The Red Hot... / Concord 315
Have You Met Miss Jones / Meditation / Street Of Dreams / Lady Be Good / That's All / Love Me Tender / How Could You Do A Thing Like This To Me / Captain Bill (recorded: 1985)

RAY BRYANT / Basie & Ellington / Emarcy 832.235-1
Jive At Five / Swingin' The Blues / 9:20 Special / Teddy The Toad / Blues For Basie / I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart / It Don't Mean A Thing / Medley / Things Ain't What They Used To Be (recorded: 1987)

DICK HYMAN / DICK WELLSTOOD / Stridemonster! / Unisson 1006
Keep Off The Grass / Like Someone In Love / I've Got A Crush On You / Who? / Birmingham Breakdown / Thou Swell / Caravan / Snowy Morning Blues / What's The Use Of Being Alone? / Fine And Dandy (recorded: 1986)

ART HODES / Joy To The Jazz World / Parkwood 108
Greensleeves / Silent Night / Away In A Manger / Jingle Bells / We Wish You A Merry Christmas / Hark! The Herald Angels Sing / White Christmas / Joy To The World (recorded: 1987)

HENRY "THINS" FRANCIS / Some American Music / Mephistopheles 102
Zonky / I Ain't Got Nobody / Serenade For A Wealthy Widow / Jazzamine Concerto / I'm Putting All My Eggs In One Basket / Snowfall / Maple Leaf Rag / Show Boat (Medley) / Just Before Daybreak / Lotus Blossom / The Duke / Love Me Or Leave Me (recorded: 1986)

GEORGE CABLES / The Music Of George Gershwin / Contemporary 14030
Bess, You Is My Woman Now / My Man's Gone Now / I Got Rhythm / Embraceable You / Someone To Watch Over Me / A Foggy Day (recorded: 1987)

HAROLD MABERN / Joy Spring / Sackville 2016
I've Got The World On A String / Blues In F / T-Bone Steak / House Of Jade / Joy Spring / Dat Dere / Pent Up House / Thou Swell / Mabern's Boogie (recorded: 1984)

Donald Mitchell (**The Language Of Modern Music**: Faber, 1963) guardedly expressed his concern that "one wonders nowadays if any aspiring composer would risk his reputation by committing himself to anything as solecistic as a good tune". If these eleven recordings are a representative testimony to that issue, he needn't have worried. Performers, at least, continue to draw from that body of "good tunes" upon which to work their magic; the ingredients of harmony, rhythm and melody are still very much alive and in demand.

Surely no one is more dedicated to this principle than producer Norman Granz of Pablo records who, for decades now, has based the success of his product on the simple formula that a solid rhythmic base + an endless reshuffling of veteran musicians = satisfying, swinging jazz. It's predictable, but it works. Witness the Basie/Peterson syndrome.

Latter-day big band Basie can, in many ways, be as exciting as those desert island gems from the thirties and forties. Though the brass and reed men may be featured (note: *My Main Men*), the indomitable Basie rhythm (Basie, Green, Clayton, Johnson) seeps through, always giving impetus and direction to the soloists. It lingers behind Terry's deliciously mellow fluegel horn rendition of *Like It Used To Be* (the title is no disclaimer!), fashions the cohesive fabric that links the well-known facets of *Pretty Time*, and offers a subtly relaxed contrast to Budd Johnson's tough, reedy baritone on *Basie's Bag*. To the end, with an even larger aggregation made up, in part, of younger musicians, that four-to-the-bar catalytic nucleus remained as the "stylization of phrasing which made the band instantly identifiable" (liner). Whether supporting an up-tempo trumpet

flourish *(By My Side)*, a dextrous saxophone incursion *(Hi-Five)*, or laying down the blues to a gorgeous ballad *(Samantha)*, the effect is innovative, changing, yet always somehow the same. *Time Stream* perhaps best serves to express and reflect the truth behind this Basie phenomenon.

Pairing Peterson with Basie would seem like putting oil on water; however, the Tatum-inspired overstatements of the former are soon dissolved beautifully in the understated Kansas City blues style of the latter. Here, there is an intriguing exchange from acoustic to electric pianos, Peterson on electric on *Blues For Roy* and *After You've Gone*, with Basie taking over on *Teach Me Tonight* and *Joe Turner* (Basie surprises us, too, switching suddenly over to organ on the latter). *Blues For C.T.* has to be the fastest blues ever, taken at an incredible clip for Basie, arthritic fingers and all. The entire session reflects the joy of two old friends lovingly sharing the bond of music, drawing continually the best from one another.

There is really no such thing as a "bad" Oscar Peterson recording; if one must impose ratings, they should read "good/better/best". In my estimation, this disk falls into the mid-range of such categorization. There is plenty of variety, both instrumentally and musically, with a strong emphasis on the blues. Though we expect Peterson and Pass to accelerate on occasion (London's *Limehouse*, for example, has seldom been subjected to such spirited animation), NHOP's fly-past *(On Danish Shore)* shows the limits to which the post-Blanton bass can be extended. *L'Impossible* presents a gentle bossa rhythm, revealing Pass's ability "to pluck fresh melody out of the air" (liner), while Peterson treats a strikingly beautiful yet neglected *If I Should Lose You* with a decidedly blues-infused interpretation. What has become the expected norm of performing calibre for Peterson would launch a newer artist into instant stardom. Too often labelled an overly prolific recording performer, he remains, ironically, unheralded now in print and on the airwaves. Alas, it's a pattern we have seen frequently before, especially in the arts.

Peterson's influence is long and strong, surely evident on the Ray Brown album recorded live at New York's Blue Note. Brown is at his best in these small group settings, as we so well remember from his many stints with Peterson over the years; his pace-setting introductions to *Lady Be Good* and his own *Captain Bill*, his powerful arco solo in *Love Me Tender*, and his delicate rounding off to *That's All* are certainly noteworthy. However, it is pianist Gene Harris, drawn out of retirement by Brown several years ago, who steals the show, especially on *How Could You* and *That's All* where he blends Peterson runs with Garnerian humour, or in his own down-home rendition of the most paradoxical plea for *Lady Be Good* on record. I would be remiss if I did not draw attention to the impressive contributions made by drummer Mickey Roker to the success of this album.

Like Peterson, Ray Bryant is always a consistently exciting and entertaining craftsman; sometimes, however, a sense of personal dissatisfaction with one's performance necessitates a break from that demanding routine in order to re-examine priorities and search out new sources of inspiration. For Bryant, that hiatus from the recording studio lasted nearly seven years; now he returns, drawing deliberately upon those early influences and feeling once more, as he says, "... like I'm just getting started". Though the blues strongly remain an integral part of Bryant's style (just listen to his version of *Things Ain't What They Used To Be*!), old wine is put in new bottles with the trio renditions of *Jive At Five, Teddy The Toad* and *9:20 Special*, numbers long associated with the Basie band, while the Ellington side of the record, moreover, offers fresh approaches to Duke's standards *(I Let A Song)* as well as nurturing a medley of familiar ballads with typically Ducal tenderness.

With the recent unexpected passing of Dick Wellstood, the jazz world has lost an uniquely colourful personality and articulate spokesman. The intrinsic value of a recording such as this, presenting, as it does, two of an ever-decreasing number of stride-oriented pianists, becomes even more pronounced. In addition, the recording itself is a gem. Wellstood and Hyman are, indeed, "monsters" of this idiom, whether competitively vying for elbow room on Johnson's *Keep Off The Grass*, Ellington's *Birmingham Breakdown*, or Perry Bradford's *What's The Use Of Being Alone*, or almost wickedly toying with the unexpected either in mode or time signature as on *Like Someone In Love* or *Caravan*. This ranks right up there with earlier duets laid down by the likes of James P/Waller, Ewell/Willie "The Lion", and Sutton/McShann.

Unorthodox or irreverent as it may seem, there is no music more naturally suited to the joy of Christmas celebration than jazz; and what more gifted artist to pay homage to that festive season is there than octogenarian Art Hodes. Be it the gentle, blues-flavoured reflections of the awe and mystery of *Silent Night* or the familiar strains of Berlin's *White Christmas*, the vibrant jostlings registered by *Jingle Bells*, the bumptious good nature of *We Wish You A Merry Christmas*, the resplendent gospel-like grandeur of *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*, Hodes fashions his own special blueprint for a meaningful and merry Christmas as only he can. One almost expects *'Parsifal' According To Hodes* next. He would enjoy the challenge, I'm sure.

Unlike Art Hodes, Harry "Thins" Francis is hardly a household name; yet his music speaks as strongly of the past as any of the others. Francis' own liner notes compound the conundrum; acquiescing to the consensus that "most people who enjoy the recent styles of jazz would be unhappy with this record", he states that his "occasional use of relatively dissonant harmony may even disqualify the music as 'traditional' ". Indeed, he does almost perversely defy categories, drawing from such disparate sources as Waller's *Zonky*, Joplin's *Maple Leaf Rag*, Kern's *Showboat*, Thornhill's *Snowfall* and Brubeck's *The Duke*. He, himself, remains ostensibly outside those niches of two-handed stride player or bop exponent, with an interesting proclivity for deliberately crossing boundary lines of musical categorization ("...musical categories are silly"); perhaps the very label itself – Mephistopheles – appropriately tokens that mischievous defiance to pigeon-holing. The result is a fine effort by a better-than-average purveyor of "American music" in a number of its many manifestations. If that is what he has set out to do, he's made his point admirably. I especially enjoyed hearing rarely performed numbers such as James P. Johnson's *Just Before Daybreak* or his *Jazzamine Concerto* (second movement only). What a partnership he and John Arpin would make!

RAY BRYANT (Photograph by Roger Kaysel)

To many, I suppose, another Gershwin album might seem superfluous. But great music survives overexposure, and, in the hands of a talented performer, becomes refreshingly rejuvenated. Cables has based his choices on selections that have "special meaning" for him; the warmth of feeling and rhythmic inventiveness he brings to them, supported ably on all but *Embraceable You* and *Someone To Watch Over Me* by bassist John Heard and drummer Ralph Penland, make this a good outing. Cables is certainly adaptive (recall those Village Vanguard sessions of the 70's with Art Pepper, or, more recently, recordings with Harold Land and Warren Gale), and Gershwin's music, it would seem, has successfully succumbed to many reinterpretations over the years, especially at the discretion of such giants as Parker, Monk and Rollins.

At last! – liner notes that give the reader a perspective of a performer in a meaningful context – so necessary if this music is to survive a generation dedicated to glitter and gloss. Made under the auspices of CJRT-FM, a listener-supported radio station, the Harold Mabern date is live from Toronto's Cafe des Copains, home to the solo pianist since 1983, where patrons take their music and unwarranted bistro noise seriously. Mabern's credentials are extensive and formidable (Mobley/Hubbard/Hampton/Farmer-Golson), and his style imaginatively challenging. "I'm from the university of the streets", he confesses; yet elements of Powell, Tatum and, in particular, Phineas Newborn can be detected even in more familiar chestnuts as *Thou Swell* and *World On A String*. Moreover, even earlier Memphis and Chicago roots are detectable as part of the Mabern composite in his originals *Blues In F / T-Bone Steak* and *Mabern's Boogie*, while Shorter's *House Of Jade* and Timmons *Dat Dere*, rich in chromatic density and harmonically complex, are treated with masterful self-assurance.

Mabern envisages the piano as an instrument with an identity of its own: "The piano is the ego. Each night I go there and it's waiting for me. It knows what it can do and it's waiting to find out what I can do ... It's the ultimate challenge!" Each of the above has faced that instrumental adversary face to face, and, from what I've heard, the score reads 11 to 0 in favour of the performing artist, based chiefly on a game plan of "good tunes". – *John Sutherland*

OLIVER JONES

I can't envisage any performer more suited at the moment to don the mantle of Canada's ambassador of jazz than Oliver Jones. Congenial, articulate, retrospectively unaffected by his own sudden rise to success, enthusiastic about the future of Canadian jazz, he is a natural choice for such a pre-eminent role.

"Why is it", I asked, "that Canadian jazz musicians seem to have to prove themselves internationally before Canadian fans take them seriously?" "Well, you're looking at an exception," he replied quickly.

The response was a candid one, for certainly, to coin a phrase, Oliver Jones has paid his dues. His teenage years were spent in Quebec and the northern States with a review band; then followed nearly two decades as pianist/musical director with the Puerto-Rican based Kenny Hamilton Show Band, touring the U.S.A. hotel circuit and European USO shows. "I have no real regrets. It was a good life in that it provided me with the means to make a living for my family. I was on the road most of the time, however; in 27 years, I can recall only two free Saturdays. Believe it or not, I have more time now on weekends to spend with the family."

He had played everything but jazz up to his decision to return to Montreal in 1980. "Starting over at my age was a gamble," he admits, "but I had plenty of help from friends." Oliver is high in his praise for individuals such as Charlie Biddle whose new club, **Biddles Jazz And Ribs**, offered him the venue and immediate exposure he needed; for Jim West whose **Justin Time Records Inc.** afforded Oliver an even wider audience for his unquestionable talents; and, especially, for his agent, Carol Clark, who not only fostered his own belief in himself as a viable jazz artist, but also has proven indefatigable in arranging tours and handling his promotional affairs. Ironically, the young man who had grown up in the shadow of such local musical giants as Steep Wade, Reggie Wilson, Gene Cooper, Milt Sealey, and Oscar Peterson, has become himself the popular elder statesman of Montreal jazz piano, a link between that memorable past and the ever-changing present.

I had decided on a tape recorder, or at least a writing pad for notes, for my interview with Oliver Jones. At the last minute, I pitched them aside, knowing full well that they would only get in the way. I wanted to meet the man, not the biography. Seated across from him over lunch at the Chelsea Inn, I knew I had made the right decision. Oliver was eager to talk, not just about his own experiences, but about the music on many levels. My initial apprehension soon gave way to fascination.

Yes, he enjoys the solo gigs such as those at the Cafe des Copains, though they are very demanding. They always teach you something about yourself, about your own strengths and weaknesses. A trio format is more comfortable to work in. It also provides work for local musicians, and he is a great believer in that. "I try to include Canadian players from whatever part of the country I happen to be playing in. There are many excellent players around." He rattled off some names – Skip Beckwith, Fraser MacPherson, Michel Donato, Jim Hillman, Reg Schwager.

Indeed, he admires a good many of today's players: Keith Jarrett, Chick Corea, Cecil Taylor, Tommy Flanagan, Marian McPartland, Hank Jones. "I'd like to make a duet album with Hank," he mused. (I hope he does!)

The past? Yes, there was Erroll Garner and Nat Cole. "Everybody imitated Nat then. Even the vocal stylizings."

Free music? the avant-garde? He's certainly not critical of the music; but his own roots demand a sense of swing, a burst of passion – from the heart (putting his hand on the spot), not the head.

The classics? Oh yes – Chopin, Bach, Mozart. In fact, from May 30th to June 3rd, he anticipates delving briefly into that world with a CBC special taping with the M.M.S.

Oscar Peterson? He's flattered by comparisons, though he confesses making no deliberate efforts to emulate Oscar's style. "We share the same feeling for rhythm and chordal structuring, I suppose." Actually, he was always closer to Daisy, Oscar's sister, who taught music

OLIVER JONES (Photograph by Mark Miller)

to Oliver for many years, and to Oscar's brother, Chuck, who was his unofficial mentor, offering him encouragement up to Chuck's death in 1985.

Journeys abroad? He's enjoyed them. He animatedly recounted his first trip – to Australia and New Zealand. "I remember a small town somewhere in New Zealand sheep country. I can't recall its name at the moment. I was driven for miles through the most beautiful countryside, passing thousands of sheep – wondering all the while what I was doing in such a remote place. It turned out to be a concert for some local dignitaries – doctors, professors, prominent businessmen. We'd play a number and then sit around and discuss each performance. Yes, something like an early court salon. It turned out to be one of the most relaxing and enjoyable experiences I ever had. I'd like to go back there some day."

"The Cuban tour with Dave Young and Archie Alleyne was interesting too. We were to follow two popular local groups, and didn't know what to expect. They applauded us for five minutes – on their feet. It seems they hadn't heard this kind of swinging music before. They hadn't even heard of Erroll Garner – only the type of jazz provided by some Russian avant-gardists."

The acoustic piano? Yes, he preferred it, though his years with the Kenny Hamilton aggregation had led him to explore many synthesized and electric variations of the instrument to meet the demands of pop criteria. No, he has no passionate affinity for the organ despite such roles as that on the **Highway To Heaven** album with Salome Bey and the Montreal Jubilation Gospel Choir.

Hang-ups? "It's important to me to work hard at making a good appearance – visually and musically. So there are no jeans and sweatshirts. That's essential. I suppose you can call it my paranoia."

And the future? Well, he'd like more time to pursue teaching assignments granted him at McGill and Laurentian universities; and to do some further composing. At this point, he handed me a list – a schedule tentatively outlined to March of 1989. It would be the envy of any travel agency – a European tour to France, the British Isles, Spain, Germany; a trio concert in Dorval; the Playboy Jazz Festival at the Hollywood Bowl; the Mellon Jazz Festival in Philadelphia; the Moncton Jazz Festival; Sweet Basil's in NYC; a planned African tour – I have arbitrarily selected only a few of his projected endeavours.

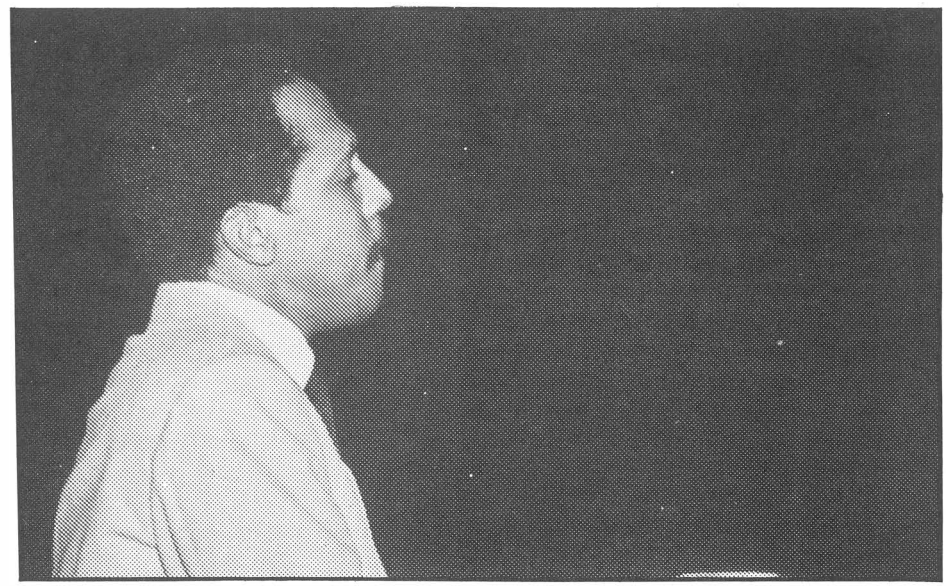
The following week I had an opportunity to view the performer. The Cafe des Copains was jammed with patrons. "There are many friends down from Montreal," he had forewarned me. I met two couples that I knew who weren't. They had come to listen. There were no disappointments.

Though there were few surprises in his first set, from the opening *Foggy Day* to the concluding Gershwin tribute, including a tenderly-wrought *Bess* and a rousing *I Got Rhythm*, one sensed a natural joy in this playing, a youthful sparkle in his eye, and an ease of manner that only graces long experience. He slipped effortlessly into *Sophisticated Lady* (he has an album of long-neglected Ellington compositions planned for release in early spring!), a somewhat over-spirited *Send In The Clowns*, a gorgeously integrated medly of *Stardust/ Memories Of You/Georgia*, and a foot-thumping *Just A Closer Walk With Thee*. When he was joined briefly by singer/ friend Lorraine Foster on *Try A Little Tenderness* and *Sweet Georgia Brown*, he proved himself totally adaptable to that role as well, skillfully shading and embellishing upon the colourations of the singer's voice, or laying back appropriately when the song demanded it. When he invited the audience to submit requests, they flowed in. "There must be at least a dozen requests for *Summertime* in this pile; of course, I don't have my glasses on," he quipped.

When he set had ended, Oliver did not simply disappear into some dark recess of the room. Oh yes, there were the usual recordings, cassettes and CD's to market and autograph; but it was more than just that. He sauntered amicably among the crowd, greeting old friends and making new ones. It was in part, I suspect, an aspect of that professional responsibility he had mentioned over lunch; yet, it was done willingly and graciously. It was like friends, and family – like an evening once spent in a small New Zealand town in the middle of nowhere: warm and comfortable. – *John Sutherland*

YOU CAN'T JUDGE A CD BY ITS COVER

Some Additions By Martin Davidson To The Article Written By John Norris * Published In December 1987 (217)



The "two versions" of Lover that appear on **Max Roach's Jazz In 3/4 Time** (Mercury 826 456-2) are actually the same take, although the stereo "version" is 24 bars longer than the mono. The AABA structure of the song is violated during the exchanges with the drums resulting in an AABAABA sequence. Also, Kenny Dorham fluffs at the start of the second A. Therefore, one assumes that it was decided to edit out the first AAB of this section for the original mono release. This edit was probably forgotten in preparing the stereo release.

Another somewhat deceptive release is **Max Roach & Clifford Brown Daahoud** (Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab MFCD 826) (50 mins). This is the infamous Mainstream record with three extra tracks thrown in. Despite what is still claimed in the sleeve note, this is material from the first quintet sessions for Emarcy.

The first six tracks – the same as on the LP – are really as follows: Daahoud (4:05) is an alternate take to that on Emarcy. I Don't Stand A Ghost Of A Chance is an alternate that breaks down after three minutes. Joyspring (6:34) and I Get A Kick Out Of You (7:27) are the *same* takes as on Emarcy. The double bass feature, These Foolish Things (3:45), is an alternate to that recently issued on Emarcy. Mildama (4:30) is the same, except for a very short section about a minute before the end – the original Emarcy release being a composite of four takes.

The first of the three new tracks – the piano feature, I'll String Along With You (4:10) – is not 'previously unreleased' as claimed, but rather the same as the Emarcy version. However, the additional I Get A Kick Out Of You (8:29) and Joyspring (6:44) are alternate takes that have not been issued before. The overall sound is preferable to the latest Emarcy digital reissues, which are too brittle. Perhaps, this could best be described as a useful addendum to the Emarcys.

The Japanese approach to the **Charlie Parker Savoy** studio sessions is better than the French and/or American one. The single CD of **Master Takes** (King K32Y 6083) (73 mins) contains 26 tracks, which are all of the titles except the four Tiny Grimes ones. The three CD set of **The Complete Savoy Studio Sessions** (King K30Y 6131-3) (204 mins) contains everything that was issued in the 5 LP box, plus the takes of Marmaduke that were omitted from that box.

Another Japanese tour de ~~force~~ is **Billie Holiday The Lady** (CBS/Sony 00DP 570-577) (501 mins) which contains all 153 Columbia/Brunswick/Vocalion/Okeh/Harmony titles plus 15 alternates – all in chronological order. (Also included is a drinking glass decorated by the album title, which, unfortunately, washes off after a couple of uses.) Maybe one should not criticise such a superior compilation, but I would prefer a seven CD set of all the originals, and a three CD one of all the alternate takes. (Incidently, if anyone has not noticed the influence of Lester Young on Thelonious Monk, then they should listen to Young's solo on take 3 of When You're Smiling.)

Some other CD reissues improve on their respective LP contents:

John Coltrane Giant Steps (Atlantic 781 337-2) (63 mins) contains the five previously issued alternate takes in addition to the seven originals. **Ellington/Mingus/Roach Money Jungle** (Blue Note CP32-5186) (57 mins) not only includes the four additional titles of the LP reissue, but also alternate takes of A Little Max and Solitude. **Booker Little Out Front** (Candid 32JDC-106) (50 mins) adds an alternate Strength and Sanity, while another CD to feature Little, **Fantastic Frank Strozier** (Vee Jay 32Y 009) (44 mins), adds another title, Just In Time.

Art Pepper with Warne Marsh (Contemporary VDJ-1577) (55 mins) contains seven different titles (two of which do not feature Marsh, alas) plus three alternates (all of which do). **Sonny Clark Cool Struttin'** (Blue Note CP32-5245) (54 mins) contains all six titles recorded with Art Farmer, Jackie McLean, Paul Chambers and Philly Joe Jones. **The Amazing Bud Powell** (Blue Note CP32-5241) (66 mins) contains all the 20 masters and alternatives that Powell recorded for Blue Note in 1949 and 1951, in chronological order.

Sonny Rollins Way Out West (Contemporary VDJ-1551) (71 mins) and **Sonny Rollins And The Contemporary Leaders** (Contemporary VDJ-1552) (60 mins) both add three alternate takes to their respective contents. **Sonny Rollins Night At The Village Vanguard Vols. 1 & 2** (Blue Note CP32-5224 & 5225) (60 and 69 mins) between them contain the material that was previously issued on three LPs, this time in order of performance.

These are examples of some of the more imaginative uses of the CDs 75 minute capacity. Too often, CDs are straight reissues of LPs, even when two shorter LPs could easily fit onto one CD. This new medium requires a different approach to the "original issues" mental-

BUD POWELL (Photograph by Robinson)

ity. (On the other hand, I am not sure about the American RCA approach of filling out CDs from more than one LP, then leaving the remaining tracks off. What will happen to all these new left-overs?)

As some examples of what could, and I think should, be done, I offer the following suggestions/requests/pleas:

All of the **Clifford Brown & Max Roach** Emarcy quintet titles could fit onto three CDs, without the current duplication of Jordu, but with less sound and in chronological order. The same could be done with the All Stars and the Jam Session.

So far nine **Ornette Coleman** Atlantic LPs have been issued – six originals and three leftovers. All of this material could fit on six CDs – three for all the issued material by the Quartets with Charlie Haden, one containing First Take and an uninterrupted Free Jazz, one the Quartet with Scott La Faro, and one the Quartet with Jimmy Garrison.

Miles Davis (CBS). The remaining titles (at least three) should be added to the 1949 Paris concert with Tadd Dameron. The sound of all this material is atrocious, but the music contains some of Davis' best work on record in the company of an ideal front line partner, James Moody. **Round About Midnight** should be extended to include the other quintet tracks recorded in 1955-56. Also, the original superb sound and the opening to Dear Old Stockholm, should be restored – both are sadly missing from the current CD reissue. The complete 1958 Green Dolphin Street / Love For Sale session and the complete 1958 Newport performance (including Bye Bye Blackbird and the unissued closing theme) can fit on one CD. A two CD set could contain the **Friday And Saturday Nights At The Black Hawk**, unedited if possible, plus the other released items from these sessions.

Billie Holiday (Verve). Polygram started with a one for one CD reissue, and followed with a CD containing one and a half LP's worth. This has recently been followed by a random compilation. Maybe they should start again with all of Holiday's Verve recordings in chronological order, divided into CD size chunks.

The complete **Lee Konitz** New Jazz recordings, including those led by Lennie Tristano, can fit on a single CD.

Charles Mingus (Atlantic). **The Clown** should be expanded to include its two session mates from **Tonight At Noon**. Similarly, **Oh Yeah** should be expanded to include its three session mates from **Tonight At Noon.**

Charles Mingus (CBS). The whole of **Mingus Ah Um**, using the complete versions of its tracks that appeared on **Nostalgia In Times Square** plus its three leftover session mates from the same **Nostalgia...**, just fits on a CD. Similarly, **Mingus Dynasty** using the complete versions of its tracks that appeared on **Nostalgia...** plus its session mate also first released on **Nostalgia...** would fit on a CD (with room for unedited versions of Diane and Mood Indigo, if they exist, and/or the 1957 Revelations from Brandeis.)

All the 1952-54 **Modern Jazz Quartet & Milt Jackson** Prestige material (with Kenny Clarke) would fit on to a CD. All the 1955 material (with Connie Kay) would fit on to another.

Thelonious Monk (CBS). A single CD could contain the complete 1963 Newport performance plus the solo and unedited quartet tracks from the Philharmonic Hall concert at the end of that year. A second CD could contain all the Big Band tracks from that Philharmonic Hall concert.

Presenting the **Charlie Parker** Verves in strict chronological order may result in sessions being split over discs. Also, the jazz performances become intermingled with those Cecil B. DeMilne productions cluttered up with latin percussion or dreadful arrangements for strings, big bands and/or voices. The most desirable compilation of this material would seem to be three CDs containing the jazz tracks in chronological order, and another three contain the other material grouped together by types: (1) strings; (2) bongos and big bands; (3) voices and Machito (including the sides just featuring Flip Phillips).

The best compilation of the **Sonny Rollins** Prestige material (involving only one session split between two CDs) would seem to be the following five CDs: (1) The 1951 quartet and 1954 quintet sessions. (2) The 1954 quartet with Monk, plus **Worktime**. (3) **Three Giants** and **Tenor Madness**. (4) **Saxophone Colossus** plus the first three titles from 1956 October 5. (5) The Bird Medley plus all the material recorded on 1956 December 7. (Chronological order should be broken to have the two dubious vocal numbers at the end of the disc.)

Here's hoping.

JOHN HICKS * YOU HAVE TO LOVE IT

JOHN HICKS: I was born in Atlanta, Georgia, but spent my early childhood in Los Angeles during the war years where my father had his first congregation as minister of St. John's Methodist Church. From there we moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where I spent my school years and grew up with folks like Lester Bowie and Oliver Lake and ended up going to college at Lincoln University with Julius Hemphill.

Years ago I used to play violin. I've played organ through the years as part of my growing up in church. In college I played the trombone for a while and I gave that up when I really got more serious about working and playing professionally on piano.

From the standpoint of growing up in America in the twentieth century as a black male, my parents felt it would be better not to pursue a career in music. Because there's no guarantees and it's not an easy life. One in every 10,000 might make some money ... But they really didn't discourage me from playing music. It's just that the idea of actually becoming a professional musician and playing jazz – they probably would have preferred for me to be a lawyer you know. It's still a hard profession to really stay in. You have to love it. You have to love it.

DAVID LEWIS: *The pieces which you played last night which I enjoyed the most were by Thelonious Monk. You brought a lot of energy and your own individuality to that music and yet it was still his.*

His music is unmistakably his. One time in Chicago, over the muzak that they have coming out at O'Hare Airport, here comes "Round Midnight". It totally knocked me out. His pieces are definitely in the tradition that was laid down by people like Fats Waller and Duke Ellington. He comes right out of that. And also during that time people like Bud Powell and then maybe a little later Sonny Clark, who also have some really great tunes that just haven't been exposed *yet*. But they'll be out there. It takes people like myself, Barry Harris and Walter Davis Jr. to bring a lot of this music out. Incidentally Walter Davis is also a fine composer.

You mentioned Bud Powell. Did you ever get to meet him?

Yes I got to meet him. As a matter of fact I played at Birdland (I think that was 1966), when he was just coming back from Paris. I was working with Frank Foster and Benny Green, the trombonist. We worked opposite Bud. The trio at that time was John Ore on bass and J.C. Moses on drums. I tried to talk to him a little bit but he wasn't too conversational at that time. It was just a great experience to be in that close, getting a chance to hear him every night.

You mentioned earlier that you had fun with Jack Dejohnette figuring out the arrangements on piano for Chico Freeman's "The Outside Within".

I've been knowing his playing for a long time, because on my way to New York to really *live* in New York in the early 60's, I met Jack Dejohnette playing at another club. I ended up staying at his house for that week. This was 1963, in the late summer going into September. We also worked together with Betty Carter in the mid-sixties when he first came to New York. I got to New York before he did. He was still working in Chicago, playing drums and piano and a little bass as a matter of fact.

Was it with Art Blakey that you got your first major exposure in the music?

That's true, that's true. I took Cedar Walton's place. He was instrumental in me joining the band in the fall of 64. As a matter of fact, along with the return of Lee Morgan, Curtis Fuller was the mainstay on trombone and John Gilmore came in for Wayne Shorter. And of course on our first recording we had Victor Sproles playing bass. I did a couple of my earlier compositions, one that I wrote for my wife called "Olympia" and another for a friend of mine from school days: "Waltz For Ruth".

That of course was "'Smake It". What was it like playing with John Gilmore whom we associate with Sun Ra rather than the Jazz Messengers?

He's from the Chicago tradition, a contemporary of people like Johnny Griffin and Nicky Hill who's dead now. There was a great tenor tradition in Chicago. The whole mid-West scene was pretty lively during the late 40's and early 50's. He's right out of that tradition, so we had a wonderful time in that band. That was my first trip to Japan, my first trip to Europe. My first recordings and a couple of albums later I did some arranging. There was an album we did called "Soul Finger". That was with Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard and Gary Bartz. Gary joined the band in late 1965. Also Lucky Thompson recorded with us on that album.

That's "Spot Session", his original. He was on soprano sax. Was that the only piece Lucky recorded with the band or was there more at that session?

I think there were a couple of other pieces that he played on, I think he wrote two other tunes, but they've never been released. I hate to say this but a lot of times after people die then all this material comes out. Then you hear about all this music that was never released or exposed to the public during their lifetime.

Lucky Thompson is one of my favourite musicians from that 40's-60's period.

Excellent musician. He was an excellent musician and really a fine gentleman. He's now living in Georgia and he hasn't been playing lately in the last few years. As great a musician as he is I think that it'll be hard for him to not *ever* play again. I'm sure that at some point you'll hear something else from him. And it'll be something good that's for sure.

And what about "A Quiet Thing"? What involvement did you have with that?

That was my arrangement. "Quiet Thing" was one of my first arrangements for the harmony for the horns and background you know. It was from a show: **Florida Red Menace**. There had been some talk about doing an album of all Broadway show tunes. I think this was one of the steps in that direction.

You recorded again with Art Blakey in 1972. And on "Song For A Lonely Woman" you were on electric piano.

That was one of the dates we did at Rudy Van Gelders' when the Fender Rhodes was just coming into prominence. Although during my years in Woody Herman's band I encouraged Woody to try that out. Because in our travels, a lot of the dance halls would have such really horrible pianos, that it was almost impossible to play. So the advent of the Fender Rhodes created some other possibilities and also the opportunity to be heard!

You mentioned Betty Carter earlier

– how long did you play with her band?

I started off when she wasn't doing a whole lot of work, in the sixties I think, 1966-67. At that time I was working with horn players. I was also doing some work with Sonny Rollins in the mid to late 60's before I went into Woody Herman's band. At that time Betty wasn't doing a whole lot of work but she would have a couple of regular things, maybe two or three times out of the year. There was a club in Harlem called **Wells' Chicken and Waffle Place**. It was next door to Count Basie's at that time. Neither one of those clubs are happening now but that was one of her regular gigs that she could do maybe two or three times a year. Also the Five Spot. She would do that two or three times a year. Other than that we maybe did two or three concerts, and we would sometimes do the Apollo on different programmes. One programme was quite interesting because they were all blues performers – T. Bone Walker, Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee and ... Betty Carter! Quite different. The audience loved it all though. They loved her even in that kind of situation you know.

Tell us about the evolution of her theme song "Sounds/Moving On".

That tune is called "Sounds" and everybody considers it to be called "Moving On" because she gets into that pretty heavy there. Actually the tune is called "Sounds". There was a lot of space in there to do different things. So what we would do we would go into different time signatures to just extend the form quite a bit. "Deep Night", there's another classic tune. The arrangement we sort of pieced together over a period of time and we really got into it. Because originally when I first did that song with her in the late 60's we did it as a ballad and from there we moved it until the tempo got a little brighter. And some other little things started happening. The changes are based on the way Bud Powell used to play it though.

Tell me about your experience working with Sonny Rollins.

Well he was a very humorous person. We never had a rehearsal but we ended up playing a lot of his music. We did a couple of engagements at the Half Note, the old Half Note, down on Hudson Street, that was 1966-67-68. Right in there. A lot of the younger tenor players, people like Bennie Maupin and some of the other guys, would always come down and sit in with him and some of the older guys too like Yusef Lateef. I remember this one concert that Yusef came to. We had played at the Half Note the first set. The second set we went up to the Lincoln Centre, played a concert and came back for the third set to finish off the night at the Half Note and Yusef was with us all the way. He played on the concert, he played the first set, then he came back with us to finish the gig that night.

Was "Hell's Bell's" your first album as a leader?

Yeah that was done in London while I was on tour with Charles Tolliver's Music Inc. I wasn't expecting to record because we were doing two weeks at Ronnie Scott's club. The guy from Black Lion Records, Alan Bates, he and Charles Tolliver had some kind of business relationship hooked up as far as Strata East Records was concerned and Alan Bates thought it would be a good idea for us to come in and do some trio. So that's how it worked out. I also did some solo, it was another date and I don't think any of it has really been released that I know of. If it has I'd like to find out about it. That was all around 1975.

Your next album "After The Morning" features the first solo performances by you that we've heard on record. There's also three duets on there with Walter Booker who's been a long time regular on bass in your band.

Well we go back a pretty good ways. At one time we lived in the same building in Manhattan. He was on the second floor and I was on the seventh floor and we would run into each other quite a bit and we got a chance to do a lot of playing together. He was originally during that time working with Art Farmer and Jimmy Heath and Donald Byrd was in there some kind of way too. There were a couple of different groups that he played in and if it wasn't Albert Dailey on piano sometimes they would call me. So I guess just because I was in the right place at the right time. Eventually from that I ended up working with Sonny Rollins with Walter Booker and Mickey Roker on drums.

You recorded another trio album "Some Other Time" in San Francisco in 1981 with Walter Booker and Idrees Mohammed. What's the story that inspired "Peanut Butter In The Desert"?

(laughs) I wrote that composition, the skeleton for it anyway the original way that it was performed, I wrote that in St. Louis some years back and the title is from a discussion that a friend of mine – an artist-in-residence with the Black Artists Group, his name was Emilio Cruz – we had a lot of discussions about politics and the situation of hunger and homelessness and some of the things that are still very much with us now. Things haven't changed a whole lot, if anything they may have gotten a little worse. But I don't know. Some of the solutions and some of the things we were talking about just brought to mind the fact that you know if you were in a desert and you were dying of thirst I mean the last thing in the world you would want would be a peanut butter sandwich (laughs).

That was your first record for Theresa

That's the first under my name because I had met Alan Pittman and Betty Ishita through Pharoah Sanders because the "Journey To The One" album was the first album that I did for Theresa.

How did your association with Pharoah Sanders come about?

That also goes back a lot of years. We sort of came to New York around the same time ... 1963.

So that was just when John Coltrane was really establishing himself as the voice in Jazz at that time.

That's true, yes, the classic quartet, I always call it the classic quartet. Although there were a couple of different bass players: Steve Davis, Reggie Workman, and finally Jimmy Garrison. But Elvin and McCoy were there for *most* of the time. Although I don't know if a lot of people know this but Steve Kuhn was actually ahead of McCoy in the original quartet. As a matter of fact I've met John Coltrane through Pharoah because he would come and hear us play. We used to play at a place in Greenwich Village called the Speakeasy and a lot of saxophone players would come through there – Roland Kirk, Joe Farrell – just a whole lot of saxophonists would come through.

They sat in with us because we had the regular gig. It was a gig that didn't pay a whole lotta money, but it was a regular gig. We played long hours. We would start like at 6:00 in the evening and play till 4:00 in the morning. That kind of situation does not really exist now because these were basically coffee house and not so much real bars. There were lots of coffee houses during that time, in the 60's. *– David Lewis*

THE COMPLETE BLUE NOTE RECORDINGS OF HERBIE NICHOLS

MOSAIC MR5-118 (5 Records)

It is hard, at first hearing, to understand how the lovely, fresh, lissome music of Herbie Nichols could ever have been neglected. His compositions are attractive and memorable; his execution is delicate and controlled. The accompanying musicians on all the records under his own name are out of the top drawer. Yet he has come, over the years since his death from leukemia in 1963, to epitomise for many the artist whose fate it is to be frustrated in his musical ambitions by a neglecting, commercial world that will pay to hear his talents displayed only in a music that is unworthy of him. This image of the jazz musician as rejected Romantic artist is a fashionable one today; yet it is certainly true that Herbie Nichols spent most of his mature playing life in Dixieland bands, and only on his records played the type of music to which he was devoted.

His recording career can be briefly summarised. His early records were mainly in the popular rhythm and blues style, with Frank Humphries, Charlie Singleton and Snub Mosely. In 1952 he made the first record under his own name – " 'S Wonderful" and "Who's Blues" – a 78 for HiLo. The session also produced a record with Nichols by vocalist and bassist Chocolate Williams. All the tracks from this session are now available on Savoy Jazz SJL 1166, **Thelonious Monk/ Herbie Nichols**, with three solo tracks (and two alternates) by Nichols. The support was good, with Danny Barker on guitar, Williams on bass and Shadow Wilson on drums. In June of 1953 he took part in a live recording from Boston with a Dixieland group that included Rex Stewart, Albert Nicholas, Fernando Arbello and Tommy Benford. Its title, **Dixieland Free-For-All** (Jazztone J-1202), sums up this frenetic stampede through such "classics" as "That's A Plenty", "South Rampart Street Parade" and "When The Saints Go Marching In", which occasionally swerves in the direction of real, expressive music, and gives an example of the sort of setting in which Nichols frequently played.

In May and August of 1955 and April of 1956 came the five sessions for Blue Note that produced the records under review. In November of 1957 he recorded for Bethlehem, accompanied by bassist George Duvivier and drummer Danny Richmond (**Love, Gloom, Cash, Love** Bethlehem 81; later **Herbie Nichols** Bethlehem BCP 6028). His last recordings were at a session in 1958 organised by British Jazz Critic Albert McCarthy that produced the album **Mainstream** (Atlantic LP 1303), on one half of which Nichols is part of a Joe Newman group that included Dickie Wells, Buster Bailey and Buddy Tate, and to which he contributes in the style of Teddy Wilson. The five solo tracks reissued on Savoy, the 48 tracks for Blue Note now issued by Mosaic and the ten tracks actually issued by Bethlehem are his legacy, all recorded in a period of just over five years.

Nichols had received conservatory training – something that shows in the control of his execution – and he had originally aspired to be a composer of conventional music. Finding himself in a career in jazz, he aimed to be a composer of the same seriousness. It has been as a composer that he has attracted attention of recent years, particularly from Misha Mengelberg, who in 1984 recorded two previously unrecorded Nichols compositions "The Happenings" and "Change Of Season" for Soul Note (SN 1104). His memory as a composer has also been kept alive in the playing of his friend and admirer Roswell Rudd, who provides the notes for the Mosaic album (as he did for the Blue Note reissue **The Third World** BN-LA-485-H2).

As a composer Nichols was an impressionist, as the titles of many of his tunes immediately suggest: "Step Tempest", "Dance Line", "Crisp Day", "Applejackin' ", "House Party Starting", "Nick At T's" (recalling "Big Nick" Nicholas, the tenor player with whom Nichols

played in the early fifties) and "Sunday Stroll". Rudd confirms this sense of his music in his liner notes. "House Party Starting" is superbly evocative with its wistful, ambling, Monkian melody that conveys the feeling of slowly winding up, so much so that one has almost the sense that the piano is out of tune – which it is not, of course. It seems an example of what Rudd calls "oblique melody ... an emphasis on narrower intervals in melodic construction, not to the total exclusion of wide intervals, but just a more judicious exploitation of even seconds and thirds, as a way of cutting sideways through tonal space..." Nichols's melodies do not have an open structure of splendour but are often muted and insinuating, reminding one again of one of Nichols formative influences, Thelonious Monk, whose tune "Thelonious" is all one note. "Gig" is another impressionistic piece with a boppish, Powellian feel, where the melodic line is taken in both hands. Nichols said of it "It's about a pick-up band ... they're not quite together here ... they play nine measures instead of 8, then it starts to get better..." It is a triumph to have accommodated this sense of musical awkwardness to a very rounded composition. Nonetheless, the rewards of such musical impressionism are soon exhausted, and there is a limit to the extent to which a composition can offer an impressionistic rendering of reality, as the brevity of some of Rudd's notes shows. The compositions must derive their power from their intrinsic musical character. That they do have such power is the claim that Rudd makes for Nichols, with justification: "...one such pioneering work, an extraordinary harmonic structure for the time ... THE THIRD WORLD was the beginning of my harmonic liberation. It has all six possible progressions: chromatic up through tritonal, notable ascending motion in minor thirds and *descending* fourths." There are many memorable pieces: "Double Exposure" – a lovely, loose, loping composition; "Chit Chatting" – exciting from start to finish; the nicely developed "Applejackin' " that comes in three versions; "Query" that reminded me a little of "I Could Have Danced All Night" and that has a quotation from the Toreador's song from Bizet's **Carmen**; and the song written for Billie Holiday and recorded by her, "Lady Sings The Blues".

Though Nichols was an innovator in some of his compositions, he stayed basically with the 32 bar form of the show tune. It was in the development of his pieces that his originality lay. All the tunes in this compilation are by Nichols, except for George Gershwin's "Mine". Nichols's playing of the pieces is essentially an orchestration of them, employing a variety of voicings. This contrasts with the bop approach to the playing of a tune, dominant in the fifties when these records were made. The boppers typically played the tune at the beginning and the end of the number, and, in between, generated variations based on the harmonies of the tune, running over the bar lines of the original tune and generally obliterating its melody. Nichols stays with the pattern of his melodies, often quoting them and respecting their form. He uses the various possible voicings on the piano as a composer might use different combinations of instrument, building a cohesive "composition". In addition, he approached the other instruments of his trio not as an accompaniment to his piano playing, but as part of the orchestration. Nichols had a particular interest in drums, and he integrates the percussion into his pieces, as in "Double Exposure" or "Brass Rings", where the section for Art Blakey and Al McKibbon is almost the best part of the track.

When Nichols manages to build a piece in this way, then we have one of his very individual successes. Notable are "House Party Starting", "Applejackin' ", "Cro-Magnon Nights". "The Third World", "The Gig". However, while Nichols was not a bopper, he owed a good deal to the style of piano playing that came in with bebop. Nobody who played piano in those days could avoid the influence of Bud Powell. Powell's great triumphs were up-tempo numbers in which a single-noted right hand is accompanied by chording in the left. Nichols had heard Thelonious Monk and absorbed a great deal, as his melodies show; and, like Monk, he used the left hand as a separate voice in his playing. Nonetheless, his work reflects the rather limited conception of the possibilities of the instrument that jazz piano playing evinced until the late fifties, when we saw the emergence of the Debussyesque approach of Bill Evans or the full classical, often Bartokian sense of the piano that was encountered in **The World Of Cecil Taylor** (Candid 8006) in 1960.

There are other limitations to Nichols's playing on these recordings. Certain

effects, such as an upward flip or particular downward runs are used too frequently; and, when Nichols does not succeed in "building" his compositions, one feels the absence of any climactic centre. The light and floating "Dance Line" does not develop interestingly; and there is a sameness to a number of pieces, such as "Blue Chopsticks" or "Furthermore". This feeling of sameness is added to by Nichols's proclivity for medium tempi. There are no really slow numbers in all the five records.

There are only a few show tunes among Nichols's recordings under his own name: "'S Wonderful" for HiLo (Savoy); "Mine" for Blue Note (Mosaic); and "Too Close For Comfort" and "All The Way" for Bethlehem. He is said to have been a great admirer of Gershwin, and he plays "Mine" with a congeniality of idiom that one does not find in Monk's playing of show tunes: there are only a few tunes, such as "Nice Work If You Can Get It" that don't get knocked out of shape by the Monkian manner. Nichols plays his show tunes with a rhythmic brightness and a lightness of touch that is very attractive. Yet, as I listen to him play "Too Close For Comfort", I keep wishing that I was listening to the marvellous Stan Getz version. Getz is in some respects a less subtle artist than Nichols; but he has the bopper's approach and gives us that exciting interplay of original melody and improvised line that was the essence of jazz in those days. Nichols plays the show tunes the way he plays his own compositions – revoicing, quoting fragments of the original, generally embellishing, but staying close to the form of the tunes and even to the bar pattern. There are no extended flights, and the result is something that seems to waver between the enchanting and the exciting – but is neither one.

Nichols's compositions have aroused considerable interest among "avant-garde" musicians. The boppers looked for tunes that had interesting but not restrictive harmonies that would form a basis for their improvisations. The avant-garde seek characterful melodies that offer possibilities of revoicing and melodic extension, of rephrasing and regrouping that Nichols's playing of his own compositions in part pointed towards. As Archie Shepp put it: "I think of Herbie as a transitional player in whom many musical systems are resolved. At the same time he is his own school of thought; for example the unusually lean harmonic ideas are part of his own harmonic concept. He falls stylistically between Tatum and Monk, reinterpreting the former; pointing toward the latter." Tatum, of course, was a decorator of melodies, a descendant of the stride tradition.

Here we may find the key to Herbie Nichols's life in music – the years in the Dixieland bands. As Whitney Balliett wrote: "The critics made much of the recordings ... but it didn't change the shape of his career." (**Night Creature**) In 1959, John S. Wilson said (in **The Collector's Jazz: Modern** where he reviews every modern jazz record available and acerbically dismisses most of them): "Nichols is an almost consistently interesting pianist, one who communicates directly, clearly and melodically. Why he has languished in practical obscurity all through the Fifties is a mystery." All Nichols's recordings under his own name were available in 1959. He had recorded with some of the most famous players of his day, who, judging by the high standard of their performance with him, must have found his playing congenial: Art Blakey, Max Roach, Danny Richmond, Al McKibbon, Teddy Kotick, George Duvivier. Alfred Lion (to his great credit) gave him five sessions with Blue Note over a period of twelve months, even though the products of the first sessions did not sell. Yet Nichols was never invited back as a sideman – never invited along by anyone as a sideman. There seems to have been nothing wrong with his personality or way of life that would explain this. He could evidently play in the traditional manner, or he would not have lasted at Jimmy Ryan's. One can only surmise that, given an opportunity to play in the then contemporary manner, he just didn't fit in: he was not a bopper.

The road to hell is paved with good but neglected pianists: Sonny Clark, Elmo Hope, Chris Albertson, Eddie Costa, Carl Perkins. None of them, except perhaps the blind Albertson, led such a musically isolated life as Nichols. Unlike the saints of the bebop movement, he did not ruin his life with drugs. He did not ruin his life with anything; and his early death from leukemia, while sad, had nothing to do with the neglect of his playing, though A.B. Spellman had the sense, when he last saw Nichols that "he seemed to be dying of disillusionment" (**Four Lives In The Bebop Business**). Yet Nichols is on his way to becoming one of the saints of the avant-garde (if he has not already got there) – one who suffered neglect because of the music he espoused; one who may have died of that neglect.

Nichols's music does not deserve or need such bogus treatment. On the other hand, it can't quite be said that he was musically out of the top drawer. His achievement has, for me, a somewhat narrow sameness, for all its originality. He certainly does not belong with Monk or Cecil Taylor or Mingus or Shepp. It is good, all the same, to see his music acclaimed and so lovingly preserved.

The main service done by the Mosaic compilation is in making available six of the Blue Note titles never issued before: "Furthermore", "117th Street", "Sunday Stroll", "Nick At T's", "'Orse At Safari's", and "Applejackin' " – along with two further titles previously available only on a Japanese compilation, **The Other Side Of The 1500 Series** (Blue Note BNJ 61008/10). (Blue Note, for financial reasons, were evidently still tied to 10" LPs when Nichols recorded for them in 1955. Two such LPs were issued and three more were planned. The move to 12" LPs meant that Blue Note were able to find material for one 12" issue and then were left with material in the vaults.) Less interestingly, in the light of Nichols's approach to his music, are the alternate takes of previously issued and unissued titles: there are sixteen of these.

The accompanying booklet is as lavish as we have come to expect from Mosaic. It contains several previously unavailable photographs. It reprints Leonard Feather's liner notes from the original 10" LPs Blue Note 5068 and 5069 and Nichols's own notes for Blue Note BLP 1519 of August 1956 (a record that stayed in the catalogue for about fifteen years). There is a brief article that Nichols contributed to **Metronome** in 1956 that is of considerable interest, and a selection of his poems that are at best nondescript. Roswell Rudd's notes have the authority of coming from a distinguished musician and a friend of Nichols.

The discographies in the booklet are extremely exhaustive and include a list of Nichols's compositions not recorded by him but recorded by other artists (Mary Lou Williams, Roswell Rudd and Misha Mengelberg). One might have hoped that, in the 24 pages of notes, room could have been found for a brief discussion of all the recordings under Nichols's own name, if not his whole

recorded output, as both are so small. Some of these records I have never heard; and sadly, one senses, neither have the compilers of the notes. Two sessions are listed under the name of Bobby Mitchell, with the note: "It is not certain that these sessions are by the same Bobby Mitchell. It is also not certain if Nichols played on either of them." This doesn't seem quite up to Mosaic's previous standards.

Indeed, a certain complacent euphoria seems to have crept in at Mosaic. Many readers will have received the Mosaic Brochure No. 5, where an Ohio customer announces on the cover "Your sets are items I will treasure for the rest of my days." Later on, another customer rejoices "I happily dropped $300 at Mosaic this year." The net effect of reading the sixteen pages of highly PR'd layout was to make me wonder why I hadn't already junked my French RCA Jazz Tribune sets, my Parlophone sets of Okeh material from the 60's and 70's, my Columbia boxed sets, the Charlie Parker Metro/Verves and Spotlites (not to mention those nasty old Blue Notes from Lexington Avenue) to make way for Mosaic's superior compilations, surely on the way. The euphoria seems even to have spread to the arithmetic: Mosaic claim to be "nearly doubling the amount of Herbie Nichols's work on record". Counting only the recordings on 12" LP under Nichols's own name, I had, before receiving the Mosaic box, 37 titles: Mosaic have added 22 tracks (including 16 alternates). The notes to the Nichols box give no account of Nichols's life, though some ordered sense of this would have been a value, in view of the fact that his sad destiny was one of the more notable things about him. Instead we get remarks by people who knew him – interesting in some cases, but as a whole reading like notes for speeches at a testimonial dinner that never took place.

If you don't have this music and enjoy jazz of this period, you will want this set. The only thing that might make you hesitate is if, like me, you already have **Herbie Nichols: The Third World**, the Blue Note double LP that included all the previously issued titles. Your $45 U.S. to Mosaic (plus postage) will then get you eight additional titles and sixteen alternates. But perhaps you'll go along with Mosaic's Nova Scotia customer: "You make me poor, but I'm in heaven!"

– Trevor Tolley

IN PERFORMANCE

JAY McSHANN & RALPH SUTTON
Folly Theatre, Kansas City
February 27, 1988

The Last of the Whorehouse Piano Players, **Jay McShann** and **Ralph Sutton** performed in a style befitting their title on Saturday, February 27 on what could be called home turf for Jay and near native setting for Ralph, who began his professional career in St. Louis, Missouri. The non-brothel setting was the Folly Theatre, a magnificent structure of a classic nature, which complemented the approach that the two pianists have to jazz. In addition to the theatre, the joint sponsor was a jazz activist group, The Friends of Jazz. Financial assistance for the concert was provided by the Missouri Art Commission and the Municipal Art Commission of Kansas City. So, in effect, a long trip from 1930s territory of Piney Brown on Twelfth Street and its environs to the Folly Theatre district of the 1980s constitutes a socio-psychological triumph. For those who presently conceive of jazz as an art form, further evidence is this concert.

Jay McShann and Ralph Sutton are old pros and it is good to be reminded from time to time that individuality is an ultimate key to success in jazz. Both of these men have been perfecting their unique musical talents and skills for over half a century. Continued growth is perceived as a fact of life for these two jazz practitioners. There is no coasting on a past reputation being foisted on their true-believing public.

To give the evening a bit of an opening life, a jazz quartet from the Charlie Parker Foundation was in the lobby. Strains of things to come placed the concert goer in a receptive mood. Once inside the theatre, with its minimal but elegant artistic flourish, there was a beautiful stage setting to behold. Two grand pianos framed by bass and drums offered a strong visual appeal. The audience constituted something of a range, but it was obviously weighted to the near and over fifty in age. Then came the music: two hours of sheer pleasure. There was an appropriate level of support from the stage for the head shaking, foot tapping and body movement that accompanies Kansas City jazz, which offers a substantial heat. It was all there.

The music was a nostalgic dream of an aficionado's paradise. Jay calls the first tune, *Folly Dolly* in honor of the theatre. In actuality, it was *I Got Rhythm* revisited. The stage was not set for a continuation of the melodic tunes and chord progressions that are geared not to tax the listener. Simplicity for its own sake did not seem to be the order of the evening.

These were some of the highlights within a total spectacular performance. The blues medley offered a demonstration of Jay's ability to project his personality through the medium of the blues. How often has McShann performed these tunes, yet, here was a freshness, directness plus a degree of sincerity that was almost created for his loyal listeners. McShann has a kind of power in his voice, and over the piano that could be overwhelming if he did not show restraint.

Ralph Sutton sits at the piano with a straight back and makes little physical movement as he plays. His interpretations of Fats Waller, Jack Teagarden and Willie "The Lion" Smith were in good taste. The clean playing that he extracts from the piano almost belies his use of extremes of beauty in musical spirit to a fervid swing, especially in his stride struts.

A well deserved demonstrative ovation elicited an encore of *After You've Gone*. It was almost as if the piano duo and the rhythm section had saved up for this one. There was an end of concert romp set in motion, which built up to a frenzied climax. The crowd lilted out of the concert hall to savour what had been in the air for the past two hours. What they felt could be called jazz ecstasy.

Bob Bransetter, bass, and Tommy Ruskin, drums, are local Kansas City musicians, who played with only a talk through rehearsal. They added to the piano duo and were never in the way. Bransetter possesses a classical tone and technique which he uses sparingly, but a one word summary of his solo and backup contributions would be - class. Ruskin had obviously listened to some of the older recordings of McShann with the legendary Gus Johnson. The snare rim work on *Hootie's Ignorant Oil* was right out of the 1940s tradition.

Two quotes from the program notes are in order here. Mr. Sutton has been described as a "stubborn dedicated perfectionist, committed to playing his own kind of piano". One un-named jazz critic was quoted as having written, "great as the Basie band was, future musicologists may well conclude that the most important man to come out of Kansas City was pianist Jay McShann". Sutton and McShann did not contradict either quote in the concert. What wonderful words for future thought and contemplation. – *James Condell*

SAN DIEGO JAZZ PARTY
Town and Country Hotel, San Diego, CA
February 20 & 21, 1988

Jazz parties, as pioneered by Dick Gibson, have proliferated in the U.S. to such an extent that they are the salvation of many older musicians, as well as of younger ones who prefer to play in the older idioms. The latest party took place at the Town and Country Hotel in San Diego

RALPH SUTTON (Photograph by Paul Hoeffler)

on 20 and 21 February. It was presented by Bill Muchnic, a trumpet-playing friend of the late Pee Wee Erwin and a staunch admirer of Dick Gibson, who came in from Colorado to give the enterprise his blessing.

Twenty-four well-known musicians were rotated in three five-hour programs for a total of twenty sets. **Scott Hamilton** and **John Clayton** were the youngest of the players and they quickly made themselves at home among their elders: **Snooky Young, Ed Polcer, Warren Vaché Jr., George Masso, Al Grey, Bill Watrous, Peanuts Hucko, Bob Wilber, Kenny Davern, Buddy Tate, Flip Phillips, Marshal Royal, Dick Hyman, Ralph Sutton, Paul Smith, Milt Hinton, Bob Haggart, Bucky Pizzarelli, Herb Ellis, Gus Johnson, Jake Hanna** and **Butch Miles**. Local musicians who made guest appearances were **Skeets Herfurt** (alto), **Johnny Best** (trumpet), **Benny Legann** (clarinet) and **Bobby Gordon** (clarinet).

Each set usually began and ended with a jam session favorite (*In A Mellotone* seems to continue to grow in popularity), and in between were solos and duos. It was a great week-end for clarinet. Besides the two guests, Peanuts Hucko gave forth with specialties like *The Sheik, Just A Closer Walk* and *Stealin' Apples*. Buddy Tate made moving use of the instrument on *Mood Indigo* and his own *Blue Creek*. And Bob Wilber, who also blew excellent alto and soprano, teamed with Kenny Davern to great effect on *Nobody's Sweetheart*. Clarinet honors undoubtedly went to Davern, whose imagination seemed to blossom in the company of his old partner. On several numbers, he played striking choruses in the lower register that gave a piquant tonal contrast to his solos.

The three tenor players were all exciting, Tate and Phillips sharing an uncommon ability to ignite the ensemble, both in solo and in the quick creation of energizing riffs. It seems a pity that records are not forthcoming from some of these parties, because the best moments, when the backgrounds inspire and propel soloists, are of a kind seldom caught on records nowadays. Hamilton's authority and confidence have grown with experience, and they were as evident in a ballad showcase like *My Romance* as on *Maria Elena*, which he and Phillips swung infectiously.

Snooky Young's power and mastery of mutes were impressive as always, while Vaché's warm tone and feeling made his exploration of Gershwin's rarely heard *He Loves And She Loves* very rewarding. Ed Polcer, who was not known to many Californians, exhibited strong chops and pleased them especially when he invoked Beiderbecke on *Singin' The Blues*.

The three trombones were as different in approach as the members of some of Ellington's memorable trombone trios. Masso is very consistent and plays with a bright tone and strong attack. Al Grey's outgoing personality, garlanded pith helmet, and energetic improvising made him the party's most colorful performer. When he played his marching trombone, he was easily able to duplicate those many-noted flurries he likes to insert in his slide solos, but he was at his best and most tasteful playing the blues seriously with mute and plunger. Watrous introduced a more modern, virtuosic note and on *Here's That Rainy Day*, to everyone's surprise, showed Bob Haggart that he was not the only whistler at the party. For good measure, he also *sang* a chorus.

Dick Hyman must now be out front of all competition as a stylistic all-rounder, even ahead of the multi-talented Wilber. He knows all the styles and plays them all well. Moreover, he is a fine accompanist, who follows the line of thought of those he is backing with sensitivity. This could not be said of Paul Smith, whose exuberant, quote-filled playing was too often out of place. Ralph Sutton, of course, gave the different groups as strong a foundation as even Fats Waller's most devoted admirers could wish for, and with The Lion's *Echoes of Spring* he reminded listeners of where his roots were to be found.

Herb Ellis and Bucky Pizzarelli, playing amplified guitars, were individually too prominent in the ensembles at times, but their solos and duets were frequently stimulating. Ellis always has been known as a swinger, but here Pizzarelli – perhaps following Ellis's example – seemed to swing much more than on records. Milt Hinton was his usual energetic, sure-fingered self on bass and sang his *Old Man Time* lyrics with great success. Bob Haggart, whose automobile plate reads BGNOISE, gave out happily with his Winnetka epic one more time as Gus Johnson beat up on the strings. John Clayton was by no means outdone by these two vets. His bowed version of *Nature Boy*, on which he maintained a mellow, cello-like tone, was one of the week-end's highlights.

There were very few drum solos (and no flute at all!), all three drummers playing for band and soloists attentively and sympathetically. Gus Johnson appeared to swing the most and it was sometimes hard not to wish he were backing Jay McShann. Butch Miles, powerfully propulsive and radiating good spirits, often brought Jo Jones to mind, while Jake Hanna's experience of big-band disciplines also made itself beneficially felt.

On Sunday, there was an hour of well-received piano duets. Since Sutton, Hyman and Smith are nothing if not two-handed piansts, these seemed decidedly superfluous, but they have unfortunately become a popular and expected feature at jazz parties.

The well-organized affair drew such an enthusiastic audience response that Bill Muchnic undoubtedly has an annual event on his hands. The hotel and its several restaurants are attractive and in a good location. Sunny San Diego is already a winter resort favored by many Canadians, so a first-class jazz party may prove an extra attraction during bleak February weather. – *Helen Oakley Dance*

DICK WELLSTOOD * MISTER STRIDE

The finite nature of jazz music once seemed certain. But it has grown and spread so quickly that its furthest branches bear little resemblance to the main trunk. Once there was order within the community. Now there are many different communities all with their special needs and aims.

Lodged somewhere among the branches are a select group of individuals who have found expression and inspiration from an earlier generation. They have deliberately chosen to step away from their contemporaries in search of the mysteries of artistic expression.

Jazz is a "hands on" art which is best learned through the experience of performing with its greatest practitioners. It accelerates the development process and gives the apprentice player unusual insights into the idiosyncracies of the style he is absorbing.

Dick Wellstood belonged to the first generation of players who stepped sideways and became absorbed with jazz styles already considered archaic by his contemporaries. Time, of course, has shown that he was smarter than they thought he was. His approach to jazz piano enabled him to work comfortably with a wide range of instrumentalists. His foundation gave him the necessary roots for many different situations.

Fundamental to his approach was the orchestral style developed by James P. Johnson and Willie The Lion Smith in New York. His lessons with these masters put into perspective an idiom which is all encompassing. Even in his younger days it was apparent that Wellstood understood that "Stride Piano" was a method rather than a style. It was a conception which gave the performer the freedom to find his own ways to interpret a tune. Wellstood was never a revivalist – even though he played many of the set pieces which were the recorded legacy of the early masters. He chose to use those "frozen" performances as guideposts rather than canon law. And that is why he was always such an interesting performer.

His transition from aspiring youngster to aging stylist seems fuzzy at best. He was always around – fulfilling his role as pianist with a wide variety of performers In his younger days he was often on the road with such masters as Sidney Bechet, Red Allen, Roy Eldridge, Charlie Shavers and Gene Krupa as well as working with many of them at New York's notorious Metropole Bar.

His circle of admirers grew slowly but surely. By the 1970s he had joined a body of his peers who were carrying the torch for a way of life and an approach to music which seems destined to be swallowed whole by the advancing hordes of rock music. Somehow they continued to survive and, in Wellstood's case, the depth of his musical energies seemed to increase. He began to make solo tours, was recorded with greater frequency and seemed to have found a niche between the cracks.

But there were also longs periods of inactivity. Dick Wellstood was an uncut diamond who was unable to adjust his cloth to suit the needs of "middle" America. His appearance changed with the seasons. His jeans, his long hair (sometimes) and his always unkempt appearance must have baffled many of his audiences. But his music always dazzled them so it all worked out fine once the job was under way.

And he was the kind of musician who always seemed to be around. He would show up in all manner of different circumstances. And it was always a delight to share brief moments of witty repartee before the job started. Wellstood was an articulate observer of the scene and his writings for magazines and album liner notes were full of wise and witty observations about the music and its personalities. His understanding and appreciation of the music went far beyond his own particular area of interpretation. It was an ongoing challenge for him to add some of this material to his own solo repertoire.

One of his best musical associations was with clarinetist Kenny Davern. Their association went back at least to the early 1960s and they even took a short-lived version of their New Jersey Ramblers on the road in that decade. Their joint irreverence with tradition gave their repertoire and approach a decidely nonconformist look. But the music they played was always refreshing.

Partnerships, for Wellstood, seemed to come and go rather quickly. There was even a brief moment when he stumbled out of music into a law practice (perhaps to justify the existence of his degree). But he returned quickly to music and forged a fresh partnership with Marty Grosz, Joe Muranyi and Dick Sudhalter. The Classic Jazz Quartet was notable for the eclectic nature of its repertoire and the perception of its interpretations. All four musicians proved they were worthy journalists in a series of contributions to Jersey Jazz which only ended with Wellstood's death in July 1987.

Dick Wellstood was never a star but he was personally known to thousands of people within the jazz community. His sudden demise, at the peak of his powers, is something which is felt personally by many people. His music was intertwined with his own persona and his departure is a double loss for all who crossed his path.

His legacy is the many recordings and the broad spectrum of musical interpretations he offered the listener. He was a brilliant, idiomatic jazz musician whose depth of expression was broad-based.

– John Norris

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Solo Piano

Alone	Jazzology JCE 73 (1970)
From Ragtime On	Chiaroscuro 109 (1971)
Walkin' With Wellstood	77 SEU 12/51 (1974)
One Man Jazz Machine	Chiaroscuro 139 (1975)
Swingin' On A Baby Grand	88 Upright 005 (1976)
Stride Piano	Electrola 32-859 (1977)
Diane	Swingtime 8207 (1985)
Live At Cafe Des Copains	Unisson 1003 (1985)

With Kenny Davern

Famous Orchestra	Chiaroscuro 129
The Blue Three	Jazz Jazz 109
Free Swinging Trio	Fat Cat 207

With Dick Hyman

I Wish I Were Twins	Swingtime 8204
Stridemonster	Unisson 1006

With Other Groups

Blowin' The Blues Away, with Bob Wilber and Clark Terry	Classic Jazz 9
From Dixie To Swing, with Doc Cheatham, Vic Dickenson	Classic Jazz 10
Wild Women Don't Have The Blues, with Nancy Harrow	Candid 8008
Three Is Company, with Jim Galloway	Sackville 2007
Some Hefty Cats, with Keith Smith	Hefty Jazz 100
Rapport!, with Billy Butterfield	77 S 54
I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music, with Marty Grosz	Aviva 6004

AROUND THE WORLD

CANADA – Contemporary Music Projects hosted a tremendously successful Toronto/ Montreal collaboration of New Jazz at the Clinton March 21 to 27. Guy Nadon, Graeme Kirkland, Tom Walsh, Charles Papasoff, Bill Smith, Jean Derome, Stephen Donald, Robert Lepage and Maureen Meriden were among the performers. The night before the festival saw another appearance by **George Koller's Free-union Collectiv**.

Sunday Night Jazz at **Cafe des Copains** has showcased such Toronto area performers as Frank Wright, Guido Basso, Brian Ogilvie, John Arpin, Phil Nimmons and the duo of Ed Bickert and Don Thompson. Strong audience support at these concerts (and those at the Clinton) suggests that all generations of area listeners are appreciative of the music being offered. The Cafe's Sunday sessions continue to the end of June with Jim Galloway, Michael Stuart and Don Thompson (playing vibes), the final three performers in the spring series.

Sam Noto was at **George's Spaghetti House** in March. His appearance coincided with the release of his new Unisson recording. Ted Moses followed Noto with a quartet featuring Mark McCarron, Scott Alexander and Graeme Kirkland. Then it was Time Warp's opportunity to play at the club. Moe Koffman continues to be in residence once a month.

The Canadian Collectors' Congress took place in Toronto April 23... **CHRY**, York University's community radio station programs jazz on a regular basis.

"Journey in Jazz", twelve installations depicting the development of the music industry and the formation of jazz in Canada from the 1880s to 1949, will be presented by sculptor **Carmen Paquette Arguelles** at Roy Thomson Hall June 22 - July 22, in conjunction with the duMaurier Jazz Festival.

This year's **Sound Symposium** is being held in Newfoundland between July 6 and 16. It will attract a worldwide gathering of composers, artists and performers.

Pete Magadini's Quartet recorded live at Montreal's Jazz 2080 Clark on March 24-26. Trumpeter Charles Ellison, guitarist Roddy Elias and Dave Young were the featured musicians. The tape is now circulating among prospective recording companies.

Steve Lacy's Sextet was in Vancouver April 5 for a concert at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre.

– John Norris

MONTREAL – After the customary lull of winter, the Montreal scene has suddenly emerged from its big sleep. To get things shaking, the **Willem Breuker Kollektief** offered us last March 19th their musical virtuosity in no uncertain terms, wowing the modest crowd in attendance. Were it not for a later rock show, they would have played more than the hour and a half alloted them. Moreover, their brand new CD **(Bob's Gallery, BV Haast 8801)** is a real treat: with over 67 minutes of music and ten tracks, it is the state of that band's art, since it was recorded only last December.

Recording-wise, soprano saxist **Dave Liebman** was in town as a guest artist on an upcoming CD of the McGill University Jazz Band. During his stay, he dropped in for a set at Club 2080, one of Montreal's most sympathetic hangouts for a good straight-ahead fare. A week after, **Frank Wess** came in for two nights, proving beyond a doubt that he can still blow. On tenor especially, he was cooking on every tune, while his flute playing was also very attractive in spots. At 66, he has both the ideas of a seasoned pro and the energy of a man half his age. Catch him if you can when he comes to your locality!

A one-time event, the **Festival international de musiciennes innovatrices (FIMI)** offered a wide array of musical acts featuring women performers. For five days in early April, twenty-three shows were staged at a number of venues, most of them free of charge. Closer to the "jazz" or improvised music tradition, Swiss pianist Irene Schweizer played once in solo and another time as a member of the European collective, Canaille. Besides her, French bassist Joelle Leandre, singer-vocalist Maggie Nichols, trombonist and violinist Annermarie Roelofs and saxophonist Co Streiff played with variable results, in short, an even share of hits and misses.

On the following night, **Steve Lacy** concluded his month-long tour in tip top form with his sextet. Benefitting from a night off between concerts, they certainly were ready to play, as demonstrated by Steve Potts in a couple of smoking solos. Lacy himself was also rather volubile in his contributions, as was pianist Bobby Few for that matter. In any event, the leader was surely in a buoyant mood, because the band managed to "life the bandstand" on a few occasions.

At this writing, the rumour mill is abuzz with headliners for our upcoming jazz festival. Chief among these are the British wunderkind Courtney Pine, Charlie Haden's Quartet, John Carter, Dizzy Gillespie with Sam Rivers (!), Joe Pass. As a special guest, Francis Paudras has accepted to present a programme of Bud Powell films and, possibly, more material on Dexter Gordon. Stay tuned for further developments.

– Marc Chenard

ELSEWHERE – An 80th birthday tribute to violinist **Stephane Grappelli** was held at Carnegie Hall on April 14. Among those participating in the celebrations were Michel Legrand, Toots Thielemans, Mike Renzi, Jay Leonhart, Grady Tate and Roger Kellaway (who was the show's musical director)... **Jane Ira Bloom** was at the Blue Note February 29... **The American Jazz Orchestra** tackled Duke Ellington's *Black Brown And Beige* at its March 3 Cooper Union concert... Pianist **David Leonhart** and bassist **Ray Drummond** were at the Knickerbocker March 15-19... **Bobby Timmons** was saluted by Harold Mabern and **Stuff Smith** was remembered by Billy Bang in April at the Jazz Center... **Tom Guralnick** performed solo at Kraine on April 23... **Karl Berger** began a six week Monday residency at The Knitting Factory in April. A six week workshop series was also conducted by Berger this spring at the La Mama Music Annex... Charlie Haden's Quartet, McCoy Tyner's Trio, the Terumasa Hino Quartet and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers were **Sweet Basil's** attractions for May and early June... **The Manhattan Blues Alliance** (10 East 10th Street, 3C, New York, N.Y. 10009) is working to keep the blues alive in New York... **WKCR**, one of the bright spots on the radio dial in New York (89.9), publishes an informative **Program Guide** for its supporters. Elliot Bratton's "Jazz in the 70s: The Fusion Confusion" was a fascinating article in the March edition while the April issue contained an in-depth interview with Sonny Rollins by Mitch Goldman... John Blake and Claude Williams participated in **The Third American String Summit** with a concert May 6 at St. Peter's Church.

Anthony Braxton was at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston April 9... **Marty Grosz and Dan Barrett** were at Meadville, Pa., for a concert April 23... Chicago's Riviera Club was the venue for an April 3 benefit night for **Koko Taylor**... Minnesota is celebrating its Swedish connection this summer with the presentation of many different aspects of its culture. Strangely, the only Swedish jazz performers are Ulf Wakenius and Peter Almqvist who hide their identities under the title of **Guitars Unlimited**... J.J. Johnson, Mary Fettig, Bobby McFerrin and trumpeter Ray Brown all participated in **North Texas State University's** music programs this spring.

The 1988 Paradise Valley Jazz Party in Scottsdale, Arizona lived up to its reputation as being among the best of these events. The mix of musical styles and generations worked well. Highlights included a quartet session featuring Don Thompson on vibes with the weekend's most "grooved" rhythm section: Roger Kellaway, Red Mitchell and Terry Clarke. That rhythm section, along with Clark Terry and Richie Cole, were the catalyst for Ernie Andrews setting a dynamic early Sunday groove with his stretched out version of *All Blues.*

Tommy Vig hosted a black tie event April 4 at Los Angeles' Century Plaza where the American Society of Music Arrangers honoured **John Williams.** Vig is also busy performing in L.A. and Las Vegas... **The L.A. Jazz Scene** is a free newspaper which lists some of the jazz activity in the area. Now if they only published a map showing where all the clubs were it

would be more useful for visitors!... **Steve Lacy** was at Catalina's March 25-27... **Jigs Whigham** conducted a workshop at U.S.C. March 21... **KLON**, the radio station which broadcasts real jazz music at all times, is hosting two evenings of music at the La Mirada Theater June 24-25. Participating musicians are Scott Hamilton, Dave McKenna, Russ Reinberg, Bill Berry, Doug MacDonald, Monty Budwig and Jake Hanna.

The fifth annual **KJAZ Spring Festival** was held April 17 with Chico Freeman the headline artist... Live music broadcasts from the station continue. Heard recently was a 1986 performance of the Turk Murphy band and Frank Morgan's Quartet from Kimball's.

By now the **New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival** is history for it took place between April 22 and May 1 with its usual eclectic mix of music and festivities... The second annual **Hollywood Blues Festival** was held May 14-15. Albert King, Margie Evans and Johnny Copeland were among the performers... **New Directions '88** was a one day event (May 21) at the Piermont Village Hall in Piermont, N.Y. which was organised by Industrial Strength / Borbetomagus Inc... Charleston's prestigious **Spoleto Festival** featured Les McCann/Eddie Harris (May 24), Carmen McRae (May 25) and Michel Petrucciani, with Gary Peacock and Roy Haynes (May 29)... The fifth annual **Chicago Blues Festival** takes place June 10-12 at Grant Park... The third **Clarence Gatemouth Brown American Music Festival** takes place June 17-18 at the Stepping Stone Ranch in Escoheag, R.I.... The seventh annual **Conneaut Lake Jazz Festival** takes place August 26-28. Bud Freeman, Joe Wilder, Ross Tompkins and Marty Grosz are among the participants... Diane Schuur, Benny Carter, Joe Williams and Mongo Santamaria are among the headliners for the **Monterey Jazz Festival**, to be held September 16-18.

Seminars, workshops and music schools are now all part of the jazz scene. **Arts Midwest** attracted a strong group of jazz industry people for its seminars at the University of Illinois' Chicago campus May 20-22... Illinois' Benedictine College presents a **Vocal Jazz Camp** July 31-August 5 with Laurel Masse, Jay Clayton and Sheila Jordan among the faculty... The University of Denver's **International Guitar Week** will be held from July 9-15 with Bucky Pizzarelli representing jazz music... Jacksonville hosts the **Florida National Jazz Festival** October 13-15. Among its highlights is the finals of a jazz piano competition. If you aspire to participate you can obtain entry forms from Jazz Piano Competition, c/o Joyce Hellmann Bizot, Chmn, 100 Festival Park Avenue, Jacksonville, Fl 32202. Previous winners include Marcus Roberts, Lorraine Desmarais and Laszlo Gardony.

Support for jazz in Hawaii is sustained through the efforts of the **Hawaii Jazz Club** who can be reached at P.O. Box 58, Kailua Kona, HI 96745.

Aruba is hosting a summer series of contemporary American music. Tito Puente, George Benson, Jean Luc Ponty and Al Jarreau are among those featured... Sid Bromley reports from **Australia** that veteran reed player Earl "Tich" Bray died in March. He was a founding member of the Len Barnard band. The Australian Jazz Orchestra is to play at the Houston Festival in July. Both Graeme Bell and John Sangster have autobiographies due for publication... Guitarist **Joe Carter** left for a South American tour May 25. He began with three weeks in Rio de Janeiro followed by appearances in Sao Paulo and Buenos Aires.

Vinny Golia toured Europe in March – some of the concerts were recorded for broadcast on German radio... **Jazzhus Montmartre** was the venue for the **Ben Webster Birthday Party** on April 3. Organised by Billy Moore Jr. it was a joyous celebration of the musical heritage of the great tenor saxophonist. Harold Ashby was the featured artist. He performed with Kenny Drew, Hugo Rasmussen and Alex Riel. (And that must have been a terrific performance!). Doug Raney's new quartet and the sixteen piece Copenhagen Dream Band also participated in the event... Glitzy tours of **Japan** are undertaken by many jazz performers. Others work there on a quieter scale. Tokyo's After Six Club has been home for Sir Charles Thompson since the beginning of January. Red Richards is another pianist to enjoy extended residencies at the same club. Ralph Sutton was the featured artist in a presentation of the Kobe Dixieland Jazz Association on April 29... **Spain's** Terras Jazz Festival took place between March 11 and 27. The GRP All Stars, the George Robert/Tom Harrell Quintet, Paul Bley, Michel Petrucciani and the Andrew Hill/Joe Henderson Quartet were among the showcased artists... **"That's Jazz – The Sound of the 20th Century"** is an ambitious multi-dimensional audio-visual presentation of the music and its place in society which will be on view from May 29 to August 28 in the Exhibition Halls on the Mathildenhohe in **Darmstadt**, West Germany... European festivals already concluded by the time this issue is published include the **Jazz Week at Burghausen** (March 16-20), Nurnberg's **Jazz Ost West** (April 26-May 1) and **Moers New Jazz Festival** (May 20-23)... **Bath**, England is the venue for an impressive international festival this summer. Jazz artists performing include Martial Solal, Andy Sheppard, Don Weller, Ken Hyder's Talisker, Bob Wilber's All Star Jazz Band, Norma Winstone, John Taylor and Norma Winstone, Ornette Coleman, Hornweb Saxophone Quartet, The Free Jazz Quartet, Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy and Humphrey Lyttelton. The festival runs from May 27 to June 12.

New from **Alligator** is Lonnie Brooks: "Live from Chicago"... **BMG/RCA** has released James Moody's "Moving Forward" and "Amina" by Amina Claudine Myers... **Capri Records'** latest release features pianist/singer Ellyn Rucker... Jean-Francois Jenny-Clark's "Unison" is a new release on **CMP Records**. The same company

has also released recordings by David Leibman ("The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner"), John Bergamo ("On The Edge") and Joachim Kuhn ("Wandlungen")... **Ken Colyer's** historic recording with **George Lewis** in 1957 at a concert in Manchester is available at some English specialty shops or from A.J. Leppard, 63 Rydal Gardens, Hounslow, Middlesex TW3 2JJ, England... **Delmark Records**, back in action, has new releases by Yank Rachell and Roosevelt Sykes...**DMP's** latest is their third recording of Bob Mintzer's band... "Art of the Duo" is a new collaboration between Lee Konitz and Albert Mangelsdorff on **Enja... Fantasy** continues its full scale release of new and older recordings. Brand new are sessions by the Art Farmer/Benny Golson Jazztet, Chris Connor, Frank Morgan with the McCoy Tyner Trio, Joshua Breakstone (with Tommy Flanagan), Donald Byrd, Mark Murphy and Sonny Rollins. The 15 new **OJC** lp reissues should make Bob Porter very happy! They are all "Soul Masterpieces" and include Willis Jackson, Arnett Cobb, Harold Mabern, Rusty Bryant, Houston Person and Charles Earland. Shirley Scott, Groove Holmes and Jack McDuff are among the organists featured. From Orrin Keepnews' **Landmark** comes CD versions of the final four volumes of their Cannonball Adderley series. It includes the outstanding Lighthouse date as well as a previously unissued European concert. Upcoming from Fantasy are a brand new Landmark session with Bobby Hutcherson and newly issued material on Pablo by Count Basie, Curtis Peagler and Sonny Criss. The Criss material dates from a 1951 JATP concert with Benny Green, Joe Newman, Lockjaw Davis, Tommy Potter and Kenny Clarke.

New on **Incus** is "Live at Oscars" with Alex Maguire and Steve Noble... The Vienna Art Orchestra's newest release "Swiss Swing" is on **Moers Music**... Pianist Onaje Allan Gumbs is now an **MCA** artist. His initial release for the company is titled "That Special Part of Me"... **Mosaic Records** has acquired all of Dean Benedetti's legendary recordings of Charlie Parker. They will be released in their totality in the fall. Contrary to legend, they were recorded direct to disc and not on wire!... **New Music Distribution** has published a new catalog of its material. They are at 500 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012... **New World Records** (701 Seventh Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10036) has released a beautifully packaged and pressed edition (2 lps) of Earl Hines playing Duke Ellington. The set contains volumes one (8114) and four (8132) of the original MJR release as well as *Black and Tan Fantasy, Caravan, Just Squeeze Me* and *Don't Get Around Much Any More.* There's two hours of music on the set which is also available in the compact disc format. Both lp and CD versions are also available from New World of Jay McShann's "Goin' To Kansas City" session.

There's a steady flow of newly recorded and reissued material from **Polygram.** Brand new are sessions with Betty Carter (Verve will also reissue the singer's Betcar sessions), Helen Merrill/Gil Evans (a remake of the material they did 30 years ago on Emarcy), a second collection from Ray Bryant titled "Trio Today" and James Williams' "Magical Trio 1" with Ray Brown and Art Blakey. Reissues include "The Genius of Bud Powell", "Intermodulation" by Bill Evans / Jim Hall, Art Blakey's Jazz Messenger's with Lee Morgan, Wayne Shorter and Bud Powell and Ella Fitzgerald sings Harold Arlen. Newly discovered sessions include Ella Fitzgerald in Rome and Benny Goodman in Sweden (1970). New on **Red Records** is an evening with Joe Henderson, Charlie Haden and Al Foster; the duo of Kenny Barron and Buster Williams ("Two as One"), a second concert performance by the Cedar Walton trio and "Love Remains" featuring Bobby Watson, John Hicks, Curtis Lundy and Marvin "Smitty" Smith... From **Owl** comes "Paris Blues" – duets by Gil Evans and Steve Lacy and Richie Bierach's solo performances on "Common Heart". New on **Black Saint** are duet albums by David Murray/Randy Weston and Lester Bowie/ Nana Vasconcelos while Soul Note has new material from Billy Bang, Paul Motian, Tete Montoliu and Mal Waldron.

Quartet Records is a new company which will present "New Sounds from the West Coast"... **Stash** has released a new recording by Grover Mitchell's Orchestra... **Stomp Off** has a new collection of traditional jazz titles. Write them at P.O. Box 341, Dept. C, York, PA 17405 for their latest catalog... **The Bruce Smith Ensemble** has released an lp of its music. It is available from them at 463 West Street, B645, New York, N.Y. 10014... "Say What You Want" is the title of Bob Thompson's new lp on **Intima Records.**

Radio Station WVXU in Cincinnati has produced a CD documenting the local scene. The music is taken from live tapings of local musicians for broadcasts over the last few years. Guitarist **Cal Collins** is the only nationally known performer on the collection but there is some interesting music by a variety of groups. More information is available by writing the radio station at Xavier University, 3800 Victory Parkway, Cincinnati, Ohio 45207.

Some major makers and shakers of the jazz community passed away this winter. The attrition rate seems to be escalating alarmingly. Pianist/blues singer **Memphis Slim** died in Paris February 24. He was 72. Organist **Don Patterson** died in Philadelphia February 10. Trumpeter **Ken Colyer** died in France on March 8 following a long bout with cancer. Drummer **Dannie Richmond** died March 16 of a heart attack. Trumpeter **Billy Butterfield** died in mid-March at the age of 71 after a lengthy illness. Composer/arranger/pianist **Gil Evans** died March 20 in Mexico. He was 76. Record producer **Richard Bock**, who founded Pacific Jazz in the early 1950s, died in Los Angeles February 5. Pioneer discographer, historian, record producer and writer **Charles Delaunay** died in France February 16. He was 77. – *compiled by John Norris*

ATTENTION
TO ALL CODA CONTRIBUTORS
THERE WILL BE NO COLUMNS IN PERFORMANCE OR FESTIVAL SCENES IN THE SUMMER ISSUE.
NEXT DEADLINE
SEPTEMBER 1ST, 1988

THE BLUES ON ATLANTIC

For blues fans who acquired their good taste after 1980 the **Atlantic Blues Box** (7-81713-1) is an high calorie buffet of guitar/piano/vocal/ensemble treats. Mind you the selection is tied to the recording environment of Atlantic and its affiliates/subsidiaries. Good stuff abounds with the blues menu covering the rich range of Piedmont, Delta, Texas, West Coast, Chicago piano and ensemble, Kansas City, Detroit, New York R&B, Southern soul/blues, Stax blues, Muscle Shoals muscle, and Stevie Ray Vaughan macho guitar. Much of this material has seen LP exposure over the last 2 decades.

The 100 plus selections are broken thematically into 4 separate double LPs that, for the convenience of the consumer, can be procured separately or enmass as a collector blues box. Other than the "box" packaging there is no extra booklet or cutout action poster with the box. All bio and discographic info is provided in the detailed liner notes with each LP.

To begin, **Atlantic Blues: Piano** (78-16941) offers a real road atlas sampling of blues traditions. A good slice of this material comes from the early 1970's Atlantic reissues – **Jimmy Yancey: Chicago Piano, Blues Piano: Chicago Plus**, and **Professor Longhair: New Orleans Piano**. The mournful early morning stylings of **Jimmy Yancey** are well represented by 4 cuts from his last session (1951) with just him and bassist **Israel Crosby**. Also from 1951 come 3 standard **Little Brother Montgomery** workouts including "Vicksburg Blues" and "Farrish Street Jive". These are trio sides featuring Crosby again on bass with speculation placing **Frank Williams** on drums. Also from the above mentioned reissues come the jump and Charles Brown stylings of **Floyd Dixon** via "Hey Bartender" and "Floyd's Blues", and some goodtime Professor Longhair in the guise of "Ball The Wall" and "Tipatina". These 2 come from a 1949 Atlantic session. From a long gone Atlantic 10 incher come some healthy **Meade Lux Lewis** with the tribute "Albert's Blues" and rocking interpretations of "Cow Cow Blues" and "Honky Tonk Train".

Collectively these should constitute a varied piano sampling. However the program keeps rolling along to include some early **Ray Charles** gems. "Ray's Blues" is a stone soulful blues while "Low Society" which originally serves as a solo rehearsal track is drawn straight from Lloyd Glenn. The instrumental, "A Bit Of Soul" takes us up to 1955 with a more formal arrangement and some room for saxophonist **David Newman** to ease in with a tasty solo.

Kansas City is well placed in the program. There are 2 cuts by **Jay McShann** from his late 1970's LP **The Last Of The Blue Devils** including "Fore Day Rider" and "My Chile". From a 1956 Atlantic session come the **Joe Turner/Pete Johnson** team with the prerequisite "Roll Em Pete" and a bluesy "Cherry Red". Both the McShann and Turner sessions feature 7 or more pieces for a nice little big band sound. In particular, **John Scoffield** shines as a bluesy guitarist on the McShann sides.

To further variety, **Amos Milburn** appears with guitarist **Texas Johnny Brown**, with a mellow West Coast/Texas "After Hour Blues". For the completist there are 2 nice **Vann Walls** instrumentals. Walls was a New York session pianist whose playing has graced many a New York session. For the cultist there is the funky "Junco Partner" drawn from Doctor John's **Gris Gris** LP (currently out on Alligator) and for the esoteric name dropper there is **Willie Mabon**'s "I Don't Know" gleened from a 1976 Chicago date that places Mabon with **Lurrie Bell** on bass and British vocalist, **Mick Jagger** on harmonica (a Little Walter he ain't).

Finally the real killers on this piano sampler are **Jack Dupree**'s alley sides from his best ever LP – **Blues In The Gutter** (currently reissued in its entirety). These sides have the funky magic of a loose, smoking jam with outstanding contributions by guitarist **Larry Dale** and saxophonist **Pete Brown**. Don't stand too close to "T B Blues" because it burns. Jack and his musical friends are even able to knock the folk charm out of "Frankie and Johnny" with some alley funk.

Atlantic Blues: Guitar (7816951) also covers quite a bit of ground. Side 1 starts off in the Piedmont and works westward. The program kicks off with **Willie McTell's** "Broke Down Engine" from his 1949 session and goes to a 1959 Alan Lomax field recording of **Fred McDowell**'s deep Delta blues. Fred's "Shake Em On Down" is pre-Arhoolie and finds him in an informal setting with second guitar and comb. Next there are 2 stark, primitive 1953 **John Lee Hooker** titles – "My Baby Don't Love Me" and "Guitar Lovin' Man". On the latter cut he is joined by guitarist **Eddie Kirkland** for a truly mean workout. Both cuts are classic early Hooker, **Sticks McGhee** is next joined by pianist **Big Chief Ellis** and **Brownie McGhee** for an unissued 1949 cut, "Tall Pretty Woman". Ellis gets a good piece of this uptempo workout. From there the program shifts to a T-Bone Walker influence via the playing of guitarist **Texas Johnny Brown**. Brown worked with Amos Milburn and it is with Milburn's band that these 2 1949 vintage uptempo instrumentals and blues vocal were cut.

Side 2 starts off on solid ground with 2 **T-Bone Walker** titles originally on the classic Atlantic release **T-Bone Blues**. Both "Two Bones And A Pick" and "Mean Old World" come from mid-1950's L.A. sessions featuring sidemen like **Lloyd Glenn, Plas Johnson, Barney Kessel, Earl Palmer** and Walker's nephew **R.S. Rankin** (a solid West Coast guitarist in his own right). This is superb T-Bone.

Next along comes West Coast session guitarist, **Chuck Norris** with a Charles Brown inspired blues from 1953 under the title of "Let Me Know". In contrast the mood shifts to the biting wake up call from **Guitar Slim** with "It Hurts To Love Someone" and "Down Through The Years". This pair of slow blues from the mid-1950's are characterized by Slim's dramatic vocals and raw slashing guitar over horns and rhythm.

Side 2 closes on a more urbane note with 2 cooking instrumentals fronted by Texas guitarist, **Cornell Dupree**. The first is a scorching tribute to Gatemouth Brown a la "Okie Dokie Stomp" while the second, "Blue Nocturne" pays homage to King Curtis with a laid back, after hours ambiance with plenty of tasty guitar, and a fat organ sound that plants it firmly in the back pew of a ghetto church.

Side 3 opens with the classic Kansas City / Chicago South Side fusion of **Joe Turner**'s "T.V. Mama" with its backing from Broomdusters, **Elmore James and Johnny Jones**. From this classic 1953 session the program detours to L.A. for some state of the art West Coast blues via **Al King**'s reading of the Fulson classic, "Reconsider Baby". This 1964 Shirley single features some excellent guitar by **Johnny Heartsman**. Less intense is the 1959 **Mickey Baker** instrumental workout, "Midnight, Midnight". However this ambiance is quickly shattered by the raw intensity of **Ike and Tina Turner's** killer "I Smell A Rat". Plucked from a live 1971 recording Tina's emotive, biting vocals are complemented by some cutting, gutbucket lead guitar by Ike. **B.B. King** follows this tough act to close Side 3 with a strong 1972 live reading of his sometimes signature tune, "Why I Sing The Blues".

Side 4 starts off very much in a Stax groove with **Albert King's** mid 1960's hits "Crosscut Saw" and "Born Under A Bad Sign". Both are essential for any serious modern blues collection. Next up is a 1969 **John Hammond** visit to Muscle Shoals. The product is a reading of Willie Dixon's dance ditty, "Shake For Me". The Shoals presence is maintained through the guitars of **Duane Allman** and **Eddie Hinton**. Finally this guitar anthology closes off with a longish Montreux performance by **Stevie Ray Vaughn**. For sure there is nothing subtle about this airing of "Texas Flood" which appeared recently on the **Blues Explosion** anthology.

Atlantic Blues: Vocalists (7816961) presents a real motherload of important vocalists whom have generally skirted the fringes of mainstream blues collections. The artists showcased come from classic blues, Kansas City shout blues, R&B and what many of us used to awkwardly call soul/blues.

Side 1 is chronologically rooted in classic blues, featuring a pair of **Sippie Wallace** workouts from a 1982 session. "You Got To Know How" sets Sippie's still strong vocal in front of an 8 piece ensemble. On "Suitcase Blues" backing is particularly good, kept simply to **Bonnie Riatt**'s slide guitar and the piano of **Jim Dapogny**. Keeping to this genre is **LaVern**

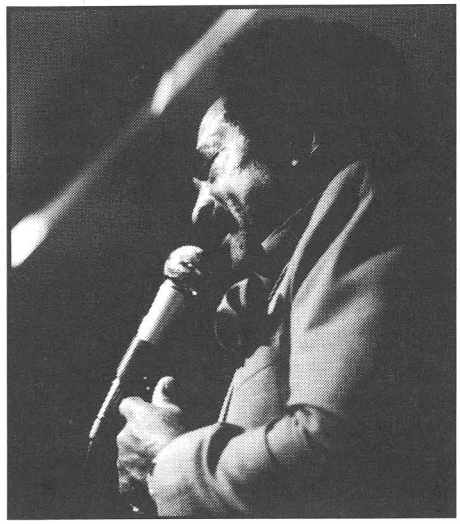
Baker's 1958 tribute to Bessie Smith with "Gimme A Pig Foot". Backing comes from an 8 piece unit including the likes of **Buck Clayton, Paul Quinchette** and **Vic Dickenson.**

Jimmy Witherspoon is also found on Side 1 giving a masterful performance of "Trouble In Mind" and "In The Evening". Both are from a 1956 session with a definite New Orleans feel complete with clarinet, trumpet and banjo. Side 1 closes with 2 relaxed **Mama Yancey** readings of "Make Me A Pallet On The Floor" and "How Long Blues" from the same 1951 Jimmy Yancey session covered on the piano anthology with of course more Yancey piano and Israel Crosby bass.

Joe Turner introduces Side 2 with "St. Louis Blues" from the 1956 **Boss Of The Blues** release followed by "Oke-She-Moke-She-Pop" from his 1953 Chicago date with **Elmore James** and **Johnny Jones.** From a 1951 single come "I've Got That Feeling" and "Every Time" by **Lil Green.** She was in great form for these post Victor blues. Some nice electric lead guitar on "Every Time" helps bring her sound into the 1950's. Next are found two jump pieces from **Wynonie Harris** cut in 1956. No departures from the status quo here. **Ruth Brown** showcases her blues feeling with the moody "Rain Is A Bringdown" and "R.B. Blues". Both were from a 1949 **Amos Milburn** session that featured Milburn on piano and **Texas Johnny Brown** on guitar. These cuts have a real easy Texas/West Coast feel.

Side 3 brings things into the 1960's and 1970's opening with two **Percy Mayfield** tracks including the brooding "Nothing Stays The Same Forever" and the tongue in cheek "I Don't Want To Be President". Both were cut in 1974 and feature session producer, **Johnny Guitar Watson** on lead guitar. In keeping with these high standards, **Ted Taylor** offers up a soulful uptempo reading of Mayfield's "River's Invitation". **Esther Phillips** and **Otis Clay** keep the aquatic theme going with "Just Like A Fish" and "Pouring Water On A Drowning Man". "...Fish" has a nice (Johnny Otis era) Little Esther blues vocal feel to it over strong, to the point 1970's production. "'...Drowning Man" is a benchmark **Otis Clay** soul/blues. A real surprise is **Rufus Thomas'** alley interpretation of B.B. King's "Did You Ever Love A Woman" in front of **Booker** T and **Steve Cropper.** Cropper delivers some stinging lead guitar. On the other hand, the low point of the program is **Titus Turner**'s pseudo-live two part, "Baby Girl". Not a very good climax to an otherwise strong Side 3.

Side 4 begins with **Bobby Blue Bland** from the 1972 Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival with a polished "Ain't That Loving You". **Johnny Copeland** follows with his 1968 stone blues single "It's My Own Tears That Are Being Wasted". Next, New Orleans R&B artist, **Eldridge Holmes** provides a standout blues performance of "Cheatin' Woman" with hardcore blues backing from the Meters. From a 1966 Memphis Stax session comes **Johnny Taylor**'s blues hit "I Had A Dream". **Aretha Franklin**'s contribution is a previously unreleased blues "Takin' Another Man's Place" recorded with the boys from Muscle Shoals. Great stuff! **Z.Z. Hill** takes the anthology out with an uptempo soul rocker "It's A Hang Up Baby" and a blues ballad "Home Ain't Home At Suppertime". This is good Z.Z. Hill drawn from a 1969 Muscle Shoals session. It sure took too long (too late) for the industry to make room for this bluesy giant.



If one wants to be picky, the fourth volume, **Atlantic Blues: Chicago** (7816971) could be taken to task for a slightly off center title. Ethnomusicalogists could cite T-Bone's Chicago session or the Muscle Shoals and New York sessions of Otis Rush and Freddy King as not being of the straight Chicago genre.

Mind you, **Johnny Jones**' 1953 sides get Side 1 off to an honest start. "Chicago Blues" and "Hoy Hoy" have a nice downhome Broomduster sound to them complete with some low key Elmore slide on "Chicago Blues". **T-Bone Walker**'s "Play On Little Girl" has an early Muddy ensemble feel complete with wailing harp by **Junior Wells** and rhythm guitar by **Jimmy Rogers.** While Wells and Rogers are still present on "T-Bone Blues Special", Walker is definitely truer to form with some assertive Texas lead. Both cuts are drawn from Walker's 1955 Chicago session for Atlantic.

From the 1970 Miami Atco **Junior Wells** and **Buddy Guy** session come 3 uptempo rockers with Junior taking vocals on "Poor Man's Plea" and "My Baby She Left Me", and Buddy on "T-Bone Shuffle". Instrumentally and vocally both leaders are strong and **A.C. Reed** is ever present to give this Eric Clapton production a real Junior/Buddy period feel.

Side 2 is your basic heavy side starting off with 3 late 1960's Cotillion sides by **Freddy King.** Freddy's rock hard lead and strong vocals are placed front and center in these fat productions by King Curtis and Donny Hathaway. Included are "I Wonder Why", "Play It Cool", and "Woke Up This Morning".

The remainder of Side 2 features 3 heavy hitters from **Otis Rush**'s Cotillion effort. This was produced by Mike Bloomfield and Nick Gravenites while Otis was holidaying around Muscle Shoals. The fat mean sound (plenty of horns and a driving Shoals rhythm section (sounding similar to the Electric Flag of the late 1960's)) lends itself well to Rush's menacing sound. He sounds particularly at home on B.B.'s "Gambler's Blues" and Chick Willis' "I Feel So Bad". The Electric Flag stamp is very apparent on "Reap What You Sow" which Rush is able to pull off comfortably. Both Rush and Freddy King seemed to be quite amenable to heavy handed rock productions.

Side 3 takes us back to the Otis Spann Memorial Field and the 1972 Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival for some good live **Howlin Wolf** and **Muddy Waters.** Wolf's "Highway 49" showcases the Wolf band at its loose, driving, downhome best complete with **Hubert Sumlin, Eddy Shaw** and **Detroit Jr.** collectively sounding on the verge of anarchy, but never quite going over the edge. Next Muddy burns out a couple of slides on an intense performance of "Honey Bee". For this gig Muddy's band was fattened up with **Marcus Johnson**'s tenor. **Koko Taylor** is next up fronting **Mighty Joe Young**'s big band for a rousing "Wang Dang Doodle". Side 3 closes with a loose "Dust My Broom" by **Johnny Shines** with the Festival house rhythm section. Not great Shines.

Side 4 continues with the Ann Arbor program with **Freddy King**'s house wrecking performance of the rocker "Going Down" and a soulful **Luther Allison** doing a clean reading of Percy Mayfield's "Please Send Me Somebody To Love". From Ann Arbor of 1972, Side 4 takes us to the 1982 Montreux Festival for 2 more cuts from the **Blues Explosion** anthology for some rocking festival crowd pleasers by **Luther "Guitar Jr." Johnson** ("Walking The Dog") and **J.B. Hutto** ("I Feel So Good" of the Bill Broonzy variety). Both feature Hutto's rhythm section of the day and are characteristic of Hutto's early 1980's gutbucket, goodtime sound and Johnson's current get up and dance bar blues sound.

Looking at this 4 volume box set there is ample variety to disarm the usual criticism of the blues as being samey. Historically speaking, pre-war manifestations are represented in the works of Yancey and McTell while the current rock/blues sound of Vaughn is highlighted. From a regional perspective, Texas, the West Coast, the Delta, the Piedmont and of course, Chicago are covered. Production wise, downhome to New York slick to Muscle Shoals hard are showcased. We are talking a serious sampler here.

Now if I was going to buy the 4 volumes separately over time as budget permitted, I would start with **Atlantic Blues: Vocalists** and **Atlantic Blues: Piano** in that order and go from there. Both the vocalist and piano anthologies seem to offer a better selection of "rare" sides. At least for my collection and taste, these 2 anthologies most successfully filled some gaps. *– Doug Langille*

JIMMY WITHERSPOON (Photograph by Gerard Futrick)

JAZZ LITERATURE

DUKE ELLINGTON
By James Lincoln Collier
Oxford University Press
New York. $19.95

Having successfully – and profitably – denigrated Louis Armstrong into a inferiority-complexed clown in his much-touted biography of Satch, James Collier now sets his hindsights on Duke Ellington with equally outrageous fortune. Besides belittling Duke's character in his usually snotty fashion (though to a lesser extent than he vilefied Louis) he questions Ellington's standing as the greatest of jazz composer-arrangers and wonders whether he was a composer at all, dismissing Ellington's entire body of work after the mid-1940s (when Duke had, in Collier's own words, reached "musical maturity") as hardly worth the consideration. Consequently Duke's most creative years of his musical life when he led what was undoubtedly the best jazz orchestra in the world, are relegated to less than a third of this ill-conceived study.

What is unfortunate though, to jazz fans, scholars and Ellington admirers alike. is that this lop-sided biography has been heavily publicized as the definitive study of Ellington the man and his music, with author tours, radio interviews in the U.S. and Canada and with the book being translated into some 15 languages for sale in as far off as Russia. Collier – a likeable man in other respects, has managed to bamboozle otherwise intelligent critics and interviewers into believing the cover blurbs (with one prominent Canadian radio interviewer practically gushing over him with unabashed adulation).

What then makes this book sell? Jazz books in general are hardly candidates for best seller lists; in the book trade they are usually written off as losses. Collier has hit on the right formula for success by belittling his subjects, taking pot-shots (and sneaking occasional low-blows) at idols of the jazz world like Armstrong, Ellington and (hold your breath) Benny Goodman, his next target, earning substantial grants from misguided institutions (in this case Brooklyn College) and stiff fees from associated publishers for his efforts. He packs his books with imposing technical analyses of the subject's work, to show off his erudition, and adroitly word-processes carefully chosen data from second-hand sources – published interviews, tapes and the like – to bolster preconceived views. "I do not write fan books," he crows (in interviews) and he's not about to write books about such deserving jazz folk as Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins or an Art Tatum that would not sell.

On the positive side, all this furor over Collier's books, pro and con, particularly among the unknowing, cannot help but generate fresh interest worldwide in his subjects, particularly among the unknowing, ultimately benefiting all of jazz itself. (Who knows, someone may yet come up with that authentic biopic of Louis or Duke, beyond **Sophisticated Ladies**. And could Collier be any worse than **The Benny Goodman Story**?)

Not surprisingly, Collier never met Ellington (nor Armstrong either) or heard the band in person – an experience quite different from listening to records. In his research, he seems understandably averse to talking face-to-face with any surviving musicians who were close to his subjects – in Ellington's case men like Cootie Williams (then still alive), Mercer Ellington, Clark Terry, Dizzy Gillespie, (Prof.) Aaron Bell, Jimmie Hamilton and others who might have changed his perspective if not his attitude. He did however have the good sense to consult premier Ellington authority Stanley Dance and Helen Oakley Dance (who produced many of Duke's small band sides) and while they put him straight on some matters they were unable to change Collier's rigid ideas as to Ellington's character and achievements.

But any book about Ellington, good or bad (**The Sweet Man** by the sycophantic Don George was the vilest; **Duke Ellington In Person** by son Mercer the most authentic; **The World Of Duke Ellington** by Stanley Dance the best informed) cannot help but compel interest, for the man was unique in jazz as in life, and Collier's Ellington is no exception. Lengthy (340 pages with index, notes, a sketchy discography, stock photos), overwritten, replete with countless "needless to says" (then why say it?). "end-results" (any other kind?) and occasionally repetitious, as Collier belabors a point, Collier's book is destined to be around, like acid rain, for some time to come – until a genuine definitive biography is forthcoming.

What is disturbing is the supercilious air that wafts through this book (more so in the Armstrong one) and colors Collier's views of Ellington's character and music, leaving its author open to suspicions of racism. When the tone is not patronizing, he sneers at the Ellington family's modest "middle-class" aspirations, it is downright derisive in describing Ellington's ducal "pretentions". (Throughout his life, he writes, 'Duke always felt he was somehow degraded if he did not go first class ... It was the style in which he lived that mattered'.)

With his usual disdain for the entertainment side of jazz – as though one diminished the other, Collier describes Ellington's showmanship at the Cotton Club and similar cabarets in his early career as barely a step removed from the "mugging and leaping around" of Armstrong and Calloway, and the "jungle music" he was expected to play as likely to shock his "middle-class" parents. Then he goes on to scoff at Ellington's explanation that the experience was educative and enriching and brought about a further broadening of his music's scope, suggesting that it "may seem self-serving, a tony way of looking at performances that verged on the pornographic", although there was intellectual support for it.

At the same time, Collier correctly surmises, it was during this period and the decade immediately following that Ellington produced his greatest body of work, the three-minute masterpieces that were turned out at the recording studios or (like 'Rockin' in Rhythm') put together expressly for dancers, but he wonders how much actual writing was involved: "How much music Duke wrote during this period is hard to know, but he certainly wrote some," he allows, then adds: "Throughout all of his work, Ellington was developing his personal method of – we cannot say composing – but creating compositions.

It has become almost a cliche to say that the band was Ellington's instrument and it's a well known fact (detailed in most Ellington studies) that Duke tailored his music to suit the individual styles of his musicians, thus producing the unique "Ellington sound". While this made Ellington undoubtedly the greatest

improviser on the jazz orchestra, Collier allows, it did not make him a great composer in the classical sense: "This helter-skelter method of composing did not lend itself to carefully thought-out pieces with developing themes, variations on material that has gone before, and other devices commonplace in musical compositions."

Much has been written (by Mercer, Bigard, Dance, others) about the many musicians who contributed ideas and tunes to the band, some of it acknowledged others just "absorbed" into the rich fabric that was Ellington's music, but certainly not the extent of Collier's estimation that "virtually all of Ellington's best-known songs originated in somebody else's head."

It was a system that worked perfectly, according to Collier, mainly because of Ellington's dominating character, his firm control of his men and music, and his craving for constant admiration: "Without the liking for control and a subtle skill at manipulating people, he could not have composed as he did..." Elsewhere he states that Duke played upon his men "as a card shark manipulates his deck," without taking into consideration the strong ties of loyalty, respect, even love that existed on both sides: many of Duke's men could barely function outside of Ellington's musical periphery, and when Hodges and Strayhorn died, Duke was shattered. Nevertheless, Collier sees Ellington as "the ringmaster of a circus, surrounded by elephants, acrobats, seals, clowns, and dancing horses – gay and gaudy dolls he must control by judicious choice of the kind word, the whip, the handful of peanuts."

In belittling Duke's reputation as a composer, which seems to be the main thrust of this book, Collier points out that Ellington had no formal training as a composer until his taking over of the band (in 1926) "forced him to learn a little more about the technicalities of composition" and he accomplished this, in the main, by "picking the brains" of well-schooled black musicians Will Marion Cook (who was teaching him) and Will Vodery. Even so, taking Cook's advice, Ellington sought individuality by constantly breaking the rules, pleasantly surprising jazz listeners while befuddling classical-bound critics like Cellier who, in his analyses of early Ellingtonia, constantly expresses shock at examples of Duke's musical unorthodoxy. Typically, Collier then concludes that "in truth, in most instances Ellington broke the rules simply because he was unaware of them" and "even after he was writing extended and quite complex musical pieces, he never knew much about formal musical theory."

This leads to Collier's final repudiation of Ellington as composer in the last third of the book, when Ellington began to take himself seriously as a composer and write the extended works that, in Collier's opinion, led to his "Decline and Fall" (as one chapter is headed). The culprits here seem to be the Europeans and particularly the British, who are accused of turning Duke's head and, in 1933, giving him a "sense of importance". ('Duke Ellington came home from Europe charged up with a sense of his importance as an artist, a sense that his work mattered and that he ought to take it seriously...')

From the 1940s, when Duke had what some critics consider his best band (Collier prefers the one of the '30s), onward, Ellington became, according to Collier, "obsessed" with extended works and he dismisses most of these in two scant chapters, with lofty assessments based on Western-music standards. Thus much of *New World A-Comin'* "sounds as if it were movie music designed to accompany the covered wagons"; *The Tattooed Bride* (Carnegie Hall concert, 1948) shows "fewer of the pompous devices found in so many of Ellington's extended works"; *The Harlem Suite* might have been a masterpiece "had

Duke simply known more about how this sort of thing should be done"; while most of *Such Sweet Thunder* strikes Collier "as a collection of self-indulgent fragments that are tied to Shakespeare by great leaps of logic and that show very little understanding."

The longer collections which Ellington put together to fill the needs of a LP age fare worse by Collier's book because they "have no sense of destination". The *Latin American Suite* (one of the most beautiful pieces of music on record) is "lacking in momentum ... lacks contrast." A number of other works are not mentioned at all because, in Collier's view, "Ellington knew a great deal about writing jazz, and not so much about writing other kinds of music."

Ellington's "sacred concerts" get an even more severe drubbing from Collier and while I am no avid fan of these religious pieces I would be more charitable than Collier in assessing the *Second Sacred Concert* as "an unmitigated disaster ... the music is empty when it is not obvious and banal when it is neither ... The words are consistently embarassing – puerile and filled with cute paradoxes and sophomoric insights..." Here Collier once more reminds us that "Ellington got only the education that any lazy high school student of his time got" and the implications are obvious. "It is my opinion," pronounces Collier, "that Ellington's growing interest in the extended pieces was one of the great artistic errors in jazz history."

Ellington's musicians, it might be added, fare no better in this "mean spirited book" (Dance's apt assessment) and his singers fare worse (Ivie Anderson had 'poor intonation' among other weaknesses) and he questions Duke's choice of the remarkably versatile and inventive Ray Nance and Paul Gonsalves among others (he suggests that Duke could have done better with white musicians like Bobby Hackett and Stan Getz). "When jazz becomes confounded with art," Collier concludes, "passion flies out and pretention flies in." On the wings of critics like Collier no doubt.

One wonders how far jazz criticism of this sort, based on stuffy Western musical standards, has come since the anonymous critic in *Melody Maker*, reviewing "Down Our Alley Blues" and "Whiteman Stomp" by Fletcher Henderson in 1927, wrote: "'Down Our Alley Blues' (is) played by Duke Ellington and His Washingtonians, a colored unit in which the expected faults of coon bands – a noticeable crudeness and a somewhat poor tone – are by no means so apparent as usual. The orchestration of this number is clever. But when it comes to really good nigger style, I'm afraid that Massa Ellington will have to give pride of place to ... Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra ... Their orchestration of 'Whiteman Stomp' is a masterpiece. It contains stuff worthy of any symphony. The performance is unusually musicianly ... and the rhythmic ingenuity in syncopation for which the colored races are renowned has not been lost in any way."

The words may be different but the sentiments, oddly enough, are similar. One couldn't do better, after reading this depressing book, than to invest in the new CD releases of Duke Ellington's **The Private Collection**: fresh recordings from a recently discovered private stockpile amassed by Ellington over the years that show Duke at work doing what he loved best – creating music, without commercial pressure and with the possibility that a lot of it may never be released in his lifetime.

THE JAZZ YEARS: Earwitness To An Era
by Leonard Feather
Da Capo Press, New York. $10.95

Leonard Feather is one of those rare individuals who not only has spent his entire career in jazz in all its diverse forms but has managed as well to earn a substantial living in the usually ill-paid field of jazz journalism. Few in fact have listened to, participated in and written so much about what he calls "this the liveliest of twentieth century arts" in every corner of the world. And, at one time, it was difficult to pick up a jazz magazine, book or record album without seeing Feather's name as writer, critic, promoter, composer, performer and premier jazz authority.

In **The Jazz Years**, which he calls "a selective retrospective" rather than an autobiography, Feather describes more than half a century in jazz and his friendships and experiences with some of its key figures – Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Dizzy Gillespie, Lester Young, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, Billie Holiday – though he covers most of these in greater depth in his earlier book **From Satchmo To Miles** published in 1972 and reprinted in a new edition. But here he puts these encounters in wider perspective, with the roles they played in his own jazz evolution.

A chance encounter with Louis Armstrong's 1929 *West End Blues* when he was a schoolboy and classical piano student in London sparked Feather's interest in jazz. Years later, after he relocated to America, Feather was producing some of Armstrong's first post-war small band sides for Victor, contributing two blues for the occasion and sitting in on piano. He was also to some extent instrumental in persuading Louis to abandon his big unwieldy orchestra and return to the popular small group format that he retained for the rest of his life.

Feather was contributing articles on jazz to the *Melody Maker, Gramophone* and other British publications when he visited America for the first time in 1935, arriving in New York "with the land of jazz right under my feet." John Hammond (with whom he communicated) met him and, within hours, whisked him straight to the Apollo Theatre in Harlem to see Bessie Smith. Sadly, Feather recalls, the great blues singer, nearing the end of her career, was drunk and a pathetic caricature of the Empress of the Blues she had been.

It was on this visit that Feather became acquainted with the racism that split America into black and white and, moved by what he saw, became a dedicated crusader against racism as well as sexism, particularly in the music field in which he flourished. His chapters on these subjects, under the heading

BESSIE SMITH

"Prejudice" are particularly enlightening. Some examples:

On a visit to New York as a reluctant advertising salesman for *Melody Maker*, he showed a dummy sheet to bandleader Freddie Martin's manager. Because the sample page featured a photo of Duke Ellington, the manager turned to Feather in horror and said: "What, you want me to put Freddie's ad on the same page with a nigger?"

On another occasion, while enjoying a social evening with Red Norvo and Mildred Bailey at their home, the phone rang. Mildred picked it up, then hung up in disgust. "Oh shit," she said. "It was Joe Venuti. He was supposed to come over but he begged off when I told him we expect Teddy Wilson. He doesn't believe in socializing with colored people."

Feather describes other incidents, both negative and positive, which occurred on the racist-sexist front since he moved permanently to America (at the outbreak of war), involving Stan Kenton and others, and he notes some progress: "It was heartening to notice that over the years men like Joe Venuti changed their minds ... (but) none of this contradicts the inescapable fact that being black in America, even being a successful black musician, still can be hard on the psyche."

Ironically Feather came under fire for favoring black musicians when he was associated with various jazz polls (*Esquire, Metronome*) and resultant record sessions, when in fact he was impartial in his choices regardless of color if not in particular jazz styles. This set off the savage wars between the Beboppers whom Feather favored and the "moldy figs" (a term wrongly attributed to Feather) who championed traditional New Orleans music and predominantly white dixieland as the "real jazz" and with whom Feather is still understandably bitter. Yet Feather, a prolific composer (and not all in the Mop Mop, Bop Bop vein) wrote several blues numbers that were sung or played by Louis Armstrong, Dinah Washington (Evil Gal Blues) and other non-boppers, though to protect himself from critics he often used nom-de-plumes. In other incident-packed chapters, Feather throws light on the confusion that exists in the music business over the overlapping roles of improvisation, composition and arrangement and the reason why, in Billy Moore, America lost one of its best big-band arrangers. There is also a lot of information on the travails of the unpredictable record business.

The latter part of the book, covering Feather's tours afar (the USSR, Far East, Middle East, Europe) and afloat, are less compelling, but Feather has a lot of ground to cover in retrospect and he does it with his usually entertaining flair.

Of all the musicians Feather was associated with, Duke Ellington earns his greatest admiration: "If I was under oath and summoned to name the most cheerfully rewarding times of my career, the various periods of employment by Duke Ellington, starting in 1942, would come immediately to mind ... It was as if I had been sent to heaven and immediately appointed special assistant to God." Thus Feather's well-grounded assessment of Duke, and his lengthier portrait in **From Satchmo To Miles**, is compulsory reading for those fortunate enough to read Collier's biographical travesty of Ellington. As Feather points out, "Too much time and newsprint have been devoted to Ellington's flaws, as if we ought to expect every genius to be a perfect human being." (The latter book incidentally is dedicated "To Duke and all the Ellingtons – The First Family.")

While most of the dozen portraits in **From Satchmo To Miles** are painted in similar glowing tones they are valid reading because Feather was personally involved with these artists or personally interviewed them (his *Downbeat* Blindfold Tests were famous) and – unlike latter-day critics who depend solely on second-hand sources – he knows what he's talking about. "These are portraits of human beings first, analyses of musicians or musical history only peripherally or not at all," he writes in his new foreword.

If much of this information may sound familiar – Lady Day's last days; one of Satchmo's final musical appearances at his seventieth birthday party; Prez's farewell sentiments; Miles' bitter racial confrontations; Norman Granz's sour assessment of the jazz record industry – it was because Feather, in most instances, wrote about it first. It was a time when the jazz world was reeling from the insanity and musical inanities of rock and jazz records were becoming an endangered species. Now in the light of a seemingly more enlightened era (what with the flood of CD reissues, alternate-takes, rediscovered "lost" sessions, mammoth concert tributes and

the like), we may view these earlier episodes with a degree of whimsicality and mourn that many of the people portrayed – notably Duke, Basie, Billie, Prez and Bird – who may have profited most from it all, are now gone.

I REMEMBER JAZZ:
Six Decades Among The Great Jazzmen
by Al Rose
Louisiana State University Press
Baton Rouge. $24.95

You might call Al Rose the Leonard Feather of New Orleans jazz; like Feather he has devoted a lifetime to jazz, participating in, promoting, recording, talking and writing about it for the best part of sixty years. However, as far as Rose goes, there is only one kind of jazz – the traditional music of his native New Orleans which he champions in no uncertain terms. Also, unlike Feather, he doesn't depend on jazz to earn a living.

Rose is best known to readers for his historical portraits of the Crescent City and its relationship to jazz – **Storyville, New Orleans** and **New Orleans: A Family Portrait**. This time out, he dips into nostalgia to view – with decidedly Rose-colored glasses – some key figures he befriended or was involved with. They include Jelly Roll Morton (he shared a tailor with the flashily-dressed Morton); Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, Eddie Condon, Jack Teagarden as well as lesser lights from across the Atlantic and elsewhere who helped keep the tradition and the music going.

But while Rose claims total recall, some of his facts – at least where verifiable – seem slightly askew. In one bizarre instance, he refers to Stephane Grappelli (misspelled Grappelle throughout his piece) as a "hero of the resistance" who "endured torture, imprisonment, illness – more than anyone could have foreseen – not only to survive but to save many other lives by helping his compatriots gain freedom from Hitler's oppression. When I saw him again in 1949 and expressed my admiration for his heroism, he said it was only natural to protect oneself and one's own..." The fact of the matter is that Grappelli, far from leading the French underground, spent World War II in London as a popular entertainment figure, working with local musicians like George Shearing.

On the whole, though, Rose's tales (which he says never appeared in print before) are warm, entertaining, sometimes revealing (about the color line for instance) often quite intriguing if, in some cases, they appear to be too profuctory. (One would have liked to know more for instance about the legendary Bunk Johnson whom Rose says he met as a kid of five, when Bunk was leading a blackface minstrel show band.)

Rose is outspoken in his estimation of some of the jazz personalities he had dealings with, including Sidney Bechet and Sharkey Bonano – both of whom demanded "star" treatment at the exclusion of others sharing bandstand or concert stage. He calls Spencer Williams, composer of *Basin Street Blues, Royal Garden Blues* and other standards, "a liar ... who never told the truth if he could help it." And he found James P. Johnson, whose style of piano playing "I never could work up any enthusiasm for" to be "grossly unreliable ... either to show up or be in a satisfactory condition when he did."

We get a revealing glimpse of early New Orleans jazz attitudes from Jack "Papa" Laine, who led the first documentable jazz band in history in 1892 and had retired from music in 1910. When Rose and his friend Edmund Souchon took him to a Bourbon Street club where Paul Barbarin's band was playing, the old man, who was partially blind and was totally out of touch with the jazz scene, exclaimed "That's the kind of band I had!" Then, as they got closer to the band, Laine turned to Rose and said in astonishment. "These guys is niggahs! They got all the *real* music jobs – the French Opera, concerts, all that. They never played our kind of music. They was too good. Now I see they taken it up!"

There are many more tales like these and, with numerous photographs from Rose's collection, they make up one of the most enjoyable and informative jazz anecdotal books to come our way via New Orleans. – *Al Van Starrex*

The opinions expressed in Jazz Literature are not necessarily those of the editor of Coda, who has not read any of these books!

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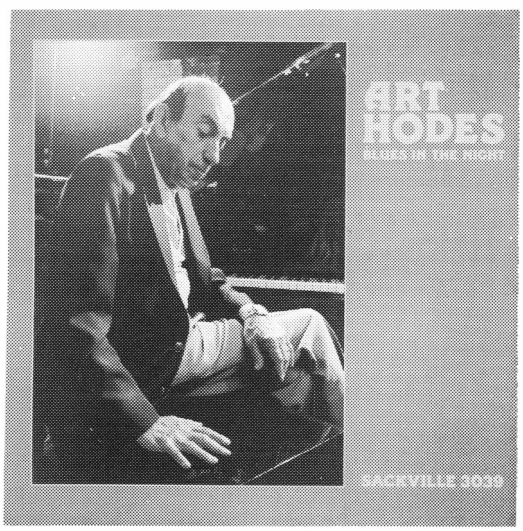

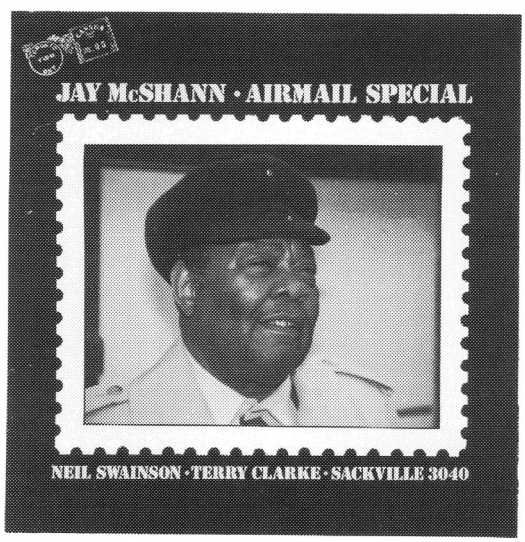

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