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# CODA MAGAZINE

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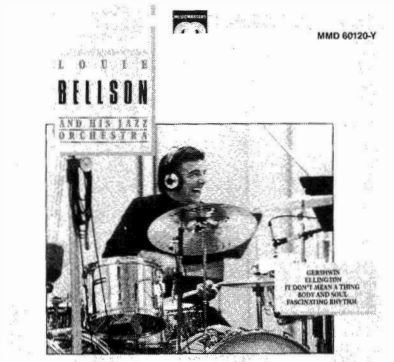


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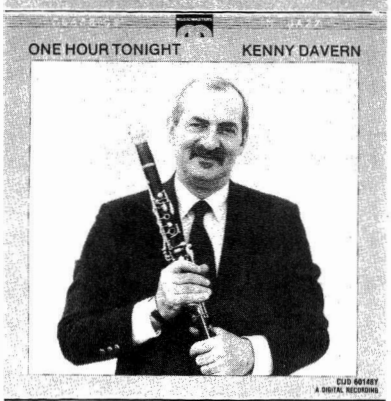



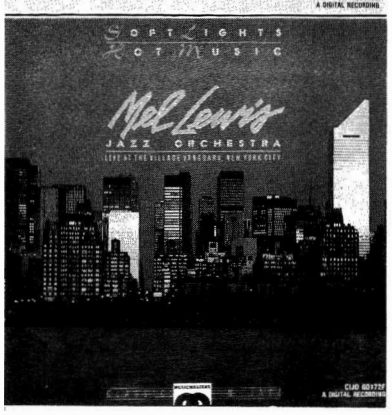


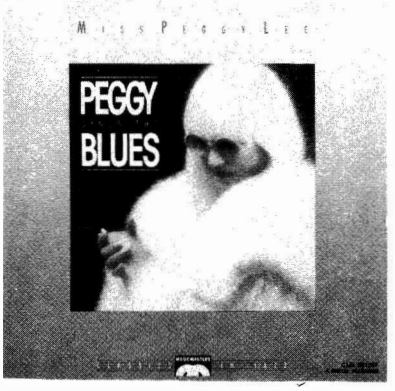


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# THREE BOOKS ON CANADIAN JAZZ

"So what have you been up to?"
"I've been reading some books on jazz in Canada."
[pause] "What on earth for?"
*– from a recent conversation with a NY critic who should know better*

PAUL BLEY (Photograph by Bill Smith)

Dear Canadians,

Like a few other Yankee jazz critics, I pride myself on following the European scene, noting with interest the musics of Martial Solal, Franz Koglmann, Giorgio Gaslini, Franco D'Andrea, Misha Mengelberg, Albert Mangelsdorff, Conrad Bauer, Irene Schweizer, Per Husby, not to mention Anglos like Lol Coxhill, Evan Parker, Tony Coe, Stan Tracey, the Jazz Warriors. And of course no self-respecting critic from the States would neglect the South African expatriates and the Russian avant-garde. But even a year ago, my knowledge of the Canadian jazz scene was limited to barely more than a handful of players: **Sonny Greenwich, Oscar Peterson, Oliver Jones, Paul Bley, Gil Evans** (barely Canadian, I know) and **Rob McConnell.** The other half-dozen or so I could identify were little more than just names in *Coda.*

The problem has to do with familiarity of context: Soviet, South African and Dutch jazz are easy to talk about because we have an idea of the sociopolitical atmosphere in which they exist. The vital jazz originating in Canada (or Italy) is harder for American critics to write about, because their contexts are not so well understood. (American newscasts about your November election campaign pointed out that Canada really is a foreign country – as if they'd just discovered you weren't just Minnesotans with funny money.)

I understand the Canadian scene better now than I did last spring, but my education has been outside my control: I lucked into a trip to the Festival International de Jazz de Montreal (FIJM) in July, and received **Mark Miller**'s books for review. Then came **John Gilmore**'s book on the Montreal scene, **"Swinging in Paradise."** By the fall, I was scheming to get to the Victoriaville festival. (I missed it, but next year...)

Mark Miller's two books are 1982's **"Jazz in Canada: Fourteen Lives"** and 1988's **"Boogie, Pete & The Senator – Canadian Musicians in Jazz: The Eighties."** Both are out as paperbacks from **Nightwood Editions**. Miller figures he's the only fulltime jazz critic in Canada. Like newspaper jazz critics south of the border, he has a less secure position than readers might think: he's been writing for the *Globe and Mail* since 1978, but he's a freelancer, not a staff writer. Which means he's stuck to his beat for so long not because it's his assigned duty but because he wants to do it. I ran into Miller at FIJM, where he appeared to be the hardest working critic/journalist in attendance: taking photographs (his books are full of them), conducting interviews, hustling between concert halls and filing daily features and reviews. On the surface he seems to embody a Canadian stereotype: his sense of humor is hidden behind a dour facade. (He has a great deadpan, solemnly informing you he's doing an oral history of Canada jazz, "Hear Me Talkin' To Ya, Eh?") He speaks carefully and quietly; he's no prattling sage, no namedropper, no jive enthusiast. He's not someone you're likely to spot as one of the more astute jazz critics working. And I don't mean just in Canada.

The best way to convince you of his worth is to let him speak for himself. On tenor saxophonist **P.J. Perry**: "Perry speaks the common bop language. His, however, is a personal style of elocution which has turned the language to his own purposes... In Perry's case, comparisons serve descriptive rather than critical purposes: to Art Pepper for emotional intensity, although such intensity augments the flow of Perry's playing where it sometimes gives Pepper's a halting quality; to Phil Woods for fire and facility, although Perry's style is of a rougher cast and fairly bursts with a kind of concentrated determination that belies a lack of confidence."

On the late pianist **Chris Gage**: "Gage is one of those pianists who, like Oscar Peterson, evidently conceives music in terms of the instrument rather than the style. His virtuosity transcends his originality; the multiplicity of his approaches to the keyboard is possibly the only singular aspect of his style."

Peterson's style is so familiar, in his native land or abroad, that Miller wisely uses his style as a touchstone, without rushing to unwise comparisons. Here's Miller on pianist **Wray Downes**: "In some ways his style has become the antithesis of his mentor, Oscar Peterson. Elemental – both rugged *and* basic – in its conception

and economical in its application, its strength comes from Downes's heart rather than his technique. The older pianist's facility is as great as it is effortless: Downes's is neither as great nor as effortless – his solos are closely crafted and there is very little that is easy in his craftmanship." Miller's own strengths are pretty much all on display here: his historical perspective, judicious judgement, tact, and a splendid ear that informs his opinions and graceful prose. He senses the music's flaws and imperfections as keenly as he does its artistic triumphs, but he's nonjudgemental about music that may not be to his taste (though he does seem incapable of referring to Moe Koffman without faintly sneering).

"The history of jazz in Canada is not the history of music, but of musicians; not of a style, or styles, but of an activity." So begins Miller's **"Jazz in Canada: Fourteen Lives,"** from which the critical quotes above were garnered. (The Nightwood paperback is a lightly revised edition of the 1982 hardback.) Everything that Miller or Gilmore has written about the Canadian jazz scene reinforces this premise. Studying jazz in Canada is a little like listening to Gerry Mulligan's early 50s quartet, as they scrupulously observe the changes no pianist is laying down. Half the framework is implied. Jazz in Canada, to be most tactlessly Yankocentric, is an activity that spilled over the border.

The border between Canada and the U.S. is porous, no more impervious to music than to acid rain. Musicians have drifted across the border both ways: Peterson, Bley, Gil Evans, and Renee Rosnes have headed south: from early days on, among those heading north were trumpeters **Jimmy Jones** and **Louis Metcalf**, pianists **Slap Rags White** and **Millard Thomas**, and even guitar madman **Eugene Chadbourne** (whose electric rake," needless to say, pays mute tribute to the Maple Leaf). Those lists suggest an unequal redistribution of talent. But as much as Oscar Peterson's fame calls attention to the idea there *is* a Canadian jazz scene, the music's identity resides with those who stay at home.

They didn't have to leave to catch the spirit – it came to them. One thing that strikes the reader of John Gilmore's **"Swinging in Paradise: The Story of Jazz in Montreal"** (a paperback from **Vehicule Press**) is how often the history and mythology of American jazz repeated itself in Canada. Musicians headed north in search of gigs, following the big river to Montreal. In the 20s, they might find employment playing on the riverboats that plied the St. Lawrence (never mind these were ferries steaming across not along the river): a few years later they might find work at Connie's Inn. Pianists were sometimes employed in whorehouses in black Montreal – though authorities shut them down during World War II, when the brothels were reputed to corrupt servicemen. AFM union rules complicated the acceptance of out-of-towners and the implementation of racially mixed bands – until bandleaders like **Johnny Holmes** took it on themselves to break color lines in the early 40s. Zoot suit riots broke out in World War II. New York booking agents sent acts to Montreal as an acid test – audiences were tough, but if you could make it there, you could make it anywhere.

(Quoted by Miller, Wray Downes supports that view: "Anyone who was ever anything in jazz [from Canada] came out of that city." But saxophonist **Jane Fair** told Miller her playing improved greatly after leaving Montreal's hothouse atmosphere for cooler Toronto in 1976.)

Gilmore sketches these facts without making too much of the obvious parallels. If jazz was born under hectic social conditions – black Americans struggling to find a place and identity in a generally hostile culture – then it should come as no surprise that parallel situations have given rise to the same musical impulses.

As Gilmore describes it, Montreal resembled Kansas City or Chicago: "Like other musicians who visited Montreal in the early years of jazz... [Louis] Metcalf was impressed by the city's vitality, hospitality and free-flowing liquor." The town got so wide open, its libidinous instincts had to be suppressed (with the reform movement of the 50s), resulting in a loss of jobs for musicians.

In **"Jazz in Canada,"** Miller writes of the life on the prairies – where, as in the American southwest, western music and German strains commingled, and jazz pianists had to cope with ramshackle instruments. Should it be a surprise that Chris Gage's few recordings show "a Basie-like sense of placement and timing"? Playing spare and pithy is one way for pianists to deal with broken down uprights.

Gilmore limns the sociological history of Montreal jazz, black and white – which means **"Swinging in Paradise"** is also a book (not a polemic) about Canadian racism – I'm told that's a topic not openly discussed much in your country. (I'm further told it's dealt with extensively in **Gene Lees'** biography of **Oscar Peterson,** which is not yet available in the U.S.). The book's serious, but the author allows himself a tiny bit of fun with hoser stereotypes. Here's black saxophonist **Myron Sutton**, as transcribed by Gilmore, on bringing his Canadian Ambassadors to Montreal from Ottawa in 1932, and finding his sidefolk work: "So I'd say, within two or three weeks we made contact, eh?... So they got in with a little group here, a little group there, and played, made ends meet, eh?" Take off.

By design, Gilmore doesn't discuss the music of the players whose careers he chronicles. "Montreal's legacy of recorded jazz is inconsistent and misleading, and any attempt to allocate places in history on the basis of recorded output would be naive. Some of the city's pivotal musicians and bands were simply never recorded; others were recorded in groupings or under circumstances which did no justice to their skill or reputation." I have mixed feelings about this decision. If Gilmore doesn't feel qualified to play the critic, we shouldn't push him to overreach. But his logic as expressed is faulty; it's as if anthropologists declined to study ancient bones because they don't have the whole skeleton. You work with what you have.

Given scant recorded evidence, the alternative is the cautiously critical approach Mark Miller adopts. One of the things I most admire about his work is, good a writer and listener as he is, his pieces are never mere personality profiles – he never forgets that the music is the point. Given the haphazard ways Canadian jazz has been documented – not to mention the problems of obtaining Canadian records in the U.S. – his most valuable pieces are those on major stylists who are or were all but unknown abroad (and at home?). Most intriguing are pianist Gage (who committed suicide in 1964) and saxophonist and clarinet prodi-

gy **Brian Barley** (who died of medical and pharmacological complications in '71) – two visionaries whose work has gone almost totally unheard. In Barley's case, his music was simply too radical for a nation (like my nation) where bop was king and audience tastes lagged decades behind the latest developments. Miller writes that by 1970 Barley was an original – "already he had found his own voice, distinct from all others in jazz – and that would not have been to his benefit with either listeners or musicians in Canada."

Chris Gage left no commercial recordings, though he turned up on a few air-checks and five early-60s CBC broadcasts; Barley turns up on a handful of recordings, one under his own name (trio sides with electric bassist **Daniel Lessard** and drummer **Claude Ranger**), two with **Maynard Ferguson**. They are hardly the only Canadian talents to work primarily in the shadows – as Miller notes of bassist **Michel Donato** in **"Boogie, Pete & The Senator,"** his "close to 20-year representation" on record constitutes "unusually complete documentation for a Canadian jazz musician." Even the latest Oscar Peterson records have been intermittently unavailable back home.

There are several reasons for these innovators' shadowy existence, one being the conservatism of CBC's jazz programming (Gage's studio career notwithstanding), another being a relative shortage of record companies who record jazz, still another being Canadian musicians' reticence to assert themselves. (Should we chalk it up to stereotypical Canadian reserve?) Miller's books are littered with tales of classic stay-at-homes. Montreal's wonderfully mad drummer/junk percussionist **Guy Nadon** turned down an offer, instigated by Louie Bellson, to join Tommy Dorsey's Orchestra in Ontario. **Vic Vogel** quotes Nadon as saying: "Well, I couldn't have gone anyway – I couldn't speak English, and besides, I didn't know where to take the bus." Chris Gage turned down offers to work in the States; Gary Burton tried to hire guitarist **Sonny Greenwich** in 1967, only to find that Sonny had (temporarily) retired. P.J. Perry sold his horns and dropped out for a while in the late 60s; in the early 80s, Rob McConnell considered and rejected the idea of taking a bunch of green kids on the road as a Rich-style band. Gage reportedly destroyed some sides he'd recorded in the early 60s, because he hated his playing.

And so Miller's books, no more of a substitute for the music itself than criticism ever is, are still more essential than most – especially as the rightness of his opinions about musicians we have heard lets us trust his assessments of ones we haven't.

There has been a proliferation of Canadian jazz in the 80s, necessitating a different sort of book. **"Jazz in Canada"** has explored 14 lives in depth (**Trump & Teddy Davidson, Paul & P.J. Perry, Herbie Spanier, Larry Dubin, Nelson Symonds, Ron Park, Gage, Downes, Nadon, Ranger, Greenwich and Barley**), sketching in the history of a national music as he does so. But last year's **"Boogie, Pete & The Senator"** is mostly shorter takes on 40 players (including updates on Greenwich, Nadon, Ranger and Symonds, and a more extended appreciation of expatriate **Paul Bley**). If anything, his prose and critical acumen are even sharper; if the pieces are more abbreviated, it's because there's more ground to cover. Stylistically, the span of musicians discussed could barely be broader, from trad/Dixieland trumpeter **Kid Bastien** and trad/mainstream saxophonist **Jim Galloway** to freebopping trombonist/pianist **Hugh Fraser** and avant-garde saxophonist **Jean Derome**. Having already reviewed **"BP&S"** (in the June '88 *Cadence* – the only Yankee jazz magazine to aggressively cover Canadian lps by the way), I'm reluctant to repeat myself. After writing that review, however, I'd been assigned to cover the Montreal fest, where **"Boogie, Pete & The Senator"** proved an invaluable reference work, which helped me to decide which Canadian musicians I could least afford to miss. No non-native should attend a Canadian jazz festival without a copy in tow.

The scene changes. At FIJM, Miller told me he's been learning French, because the most interesting Canadian jazz these days is played by Francophones. He sees his hometown Toronto jazz scene as badly splintered, and a place (as he says in **"BP&S"**) "where jazz has traditionally been stylish and disciplined rather than spontaneous," where the supply of adventurous music outstrips demand. Montreal may be overly enamored of fusion bands, but Francophone-Anglophone political tensions have inspired some radical music, much as the civil rights struggles of the 60s invigorated American free jazz. History repeats itself again, as Montreal relives the avant-garde wars. At FIJM, when Derome and guitarist **Rene Lussier** opened for Ornette's Prime Time, angry patrons booed and fled their Shockabillyish antics, such as using a government application for welfare (the French version) as a lyric sheet. (People walked out on Ornette too, but they did it with respect – they didn't like the music, but acknowledged he was a master).

Less than a year after his last book, there are lots more musicians for Mark Miller to write about: Lussier; the splendid pianist **Renee Rosnes**, now living in Brooklyn, formerly of Vancouver (another hotbed of adventurous music); Montreal pianist **Lorraine Desmarais** and clarinetist **Robert Lepage**; expatriate guitarist **Peter Leitch**; piano legend **Al Neil**; and yes, **Moe Koffman**. Currently Miller's working on a monograph about Charlie Parker's brief visits to Canada, centering on the Massey Hall concert – it's called **"Cool Blues,"** (also on Nightwood Editions), which is a great pun. Forthcoming from Vehicule Press is John Gilmore's **"Who's Who of Jazz in Montreal: Ragtime to 1970."** The picture is becoming more detailed and easier to read; the pieces of the mosaic are falling into place. That's good for us foreigners, but it's even better for Canadians. The more you perceive jazz as an art form that has taken root and adapted itself to Canada's local/regional/national cultures, the greater its growth will be.

*These three books are available from Coda Publications:*

**1) JAZZ IN CANADA: FOURTEEN LIVES by Mark Miller. $16.95**

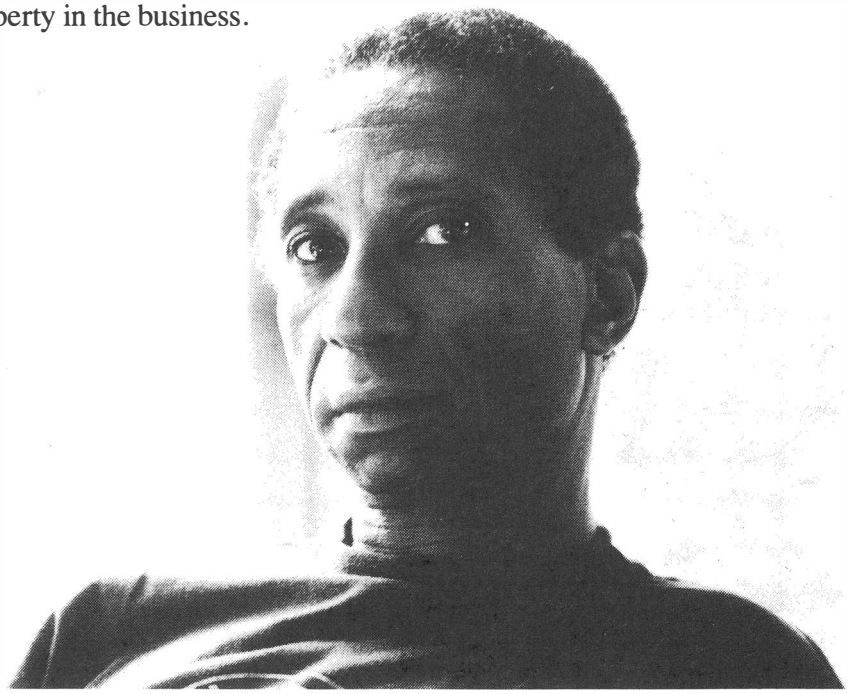
**2) BOOGIE, PETE & THE SENATOR/ Canadian Musicians in Jazz: The Eighties by Mark Miller. $16.95.**

**3) SWINGING IN PARADISE: The Story of Jazz in Montreal. $16.95.**

All prices include postage; payment to be made in Canada in Canadian funds, elsewhere in $U.S. or equivalent. Send cheque or money order to Coda Publications, Box 87, Station J, Toronto, Ontario M4J 4X8 Canada. Visa & Mastercard accepted. (416) 593-7230.

# RONNIE MATHEWS

In jazz, as in all musical fields, there are stars and superstars alike, all of whom are the object of much media attention. Nevertheless, any knowledgeable jazz fan knows better than to get caught up in too many promotional gimmicks aimed at selling the latest hot property in the business.



More important than all the hype given to a select few, is the basic pleasure of listening to a performer who expresses himself with sincerity. Such musicianship can often be found amongst those commonly known as ''sidemen''. Because of their experience garnered through a wide variety of situations, they achieve a reputation *within* the musical community. Without ever becoming headliners, they achieve notoriety for their dependability. This rings particularly true for the supporting cast of almost every jazz group, i.e. the rhythm section.

Without a doubt, pianist **Ronnie Mathews** fits into all of the above criteria. Born and raised in New York City, he was exposed to jazz from an early age. Now 54, he has been on the scene for close to 30 years as a professional. In that time, he has had steady gigs with a long list of musicians, some of whom are mentioned below.

Though his interest in the music came early, he was a late comer of sorts, starting only at age 17. And this was the first topic he discussed at the onset of this interview, which took place July 3rd, two nights after he played in Frank Morgan's quartet at last summer's jazz festival in Montreal.

**RONNIE MATHEWS:** At home, I heard jazz from a very early age, mostly through my brother who was a great enthusiast as well as a drummer in his spare time. I really wanted to play jazz from the time I began listening to his records and those that I liked a lot were those of Duke Ellington and Nat King Cole. But I only started playing in my late teens, because I found a teacher in college who really encouraged me to pursue my interest. That person was Hall Overton. In fact, I was enrolled as a pre-med student in the hope of becoming a doctor.

But as they say, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and I discovered that when I met Hall Overton. Not only was he a gifted musician and composer, he was also an enthusiastic teacher. And to be a teacher, one must have a sense of enthusiasm and if one can transfer that excitement, then that stimulates the students to gather knowledge on their own.

While in college, I studied with him for two years. But then, one day, I decided to change my career plans and become a musician instead. Mind you, that turned out to be a very traumatic experience for my parents. (Laughs) And me too. Eventually, I came to an agreement with them: before getting into music, I would first have to finish college.

Looking back at it now, I was quite lucky to have received that foundation from Hall. His training helped me develop my ear as well as to understand musical theory and harmony, which were my chosen fields of study when I got in at the Manhattan School of Music. Were it not for that, I don't think my parents would have let me become some vagabond musician without a steady job. Once I graduated, I really started taking my instrument seriously — which almost drove my parents crazy. I would roll out of bed and just spend my days at the piano bench. Even though I chose music as my field, I still had no job in sight after seven years of personal study and practice.

**MARC CHENARD:** Having studied under Hall Overton, did you get to meet Monk?

**R.M.:** Yes I did. And it was quite an experience too. They were quite close at that time, because they were working together on that first Town Hall Concert. As a matter of fact, I went to all the rehearsals. They were done at four in the morning. Some of the musicians worked during the day in studios, while others were working nights in the clubs; so the only time they could get everybody together were in those late hours. Just being there was an education in itself. I was right behind Monk, peering over his shoulder and following his every move. I did hang out with him a bit, and those are moments you don't easily forget.

When I was 11 or 12, I took a few piano lessons, but wasn't that interested in going through all of the basic stuff: I wanted to play jazz! Mind you, my parents never really discouraged me from playing music, but they didn't exactly have a musical career in mind for me. Because they were both from the West Indies, they liked music a lot, and they sang in church too. So, for them, it was an important

RONNIE MATHEWS (Photograph by Peter Danson)

part of the human condition. Essentially, I became a pianist because of my brother's drum playing: there was no way my folks would want two drummers at home! Since we had an upright, it was only logical for me to play it. I was only too glad to use it, and it mattered very little at first what instrument I played: jazz was first and foremost in my mind. Of course, I had not thought of making it a career, so I really did not care too much what I played, or how for that matter.

As for influences, my first one was Horace Silver; he was the real big name at that time. Subsequently, I got to know him, because as any aspiring musician, you start following your idol around, trying to catch his gigs. I remember him from the days when he was part of the early Jazz Messengers and also when he started up his own group shortly thereafter. Since one thing leads to another, I started keying in on other piano players, Monk being one of them — and a very important one too.

During my studies at the Manhattan School of Music, I started hanging around with a fellow student, Donald Byrd, and he was the one who gave me my first gig. I was frightened to death. I just could not play... I got fired! Can you imagine, you get on the bandstand and people like Gigi Gryce, Arthur Taylor and Donald are there waiting for you. At that time, Donald had already hit the big time, he was already making it with Blakey's band. Yet, he gave me my first break, though I let him and myself down all at once.

New York in those days was much different to what it is today. Every night you had sessions going on in Brooklyn, Manhattan, the Bronx, even as far as Queens. You could find music everywhere, not just in the clubs but in all of the neighbourhood bars. Around that time, I met Cedar Walton, who had just come out of the service. He was well versed even back then, since his mother was a piano teacher, so I hung out with him. Then, I met Freddie Hubbard shortly after his arrival in New York, and we started playing together, mostly at home. At that time, I was holding a weekly jam session there, and my parents moved the piano into the basement, so we wouldn't tear up the living room (laughs). The more I was getting involved in the scene, the more I was having people over to play. It was great fun playing down below, and we could really get into the music without bothering anyone too much. And besides, it doesn't look very good to have trumpeters and trombonists opening their spit valves on the living room carpet! After a while, I started to build a reputation on the strength of my Thursday jam sessions, and more and more cats were coming around.... Junior Cook, Blue Mitchell, Freddie Hubbard, Sonny Redd, Curtis Fuller, Louis Hayes, Donald Byrd of course, and the list goes on and on. Thursday used to be session night, but there were also get-togethers in the day. Because of those private jams, my name was becoming known amongst the musicians, and from that I was starting to get some gigs.

**M.C.:** Over the years, you have worked with a long list of people, both instrumentalists and vocalists. Some years ago, you were Betty Carter's accompanist. Based on your own experience, do you feel that it is much different to work with singers than with horn players?

**R.M.:** Yes, it is quite different to work with a singer than with a horn player. For me, it has mostly to do with volume and sensitivity, because it is important to hear the lyrcis sung by the vocalist. It's obvious that the voice does not have the same capacity to project as a wind instrument. On the other hand, this develops your own sensitivity as well as your own ability to play more with the dynamics of your keyboard. As for Betty, she uses a full range of dynamics in her shows, and you get the feeling that she is taking you over and under the waves. She sings as well in all kinds of tempos, be it up, medium or slow, as in a ballad or a blues. This ability of hers brings her much closer to the instrumental side of things. But, there is still a difference in terms of power. When you have a couple of horns in front of you, the demands are greater in that you have to be more physical in your approach. In contrast, the singer develops your sensitivity. At the same time, you have more space to play with, and that is very important when it comes to playing ballads. In fact, the slow tempos are the hardest thing for a player to learn, especially when you are young and nervous, because you are trying to prove to the world that you have chops, you always want to put something in rather than letting the space be part of the music.

Over the years, I have worked with my share of singers. My very first gig was with Gloria Lynne; that was around 1959 or '60. At least, that was my first professional job that paid a half-decent wage. Throughout the sixties, I worked around a lot, but one long-standing engagement was with Max Roach's band for four years. Amongst others, I had stints with Roy Haynes, Kenny Dorham — who was also living in Brooklyn — and Freddie Hubbard, just after he left the Messengers. In fact, I was on his debut album on Blue Note (''Breaking Point''). That band broke up after that date, but he put one together with Harold Mabern. They did two live albums at a small club in Brooklyn called La Marchal (''Night of the Cookers'', Vol. 1 and 2). Now that place is just a perfect example of what I was talking about earlier. All those places had both regular bands, either for the week or just the weekend, and a one night jam session in the week. And that is why Lee Morgan and Big Black are guests on both of those records. On these session nights, musicians would just head into town from both far and near; this was just a regular part of the business of any club that featured jazz.

**M.C.:** Looking back at that period, how does today's scene compare, especially since City Hall has revoked that cabaret law that was restricting the number of performers onstage?

**R.M.:** Things are very different now; as I said previously, you had all these bars with live music, right within the black communities. Even the little place on the corner had a small band, like an organ trio. Now, the cabaret law you alluded to didn't have an effect on that scene. But when you tried to work in another part of town, you would realize that it was only enforced in some areas, because its intent was to keep jazz out of certain neighbourhoods.

But all of that musical activity is gone now. By the early seventies, it was starting to dry up, which is really unfortunate, because that was the proving ground, so to speak. In fact, you heard music in many of those sessions that was as high as that played at set gigs in the top notch clubs. Because they were so numerous, it was easy to find a place where you could sit in and play with musicians of your caliber, while setting your sights on another place where the high rollers were.

**M.C.:** It almost reminds me of baseball, with its different class farm clubs that lead all the way up to the major leagues.

**R.M.:** That is true, and in more ways than you think. In the better clubs, for example, you had set gigs with a certain band or a headliner, but these were not limited to the featured performers. One night a week, there was the jam session night, where one musician would be in charge of organizing the sets and choosing those who could participate. In so doing, you would find musicians of similar ability playing together, but that didn't exclude the possibility of sneaking in once and a while with those who were more able than you. Of course, you were always looking for those chances, because that is how you gained the necessary experience to improve your own skills as well as building up your confidence. But you had to be realistic at the same time:

they were not going to let you on the stage with them if you were going to be a drag. Though the system was tough, you could still strive for something; you had to work hard and be on the lookout for a place that would let you in on one of their sessions. Those were the kinds of things you would have to do just to get a gig of your own, and there was no money in those sessions. To make it a bit easier, two or three of us would head out together to a different place every night, hoping that we would all be invited to sit in. No matter how much practising you do at home, you have to go out and play with others, and all of your efforts will be for nought if you don't know how to be a part of a team.

**M.C.:** Having lived through that period, what is your perception of today's generation of schooled musicians?

**R.M.:** It is most unfortunate that we do not have this ''University-of-the-Streets'', because there really is no substitute for playing *in front of an audience*, and with all kinds of musicians too. Having said that, I am also glad to see that universities have not only taken an interest in the music, but some people there have actually pushed and fought to have it recognized as an accepted art form, which it has been all along. When I was a student, if I played anything close to jazz in one of the school's practice rooms, inevitably one of the teachers — excuse me, ''professors'' — would come in and tell me to ''stop playing that music''. So that change of attitude is certainly positive, and it has been long overdue to have the music finally gain its rightful status.

On the one hand, you can say that this environment is covering for the lack of a ''University-of-the-Streets'', but on the other hand, they cannot duplicate that practical experience within the walls of a classroom. In medicine, for example, every student must spend two or three years of internship, applying his acquired knowledge under the supervision of a qualified professional. To me, that is how it should be in music, and that is the very situation we are faced with now. You see, there is a tremendous amount of available information, but these institutions can only make the students aware of it as a series of concepts rather than as a life experience. Even if the students have the knowledge, they still have to live it in order to apply it. But they can only do that once they get out of school, which means that they too have to go to this ''University-of-the-Streets''. But that is much more difficult now, because there are nowhere near as many venues to work on your craft as when I was coming up.

I have seen a lot of people coming to New York, but they sure must find it cold here, because there is so little work for so many people. Nowadays, you don't really have those clubs where the more established musicians could go and check out some of the newcomers. In that way, you really knew who had the talent. And that had the advantage of getting you a gig, either through a recommendation or an invitation to work with a well-known musician. Today, you may meet a young cat who tells you who he is and where he graduated from. So what! (Laughs) But that doesn't mean he can't play; he just lacks the practical experience that enables him to express himself as an individual. Mind you, these musicians know the literature very well; they've heard tons of records and have analyzed transcribed solos just to understand how improvisation works. But all of that is done for them on mimeographed sheets; I had to do those things too, but I had to find that out for myself at home by moving the needle back on my record player. Now we have a generation of musicians who just open a book to see Charlie Parker's solos written down for posterity. It's easy to knock this whole approach, but there always is some good and some bad in everything.

**M.C.:** It's a curious fact, but a lot of musicians of your generation have become jazz educators, even though they have been critical of those music programs. When we met yesterday, you told me that you were also active in that field.

**R.M.:** Yes, I have been teaching for a few years. To get this job, I had to go back to school myself and earn a degree in music education, so now I have a license to teach in the State. Personally, I'm most comfortable teaching at the college level, where the students already have a certain background and are now striving to become professionals, be they as performers, teachers or whatever. Only on occasion do I teach beginners; I'd rather devote my energies to those who have attained some level of proficiency, but who still need to focus on some of the finer points of performing. Rather than talking about theoretical questions like chords, I will look at the ways one can work with these elements, such as how one can move around the notes to give a certain coloration to the overall sound. In a way, this is an extension of my own playing and also of the private teaching I do with a couple of more serious students.

**M.C.:** A little over three years ago, you recorded a trio date on drummer Alvin Queen's label (''So Sorry Please'', Nilva Records). By what I gather, you have recorded a follow-up session to that first release.

**R.M.:** That's a good way to put it, and I must say that I am very excited about it, since it will be my first CD. Basically, we returned to the studio last winter - Alvin, Ray Drummond, and I - to add another 25 minutes to the original vinyl LP. At last news, it should be out by the fall. In its new form, there will be four extra cuts, including a version of *You Leave Me Breathless*, which we all wanted on the LP but couldn't fit in because of the usual time considerations. I'm glad about that.

**M.C.:** On that album, you play two solo cuts. Have you done much playing in that capacity? All pianists agree that the solo format is the greattest challenge for them, a sort of acid test.

**R.M.:** You're certainly right on that one. Actually, I have to thank Canada for that, because there is a place in Toronto called Café des Copains which features only pianists. I've worked there twice now, and I must admit that my first appearance there made me a nervous wreck. It wasn't the fact of playing solo that was challenging, but it was a two-week-long engagement of just myself. It took me a week to just start settling in. Previously, I had just played a solo tune here or there, as a feature spot with a band in a concert or club date. I could handle that easily, but three sets every night, for two weeks, with only one night off! But to use my ''University-of-the-Streets'' analogy, I managed to overcome my apprehensions by getting that first hand experience, which only helps you to build up your confidence. Be it on a record date, like the one I did, or in a live situation, I don't have any problems dealing with that, now that I've gotten over that hump. I am comfortable enough with it that I want to play more as a solo artist.

RONNIE MATHEWS (Photograph by Barry Thompson)

# CANADIAN JAZZ ON RECORD

**THE MONTREAL JUBILATION GOSPEL CHOIR / Jubilation II / Justin Time Just-21-1 ● SONNY GREENWICH / Live at Sweet Basil / Justin Time Just-26-1 ● DENNY CHRISTIANSON BIG BAND / More Pepper / Justin Time Just-19-/ ● PETE MAGADINI QUARTET / Live in Montreal / Briko BR 1003 ● ORHAN DEMIR TRIO / North West / Hittite 2002 ● JEAN DEROME / Confitures de Gagaku / Victo 05 ● PAUL BLEY and PAUL MOTIAN / Notes / Soul Note 121 190-1 ● HUGH FRASER QUINTET / Looking Up / Jazzimage JZ 115 ● BRIAN DICKINSON QUINTET / October 13th / Unity 3 ● GRAEME KIRKLAND / Graeme Kirkland / WRC4-6044**

In the shadowy corners of the world of spirituality lurk figures like Jimmy Swaggart and Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker. Standing on the bright-lit podium of truth are those who do indeed contribute to the world's well-being and who create things of beauty. Such is **The Montreal Jubliation Gospel Choir**. Sharing a joyous enthusiasm, the well-rehearsed ensemble has released **Jubilation II** which documents flowing melodies punctuated by hand claps of singers and audience as well.

The well programmed collection alternates spirited houts with ballads, and pop settings with traditional spirituals. The reggae *You Brought The Sunshine* dresses in modern garb the same message as the *a cappella Lord I Know I've Been Changed*. Dynamic contrasts, skilful shifts in key, and climactic tempo changes continually draw the listener deeper into the music.

The rhythm section and chanting choir operate as a unit to support solo singers Kathleen Dyson-Oliver, Jackie Richardson and David Gordon who, like jazz instrumentalists, interpret a song's melody, then improvise. The choir cultivates an infectious feeling of optimism, the force of which can make your scalp tingle. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

The **Sonny Greenwich Trio** recorded **Live at Sweet Basil** documents the work of a guitarist-leader who prefers his instrument's single-line melodicism to its chordal or rhythmic functions. Typical of Greenwich's love for melody is his well-conceived introduction to *Tomorrow*. His slightly distorted guitar tone reminds one of John Scofield, Larry Coryell, or McLaughlin, while his angular rhythmic displacements keep drummer Andre White on the alert.

The spirit of John Coltrane informs *Tell Yourself the Truth* and *Libra Ascending*. Greenwich introduces the former with a four-minute long improvisation then glides smoothly into a walking tempo, as Trane might have done. *Libra* bears harmonic similarity to *Giant Steps*, just as pianist Fred Henke's solo suggests McCoy Tyner's harmonic conception.

Andre White solos in steady rolls and streams, integrating his bass drum into the fabric of his hand patterns — no easy task. Pianist Henke often incites White to unruliness, most noticeably during *Tell Yourself*. Bassist Ron Seguin has been absorbing Eddie Gomez, but his strength as a soloist isn't as important as his ability to keep a steady groove.

Three of the album's four cuts are fresh and substantial tunes by Greenwich himself. He does, however, tip his hat to the standard repertoire with *You Go To My Head*.

The **Denny Christianson Big Band**, a well-conceived and cleanly articulated ensemble, boasts a fresh sound and revels in the underworld tonalities of the baritone saxophone. In **More Pepper**, the late Park "Pepper" Adams is the guest artist, wielding his massive saxophone with wiry majesty and hoary command, creating his signature biting attacks and bluesy lines. Ironically, the tune *More Pepper* features not Pepper himself but the band's other baritone players, who hold their own quite well. Jean Frechette, in fact, displays technical fluidity rivalling Adams's.

Arranger Glen Garrett does what an arranger is supposed to do — re-design the packaging of good tunes. Into the form of *Sophisticated Lady* he inserts two brief interludes, and effective, interesting device. Alf Clausen's *Captain Perfect*, similar to Thad Jones' *Fingers*, achieves a satisfying balance between soloists and ensemble.

Christianson himself plays interesting flugelhorn, incorporating some of Freddie Hubbard'a chromaticism and plaintive lines. Richard Ring plays tasteful guitar, preferring its full-sounding middle range.

Big band music is in danger of becoming a genre of the past. It can remain vital and relevant only by attracting talented composers and arrangers. As they produce substantial new literature, effective leaders must gather good instrumentalists. The Denny Christianson ensemble leads the way.

The **Pete Magadini Quartet** provides warm, pleasant listening. **Live in Montreal** attests to the band's melodic and carefully executed performance style. Unusual in a drummer-led band, the music does not function as a showcase for the leader; rather, Magadini places the music itself in the spotlight. He solos only occasionally, but when he does, he speaks forcefully.

Trumpeter Charles Ellison's four tunes point to his interest in harmonic evolution. *Song for Alice*, a sloooow ballad, bases its melody on an altered scale, while his oddity *One for Barry* juxtaposes seemingly mismatched chords against each other along a jagged harmonic fault line.

Guitarist Roddy Ellias, on the other hand, turns his attention toward rhythm, contributing the samba *Cuba*, the meter-switching *French Song* and the rhythmically fragmented *Clown*, which leaves room for a dynamic solo by Magadini. Ellias follows the effective and all-too-often neglected technique of opening his solos by echoing the conclusion of the preceding one.

Bassist Dave Young's spirited display of chops during *Looking at You* draws spontaneous applause as he raises the tune's energy level about three notches. His relaxed bossa nova *Irie* sounds like something Laurindo Almeida might have written.

**Orhan Demir's North West** places cutting-edge harmonic explorations within a traditional guitar-bass-drums format. As Demir's guitar tone shifts between that of Gabor Szabo and John Abercrombie, his rapid fire technique rivals the almost incredible intensity of John McLaughlin. As his improvisations blaze across the fretboard, bassist Neil Swainson and drummer Barry Elmes miraculously manage to keep up.

Demir's compositions typically contain a fast, intricate guitar-bass unison line. As he zips through *Satellite Service* hummingbird-like, flitting from idea to idea, you realize that he's not exactly what you would call a swinging, rhythm section player. His flight-of-the-bumblebee penchant sometimes makes one wish for a bit more melodicism — as he capably exhibits in *Infinity*. Based on a trance-inducing bass line recalling Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*, *Infinity* grows climactically before dissolving into chaos.

Barry Elmes, tastefully complementing the others, always attunes himself to the overall balance. Neil Swainson's bass, natural and woody, voices his agile solos as he shapes them into nicely-rounded arcs, interlocking his rhythms with Demir's.

The **Orhan Demir Trio** reaps the rewards of apparently having played together for some time. Its members interact with sensitivity and imagination.

**Jean Derome's Confitures de Gagaku** involves relatively little improvisation, but requires razor-sharp ensemble work and excellent reading skills. **Confitures** was inspired by Derome's listening to Japanese Gagaku music, which he characterizes as "one of the slowest musics on earth." Derome's impressions of this music are internally consistent and his scores are professionally and sympathetically perfromed. His scores combine the splash of a percussion ensemble and the melancholy of Charles Mingus, while occasionally hinting at Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*.

Especially attractive moments include the reedy and Ellingtonian *Nuisance; Beau* suggesting the staccato, martial moments of Anthony Braxton; and *Quareau*, wafting little clouds of flute notes around the voice of Karen Young.

Young is to Derome as Irene Aebi is to Steve Lacy — a talented singer who can interpret angular melodies. In her reading of the dark, epigrammatic "Work which does not seek beauty/Beauty which follows work," her melodic lines ribbon over and under each other in various tonal permutations. Her quite erotic *The Moon in Me* captures a genuine blues feeling, complemented by Derome's Gil Evans-like instrumental voicings and a bump-and-grind rhythm which propels an off-the-wall alto sax solo.

Like a good confiture, Derome's music leaves a nice taste in the mouth.

**Notes**, by **Paul Bley and Paul Motian**, shows how two instruments can suggest several, and that the essence of jazz lies in the interaction among its players.

Typical of the collaboration is *Turns*. After Motian's capricious brush solo, Bley joins in, then Motian matches his movements, limb for limb, trekking through uncharted harmonic territory without a map, arriving at a logical stopping place nevertheless.

Although absolved from having to "keep time", Motian yet follows closely Bley's energy level and melodic intent. Like Mel Lewis, Motian leaves "holes" in the musical fabric. Rather than pursuing a driving, continuous pulse, he eases into and out of various tempi and displays remarkable technical control at very low volumes.

Montreal-born Bley shows remarkable ability to sustain successfully a motivic idea. During *Love Hurts* he couches a simple three-note motive within a series of Chopin-esque harmonic variations. In *Finale* he dances brief patterns over Motian's drum rolls, pounds, splashes. Here Bley's playing suggests Cecil Taylor's.

With the combined talents of these two players, it's not surprising that this music succeeds, even though most of the tracks are first takes. "We like to think of keeping the taxi waiting while we make the record, as opposed to spending three months in the studio," says Bley.

The **Hugh Fraser Quintet** plays with conviction and expertise, interpreting Fraser's scores with clean articulation, dynamic variety, and alert precision. Classical restraint is the mode in **Looking Up**, a generous 54-minute package.

Besides being a composer of merit, Fraser is a talented trombonist and pianist. By double-tracking himself, he's able to play both instruments at once, and to play a handful of horns during *The Dome*. Here his melodic lines and the voicings in parallel fourths and fifths recall Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*.

Fraser the pianist races through the fast rhythm-changes-based *Irenerosnesity*, yet always lands on his feet. He enjoys setting up sequences of rhythmic displacement that are happily pounced on by drummer Buff Allen. Allen observes the music's dynamic ups and downs and plays cleanly.

But this is not to say that Fraser dominates the show. The quintet, not Fraser himself, is the point. The band's somewhat unusual front line consists of two saxophonists, Campbell Ryga and Phil Dwyer (see Graeme Kirkland review), who work well together. Bassist Chris Nelson demonstrates perfect intonation and timing. His solo on *Looking Up* is typical of his woody, resonant sound.

Strongly influenced by the 1960s Blue Note sound, **Brian Dickinson** likes to set his compositions within well-established instrumental harmonic and rhythmic frameworks. **October 13th** serves as a vehicle for his talents as composer, pianist, and bandleader.

His abrasively irregular *Spring Street* allows the musicians to contrast levels of intensity. A fiery duet between tenorist Mike Murley and drummer Barry Romberg precedes a low-key exchange between bassist Kieran Overs and trumpeter John MacLeod. At the keyboard, Dickinson's hands play a game of call-and-response throughout.

Dickinson has assembled a strong team of players. Murley and MacLeod coax full, rich sounds from their instruments, and they shape their solos nicely. To my ears, Murley's fluent tenor playing places him in a league with Bob Berg and Mike Brecker. Kieran Overs shapes his *Autumn* solo effectively, and sensitive recording of his bass brings out its percussive stringiness.

This band's quality merits its consideration in a class with the best of them. Brian Dickinson sets and meets professional standards for himself, and one expects to hear more good things from him.

Although his cassette, **Graeme Kirkland**, does feature a chorus-long drum solo Kirkland, like Pete Magadini, remains primarily interested in music, not drum pyrotechnics. This is tasty, soulful stuff.

Kirkland's talent as a composer is matched by his ability to gather capable sidemen. Saxophonist Phil Dwyer, a solid thinker and tasteful player, creates strikingly melodic improvisations and occasionally speaks with the reedy intensity of Jan Garbarek. His solo during *Claude* juxtaposes fast lines against long tones; he then transcends the tune's harmonic strictures to investigate the meaning of the primal scream.

*Eventually* requires Kirkland's men to improvise together over apparently random chords and a constantly churning Latin groove. After Dwyer builds intensity there's a striking return to the original rubato ballad feel.

The complicated melody of *I Want To Live* leads into a satisfying guitar solo from Geoff Young, while the ensemble approaches the intensity of the recent Ornette Coleman/Pat Metheny collaboration, "Song X". By way of contrast, *Street People*, featuring Young's guitar synthesizer, is a pretty jazz waltz.

The relative brevity of Kirkland's compositions sometimes leave one wishing for more extended development, and their sameness calls for more variety in mood. But looked at another way, the tunes meld together into a long suite, a single musical statement.

JEAN DEROME (Photograph by Mark Miller)

# THE BEST DAMN PIANO PLAYER IN THE LAND

**OSCAR PETERSON - THE WILL TO SWING**
**By Gene Lees**
**Lester and Orpen Dennys. 293 pages.**

Oscar Peterson is one of those rare figures who makes one reconsider what it means to be a Canadian. Born and raised in Montreal and presently a resident of a Toronto suburb, Peterson has spent his entire life in a country that has produced few cultural heroes--and even fewer internationally recognized jazz musicians. Peterson is a member of a select elite, a grouping which includes such notables as **Glenn Gould, Northrop Frye, Robertson Davies, Marshall McLuhan** and **Margaret Atwood**, who have made a profound impact on Western art and thought while remaining residents of Canada. While honouring Peterson for his achievement, one is confronted by the sparse number of Canadians who can reasonably claim to have made such a difference on a global scale. Peterson's contributions should be considered in the context of a society that has produced few icons and as a consequence has placed undue burdens on them.

Among jazz aficionados, Peterson is recognized as the first great practitioner of the music in this country. His appearance on national broadcasts for the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) as a teen-aged boogie-woogie piano player in the midst of World War II was as startling as the rise of Django Reinhardt must have been in France during the Depression-burdened Swing Era in '30s Paris. Both men could play every genre of jazz from Dixieland to Swing (and eventually Bop) in such a spectacular manner that they quickly acquired legendary status among musicians. Reinhardt and Peterson were such virtuosos that they were able to achieve the ultimate accolade for foreign players of jazz: they became famous in the United States. For both players, the ascent to celebrity status did not engender a desire to abandon their roots and, as a consequence, their musical presence helped to create an indigenous scene in their own lands.

A major biographical study of Peterson has recently been released in Canada by Lester and Orpen Dennys, a prominent literary publishing house. Written by Gene Lees, a former editor of *Down Beat* and a Canadian who now resides in California, it is a scholarly look at the man and the environment which produced him and his music. In **Oscar Peterson: The Will to Swing**, Lees evokes Peter+-son's birthplace, the Montreal of the '20s; the Canadian media scene during World War II via CBC transcripts; and, through interviews and personal reminiscences, the contemporary Toronto jazz scene. Peterson emerges in this work as a great but misunderstood virtuoso who has achieved the heights of success while suffering from constant critical disapproval. Gene Lees has attempted to right that imbalance by placing Peterson formally in the lineage of superior keyboard players deriving from Franz Liszt. Though that assumption is problematic, one can only admire the author's dedication to his subject and be fascinated by the details accruing to the Oscar Peterson legend.

Lees researched his subject so thoroughly that he was able to uncover an unpublished master's thesis from McGill University in 1928. Entitled **The Montreal Negro Community**, this historically precious document by William Emerson Israel describes the type of existence that Oscar Peterson lived during his youth and adolescence. While describing intimate familial structures, Israel noted: "In the West Indian family, the husband occupies the dominant and superior position.... The home education of the children is one of restrictions, rather than allowing the freedom of city expressions." Oscar Peterson grew up in a family in which the father, a West Indian emigre who worked as a railway porter, enforced discipline with the strap, forcing his children to practise the trumpet and the piano.

The society circulating amidst Montreal's Cote St. Antoine district was already attuned to jazz during the Roaring '20s. Describing the twenties, Israel wrote: "The jazz band of piano, violin and two saxophones grinds out the sensuous blue harmonies with a syncopation that sets the body in ready motion with sympathetic vibrations.... From the [midnight] 'till daylight, the dominance of the saxophone is challenged by the laughter of both male and female voices. " It was inevitable that the musically gifted Petersons would evidence interest in the music that surrounded their neighbourhood.

Peterson's family background is tragic. One brother, Fred, purportedly the family's finest pianist, died at the age of fifteen of a severe case of tuberculosis. Another brother, Chuck, lost a hand in an industrial accident. Peterson's musically gifted sister, Daisy, was so traumatised by the demands of their father that she found it impossible to perform in public. Of all the Petersons, only Oscar arrived at adulthood, sound and adjusted, ready to play in the **Johnny Holmes** band in Montreal, an aggregation that also featured the young **Maynard Ferguson**.

Growing up black and English in a province that is predominately white and French could not have been easy for the Petersons. Although Daisy insisted in an interview that their lives were "pleasurable, though sometimes painful," Lees goes into great detail, recounting numerous racial incidents that occurred to Oscar Peterson. Due to his musical ability, Peterson was able to break down the "coloured" barrier in bastions of elite society in Montreal, notably the Ritz Carlton Hotel. Although these triumphs must have encouraged Peterson to persevere at the time, they undoubtedly cost him much in terms of dignity and self-esteem. He later observed to Lees: "Many of the times I went in...and broke things, whether in Montreal or Toronto...I had the feeling it was temporary, and mainly because it was me. And that used to bug me more than anything else."

"The kind of prejudice that I experienced at home here in Canada was certainly not as violent as I saw it in the United States. But that didn't make me feel any better as a human being."

Oscar Peterson has gone on to fight prejudice in Canada and abroad throughout his life. Gene Lees first met Peterson in Hamilton, Ontario, during the early 1950s when, as a cub reporter, he covered a case in which the pianist fought the racism of a barber who refused to cut his hair because he was black. Eventually, Peterson won the case--which only persuaded him to pursue other, less costly, methods in order to change Canadian traditions and prejudices.

Recently, Peterson has been involved in changing Canadian unspoken media standards for hiring minorities in commercials. The pianist worked with Ontario's Attorney General in the early 1980s, Roy McMurtry, to speak to corporate and advertising leaders about the issue of racial representation. As Peterson noted, "there was a certain amount of shock value when I spoke out on the subject, because I think I have a fairly creditable record as a human being, and as a Canadian." Though one can't gauge Peterson's exact effect, Canadian advertising **does** now reflect some ethnic diversity.

"A creditable record"—this description may reflect a certain engaging modesty on Peterson's part, or could it be saying more about the man? Despite his world-class accomplishments, has this son of a railway porter ever felt himself to be truly respected? Lees' portrayal of Peterson is cautious and curiously

diffident on this essential question. One reads descriptions of occasional bursts of anger (Peterson literally ripping a car door off its hinges in Toronto or knocking a man out, as a young man in Montreal, during a racist episode) but these are presented as exceptional moments in the pianist's life. For every violent scene, one must assume that there were hundreds of times when the piano playing star kept his cool. The cost to his self-esteem is left unexplored by Lees, probably out of the writer's great admiration for his biographical subject.

An area that Lees does touch on, if only for a chapter, is Peterson's prescient establishment of a jazz school in Toronto in 1960. Called **The Advanced School of Contemporary Music**, this unique educational institution allowed for a great amount of personal rapport to be developed between the teachers and their students. The star attraction, naturally, was Peterson, already an international name at that time. Other staff members were highly regarded as well; among them were the rest of the Peterson trio, bassist **Ray Brown** and drummer **Ed Thigpen**, and Oscar's musical compatriots **Butch Watanabe** and **Phil Nimmons**. At its height, "the school occupied a sixteen-room house and had all the students its faculty could handle," according to Lees. Reflecting the hard-working nature of Peterson, the school dwelt on the exhausting, practical levels of jazz musicianship. Peterson and the rest of the faculty developed a methodology called "the forum" in which the students got to play with the staff in controlled audience situations. One can imagine the "sink or swim" nature of such performances, with some students rising to heights of proficiency and others falling by the wayside.

One faculty member has described the feeling around the school as being "very intense. It was quite ahead of its time." Many students recall their days at the school with great fondness. Phil Nimmons says that, "To this day, people come up and introduce themselves as being from there [the Advanced School]." The proof of the success of this educational environment is its "honour roll" of graduates. Among the players who attended the school are bassist **Jay Leonhardt** and pianists **Wray Downes, Carol Britto** and **Mike Longo**. Despite the high proportion of piano players on that list, it is important to note that Peterson did not, as he put it, "build robots." Lees talked to Mike Longo, who recalled, "He put the emphasis on two things. How to play and what to play. How to play involved your touch, your time, your tone, your technique and your taste, what he called the five Ts....He said, Mike, if you want a career as a player, you're going to have to have a touch that's impeccable, your time has to be beyond reproach, your tone exquisite, your technique flawless and your taste a thing of beauty." Longo obviously was up to these exacting standards, but Peterson's scholastic homilies are quite revealing on another, more personal, level. Oscar Peterson has been hailed as a "natural" player, a virtuoso. Yet when dealing with a young man of talent such as Longo, Peterson could be harshly exacting in his advice. Was he not indicating to Longo the painful obligation of endless rehearsals that he must have endured in order to "become" that keyboard wizard, Oscar Peterson?

The Advanced School of Contemporary Music started, according to Nimmons, "...as a natural extension of questions...in those days people would come up and talk to you after a set. " The Peterson Trio regularly played at the Town Tavern on Toronto's Yonge Street in that period. Initially the sessions with young musicians were informally held in some of the players' homes. After 1960, the arrangement was formalized; brochures were sent out; *Down Beat* interviewed Peterson concerning his unique learning institution and fledgling jazz artists came to the Toronto-based school from the United States, South America, Europe and the rest of Canada. The school lasted five years, from 1960 through 1964. Peterson kept the institution going at great personal cost. He would forego tours that would have been more remunerative in order to play at the Town Tavern and teach at the school. Eventually, the tug towards international touring proved to be too great, and the Advanced School closed its doors.

It is intriguing to consider that the rhythm section of Oscar Peterson's celebrated second trio, Ray Brown and Ed Thigpen, ended up moving to Toronto for over half a decade. Perhaps only fellow Canadians can fully delight in realizing that the pianist could establish a happy enclave for himself and his musical companions in his homeland. It always seems so much easier for Canadians to be successful and move to Los Angeles or New York, but here, again, Peterson frustrates the usual tales. As a composer, it naturally follows that Peterson's most celebrated work would be dedicated to this country. **The Canadiana Suite**, Lees correctly notes, "proceeds across Canada from east to west, which is the way the country thinks, in the precise sequence of the railway journey from the Atlantic to Pacific." As Peterson's father was a railway porter, Lees' biographical linkage of the work to the man are lucid and to the point: "Those pieces [in the Suite] are like views from a train window; or perhaps memories of a father's descriptions of the land when he would come home from his journeys and supervise his son's piano lessons."

Those lessons, as we know, proved to be wildly successful. Oscar Peterson achieved fame in Canada while still a teenager by winning a nation-wide talent contest. He was leading his own band in downtown Montreal by the age of 22. There he was quickly discovered by impresario Norman Granz, who literally made him an international star "overnight" by placing him, with attendant publicity, in a featured debut at Carnegie Hall in 1949. Peterson spent the decade of the 1950s with Granz' Jazz At the Philharmonic (JATP) touring groups, all-star aggregations that included such luminaries as **Dizzy Gillespie, Lester Young, Buddy Rich, Illinois Jacquet**, and **Ella Fitzgerald**. He led his own trio with guitarist **Herb Ellis**

RAY CHARLES & OSCAR PETERSON (Photograph by Bill Smith)

and **Ray Brown** which, when not touring themselves, formed part of the JATP band. Peterson recorded so regularly for Granz' Verve label that, according to Lees, "it is a joke within the company that if a project to issue The Complete Oscar Peterson Verve Recordings were undertaken and completed, it would take a truck to carry them, even in compact disc form." After JATP disbanded and Granz sold Verve, Peterson continued to make a tremendous number of records. When Ellis left the trio, Thigpen joined within a year and the band remained highly successful.

Yet despite world-wide acclaim, Oscar Peterson has encountered much controversy regarding his status as an artist. The winner of the Down Beat Reader's Poll fourteen times between 1950 and 1972, Peterson had developed a wide listenership without attracting much critical support. Lees quotes several harsh reviews but none harder than this from British critic Max Harrison: "Most of us have been bored by the monotony of Peterson's mechanical posturings but it is hard to convey their meaningless in words. Perhaps it is enough to say that he appears to be concerned mainly with playing the piano and only incidentally with making music. This monotony is accented by the lack of variation in dynamics and altogether the impression with which Peterson's work leaves us is one of insensitivity." To a certain extent this negative critique, and others like it, can be attributed to the carping that attends any popular artist: such people are often accused of being mechanical or "commercial" players. Peterson is understandably defensive on this subject, stating ,"I don't believe what the critics say, because often I sit down at a concert beside them and they **ask me** what the musicians on stage are doing." Furthermore, Peterson was clearly associated in certain critics' minds with Granz' JATP and Verve output, which had often been attacked for being a vulgar, watered-down version of true jazz music.

As Lees notes, Peterson has begun to attract more accolades in recent years. His recordings for the German MPS label, especially his solo album, **The Way I Really Play**, won critical plaudits even from the inevitable Mr. Harrison, who noted that Peterson is "a conservative, a rare type in this music, but he has learnt one of Tatum's main lessons well, for, as the lithe, bounding phrases of "Foggy Day" or "Sandy's Blues" show, in his best moments decoration assumes a functional role and so is no longer decoration, ornament becomes integral to the process of development." Peterson's MPS recordings, made in the late sixties and early seventies, allowed the inherent taste and sensitivity of the pianist to be aurally apparent to the committed listener. The hard-driving virtuosity heard monochromatically in the Verve recordings is placed in relief to the rest of the pianistic palette in these reflective pieces. Although Peterson returned to Granz, and his new label, Pablo, in the early seventies, these MPS sides served notice to critics and the public alike that there is more to Oscar Peterson than his "will to swing."

Towards the end of his book, Gene Lees places Peterson in a uniquely Canadian cultural context. Writing about a recent concert, he notes: "Oscar's playing had reached a new level. It had become deeper and very abstract....The figures he plays with such astonishing facility had become like brush-slashes of colour on a canvas, no longer devices but great blocks of material used with abandon....The phenomenon was comparable to what happens to painters...as they grow older...the subject matter ceases to be the point of the exercise, the design and materials become the meaning." Having established a comparison with painters, including Canada's "Group of Seven" members A.Y. Jackson and Lawren Harris, Lees adds, "Canada has long excelled...in landscape painting. It is almost certainly not an accident that Oscar's first extended work, **the Canadiana Suite**, is a kind of landscape painting in sound." Peterson's considerable oeuvre deserves re-evaluation, particularly within the framework of his identification with a romantic notion of the Canadian landscape.

Towards the end of the book, Lees recounts an anecdote in which Peterson was sitting with friends on the dock near his cottage in northern Ontario. Suddenly, a "flotilla of rowboats" appeared on the scene. Peterson recalled to Lees: "It could have been almost the situation that day with Anwar Sadat, and I was really apprehensive. Then they raised all these signs that said, 'Happy Birthday, Oscar.'" The mixture of love and fear in this tale seems curiously appropriate to the whole Oscar Peterson story. A strong, motivated and talented individual, Peterson has succeeded in conquering the barriers placed before him, whether by racists, colonialists, cynics, hustlers or critics. Through it all, he has steadfastly maintained his identity as a proud black Canadian artist. But at what price? Will the fears of intolerance and critical disapproval always haunt the man? In honouring Oscar Peterson, can anyone, even Gene Lees, truly say they understand what makes Oscar run?

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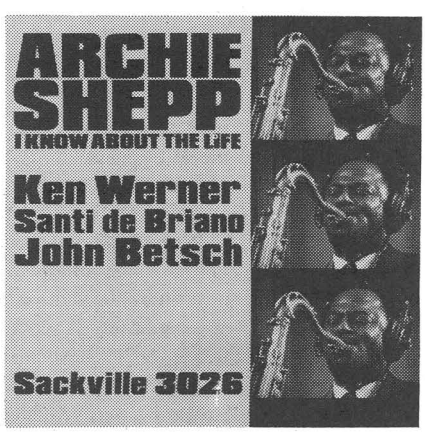


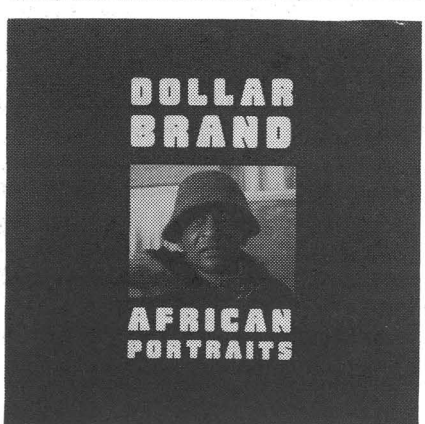


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EDDIE "Lockjaw" DAVIS (Photograph by Jorgen Bo)

The recordings before me may already hold some of the answers to what the future holds in store for the instrument. **Steve Lacy**, for example, has systematically penetrated a range of musical styles from Bechet to Cecil Taylor (and beyond), stretching the soprano sax to its tonal limits. His most recent albums (he has turned out over 50 under his own name!) undeniably reveal that he is a major, though highly underrated, creative force on the jazz scene today. His pairing with long time friend, **Gil Evans**, this time in duet format **(Paris Blues: Owl 049)** results in quietly sensitive interpretations of such Mingus standards as *Reincarnation of a Lovebird, Orange was the Colour of her Dress,* and *Goodbye Porkpie Hat*, as well as a reworked original (*Esteem*) in memory of Johnny Hodges, and the infrequently heard title tune by Ellington. Among the last recordings of Gil Evans, it serves as a suitable tribute to his unheralded skill and imagination as a pianistic improviser. Lacy's role here is an evocative one, drawing magic from Gil's fingers, especially noteworthy on the rhythmically shifting *Orange*. If this album reflects the creative joy of shared ideas between two old friends, Lacy's **The Window (Soul Note 121 185-1)**, a session ''about light'', captures a different atmosphere, charged with the bright colourations and flashes of musical insight that such a unifying symbol might suggest. All but one of the numbers are composed by Lacy. **Jean-Jacques Avenel** (bass) and **Oliver Johnson** (drums) support well the ever-sinewy yet evanescent style of Lacy, most notably on *The Window* and *Twilight*, dedicated respectively to drummers Max Roach and Art Blakey, and on *The Gleam*, ''a song celebrating drink and good company'' (liner); the latter is an outstanding example of the group's dynamic cohesiveness and Lacy's own instrumental ingenuity.

Saxophonist **Billy Pierce**, surrounded by the considerable talents of other ex-Blakey sidemen **Mulgrew Miller** and **Terence Blanchard**, offers the listener a varied array of new and relatively brief compositions on an album appropriately titled **Give and Take (Sunnyside 1026)**. The playing is unquestionably of a high calibre; however, out of the many numbers showcasing the group's pyrotechnical sorties, it is difficult to recall memorable details from the sessions, except perhaps Pierce's own unaided solo on *Aria's Prance*, his gently flowing soprano on *The Moment You All Have Been Waiting For*, or the charged-up inventive treatment of the standard, *Love Walked In*.

**John Stubblefield's** sixth album, **Countin' the Blueds (Enja 5051)**, with the baritone of **Hamiet Bluiett** and the piano (again!) of **Mulgrew Miller** as members of the supporting cast, runs a gamut of blues improvisation, scorching them on *Remembrance*, wailing them on *Going Home*, extolling them on *Countin' the Blues*, - even, paradoxically, infiltrating them into Richard Whiting's 1931 hit, *My Ideal*. The musical accord achieved by the interaction of Bluiett and Stubblefield (on soprano, in particular) makes for a fresh and powerful statement on the traditional theme of the blues. In addition, to overlook the contributions from drummer **Victor Lewis** and bassist **Charnett Moffett** would be to miss a vital ingredient here.

I had not heard of baritone saxophonist **Glenn Wilson** until this recording **(Elusive: Sunnyside 1030)**, although this appears to be his second album. The quartet, including **Harold Danko** on piano, is augmented on some cuts by tenorman **Bob Belden** and trumpeter/flugelhornist **Jim Powell**. I enjoy the baritone sax, and Wilson elicits a clear, rich tone from the horn. What remains *after* a first hearing (one of my measuring sticks) is Danko's surging tribute to McCoy Tyner (*McCoy's Passion*), a lovely pairing of baritone/piano to a soft bossa beat on *Alone but not Forgotten*, some interesting tenor lines by Belden on his *Tale of Two Souls*, a Baker/Mulligan-like treatment of Thad Jones' *Elusive* by Powell and Wilson, Wilson's own rhapsodic dedication to Pepper Adams (*Adams Park*), and an overall feeling of having spent some forty minutes listening to good jazz played by six dedicated disciples of the music.

Tenorman **Jim Pepper**, drawn out of semi-retirement from the music business and to the European jazz scene by Don Cherry, reveals his indebtednes to Gene Ammons on his latest album, **Dakota Song (Enja 5043)**. A native American Indian by birth, his commitment to his own cultural identity filters through on the title track, a melody of great beauty yet encompassing sadness. But it is on such standards as *What's New?* and *It Could Happen To You*, Ornette Coleman's *Comme Il Faut*, or his own *Jumpin' Gemini* and *Mercer Street Blues* that both the player's inner warmth and restrained power are most clearly evident. The trio of **Kirk Lightsey, Santi Debriano** and **John Betsch** creates a subtle pallette from which Pepper can colour his imaginative tenor flights. This is an album to be enjoyed many times.

Saxophonists **Peter King** (alto) and **Don Weller** (tenor) have been busily productive ''over 'ome''. The King recording, **Hi-fly (Spotlite 527)**, has just arrived on the scene here, and offers some fine, free-wheeling bop on the opening *Blues for S.J.* (an original),

# REVIEWS BY JOHN SUTHERLAND

*Seven Steps to Heaven*, and the Parker-affiliated *Star Eyes*, to the delight of the audience at Le Plateau des Quatre Vents in Lorient, France. In addition, the **Philippe Briand** trio admirably shifts its rhythmic emphasis to enhance King's lush ballad style on *Old Folks*. Meanwhile, the more recent (1988) disc - **Don Weller/Stan Tracey Play Duke, Monk and Bird (Emanem 3604)** - was recorded ''down under'', incorporating two Australians, **Chris Qua** (bass) and **John Pochee** (drums) in the line-up. Weller's fractured tone (e.g. *Let's Cool One/Nutty*) Marks him, indeed, as the Pee Wee Russell of the tenor sax, though this idiosyncrasy heightens the emotional appeal to *A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square* or *Sophisticated Lady*. Tracey is comfortably at home with the Monk/Ellington numbers, enjoying the occasion especially on *Nutty* and *I Let a Song....* The outing doesn't break any new ground, but does generate some straightforward swinging that is pleasant to hear.

It is strange (alarming?) that British players wich such substantial talents should be cutting their respective records abroad. Why?

Ex-Ray Charles and Basie sideman, **Curtis Peagler**, takes the leader's chair on a 1986 quartet date **(I'll Be Around: Pablo 2310 930)** featuring a basically standard repertoire. From the opening *Sly Mongoose* with its buoyant West Indian rhythm to the sprightly swinging *Surrey with the Fringe on Top*, Peagler displays a varied panoply of fresh saxophone styles and rhythms that reflect well those profitable years spent in a journeyman capacity. His tone can be lean and cutting as on *I'll Close My Eyes* or *Johnny One Note*, yet soulfully sinuous as with *Nina Never Knew* or *Old Folks*. The trio of pianist **Gildo Mahones**, bassist **Herbie Lewis**, and drummer **Billy Higgins** adds immeasurably to the success of this album.

When veteran players enter a recording studio, new and exciting things often happen. For example, the resurgence of the alto sax of **Frank Morgan** in the 80's has been a jazz fan's delight. Despite a self-inflicted hiatus of almost three decades, Morgan seems to have lost none of his verve for blowing up a storm or passion for reinvigorating a worn standard into a thing of beauty. Listen to his recent outing with the **McCoy Tyner** trio **(Major Changes: Contemporary 14039)** and you will more fully appreciate the import of Tyner's compositional tribute, *Frank's BAck*, and Morgan's own vibrant rendition of it. As well, his willowy treatments of *Emily, How Deep is the Ocean*, and *All The Things You Are* show how experienced players are able to strip away the banality from these oft-performed numbers. Tyner, here, is the consummate accompanist.

**James Moody**, too, continues to gather new players about him while reshaping some old warhorses on a 1987 release, **Moving Forward (RCA 3026-1)**. As the liner suggests, Moody is ''true to the roots, yet invigorating in his freshness and exuberance.'' Nowhere is this more evident than on his boppish romp through *Autumn Leaves*, a relaxed stroll (flute) on *A Summer Afternoon*, or with the rollicking Latinized version of the traditionally ballad-like *The Night has a Thousand Eyes*. He even affords us a rare vocal on an original, *What Do You Do*. It's jazz nouveau, bottled for the 80's — sparkling, refreshing stuff, yet with just the right musical bouquet to please any taste.

And what can one say about **Benny Carter**, eclipsing 80 years of age and sounding many, many years younger on the 1986 **Benny Carter Meets Oscar Peterson** album for **Pablo (2310 926)**? A legend of any decade in jazz since the early 30's, he is a superb instrumentalist (be it alto, tenor, or trumpet), a proven arranger, and a prolific composer (*Back Bay Boogie, Symphony in Riffs, Blues in D Flat, When Lights are Low, Blue Interlude, Cow Cow Boogie*, et al). Mind you, Oscar Peterson brings out the best in almost anyone, and Carter appears to relish this meeting, easing his way comfortably through *Just Friends, It's A Wonderful World, If I had You*, with plenty of energy remaining to charge up *Sweet Lorraine* or *Some Kind of Blues*. Moreover, **Joe Pass** (guitar), **Dave Young** (bass), and **Martin Drew** (drums) certainly know what to do when two old friends get together for a jamming session.

Though it has been more than two years now since the passing of **Eddie Lockjaw Davis**, a 1966-67 reissue **(Bluebird 6463-1)** reminds us of those qualities the tenorman never really abandoned, as evidenced in later recordings such as The Heavy Hitter (1979) or What's New (1975) where he was still capable of turning out those tough angular sounds or descending to the smooth, creamy richness of some torchy ballad. It's all here — from a raucously good-natured *Bye Bye Blackbird*, a shockingly unsentimental *Out of Nowhere*, to a warm, woolly *We'll Be Together Again* — and, today, still makes excellent fare for the insatiable jazz fan.

Wherever jazz may be heading, you can be sure that the saxophone will remain an integral part of its development. Above are 13 good reasons in support of its limitless potential.

# JANE BUNNETT * IN DEW TIME

*I visited Jane Bunnett recently after her week long engagement at Toronto's East 85th with Dewey Redman, a show that reached many highs for audience and performers alike, with the frontline of Bunnett on soprano and flute, Dewey Redman on tenor, and Larry Cramer on trumpet seeming very relaxed with each others' company and inclinations towards the tunes that were being played. The ensemble was rounded out with Don Thompson on piano, Michel Ratte on drums and Normand Guilbeault on bass, producing a concentrated sound texture that recalled the recently issued "In Dew Time" but delivered with an unexpected forcefulness. All members of the ensemble played with an energy that transcended the difficulties faced in arranging logistics for the meeting of players, broadcast commitments, and airline travel, creating an infectiously bright engaging presence. The interview, which took place at the saxophonist's home, presented a slightly different view of Bunnett, visibly recovering from a week of completely intense playing and interacting with one of the legends of creative music. Our conversation here is picked up after Ms. Bunnett had been discussing the CBC recording of the ensemble during the previous week.*

**STEVE VICKERY:** *In the year since you've done the record, the band sounds like it's grown a lot, solidifying itself over the time that's passed.*

**JANE BUNNETT:** Our concept has just gotten stronger and more developed.... After a while, when you sit and you listen to something you grow as a musician. Just in the week of playing at East 85th, I personally felt a change, even Larry said this to me. It's gone from (gestures a wide sweep with her arm) here to here, and it may have something to do with playing six nights a week in a row, going into a club and having to beat yourself, to come up with new ideas the next night than what you played the night before. You feel something working so you develop that a little more, a year is a year, the experience is there, it's also been a year for me of interesting interaction, such as playing with [saxophonist] Jean Derome. There are all these little things that add up. Playing with John Tchicai at Sneaky Dee's, playing with Jean Beaudet, playing in the Hemispheres concert, doing gigs with our own quintet, it's been really quite a year. And all these things help a musician grow. When I think back now, I probably wouldn't have believed it if someone had said to me then, in two and a half years, you'll be doing this this and this. It would have scared me if someone had said, you're going to be playing with Don Pullen, these things are going to happen, then you'll do six nights with Dewey Redman. I mean, this is a natural evolving process but in retrospect, it still seems pretty incredible to me. I'm very surprised that things have worked out so well.

*Do you feel the forward momentum of all these events, of having to rise to the occasion?*

Yes I do. I've always been the kind of person who needs projects, for instance the project that I've done with Jane Fair performing Thelonious Monk material. I've always needed a deadline when I have to get something together, and I think that most musicians need that. You keep trying to come up with something new and keep developing, that's so important as a musician: to keep tabs on what's happening musically, with who's recording what, with what's going on in New York – because New York is the centre of it all. Although there's a lot happening in Toronto, it's too easy to sit back here. You have to know what's going on, and constantly be creating and studying. I personally feel let up from the studying end of things, I have a problem sitting back sometimes and reflecting on what I've done. It's good right now because I have to do that but it's something to do, especially for a woman, because at some time I'm thinking about having a family and that means certain things that I have to work on. I've got to do this and I've got to do that, because I'm going to be out of commission for a year! – which is maybe a funny way of thinking of things but, as I say, I like projects and preparing myself for things.

*I found it interesting in the East 85th week of performance to see the interaction across the generations between Dewey and Don, and yourself and Larry and the rhythm section.*

I really felt that too because Dewey is coming from one end of the music. The musical spectrum that he's from, the people that he's worked with... both he and Don Thompson are very steeped in modern jazz but they've certainly both come out of the tradition, and Vincent [Chancey, french horn on "In Dew Time"] coming from what he's done, it's pretty amazing, I have a tremendous amount of respect for them as musicians and as human beings.

After doing a week with Dewey, I feel that I know Dewey very well and a sweeter person you'll never meet, a really generous, giving musician. Truly a musician – when he was here I asked him, do you want to go see anything, a museum or something, and he just shook his head and smiled: "No, I'm here to play." Woring with people like that really reaffirms, for myself and I know for Larry too, the seriousness of music and the dedication that you need to have to develop into a truly great musician – there's no half-doing something, you've got to totally throw yourself into it. There's that old cliche that "you have to play like it's your last time" – but when you're playing with musicians like tht, it feels like it. The energy comes through, and you really draw from yourself musically, from places you never knew were there.

One night when Dewey was playing with us, we had had some hassles at the club and I remember hearing him play and I had to step down off the bandstand because I was just bawling my eyes out. It was truly embarrassing. It wasn't even like I said to myself, I'm going to cry, it was like Bang!, I was crying. It's amazing that the power of someone's playing can move you that way. The intensity and the soulfulness and the beauty in what he was doing – I just couldn't stand it, I had to go sit down and just look at him and give it some distance. It was personally too powerful for me. This happened a number of times. Larry and I were both blown over, we'd look at each other and we'd both feel like holding our hearts. It was so strong, but even though his playing is so aggressive and powerful there was never a moment when it came from an ugly place. It was always just pure beauty. The night at the BamBoo Club that we played was really an incredible high for me, and it was the first time that I had experienced the power of the music in that way. I could really under-



JANE BUNNETT (Photograph by Barry Thompson)

stand how people who played with Coltrane spoke about it; when you're on the bandstand with someone who is that devoted and that good... I can really understand why there are churches where they worship Coltrane.

The East 85th gig was also the first time I'd played under my own name in a club for six nights. I played with the "Ladies of Jazz", and I played with "Music in Monk Time" with Jane Fair. At East 85th I was basically just trying not to lose my concentration so I could focus on what was happening in the music, and some of those times that I left the bandstand I felt that it was very dangerous because once I left, it was almost like there was a wall separating me from what was happening on the stage and if I hadn't soloed already and had to go back on stage and solo, it was very hard for me to get back into that surrounding feeling, that womb-like security on the bandstand, being with individuals who are playing so great, and all of them were so supportive, and such nice individuals, it was really just a wonderful feeling on the bandstand. Once the music got going, there were a number of times when my time would come to solo, and I would get this incredible feeling that I was going down a tunnel, and the rhythm section was carrying me along, I felt comfortable and cushioned and totally secure. I've never felt like that before in music. I can understand how people get heavily into drugs to try to simulate that feeling. And then when things are over, I always think of that thing Dolphy says at the end of the "Last Date" record, that once the music is played, it's gone in the air.... It's such a great feeling when the music is happening but when it's left you, it's a very lonely feeling. I can honestly see how some people can be into it and get truly messed up.

*Do you spend time on a particular approach to preparation for a show? I don't mean technically but rather personally. It struck me that it must be hard to go out on stage six nights in a row, in such heavy company, and give so much emotionally.*

Yes, it is difficult sometimes. Larry and I have endless conversations trying to think things out about music. Sometimes I am a very scattered person but I really like to prepare myself mentally to play, and when I have been able to do that, it's been wonderful. Just to sit by myself quietly for ten minutes, blow some long tones on my instrument and think about what's going to be happening in the music, the different kinds of feelings I'm going to try to put across. It's difficult because of all the other things, someone running up to you saying this has to be done, and was so-and-so notified of this problem, but I've always liked those times when I've just been able to sit and think of what I'm going to do. It can't always be done but I think as you get older and more experienced, you take care of allowing yourself that time for a few minutes of reflection.

*You originally started on piano, but switched instruments because of problems with tendonitis.*

Well, I finished my grade ten piano, and had my hand in a brace, and went to San Francisco and that's how I got into jazz, seeing the Charles Mingus band there. Don Pullen was playing and he really blew me away. When I came back I continued my piano studies but I was supposed to have an operation on my hand, hopefully to correct the tendonitis, and basically I faced the fact that I was not going to be a piano player, because I was always going to have this problem with my hand.

I was playing flute already. In the next two years I finished my grade ten piano, because I wanted to complete something. I had never completed anything. I had gone to five different high schools and finally graduated, gone to art school and quit, I liked to have a good time and I was a horrible student. Finally I buckled down enough to make it into university, but when I came back from San Francisco, I started studying jazz. I studied with Howard Spring at the New School of Music that he set up, studied with various people there: Jane Fair, Don Englert, Mark Eisenman.

*It must be very satisfying for you to now be working with Jane on the "Music in Monk Time" band.*

It's really satisfying, and exciting to

think that once Jane was my teacher, and now here I am playing with her. She's an excellent teacher, and my good friend, but she's a marvelous musician. She doesn't get out to play as much as I think she'd like to, but that's hard with a commitment to a family.

*Can we talk about your two major instrumental influences, Eric Dolphy and Steve Lacy?*

For me, Lacy has the most beautiful soprano sound, nobody can beat it. His approach to the horn has been so different than most other horn players; something in what he does is very minimal, his concept of time is so interesting, so personal, and the melodic sense in some of his early things.... Now he's definitely a bit more on the outer fringes, but I think he's been in the music so long that he keep hearing things that are more and more evolved.

Eric Dolphy was just an unbelievable musician on every instrument. In some ways I don't feel his concept has been surpassed on either flute, alto saxophone, or bass clarinet; really, I image he would have eventually added soprano to his list of horns. He was such a pioneer, but got such hard knocks, along with Ornette Coleman and the other musicians who were just knocked so terribly... and he died so young. What he was doing on the flute was so interesting, that he was hearing all these incredible things and trying to get them all out on the instrument.... I find so many musicians to be real heroes, but especially him.

*Have you found the reaction to "In Dew Time" to be what you expected? Is it being received positively?*

I'm surprised by how positive the reaction has been, it's been getting a lot of airplay. *Big Alice* is even getting airplay on CBC AM, which is really surprising, in between spots on the different shows. If there has been any negative reaction to the record, it's so minimal I don't know whether it's worth mentioning... but some people have asked me, why would you record with Pullen and why would you record with Dewey, why do you record with Americans (groans all around) as if to say, can't use you people from home: well, you can't.

You use the people who are out making the music. There is no one in the world who plays like Dewey Redman, there is no one in the world who plays like Don Pullen. There are so many reasons to record with them. They are musical heroes of mine, and the reason for that is because they are musicians who have been doing what they do *with no compromise* – they have always done what they've done and they've made incredibly strong musical statements. They changed the music in a way; they've added to jazz so much and spread the history of the music out even farther by their own personal styles. They are people who have inspired me as a musician. And to work alongside players like that, who play so great....

Look at the musicians who have gone through Art Blakey's band; how they play when they finally come out of "the school of Blakey". Same with Dewey, Dewey said that he started playing with Ornette Coleman twenty or twenty five years ago and the way he tells it, he still doesn't know if he's passed "the school of O.C.", but he said it's rubbed off on him. It's the same for us, that's why I like to work with these musicians, because it will make me stronger and make me play better as a musician.

Very last on the list is the international importance of having their names on the record, although that's really an afterthought it works in our favour in terms of possibly working in Europe and getting the record out there.

*You can't play superficial sound when you're beside people like that.*

Exactly! And the feeling that comes from playing with Dewey, and having him say, at the end of your solo, "Yeah, Jane" (screams).... A couple of times, he heard me solo and he'd look at me and say, "I heard that!" To me, you could give me all the money in the world and nothing could mean as much to me as him saying that.

*If you had a chance to work in, say, Art Blakey's band, would you go for it even though you have made the first steps in successfully establishing your own name?*

What a decision that would be! I don't know. There's so much that someone like Blakey, or Jack DeJohnette could teach me. Working with someone like Blakey would be something you'd tell your grandchildren about. The guy is a living legend, he's still going strong, and there's so much to be learned from the way he works a band, with the dynamics, and what he pulls out from his players. But at this point in time it would be such a hard decision. I remember reading that Courtney Pine was asked to join Blakey's band and didn't do it.

*That becomes another problem too: the transatlantic shift in establishing one's name in North America is a key issue.*

I think there is no doubt that there is more happening in New York than in England. There is lots of music happening in Europe but to me the breeding ground is New York and the States. So that would be a real hard decision. I would have stomach pains for a week agonizing over what to do. Maybe the best thing would be to do it for six months. The way I play, I don't think I would be a good candidate for Blakey's band but I'm sure my playing would develop in a whole other direction. It would be a healthy development for me, but still a tough decision.

*What about the opposite scenario of composing?*

The difference between being a great composer and a great player is like the difference between the two parts of the brain. Developing your skills on your instrument and developing your skills as a composer are two different activities. It's something I always battle with. In some ways it would be nice to focus on one thing at a time because I always feel that I have so much to work out on my instruments, because I started late. I started on soprano about nine years ago, and flute about twelve years ago. So there's a lot of ground to cover.

*What sort of venues do you feel yourself moving toward in the near future: more club work or strictly concerts and festivals?*

The club scene is very difficult; not only in this country, it's even difficult in New York. There is just a handful of clubs.

I love the intimacy of working in a club; I find it difficult to do some of these outdoor concerts where you're on this huge stage and the audience is at least forty feet away. There is also the time problem. In the case of that

opening spot we were talking about earlier (the quintet opened for Carla Bley/Steve Swallow in the DuMaurier Summer Jazz series) the set we did was forty-five minutes which I find extremely difficult; it's like you've got to say it all in a short span of time. When we finished, I really felt that we had just started. If we could do what Carla was doing (an hour and a half concert) it would be different, but forty-five minutes just feels wrong to me, especially with that many players. You want everybody to get to solo. I'm not saying each tune should be forty-five minutes but I like to think of performing in terms of balancing the program, taking people through mood swings (laughs) just like me.

I think what we will eventually end up doing is a combination of both concerts and club dates.

*Is there a particular venue or place you'd like to play that you haven't made it to yet?*

I think the festivals in Europe, and I want to go to Japan. Doing some travelling, some places I haven't been. Other than that, I'd like to do some sort of project with some dancers.... I'm very interested in Cuban music so that's another project I have in the back of my head. I'd like to record with some Cuban musicians. Larry and I go every year, we have so much fun and the musicians there are wonderful.

I really enjoy interaction with different players, and the different energy that they bring. It pushes the music in another direction and it's such a learning experience. The musical friendships that Larry and I have made over the last few years have really strengthened me, meeting Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, Slim Gaillard, John Tchicai, the players from Montreal, Dewey Redman, and Don Pullen. It's so great where the music can take you, not just in terms of the music itself, but in terms of meeting incredible people who help you grow as a musician, and as a human. It's an experience I think a lot of musicians don't allow themselves to have because they get involved in doing one particular scene. For me, it's given me so much that I've met these people and begun to understand where they're coming from. I can't believe believe that five years ago I was a waitress! I feel very fortunate and very lucky... yeah, very....

# ANNE LEBARON * VINCENT CHANCEY * DAVEY WILLIAMS

*IN PERFORMANCE * OPEN SPACE GALLERY * ALLENTOWN * APRIL 9TH, 1989*

photograph by: Michael Hauptschein

From the very first moments of her performance, Anne LeBaron distanced herself from the handful of harpists working in improvised music.

She began by inserting a bow for a three-quarters size cello between two of her harp's bass strings. As she bowed the string, she moved a T-shaped metal tuning key along the played string, as a slide guitarist would do. Amplified, the effect was a full sound implying motion. It was as if someone had sampled a passing freight train and selected to repeat the moment when the train's pitch was at its most intense.

The other members of LeBaron's trio--Vincent Chancey on miked french horn and electric guitarist Davey Williams--soon joined the harpist, offering a montage of textured sound layers that floated above and below LeBaron's bowed line.

What followed was an afternoon of unannounced collective improvisations, this trio's first performance.

The afternoon had much to offer listeners. Not only did the small but appreciative audience get a chance to see a performer who pushed the boundaries of the often pigeonholed concert harp, but they had a chance to hear the harp in a rather unusual setting with guitar and french horn.

The sounds LeBaron produced on this particular afternoon were other-worldly, a somewhat ironic condition for a double concert harp such as LeBaron plays. A harp run has become a cliched metaphor for an ascension, as if to heaven, yet most of the other-worldly sounds LeBaron produced resulted from her preparation or treatment of the strings. After the bowed section, LeBaron inserted a yellow plastic strip between several of her harp strings. Playing a run that included prepared and non-prepared strings, LeBaron produced a sound with a sharp contrast. At times, LeBaron attached small microphones to particular strings, using alligator clips. At other times, she simply attached single alligator clips to the strings, which produced a rattle tone of undetermined pitch, sounding somewhat like the snare on a bendir. And at other times, she struck particular strings with a small rubber mallet, one a vibraphone player might use.She seldom played her amplified harp in a traditional way, using prepared strings, special amplification and extended technique to express her musical thoughts.

Guitarist Williams employed even more extended techniques. He began the afternoon's second improvisation by increasing the volume on his guitar and passing near the guitar's pickups a battery-powered motor strapped to a rubber fish. His movements, and in particular their direction, created specific sounds. A perpendicular attack produced one type of sound; a parallel attack produced another. The shimmy of the fish also produced a distinctive tone. Later in the performance, Williams removed a wrist watch from his pocket and placed it over the guitar's pickups. The pickups, with their volume near their maximum, picked up the distinctive tick-tick of the watch. It struck this listener as a rather funny comment on timekeeping in music, and by extension, a wry look at the increasing use of time-keeping devices like drum machines.

On this post-modern plane of extended technique, Chancey, the french horn player, was at a distinct disadvantage.

With the possible exception of deconstructing his instrument (as John Zorn would do, for example) or playing the instrument itself (as several others have done), there was little extended technique he could do. What he did do was cluck into his instrument's mouthpiece, following Williams' wristwatch lead. Chancey did produce occasional blasts and blurts, at appropriate moments. Still, his dry, precise tone, with an occasional wide vibrato, served as something of a centrepiece for the afternoon's swirling lines.

An intriguing aspect of this performance, in particular, was the way the trio members supported each other. After an energetic cross-hatch of guitar sounds, Williams glided into a repetitive figure. At this, LeBaron and Chancey took off, with LeBaron building a more or less vertical improvisational structure while Chancey offered a line that was more or less parallel to that of Williams, but far less repetitive.

LeBaron had wanted to perform at least one of two compositions that she usually performs together: "I Am An American .<t>.<t>. My Government Will Reward You," a piece for amplified harp and digital tapes created by a Synclavier II system. Schedules did not permit enough practice time for this, but LeBaron hopes to do this piece solo when she performs at the New Music America festival this fall. LeBaron also expects to debut her electronic blues opera, "The E & O Line," at the CSC Repertory Ltd. in New York City this year or next year. - *Tim Blangger*

# THE JAZZ BIOGRAPHER

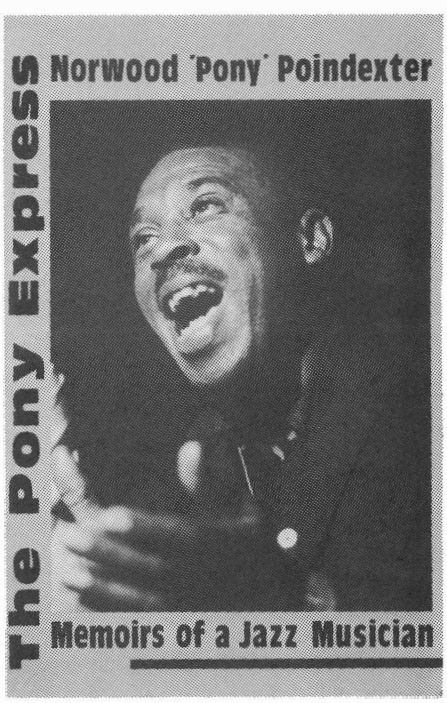
**THE PONY EXPRESS: Memoirs of a Jazz Musician by Norwood "Pony" Poindexter, published by Jaz Publikationen, Eschbornerlandstr. 14, D-6000 Frankfurt, West Germany. 295 pages. / A CHOICE OF WEAPONS by Gordon Parks, published by Minnesota Historical Society Press. 274 pages. / THIRTY YEARS WITH THE BIG BANDS by Arthur Rollini, published by University of Illinois Press. 134 pages. / STORMY MONDAY: THE T-BONE WALKER STORY by Helen Oakley Dance, published by Louisiana University State Press. 285 pages. / BENNY CARTER: A Life in American Music by Morroe Berger, Edward Berger and James Patrick, published by Scarecrow Press. Complete in 2 volumes. 877 pages. / ALL IN GOOD TIME by Marian McPartland, published by Oxford University Press. 174 pages. / MEET ME AT JIM AND ANDY'S: Jazz Musicians and their World by Gene Lees, published by Oxford University Press. 288 pages. / GOIN' TO KANSAS CITY by Nathan W. Pearson Jr., published by University of Illinois Press. 252 pages. / JAZZ GREATS: Getting Better with Age by Lowell W. Holmes and John W. Thomson, published by Homes & Meier Publishers. 150 pages.**

**PONY POINDEXTER** was from New Orleans but he was in California from the time he was fifteen. He had already made a conscious decision to turn his back on the middle class aspirations of his parents and adapt instead the street life of the hipster. From that point forward Pony Poindexter dedicated his life to music and the street scene. He spells it out with graphic realism in this fascinating memoir. It's all there – his involvement with dope, his many confrontations with the law and the up and down nature of his personal involvements with various women. Above all, though, this book deals with Poindexter's passionate lifelong affair with jazz and his dealings with White America.

Poindexter lived through a tumultuous time in California in the late 1940s through the 1950s. Segregation was almost as strong there as it was in the South and the musical mix which began during that period – both with audiences and musicians – brought these people all kinds of heat. They were pioneers in making a stand a decade before the civil rights marches of the 1960s finally forced the country to change some of its laws. Poindexter, and many others were beaten, thrown in jail and denied their rights. In the end Poindexter fled to New York, and then to Europe. Once there he finally found some semblance of sense in his career. But before he departed he made a number of outstanding recordings which have long disappeared from view. Best of all was "Pony's Express" on Epic and almost as good was "Gumbo" – a Prestige date with **Booker Ervin**. In 1979 Poindexter's career came to a close when he suffered a stroke following cocaine use. This book, published in West Germany, came out in 1985. In April 1988 Pony Poindexter finally gave up the struggle for life.

The fight to established some direction in one's life is something which everyone faces. But in Black America the struggle is much harder. All these autobiographies give us glimpses into that struggle but none come close to the clarity and perception offered by **Gordon Parks** in **"A Choice of Weapons"**. This is the second volume of writing by the noted photographer. It traces his growth into manhood in Minneapolis/St. Paul and Chicago following the death of his mother. All the elements for disaster were present in Parks' adolescence but somehow or other he came through relatively unscathed. Photography was his route out of revolving poverty while jazz piano (at an amateur level) kept him in food on more than one occasion. Parks went on to become a highly successful photographer following his apprenticeship in the photographic unit of the Farm Security Administration. His skills as a writer match his keen photographic eye. He remembers with clarity incidents and feelings from long ago and has the ability to present them in a dramatic manner. He keeps the reader totally absorbed in his struggle. Parks' story, told with considerable frankness, mirrors the experiences undergone by many musicians during this same period. It is an important document.

**Arthur Rollini's** chief claim to fame is that he was the tenor saxophone soloist with the Benny Goodman band at Carnegie Hall in 1938. His story has few of the struggles faced by his Black counterparts. Rollini was never a major jazz soloist. It was his elder brother Adrian who was the musical genius of the family. The book's value will be felt by people interested in how **Adrian Rollini** helped his younger brother become established as a musician. The musical high point of his life was the period with Goodman and this is discussed in some detail. It was also the stepping stone to a financially successful career as a jobbing studio musician in New York. Life for Arthur Rollini has been quite comfortable and it shows through in this rather brief account of his life.



# PART TWO BY JOHN NORRIS

Biographical writing in the jazz world takes several different directions. Many are written from a distance without any personal contact with the artist. Notable examples in this genre include **Jack Chambers'** study of **Miles Davis** and **James Lincoln Collier's** revisionist looks at **Louis Armstrong** and **Duke Ellington**. Other so-called "official" biographies are little more than publicity vehicles – such as **Charles Sawyer's** book about **B.B. King.**

The most successful biographies are where the writer has the full cooperation of the artist. Nothing is held back, the files and papers of the artist are available and all areas of the person's career are openly discussed. Then it is up to the writer to work on the actual book within the mutually agreed parameters.

This process has produced biographies of **T-Bone Walker** and **Benny Carter**. Both are highly successful while being entirely different in their approach.

**Helen Oakley Dance** used T-Bone and his family as the basic material for her book. She skillfully weaves together T-Bone's own remembrances with those of his family and friends. She spent many days hanging out at the Walker residence in Los Angeles. She soon became one of T-Bone's extended family and everyone was quick to tell one sensational story after another about events surrounding the flamboyant singer/guitarist's life. This book is a long overdue tribute to a musician whose influence permeates jazz and popular music. He played the blues with great musicality and gave such performers as Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley a method for presenting themselves on stage. In effect what you saw was Walker's act done by someone else. French enthusiast/promoter Jacques Morgantini noted that "of all the musicians I've had the good fortune to see and hear in person T-Bone, along with Louis Armstrong and Lionel Hampton, has the greatest dynamism. And like them, with a single phrase at the start of a chorus, he transports his listeners into another musical world." T-Bone belonged to a time when performing music was the totality of their existence within a life style which was one continual round of partying. As his son Junior noted "At home we didn't understand what it was all about, what it meant to him. I didn't catch on till I heard him playing every night. That was his passion. Not the money-making or even building his name. Making music was basic."

Walker often felt the draft from the working environment he faced in a segregated United States. He had the charisma and talent to have a career as big as Sinatra's but for most of his life he was hidden away in isolation. That's why he was surprised at the reaction he received when first visiting Europe. "Going abroad was an education to me. I dig the way those people live. They consider you an artist and treat you that way. That's why a lot of the fellows stay over there. It's not just the women. It's something more than that. For the first time us guys could hold our heads high. Maybe there's no place like home, but in the U.S. when you feel less than a man, something is wrong." T-Bone, in his declining years, was often put into a situation where he would be working with heavy-duty white rock acts as a secondary attraction. But Johnny Otis got to the root of the situation when he told Bob Hite of Canned Heat "Sure, whites mouth the blues and do a good job but they don't *create*. The blues is created by blacks. Why can't we quit looking for a white hope in every damned thing? Can't the black man have any single game of his own?"

T-Bone Walker's music will outlive all his imitators and this book is a written testament to his life and his music. You can now hear all of his seminal 1940s recordings on three Charly lps – issued in England but distributed worldwide. They tell the truth.

**Morroe Berger's** biography of **Benny Carter** is markedly different in style. Carter's professional chronology is traced but there is little personal insight into his many experiences. More than half of the book is taken up with discussions by the authors of the musical world within which Carter worked.

These discussions, based upon extensive research of existing written materials as well as interviews with other musicians, include assessments of such musical styles as pre-jazz black music, Harlem in the 1920s, the early jazz orchestra, arranging for big bands, the changing face of music in World War II, the role of music in film, integration of the Los Angeles Musicians Union locals and the recording industry. There are also profiles of influential musicians. These include **Will Marion Cook, J. Rosamond Johnson, Will Vodery, Bill Challis, Irving Mills, John Hammond, Archie Bleyer** and **Sy Oliver**.

This book is a biography of Benny Carter the noted professional musician. It assesses and puts into perspective all the innovations and accomplishments which have made him one of the outstanding contributors to jazz music. He altered the way in which the music is performed and the way in which it is orchestrated. It is a serious study about a musician who takes his role in music seriously. The one recurring theme throughout the book is that Carter has been steadfast in his refusal to bend his principles to attain greater success or a wider degree of popular acceptance. His sacrifices have been many because of this. Only recently has it become less difficult to be successful without succumbing to the whims of show business.

Carter's persistence in his pursuit of excellence is one of the more remarkable stories of jazz music but this study gives us too little insight into Carter's own views and ideas. Despite four hundred pages of biography we know little about his personal life. Presumably he chose it to be like this.

What he has given us is a lifetime of music. This is documented with care an extraordinary detail in Edward Berger's discography which makes up the second volume of this **"Life in American Music"**. It includes all Carter's commercial recordings as well as many broadcast items. Even more valuable is the documentation of Carter's arranging and composing for film. Credits for this kind of work are rarely given by Hollywood and the range of Carter's work is impressive.

This second volume is an indispensible reference work which will be continually used by anyone who listens to Carter's music.

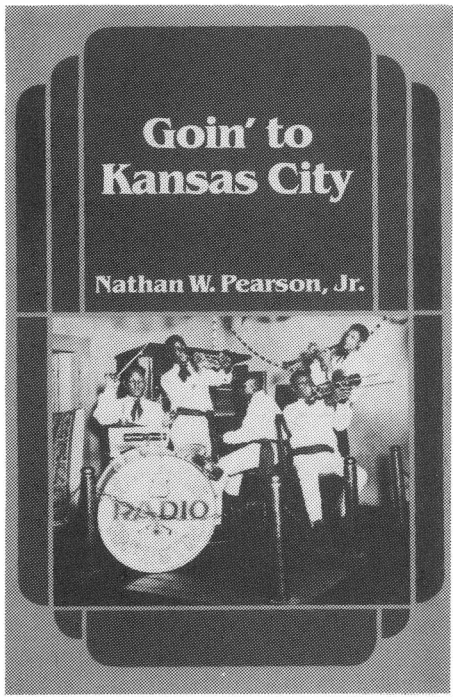
The working journalist and the academic researcher are at opposite ends of the writing spectrum. Most jazz writers earn their living by churning out magazine and newspaper articles and reviews. A growing number of academics are

seeing their research papers being published in book form. Many of these are doctoral theses and they reflect the growing interest being shown in the music by academic circles.

Most journalists are hard pressed to find the time to write books. They are scuffling to make a living in a highly competitive and volatile market. Even the most esteemed of them (**Whitney Balliett, Stanley Dance, Gary Giddins**) rely on recycling previously published pieces in book form. The same is true for both **Marian McPartland** and **Gene Lees.**

**"All in Good Time"** brings together 13 articles written by Marian McPartland between 1960 and 1983. Many of them appeared originally in Down Beat but it is good to have these cameo portraits assembled in one place. There is the briefest of updates following each piece – which is allowed to remain in the form in which is originally appeared. Particularly valuable are her pieces on **Joe Morello, Paul Desmond, Alec Wilder** and **Bill Evans**. She brings a musician's perspective to her appreciation of her fellow workers. They are warm and affectionate but often all too brief. Marian's writing skills are good enough for her to write more extensively about those she cares for in the jazz world.

This is certainly what Gene Lees has done in the essays brought together in **"Meet Me At Jim and Andy's"**. The articles appeared first in the **Jazzletter** – Lees' privately circulated broadsheet which has limited circulation. The articles were substantially rewritten for this book and provide the reader with invaluable insights into a meaningful decade for Lees as a writer and composer. Best of all is his chapter on **Bill Evans**. Only someone who was both close to the pianist and an ardent admirer could have captured so fully the complex personality of such an outstanding musician. Lees is also an astute listener to those musicians who appeal to him and his insights into Evans' playing is particularly valuable. **Duke Ellington, Artie Shaw, Woody Herman, Frank Rosolino, John Heard, Billy Taylor, Art Farmer** and **Paul Desmond** are the other musicians profiled here. There are also warm essays on two of the favourite drinking spots frequented




by New York musicians in the 1960s – **Jim and Andy's** and **Junior's**. Lees has always taken to task his fellow writers and there is a chapter called The Myth where he squares off at many accepted ideas. It will no doubt provoke much discussion as the readership of the book expands.

What makes Lees' observations on the music so fascinating is his ability to use his musical knowledge (as a singer and songwriter) in a way which helps illuminate the music he is talking about. This book is also a portrait of the life and times of at least one segment of the New York jazz community in the 1960s. It leaves the reader with a warm feeling for the musicians and their contributions to the art.

**"Goin' to Kansas City"** covers much the same ground explored by **Ross Russell** in his book **"Kansas City Jazz and the South West"** and by **Mary Lee Hester** in her collection of interviews published as **"Going to Kansas City"**. It isn't clear why this newest book has almost the same title as Ms Hester's work. This book also duplicates the many articles written by **Frank Driggs** on the subject over the last three decades as well as the oral commentaries used by **Hentoff and Shapiro** in **"Hear Me Talkin' To Ya"'**.

**Nathan Pearson** wrote the book which is based on interviews conducted by him and **Howard Litvak** in 1977 following the receipt of a grant from The National Endowment for the Humanities. The interview material is integrated into a chronological study of jazz history from the perspective of Kansas City. This means that early jazz and ragtime developments are rewritten once again as background to the main story. What is interesting in light of other books covered in this survey is the statement that "Among the important effects of this [Harlem Renaissance] movement on blacks nationally was a proliferation of music professors who, in high schools, local parlors, or informal "academies", brought rigorous musicianship and considerable sophistication to beginning musicians. The aim of their teachers was usually to uplift fellow blacks and impart the skills of European high culture."

The interview material is skillfully interwoven into the main theme to give the reader an excellent overview of both the period and the evolving nature of jazz in Kansas City. Somehow, though, it doesn't really add much to what we already know. Despite the extensive bibliography listed at the back of the book it would seem as if the research was a voyage of discovery for the interviewers rather than a serious attempt to uncover major new material on the subject.

Stating that Walter Page was "among the first to feature string bass instead of tuba or bass saxophone as the rhythm section's bass instrument" flies in the face of the string bass tradition in New Orleans. Such great players as Wellman Braud, Pops Foster, Bill Johnson, Steve Brown, Al Morgan, John Lindsay, Ed Garland and Chester Zardis all played string bass before they took up a brass bass and most of them are to be heard on recordings made in the 1920s which substantiate their abilities. Pops Foster's autobiography noted that tuba became a fashionable instrument in the late 1920s when its fuller sound was needed for the orchestras playing in large dance halls.

Eddie Durham observed that "Kansas City (musicians) thought they were the greatest. They formed a clique there...." which is very much the feeling many musicians have towards their comrades from New Orleans. It's obvious that each community supported its own members first – in order to survive. It was only later that the jazz community as a whole merged together so *it* could survive against the rest of society as a whole.

It's also unfortunate that the authors didn't dig deep enough to establish Jay McShann's correct age. He was born in 1916 and not 1909 as has been listed in reference books since the 1950s. He's been interviewed enough times to make it obvious that the chronology simply doesn't fit with the earlier birthdate.

There are brief biographies of the musicians interviewed as well as an ineffective listing of recordings by musicians who were part of the Kansas City scene.

**"Goin' To Kansas City"** is a useful primer on Kansas City Jazz for it brings together most of the existing knowledge of the subject. It becomes, therefore, an illuminating look at the subject for those unfamiliar with material published in the past and is a warm tribute to the men and women who made such a wonderful contribution to jazz music.

More specialised in its scope is **Lowell Holmes** and **John Thomson's** look at the ageing process in jazz. Twelve musicians were interviewed during 1978 and 1979. The purpose was to resolve whether creativity declines with age (as it is usually viewed by a society who worships youth) and what differences the musicians noticed in their playing and their position in the music community as they had grown older.

It has taken nearly a decade for these interviews to be published in book form along with the author's summarisation of the views of the musicians. Each person was asked the same group of questions from which it was deduced that all the musicians felt their creativity remained with them as they advanced in age. They felt that what they had lost in youthful impetuousness was more than compensated by their greater skills and experience. It was hardly surprising that a majority of them could see little value in the innovations of Ornette Coleman. The established veterans of the 1940s probably felt the same way about Charlie Parker. But there was a wide

divergence of attitude towards evolving developments in music – a reflection of the degree of intellectual curiosity of each individual.

The musicians were asked questions relating to their performance schedule, their changing abilities, their views on developments within jazz, their personal lifestyles, religious views, stylistic development, improvisation, ways to stay healthy and whether they were getting better with age. Two of the participating musicians were already retired **(Lawrence Brown, Jess Stacy)** while three others were no longer playing but were active in a business role in music **(Andy Kirk, Howard Rumsey, Walter "Foots" Thomas)**. The remainder were actively performing at the time of the interviews **(Milt Hinton, Doc Cheatham, Mary Lou Williams, Eddie Barefield, Johnny Guarnieri, Marshall Royal, Eddie Miller)**.

The general consensus seems to be that the musicians are "getting better with age" but as is pointed out in the recapitulation these are exceptional people who have managed to survive and remain active, kept their health and minds intact, and still enjoy the cut and thrust of competition.

What isn't discussed at all is the nature of the artist in society. Creative people often continue to work throughout their lives rather than retiring at a certain age. As long as there is an audience for an artist he will try to remain active. Great jazz stylists, like great painters and writers, are not replaced so the demands on their work should expand with age. Jazz audiences now view the music with greater perspective than was the case in the past. There is respect and appreciation for performers in a variety of styles and it is no longer fashionable to quickly discard what isn't new.

This has played a major part in helping extend the creativity and working life of those who remain from jazz music's older generations.

The diversity of subjects and concepts within the covers of these books is remarkable. Collectively and individually they add to our knowledge and understanding of a music which has been *the* creative spark plug of the Twentieth Century. We are fortunate that we can still experience personally so much of its history.

# AROUND THE WORLD

**CANADA** — Even though the major summer festivals are only two months away there is still no word of just who will be performing at these events. The rumour mill continues to work well, however. In Toronto it looks as though the main focus of the DuMaurier Festival will be centred around the St Lawrence district with open air concerts taking place in the small park framed by Front and Wellington Streets. There is also a good possibility of an alternative event running simultaneously to the main festival programming music which the DuMaurier people have shown little interest in in the past.

The only visible activity pertaining to any of the Canadian festivals at this point is the Alcan Competition. The regional winners of this event get to perform at Montreal's Festival with the winner part of the festival finale as well as having a recording issued on the CBC's Jazz Image label. Already there is controversy surrounding the parameters of the competition. There is some question about the constitutionality of the event only being open to musicians under thirty.

**Oliver Jones, Dave Young and Archie Alleyne** made a six week tour of African countries under the sponsorship of Canada's Exernal Affairs Department. A documentary film of the tour is being produced.... **Bob Mover, Alex Dean, Bill McBurnie, Mike Murley** and **Laura Grecco** have been recent performers at George's Spaghetti House.... **The Artists' Jazz Band** took over the stage at Emerson's for the first time on April 17. **Dave McMurdo's Big Band** is also resident there on the first and last Monday of each month.... **Eugene Chadbourne** was at The Rivoli on March 11 and **Jack Wright and John Oswald** were there on May 4.

Recording engineer **Phil Sheridan** has taken over ownership of Cats located at 169 Front Street East. Now known as The Jazz Bar, it is featuring live music every weekend. Singer **Trudy Desmond** and guitarist **Lorne Lofsky** were in residence for a weekend in April. The singer, whose new recording on Innovation should be out soon, has also been heard at Le Canard (with **Wray Downes**) and will be back at The Jazz Bar June 2-4 with **Ed Bickert and Steve Wallace.**

Live jazz is also planned for Deep Blue, a seafood restaurant which opened recently at 459 Church Street. The music will be showcased on The Upper Deck with an opening set for June 8.

West coast pianist **Mike Wofford** makes a rare trip to these parts for a two week stint at Cafe des Copains. The San Diego based artist often works with Gerald Wilson, his own small groups and can be heard on a growing number of recent recordings.

A rare showing of Louis Malle's "Elevator to the Scaffold" at Harbourfront on March 14 coincided with the release on CD of a much expanded soundtrack of Miles Davis' music from the film.

A Space hosted an evening of "Jazz Musicians on Film" March 10 with a screening of Bessie Smith's "St. Louis Blues", Louis Armstrong's "Rhapsody in Black and Blue" and Duke Ellington's "Black and Tan". A panel discussion followed. The participants included Coda editor **Bill Smith** and series coordinator and film expert **Marc Glassman**.

The Canadian Collectors Congress was held April 29 at the Wilson Avenue Ramada Inn.... Moe Koffman, Peter Appleyard and John Arpin are among this summer's performers at Parry Sound's "Festival of the Sound".

Marc Chenard reports on recent activities in Montreal:

"The non-profit Montreal Jazz Association, established last fall, has started to deliver the goods, so to speak. Aside from two series featuring local musicians, there were appearances in March by Barry Harris — his first gig since the death of Baroness Nica last November — and hard driving altoist **Bobby Watson**. Elsewhere, **Junior Cook** avoided the same hackneyed standards in his guest appearance at Club 2080 in February. A month later Charles Davis plodded through with some of the most uninspired playing heard at the same venue. On the other end of the scale, trumpeter **Eddie Henderson** delivered the best straight ahead jazz heard since the New Year thanks to his great chops and some fiery young rhythm section talent from the Apple.

"Equally noteworthy was cornetist **Butch Morris's** ten days in town. During his stay, he played a solo concert and a duet with guitarist Tim Brady as well as fronting a 12 man workshop ensemble. After introducing them to his 'conduc-

BUTCH MORRIS (Photograph by Gerard Futrick)

tion' system, he guided them through two rehearsals and three public concerts which were enthusiastically received by all of those in attendance. More on this in a future issue. Late in March, altoist **Steve Potts** made a side trip to the city after a U.S. tour with Steve Lacy's sextet. With bassist **Lisle Ellis** and percussionist **John Heward** in tow, the visitor stretched out more than usual, even indulging in a two sax routine a la Roland Kirk. Baritonist **Charles Papasoff** pulled out his horn for the second set, which added a few more sparks.

On the recording scene, releases by Paul Bley, Dave Turner with Ronnie Mathews and Jon Ballantyne with Joe Henderson are due shortly on Justin Time (hopefully!). Not to be overlooked either are recordings by Vic Vogel, the first with his "Awesome Big Band", the second being a live sextet date. By all appearances, Polygram is considering the first project for release, but no news yet on the latter. As for Festival news, stay tuned for future reports in these pages."

The **Andy Homzy Orchestra** debuted Francy Boland's "Faces" in a concert held at Concordia University on April 7.... Jazz Report's editor, keyboardist **Bill King** has a new CD recording availabe. "Magenta Nights" is as musically diverse in style as the coverage given to the music in his publication. Penta Disc, who released the music, are now also responsible for the distribution of Grammavision Records in Canada.

**Herb Ellis, Larry Coryell, Gene Bertoncini,** Jim Head, George Robert and the **Karen Young-Michel Donato Duo** were all heard at Edmonton's Yardbird Suite during March/April.... The **Cedar Walton Trio** was at Vancouver's East Cultural Centre on April 17.

**ELSEWHERE — The George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band** were on tour in Europe from April 28 to May 12. The international band has won enthusiastic acclaim in recent years and the 1989 edition of the band includes such outstanding soloists as Stanton Davis, Marvin Stamm, Manfred Schoof, Howard Johnson, Ernst-Ludwig Petrowsky and Vinny Golia. A U.S. tour begins June 22 in Dallas' Museum of Art. Concerts in Los Angeles (23/24), San Francisco (25), Vancouver (26), Interlochen, MI (28), Chicago (29), New York City (July 1), Saratoga (2) and Washington (4) have all been confirmed.

**Abdullah Ibrahim, Art Blakey, the Connie Crothers-Lennie Popkin Quartet, Paul Bley (with John Abercrombie), Yosuke Yamashita, Phil Woods, Nat Adderley** and **McCoy Tyner** were the April/May performers at Sweet Basil in New York.... Craig Harris' Tailgaters were at Indigo Blue March 14-19.... The Cecil Payne-Joe Carter Quintet were at Birdland March 16.... The **Carlos Ward** Quartet was at Visiones May 3.... A party was held for John Cage May 25 at the Pierre Hotel.... Vocalist Rebecca Parris has been collaborating with songwriter Carroll Coates in the presentation of new songs. These will be heard June 24 at The Blue Note during the JVC Festival.... The Hilton Ruiz Ensemble closed out the current season of presentations by the International Art of Jazz at SUNY Stony Brook on April 7.

Pianist **Glenn Horiuchi** and his Double Bass Quartet were heard in concert May 6 at Boston's World Trade Center.... The Massachusetts Institute of Technology is hosting a program of "Jazz on Film". The series runs from July 31 to August 4 under the direction of Mark Harvey. Further information is available from MIT by calling (617) 253-2101.

Art Park summer concerts this year include a Salute to Duke Ellington with Sarah Vaughan and Louis Bellson (June 27), Chuck Mangione (July 19), Preservation Hall Jazz Band (July 20) and Yellowjackets and Stanley Jordan (July 25).

Saxophonist/educator Wendell Harrison has recently had published a revised version of his "The Beboppers Method Book and Tape". He will be heard at the Detroit and Pontiac Jazz Festivals in early August and will take his music to Michigan high schools next October in a workshop/concert series called "Jazz on the Run".... City Folk keep the spirit of jazz alive in Dayton, Ohio with the publication of their "Jazz News" and their successful concert series each fall and winter. Upcoming on September 9 is a special "homecoming" for Snooky Young, Ross Tompkins, Bob Cooper and Ernie Andrews will make the trek east with the trumpeter for this special

event.... The IMP ORK with guest soloist **Don Cherry** were at Minneapolis' Walker Art Center on June 1.... The Harold Howland Ensemble performed at Washington's Corcoran Gallery of Art on April 30 and will be at Blues Alley on June 5. Look for a new recording by the ensemble on Soul Note Records.

Danny Stiles, Ira Sullivan and Bill Allred were among the participating musicians in Cocoa Beach, Florida's fifth annual benefit concert for the Brevard Community Food Bank. Organiser Jack Simpson is also heard spreading the word on local public radio.

Jazz entertainment has been scheduled on the Royal Viking Star's weekly cruises to Bermuda between April and October. A different group will be showcased each week with music within the music's mainstream traditions. A full listing is available from the cruiseship line at 95 Merrick Way, Coral Gables, FL 33134.

The Seventh Floating Jazz Festival takes place aboard the SS Norway (October 21-28) and SS Seaward (October 29-November 5) with all star lineups. Details are available from Norwegian Cruise Line, 2 Alhambra Plaza, Coral Gables, FL 33134.

An international meeting of flutists takes place in New Orleans August 17-20. They promise a special gala jazz night featuring Jimmy Walker and Free Flight. Such premier jazz flutists as **Paul Horn, James Moody, Yusef Lateef, Moe Koffman, Frank Wess** and **Hubert Laws** do not seem to be among those invited.... The University of North Texas' One O' Clock Lab Band was at Disney World April 12 during a short tour of Florida locations.... Saxophonist Pete Christlieb conducted high school clinics during his visit to Phoenix at the end of March for performances at that city's jazz festival. ...The American Federation of Jazz Societies held its fourth annual meeting April 1-2 in Culver City. Veteran bandleader/performer Benny Carter was honoured during the meeting for his outstanding contributions to the music.... Vibraphonist Charlie Shoemake celebrated the release of his new Chase Music Group recording April 4 at the Grand Avenue Bar of Los Angeles' Biltmore Hotel.... **Bob Wilber, Jay McShann**, Banu Gibson, Wally Rose, Norma Teagarden and Ray Skjelbred along with many West Coast traditional jazz bands took part in Mountain View, California's first Shoreline International Dixieland Jazz Festival May 21.... McShann, along with Ralph Sutton, Dick Hyman, Mike Lipskin and Harry Edison was heard in a "Stride Summit" May 13 at Los Angeles' Wiltern Theatre.... **Anthony Braxton and Buell Neidlinger** gave a duet recital April 8 at McCabe's Guitar Shop in Santa Monica.

Most festivals have taken place by the time their announcements reach us. It was true of the U.C. Berkeley Jazz Festival held April 29 with The Timeless All Stars (Harold Land, Bobby Hutcherson, Curtis Fuller, Cedar Walton, Buster Williams, Billy Higgins), Dianne Reeves, Mongo Santamaria and Tuck & Patti among the featured artists.... The Otter Crest Jazz Weekend, a premiere event on the jazz party circuit took place May 4-7 with a strong contingent of Canadian performers (**Oliver Jones, Terry Clarke, Don Thompson, Ed Bickert, Rob McConnell**) among the thirty or so musicians assembled by Bill Berry.... Wynton Marsalis, Doc Cheatham and Harry Edison share the stage June 6 at the Spoleto Music Festival in Charleston. Hank Jones and Billy Higgins are other special guests at this concert. The culmination of the week long Bud Shank Jazz Workshop in Port Townsend is a weekend jazz festival (July 28-30) with Monty Alexander, Herb Ellis, Ray Brown, Super Sax, Emily Remler, Jay Clayton and the John Clayton/Jeff Hamilton Big Band the headliners.... The eight Conneaut Lake Jazz Party is being held August 25-27 at Conneaut Lake Park in Pennsylvania. Traditional in style it features such well known players as Dick Cary, Bud Freeman, Marty Grosz, Keith Ingham, Bob Havens and Bobby Gordon. Call 814-724-2163 for more information.

Jazz Workshops are part of many summer music programs for students of widely varying levels. The Idyllwild School of Music and the Arts in California is running a two week session from June 25 to July 8 with faculty drawn from the Los Angeles area.... The finals of the seventh Great American Jazz Piano Competition will be held during the Jacksonville Jazz Festival October 12-14.... The fifth annual Barbados Jazz Festival was held May 26-28 with

trumpeter **Shake Keane** and pianist **Monty Alexander** among the internationally known performers showcased.

The closing date has already passed for entries into the European Jazz Competition 1989 to be held October 12-13 in Leverkusen, West Germany.... Some weeks earlier another "Euro Jazz Contest" was held in Belgium. Both these competitions are only open to newcomers to the jazz scene.

The Danske Jazz Center represents Jens Winther's Scandinavian All Stars. They also announced the finalists for the first Jazzpar Prize of 1990. In the running are **Muhal Richard Abrams, Benny Carter, Lee Konitz, David Murray** and **Sonny Rollins**.... The Copenhagen Jazz Festival takes place July 7 to 16.

The British Library's National Sound Archive has organised a series of live events to be held at their archives (29 Exhibition Road) and the 100 Club. **George Webb** and **Freddy Randall**, two pioneers of the British jazz movement are featured April 10 and 17 while part 3 of British Black Jazz focuses on the 1970s and the impact of the South African musicians on the music. Dudu Pukwana and Hazel Miller are among the participants in a program dedicated to the memory of Mongezi Feza on May 11.... Glasgow's third international jazz festival takes place June 23-July 2 with concerts by George Shearing, the Ellington Orchestra, Cab Calloway, Fred Frith, John Surman and many other bands.

We have received the following report from Roger Parry on jazz activities in Hong Kong, dated February 27:

"The 1989 Arts Festival came to a close on Sunday, 26 February. In a wide spectrum of performances, jazz was represented by two evenings by the Toots Thielemans Quartet with Toots on harmonica and guitar; Frederick Hersch, piano; Harvie Swartz, bass and Terry Clarke, drums. Both shows were sold out at the Academy of Performing Arts Drama Theatre, a good venue for such performances being both comfortable and yet still intimate despite the formality induced by seating fixed for small dramatic presentations. The material ranged widely – Monk, Ellington, Porazil, Shorter, Miles, Jacques Brel and, of course, Toots' own classic "Bluesette". On the final night, Honk Kong's Dave Packer on harmonica joined Toots to close the show, trading imaginative solos. The audience was very enthusiastic, hopefully noted by the festival organisers for the future.

And just formally announced is the forthcoming (13 March) opening of the Jazz Club, situated in the Lan Kwai Fong night-life area of Central. The club offers an intimate and relaxed setting with great drinks and good food where top Hong Kong and international jazz artists can be heard daily (except Sundays) from 5 p.m. onwards, with live music from 8:30 p.m. The Jazz Club is directed towards a membership structure, but anyone who pays the cover charge will be welcome. International jazz artists are already lined up with Anita O'Day "opening" things up, 20-25 March. Others expected are Sheila Jordan/ Harvie Swartz Duo; Ernie Watts (who is also scheduled for Urban Council performances here in April); Ronnie Scott Quintet, James Moody, The Duke's Men, Chris Hunter Quartet, Stan Tracey/ Alan Skidmore Duo and the Norma Winstone Trio. House musicians include Ric Halstead, saxes; Dave Packer, piano/ harmonica; Eugene Pao, guitar; Rudi Balbuena, bass and Johnny Abraham, drums. (Address: 34-36, D'Aguilar Street, 2/F, Central, Hong Kong. Tel: 5-8458477; Fax: 5-8459773). Progress reports will be following!"

We only recently received a beautiful poster from Bologna announcing a concert series dedicated to the spirit of Charles Mingus. The January events featured the **Max Roach/Cecil Taylor Duo**, a "battle royal" between Max Roach and M'Boom with special guests Art Blakey and Mongo Santamaria. The final event was a concert with the Max Roach Double Quartet, World Saxophone Quartet and the Wynton Marsalis Sextet.

From Bernd Jahnke comes news of an international jazz festival in Sibiu, Romania from March 29 to April 2. It was the 19th such event to be held in Sibiu which is the centre for jazz in Romania:

"The International Jazz Festival is the only international festival in Romania, presenting 18 Romanian groups and soloists, seven foreign groups and soloists and two international groups this year.

So above all the festival guarantees a good survey of the Romanian jazz scene.

"Pianist Harry Tavitian and singer Anca Parghel, two outstanding personalities of the Romanian jazz scene, presented their international groups at the opening night. Both performances were highlights of the festival. Anca Parghel, leading Romanian jazz vocalist, performed with two young but gifted musicians from the German Democratic Republic, pianist Stefan Kling and bassist Thomas Moritz. She has developed a very individual musical language, and with her two partners the vocal acrobat was able to perform her own compositions as well as standards in a very original way, connecting composed and free improvised parts with each other. Harry Tavitian, the most profiled musician in the field of free improvised music in Romania, performed his "East-West Suite" with a double trio called "Creativ Combinations" including drummers Eugen Gondi and Corneliu Stroe, bassist Catalin Rotaru and two guests from the Federal Republic of Germany, saxophonist Martin Verborg and bassist Reinhart Hammerschmidt. Including theatrical elements, the show made hearable differences as well as points of contact between Western Free Jazz tradition and elements of East European folk music.

"Most of the Romanian musicians are oriented to modern mainstream jazz but doubtless they try to find their own musical expression. First of all pianist Johnny Raducanu, the father of Romanian jazz, has to be mentioned. His solo improvisations became deeply rooted in Romanian folk music tradition. Other musicians of the older generation who found their own way of expression are pianist Marius Popp, who performed with his own trio; saxophonist Dan Mindrila, a member of "Opus 4" group; drummer Eugen Gondi, a sensitive sideman of various groups; and the members of the Sibiu based "Vocal Jazz Quartet" whose leader Nicolae Ionescu is also the president of Sibiu Jazz Club and one of the initiators of the Sibiu festival. But there is a large number of young musicians who are extraordinarily talented; trombonist Liviu Marculescu who opened the festival with the Titel Popovici Sextet; bassist Catalin Rotaru, one of the most remarkable talents in Romanian jazz; Ioan Bontas, the busiest drummer at the festival; bass guitarist Decebal Badila, who also performed with several groups; the duo of pianist and bandleader Mircea Tiberian and guitarist Dan Ionescu, both members of the 'Opus 4' group.

"Foreign groups which performed at the festival were Gunther Klatt Elephantrombones from the Federal Republic of Germany, "Acoustic Version" from Bulgaria, the quartet of French violinist Didier Lockwood, the Emil Viklicky Trio from Czechoslovakia, 'Still Dawn' from Poland, solo pianist Leonid Ptashko from the Soviet Union, and the Steve Williamson Quintet from Great Britain."

The TAKTLOS 89 tour of Switzerland in April featured the trios of **Jeanne Lee** and **Marilyn Crispell, Fred Frith** and the **Murray-Sharp** Duo. Concerts were held in Basil, Bern and Zurich.... San Diego's Ciao Travel is offering package tours to the Montreux Festival. Only three nights of the two week event offer music which has any resemblance to jazz these days so it hardly seems an attractive offer.

The Burghausen Festival took place March 15-19 with Tony Scott, Ernie Wilkins, Chick Corea, Gary Burton, Cecil Taylor and Tony Williams among the participants.... The 1989 Moers Festival was held May 12-15 with **John Zorn, Geri Allen, Dewey Redman, David Murray** and **Bill Frisell** among the American participants to this international gathering which included **Montreal's Jubilation Gospel Choir**.

A 260 page discography of Buck Clayton has been published by its author Bob Weir (18 Tydfil Place, Roath Park, Cardiff CF2 5HP, Wales, U.K.) and costs US$27.00 postpaid.... The long awaited first volume of Jazz Records 1942-80 has been published. The hard cover book have 646 pages and covers A-Barnes. Its price is US$45.00.

**Mario Pavone** is in the midst of issuing four recordings on his Alacra label featuring himself with a variety of musicians. You can get a catalog from the company at 19 Chandler Drive, Prospect, CT 06712.... Charles Brown, Lil Ed and the Imperials and Lucky Peterson are the most recent Alligator releases.... Pianist Glenn Horiuchi has released a second album on Asian Improv Records.... Atlantic has issued a new David Newman recording done at the Village Vanguard.... Robert Parker's newest restorations are now available on BBC CDs. They feature recordings by Fletcher Henderson (1925-28), Sidney Bechet (1924-38) and Clarence Williams (1927-34).... The newest Bluebird reissues include a jazz vocal collection in the blues vein, a collection of Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster and Benny Carter which includes titles from Hampton and Ellington sessions. Some of these may already be available on other CD/lp collections; Oliver Nelson, "Two of a Mind" by Paul Desmond and Gerry Mulligan and an Erskine Hawkins collection.

CBS Records recently announced it had sold more than two million units on the first 75 titles issued in the Jazz Masterpieces series. Their sales figures show that 50% were on CD, 30% on cassette an only 20% on CD. They believe these figures show that there is a new young audience for these jazz masterpieces. Just issued are volume 3 of Louis Armstrong Hot Fives and Sevens, Saturday Night at the Blackhawk with Miles Davis, Ellington Indigos (extra takes), Benny Goodman small groups 1941-45, Billie Holiday Volume 5, a collection of J.J. Johnson sides from the late 1950s, Lambert Hendricks and Ross' classic "Hottest New Group in Jazz" plus extra titles, a Bessie Smith collection and yet another sampler. It's hard to be enthusiastic about the choices in the Johnson collection and the sound quality of the Armstrong and Bessie Smith material is barely better than the lp reissues they put out in the 1950s. As this material, on a worldwide basis, falls out of copyright we won't have to rely so much on the "take it or leave it" attitude shown by the major companies to much of this vintage material. The remarkable quality of Robert Parker's restorations is becoming more widely appreciated. You only have to compare his version of Empty Bed Blues with the pinched sound quality of the CBS rendition to understand the difference. CBS preserved for posterity the complete Bessie Smith recordings in five two record sets in the 1970s. Only the most dedicated want to hear all of these recordings. But despite their being at least four CD reissues of the singer's recordings available no one has included Sobbin' Hearted

Blues, Cold in Hand Blues (with Louis Armstrong), Back Water Blues (with James P. Johnson) or the driving swing exemplified by Cakewalkin' Babies From Home and There'll Be A Hot Time In The Old Town Tonight.

Even more distressing is the sound quality of some of the CBS Portrait reissues – mostly from older Epic lps. The Bobby Hackett sounds like it has been put through a distortion box while the CD reissue of Leroy Carr's "Blues Before Sunrise" has so much echo added it has succeeded in altering the very timbre of Carr's voice. The Columbia lp may have had surface noise but at least the music was not distorted. Also out on Portrait is Ruby Braff's classic Epic date which also featured Coleman Hawkins on many selections. The two disc Duke Ellington "Braggin' In Brass" is a replica of the Smithsonian lp collection of material from 1938. Ahmad Jamal's "Poinciana" predates his success at Chess while Dave Pike's "Pike's Peak" is notable for the presence of Bill Evans whose qualities as a sideman are often underrated. And to think that Portrait state in their press releases that this music has been "painstakingly remastered".

New ECM recordings of European music showcase Heiner Goebbels/Heiner Muller in "The Man in the Elevator", Marcus Stockhausen/Gary Peacock in "Cosi Lontano...Quasi Dentro", the solo flute of Dino Saluzzi in "Andina" and the Eberhard Weber Orchestra project.

The World Saxophone Quartet's third Elektra recording is of Rhythm and Blues compositions.... The President is the collective name of a group featuring Wayne Horvitz, Eliott Sharp, Doug Wieselman, Dave Hofstra, Bobby Previte and Dave Tronzo. Their debut recording, on Elektra, is titled "Bring Yr Camera".... Empathy Records first CD is a duet recording by Warren Chiasson and Chuck Wayne.... The Complete Bill Evans recordings for Fantasy are now available in a 9 CD collection. It includes a previously unissued 1976 Paris concert and the pianist's hour long Public Radio Broadcast with Marian McPartland.... Fantasy has also released another large batch of CD reissues from the Prestige and Riverside catalogs. There are many classic Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk titles included in this release as well as a number of less well known recordings.... Brand new from the company is "Tomorrow's Rainbow", a collection of Brazilian songs by Bud Shank, "Self Portrait in Swing" by Joshua Breakstone with Kenny Barron, "Love You Madly" by Carol Sloane and "Reflections", an all star sextet date under the direction of Frank Morgan. Coming up is a McCoy Tyner Big Band performance from New York's Blue Note, a Joe Pass collection to be called "One For My Baby" which features Plas Johnson, Gerry Wiggins and Tootie Heath. Complete CD collections of Art Pepper's Galaxy material, Charles Mingus' Debut recordings and Art Tatum's group recordings are also in the works.

Trumpeter **Reunald Jones** died February 26. He as 78. Composer/arranger **Billy Moore Jr** died February 28 in Copenhagen. He was 71. Tenor saxophonist **Arnett Cobb** died in Houston, Texas March 24. He had been hospitalised since December. Guitarist **Tiny Grimes** died in New York March 4 at the age of 71. Recording engineer and record company owner **Wally Heider** died March 22 in Santa Clarita, California.

# LONDON BRIDGE IS BROKEN DOWN

A concise history of Britsh jazz would reveal a germination dependant upon the arrival of imported Afro-American jazz recordings and touring musicians. While imitation may well be a high form of flattery, derivation did little except to provide entertainment whose by-product was an inferiority complex of authenticity. By the onset of the sixties a new generation of British musicians, centred in London, uprooted the complacency of the copy cat crowd inspired by the "New Thing" of Coltrane, Ornette et al. Concurrent with a burgeoning blues scene a breath of fresh air was being blown by mavericks Joe Harriott, Tubby Hayes and John Surman. The residue remains.

Activity by first and second generation musicians has been plagued by apathetic audiences and recording companies, who together have mined a catch 22, entrapping the economically weak. Only a handful of independants persist: **Cadillac, Impetus, Incus, Matchless, Spotlite** and a

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One musician who has dodged recording problems is multi-reed player **Chris Biscoe**, whose sextet has released its debut independent of the independents. The record springboards to a volatile start with the punningly titled "Grandada". A challenging bop head gives way to inspired solos by trumpeter **Ray Manderson**, pianist **Peter Jacobson** and the Italian trombonist **Danilo Terenzi**, each against an alternate treatment of the chord sequence. Upon return of the exhilarating theme it becomes self-evident that this is not another treadmill exercise. The billing of the record as that of a sextet is a slight misnomer as two tracks are duets. "Il Prcellini" features Terenzi's trombone, demonstrating deft attentiveness during his improvisation with baritone sax, while by contrast "South Ghost" reveals Biscoe's great sensitivity as a composer of ballad form. Neither is Biscoe given a handicap for playing with piano as exquisite as Jacobson's. All too often an instrumental ballad will lapse into langour, but there is an abundance of beauty here to prevent a narco-leptic seizure. Another delight is the closing "Billy Whole Half Egg", with Chris returning to the alto sax and clarinet in a lazily loose framework that finds a catalyst for momentum in **Dave Barry's** drumwork. It's his brief solo that leads to a disorderly climax worth its weight in eccentric charm. I would think it would be difficult for any reviewer of this recording to be less than self conscious of his/her selection of descriptive cliches as Biscoe's own sleeve notes provide not only biographical information, but a musical discourse including subtle swipes at orthodox jazz criticism. Objection overruled so as to state sufficely that Chris Biscoe possesses a considerable degree of lyrical musicality. One is prompted to wonder if his best work is yet to be realized, but for now this will do just fine thanks.

**CHRIS BISCOE SEXTET**
**Walking Wig Records WAW 1**

**MIKE AND KATE WESTBROOK**
**London Bridge Is Broken Down**
**Venture VEB 13**

**CHRIS McGREGOR and the BROTHERHOOD OF BREATH**
**Country Cooking**
**Venture VE 17**

**ALEX MAGUIRE & STEVE NOBLE**
**Live at Oscars**
**Incus 52**

**HORNWEB**
**Sixteen**
**Ladder Rung 001**

**MARTIN ARCHER**
**Wild Pathway Favorites**
**Ladder Rung 002**

**THE TRIO**
**By Contact**
**Ogun OG 529**

**TREVOR WATTS**
**MOIRE MUSIC SEXTET**
**Saalfelden Encore**
**Cadillac SGC 1015**

**GRAHAM COLLIER**
**Something British**
**Mosaic GCM 871**

**London Bridge is Broken Down** is the latest epic of high art from **Mike & Kate Westbrook**, composed by Mike for his Jazz Orchestra, the Chamber Orchestra Le Sinfonietta de Picardie and voice, of course that being Kate's. The text was selected from a variety of European poets and is sung in German, French and English. It is also a four record box set with booklet, accomodating one hundred and forty minutes of music, with a prestigious presentation it so dearly deserved. Kudos to Virgin's new jazz label, Venture, for doing it right. The enormity of London Bridge prevents a play by play style review of its musical events, born and inspired by contrasting images of European history, London Bridge to Picardie, via Prague, Berlin and Vienna. Much of Westbrook's pedigree is represented here, including serene solo piano, turbulent interplay between complex score for ensemble and soloist, evolution from solemnity to the unveiling of daring crescendos. This is a fraction of the range of compositional wit that gives no pedestrian quarter. What is new for Westy is the inclusion of chamber orchestra into his palette. The awkward trap of appropriating classical colours for integration with jazz is avoided, the result being a creation beyond the limits by which these genres are generally contained. Aesthetically this will lay to rest the memory of "Third Stream Jazz" and the frequent failures of the "Symphonic Rock". Ironically Mike's diffuse

vision for London Bridge has considered the fervour of rock and come up with the goods in the visceral guitar playing of **Brian Godding.** Likewise the performance demands elicited from the jazz orchestra have delivered solos of extraordinary construction from reedmen **Peter Wyman** and **Chris Biscoe**. There is much remarkable impassioned singing from Kate, particularly during "Berlin Wall". I suspect that future chronicles of jazz history will regard London Bridge with the reverence that esteems Gershwin, Willington and more recently Anthony Davis's marriage of European and American form. There's an easy temptation to proclaim this work as Westbrook's masterpiece, yet it is simply another chapter in a long series of sublime program music.

Another Venture for Virgin is the release of **Country Cooking** by the latest incarnation of **Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath**, a large band whose legend preceeds its current status. Indeed it is the strength of this legend that presents difficulties in coming to terms with McGregor's latest offering. Missing from the tight charts is that sense of cutting edge abandon, a characteristic of earlier lineups, that fueled collective improvisation on loose African themes with unrestrained vigour. Allowances for improvisation are relegated to soloists and here McGregor has assembled strong players from the old guard, trumpeter **Harry Beckett**, tromboist **Annie Whitehead** (who is not really that old! sorry Annie) and **Chris Biscoe** (again) who rise to the occasion of the infectiously robust compositions. The young members assembled are no slouches either. Tenorman **Jeff Gordon** and drummer **Gilbert Mathews** contribute excellent solos during "Mr. G", the album's sole non McGregor chart. Upon first listen one may deem Country Cooking's content as revisionist or as a regression down the well trodden paths of traditional big bands. However, closer scrutiny reveals well oiled thematic and harmonic constructions that are unmistakably modern. Unfortunately producer Joe Boyd has opted for a lip gloss recording of this performance, although surely this is a subjective qualm. Other ears are bound to disagree. Another failed expectation was for the joyful forays of the Kwela folk music of McGregor's native South Africa, a signature of earlier Brotherhood recordings. For a strong taste of Kwela's buoyancy I heartily recommend the latest **District Six (Editions EG)** and the **Johnny Dyani** memorial session, **Blue Notes For Johnny (Ogun)**. Both feature Chris McGregor's magnificent piano playing. Nitpicking aside, Country Cooking, taken on its own terms, is filled with wondeful music and makes a perfect companion for the two afore-mentioned records.

Contemporary freely improvised music is alive and well in Britain, as a new generation expands the creative flame. Proof positive is the brilliant record, **Live at Oscars**, by pianist **Alex Maguire** and percussionist **Steve Noble**, on the preeminent label of improvised music, Incus. The crystalline recording captures this regretfully underrecorded power duo from a set of continuous music at the 1987 Bracknell Jazz Festival. Maguire is a formidable talent whose refusal to tedious tinkle away into deadlock, lends way to a breathtaking musical adventure of stylistic resource and resolution. Maguire's partner, Steve Noble, is a rhythmic firebrand who has gained experience with Rip, Rig and Panic, Derek Bailey and currently works with Kohondo Style. Not content with alternating with his kit drums and percussion, Noble performs intermittently with bugle and harmonica. Together, and often at a furious pace, they craft intense pandemonium and melodic miniatures, which will be certain to engage a receptive listener. There is a strong dramatic character inherent in the music, unleashed by the seemingly telepathic communication between Maguire and Noble, a quality that compels further listening to this vinyl document. Surely a signpost of success.

Given that major record labels have decided to present contemporary UK jazz to the global village with releases from the Jazz Warriors, Courtney Pine and Andy Sheppard, one could be forgiven for not being in on Sheffield's best kept secret, **The Hornweb Saxophone Quartet**. Here is a young ensemble whose work shatters any conventional precepts of the saxophone quartet format, surely an iconoclastic feat in light of precedential recordings from

CHRIS BISCOE, MIKE & KATE WESTBROOK (Photograph by Bill Smith)

ROVA and the World Saxophone Quartet. For their second independently produced LP the Hornwebs have augmented the instrumentation with violins, guitars and percussion. The presence of additional players necessitated a name change to simply **Hornweb**, although conversely, this explains the album's title, **Sixteen**. The musical ground covered is a compelling and rich garden of chamber, improvisation and avant-rock, with a healthy dash of minimalism, that adds up to a sum greater than its ingredients. Individual ego has been forsaken in favour of a democratically realized music, with an originality that is nothing short of astonishing. Few ensembles have sown and harvested such challenging territory with telekinesis, although aspects of Henry Cow's work has been an influence, particularly on the fourteen minute "Azazazas". Oftimes there is a transparency within Hornweb's music, yet never does the playing degenerate into sloppiness. Alternatively, excursions into opaque density are never gratuitous to the point of oppression. Sixteen is one of those rare LPs possessing a balance of compositional strength with a clarity of execution whose engaging listening experience is not to be missed.

**Martin Archer**, who composes much of Hornweb's music, has pursued improvisational music further with **Wild Pathway Favourites**, his debut solo outing. The inner sleeve notes offer elucidations regarding Archer's intentions as he identifies his current musical state as "A further stage in my attempts to present music within which composed and improvised elements become inseparable. For me the best improvisers are players whose improvisations have the internal logic of good composition, while the best compositions are those which retain a fluidity which allows the players a creative space in which to work". This expository can only allude to its bottom line, a listening experience akin to a labyrinth filled with jewels at every turn. The sonority of each instrument, during long expeditions such as "Showers" and "New Scientists", is straight forward with only occasional concerns of extracting innate sinuous extremities. AMM this is not. A consistent exception is the guitar method of **John Russell** and alongside this we are privy to a refreshingly original blend of cello, viola, piano, woodwinds and percussion. It is with the two aforementioned pieces that Archer advances his reverberatory metallophone, for the remaining tracks it is a confabulation through soprano saxophone. The title track is superlative with its histrionic alternations between the wanton trio of Archer, **Charlie Collins** also on soprano, stalwart trombonist **Nick Evans**, and the thigh slapping pseudo march drumming of **Pete Infanti**. Wild Pathway Favourites is an entirely memorable event with integrity stemming from players whose colloquial performances realize the ambitious ideas of Martin Archer. Along with the Hornweb records this is indispensable for those with a library of recordings of new and extemporized musics.

Sometimes recording sessions are left to rot in the cans for good reason. Sometimes excellent music is abandoned by the impositions of contractual complicity, financial restrictions, etc. Occasionally the former will be released, adding a new perspective on an artist's body of work, albeit an embarrassing insight. Occasionally the latter will be resurrected by benevolent ones for the edification of producer and listener. Such is the case with **By Contact**, a tape by **The Trio** that dates back to 1971, and is now available on vinyl from Ogun Records. The Trio was a short lived (late 69 until mid 71) group fronted by a young pugilist of the baritone, **John Surman**. The Americans, bassist **Barre Phillips** and the late **Stu Martin**, on drums, were the ideal musicians to commiserate with Surman for his post Coltrane sonic intensity. Martin is superlative as his tidalwave of rhythms and fractured snare cracks has the effect of pinning the listener to immobility while a maelstrom of authority is unleashed by Phillips and Surman. One encounter with "Flyover" or "Utah, Oregon" will offer ample evidence of The Trio's insatiable appetite for rabid hard/free bop. "Noninka" features impressive arco bowing from Phillips, and get this, the only known recording of Surman on cornet! Another delight is the lyrical "Cant", which sensitively exchanges bass and bass clarinet melodies. All forty eight minutes considered, By Contact is a welcome opportunity to encounter the exuberance of The Trio and will prove indispensable for those lucky enough to have both the out of print Dawn recordings.

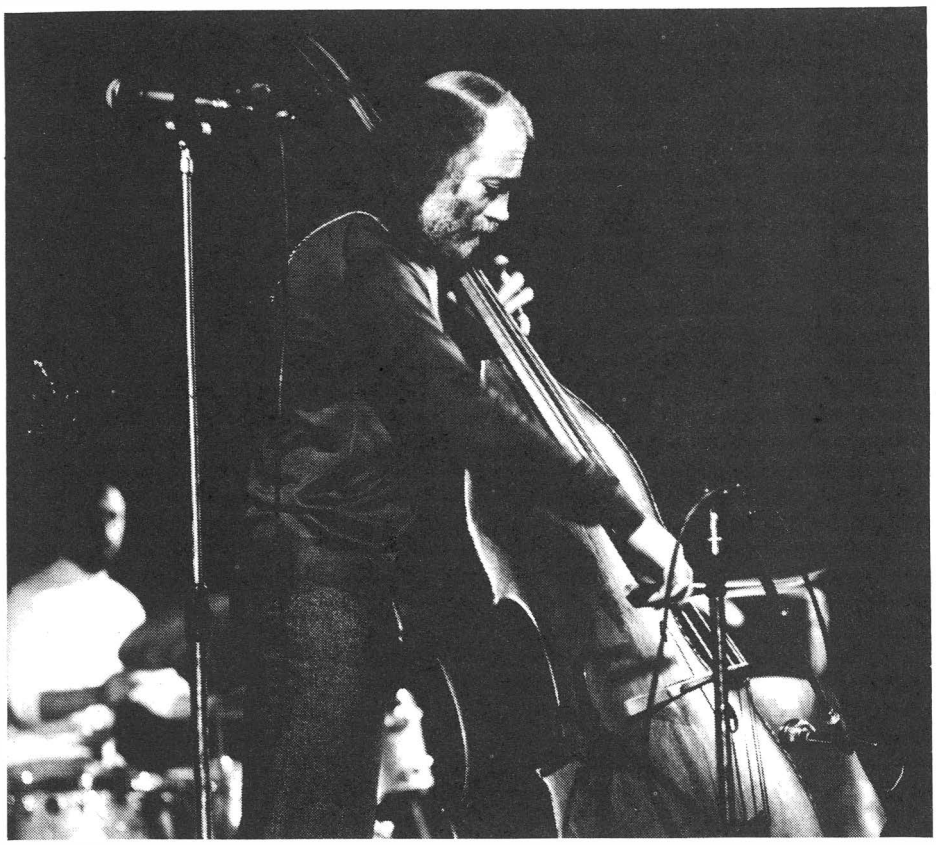
**Saalfelden Encore** is the second recording of **Trevor Watts Moire Music Group**. Although reduced to a sextet the music sounds larger than one would expect from the alto/tenor/violin/piano/bass & drums instrumentation. This is just one of the numerous successes of Moire Music, the moniker for Trevor's innovative approach to composition which breathes fresh ideas into the lifeblood of jazz as social music. Here is a form that is, pardon the pun, an amalgam of rich counterpoint and cyclical minimalism, which grows from its innately organic elements. Moire Music is an original resolve for the aged problem. Compatability between predetermined structural improvisation that avoids the predictability of theme, variation and solo. This opportunity is exploited brilliantly by Watts and tenorman **Simon Picard**, violinist **Peter Knight** and pianist **Veryan Weston**, over side long pieces. Oh yes, don't overlook Weston's superb solo piano record, **Underwater Carol**. The rhythm section of bassist **Paul Rogers** and long time associate, drummer **Liam Genocky**, provides the kinetic drive with a dynamic rock sensibility. Now after twenty years of combined experience with the Spontaneous Music Ensemble and Amalgam, Moire Music has been served up, much to the reward of your own head and heart.

It seems the principal method of obtaining UK jazz recordings from the past twenty years, is indeed from the diligent mining of second hand stores in Toronto. For further initiation or intimidation, depending on experience, one could refer to **Phillippe Renaud's - The Discography of British Jazz (Notes)**, for a detailed guide. Still there is a plethora of new music to be discovered, as the eight titles presented here are only the tip of the iceberg. Imminent are releases by Keith and Julie Tippett, and Mike Gibbs' first release in thirteen years. So why not invest in blue chip stock?

These and many more recordings are available from the following sources:

**Cadillac Distribution**, 180 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 8HJ or **Mole Jazz**, 291 Pentonville Road, London W1 9NP.

# FRANCOIS RABBATH THE SOUND OF THE BASS



**FRANCOIS RABBATH:** I met the double bass when I was 13 years old. My big brother brought a double bass home from Damascus to my home in Aleppo (Syria). This was a surprise to me because I'd never seen a double bass before in my life. My brother played the violin and the bass was so much bigger that she impressed me and it was in this way that I chose her and she chose me.

I was born in Syria and began to play the double bass in Beirut. My first job was when I was 13 years old. I played with my brother in a small orchestra in a nightclub.

When I first got the double bass I just began to play any notes in rhythm. I didn't know what the notes were. One day my mother sent me to a tailor shop to get measured for new clothes. The tailor had a music stand in his shop with a music book on it which was like a display or an antique to him. So when I looked at the music I saw it was "Methods of Double Bass" by Edouard Nanny. I was so happy and surprised to see a book like this in Syria. I was afraid to ask him if he could give me this methods book because I thought that it was probably the only book like it in Syria. I could also tell that he saw it as an antique so when he finished measuring me for my pant size and went away to another room I put the methods book under my shirt, or in one word, I stole it so I learned a lot from this methods book of Monsieur Nanny.

**MIKE JOHNSTON:** *To my knowledge, "Bassball" is your first album. How did this recording come about?*

I did this record in 1963 for the Philips label. The story of the album is sort of unusual. I had been hoping to record an album for some time but never had the opportunity. At this time I earned my living as an accompanist for Charles Aznavour, as I had no opportunity to perform my own music. Aznavour knew Quincy Jones and Quincy came one day to hear Aznavour perform. Quincy heard me playing arco style and asked me why I didn't make a record. I told him that I'd never been asked. So he asked me to make a demo and send it to him. So I went to Philips and asked if I could rent a studio because Quincy Jones asked me to make a demo tape and basically they said we don't need Quincy Jones, we can write you a contract. So that's how that record came about, simply by his interest and his name alone.

My intent on this record was to prove with two instruments, bass and percussion, that we could make a good and enjoyable record. I asked two composers to compose something for me. They were song composers, however, and Philips wanted me to do a record around things I could do on the instrument. I composed a piece myself, because at that time I had no repertoire. When I turned the demos in, Philips chose my piece over the other two and that was the first time in my life that I had composed something and that basically developed out of need. Philips requested twelve pieces for a record. So after about three weeks I had it all together.

When "Bassball" was released in Paris, it was entitled "Sound of the Bass". But Philips U.S.A. decided it needed another title and titled it "Bassball".

There happened with the first recording a disagreement between me and Philips. They put demands on me for the ASCAP rights and said if I didn't give them the rights that they'd take the record out of print. I didn't like the aggressiveness of their approach so I said no. If they would have asked me kindly I would have said yes. But by obliging me I answered no. My contract was for two records so I made the second record and quit the contract. It wasn't until my "Live in Paris" album [recorded in 1971] that I recorded again. I had many concerts but no records during this time.

During this time I was still with Charles Aznavour but also giving concerts on my own. Eventually I broke away from Aznavour to work in the studio and to play in nightclubs so that I could be free to give concerts when the opportunity presented itself.

*Why do you feel your music isn't heard or written about more in the United States or Canada?*

Well, it's new music in a way, especially at the beginning in the early 60s. It doesn't really belong to any style of music. You cannot really call it Jazz or Classical. It is music that really belongs to the double bass and the music is kind of a descriptive music to bring out all of the possibilities of the double bass. People seem to like it when they come to hear it but the publications often seem afraid to say something because they are lost. When something is new nobody wants to be the first to state an opinion on something. Everyone seems to wait for someone else's opinion. Finally now, critics have been speaking on this music. Not so much classifying it, but commenting more on particular pieces. I guess I don't feel it's necessary to explain this type of music. You feel it and that's enough. I don't actually expect someone to write about it.

There are a couple of recordings available on Frank Proto's Red Mark record label. These are *Suite Of Bach* and *Fantasy For Double Bass*, a composition by Frank Proto who is a bass player, composer and friend. There is also another from the film "The Temptation of Isabelle" which has just been released in Europe. This music I feel was very good for the movie but it seems to fit better with the movie than standing on its own.

*Can you share some comments on your music. What kind of feelings and thoughts do you have about it?*

Well, first of all, I do like my music. I don't

FRANCOIS RABBATH (Photograph by Frank Proto)

know if it's good music or bad music but I never write music without a reason. I try to express feelings. For example, I wrote *War And Peace* for Picasso. This came about when the French Government was giving an exposition and honoring Picasso. Picasso phoned me and asked me to write music for his painting. We played this piece at the Palais des Sports when he was 90 years old. So in this case, the imagery works off from the title and the painting itself. In all of my music, I usually have something I'm trying to convey with it. I don't know how other musicians are inspired but I must have a pretext to work from to write the music.

Another example is when I was in Africa doing a concert. They took me in the desert to show me the desert at six p.m. and I saw what I believed to be a mirage. What I saw was a rose-colored lake in the middle of the desert and all around this lake was what appeared to be snow. I found out later that it actually was a salt lake and the wind created like a head of white foam on the lake and this was really from my perspective a dreamlike vision. I call it *Trabar*, which is the name of the lake. All of my compositions are kind of like that. I never write my compositions without a pretext. Each title I give my pieces means something and each composition is a story. If you know the story it's fantastic. I don't feel that it is necessary to know the stories to enjoy the music though because I feel each one can make up his own story on the music. But I do like to explain the stories for people who want to play the pieces. But in concert the importance seems for the individual to listen and get their own images from the music.

*Because there is such a small sample of your music on record, are you satisfied with your music on the recordings that are available?*

You are never happy when you make a recording. Because of its nature, it captures a moment. I'd like to be able to make a recording every day, a lot of times recording the same piece because each day it differs. I also think that when you hear music live that it's much better than recordings because the recording is simply one way of a person. As a player your interpretations are changing every day and as you age and mature you prefer to do pieces differently. So for these reasons, it's hard to be happy with a recording. I do find it interesting how a recording fixes music into a moment and in this way you can see the evolution of a person, his playing and how the music changes. We must evolve as people and when I think that this moment it's time for me to record I accept it because tomorrow I will do other things.

All of my life I've been drawn to painting, sculpture and poetry. I feel that all art is one and when I compose something I never think of the composition as isolated from other things. I always have been inspired by an image from an oil painting, nature or some idea from a writer. But I think somehow I'm drawn strongest by painting because the image gives me more ideas than words. Words seem more precise and definite and make me feel more like a prisoner to them. But painting images always seem to open up to enable you to see other things and help you dream. For that reason I guess I've felt closer to painting and many of my painter friends, like Picasso and Dali, have all felt a strong affinity for each other and for what we are doing. Over the years we discussed and shared ideas many times.

Chagall, whom I've never met, is another painter I feel an affinity with. He always had a small musician in his paintings. But the other painters I've mentioned, we've exchanged many views and I understand how they compose and on many levels we are doing the same thing.

*How did you become interested in playing the Saz? [a Turkish string instrument]*

One day Tuli, a Turkish singer I know, had a festival performance coming up in a week when unfortunately her Saz accompanist was in Istanbul and couldn't make the performance. Tuli was very upset and didn't know how she could do the show because she felt she couldn't sing without the Saz accompaniment. Jokingly, to try to keep her from crying, I said don't worry, bring a Saz and I will accompany you. The next day she phoned me telling me that she had the Saz. So I said o.k., bring it and show me how to play it. She brought me a recording. I listened and learned how to tune it and realized that basically it just followed the melodies. I had about three days to prepare and was very worried. About two days before the recital we got together and prepared five pieces. So basically, I tried not to think about the notes and trusted my hands.

When I was young, each year we went to Turkey for a vacation. The problem was not the Arabic music, because I knew that. The problem was simply to familiarize myself with the instrument enough to just let my hands go and play it. I felt too that I must play it because I wanted to help Tuli do her performance and earn her living and after the tour, I was so pleased with playing the Saz that I recorded the "Sazmorphosis Recording." This is how it came about. When I do something I don't expect success, money or anything. I do things because I like them. In my life I've persued my interests and that's all.

For me to play with someone, I feel we must have something to say together, or more specifically you must find the right person who impresses you that you'd like to make something with. I did something with Tuli because her voice impressed me and also because of her sadness. I love many jazz musicians but I've never really had the opportunity to work with any. And I'm sure if there was a musician that I knew very well that played the horn, I would definitly do something with them if we have something to say together. But I've never actually had the opportunity. The other reason is the evolution of my music has always been with percussion. Recently, I've begun using the piano. Many times I choose not to use other musicians because it seems the more musicians you have the more problems that come along with them – it's true! Because they always expect something and they don't like this or that. When I had two percussionists at the Palais des Sports, they were discouraged with each other and there was always a problem. So as a result, I started to give many solo concerts. When I went to Africa, for instance, that was all strictly solo double bass. There are players I'd like to play with in duet, trio or quartet, but I'd have to probably live in the States for that to happen.

*I recently read an interview with bassist William Parker who said that, "It's not enough to be a great musician, that you must be visionary as well." For me, your music has this quality. Can you comment on this?*

What can I say? I'm happy about that. When you compose music and play with vision, when you put the music together to try and say something, you try and leave people with feelings. I'm not a composer, opportunity brought me to compose. So when I say something I always give what I feel in my body. That's my music. And if that's felt, I'm happy because that's my meaning.

I've been doing many concerts. Recently I was in Taiwan, Manila and Australia, and for two or three months I played Wigmore Hall in London. I also played five concerts in Paris, and in Czechoslovakia. I was invited to play and teach. Actually, right now I have more projects than time to do them. My problem now is lack of time. Another commitment of mine is I'm a member of the Opera of Paris which takes up much time.

I like to play in concert and for me, my favorite place to play has been in the States. People there seem more open to everything. I feel people come to the concerts with an open mind rather than prejudging the music ahead of time. People there come and then respond positively or negatively based on what they've heard. And for me, that's important because I feel the people are not skeptical in the beginning and that's fantastic. This reaction is also similar in China and Russia. But I think in those countries it's rare to have guest musicians there too which helps.

The problem usually is when you advertise a double bass concert, most people are skeptical. One of the reasons I'm into writing pieces is there isn't a big repertoire of pieces written for double bass. People ahead of time don't have an idea of what the msuic is going to be like, so they don't come.

*Why or how did you come about settling in Paris?*

When I left Lebanon I had a choice between the States and France. It was partially language and the bass method of Edouard Nanny which kept me in France. My dream was to go to Nanny and say I studied with nobody, just his method and I wanted to thank him.

When I got to France I tried to meet Nanny only to discover that he had died ten years earlier. This made me very sad at the time. Paris was near to Lebanon so that was nice too. Because at that time I was afraid of going too far away from home.

I am very happy to live in Paris. I think it's fantastic. In terms of musical satisfaction, I'd have to say I'm not happy here. They say you are never a prophet in your own country and I think this is universal. I have opportunities to play in other countries which is nice and in France, of course, there is an audience. But my relationship with other bass players is sometimes hard. Jealousy is a problem and one that can't be fought because it's human. But it's hard to deal with. Many of the hard feelings seem to come from the fact that I didn't have a teacher, but that fact was great for me because in my efforts I discovered a new technique. But the jealousies have hurt because all of my life I've loved the music of the double bass and I'd actually like to create a family of double bass players. Some places in the world this is sort of happening. But in France it's too hard because of the the relationship between me and the French players. The jealousy really interferes though and that too is a reason why the States and China are more open minded because these attitudes I'm talking about don't exist. I feel admitting the quality of someone else doesn't discredit yourself at all. I've asked myself why many times. I just don't understand.

All music inspires me, even if you don't pay attention to something it inspires and influences you. Not just music, actually anything. I've always liked other musics without getting deep into them but to receive them like Arts. I guess what I'm getting at is I don't want to philosophize about music, it isn't intellectual for me. For me, feeling the music is all. Many people don't go to concerts because they think they can't comprehend the music. But music is a feeling, you feel it, that's all. I think you have to get used to some musics to feel them, but when you feel it and your hair stands up on end, that's great. If you don't understand do-ray-mi-fa-so-la-te-do, seven notes, so what? We philosophize too much about it. If you are a player and you like to go deeply into a kind of music that's another question, but even then I think you learn something if you feel it. Even if you're performing a piece of music like Bach. If each day you don't feel it and play it differently, the sameness will kill it and Bach will be dead forever. Bach lives because people are here, musicians are here that fortunately are here to feel it differently and live Bach again. As players we must not learn music intellectually because everybody is going to learn exactly the same things and that's the death of music.

*This leads me to ask you about improvising in music, something I feel that never seems to get talked about much.*

I think honestly that it's the most important aspect of playing. Every musician can play something and feel it. That's why jazz is such great music because even if there is a written part, it's usually left open for each player to express themselves differently. And usually if there is a written part, it's a framework to play off from like say a melody or something. In classical music, say in a cadenza, the musicians' solos usually seem to be showmanship of technique. I don't like that. I think sometimes it's because of the composer. Because each player has different facilities and the composers don't seem to reach for these facilities, to show the virtuoso through that facility.

For me, I've tried to change that. I feel more like a jazz musician when I write my pieces. Like when I write a concerto, I provide two chords or whatever and try to build melodies with certain movements. I feel it's very important to improvise.

In the Chagall piece, there are three bars and then yes, it's all left to imagination. We do it one time and that's all. There are many great improvisors. It's creation in the moment and it must be kept like that for it to be strong.

This is definitely different than composing. Improvising requires letting your imagination go. But in composing there are a few important things to me. An image, technique of the double bass and the sonority of the double bass. You must exploit all of these at the same time.

When you improvise you have a type of harmony and you let your imagination go. When you are improvising, you are dealing spontaneously with all of the things you might use to compose with so everything must be together.

When I find a small sonority effect of the double bass I don't just play the effect. I take the effect and build a whole piece on it. This sound is a genre so you build things off from it, sort of like the idea of a raga.

I can't say as I like some of the improvising when it seems like all of the players are just playing effects. It's good when they take them and produce something with them. But to hit the double bass and then ramble on to another effect without anything else doesn't mean much to me. But when you do that really well and dominate the instrument, it becomes new ground to explore and exploit. And this can, in this way, expand the vocabulary of the instrument and make a rich quality for the instrument and music.

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The music of Francois Rabbath can be obtained from: Red Mark / Liben Records, 6265 Dawes Lane, Cincinatti, Ohio, USA 45230.

# CONTEMPORARY MUSIC IN REVIEW

**GESTALT ET JIVE**
**Creative Works Records / CS 1006/1007**

Alfred 23 Harth, tenor & alto saxophones, bass clarinet, mouthpieces, voice; Ferdinand Richard, alto saxophone & six string bass; Peter Hollinger, drums & objects.

Ever think what the term ***"culture"*** might mean beyond the flood gates of pretension? Or, better yet: is it conceivable there's really such a thing as a cultural kind of "knowledge"? A kind of knowledge, in other words, which might be totally alien to "information" per se(?).

This recording — **Gestalt et Jive** — surprisingly or not, is more than illustrative of my opening suppositions. As a matter of fact, the music found on this double album prompted the privileging of "culture" in those opening sentences.

Thus, taking my opening paragraph into full account it probably wouldn't come as a surprise to discover that the predominant ***feel*** of this music; bluesy, with a tinge of new wave gloss — is misleading. Misleading in the sense that the semiotic re-arrangement of musical "terms" is itself deceptively hidden, and operational only at the level of ***meaning***. That's to say, further, that the surface semantics of this music tend to be "invisibly" stronger than the musical idiom(s) asserted.

Take, for instance, Harth's tenor playing on the three minute, thirty-eight second "Ich bringe mein Schwimmflügel mit", for starters. Here tenorist Harth preaches a thoroughly familiar vocabulary of blues homiletics — complete with trooper-like rhythm(s) elicited from Richard's "six string bass" along with Hollinger's tonally temperate drums. And yet, the semantic surface of this music is hauntingly recrudescent of a whole other tonality, a tonality — surprisingly enough — which is completely outside the mode of the tune.

Revealingly, and pardon the slight digression, Harth has recorded with the volatile German reedist Peter Brötzman (Go-No-Go/FMP 1050). Perhaps a comparison of the two saxophonists and their distinctive "stylistic" differences would help to aperturally clarify the music in review.

With all due respect to Brötzman's unflinching commitment to what Europeans used to call "Free Jazz" (and please forgive the pseudo-perfidious tone of these declarations), the saxophonist is indeed in danger of becoming "merely" a latent (re: "historical") exponent of 1960s high energy music (Shepp, Sanders, Ayler, Murray, etc.). Harth, on the other hand, has a more stylistically distinctive approach to his horns, and tends to take infinitely more for granted than Brötzman. Hart, as evidenced by **Gestalt et Jive**, builds more toward a conceptual edifice minus — of course — any concern that could be misconstrued as "formalist". In a very real sense, then, Harth's music — particularly that of **Gestalt et Jive** — is millenniums away from that of screamer Brötzman, who would hardly take the time to semiotically construct a gestalt "merely" for the sake of thoughtful revision.

At any rate, getting back to the record under review: though Harth and company include some pieces that the collection probably could have done without — on the whole, the semiotically induced idea of employing a distinct semantics to essentially idiomatically based music was a success. And so too was the decision to make these pieces short, impressionistic, and highly "mood" oriented (only one piece, by the way, runs over 4:20, most are considerably shorter). Aside from the aforementioned "Ich bringe meine Schwimmflügel mit", outstanding features of this set include the phanerically inviting, almost Polynesian sounding "Let's use death as the most expensive effect", and the rhythmically swaggering "pure and hard seduction", featuring the full bodied bass clarinet of Harth. ***— Roger Riggins***



**MARILYN CRISPELL/DOUG JAMES**
**And Your Ivory Voice Sings**
**Leo Records LR 126**

This album's successful cuts show that Crispell is an important new voice in jazz. She is enough at ease with the high energy, atonal, dissonant vocabulary pioneered by Cecil Taylor (to whom she dedicates the title cut) to say some strikingly original things with it. Using Taylor as a starting point, she is expanding the free jazz vocabulary into new areas. She is not an imitator, despite some superficial resemblances.

On this album she is accompanied by Doug James, a light-handed, agile drummer who plays with brushes throughout much of the record. A sympathetic and supportive, rather than a driving, drummer, he follows Crispell's every move like a shadow.

Their strong efforts are very strong indeed. "On and Off The Beaten Track" opens with a light-hearted theme played by Crispell on slide whistle, and grows progressively more agitated before returning to the theme. The giddy, elated quality of the music makes it especially enjoyable and unique. Both James and Crispell seem thrilled at their technical mastery and surprised and delighted with each others' ideas as they turn up. Another highpoint is a reading of Coltrane's "After The Rain". Unlike the serene, cleansed atmosphere of Coltrane's original, the storm clouds still linger close by in this turbulent, moody version. Crispell slowly sworls around the melody, building a swelling solo that subsides to an uneasy peace. It's a brilliant and surprisingly apt interpretation which brings out a darker side inherent in the tune.

Both "Opium Dream Eyes" and "Song For Jeanne Lee" are slow, finely nuanced Crispell originals. On the dedication to singer Lee, Crispell uses the damper pedal to shade her phrases and give them an unexpected twist at the end. The playing on "Opium" evokes the title as notes hang and decay on a still background. Harp-like textures from the treated piano give way abruptly to rushes of sound and volume in a performance of contrasts, culminating in an enigmatic, unresolved finish.

The other three cuts on the album are not as memorable, derively too closely from Cecil's music. But it is so rare for any young musician today to seriously attempt coming to terms with Taylor's music, that sounding derivative at times is forgivable, and finding something new to say with the vocabulary is occasion for excitement and praise. The nature of Crispell's music must blunt any criticism and heighten any praise. A mixed effort with some riveting highpoints from an important artist.

***— Ed Hazell***

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