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CODA MAGAZINE

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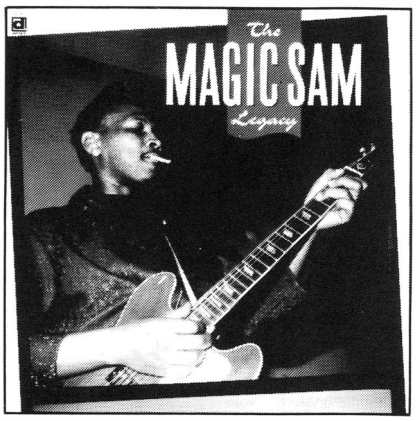

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CANADIAN FESTIVALS

DOWNTOWN JAZZ AND BLUES STREET FESTIVAL

In the last week of June, Toronto audiences were given a rare opportunity to hear and experience a wide cross-section of current world creative music. The exciting coincidence of two major music festivals related to jazz and improvised music occurring in this city over the same ten day period is an event of unusual dimension.

It is a welcome sign that this trend of international gatherings (the most representative one being the 1988 W.O.M.A.D. festival) has inclined us to think further about our own culture as part of the larger global perspective. From the blues of Otis Blackwell to the Pan-African makossa soul of Manu Dibango, from the depths of sound explorations charted by Sun Ra to the jazz/reggae of Oliver Lake's Jump Up, the two festivals brought forth an unprecedented flowering of creative talents. For their efforts around the clock in organizing this week, the artistic directors of the two series, **Jim Galloway** of the DuMaurier Festival and **Serge Sloimovits** of the Downtown Fest deserve our thanks and respect.

Through the invitation of the Downtown Fest's publicist, I was able to attend a week's worth of performances at the **Bamboo Club** and observe the shows. Here is some of what happened.

After conducting interviews with **Charlie Haden** and **Paul Motian** on a steamy afternoon in June, the idea of spending the evening in the darkness of the Bamboo for the opening of the Downtown Jazz and Blues Street Festival was inviting enough for one to overlook the obvious laws of thermodynamics; many people in one small room will inevitably raise the temperature way up.

David Mott Quartet featuring vocalist **Maureen Meridan** opened the evening with some pleasing voice and baritone saxophone melodies set against a churning rhythm section. Interesting parts were inadvertently lost in the mix until well into the set, peeking through for a moment and then vanishing in the mid-range heavy din of the Bamboo's sound system, a not-surprising side effect of staging an acoustic concert in what is usually a venue for reggae and caribbean music. Mott's compositions showed a high regard for structured improvisation as well as committed solo and ensemble playing. It's unfortunate that a lack of sensitivity in the mix partially blunted the effect of Mott's carefully prepared program.

After a long-delayed beginning (at the insistence of Charlie Haden, who found the mix onstage intolerable), the trio of **Charlie Haden, Paul Motian**, and **Gerri Allen** lived up to the expectations of their audience with an intense swinging set that took the emotions through many turns, bringing the listener into an evolving three-way conversation of unexpected beauty and clarity. Gerri Allen was the evening's new star, equally at ease with the complexities of **Thelonious Monk's** *Epistrophy* and the otherworldliness of **Ornette Coleman's** *Lonely Woman.* Her technique and expressive sense never seemed to falter, neatly tying together strands of disparate harmony in a manner that will certainly gain her much-deserved acclaim. Motian and Haden also spoke from the heart throughout the ninety minute set, plainly digging each other's energy and attunement to the trio's music. *Blues in Motian* features the percussionist revealing his particularly searching approach, turning over textures and colours in succession, choosing rhythmic placement of sound in a considered and wholly distinctive fashion. Haden's thoughtful solos once again underscored his importance as an innovative and provocative composer/performer. The subtle power of the music is difficult to express in print but its effect on the opening night audience was appreciable. One song performed late in the set moved the person next to me to tears, so strongly heartfelt was its delivery. Despite the distraction of an unforgiving sound mix, it was an exciting beginning to the week from one of the music's most steadfast small ensembles.

TUESDAY JUNE 27

Now in its seventh incarnation, the New York-based **Steps Ahead** delivered two solid sets under the leadership of **Mike Mainieri** performing material largely from their new release, ***N.Y.C.*** The music is very much a product of that city, tightly structured and leaning toward a coolness of expression, almost aloof. The appeal is in its mystery, showing as few cards as possible, though certainly it is compelling in its distance. **Steps Ahead's** music takes its direction from the blending of rock's simplicity in the jazz-fusion nexus, building from the combination of a powerful rhythm section (**Steve Smith** and **Victor Bailey**) supporting and commenting upon a divergent front line (**Mainieri** on mallet instruments, guitarist **Jimi Tunnel, Rachel Z** on keyboards, and tenor saxophonist **Bendik**). A percolating blend of sounds, **Steps Ahead** proved to be a favourite with the audience of mostly under-30 rock fans, gliding through their material without a false move, easily negotiating hair-pin turns and rhythmic sleight-of-hand. It is pointless to attempt comparisons of this band with earlier editions of the unit but it does reflect favourably on the abilities of **Mike Mainieri** to sustain a high quality ensemble through so many transitions and changes of personnel.

FRIDAY JUNE 30

Oliver Lake's avant-reggae quintet, **Jump Up,** closed out the week of shows in the Downtown Street Fest with a snapping mix of roots reggae and heavy urban funk, twisted and burnt by Lake's incendiary alto. Confirming that jazz is after all a dance-influenced music (a truth made tangible over the course of this century by the contributions of dancers from **Baby Laurence** to **Alvin Ailey**), **Jump Up's** sound filled the room, swinging with the crunch of a rhythm section fuelled as much by the current N.Y.C. computer funk as by the well-oiled machinery of James Brown and George Clinton.

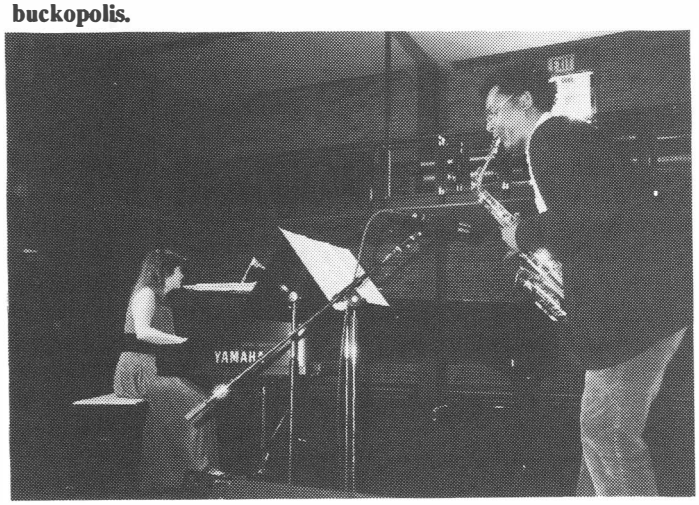
Big city energy pervaded this edition of Jump Up, a noticeably different approach being given the older tunes in the show that made obvious the distinct difference between this ensemble and its predecessors. There was a youthful strength and antsy anticipation in this sound, the music of a young America facing up to 1990, fully aware of what is on the horizon.

Lake's soprano and alto continue to develop as a human voice, first speaking offhand, then yearningly, then later exclaiming and shouting the gospel of jazz freedom.

Surprise bandmember **Michelle Rosewoman** on electronic keyboards maintained a subtle presence through much of the evening, gradually pushing forward to prompt Lake's flights on alto. Her playing seemed tentative at moments in the first set, as though she were feeling her way along a dark passage, searching for the light switch she found twenty or thirty minutes into the set. Not enough of this talented woman's work was featured in the set in an obvious way; look out for her own Yoruba music ensemble for a clearer indication of her work. - *Steve Vickery*

TORONTO JAZZ FESTIVAL
JUNE 23 - JULY 3

When I first came to Toronto some twenty-six years ago, it was considered a great jazz city, so it makes it even more disappointing to have experienced its transition in this quarter of a century, from a place in which one experienced life, often on the very edge of change, to a slick, fashion sick, corporate and banking Megabuckopolis.



As I sidle into middle age, there is a large portion of my brain given over to nostalgic romance, especially when I reflect on all the past wonderment and adventure that has come my way because of this involvement with jazz music. The jazz club has always been how I perceived the "real scene," and often I feel saddened and somewhat disillusioned when I realise that this system of social order is very much on the wane. The memories of the music, firstly in England as a young man, and later entranced by its beauty in such legendary establishments as the **Five Spot** and **Slugs** in New York City, and the **Town Tavern** and the **Colonial** in Toronto, remain, in my brain, as moments of extreme joy. The smoky bars gave me the opportunity to hear the music of Charles Mingus, Cecil Taylor, Bill Evans, Albert Ayler, Jackie McLean, West Montgomery, Sonny Stitt, Thelonious Monk, Ornette Coleman, Coleman Hawkins, Earl Hines, Miles Davis (and more), and they all still hover as vague, ghostly, mental images. Such a time. Such a way of life.

As I retrace my thoughts to impressed youth, the presentations of our music, that also gave us pleasure, were the summer festivals. The first one that I recall was held on the estates of a British Lord, and still makes me memory tremble. Hanging out with **Joe Harriott, Hans Koller** and **Anita O'Day.** Beginning to be the jazz life. Hearing the music, sleeping on the beaches around camp fires, being with new friends, and all in love with jazz music. A social order that protected us from the rathermundane lives that were our everyday lot.

When I came to North America to live,there was the **Newport Festival** in Rhode Island, again out in the sum, on the beaches....and even in more modern times this magic has appeared in such places as **Bracknell** (UK), and **Moers** (Germany).

Of course there still are great jazz festivals that create the ambience that I long for, and in Canada the events that take place in Vancouver, Edmonton, Montreal and Victoriaville, although each being quite different in character, still have certain ingredients that make them social occasions.

Toronto has never been able to quite focus on the qualities or concepts that have made festivals special, and once again, this year, the magic ingredients eluded this city. True there were the "big name" presentations of **Sarah Vaughn, Branford Marsalis** and **Cleo Laine** with **John Dankworth,** for the credit card clientele . A small concert hall with a very high class series of contemporary jazz. The outdoor parks and a multitude of clubs with the music of local players. But never did it seem to be connected together. Never a group adventure.

There are many reasons in this period why it is not possible for festivals to operate in the traditional methods, but foremost on the list has to be the exorbitant costs of all the elements that are required to bring them about. Although the inflated costs of current existence are not often reflected in the earnings of our great artists, it is true that the air travel, hotel, stage building, sound systems, advertising, etc., are now at such a level, that the simple idea of a gathering is something that must be only in history. This then, has placed the art in the position of being supported by corporate sponsors, the only organizations apart from banks that seem to have money to spare. And with it comes all the capitalist systems that they employ to make the music an advantage to their business. It surely cannot be profit, because in comparison to the money generated from a baseball game, jazz must still be a small time, minority fringe art. So why would a corporation such as duMaurier be interested in such a very small catch?

Cigarette Smoking Is Hazardous To Your Health...

In Canada, and I suspect in many other places on the planet, it has become very difficult for the producers of tobacco to advertise their wares, so their public relation and advertising departments have to find new ways of reaching the young and gullible with the idea of inducing them to participate in smoking. Beer companies also seem to be attracted to jazz. Is this because they feel there is some connection with their products and our music? Do they know about the legend of the jazz clubs, that in my youth I was so fond of? It would seem so. And in a very twisted sort of way, I suppose, if the artists were making a great living from the money supplied by these corporations, then all could be well. But, when one is part of a festival, it soon becomes clear that they are not interested in the promotion of culture, in the ongoing development of this great art, in fact in a certain manner the art gets in the way of their product.

Example... All the giant posters, bright red in colour, proclaimed DU MAURIER - DOWNTOWN JAZZ, imitating a giant cigarette packet. But for the most part not telling you where you could hear the music, at what time, how much.

Example... If you were wearing a garment that was red in colour, like a pair of sneakers, you could win a free ticket, or a voucher to a chosen event. Fine, but the purpose of this is still not to promote the music, but the product. Consumer Nation as Oliver Lake would say. My friend, Guy LeBlanc, and I joined in this circus of errors, just for fun, always wearing something red everyday. I do believe he won. Thank goodness as he is poor & loves the music.

Well that is enough, but I do hope as a reader you see my point.

Example... Would it not seem more logical if high-fi companies, record companies, sound system companies, instrument companies...were supporting these events? Not against taking their money you understand, just protecting our art against what may be their future plans of control.

MARILYN CRISPELL & ANTHONY BRAXTON (Photograph by Bill Smith)

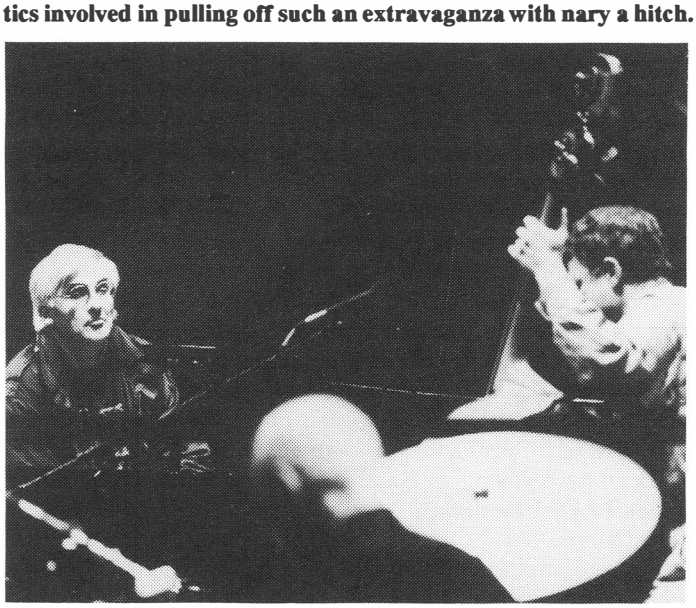
In spite of my experiences with the organizers of this festival, many of which were negative but not worth becoming agitated about again, the music of many of the artists that I heard was superb.

I spent most of my time at the duMaurier Theatre Centre, where I was treated to the **Randy Weston** trio, **Andrew Cyrille** and **Craig Harris**, and the **Anthony Braxton/ Marilyn Crispell** duo, with whom I was invited to perform a piece. The outdoor concerts, in a most unsuitable park that was resplendent with traffic noise and the chatter of the after-work office crowd, produced two events that were just fantastic. One bringing back those old memories, and old friend in the form of **Charles Lloyd** with a band completed by **Bobo Stenson, Palle Danielsson** and **Jon Christensen**, and one wonderful lunch time with the **European Jazz Quartet**, who once again flooded my body with the continuing heritage of John Coltrane. Thank you **Gerd Dudek, Rob Van Den Broeck, Ali Haaroud** and **Tony Levin** for the music.

There was more, but I could not summon the enthusiasm to extend myself to overcome the bureaucracy that I constantly encountered, and ended up doing exactly what I had done two years previously. I hung out at the Bamboo Club and had a fine jazz club time with the likes of **Gerri Allen, Charlie Haden** and **Paul Motian**, and danced to **Oliver Lake** and **Jump Up**. Now that's the right idea...JUMP UP, Eh! -
Bill Smith
(In Exile)

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE JAZZ DE MONTREAL (FLIM) JUNE 30 - JULY 9, 1989

Once more, the great supertanker of Canadian jazz festivals came into dock loaded with barrels of crude of every possible grade...of music, that is. And for a good reason, too. For its tenth year edition, everyone was expecting the big splurge: more outdoor shows, more indoors, more tourists (musical and otherwise), in short, an awesome event it was in its size, not to mention the logistics involved in pulling off such an extravaganza with nary a hitch.



PAUL BLEY & CHARLIE HADEN (Photograph by Peter Danson)

Of course, figures make good press, such as the 100,000 visitors a day as touted at the closing press conference, but the whole purpose, lest we forget, is the music. In terms of quantity, there was so much going on, that at one hour alone, there were no less than four series running concurrently. Now, as for the quality...

Basically, the organizers tried to cover as much ground as possible, trying to please aficionado and neophyte alike. Overall, though, as much as the program held promise, when unveiled last spring, it seemed to come up short, at least in retrospect. It may be that those of us who are close to the scene here set our expectations a little too high; yet, there is still a case to be made for the previous assessment.

Nevertheless, the major coup orchestrated for this milestone year was the inclusion of a tribute series to bassist **Charlie Haden**. Over the ten day event, he played eight concerts, welcoming different guests each night. The opener, for instance, was eagerly awaited, since **Joe Henderson** and **Al Foster** were to share the spotlight. However, the rather brief set (70 minutes and no encore to boot) did not only come up short timewise but musically as well. In fact, just as the music was starting to gel, it was all over after four tunes. **Gerri Allen**, on the following evening, did not fare too well either, the reasons being poor amplification of her piano and an unusually overbearing Paul Motian on drums.

Caught in a schedule conflict, I missed the pairing of **Ed Blackwell** and **Don Cherry** for the third show, and, to my chagrin, the majority report told me I should have been there. Cherry was at his most playful, dancing around on one occasion and playing his Doussoun Guni too. As for Mister Blackwell, he was the master of finesse as per his reputation. Many more good notes were struck by Cuban pianist **Gonzalo Rubalcaba**, whom Haden openly admires, and this fiery young man was in no way intimidated by the return of **Paul Motian**; in fact, both of them were at the same level, while the leader seemed to be dragging behind his sidemen.

After the customary day off from the indoor shows, the second half of the series got underway with a duet performance featuring **Milton Nascimento**, who played more piano apparently, followed then by another trio set with **Jack de Johnette** and the festival'[s Wunderkind, **Pat Metheny**, who, two days before, gave the yearly "super show" outdoors, satisfying the throngs of local admirers in a jammed packed public area in the centre of the city. Of decidedly historical importance was Haden's encounter with **Paul Bley**, their first in 30 years. Although a major falling out had driven a wedge between them, all seemed to be forgotten when the bassist introduced his partner, he had not seen since the Hillcrest days in Los Angeles. Musically, the pianist wavered between the laconic and the iconoclastic, the latter most evident in his oblique treatment of standards such as Body and Soul. To keep their conversation at an intimate level, Paul Motian, back again, had a plexiglass screen set up in front of him, which most likely made him play in a more subdued fashion.

To round off the slate, the honoured guest presided over his latest edition of the **Liberation Orchestra**. Once more, **Carla Bley's** arrangements were used as heads for lengthy blowing sessions, which featured new alumni like **Ernie Watts**--who I am sure has never been let so loose--**Tom Harrell, Joe Lovano**...as well as holdbacks from the past, such as **Ken McIntyre, Sharon Freeman** and, the only other original cast member, **Paul Motian**--who couldn't bury anyone this time around. As much as previous shows in the series were too short, this

orchestra just about tacked on all of the missing time to its performance, which lasted a little over two and a half hours. An exhaustive concert indeed, but an exhausting one for those in attendance. And after having attended some 25 shows, yours truly felt nothing short of wiped out. One last thought though: with all of these greats, the initials O.C. were not to be found in that series, and that would have been the icing on top of the cake.

With regards to the shortness of these shows, that might be explained by the fact that the late night "Jazz dans la Nuit" series was staged less than an hour after Haden and colleagues called it a night. Of note here was the neat division in musical orientation in each of the halves. Bop dominated at first with the quartets of **Bob Mover** and **Jacke McLean**, as well as in Nat Adderly's quintet, in which the otherwise fine **Vincent Herring** had to play the part of the late brother in this dubious "Cannonball Adderly Revival" night. Add to that an element of pop, too, with **Mark Johnson's** *Bass Desires*, largely a sounding board for the fretboards of **Bill Frisell** and **John Scofield**. McLean and Mover, for their part, were both in fine fettle, the latter being propelled by **Freddie Waits, Richard Davis** and **Walter Davis Jr.**, the former being supported by a more workmanlike rhythm section than a really ear-catching one.

In the second half, there were three shows that seemed to be conceived as an attempt to assuage the criticisms of those who bemoan the festival's lack of daringness in its musical content. Eagerly awaited was trombonist **Craig Harris's Tailgater Tails**, but his quintet was quite a letdown because of very lacklustre performances, including clarinetist **Don Byron**. Though Harris himself was the most consistent soloist, his contributions were still not enough to carry the show. The next night, guitarist **David Torn** shuffled around his pedals and fuzz boxes, creating waves of turgid sounds which soon thinned out an already meagre crowd. Finally, **Anthony Braxton** and **Marilyn Crispell** held their devoted followers captive, eliciting from them an enthusiastic response.

Elsewhere, there were many more events worthy of attention, one of the winners being the duet of **Kenny Drew** and **Niels Henning Orsted Pederson** in the Piano Plus series. When virtuosity and finesse meet, the results cannot be anything less than satisfying. This year's discoveries were to be found on the outdoor stages, two of which featured European and international performers. For instance, the Danish band **Page One** came across as a slick, well-oiled hard bop machine with an added punch in the solo department. Of these five newcomers, Swedish trumpeter **Anders Bergcrantz** stood out in his strong idiomatic solos with a dark brassy ring to them. Of a different edge, the Australian group **The Last Straw** was a rough and tumble collection of four veterans and a young bassist going for broke on every tune. Altoist **Bernie McGann**, who has been receiving a lot of press lately, literally scorched, just like a midday sun in the Aussie outback. Finally, **Willem Breuker** may not be really new to all of us here and even if their show was pretty much a reprise of their previous performance here, just seeing their madcap action before some 5000 delirious people on the street made it worthwhile. Such sweet thunder it was...

As a side event, which too often has been overlooked in past reports, there were late night jam sessions at the hotel where the festival performers were staying, some of whom even sat in. Surprises abounded, such as when **Don Cherry** came up to the band stand, playing along side **Bobby Enriquez** (!), whom I had made a point not to see earlier in the evening when he had played one of the concerts with **Richie Cole** (two strikes right there...). Yet another surprise was hearing the high voltage blues guitarist **Jeff Healy** playing some tasty jazz lines a la Kenny Burrell and even like an updated version of Django Reinhardt...no kidding.

Of course, one could mention **Tony Williams's** overwhelming percussive flash or **Charles Lloyd's** set of peaks and valleys, but there is so much more to say, yet so little space to do it in. All of this to say that this year's festival was so big, that even the organizers conceded that its size will have to be kept in check for the future. As supertankers carry bigger loads all the time, one wonders how they can stay afloat, and it only takes a reef for a major disaster to happen (one just has to look back at the Valdez incident for proof). Still, the good ship "Lolly jazz" (rather than pop) will return next year, full of goodies, but hopefully, not listing too much.

Marc Chenard

SOME THOUGHTS FROM THE PUBLISHER

Before, during and after the 1989 duMaurier Toronto festival, the question most often asked of me was, "why can't we have a festival like the one in Montreal?"

JACKIE McLEAN (Photograph by Peter Danson)

There was no easy answer to that question but it certainly seemed important enough to make the trip to Montreal to attend some of the concerts at that event. Maybe then there would be some answers.

It should be pointed out that despite publishing **Coda** for more than 30 years, neither event deemed it important enough to extend an official invitation for me to attend

their festivals, but both Montreal and Toronto did give press credentials to **Coda** writers and their reports are elsewhere in this issue. These observations, therefore, are unaffected by any special treatment.

Both events presented programs in concert halls for paying customers as well as open air concerts which were free of charge. Music could be found in many clubs in both cities but only those in Toronto were part of the festival umbrella.

At this point in time, though, there is an enormous gulf between the two events. The Montreal festival, after 10 years, is one of the major festivals on the world circuit while Toronto hosts a much smaller, regional event.

The level of support enjoyed by Montreal is impressive. They have a major sponsor (Alcan), subsidiary sponsors such as Canadian Airlines, who not only provided transportation but also presented two different concert series (featuring Canadian and European artists) and CBC Radio (French and English networks) who, by recording six out of seven of the indoor concert series, underwrote their cost while accumulating in ten days enough material to fill out a year of programming.

Furthermore, the city seems to be 100% behind the festival. This includes closing Ste Catherine Street for the block where Place des Arts and the Meridien Hotel (festival headquarters) are located. Other streets were also closed in the evening to make up a total of seven street locations offering regularly scheduled concerts.

Only now, after three years, were Toronto city officials willing to allow outdoor concerts on a limited basis. Toronto streets are only closed for Shriners parades and world economic summits so it was a major step forward to have concerts at Berczy Park in the narrow strip of land between Wellington and Front Streets. Even then local residents complained and concerts had to end abruptly at 7 p.m.

At least this marked the beginning of some focused centralization for a festival whose elements included Harbourfront, Roy Thomson Hall and widely scattered clubs. Attendance was up this year and a roving double decker bus took people from spot to spot.

But Toronto has only one sponsor (duMaurier) and lacks the focused commitments of Montreal organization. Toronto's festival is administered by Roy Thomson Hall, who regard it as a temporary appendage to their yearly operations. They earn a management fee and make sure their hall is booked for a few concerts. All the public relations is contracted out to an organization who have many other concerns besides a jazz festival. Only Jim Galloway, who is officially the artistic director, has any direct link with the jazz community and inevitably he does the work of four or five people. Without him, the whole structure would have crumbled long ago.

Montreal's organizers, on the other hand, are working year round on the event. Their separate responsibilities encompass fundraising, programming, production, public relations and administration. The result is a highly impressive ten day festival in which they presented more than 300 concerts.

Toronto's festival, on the other hand, was only directly responsible for the eighteen open air concerts at Berczy Park and the selection and booking of artists at other venues. Harbourfront managed its major concert series at the duMaurier Theatre Centre and their weekend of traditional and modern jazz (which has been in existence longer than the festival itself) while Roy Thomson Hall presented its own concerts. Most festival performances were held in clubs: some (Cafe des Copains, George's Spaghetti House, The Jazz Bar, Myers) present jazz on a regular basis but many others took advantage of the festival's financial support to present music they wouldn't allow inside the door for the rest of the year.

TONY WILLIAMS (Photograph by Peter Danson)

Apart from generalized advertising on billboards, in newspapers and on TV (where only duMaurier's name was prominent), all specific advertising seemed to be handled by the individual venues. Roy Thomson Hall, for instance, was far more energetic than harbourfront in advertising its events.

In Montreal it was impossible to avoid the festival. Everyone knew about it and there was an abundance of coverage in both the daily newspapers and the alternative press. Souvenirs were available everywhere and business was brisk!

Reviews on a daily basis occupied at least a page of both the French and English newspapers in Montreal while only Mark Miller in the Globe and Mail gave consistent coverage to the Toronto event.

In Montreal the media were encouraged to take the festival seriously. Their media office organized regular press conferences with the visiting celebrities and backstage interviews were continuous. Toronto's festival didn't offer any of these facilities, while their official hotel (The Westin) was removed from most festival activities.

I'm sure that Montreal's festival struggled hard to reach the heights it has now attained as one of the world's major jazz festivals. Toronto still has a long way to go as it continues to search for its own personality in a city which is traditionally so reserved in its attitudes. There was increased attendance and visibility for the event this year, but more sponsors are needed, an organization which is more responsible for its own destiny and greater commitment from a city government which benefits from such events.

Other writers will be commenting on the music so I will only briefly mention some of the music that moved me during this two week period.

Offsetting the weight of so many groups cloned to the Coltrane legacy were the many intimate concerts featuring just two performers who represented the art of jazz at its highest. There was the personal warmth of **Frank Morgan** and the virtuosity of **George Cables**. They gave fresh meaning to the bebop language. So too did **Kenny Drew** and **Niels Henning Orsted Pedersen** in a program largely devoted to grooving explorations of the popular song. The enduring warmth and sheer swing of **Jay McShann** and **Jimmy Witherspoon** turned Theatre Port Royal into a rather large living room while **Toshiko Akiyoshi** and **Lew Tabackin** refined their orchestral sense within such a naked environment.

The Cafe des Copains' solo piano series was full of surprises. It started on a high note with **Cedar Walton's** immaculate conceptions and was followed by **Jon Ballan-**

tyne's first solo performance in Toronto. He demonstrated that he is now much more than a learning musician. He has arrived on the scene! Another surprise was the last minute substitution of **Bill Mays** for an ailing Monty Alexander. His two evenings with bassist **David Williams** epitomized the essence of jazz. Within their first tune together, they found the common ground from which to build a series of stunning collaborations.

The powerhouse music of the **Tony Williams** band gave listeners in both cities a chance to hear some of the musicians now filling the gap for fallen heroes. Trumpeter **Wallace Roney**, saxophonist **Billy Pierce** and pianist **Mulgrew Miller** are major stylists. Hopefully their ears will survive the sheer volume of sound generated by Tony Williams! Both the performance and acoustical level was better in Toronto than Montreal. It was almost magical to finally hear **Jackie McLean** in person. His playing still retains all the explosiveness which made him such an exciting performer in the 1960s.

Canada's festivals play host to many groups from Europe and this year there was also music from Australia (**The Last Straw**) - with saxophonist **Bernie McGann**--and Japan (**Anli Sugano**). It's the kind of cultural exchange which needs to be balanced out with Canadian bands participating in the European circuit. The **European Jazz Quartet** played impassioned music from the Coltrane era with **Gerd Dudek's** saxophone a powerful voice. Especially noteworthy, while making the rounds of the open air events in Montreal, was the performance of **Page One**. This Danish band performed all original music which is inspired by the Wayne Shorter/Miles Davis approach of the Sixties. What caught my ear, though, was the conviction within their playing, the drive and energy of each musician and the obvious commitment to the idiom. This was genuinely exciting music. And what a pleasant surprise to discover music of such calibre on the street. Swedish trumpeter **Anders Bergcrantz** was the band's most exciting soloist (he has a recording available on Dragon 133, ***Touch***), but it was the overall impact of the band which made their music so impressive. **Thomas Hass** (tenor), **Erik Grum** (piano), **Lennart Ginman** (bass) and **Thomas Blachman** (drums) are the other musicians, all of whom come from Denmark where the band resides. Their initial recording, with a different trumpeter (Henrik Bolberg) was recorded live at the Montmartre and is available on Stunt Records 18808.

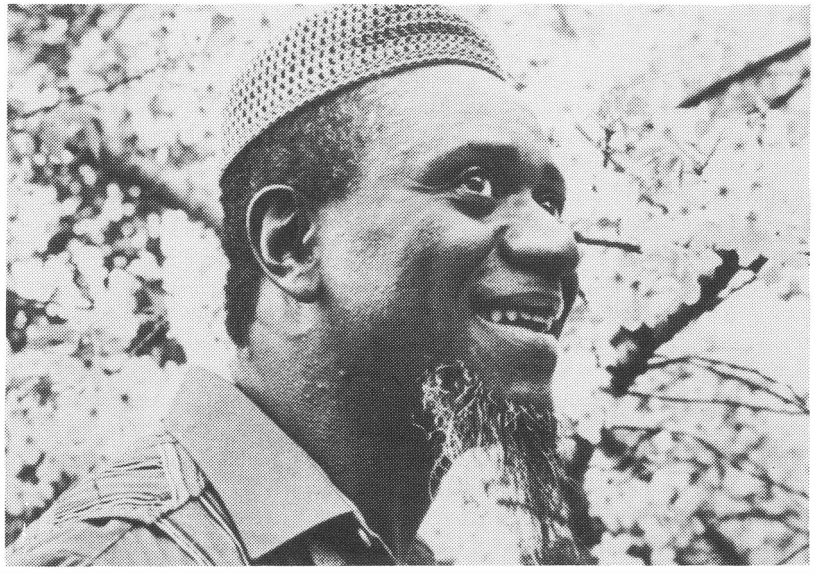
Time restrictions and overlapping concert schedules meant missing many wonderful concerts. Financial restraints were also a factor in festivals where overall passes are not part of the sales program.

Festivals are now just about the only opportunity to hear many of the musicians who make up the multi-faceted world of jazz. In a few short days, they use up a year's supply of energy. Catch them when you can for there's little else to hold onto for the rest of the year. If you want to be part of a city celebration, Montreal is a good spot to choose. If you are looking for a less intense event placed within a calm relaxed city then Toronto may be just the place.

Finally, it must be noted that neither festival has a good track record for announcing its schedule early enough for non-residents to make specific decisions about attending the events.

John Norris ■

PHAROAH SANDERS



Pharoah Sanders bites down hard on the metal mouthpiece of his tenor saxophone, producing a shrill, frenzied, delightful squall. It's been twenty years since I first heard him play as a member of John Coltrane's revolutionary jazz quintet, but the music still has the power to frighten and inspire. Pharoah squawks, squeals, chortles, grunts, bleats and bellows; his saxophone sounds almost human, an impassioned voice seething with pain, defiance, madcap hope. Pharoah wails his own peculiar version of the blues, and all of us in the audience feel a little closer to the Truth.

Check out Pharoah on the bandstand, swaying back and forth...

Squat and solid, dominating the stage with his huge, wide sound, he seems to occupy an enormous amount of space. He's flanked by sidemen on bass, drums and piano, who must strain to keep up with his frantic playing. Beads of sweat cut rivulets down his elastic face; his gray, squared-off goatee bristles like a stringy brush pasted onto his protruding chin. Energy, muscle, passion, pursuit. The audience echoes a series of tiny gasps as the melody wiggles by like a serpent--and Pharoah follows close behind, chasing the song with his stick, the country boy from Little Rock wielding his gleaming Selmer Mark VI saxophone. Pharoah in command, ruthlessly pursuing the sounds that most of us can't even begin to hear without coaxing, sounds for which there are no names...

"Monster player," I say to the man sitting next to me at the bar. I feel a need to explain what's happening on the bandstand tonight--a vain impulse to tie it all together with words. The man at the bar nods mutely and then applauds like thunder, because words are insufficient to summarize the effect of Pharoah's forceful blowing.

After all, we're listening to a jazz master--his music as formidable and joyous as any human being can fashion by exhaling powerfully through the vibrating reed of a gold-lacquered tube.

Everybody calls him Pharoah--the last name superfluous, because in jazz there is only one Pharoah. "In a century of screams," wrote one critic, "your scream is the most distinctive scream of all." But despite the intimacy that his playing seems to inspire among fans, very few people, in or out of the jazz world, claim to know much about the man.

In an effort to get closer, I call on Pharoah at home. For the past year, he has been renting a stucco house in working-class Richmond, where he lives with his wife, Shukuru, her son and his daughter from a previous marriage. It's not the first place you'd expect to find a world-class musician, but then, Pharoah has never demonstrated much interest in living up to other people's expectations. It's not that he's a self-conscious rebel; rather, he lacks the inclination to divine what other people may require from him. His tastes and habits run contrary to what most people expect from the jazz life: no smoking, no drinking or drugs, mostly fruit and vegetables sloshing around in his kitchen blender. For years, Pharoah has been talking about someday opening up a health food store.

"Is this a good neighbourhood?" he asks me, when I tell him that I once worked near his house. Pharoah doesn't know much about the neighbourhood himself; he doesn't get out much these days. "It's kind of a jones I got to get back to the house," he insists, declaring himself to be a homebody, uncomfortable in the world of smoky nightclubs and huge performance halls. "Get back to my horn."

Pharoah struggles with the trials of celebrity. Months earlier, I spotted him in the audience at Yoshi's jazz club in Oakland, attentively listening to pianist Randy Weston's latest African-influenced band, which was making a rare West Coast appearance. Weston noticed Pharoah, too, and called upon the crowd to acknowledge with their applause the presence of "the great Pharoah Sanders, master of the tenor saxophone." The listeners stamped and hooted as Pharoah bobbed up from his seat for a painful second, wincing and ducking as though his fans' adoration were a shower of stones. Even now, he insists that Weston "shouldn't have done that." At 47, Pharoah retains a youthful, rough-rubbed diffidence, bordering on timidity, that stands against the continuing power of his music.

Pharoah's house is modestly adorned, tidy, functional. The only excess for suburban Richmond: a stick of pungent incense burning on the edge of the kitchen sink. Like many of his neighbours preparing themselves for jobs at Chevron or Stauffer, Pharoah rises early each morning, usually before six a.m. By ten, the tape records are whirring, sometimes two machines simultaneously tossing back his improvisations from previous days, while he stands in the centre of the living room, blowing for perhaps twelve hours.

"Not constantly," Pharoah explains, his dark, penetrating eyes expressing pain at the prospect of being misunderstood. "Sometimes the phone rings...I just kind of relax for a minute, maybe talk some, then get back into it..."

Pharoah Sanders, man of few words, has not spent much of his life in idle conversation, on the phone or otherwise. Today we talk for several hours, but each comment from Pharoah must be extracted as if it were an abscessed tooth. Famous in the jazz world for his privacy and independence, Pharoah seems not so much distrustful of words as sceptical about their usefulness.

"He doesn't even talk to his band members," says Betty Ishida, an associate producer at Pharoah's current label, Theresa Records. "They just sit in the studio together and then go out and play something for the first time. But when you sound like Pharoah, who needs to talk?"

Given the right topic--and the right topic must always light eventually upon music--Pharoah can occasionally prove loquacious. He can talk almost indefinitely, it seems, on the highly technical subject of saxophone mouth-

PHAROAH SANDERS (Photograph by Kathy Sloane)

pieces. He owns more than 200 mouthpieces and has scoured the United States and Europe in order to locate one that will give him "a deep, dark, centred tone," something he admits will probably always elude him. Pharoah, the quiet man, is obsessed with sounds. With his mouthpiece and reed in order, he more closely approximates the human voice than any other player, weeping, bitching and hollering with intense sorrow or delight.

This afternoon, he explains to me a technique called "circular breathing," a horn player's method for extending blowing power by forcing out air from the slackened jaw, while inhaling violently through the nose, all in a continuous loop. As a demonstration, Pharoah flares his nostrils wider than seems possible and guts out a lungful of air as, froglike, his cheeks expand.

He smiles, suddenly self-conscious about the demonstration, and hums a little song to himself.

"I've been listening to the birds for a long time," he tells me after a long spell of silence. His eyes gloss over. "And I used to listen to the subways in New York. And this car door out on the street, this rusty car door..."

Eventually Pharoah seems anxious to get back to his horn. Our conversation does not so much conclude as evaporate. He escorts me to the front door and we shake hands.

"It takes a lot out of a person when somebody comes over," he confesses. "I have to think: Did I give you the right kind of information? Was I disciplined enough to give you what you really wanted? Was I a good person to be around?"

As I drive home, I realize that instead of frustration over the difficult interview, I feel deeply rested and peaceful. Pharoah is the unconscious purveyor of good vibes. He must rank among the least distracted men in the world, or certainly the least interested in the world's daily affairs.

"Pharoah's identity can't be separated from his music," one of his former associates says. "He doesn't like controversy. He's really almost childlike. The other stuff that interferes with his music, he just considers all that to be a bother."

"What other stuff?" I ask.

"Life."

It's impossible to talk about Pharoah Sanders without discussing John Coltrane. Coltrane died in 1967, but Pharoah still brightens noticeably, peeking out from behind his shield of reserve, whenever he recollects the three-and-a-half years they spent playing together. His living room is decorated with prints and photographs of Coltrane in his prime, and he speaks of his mentor in reverential tones.

They first met in 1960, during one of Coltrane's rare West Coast engagements at San Francisco's old Jazz Workshop. Both quiet and reflective men--listeners, not talkers--they were immediately profoundly drawn to each other despite an age difference of nearly fifteen years. As they prowled around the streets of downtown Oakland, nourishing themselves on a stalk of bananas presumed to bequeath some restorative powers against the rigors of the jazz life, they exchanged tentative opinions on diet and meditation and hit all the local pawnshops in search of--what else?--the perfect saxophone mouthpiece.

"John had his horn out," recalls Pharoah, "trying different mouthpieces, blowing all day long. It was one of the highlights of my life."

Pharoah had recently arrived in Oakland from his hometown of Little Rock, Arkansas. Jamming at long-departed Bay Area jazz spots such as Soulville and Bop City, Pharoah had earned notice as a dynamic young player with a sound distinct from the era's standard hard-bop phrasing. Other musicians had taken to calling him "Little Rock", perhaps as much a measure of his steady, immovable presence as his southern roots.

"We had a house in West Oakland," remembers local pianist and bandleader Ed Kelly, who cut his own musical teeth at those late-night jam sessions. "We used to call it the Big House, full of musicians. I first met Pharoah there and I was fascinated by his sound, this unique tone that no other player could get. Of course, we were all young guys then; we wanted to hang out too, go to parties and things. But Pharoah, he just wanted to play."

Obsessed with music, the twenty-year-old saxophonist was dreaming every young player's dream; New York. In 1962, hoping to rekindle his acquaintance with Coltrane in the nation's jazz capital, Pharoah climbed into a car and feverishly drove toward New York, stopping only when his rear axle collapsed. He finally arrived in the East stone broke.

New York offered Pharoah the opportunity to sleep in subways and under tenement stairwells, clutching his saxophone case to his chest like a baby. It offered barely enough to eat, funky and infrequent daytime jobs and slim hopes of a recording contract or a steady gig. But New York in the early 1960s also rumbled with the sounds of a jazz insurgency led by a band of outrageous young rebels, many of whom are now venerated as the music's masters.

Ornette Coleman was knocking the critics on their ears, breaking free of the conventional reliance on chord changes with a ceaseless stream of spontaneous melodies. Charles Mingus's Ellington-styled orchestra was experimenting with wild, collective improvisations screaming above complex, blues-rooted compositions. Cecil Taylor was regularly assaulting the piano at the Five Spot with stunning technique that sounded like five fists flying across the keyboard.

Pharoah listened; he practised with intense discipline and gigged for a short time with the legendary Sun Ra's Arkestra. He insinuated himself on the bandstand at all-night jams in barely lit lofts, galleries and basements on the Lower East Side and across the river in Newark. And he quickly became known as one of the hard-blowing, extravagant insurrectionists in what was being called the "new thing," the "avant garde" or "black art music."

Playwright and critic Amiri Baraka praised Sanders' playing as "mad body-dissolving music...the beautiful writhe of black spirit-energy." Next to Coltrane, Pharoah ranked as one of the strongest tenor players in a field of very strong contenders.

Many of Sanders's contemporaries gave their playing an amplified jolt by declaring it a political act. The new music signalled protest, affirmation, solidarity; almost all of the important players were black. Even today it is difficult not to hear the discordant screeching of this period's "free-playing" ensembles as cries of pain and outrage against the racism, poverty and warfare that were being excoriated at other levels of society by equally engaged and determined voices.

Yet Pharoah, typically, remembers this politicized scene in a very different light. "You find clippings," he says, "where people are saying it was angry music, hateful music. But we never did get into movements like that. It was really on the high-energy level, on the spiritual level."

John Coltrane shared Pharoah's vision of spiritual regeneration. In fact, Coltrane's reasons for selecting the young, relatively unseasoned Sanders in 1964 to join his famous band owed more to his opinion of Pharoah's values than his nascent instrumental technique. "Pharoah is a man of huge spiritual reservoir," Coltrane once said. "He's always trying to reach out to the truth.... He's dealing, among

other things, in energy, in integrity, in essences."

After Pharoah joined Coltrane, many listeners noted the unique sense of mutual understanding that powered the Coltrane band. Coltrane "was like a relay runner," wrote one critic. "At a certain point, he would hand the torch to Pharoah Sanders, who then had to press forward, even more powerfully, intensely and ecstatically.

To detractors--and there were many--this attempt to "investigate all the space that lies between C and C#" sounded more like Schonberg and Stravinsky locked in a tag-team wrestling match with Leadbelly and King Oliver, while cars collided and meteor showers descended upon the battlefield of their sound stage. It was never easy-listening music; rather, it was music to stretch the ears and build character. It was, in the largest sense, spiritual.

Coltrane's notion that music should help "uplift people" remains central to Pharoah's playing today. "Music is a form of god to Pharoah," says one of his musical associates. His saxophone serves a sacramental function. "What I want to give people," Pharoah says, "is something they can use the rest of their lives."

When Coltrane died, Pharoah seemed his heir apparent. Critic Frank Kofsky called him "perhaps the key figure in the new jazz movement." And for several years, Pharoah did continue to stir attention, experimenting with bells, gongs, African instruments and voices. He recorded a series of popular, energetic albums for Impulse records, including Karma and Tauhid, and for a while it seemed as though he might continue to ride the wave of controversy and rebellion that had made the Coltrane band world-renowned.

But then came the 1970s, tough years for jazz all around, and the wailing, searing sounds of Pharoah Sanders's saxophone seemed to fade into the distance along with other forms of turbulence from the troubled decade. His fountain of recordings slowed to a trickle, and for many jazz fans, Pharoah simply disappeared.

In Bump City, a late-1970s paean to Oakland written by local novelist John Krich, Pharoah Sanders appears briefly as a fallen prophet, gigging ignominiously through the city's nameless flatland dives, warming up the liquor-dulled crowds for a procession of mediocre torch singers.

"What is a prophet if he is not occasionally ignobled, scorned, unattended?" asked Krich. "Could it be Pharoah stumbles consciously toward this state of not-being-heard in order to be heard once again?"

In fact, though he performed only in small clubs in New York and the Bay Area, where he lived off and on, and rarely recorded, Pharoah spent the '70s doing what he's done all his life: practising, composing, listening to the birds and the creaking of rusty car doors and practising some more.

Today Pharoah's style still keeps pace with that of his ferocious youth, but he's gentler too. At infrequent club gigs, he turns the swooning Rodgers and Hart standard, Easy To Remember, into his own breathy signature tune. In place of the interstellar screeching of his Coltrane days, he'll often intersperse his most furious musical explorations with snatches of the basic blues, even singing along behind the piano. Far more accessible than ever before, in recent years Pharoah has cultivated a new cadre of admirers through his superb recordings on Theresa Records, a tiny but superior jazz label innocuously nestled in the hills of El Cerrito. Over the past nine years, he's been featured on seven albums, including a pair of dynamic two-record sets, Journey to the One and Rejoice, and two live albums recorded locally.

"Pharoah is one of the best, most innovative players alive today," affirms Allen Pittman, founder and co-owner of the Theresa label. "I'm just surprised he's not a phenomenon."

Pharoah has never fared well in places like the Downbeat or Playboy annual critics' polls and readers' surveys. And while other leading saxophonists like Sonny Rollins regularly appear at events like the Kool Jazz Festival--or cross over to a wide radio audience with funk renditions of pop tunes--Pharoah continues to appeal chiefly as "a major figure among musicians." He draws huge crowds in Europe, where he tours almost yearly, but he has yet to receive the full measure of appreciation in the United States.

Those closest to Pharoah inevitably cite his eccentric and contradictory nature in explaining why his reputation hasn't risen again to the level of the Coltrane years. Record producer Allen Pittman admits that he has tried to push the saxophonist toward more hard-headed career decisions: for instance, an organized club and concert hall tour following each album release. "But I always meet some resistance somewhere along the line," Pittman admits. "I've learned. You don't push Pharoah."

On the surface, this seems to be a very old story: the impractical musician, the inevitable conflict between business and art. And at times, Pharoah's disengagement from the details of his own career can be startling. One evening, I joined Pharoah and Pittman to listen to some old records and to talk. I mentioned an Impulse album cut live in Seattle--a recording that actually promoted Pharoah's name above that of Coltrane. Pharoah couldn't remember the album, though he thought his cousin might own a copy. Another time, I asked him about Archie Shepp, another prominent young Turk of the '60s, whose work on tenor was often compared to Pharoah's. "Shepp, no I don't think I ever met him," said Pharoah. Digging through my records at home, I pulled out a ground breaking album from 1965 titled Ascension, in which Shepp, Pharoah and Coltrane screamed on together.

Perhaps Pharoah's disinterest, his lack of worldliness, owes something to the nature of his art. Music is evanescent: once out of the horn, it rises and disappears like smoke. You can capture it on vinyl, and that's fine, but the real point is to keep playing, stretching, searching. For Pharoah, fashionable posturing, hip gestures and even sober business planning are efforts doomed from the start.

Several years ago, while recording Rejoice for Theresa Records, Pharoah discovered that the studio piano employed for the date was afflicted with a deep buzz that spoiled the sound. Since the clock was ticking off payments at better than union scale for some of the sidemen, Pharoah suggested to Betty Ishida that she improvise a brief speech over the piano's opening bars.

"He always liked the sound of my voice," Ishida recalled. "But I didn't know what to say. 'Say something about peace and love,' he told me. This '60s stuff. But that's really the way Pharoah feels."

One of "the god seekers," Amiri Baraka once called him, for whom "to play strong forever would be the cry and the worshipful purpose of life." Or as Ishida puts it today: "Pharoah feels like he's a funnel. The music's going on up there." She motions vaguely toward the sky, toward the great unfurling universe. "It's just that Pharoah's able to express it."

Theresa Records are available from:

Cadence, The Cadence Building, Redwood, NY 13679

This article was previously published in ***Image Magazine.***

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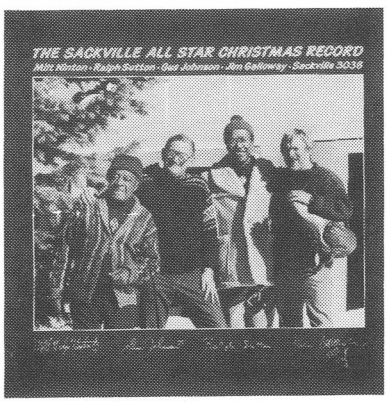

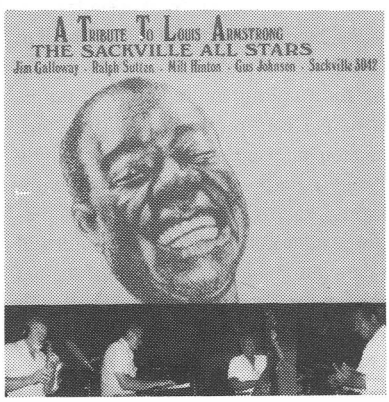

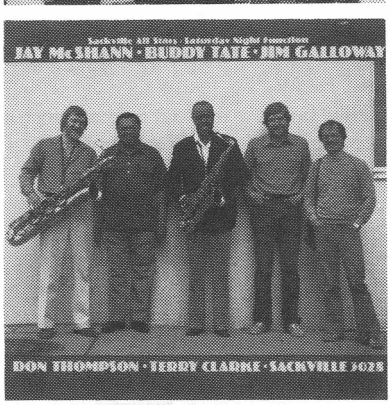

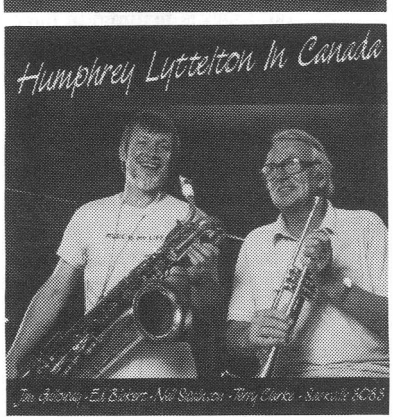

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COMPACT DISCS IN REVIEW

The debate over the CD's relevance continues. There was the disturbing report in the summer of 1988 that the inks used on the CD label would eat into the disk and it would self-destruct over a period of years. That story seems to have been a red herring. The sound quality of CDs continue to fluctuate, as does the ability of the CD machine to reproduce the music.

Clarrie Hanley voiced reservations which seem to be commonplace in the June 1988 issue of ***Jersey Jazz***. "I have steadfastly stuck to vinyl on the principle that the record companies have handed the collector a raw deal with their CD releases--hodge-podge reissues, pirated music badly recorded, no new jazz material from the larger companies and a vast overpricing."

These criticisms had some validity two or three years ago but many changes have taken place. Most major companies are now involved in extensive reissue programs which have seen many obscure sessions restored to circulation. Atlantic, CBS, RCA (through the BGM Bluebird series) and Polygram areflooding the stores with their reissues while Fantasy (the largest non multi-national) has several hundred CDS in its catalog.

Smaller companies now have little difficulty in obtaining manufacturing time at the plants and many of them are issuing their new material on CD. Their biggest problem is financing the repackaging of their catalog in a distribution environment which severely limits their accessibility.

The manufactured cost of a CD in North America is now twice that of an LP and retail prices reflect the spread. Most companies try to offer greater playing time than is possible on an LP. Concord and Black Saint/Soulnote are companies who continue to record only an lp's worth of music while issuing the music in all three formats.

The advantages of the CD are as dramatic as when the LP was introduced in the 1950s. Early LPs were five times the price of a 78 but their extended playing time, much improved sound and convenience gradually won over the sceptical. The same scenario is taking place with the CD.

New recordings sound much better on CD and recent computerized systems can now remove surface noise, clicks and pops from 78s in a manner unknown only a few years ago. This process, demonstrated in 1988 on BBC television, promises new listening horizons for all early recordings.

Recent CD issues, covering a wide range of musical styles, give a good idea of the depth of choice available. Some of these recordings are also available on LP but an increasing number of companies are no longer making LPs.

Love Remains **(Red CD 123212-2)** is the latest example of maturing alto saxophonist **Robert "Bobby" Watson**. All but one of the compositions were written by the leader and they serve as excellent vehicles upon which to build exciting improvisations. The vitality and energy of his playing immediately captures your attention. His improvisations flow with a restless passion at up tempos and are caressingly tender in the ballads. The intensity is maintained through the drive of **John Hicks'** percussive piano attack and the cohesion achieved between the pianist, bassist **Curtis Lundy** and drummer **Marvin "Smitty" Smith**. This well recorded collaboration (November 1986) is an impressive musical experience.

An Evening with Joe Henderson **(Red CD 12315-2)** is an electrifying concert performance from the 1987 Genoa Festival. Tenor saxophonist Henderson shares the solo work with **Charlie Haden** in the four extended performances with drummer **Al Foster** underpinning their work. *Beatrice* and *Ask Me Now*, included in Henderson's Village Vanguard Blue Note sessions, are really opened up here by the trio. Henderson's superb sense of form never falters in these lengthy improvisations which serve as a further reminder of his stature as one of today's major performers.

Joe Henderson is now a member of the **Paris Reunion Band** and is featured in their second recording, ***For Klook*** **(Sonet SNTCD-977)**. **Nat Adderley, Grachan Moncur** and **Idris Muhammad** are the other musicians who have replaced original members of the band. This 1986 recording, like its predecessor, has tightly structured performances and arrangements--reflecting the organizational concepts of **Nathan Davis** who is the musical director. His lead soprano gives two of the tunes *(For Klook, Jamaican Hot Nights)* a special flavour while the trumpet, two saxophone and trombone front line adds density to

the ensembles. This is elegantly structured music with solos which tend to understate rather than jubilantly shout out the joys of the performance.

Benny Golson's arranging skills are evident in ***Stardust*** **(Denon CY-1838)**, a CD-only collaboration between the tenor saxophonist and trumpeter **Freddie Hubbard**. The frameworks are much looser than those used by the Paris Reunion Band with the focus centred on the solo contributions. Both Hubbard and Golson play with polished ease in front of a smoothly cohesive rhythm section of **Mulgrew Miller, Ron Carter** and **Marvin "Smitty" Smith**. The recorded sound matches the excellence of the music and the playing time is a generous 67 minutes.

Central City Sketches **(Musicmasters CJJD 60126X)** features the **American Jazz Orchestra** performing **Benny Carter** compositions--all of which are arranged by Carter and he is the principal soloist. Specially written for the occasion is a six part suite from which this CD derives its title. This is classic big band writing and the orchestra brings out the subtle nuances of Carter's writing. This music was performed at the Great Hall of Cooper Union on February 26, 1987 but it is unclear how much of this music comes from that concert and how much of it was recorded in the studio. Trumpeters **Marvin Stamm** and **Virgil Jones**, saxophonists **Loren Schoenberg** and **Lew Tabackin**, trombonists **Britt Woodman, Eddie Bert** and **Jimmy Knepper**, pianists **Dick Katz** and **John Lewis**, bassist **Ron Carter** and drummer **Mel Lewis** all make solo contributions to the 71 minutes of music on this CD. Ultimately, though, it is the imagination, tenacity and sheer artistry of Benny Carter which dominates every bar of this music.

Less ambitious in its scope but perhaps even more personal in its message is **Benny Carter's** ***In The Mood For Swing*** **(Musicmasters CIJD 60144T)**. Once again all the compositions are by Benny Carter and interpreted by a core quartet of Carter (alto saxophone), **Roland Hanna, George Mraz** and **Louis Bellson, Dizzy Gillespie** joins the group for four selections while **Howard Alden** fills out the rhythm section in seven selections as well as contributing tasty solos. Carter had performed with Alden, Mraz and Bellson shortly before this session aboard the S/S Norway, and his enthusiasm for their playing had made his sets with them one of the highlights of the week. Now that excellence is captured for everyone to hear in this collection which ranks among the finest Carter has made since his return to full time playing. His songs are richly melodic as well as harmonically stimulating and the subtle twists always inject a sense of surprise. One of the highlights is a chance to hear *South Side Samba,* Carter's catchy line which he has been performing for a decade. Its only previous recording was in a concert lp from Japan. Carter and Gillespie give it a joyous reading here.

Happening Now **(Hat Art CD 6008)** comes from the 1987 concert tour of the U.S. by the **George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band**, which is markedly different from Benny Carter in the scope of its musical philosophy. Gruntz' orchestral concepts have continued to incorporate the most contemporary jazz ideas and his music is designed to enhance the special qualities of his musicians. **Kenny Wheeler, Joe Henderson, Enrico Rava, Ray Anderson, Larry Schneider** and **Sheila Jordan** are the voices around which Grantz shapes his music and the performances are stunning. Interwoven into the music are elements of various cultures but the underpinning to the music is the vitality and energy of the jazz tradition.

Archie Shepp, in comparison to most contemporary players, is a diamond in the rough. His sound is unmistakeable and it is personal. He plays a song with a unique perception of its inner qualities, making the song bend to his wishes. In ***Duo Reunion*** **(L+R 45003)**, he rides roughshod over the quietly emphatic chording of **Horace Parlan** but his hauntingly lyrical renditions of such standards as *Sophisticated Lady* and *Stardust* is truly personal. Execution difficulties and a flabby embouchure are more noticeable in the quartet session made a day earlier (May 4, 1987). ***Splashes*** **(L+R 45005)** adds bassist **Harry Emery** and drummer **Clifford Jarvis** to the duo. The forceful pulse threatens to overcome the saxophonist in the more complex lines of *Relaxin' at Camarillo* and *Groovin' High,* but somehow it all ends up in place. Shepp is more expansive within the easier pace of *Reflections* and *Manhattan* but whatever the song he always manages to offer us a fresh vision.

Cedar Walton's busy career has recently achieved greater prominence due to several recordings with his own trio in Europe and his collaborations with such high profile hornmen as Frank Morgan. And yet, when everything is evaluated, he still remains an under appreciated artist. He doesn't record for a major corporation and neither do such contemporaries as Tommy Flanagan and Kenny Barron - all

JOE HENDERSON (Photograph by Gerard Futrick)

of whom are more important to the jazz world than the newest nine day wonders. Perhaps it's just as well. No one wants to hear Walton with a drum machine, synthesizer and backup vocal group. But he does get additional help on ***Cedar Walton Plays*** **(Delos 4008)** - a CD-only issue which is notable for its generous playing time, the beautifully recorded sound and the tasteful presentation of Walton's piano within his trio **(Ron Carter, Billy Higgins)** and a five horn ensemble which often seems larger and fuller than it really is. **Kenny Garrett, Don Sickler** and **Steve Turre** also solo but the focus is on the leader. He executes with clarity and precision within the framework of the arrangements.

There's more spontaneity in ***The Trio 2*** **(Red CD 123193-2)** - part of a 1985 concert in Bologna, Italy with his regular "on the road" trio cohorts **David Williams** and **Billy Higgins**. This isn't a casual pickup band and their cohesion within the arrangements as well as the consistently imaginative improvisations make this clear. There is an open-ended feel to these concert performances but equally impressive is a studio session from the same tour (only available on lp) which is simply titled ***Cedar Walton*** **(Timeless 223).**

Kenny Barron and **Buster Williams** constituted 50% of Sphere but they also perform together as a duo and ***Two as One*** **(Red CD 12321402)** captures them exploring the harmonic intricacies of some familiar standards at the Umbria Jazz Festival in 1986. There's little planning to the interpretations. They simply

state the melodies and then explore the rhythmic and harmonic possibilities within the improvisations. In that sense it is safe to say that this is a representative set by two exceptionally gifted musicians but it doesn't have the impact of Barron's various studio recordings over the past decade.

A fresh generation of pianists are rapidly maturing. While they may lack some of the individuality of past masters, they can certainly perform with tremendous conviction. This is evident in ***Magical Trio 1*** **(Emarcy 832.859-2)** which features the piano of **James Williams** along with **Ray Brown** and **Art Blakey**. Unlike earlier recordings by the pianist, this is a spontaneously put together session which is full of musical surprises. Williams has a strong affinity with the blues tradition and elements of this are noticeable throughout this date. The program includes popular songs, original compositions based on several different structural devices, and jazz standards.

Style is something musicians search hard and long to achieve. **Adam Makowicz**, like other Europeans, has found his voice in the U.S. His considerable pianistic skills are now joined with an expressive sense which makes his performances more personal. His music is built around harmonic embellishment and digital dexterity. This is amply displayed in ***Naughty Baby*** **(Novus 3022-2N)** - a selection of George Gershwin songs arranged by Makowicz for trio performance. The interpretations are as light as a feather with the piano dancing gracefully over the buoyant rhythmic patterns of **Charlie Haden** and **Al Foster**. **Dave Holland** is added as a second bassist on six of the selections.

While Naughty Baby is delicately engaging, ***Interface*** **(Sonet SNT CD-963)** presents a more complete view of Makowicz's artistry. He sounds supremely confident performing his own compositions. Bassist **Palle Danielson** and drummer **Jon Christensen** are eloquent companions who contribute vigorously to music which has much more personality than the Gershwin tribute. Interface is an apt description for the collaborative work of the trio in this essentially romantic approach to jazz music.

Russian pianist **Michael Nabatov** reveals more of this major influence (McCoy Tyner) in ***Circle The Line*** **(GM 3009)** (167 Dudley Road, Newton Centre, MA 02159) than Makowicz does in his recent recordings. There is a great deal of strength to his playing but *Circle The Line* is very much a group effort and bassist **Ed Schuller** and drummer **Paul Motian** are equal partners with Nabatov in creating the special ambience of the music. Both Nabatov and Schuller are still searching for the right way to express their gifts but Motian's presence is an invaluable bonus to their efforts.

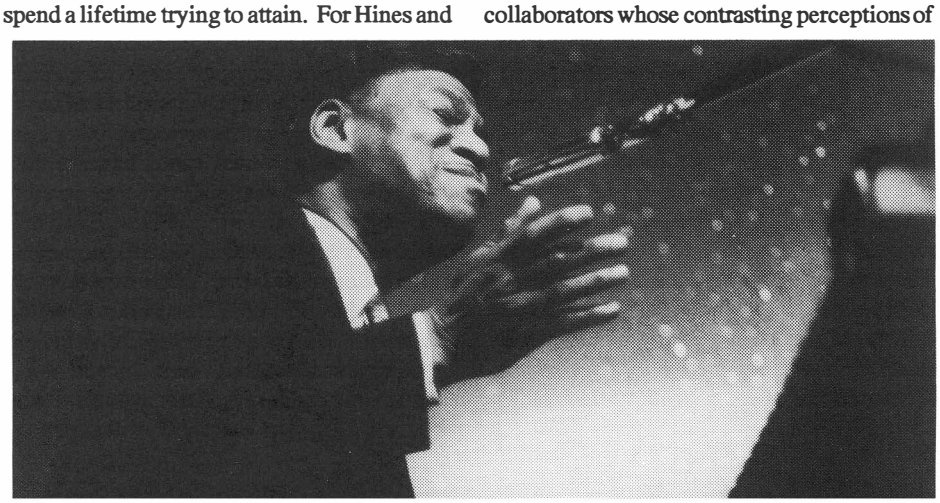
Don Friedman's artistry has been in place for a long time. ***Meant To Be*** **(Apollon BY32-5012)**, the most recent of his solo piano recordings, was made in Tokyo in October 1987. It is a striking example of his musical thought, eloquent improvisational ability and the rich tonality of his piano touch. Six of the nine compositions are by the pianist and they are pianistically conceived vehicles for his many skills.

There is so much cross-pollinization in jazz today that the basic elements of the music are often obscured. It has become a legitimate facet of jazz to allow European elements to dominate the music. The language of the blues, for instance, is only incidental to the playing of Adam Makowicz, Simon Nabatov and Don Friedman. But at one time it was an essential ingredient, even in a pianist like Earl Hines who, it was said, didn't favour the blues. How then does one explain away such Hinesian masterpieces as *West End Blues* (with Louis Armstrong), *Blues In Thirds* (with Sidney Bechet) or *Brussels Hustle*. Hines' masterful sense of swing is another element often discarded today--and our loss is apparent when one hears ***Earl Hines: Live at the Village Vanguard*** **(Columbia CK 44197)** a previously unreleased 1965 recording. Hines is in superlative form, better even than the legendary Little Theatre concerts which reestablished his stature as a virtuoso jazz soloist. The Vanguard is an ideal venue for the performance of jazz. Its intimate environment is encouraging to both musicians and listeners and this chemistry is apparent in the playing of Hines, **Gene Ramey** and **Eddie Locke**. Saxophonist **Budd Johnson** joins the trio for six of the nine selections. This music has a timeless quality which lesser performers spend a lifetime trying to attain. For Hines and Johnson this was one night performing the music they helped shape. The only tragedy is that it took more than twenty years for it to be released.

Ray Bryant is a pianist within whom can be found all of the attributes essential to a jazz artist. But more importantly, perhaps, has been his shaping of a distinctive voice on his instrument. ***Trio Today*** **(Emarcy 832.589-2)** is notable for a number of reasons. The performances come from his first trio session in over five years and contains many tunes not previously recorded by the pianist. The repertoire consists of outstanding compositions by jazz musicians (including Bryant) which are harmonically interesting as well as being rhythmically and melodically challenging. The fluent interpretations are full of unique Bryant touches while bassist **Rufus Reid** and drummer **Freddie Waits** are remarkably in tune with the pianist's wishes in this outstanding recording.

Neither **Mike Wofford** nor saxophonist **Paul Sundfar** are household names and yet their qualities deserve listener attention. ***Funkallero*** **(Trend TRCD-552)** is an excellent showcase for their combined talents. The repertoire again comes from within the jazz community (Monk, Miles, Strayhorn, Evans, Bob Borg, Mercer Ellington, Hampton Hawes) and both the pianist and the saxophonist (who doubles on alto and soprano) show sensitivity, lyricism and a focused expression which comes with maturity. This music is for listening.

Manhattan Jazz **(Musicmasters CIJD 60136)** is the latest in a series of collaborations between cornetist **Ruby Braff** and pianist **Dick Hyman**. As always the results are exquisite. The music comes from a New York studio recording broadcast originally on Public Radio. The music is notable for the spontaneous way in which each performer reshapes the popular songs they use as the basis for their music making. Hyman and Braff are ideal collaborators whose contrasting perceptions of



the material keeps the listeners on their toes.

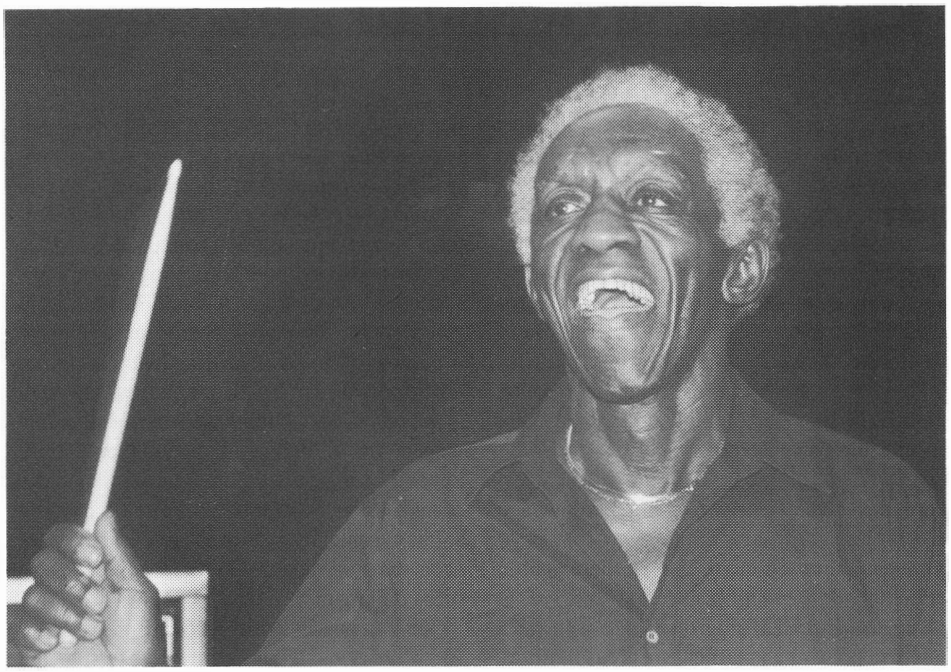
Guido Basso **(Innovation JCCD 0014)** is a long overdue showcase for the brilliant soloist from Rob McConnell's Boss Brass. He's featured on flugelhorn in this quartet setting with pianist **Frank Collett**, bassist **Andy Simpkins** and drummer **Terry Clarke**. Basso has the kind of dancing fluency which made Clifford Brown's playing so attractive but that's where the similarities end. There's a sinuous flow to the improvisations as well as a gentility which is reflected in the prettiness of the chosen songs. The playing is understated but always firm. It's music to keep.

Harlem Blues **(Landmark LCD-1516-2)** marks the return to recording of **Donald Byrd**. The trumpeter/flugelhornist recorded prolifically in his youth, stepped sideways into popular music and is now back where he started. The angular hard-bop of *Fly Little Byrd* and *Sir Master Cool Guy* are new rhythm lines by the trumpeter but it is the energy and exuberance of his sidemen, all stellar players from the new generation, who capture the imagination. Alto saxophonist **Kenny Garrett**, pianist **Mulgrew Miller**, bassist **Rufus Reid** and drummer **Marvin "Smitty" Smith** are musicians with much to say and they make the most of their opportunities. The economical lyricism of the leader is best captured within the orchestral textures of **Mike Daugherty's** synthesizer in *Harlem Blues* and *Alter Ego*.

Sam Most's Any Time Any Season (Innovation JCCD 0012) was originally recorded as flute/piano duets by Most and **Frank Collett**. Three selections *(Like Someone In Love, Lover, Yesterday)* remain in their original state and illustrate the resourcefulness and preciseness of both players. The six remaining selections are enhanced with string arrangements which envelop the flute and piano in a softly compelling blanket of sound.

Collaboration is a 1987 recording by **Helen Merrill** and **Gil Evans** which uses updated and altered charts of songs they recorded together in 1956. There's now greater depth to Ms. Merrill's interpretations and the fullness of the orchestrations are a comfortable frame around the atmospheric overtones of the songs. There's a pristine musical purity to both Helen Merrill and Gil Evans which is only shattered in the emotion packed solos of **Steve Lacy**. His presence, and solo statements, help make *Summertime* and *Any Place I Hang My Hat Is Home* the highlights of this well crafted collaboration.

REVIEW BY JOHN NORRIS



ART BLAKEY (Photograph by Frank Wernicki)

J. J. JOHNSON AND KAI WINDING * *The Great Kai & J.J.* * Impulse MCAD -42012

McCOY TYNER * *Inception* * Impulse MCAD-42000

DUKE ELLINGTON AND JOHN COLTRANE * Impulse MCAD-39103

CEDAR WALTON AND GEORGE COLEMAN * *Eastern Rebellion* Impulse MCAD-33102

ART BLAKEY AND THE JAZZ MESSENGERS * *Album of the Year* Impulse MCAD-33103

GIANTS OF JAZZ * I*n *Berlin '71* * EmArcy 834 567-2

THE HARPER BROTHERS * Verve 837 033-2

CRAIG FRAEDRICH * *First Flight* * Creative Digital Products CDP-5188

Listening to most of the CDs under review is like being transported back in time without knowing it. Is it possible that the J.J. Johnson and Kai Winding recording was released twenty-eight years ago as the first Impulse album? It seems like yesterday. Unfortunately, listening now on CD to some of this music first heard over a quarter of a century ago and seldom since reveals how time has not served well performances that once seemed vibrant.

The group co-led by trombonists **Johnson** and **Winding** was one of the most popular of the mid-1950s. Part of the reason for the success of this pair of first-generation bop trombonists (Johnson was and is **the** bop trombonist), we see clearly now, was novelty: two trombones plus rhythm was a new concept when they first recorded for **Vik** in 1954. Their popularity increased with their work for **Prestige** and **Bethlehem**, and they gained such a wide audience from their **Columbia** sessions that they expanded their front line to **eight** trombones for one Columbia album. Following their final Columbia recording in 1956, they disbanded.

Reuniting them to launch the new **Impulse** label was a good idea. Certainly Johnson and Winding were individually and jointly proven musicians who had succeeded artistically and commercially. Excellent sidemen were chosen to accompany them: **Bill Evans, Paul Chambers/Tommy Williams**, and **Roy Haynes/ Arthur Taylor**. With every reason to expect success, Creed Taylor produced an album that may have sold well, although today the music seems tepid.

There are several reasons why Johnson and Winding did not create music of lasting value on this recording and probably on all of their recordings. The most obvious problem is

EARL HINES (Photograph by Bill Smith)

texture. This recording cries out for a trumpet or a saxophone and more solo space for pianist Evans. Frankly, so much trombone playing quickly becomes tedious, at least to me. Another problem is tune selection. The leaders diminish the quality of the best tunes they play *(Alone Together, Blue Monk)* by surrounding them with mediocre compositions by others *(Side by Side, The Theme from Picnic)* and by themselves (Johnson's *Trixie* and Winding's *Going, Going, Gong!)*. Something for everybody here means diluted substance.

Another problem is the length of each performance, which ranges from three minutes to five minutes, with an average of less than three minutes, thirty seconds. That is, there is little stretching out, and all is neat and safe.

In the end, that this type of music once attained popular and critical success tells more about the age that produced it than about the quality of the music itself.

More successful than the Johnson/Winding date, the new **McCoy Tyner** CD includes Tyner's first (***Inception***, 1962) and third ***Nights of Ballads & Blues***, 1963) albums as leader. By the time of his 1962 recording, Tyner was a young veteran not yet halfway into his musical relationship with John Coltrane (He had already recorded ***My Favorite Things***, the Village Vanguard sessions, and other classics with Coltrane). Yet, with the exception of the fire in *Inception* and an unusual treatment of *Speak Low*, this is only slightly more than an average trio date.

While clearly identifiable as a Tyner session, and with some predictably wonderful drumming by **Elvin Jones**, the 1962 listener must have been mildly disappointed with this recording and have hoped for a more substantial outing soon from this much-discussed pianist. Perhaps, though, given the controversial nature of the Coltrane quartet's music then, Tyner wished to prove that he could play in a restrained manner, as Coltrane presumably did later that year on his Impulse album ***Ballads***.

The 1963 session, with **Les Humphries** replacing Jones, begins unpromisingly with Duke Ellington's *Satin Doll,* which even then was overrecorded. But if Tyner cannot redeem this tune, he redeems himself throughout much of this session. He excels on Monk's *Round Midnight* and *Blue Monk*, but also on the unlikely *The Days of Wine and Roses.* This is a fine trio session, although Humphries's brush work occasionally grates.

Both **Duke Ellington** and **John Coltrane** compromise on their 1962 date: Ellington by performing with Coltrane; Coltrane by resisting the temptation to play "out." Coltrane really only comes close to breaking loose on Ellington's *Take the Coltrane*. During Coltrane's first, impassioned solo (which is augmented by **Elvin Jones's** amazing drumming), Ellington sits silent, as if dumbfounded or in awe, or both. The pianist/composer attempts to accompany the saxophonist on his second solo, but he only feeds a few feeble chords. My point is merely that Coltrane shows considerable respect for Ellington by playing only once beyond Ellington's limits. For the remainder of the session, Ellington sets the mood and both soloists generally play well and complement each other, although Coltrane is clearly the more dominant of them.

This music is worth listening to seriously for two reasons. It is good music, to be sure, but is also a historical document that records the only meeting between the greatest figure in all of jazz history and one of the two or three most significant revolutionary figures of the 1960s. Had it not been for the achievements of the former, the latter might not have created as he did.

The **Cedar Walton/George Coleman** session, recorded in 1975, is new to me, although I believe it is the Walton trio of the time (with **Sam Jones** and **Billy Higgins**), augmented by Coleman. While Walton has been acknowledged for some time as a premier pianist, both as soloist and accompanist, Coleman has never received the acclaim due someone of his talents, despite numerous good recordings and having been hired by the likes of Miles Davis. Here he shows that his distinctive voice, influenced to a degree by Coltrane, deserves serious attention at last. Featuring two originals by Walton *(Bolivia, Mode for Joe)*, one original by Coleman *(5/4 Thing)*, one by Jones *(Bittersweet)*, and one by Coltrane *(Naima)*, this is superior small-group hard bop by four substantial musicians.

Recorded in Paris in 1981, **Art Blakey's** immodestly and hyperbolically named ***Album of the Year*** is too recent and too acclaimed to demand much analysis. But something does need to be said about it in light of subsequent developments concerning **Wynton** (here spelled Winton) **Marsalis**. On this, one of his earliest recordings, his technique is impressive for a twenty year old. And he plays with some feeling, a quality I find generally lacking in his later recordings. (He is therefore to me more impressive as a classical than as a jazz player.) The reason for this emotionalism in 1981 might well have been Blakey, who has seen trumpeters come and go, all of them possessing a good blend of technique and feeling. In other words, Blakey could coax emotion out of a stoic, and did, apparently, with Marsalis.

Recently I read that Marsalis apologized to Blakey for, I think, having been unappreciative of Blakey's talent during his tenure with the drummer. The better apology would have been for his having deserted an important aspect of music that Blakey probably goaded him into expressing.

This commentary on Marsalis aside, Blakey's Paris session contains good music with no great surprises for anyone familiar with Blakey's music, other than the youth of his players: **Bill Pierce, Robert Watson, James Williams, Charles Fambrough**, and Marsalis.

Blakey is the drummer with the ***Giants of Jazz***, whose 1971 Berlin session is significant. From the early measures of the first tune, *Blue'n Boogie,* **Thelonious Monk** plays inspired piano, and his performance throughout these performances constitutes the musical highlight of this concert. (Perhaps Blakey is also partly responsible for this.) We know now what no one could have known then: this European tour, during which he recorded his final solo and trio sides in London, constituted his last flurry of recording activity; his last session was a year later with the Giants of Jazz in Switzerland, with no recording between the two tours. He recorded nothing during his last decade.

Dizzy Gillespie also plays well. Although his playing has diminished in recent years, and understandably so, he was in 1971 preparing for a burst of creative energy that would culminate in a series of recordings with Pablo beginning in 1974. And if he was capable making such an album as ***Souled Out*** (the pun is more appropriate than one would like) in 1970, he was also capable of playing sublimely, as with the Giants of Jazz. Open or muted, whimsical or serious, his solos are rewarding, and especially on *Tin Tin Deo*, a duet with **Al McKibbon**. **Sonny Stitt** is less significant here than his deserved substantial reputation might suggest, and **Kai Winding**, a replacement for J.J. Johnson, is less significant than Stitt. In sum, substantial music by some of the fathers of modern jazz.

Winard Harper, the elder of the Harper brothers, was nine years old when the Giants of Jazz recorded in Berlin. **Michael Bowie**, the eldest member of the quintet, was only ten; **Stephen Scott**, the youngest, was two. In other words, the Harper brothers' group is one of the

youngest groups in jazz; it is also a substantial one. Most impressive of these musicians is trumpeter **Philip Harper**, who is reminiscent of the two trumpeters he acknowledges as major influences, Lee Morgan and Kenny Dorham. Sometimes he has the clear, clarion tone of Morgan; other times, a buzzing, pinched sound like Dorham's. Not bad models.

As proficient as these musicians are and as attractive as their music is, their playing raises the same question that has been asked about such other fairly recent phenoms as Wynton Marsalis and Scott Hamilton; namely, what is the value of young musicians playing in the older forms--in this case primarily hard bop--when, ideally, they should be discovering a new vocabulary and taking music forward? This is a valid question, although part of the answer to it is that one must first of all be true to oneself. But no matter how one responds to the question, the fact remains that the Harper brothers' group (**Justin Robinson** and Stephen Scott in addition to Bowie and the Harpers) plays well and deserves to be heard. Perhaps in time one or more of them will help take improvised music into a new direction.

Most of my comments about the Harper brothers' quintet apply as well to **Craig Fraedrich's** quartet. This group also makes good music in the tradition, although these musicians seem more formally schooled than the members of the quintet, which I intend as a slightly negative comment because they sound a little too stiff and formal. Further, while the quintet features musicians of similar capabilities, Fraedrich, playing both trumpet and flugelhorn, is clearly the major instrumentalist with his group. While his technique generally predominates on this recording (he reminds me of a young Claudio Roditi), he nevertheless plays well; and he has written an attractive tune in *First Flight*, the most successful piece the group plays. He is accompanied by **Robert Fox, Brian Bennett,** and **Alan Wonneberger**.

The sound on all of these CDs is at least adequate. Nothing appears to have been done to enhance the Impulses, but the sound was good to begin with. Therefore, what is the benefit of buying this music on CD if one has it on disc? None, except for the Tyner release that contains the entirety of two albums.

Of these CDs, I recommend most enthusiastically the ***Ellington/Coltrane*** on **Impulse** and ***Giants of Jazz*** on **EmArcy**, for the reasons stated above, although the former suffers from a playing time of only thirty-five minutes.

REVIEW BY BENJAMIN FRANKLIN V

ROSCOE MITCHELL * THE NEXT STEP

After playing woodwinds in Muhal Richard Abrams's Experimental Big Band in Chicago 1961-63, Roscoe Mitchell became a founding member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) and served as its Dean of Education 1964-70. During the mid 1960s, Mitchell led various groups and in 1969 he organized the Art Ensemble of Chicago (AEC), a collective whose recordings and live performances have profoundly affected improvised music.

After forming the Creative Arts Collective in East Lansing, Michigan, in 1974, Mitchell served as artist-in-residence at the University of Illinois, Champaign, at the Creative Music Studio, Woodstock, NY, and at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he is now associate professor of music.

Critics have singled out for praise Mitchell's achievements, including the work of the Art Ensemble, his 1978 record Nonaah, and his work as a composer. Mitchell was presented the National Association of Jazz Educators' 1988 Outstanding Service to Jazz Education Award, and the National Endowment for the Arts has awarded him several grants. His Variations and Sketches from the Bamboo Terrace, a work for chamber orchestra, was premiered at the University of Wisconsin in 1988, and he is currently working with his quartet, his New Chamber Ensemble, and the Sound Ensemble. Mitchell takes time off from composition to play an occasional concert, and he taught at Banff in July 1989.

Paul Baker: You're teaching at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Roscoe Mitchell: I teach a class called Music in Performance. It involves some live performances. It's varied. We might listen to a blues band one week, then music by John Cage, then flamenco, then American Indian. I designed the course to expose young people to music they wouldn't ordinarily hear.

Is this the responsibility of the media?

Sure. When I was growing up, a particular station might play a wide variety of music in a day's programming. Now stations play the same thing, all the time, day after day. What happens is that large masses of people don't get that exposure. And record companies used to be small, owned by one person. Now it's a commercial machine--mass production. Does that lead to music? It does lead to mass production...

How can you reach students in just one seminar?

People turn around in their own time. It took me time to understand certain directions in music. What I try to do in the class is to bridge that gap for people, to give them something else to think about. They may hear something in the class that may stimulate them to explore that segment of the music. That might open other channels. Most people who really find out about music are the ones who are really searching as listeners.

I saw you perform in Madison last September with Tani Tabbal and Malachi Favors. The music was strong, almost overpowering. It seemed as though your trio was trying to blow away the audience. Were you?

That's a big question. Now we're talking about the overall, global musical scene. In the 60s overall, throughout the planet, and certainly in the area of music, there were many inventive things happening. I feel that some of those things haven't been explored. What we've seen happen between the 60s and now is the commercial machine expanding and dominating the scene. From 60s to now, we've seen the institutionalizing of so-called "jazz." We've seen a general turning away of new ideas and sounds. Some people have survived that era; the Art Ensemble of Chicago is one of them. So now, as we approach the 90s, I think we'll start to see the re-emergence of some of the people from the 60s who have continued to work on theirmusic. People will want to hear fresh new directions in music--the next step in music. There is always a next step; there has to be a next step.

So what we did at Willy Street Art Fair in Madison is in keeping with the time. From the 1960s to now is 30 years. There's a lot of information there, information that some of the younger musicians have skipped over. They're not really nailed down. They're getting these messages from the media that they should do such-and-such to "re-create the tradition."

ROSCOE MITCHELL, LESTER BOWIE & JOSEPH JARMAN (Photograph by Bill Smith)

But the tradition will never be re-created as strongly as it was by the people who invented it. You're seeing a group of musicians that don't have a knowledge of the 60s, and they will have to go back and study the music.

You used the phrase "institutionalization of jazz." That sounds ominous.

We're feeling an institutionalization in all of our arts. I think one thing that's important about art is that it does keep evolving. It's hard to select a particular era of art and live by that rule as if it were the rule for this society entirely.

It can be exciting, though. You can look at some of those original solos as great works of music, just as we re-create works that have been notated by great composers. I've done it. In a concert in Chicago, I paid tribute to John Coltrane, and not only did I play his compositions, I played some of the compositions with the actual solos by Coltrane. This is another link that will help people get re-acquainted with some of the people they've missed, like Coltrane, and Sonny Rollins, and Horace Silver, who is a great composer and has contributed so much to the music. I feel that a lot of younger people don't really know these people at all.

In that sense, institutionalizing the music is good.

Certainly. It's always been institutionalized, but the institutionalizing of it has never sloweddown its growth. We're at a point in our society where we have to re-look at a lot of things that are institutionalized. I mean, are they still the very gems that we plan our entire existence around? Or is there some room for some more gems to be created? Certainly there's a need to institutionalize, so that things can be studied and learned.

But the creative process is also still going on. I'd personally like to see more emphasis put on showing people what is happening creatively. It sometimes takes a long time to change the way people perceive things. Exposure plays a big role in this. The more exposure that can get out there, the more choices.

Have you ever been tempted to do again some of the things that have worked for you in the past?

It's not interesting to try to go back and repeat past successes. If you follow my musical career, you know that I've always been one who will step out there into the unknown, because that's interesting. I believe that more now than ever, because it seems that things are starting to fall in line. It seems the music is starting to open up all over again. The choices are infinite. To be too safe would be wasting a little bit of time.

You seem to enjoy juggling several projects simultaneously. A trio project, a solo recital, a composition for orchestra.

I think that by doing different things you add to the whole of your personality. And it follows one of my philosophies: it's a good idea to leave some things behind for some other musicians to study. However, some of the things I play or have played would be very difficult to write down. There have been some improvisations that have inspired compositions, might inspire me to write down something and leave that behind.

I think as we grow as a society, it's easier to get information, to be in different places. You can get on a plane and go somewhere and study something. You can speed up your intake of information, and that makes you want to research more. If I hear something I like, I want to keep that option open, in playing as well as composing. It's something I've always done. To stay involved in it seems like the natural route to take.

What do you consider to be the role of art?

Art is something that tends to uplift people, once they understand it. It stimulates them in all the other fields they're working in. When you don't have that, everybody falls short, into a very complacent kind of thing, a "don't really care" kind of thing. The danger is that the drifting on could drift you into infinity, if you don't wake up soon enough.

It's important to make sure that communication is happening. People should know about different things that are available. In the 60s, the AACM knew that we wanted a particular situation to come about. We sat down and thought about the best ways of doing that. We wanted to have more of a presence in the community, more involvement with young aspiring musicians. We wanted to promote concerts of our original compositions.

We supported our functions by paying dues, eventually giving concerts, setting up a school, setting up a network with other cities, doing exchange concerts. All these things stimulate the community. It would be nice to see more government money so more productions could be possible and accessible to people who couldn't afford them.

You see the 1960s as an important time.

In the 60s it was time...something had to come through. Some of those things have not yet been dealt with. We now have the knowledge to dissect some of those elements. Different sound areas. One of the reasons the music of the 60s was so exciting was because people found out they didn't really have to adhere to certain rules. They found that they could bring their own individuality to the music, and it works. As listeners we were exposed to several palettes of sound and colour and direction. Some people didn't make it through to now. Some of their ideas were stunted and stopped. So now we have those ideas to work from.

What I'm striving for in my music now is the presence of the concentration element. That's what's happening in the newer music. The new music is going to be for thinkers. As it starts to emerge, you'll be able to tell what's happening inside the music. We've had lots of different things happen. Look at the development of the rhythm section from then to now.... You're going to have to have a wide palette of musical foundations that you can call upon to apply to any spontaneous situation that might come up.

We have to think about, what is advanced thinking and what is not. [For example,] are you over there playing a repetitious figure because your mind is on rest? If I'm not thinking repetition, what you're doing is become a drone of some sort. That could represent a breakdown in thinking if we're doing something that's fast-paced or is supposed to keep moving.

The instruments function completely independently. You don't have to back me up and I don't have to back you up either. And I really would prefer your not following me. That cuts down on the full dimension of the music. It makes the music one-dimensional.

It takes some work to get that type of thinking developed, and it takes some time.

What is multi-dimensional music?

Let's say we were talking about an improvisational situation. What you would want is a music that offered completely free choices for everyone. That is, I wouldn't be doing anything that would inhibit your choices. Your choices would still be free and able to exist within the same space. What we're thinking about, with this concentration, is we're actually creating major works, spontaneously. What we want to do is build on the time that we would be able to do that. So that we could have works as long as we wanted to.

A lot of the music we experience today is built around a particular centre, or drone, but in this situation we could have multi-centres.

When we look at the function of the rhythm section in so-called "jazz," a lot of the music will have a particular beat and the bass can be walking a particular line and the piano will be playing chords of some sort. Now to diffuse that whole thinking, and create a pure music, would be more along the lines of what I would be thinking about. We would have a so-called "free" element with a rooted centre.

Once this kind of thing is achieved then the music somehow seems to become an almost infinite amount of choices. I find this very stimulating. Everybody gets stimulated by this process. When the whole creative process is in flow, there's so much to learn.

What kind of discipline do musicians need to exercise when faced by this much freedom?

I practise a lot and study all kinds of musics. I want to know what went into a Coleman Hawkins solo or what Sonny Stitt did...or in a composition, what happened here or there. It's interesting to know all of these things. That's certainly something to study. In a situation where you were developing your improvisational chops, you would want to be able to make the link, to transfer known knowledge to unknown situations that you would participate in.

To me, it feels like a different way of thinking about something, when you're thinking about a situation that is known, and the elements of that, as opposed to something that's unknown. The serious people who are really searching for the unknown, they know a lot of the known, and apply that.

The unknown is attractive. We know we can do the known, a lot of people can do the known.

One thing that worries me about the younger players is, what do they think they're doing? I don't get it, exactly. Do they think they can just come along and ride high-tide on what someone else has done, not as good as they've done it? And then try ta tell somebody that that's it? No, that's not it.

They'll be disillusioned, once this next thing really comes. People are trying to push it back. But they know there are certain people around who really have it.

What are you striving for now in your writing?

It depends on the particular composition. I think in terms of making certain blends for certain compositions. For example, the composition Duet for Wind and String, on the Lovely Music compact disc, is a composition for alto sax and violin that tries to blend the metal and the wood together. Sometimes it's deceptive to the ear where the sound is coming from.

One of the great things in my life is the opportunity to work with a man like (university of Wisconsin faculty violinist) Varton Manoogian, being able to present the saxophone in a way that it really matches with a string instrument, and to enjoy all the different nuances and levels of dynamics. An uncovered world of music, in a way.

I like to create a wall of sound using multiphonic textures, or to use a palette as large as a chamber orchestra, for a very wide range of colours.

Who do you consider your peers, your fraternity? Who do you call up now and then to keep up with their projects?

Usually I'm too involved in different things, either writing a commission, or practising for something. This year, I'm practising a lot. I feel that I need to be practised up for 1990. Occasionally when I'm touring I'll run into people and hear their music, or we'll exchange tapes. It all works out, but I don't plan it.

But I am all set to do collaborations with different people. I see things as starting to become interconnected in a way. I have a concert scheduled with a painter, Dennis Nachvatal. I'll be playing solo sax and he'll be painting. This concert should reach out not only to people who know me or know Dennis, but also to people who don't know either one of us. I see things as becoming more interconnected between people in different fields of the arts. I think that's a very important thing. I'd like to see more collaboration in different media so people have the experience to shape these things.

In a way, you'll give them a lesson in the creative process. They'll be able to see how Dennis paints and how you guys play off each other.

It'll be a total collaboration. I'll do another collaboration with a woman who does movement, dance. It constantly unfolds. I'm seeing that there are opportunities on several sides of several fences. I have the area of composition that is starting to open up for me. I've collaborated with people in the area of computers. There are some things to do with the orchestra--really some good things. I don't want to be left out. I'm stimulated by it. Composition excites me.

We also have the legacy of all the people that have grown with us from the 60s. You can

have highly specialized pieces of things, like what I'm doing with the New Chamber Ensemble. It makes it seem a waste of time to imitate the past. All these other things are out here happening.

I remember going to concerts in the 60s and not knowing what to expect. You'd go see your peers and they would inspire you, because the last time you saw them they weren't doing this, and now they are.

I'm constantly working on performances with various ensembles. It's a very rich life. When you're really working at it, it's rewarding.

What's waiting for us in the 1990s?

I see a re-stating and resurgence of ideas and philosophies of the 60s in more refined versions. We'll see an exciting musical period emerge. We've developed super musicians and stepped up the rate that information can be digested.

There is a feeling of resurgence of the music. I feel it all the way around, on a lot of different sides of the fence. This was the music that was happening in that time. I first heard Ornette Coleman in the late 50s, and for that message to come all the way home to me, through other musicians on the way back to Ornette Coleman, took a couple of years. This is the kind of music that we were experiencing in the 60s. So I start to feel it all the way around.

The things that should be happening that are not happening, we have no control over. Music is going to keep on growing. I may keep mentioning the 60s because we actually did survive this period of life and experience these things, but it's really a force that's larger than all of us. The process will go on. Whether it is given any recognition is another question. Certainly this is the time for it to get some recognition, with the media being as strong as it is. You can have messages all over the world real easily with satellites. I think it would be a good idea if everybody could see what is important.

That's where the media can come in. And as time goes on, I'd like to see art organizations help out more with funding so that a lot of these things could be free to people who can't afford them. The whole thing is a problem that we face as human beings, not cutting ourselves off, and remaining open-minded. We can experience that in every day life, when we see something that's different than the way that we know it's supposed to be. We can test ourselves right there just to see how we're going to respond to that.

In the creative process, it's making a ripple on a sea of commercialism. I want to do something that's informative, that will at least start people to thinking about other options. Certainly, there's a lot of us around that have remained honest and faithful to this music and continue to work constantly.

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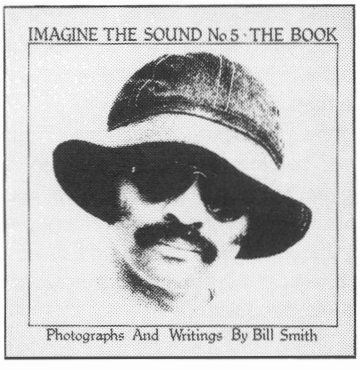

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INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVALS

JVC JAZZ FESTIVAL
Benny Carter Quartet
Art Blakey and
the Jazz Messengers
Palace Theatre, Stamford, CT
June 23, 1989

It is difficult to imagine two more dissimilar jazz musicians than **Benny Carter** and **Art Blakey**. Carter embodies serene elegance, his playing a ripple-free stream of sound. Blakey is all turbulence and agitation. The pairing of these two greats as part of the JVC Jazz Festival was a study in contrasts. Blakey and his Messengers were to have opened the show but delays and late arrivals forced the Benny Carter Quartet to go on first. Ultimately the change in scheduling proved fortuitous. It is inconceivable to this reviewer how Carter could have followed the tumultuous, frenzied display of sound that Blakey and his Messengers provided.

Carter, accompanied by **Dick Katz** on piano, **Rufus Reid** on bass, and **Connie Kay** on drums breezed through a repertoire of jazz standards that included *On Green Dolphin Street, All The Things You Are, Misty, There Is No Greater Love, Lover Man,* and *You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To.* The playing was never less than effortless and ordered. This is not to say that it was uninspired but simply to indicate the particular character of the Quartet's delivery. Carter's lucid lines instill a quiet contentment in his listeners. Yet he can evoke the bittersweet and melancholy as well, as he did in his beautiful rendition of *Misty*.

Carter is ever the generous leader, taking evident delight in his sidemen's improvisations, goading them onward with warm chuckles and the refrain, "one more time." Dick Katz's piano playing matches Carter for limpidity and cleanness. He plinks out the notes and always swings. He appears genuinely bemused by applause and responds with a shrug of the shoulders and a wry grin. His expression is one of ironic intelligence. The quartet really kicked into gear on *You'd Be So Nice To Come To* and Kay's drumming achieved the kind of volume one normally expects. His understated approach is a trademark of his MJQ association. Nevertheless, at times his percussive restraint borders on diffidence. His timekeeping method is completely opposite to that of Blakey's. To hear these two drummers, so utterly different from one another, yet so representative of a type, Kay of modest unobtrusive backing, and Blakey of explosive sound, is to understand the range of rhythmic approaches contained in the jazz canon.

Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers are, of course, the premiere finishing school for a certain kind of jazz musician. Over the years the change in personnel has been a given. Less noticeable, perhaps, has been the corresponding enlargement of the original musical ensemble, from the initial quartet configuration, to quintet, sextet, and on this night an octet gathered on stage: two altos, tenor, trumpet, trombone and the usual rhythm section. This array of instrumentation begs the question: where is the baritone sax player and will the group continue to augment itself? Unlike the composed, unflappable demeanour of the **Benny Carter Quartet**, this assemblage displayed all the mannerisms and gestures of, to borrow Dexter Gordon's famous phrase, used to describe his early apprenticeship with the Billy Eckstine Band, "tempestuous youth." There was much shifting and walking about on stage, a restless attitude that combined with the volcanic music seemed to augur disorder; a disorder, however, of youth and high spirits. The term "youth" in this instance is as much a reflection of outlook as age. The most rambunctious figure in the group is Blakey himself, the enfant terrible who the others watch with expressions of amusement, envy, and astonishment. Blakey's impetuosity, his ecstatic transports, constitute one of jazz's great spectacles. He crashes, bangs, and pounds. When not playing at full tilt he offers grunts, groans, and cries of appreciation, encouragement and humour. His young sidemen, like his audience, can only marvel at his galvanic playing and attitude. The **Jazz Messengers** have at times a rough-hewn sound but this only increases the feeling of tension and excitement. Their playing is wild and incendiary. **Frank Lacy**, a Texan trombonist, is a standout; an instrumentalist who soloed with such intensity, brilliance and originality that he left no doubt he means to carve out new and unexplored musical space on the trombone. **Javon Jackson** on tenor was reminiscent of the young Dexter Gordon. He has the same commanding presence and his lines are executed with vigorous abandon. **Bennie Green** is an unflagging pianist. If Dick Katz sparkles when he plays, Green is in the tradition of pounders, without, however, sacrificing definition and clarity of execution. The trumpeter **Brian Lynch** is excellent. Ex-messenger **Donald Harrison** was on hand to demonstrate the alto artistry that has launched him on his own recording career. The Messengers played blistering versions of the *Blues March* and *Little Man*. On the former there was not a trace of the routine boredom that often attaches itself to frequently played tunes. Judging from the intensity of the delivery one would have thought that the *Blues March* was a new addition to the Messengers' book. Following the musical performance, Blakey delivered a monologue on the beauties of jazz, going so far as to say that no one could speak of a fulfilled to life who had failed to encounter this profound and moving music. His discourse was amusing and eloquent.

There is no question that **Benny Carter** is as much as messenger of jazz as **Art Blakey**. Both men practise the arts of persuasion and conversion. It is their style in conveying the spiritual message of jazz that differs. One wields thunderbolts and lightning, the other

STAN GETZ (Photograph by Jerry Moresi)

prefers to calm the roiling seas and clear the overcast skies. This difference in style enriches the jazz heritage and makes its community of listeners all the more grateful-for the longevity and continued excellence of these two jazz giants.
- *Marcela Breton*

VERONA JAZZ '89

This year marked the tenth anniversary of Verona Jazz, held in the beautiful open-air Teatro Romano. Always thematic in concept, this year's festival spotlighted musicians who spent their developmental years in Chicago. Verona Jazz '89 also drew from the rich cultural talent pools of New York City, Los Angeles and New Orleans.

Although inclement weather threatened the festival's opening night, the skies suddenly cleared for **Jack De Johnette's Special Edition.** Jack has been recognized as one of the idiom's preeminent percussionists, but his compositional abilities and piano playing were also brought into focus during this set. **Lonnie Plaxico's** rich bass explorations and **Nick Goodrick's** rock-oriented guitar licks helped establish an always evolving rhythmic bed for **Greg Osby's** lightning-quick alto runs. Although Osby's intricate solos were fresh and inspiring, the DeJohnette set never quite coalesced into the organic unity found on his many recordings. The absence of tenor saxophonist Gary Thomas (he missed a connecting flight) may have been largely responsible for this.

Stan Getz is widely rumoured to be in ill health, but he looked and sounded fine in Verona. Stan finessed his way through a solid set of standards with the consummate support of **Kenny Barron, Ray Drummond,** and **Ben Riley**. Getz has always been able to attract top drawer rhythm sections and this group was no exception. Barron's demonic runs on the keyboard were splendidly executed and Drummond and Riley'srhythmic ambience fit Stan's warm tone like a glove. Getz' set was a beautifully crafted blend of standards, ballads, and bossa nova rhythms.

On Verona's second night, **Lee Konitz** greeted an attentive audience with an abstract introduction to *Invitation*. Pianist **Andrew Hill** joined Lee midway into the tune. Hill's angular jagged phrases on piano contrasted nicely with Konitz' romantic runs on alto. On a jumpin' blues original, Konitz switched from alto to soprano, his tone always bright, yet full and round. Even halfway into their set, it was clearly apparent that the pairing of these two jazz giants would be the highlight of this year's festival. Konitz and Hill took standards like *What's New* apart, then rebuilt them with a sense of new life and identity.

The perfectacoustics of Teatro Romano were never more apparent than during Hill and Konitz' set. The flow of the Adige River in the background and the squawks of small birds at dusk provided the perfect backdrop for this presentation of organic music. Clearly, magic was in the air and the chemistry was right for creative interplay.

Amina Claudine Myers' quartet followed with a gospel-flavoured set featuring the Coltrane-influenced tenor work of **Ricky Ford**. Ricky has developed as a towering figure on tenor. His sound was as confident as his self-assured stage presence. On *Jumpin' In The Sugar Bowl*, the band explored some dissonant passages while simultaneously remaining vigorous rhythmically.

Chico Hamilton's original Quintet then swung through a spirited set of beautifully structured chamber jazz. On an uptempo reading of *I Wanna Be Happy,* **Fred Katz** took a swinging solo on cello and **Buddy Collette** got off several satisfying runs on flute. Hamilton's brush work remains a study of precise execution. On Collette's *Blue Sands*, Katz and guitarist John Pisano took solos to good effect, with Chico's mallet work setting the complex but supportive rhythmic foundation. More than just a walk down memory lane, this reunion band swung like they've been together for the past 30 years! At 68, Hamilton looks 49, sounds fresh and inventive, and remains a distinguished and regal figure in the field of jazz.

On Verona's third night, **The Art Ensemble of Chicago** combined a barrage of thunderous percussion, a strong front line of brass and reeds, and a thematic sensitivity that made the avant-garde accessible to all. Part ritual, part theatre and part music, the Art Ensemble is hard to categorize as anything other than their self description as, "great black music from the ancient to the future."

Other highlights of Verona Jazz '89 included a soul stirring set by **Allen Toussaint,** replete with New Orleans gospel and pop flavours, the compositional brilliance of **Henry Threadgill,** and the forward-looking explorations of **Max Roach** and **Anthony Braxton.**

Nowhere else in the world does music of such uncompromising purity draw an audience of this size. Kudos to Verona's producer, **Dr. Nicola Tessitore**, for his eclectic, challenging booking policy and to the people of Verona for their continued support of the music.
- *Gary G. Vercelli*

JVC JAZZ FESTIVAL, NEW YORK
JVC GRANDE PARADE DU JAZZ, NICE

Since the mid seventies, a very large number of jazz festivals has sprung up and grown all over the world. The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz lists nearly two hundred "festivals involving professional musicians of international renown," and 171 of them are listed as being still active. Such a proliferation has taken away much of the festive, grandiose and exceptional quality which the word "festival" implies.

The stature of the performers, and their sheer number, place the New York (9 days, 40 concerts) and Nice (11 days, 214 sets) events among the biggest of their kind: it is almost easier to point out the important artists who did not appear, than to list all the musicians who have participated in these musical marathons. The new music was noticeably absent from the Nice festival, however some of it was included in the New York program as a series of four concerts which were produced by The Knitting Factory club at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall. In spite of the fact that in 1989 both festivals also included some acts which were quite commercial and some which were only marginally related to jazz, both offered a lot of music which most jazz lovers could enjoy.

The New York event included a series of one hour piano recitals by **John Bunch, Jake Byard, Art Hodes, Dr. John, Oliver Jones** (the only exception to the solo format, as he performed in duo with **Jimmy Owens**), **Roland Hanna, Dave Frishberg, Don Pullen** and **James Williams.** These concerts were held at the very comfortable Weill Recital Hall, on the third floor of the Carnegie Hall building, with great acoustics, an excellent piano, and no amplification at all (except for a microphone, an amplifier and a speaker used for the singing included in Dr. John's and Dave Frishberg's performances). What a delight!!! At the Jones/Owens appearance, Mr. Jones wore a grey business suit while Mr. Owens was clad in a fancy purple shirt. Visually they offered a striking contrast, but their music blended spotlessly, although at times the flugelhorn (Mr. Owens played the trumpet on one number only) tended

to overpower Mr. Jones's dark keyboard sound. Mr. Jones was intelligent, passionate, deep, and technically impressive, and Mr. Owens developed some beautifully constructed improvisations.

"The Blue Note 50th Anniversary Concert" at Carnegie Hall consisted of four acts. **Stanley Jordan** played solo guitar and, although the way he handles the guitar is amazing, he did not manage to create on it anything that sounded meaningful or new. Brazilian pianist **Eliane Elias** appeared with a quintet that included **Bob Berg** on tenor saxophone. She was, however, at her best playing a solo number in which she wove a long series of choruses on *All The Things You Are.*

The music of the **Tony Williams** quintet, with **Wallace Roney, Billy Pierce, Mulgrew Miller,** and **Ira Coleman**, did not meet the superior standard that its young star studded personnel made us expect. The sound system (which is a pain in the neck most of the time anyway) distorted much of what they were playing. Maybe it just wasn't the right night for them... Blue Note's recent discovery, singer **Dianne Reeves**, was the most impressive performer at the concert, and she got a standing ovation for it. She showed conditions that may make her become a major artist either in jazz or in pop/showbiz, it's up to her (and whoever manages her) whether she'll go for big money or for artistic fulfilment...

Although it is listed in the New York festival's program, the Jazz Picnic in Waterloo Village constitutes really a separate event, both because of its location (an hour drive from Manhattan) and because it is independently produced by the New Jersey Jazz Society. The scenery is lovely, the crowds include whole families with babies and all, and the atmosphere is much more festive than at the Manhattan venues, where practically nothing sets them apart from any other jazz concert at any other time of the year. As usual, this year's picnic had under its main tent some spirited music by several all star mainstream groups, which were supported by **Derek Smith's** driving piano and the seasoned journeyman drumming of **Bobby Rosengarden.** On another outdoor stage, the 'Gazebo', guitarist **Tal Farlow,** aptly accompanied by **Gary Mazzaropi** on bass, offered a masterful hour long jazz performance which was one of the highlights of the whole festival.

Half hidden on the Cimiez grounds where the Grande Parade du Jazz takes place is a bust of Louis Armstrong. It was unveiled in 1974 by Princess Grace of Monaco (who, as Grace Kelly, had co-starred with Satchmo in the film ***High Society***). The Nice festival, another offspring of empresario George Wein, was celebrating its fifteenth anniversary. Mr. Wein owns a summer place nearby, and the event is smoothly run by some of his people and a French staff headed by an unassuming and efficient Mme. Simone Ginibre. An olive grove, the ruins of a gallo-roman amphitheatre, and the front of the Matisse museum, are the three spectacular stages on which a different group of artists performed nightly during eleven days, every hour on the hour, from 5 p.m. to midnight.

On the rest of the grounds you could have a creole meal, imbibe champagne and wine (and "eau Perrier" if you really had to), eat local snacks such as "pain bagnat" and "soca", buy jazz records, fake books, posters, t-shirts, all sorts of souvenirs, mingle with the musicians, or just relax and enjoy the whole colourful scene. All this and the French Riviera, too!

French pianist **George Arvanitas**, who backed trombonist **Al Grey** with **Red Mitchell** on bass and **Oliver Jackson** on drums, played some of the most swinging, no-nonsense, original and interesting music of the festival. Another outstanding French pianist was young **Francois Rilhac** who, after his festival performance, strided the night away at the Beach Regency Hotel, where most of the musicians were lodged. The British contingent included the very young **Tommy Smith Quartet**, with the leader on soprano and tenor saxophones, **Jason Revello** on piano, **Alec Dankworth** (son of Johnny and Cleo Laine) on bass, and **Clark Tracey** (Stan's son) on drums.

It was a pleasure to find **Aaron Bell** playing with a group of Ellington alumni billed as **Clark Terry And The Spacemen**, but it was quite a surprise to find that **Jimmy Woode** was the group's bass player, while Mr. Bell was in the piano chair! Another pleasant experience was to watch, after several years of having lost his track, a slim and fit-looking **Sir Charles Thompson** who continues to build his clean and swinging bop lines on the piano.

The delightful group co-led by guitarist **Howard Alden** and trombonist **Dan Barrett**, with **Chuck Wilson** on alto and occasional clarinet, **Frank Tate** on bass, **Jackie Williams** on drums, and trombonist **Urbie Green** as guest artist (another frequent guest at their performances was clarinetist **Kenny Davern**), performed light and swinging original versions of several jazz classics. In their tight ensemble playing, they sometimes brought back the sound and spirit of John Kirby's group of the late thirties and early forties.

The **Charles Mingus Super Band**, led by **Jimmy Knepper**, brought to life some complex and engaging Mingus works, such as *I's Flat, And 'E's Flat Too, The Black Saint And The Sinner Lady, Duke Ellington's Song of Love, Meditation,* and *The Shoes Of The Fisherman's Wife And Other Jive Slippers*, and managed to make great music in the process. Pianist **John Hicks**, trumpeters **Jack Walrath** and **Lou Soloff**, saxophonists **John Handy, Craig Handy**, and **George Adams** and drummer **Billy Hart** were the major soloists in three long sets which were among the best of the festival.

The World Famous Count Basie Orchestra played brilliantly, and its four long sets were also among the cream of the music heard in Nice. The band was almost as good as at its best when the Maestro himself was at the helm. Leader **Frank Foster** has added some interesting new arrangements, **Duffy Jackson** pushes the men enthusiastically from his drums, while young alto player **David Glasser** and veterans **Bob Ojeda** and **Byron Stripling** on trumpets, **Danny Turner, Eric Dixon,** and **Kenny Hing** on saxophones build engaging solos.

Another highlight was the performance of **Michel Camilo**, the young pianist from the Dominican Republic, who played with passion and amazing technique his charming latin-tinged originals. There were many other points of interest, such as a piano duet by Sir Charles Thompson and **John Lewis,** a reunion of **The Original Chico Hamilton Quintet**, with the leader on drums, **Buddy Collette** on reeds, **John Pisano** on guitar, **Fred Katz** on cello, and **Carson Smith** on bass, a performance by guitarist and vocalist **George Benson with McCoy Tyner and his Trio**, and several jam sessions with the participation of saxophonists **Billy Mitchell, Harold Ashby** and **Teddy Edwards, Stacey Rowles** (Jimmy's daughter) on flugelhorn, and trombonist **Bill Watrous,** among many others.

There are very few, if any, better ways to spend a jazz lover's vacation than to attend a jazz festival: you keep these events going, you help to support the artists, and very likely you have a lot of fun in the process.

-J. Hosiasson

PAUL SMOKER * MUSIC FROM THE HEART

Paul Smoker is a trumpet player. But more importantly he's a trumpet player who has forged his own voice in a world of sound-alikes. "I've learned from everybody, all those great players. What I've come up with is something different from all of them. It's just me. I'd like to think it's in the tradition of jazz, but it's got all these other experiences in it."

Born in Muncie, Indiana in 1941, he grew up in Davenport, Iowa where he decided to take up the trumpet in fifth grade after hearing Harry James on the radio. "Ever since I can remember, my mother always had the opera on Saturday afternoons from the Met," he says. "I was listening to the radio and I heard this trumpet...it sounded like those opera singers soaring above the orchestra. But only he was doing it four or five times faster."

He convinced the band director, who wanted Paul to play violin, to let him play trumpet in the grade school band. Although the other kids had a year and a half head start he moved from last chair to first in only two weeks. It was then that he decided music was the path he must follow.

Thirty years, four degrees, and four records later, he is still following that path with the Paul Smoker Trio, a new group based in New York called Joint Venture, and at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa where he teaches. The Trio has played to enthusiastic audiences in Iowa, Chicago, New York, Washington, D.C. and Europe. "We got a standing ovation in Chicago. We played the last note and the people just jumped up and screamed and hollered for ten minutes."

The Paul Smoker Trio is Paul Smoker (trumpet), Phil Haynes (drums), and Ron Rohovit (bass). They were drawn together as a group when Phil, a student of Paul's at Coe College at the time, gave a recital and asked Smoker and Rohovit to play with him. Paul remembers, "Phil took us out to eat afterwards because it was his recital and I said, 'Listen, I think something is happening here.' The others agreed and the trio was formed.

Creating something new and interesting while maintaining high musical standards is the guiding principle behind their individual sound., "It's more of a chamber music concept," Paul says, referring to the equality and interdependence of the instruments. "It isn't like when the trumpet takes a solo it's a solo with bass and drums accompaniment. They should be soloing, too."

The trio's unique sound is full of energy and is often abrasive. Notes fly from them like beams of light from an exploding star, striking the listener with a beauty and intensity matched by few other performers. The compositions in their repertoire are not unusual, including the jazz standard Body and Soul, Duke Ellington's Caravan, and many original compositions, but their interpretations are highly personal. The tempos they choose are sometimes extremely fast, and they always try to find a way to perform a composition like no one else has. This allows them to bring out the unseen character of familiar music. One writer described their music as Free-bop: free from the harmonic and rhythmic limitations of be-bop, but with the same spirit and in the same tradition. They also employ a variety of strange sounds to achieve various effects. These sounds include using a bass bow on cymbals; throbbing, pulsating bass drones; plus laser guns and horse laughs produced on the trumpet. When all this comes together, the result is a sound full of texture and complexity capable of producing music that can explore emotional territory from introspective serenity to volcanic ferocity. This makes for an interesting and challenging landscape for soloists to negotiate.

As a soloist, Paul is a stand-out. So much so, he was acknowledged in DownBeat Magazine's last Critic's Poll in the "Talent Deserving Wider Recognition" category. He attributes his unique style to his playing experiences in all kinds of music, from symphony orchestras to circus bands. He says, "My playing is the sum total of my experiences with life and as a musician...I've had some experiences that most people haven't had and it shows." Listening to the masters of the trumpet also had a profound effect, although he doesn't sound like any of them. "I'm nobody's clone," he says. "But at the same time I'm everybody's clone, because I've learned from everybody."

One of the lessons he has learned is that as a brass player, his time is limited. There aren't very many trumpet players over fifty who still have the strength and endurance to play like they did when they were thirty. "I'm getting to the age where I don't have that much time left. I've got to make optimum use of the time I have left to play, which is, if I'm lucky, ten years." He adds, "I can play for another ten years, so if I'm going to do something in my life, now's the time for me."

And in the next ten years he plans to continue trying new things: "I don't want to play like I did yesterday. I figure between yesterday and today, hopefully I learned something." Learning is definitely an important part of Smoker's life. He comments, "I don't feel there is a limit to what you can know and what you can learn from and what you can use. I don't think that ever stops. I don't think you ever get to a point where you say, I am the master!"

But he and the trio have achieved a level of mastery over their art that is rare. They are a unit where every member is important because of his contribution as a musician and as a person. Playing is a creative act for these three that requires an enormous amount of energy, and they depend on each other for inspiration, support and encouragement, like a close knit family. This atmosphere increases the creative potential of each member, and allows the group to transcend what they can do as individuals, creating something powerful and beautiful. "The idea was that anyone is free to do anything they want at any time, as long as they know where they're at and what they're doing." Paul says this is the principle of freedom that has guided the trio since its formation in 1981. But freedom can be dangerous, as Smoker points out. "If the music isn't together, it almost immediately turns into chaos."

To prevent chaos, the trio rehearses vigorously for weeks before making a record or performing, but the work isn't over when the instruments are put away after rehearsal. "When we get together, we live together, that's all we think about," Paul says. "That's all we do, twenty-four hours a day...we're playing the music and we're talking about the music and we're thinking about the music and we're doing all this together for that period of time..." Bands used to spend all of their time together either on the road or in clubs. That doesn't happen any more, mainly for economic reasons. The trio tries to stay close by spending time together and keeping in touch when they disperse after a project. The reward they get from this contact is a tightness and solidity few jazz groups ever achieve. "It's a real group, and there aren't a whole lot of those any more."

PAUL SMOKER (Photograph by R. Bourjally)

BY CRAIG MACMILLAN

But there is a price to pay for sticking to ideals as strongly as they do. "We like to make money if we can, but if we can't we're going to play the music anyway," Paul comments. "Sometimes it costs us money to do it, but we do it just because we love it." He feels that this love for the music helps to make what they do happen. "And when it happens, it's music that's greater than the sum of its parts, it really is. I hope we can keep doing it." Smoker plans on continuing to make the trio his main musical project. "That's where I'm the freest, because those guys know me so well..." He adds, "I play a lot of other stuff, but that trio is heaven for me."

In Paul's musical journey through life, he has played all styles of music. "And always the hardest music was playing jazz," he states. "It's the hardest music there is! Playing it and making it mean something. I always kept coming back to that." "That's why I started playing and it's finally happening to me," he says, referring to the trio's growing following and recognition. But even with this recognition, Smoker says, "I feel like I'm just a beginner." Still, he is proud of the music; he puts an entire lifetime of experiences, on and off the bandstand, into every performance. "I'm not afraid to play my music in front of anybody," he says confidently. "I'd play it to Beethoven, I'd play this music to Bach...and it wouldn't be the same as their music, but they would like it, because they would know it is serious, it has a lot of knowledge behind it, and it is from the heart."

Paul Smoker's music is definitely from the heart. It is energetic and intense, like the people who make it. But at the same time there is a quiet, gentle side like the muddy Mississippi River where Smoker spent his childhood, or the rolling, green fields of Iowa in July. Paul has taken all of the world around him and put it into his trumpet. The result is some of the most expressive, personal, and original music heard anywhere.

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BILLIE HOLIDAY ● By John White, Universe Books US$17.50 (hb) $10.95 (pb)

BILLIE HOLIDAY (Photograph by Burt Goldblatt)

Peeps into the private lives of the great are always intriguing. Yet the serious biography of the great artist requires more justification than the satisfaction of curiosity. That the world's greatest exponent of the marimba always lost at poor yet was a lifetime devotee does not bring us closer to understanding his music. Yet it is not only because of their music that we have any interest in the lives of jazz musicians. We sense that an understanding of the context of their music will give us a greater appreciation of their music. This is particularly the case with those musicians who came along in the late twenties and early thirties when jazz took such leaps forward as an improvisational music. How it came about and how they came to do what they did is what we long to explore; because their lives, we feel, will help us to understand the very formation of jazz itself. The good jazz biography leads us to such understandings.

The first of the biographies under review is that of **Jack Teagarden**, whose importance in the history of jazz is acknowledged to be his contribution to making the trombone an expressive jazz instrument. He was at the forefront of the generation of players who established the trombone as a solo instrument; and the story of his life should be the story of a man who did this. Yet this book is a set of anecdotes that seems intent on proving that Teagarden was one of the boys--even if he was one who happened to be able to blow beautifully. The scrapes he got into are lovingly told; but no sense of a life related to his music emerges. In addition, many of the anecdotes seem just to end, leave us with a sense of "So What/" Others emerge in the narrative with no clear sense of when they happened--again blurring any significance they might have. In a brief foreword, Teagarden says that the "acceptance of jazz abroad was the best thing that ever happened to it," because this led to its being taken seriously and not being regarded as a drinking man's music. At times one has the sense that **Smith** and **Gutteridge** are out to prove that jazz was a drinking man's music, a music that only drinking men could play.

The book was published in 1960, less than four years before Teagarden's death. Yet it is reprinted as first published, apart from a new and laudatory preface by Martin Williams. Fifteen of the two hundred pages are devoted to a "Selected Discography," which lists only LP issues available in 1960, so that it provides no guide to readers of today and very little information of any interst now. The Da Capo imprints may do a service in bringing back into print classic works on jazz; but this is a case (like the Delauney book on Django Reinhardt) that called for an updating. At least the remainder of the life might have been told and the discography revised. As usual with Da Capo books, which are photographic reprints, the pictures are fuzzy.

The remaining three books inaugurate a series called **Jazz - Life & Times**. There is promise of additional volumes on **Dizzy Gillespie, Bunk Johnson, Louis Jordan** and (very welcome) **Bud Powell**. The editor of the series, **Bruce Crowther**, has evidently given some thought to how jazz biographies should be written: "Unlike some jazz books that concentrate upon the detail of the performers' lives or music, this series is concerned with much more...the social background into which the subject was born and raised and the environment in which his or her music was formed."

The notion is a good one, promising a basis for exploratory analyses of the lives and achievements of its subjects. No life is lived in an historical vacuum; and no cultural achievement is fully understood jnless seen in the light of the cultural situation that helped give rise to it. To this extent, one can offer only praise for the intentions of the series. However, when we turn to the biographies themselves, we see that there are limitations to the proposed approach. The book on **Billie Holiday**, whose life was so bound up emotionally with the experience of being a Negro in America, is a powerful success; the book on **Armstrong** inevitably benefits from a discussion of his background, which is the background of jazz; but the book on **Krupa**, by the general editor of the series, has to strain to make connection between Krupa's music and the environment in which it emerged.

In the first half of the book on Krupa, his life and activities are almost swamped by sociological detail: prohibition, the big crash, Polish immigrants in Chicago, the movement of negroes north into Chicago. Indeed, it is hardly unfair to say that we hear so little about Krupa in the first half of the book that there is not much for the sociological detail to explain. Bruce Crowther attempts to relate the character of Chicago music to the character of the city;

but such broad and ultimately impressionistic connections are at best dubious. When the book reaches the Swing Era, things get better. Krupa, the frenetic drummer who had to change his perspiration-drenched suits between sets, was an idol of the swing fans and epitomized in his performances the new cult of extrovert excitement that was a part of the era. Notwithstanding this, Krupa emerges as a thoughtful, somewhat intellectual person with a leaning towards respectability, despite his unfair imprisonment on a minor drug charge, and Crowther's portrayal is effective here.

The step from a social environment to a particular style of drumming is, however, a long and uncertain one. Krupa's playing would be better understood in terms of a history of jazz drumming rather than a socio-economic history of Chicago and America from 1920 to 1950. In fact, the book seems slightly ambivalehnt about Krupa's historical place as a jazz drummer, perhaps because of its focus on his years in the Swing Era, when musically he was overshadowed by Sidney Catlett, Chick Webb and, at the end, byhis fellow Chicagoan, Dave Tough. Krupa never successfuly made the transition from bass drum to cymbal as carrier of the beat. He opened the eyes of the jazz world with his first recordings in 1927 with McKenzie and Condon's Chicagoans. Crowther brings this out, but tends to underrate the originality of the early playing, where Krupa was truly influential. He speaks of the "molten majesty" of the Mound City Blue Blowers One Hour of 1929, but adds that "it would be absurd to pretend that Gene's contribution on this date is of any particular significance." That tight, rock-solid rhythm section, with Jack Bland and Eddie Condon, is what makes possible the magnificent, relaxed exploration of the tune by Hawkins: for perhaps the first time, the soloist could lean back and forget any need to assert the beat himself. Crowther also passes lightly over the records with Red Nichols and members of the Ben Pollack Orchestra, where Joe Sullivan and Krupa were in the rhythm section. Krupa plays with superb lift of a kind previously unheard on *The Sheik of Araby, Shim-mo-sha-wabble, Carolina in the Morning* and *Who.* He was then far ahead of any drummer of his time in generating a powerfully felt, but smooth, even beat, incorporating rim-shot explosions between choruses.

Any new book on Louis Armstrong must inevitably invite comparison with James Lincoln Colier's learned volume. In less than 140 pages, Mike Pinfold cannot be expected to do what Collier does in 350. Nonetheless, there is a place for an introductory book on Armstrong, and this could fill the spot. It is informative and balanced, and the latter could not be said for Collier's book. Collier spent more than halfhis pages getting to the end of the Hot Five recordings. Unlike Collier, Pinfold sees the importance and the influence of Armstrong's recordings in New York in 1929; and he sees how well Armstrong played, when the material allowed, on the Decca recordings of the late thirties.

The plan of the series fits the presentation of Armstrong well enough. The beginnings of jazz in New Orleans; prohibition and the flourishing jazz scene of Chicago's South Side in the twenties; the vogue for coloured entertainers among white people in New York around 1930: all these were part of Armstrong's life. The emergence of his music in those cultural settings is one of the important reasons why those times are remembered. Yet one gets an "off-on" feeling as the book progresses: a slab of history and then a bit of Louis and then another slab of history, and so on. The chapter on Armstrong's visits to Europe in the thirties is one of the best, but the seven pages devoted to the history of jazz in Britain is not only too long, it produces an hiatus in the book where the central subject, Louis Armstrong, is not mentioned.

The life of Louis Armstrong is the life of his music. If he had played only as well as, say, Harry Edison (no mean player), we would not want book after book about him. His rise from nothing to fame in the face of adversity and his ability to be happy in the process is remarkable, but no extraordinarily interesting. It is unfortunate, therefore, that the format of the series calls for the recordings to be discussed in a brief concluding chapter. The landmarks of the book, even if it is a "life" as opposed to a musical study, should be the epoch-making records, the only evidence of his music-making that we have.

The best of the books is the one on Billie Holiday by John White. Comparison is inevitable with John Chilton's *Billie's Blues.* Chilton brought together a lot of previously unavailable information about Billie Holiday, and corrected a great deal of other so-called "information," some of which derived from her collaborative autobiography, *Lady Sings the Blues.* Nonetheless, I found myself reading John White's book with growing admiration. It has focus: it conveys a particular sense of its subject, and the details it introduces are sub-

jected to that controlling sense of things. I do not imagine, however, that jazz collectors will find it a better book than Chilton's: jazz collectors do not like books, they like information.

What it meant to be a negro in America--a negro woman; jimcrow in the South; the unacceptability of negro performers with white bands; the drug scene: all of these are part of Billie Holiday's life and, we sense, part of her music. She was formed by these influences and the way she sang her songs, however trivial they were, seemed marked by the experiences of her life. Her life was, quite apart from the music, a significant life, because it contained these experiences that typified the experience of her race, and what she sang was her life. She once said that she phrased like Lester; and this has led to the idea that she sang like the bop singers, improvising like a saxophonist. Yet we have only to listen to her with Lester Young on her records with Teddy Wilson to know that she meant that she transformed the melodies. As Philip Larkin pointed out, her singing of popular songs was remarkable because, however trite they were, she sang them with such conviction and gave them an emotional depth that seemed to come from her having lived what she sang about.

John White offers a number of new perspectives on Billie Holiday. He begins the biography from her earliest days and sees the relevance of her childhood in Baltimore and its insecurities. He mentions her interest in the dramatic art of Mable Mercer in the late thirties and the way it helped shape the articulation of the lyrics in Billie Holiday's later work. He unfortunately follows Chilton in the story of racial discrimination woven around her only recording for Victor with Artie Shaw, *Any Old Time*. A second version of this was made a few months after the first, with Helen Forrest singing, and Chilton and White would have us believe that the original version was withdrawn. White and Chilton are British and can perhaps be forgiven for not knowing that the origianl version is one of the more common Shaw records. A glance in Rust will also reveal, to those familiar with American 78's, that the version with Helen Forrest has a number that shows that it was not issued until it appeared in an album in the forties. Yet White's book is a fine book: it is informed by a sense that Billie Holiday's "real monuments" are "those inimitable and irreplaceable recordings."

The clarity and lack of sentimentality in White's book leads one to certain reflections. How tragic was her life? How tragic was it to make a quarter of a million in three years in the mid-forties? Most of those who buy her records would be more than happy to make that today. Norman Granz, who did so much for her, asked, "Why the hell should I sympathize because of her childhood?" In an active career of twenty-five years, she made hundreds of recordings that were highly acclaimed as they appeared. She never had the national popularity of Ella Fitzgerald, but she did not end up as a bank messenger like Dickie Wells, or totally forgotten like Miff Mole or Joe Oliver, or largely unwanted like Bessie Smith or Johnny Dodds. Even when her voice was gone and it was doubtful whether she would perform at all, clubs hired her and people flocked to hear her.

Yet her case touches us more deeply than that of any of the other self-induced derelictions of jazz, than that of Parker or of Powell or of Beiderbecke. This is partly because of her beuaty and partly because of her power to move us with depth of feeling that seems close to wisdom. Her real tragedy was that, given her gifts and the acclaim she received, she seemed driven to make such a hash of her life. "Self-destructiveness" is the term often used, and used by John White. Yet there seems little mystery to such tendencies: they are a manifestation of a deep insecurity of personality, exacerbated in her case by the destructive grip of heroin addiction. We can trace this, with some justification, to her unhappy childhood and to racial discrimination. Yet nobody could have had a notably worse childhood than Louis Armstrong, and he started out where racial discrimination was most fierce. While he manifested signs of insecurity all his life, hemade a happy success of it in a more uphill situation than that of Billie Holiday, who was taken up by John Hammond when she was only eighteen. Her tragedy touches us so because her unhappiness was associated with being black and with being a woman. *Lady Sings the Blues,* for all its inaccuracies and emotional slanting of incidents, is (as John White sees), a telling document of the indignities met by a black woman who could not put up with her situation as Armstrong did.

Jazz Life & Times books have full bibliographies, a very welcome feature. They are very nicely turned out and have a wealth of well-reproduced photographs, many of which are new to me and will possibly be new to most readers. Devotees of any of the artists may want the books for just this reason. ■

JIMMY WITHERSPOON FEATURING BEN WEBSTER
Roots
Atlantic 7 90535-1

Jimmy Witherspoon, like all the best blues singers, is a big man with a big chest tone voice, and a heavy vibrato. He's often credited with introducing jazz phrasing into the blues, by placing the lyrics behind the beat or in front of it rather than right next to it. This is of paramount importance in separating old blues singers from modern ones. Thus, we have the first of the post-war Kansas City shouters.

Ben Webster invented what has come to be called The Websterian Saxophone Sound which was an almost schizophrenic duality; on up-tempo, more overtly rhythmic numbers, he made the sax tone coarse, threatening and fierce, the swing huge; on ballads, the tonal quality became breathy, tender and sumptuous - rather like the muted roar of a contented lion. Either way, it was a totally individual and influential voice.

What happens when two epochal inventors get together to make an album? ***"Roots!"***

Ben had backed Witherspoon on record on a couple of previous occasions--first at the Monterey Jazz Festival on October 2nd, 1959--when he was a member of an all-star band that included Roy Eldridge, Woody Herman, Coleman Hawkins, Urbie Green, Earl Hines and Mel Lewis. This was followed by a date at the Renaissance Club on Sunset Strip some two months later when Ben shared saxophone duties with Gerry Mulligan. Both recordings were produced by Dave Axelrod who, clearly working on the principle that the best things in life are three, paired Spoon and the Frog once again to produce this fine album.

Roots was first released in 1962--as a result of a studio session originally set aside for Frank Sinatra--on the Reprise Label. Now it is reissued under the banner of the Atlantic Jazzlore Series.

In addition to the astonishing symbiosis between the two principals, and blues masters, the session also features some rare solo work from trumpeter **Gerald Wilson,** a very gifted musician from Mississippi who replaced Sy Oliver in the Jimmie Lunceford band in 1939, ran his own big band on the West Coast in the middle and late forties and wrote some distinguished charts for Ellington, Basie and Dizzy Gillespie. The pianist was **Ernie Freeman,** perhaps more celebrated as a producer than as a musician, but a man who had nursed a long-

BEN WEBSTER (Photograph by Cecco Maino)

time ambition to play on a record with Spoon. **Herman Mitchell** on rhythm guitar, **Chuck Hamilton** on bass, and **Jimmy Miller** on drums filled out the personnel roster.

The opening number, *Muddy Water,* which later proved to be a big hit for Lou Rawls (also, incidentally, produced by Axelrod), is taken at a beautifully leisurely lope that sets the mood for the whole album. *Outskirts of Town,* one of Louis Jordan's major successes, has two sublime choruses by Webster (who was clearly at the height of his musical prowess before his untimely death in Amsterdam in 1973).

But what they accomplish together on the Big Bill Broonzy number, *Key to the Highway,* is something else entirely: something right out of this world, evocative without being treacly, low-down without being disconsolate, rudimentary without being the least bit dated.

It's the meeting of jazz and blues as sibling rivals, once too prideful even to commingle. After finding the formula for this musical detente, ***Roots*** power-glides to a 12-bar fusion (*Your Red Wagon, Cherry Red, Just a Dream,* and more) which at this point in Western history was yet to have a name.

Today the term fusion may suggest an amalgamation of formerly distinct entities, or a rounding-off of various musical elements and styles. In the beginning, however, it seems that Spoon and Webster had something altogether different in mind. Theirs is the theory of the double-whammy, if you will. There is nothing amalgamate or rounded-off about it. Instead, it is a vision of a place where blues and jazz can be free of the machinations of false pride. A place where what they have in common is of a greater moment than the things that separate them, enticing a listener to wonder how they ever got on different highways to begin with.

KOKO TAYLOR
An Audience With The Queen
Alligator AL 4754

A.C. REED
I'm In The Wrong Business
Alligator AL 4757

Cora Walton was born in Memphis, Tennessee in 1935. Like a tadpole becomes a frog, over the ensuring decades, through resourcefulness and perseverance, Cora Walton became Koko Taylor, first lady of Chicago blues.

Koko Taylor is from the "let's drink some beer and talk some trash" school. So it is not at all surprising that her latest album from Alligator Records, ***An Audience With The Queen***, is filled with jackhammer treble riffs than can make the house shake. It's difficult to define house-shaking blues other than to say it's made for ordinary folks by ordinary folks, with an extraordinary capacity for wringing every last bit of emotional juice out of a twelve-bar structural format.

We all know the nondescript kid on the block who happens to be a computer or mathematics wizard. Well, Koko is the other kid who just happened to be a wizard at two-chord harmony and "blue notes." During much of her first decade as a recording artist, not faring well, she supported herself as a domestic, with steady assistance from her husband, "Pops." She began with an inauspicious debut on USA Records, and subsequently went to Chess, where slide-master Robert Nighthawk and other blues greats lent solid studio support. However, it wasn't until her providential connection with Mr. Everything, Willie Dixon, that Koko began to experience definitive career advancement. With production assistance by Dixon, Koko transformed his lyrically intriguing composition, *Wang Dang Doodle*, into the last Chess blues hit on 45.

By 1972, Koko had two albums released on Chess, and was firmly entrenched locally (often working with the Mighty Joe Young Band). Her career received its final giant boost when she switched record labels to Alligator in 1975. From this point on, she has put together a string of acclaimed LPs and has become the most consistent winner of the W.C. Handy Award.

An Audience With the Queen reprises Dixon's *Wang Dang Doodle* in live and extended form at Fitzgerald's Tavern, Berwyn, Illinois. Koko also sings *I'm A Woman* (the blueswoman's exhilarated, gender-flipped rendition of Muddy Waters' electrified jonquil, *I'm A Man*) and she rejoins: "I'm a woman, I'm a love maker; I'm a woman, don't you know I'm an earth shaker...." In addition, there is a sparkling version of *I'd Rather Go Blind*, a song that is fast becoming Queen Koko's flag song (a distinction shared with Etta James). In her own inimitable style, she demonstrates that, outside of Etta perhaps, she can put more bump and grind into a lyric than any woman alive.

On the whole, ***An Audience With the Queen*** is consummate Koko Taylor, direct and to the point, live and raucous. With the help of The Blues Machine, her percussively tight road band, her engaging personality, her hard-working approach and her showmanship, "The Queen" will continue to win over audiences around the world, and in the process bump and grind her way to more award-winning albums.

A.C. Reed has always been known as a kick-ass, gritty live performer who could make an audience of parish nuns shake off their habits and commence doing the down-and-dirty. The people at Alligator Records have finally captured the A.C. grit on vinyl, in a series of 'go-for-the-jugular', 'wooee-these-blues-is-killing-me,' sensual-sax oriented ditties. The album is characteristically titled, ***I'm in the Wrong Business***, and it is literally filled with the growls and slurs of neo-contemporary Chicago blues.

He's been called 'the definitive Chicago blues sax player,' and has been in constant demand for both recording and live shows with such artists as Albert Collins, Muddy Waters, Buddy Guy, The Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, Earl Hooker and Son Seals. All of the above, incidentally, have been driven to their best work by the presence of Reed's artistry. Because of his capacity to generate dynamic synergy through shotgun sax arpeggios, A.C. has long been one of the most respected and sought after musicians in the blues world.

Born Aaron Corten (A.C.) Reed in Wardell, Missouri in 1926, A.C. went to Chicago in 1942 where he bought a pawn shop sax with his very first paycheque. He quickly gained a reputation as a bluesman with a golden horn, and was snatched up by the great Willie Mabon. In the 50s, A.C. played the blues with guitar virtuoso Earl Hooker and red-hot R&B with Dennis Binder's band. Throughout the 60s, he recorded a flurry of self-penned singles on such small labels as Age, Nike and USA. From 1967 to 1977, A.C. toured the world with harpman Junior Wells and guitarist Buddy Guy, including a memorable European tour in 1969 with The Rolling Stones. After leaving Junior and Buddy, A.C. joined Son Seals for two tours of Europe. Then an explosive saxophone chorus during an on-stage Chicago jam session with Albert Collins led to a five year stint with 'The Master of the Telecaster,' as one of the original Icebreakers.

It was as recently as 1983 when he formed his own band, waggishly named A.C. and The Spark Plugs. That same year his *I'm Fed Up With This Music* received a W.C. Handy Award nomination for blues single of the year (one of the highlights of his first full album as a leader).

Now with his second full-blown effort, ***I'm In The Wrong Business*** continues the chron-

icle of A.C.'s tongue-in-cheek love-hate relationship with the music business, while he continues to refine and expand on his bel-esprit musical vocabulary. Along with the simpatico provided by the regular members of The Spark Plugs, the album features A.C. admirers Stevie Ray Vaughan (*I Can't Go On This Way*, *These Blues is Killing Me,* and *Miami Strut*) and Bonnie Raitt (*This Little Voice* and *She's Fine*).

Of all the industrial strength blues in the package, *This Little Voice* is destined to become synonymous with A.C. Reed, and life in the gritty lane:

Hear a little voice deep down inside of me
Telling me I got to go
I'm going home to find my baby
Where I'll find her I don't know.

Here, A.C. is at the height of his power to conjure up foreboding images with lyrical economy, and pour them over a funky, whiny, rock-steady beat that should be accompanied by its own dance steps (like Willie Dixon's *Wigglin' Worm*).

Of course, even at his nimble and impassioned best, A.C. Reed is not likely to ignite a dance craze that will sweep the continent. As he says, he is in the wrong business. He's in the wrong business for mass appeal contagion. He's in the wrong business for palatized achievement. But the message that comes shining through every last blue note and funky run is that he wouldn't have it any other way.

CHARLES BROWN
One More For The Road
Upside Records BL 60007-1

Charles Brown was born in Texas City, Texas in 1922, and over his long career he has had his share of hits--nine tope R&B singles between 1946 and 1952. He has also created standards--*Driftin' Blues, Merry Christmas Baby,* and *Please Come Home for Christmas*--that are revived and requested by every generation of blues musicians and fans. Yet, Charles Brown is, without question, one of the most overlooked blues artists in the history of blues artistry.

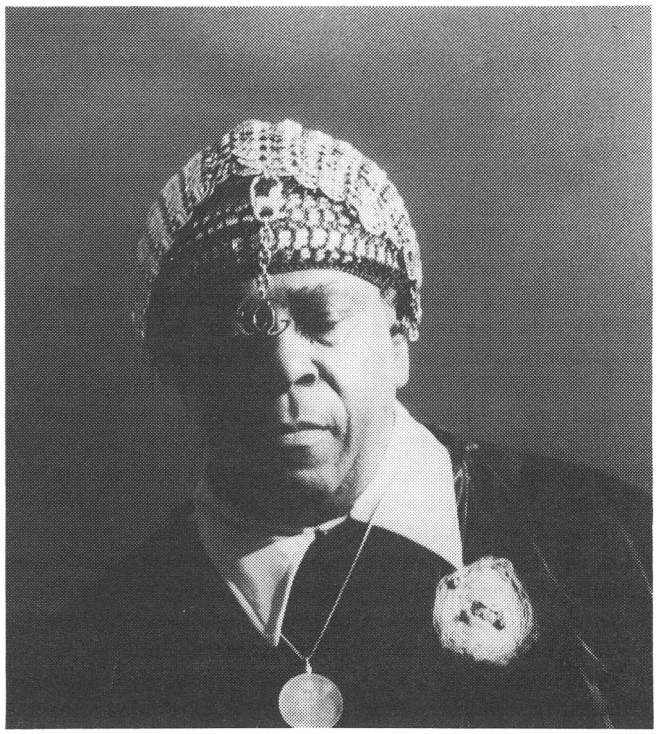
One can only hope that this new album, ***One More for the Road,*** will begin to change all that. The time seems ripe for a revival of the Post-War Texas Blues, with its slower tempos, relaxed and free vocals, and polished instrumentalization. Moreover, the time seems ripe for a revival of the flawless brilliance of Charles Brown.

In his very early days in Texas City, Charles Brown was a school teacher with a degree in Chemistry, but he grew tired of the low pay and struck out for Los Angeles in an attempt to use his skills as a piano player in the big city. He worked by day as an elevator operator, and at night he frequented the fertile club scene. After winning a weekly amateur contest at the Lincoln Theatre in 1944, he came to the attention of guitarist Johnny Moore, who auditioned and subsequently hired him. Inspired by Brown's addition, Johnny Moore and the Three Blazers quickly became a popular fixture in Hollywood nightclubs. A year later--and thanks to a song Charles had written in high school--Driftin Blues rocketed the Three Blazers and its writer and lead vocalist, Charles Brown, to subterranean star status.

Charles Brown literally became the deep blues extension of his contemporary, Nat King Cole. He employed dark minor chords and a slurred, moody, exaggerated, almost spoken vocal style that paralleled Nat Cole's ballad interpretations. The result, however, was not Nat King Cole 'clean,' but rather, Charles Brown 'impeccable.' Whereas Cole filled the California air with stylized romance, Brown re-filled it with infallible texture and poignancy. This fact did not go unnoticed by the young Ray Charles or the young Little Richard. Charles Brown became a major influence on their early work. Moreover, he was an absolute inspiration for Sam Cooke's exhilarating ***Night Heat*** blues album--an unacknowledged tribute to Brown including several wonderful readings of Charles Brown songs. Even *Bring It On Home To Me,* one of Cooke's most inspired performances, was a barely disguised re-write of a Brown song called *I Want To Go Home* (as writer Joe McEwen has pointed out in the liner notes).

Although Charles Brown has recorded off and on for many years, ***One More For the Road*** really and finally captures the full scope of his talent. The album was recorded in the summer of '86 in New York City. It is comprised of sensitive, inspired and moving renditions of such songs as *I Cried Last Night, Route 66, One For My Baby*, and more. All told, what we get here is a mature bluesman with the wisdom and talent of the ages; a talent that is drenching and penetrating, yet exhibiting such a subtle and delicate touch that one can often lose focus on the sophistication and just swim in the music. In the end, though, that's perhaps the place we want to be when we listen to Charles Brown--enveloped by the dreamy poignance of the music. ■

CANADIAN FESTIVALS



SUN RA (Photograph by Bill Smith)

duMAURIER INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL VANCOUVER

Upon first reading the lineup for this year's festival held June 23rd to July 2nd in Vancouver, I wasn't overly impressed, but my fears proved ill-founded. With a budget a fraction of that of the big festivals, artistic director **Ken Pickering** put together what proved to be a challenging and enjoyable program that explored most facets of jazz and improvised music. As one of the satisfied musicians put it, Pickering should have been a bandleader himself. In a tribute to both the increasing sophistication of Vancouver audiences and the rising profile of the festival, attendance rose by almost 30% after a 25% increase the year before, and many shows were sold out. One of the best signs for us patriots was the amazing breadth of Canadian talent on show. The number of quality native-born musicians between the ages of 25 and 40--that is, just moving into artistic maturity--was inspiring.

This year guitarists provided many of the highlights. I'd waited many years to see **John McLaughlin**, having cut my teenage jazz teeth on Mahavishnu Orchestra and Miles Davis records before discovering the wonderful recordings he'd made in Britain before reaching stardom, not to mention the sublime delights of his Indo-jazz group, Shakti. McLaughlin appeared at the Commodore, a large nightclub which generally hosts the raucous partying of drunken rock-and-rollers. But this night, though the house was packed, you could hear a pin drop--or the waitresses clanking bottles--as the trio of **McLaughlin** on acoustic guitar, **Trilok Gurtu** on percussion, and **Kai Eckhardt** on electric bass thrilled the crowd with a wide-ranging program of standards, old McLaughlin favourites, and new compositions. Even after two long encores, the audience wanted more. The electricity among the three was astounding, as they swung from beautiful ballads to riveting fast raveups to vocal interludes combining Indian vocal techniques and rap stylings from Eckhardt. The bassist, just out of Berklee, must have thought he was in heaven being on stage with McLaughlin and Gurtu. See this group if you can. It captures the excitement of Shakti without their sometime freneticism.

I imagine most ***Coda*** readers have seen Bill Frisell play live by now; for certain you've heard him on record. He's another guitarist who has managed to develop a unique sound on this instrument played by so many. He brought his quartet--**Hank Roberts** on cello, **Kermit Driscoll** on bass, and **Joey Baron** on drums--to the intimate confines of the Vancouver East Cultural Centre (the Cultch). This was a harder-edged Frisell Quartet than the last few times I'd seen them, power chords crunching and drum beats rocking. The program veered through old Frisell favourites from his ECM albums through Nino Rota and John Zorn to new material, the second encore being a world premiere of a piece called (so far) *#19*. Just about every style of music you can imagine that instrumentation performing was covered, from rock to noise to spacy to country to hardcore to polka to reggae and more. These permutations and combinations developed in a natural and unforced manner, save for an overlong Zorn composition which delivered his all-too-frequent pedantry. The overflow crowd demanded and received three encores, and there would have been more if the band hadn't been tired by a cross-country flight.

Another New York agglomeration, the **Jazz Passengers**, led by saxophonist **Roy Nathanson** and trombonist **Curtis Fowlkes**, found its most individual voice in guitarist (and tenor horn player) **Marc Ribot**, best known for his appearances with Tom Waits. He plays in a spiky, distinctive style which grows on one with each listening. This group also covers many many styles, reminding one at times of late Eric Dolphy (Out to Lunch) or early Tony Williams (Spring) thanks to **Bill Ware's** creative vibes work, but at other times one heard hints of Albert Ayler, minimalism, and even Eastern European folk music. Special mention must be made of the rhythm section (bassist **Brad Jones**, who also exhibited great intonation, and percussionist **E.J. Rodriquez**), which can really build up a head of steam. The only sour note was the pretentious New York shtick which at times undermined the sincerity of the performance.

It was a pleasure to hear **John Scofield** outside a funk context in a trio with fleet acoustic bassist **Anthony Cox** and drummer **John Riley**, though the heavy-handedness of the latter and Scofield's heavily processed sound reminded one of his usual playing environment. The trio zipped through a mixed batch of standards: *Ornette's Turnaround* being the highlight, and virtuosity of a different type was exhibited in a variety of settings by Brazilian **Marco Pereira** who, with inventive percussionist **Djalma Correa**, revealed the subtleties and power of the music of their native land. Pereira's playing revealed a classically-trained background, while Correa's deceptively simple percussion was extremely evocative. One highlight was their get-together with fellow-Brazilian Celso Machado--no mean guitarist himself--for a percussion jam at Isadora's. Finally, the last plectrist I'll mention is **John Abercrombie**, who provided several of the few highlights of a surprisingly lacklustre set by a **Peter Erskine**-led septet.

No less than four very different big bands appeared at the festival. The first was **George Gruntz' Concert Jazz Band**. In spite of some interesting arrangements, the Swiss maestro's all-star agglomeration is definitely a soloist's band. The musicians have great fun on stage, egging each other on all the while. Solo honours perhaps went to trumpeter **Lew Soloff**, who looked like a tourist who'd wandered on stage in his bright green pants and Vancouver-logoed T-shirt. But then there were tenor

player **Joe Henderson**, euphonist **Joe Daley**, and **Howard Johnson** on tuba, and **Manfred Schoof** on flugelhorn, and trombonist **Ray Anderson**, and the wild and crazy **Ernst-Ludwig Petrovsky** on alto and clarinet... Well, you get the idea. The only disappointment was each player having so little solo space.

Sun Ra brought his **Omniverse Ultra Jazz 21st Century Arkestra** to town a few nights later. If McLaughlin made the Commodore unbelievably quiet, Mr. Ra made it unbelievably loud with a joyful night of what was basically an updated Cotton Club performance augmented by the trademark interstellar costumes and great outside solos from the likes of **John Gilmore** and **Marshall Allen**. Even more so than at their Seattle appearance last October, the band hewed to the straight and narrow of blues and big band swing: Ra's synthesizer remained untouched. Of course, there was lots of dancing and singing and parading around the stage, and even a rousing version of Disney's *Hi Ho*, not to mention travel on the spaceways, but Sun Ra appears to be returning to his roots as he grows older. The sellout crowd loved it; they were still chanting and singing twenty minutes after the band made its final exit from the stage.

The last three days of the festival brought eight hours of free performances on three simultaneous stages at the Plaza of Nations. One of the headliners was **Loose Tubes**, an all-star collective of 21 British musicians. Unfortunately, the outdoor stage, a late arrival, and jetlag combined to reduce what could have been one of the festival highlights to merely okay. The arrangements were interesting, veering outside the big band norm to suggest at different times Arabic, South African, Brazilian, and Greek folk musics, and there were many fine soloists, particularly **Django Bates** and **Iain Bellamy**, but the playing was at times ragged. Only on their magnificent tribute to the late **Mongesi Feza** did we getmore than a hint of what **Loose Tubes** could deliver under the right circumstances.

The next day our own **Vancouver Ensemble of Jazz Improvisation**, with special guest **P.J. Perry**, turned their attention to the music of **Charles Mingus**. Surprisingly successful was **VEJI's** performance of the first half of *Black Saint and the Sinner Lady*, much better than an attempt by most of the same musicians last winter. Kudos to guitarist **Ron Johnson**, with **Bill Clark** on trumpet, **Phil Dwyer** on tenor, and **Perry** contributing fine solos. A rollicking version of *Boogie Stop Shuffle* completed the set.

This festival brought my first opportunity to hear **Anthony Braxton** in person, and I was not disappointed. A duo performance with pianist **Marilyn Crispell** at the cozy Western Front started off a bit shakily with the sightreading of Braxton's complex scores, but things soon took off. The continuous performance alternated written heads with superb soloing, Braxton switching between alto, soprano, sopranino, clarinet, and flute with the greatest of ease, Crispell wringing every nuance of emotion out of the keyboard. They exhibited the great empathy one would expect from two masters experienced with each other's playing. The great range of dynamics and timbre made the 45 minute set seem much longer.

The next day **Braxton** and **Crispell** played back-to-back sets at the Plaza of Nations, thankfully indoors at the Discovery Theatre. Braxton was up first. Playing only alto, he performed eight very different pieces, each exploring a different area of the sounds and emotions that can be produced on that horn. The first stuck slowly and calmly to the mid-range of the alto, while the next used the same notes but built to a frightening intensity. Then Braxton played a slow piece utilizing circular breathing to explore split tones and chords, followed by a very fast version of *All The Things You Are* that exhibited his skill at running the changes. The next piece was hilarious, featuring call and response between gruff low tones and higher notes, while the sixth used circular breathing and tonal manipulation in an unbelievably fluent working-out of an arpeggiated motif. This was followed by a very emotional reading of *Round Midnight*, and then...The last piece, no more than a few minutes long, started off with plaintive bent tones rendered comic by an absurdly wide vibrato. Braxton bolted off the stage leaving a stunned audience unable to believe what they had heard. And to think the man has been pilloried for being unemotional by some critics! Crispell's solo set was almost as stunning, starting off with wordless vocals revealing a strong if untrained voice and moving through many moods reminiscent of last fall's concert in Vancouver I wrote about a few issues ago. Again she ended with a Coltrane piece, this time a very emotional rendering of *Dear Lord* worthy of Trane.

Another programming highlight brought together old friends pianist **Paul Plimley** from Vancouver and bassist **Lyle Ellis** from Montreal. They appeared in many formats with a variety of other performers, but my favourite was their duo appearance at the Western Front. Plimley is virtuosic and has the ability to make the piano keyboard seem to shrink as he ranges from the top notes to the bottom. Ellis has worked hard to achieve a truly individual voice, using a wide variety of techniques for expressive purposes. Their continuous performance covered many moods, sometimes one leading the way, sometimes the other, their years of association revealed in an uncanny ability to stop on a dime without eye contact. It was a true conversation, sometimes violent, sometimes gentle, leavened with a large dose of humour.

Another duo performance brought together topnotch electric bassist **Steve Swallow** and pianist/composer **Carla Bley** at the Cultch. Stripped of the syrupy arrangements which have marred their recent recordings, their outstanding compositions, along with the evident enjoyment in playing together, made for an enjoyable evening for the overflow crowd. Torontonians **Tom Walsh** on trombone and **Richard Underhill** on saxes performed together at the Western Front. This gave Underhill a chance to step outside his usual frenetic **Shuffle Demons** milieu, and both he and Walsh revealed a mastery of modern techniques on their instruments while performing interesting original compositions. They took turns providing the rhythmic impetus in an enjoyable performance, though it would have been nice to hear them be a little less polite now and then.

The same could have been said at times for the solo piano performance of **Takashi Kako** of Japan. Working out of a territory bounded by Bill Evans, Chick Corea, and Keith Jarrett on one side, and Debussy and Ravel on the other, he occasionally veered towards New Wave preciosity. Most successful were two suites, one based on his impressions of painting by **Paul Klee** and another entitled *Storm in the Sea*. I'd like to see Kako perform in trio some day. Out from behind his usual electronic keyboards, **Wayne Horvitz** contributed a rather cursory set of solo piano, followed by **Pauline Oliveiros** and her engaging performance of solo electronic accordion trance music, certainly not an overcrowded genre.

One of the classic formats in jazz music is the good old front line/rhythm section quartet/quintet, and there were many fine performances using this setup. Van-

couver-based drummer **Claude Ranger**, besides his usual multiple sideman gigs, fronted an amazing continuous quintet performance. Bassists **Paul Blaney** and **Clyde Reed**, their instruments thundering and wailing, inspired Ranger to the most inspired percussion I've heard from him. The three together generated the propulsion of a runaway freight train, driving the impassioned sonic assault of **Daniel Kane** on baritone and the caterwaulings of guitarist **Ron Samworth** in a manner which pinned the listener to the back wall of the club. Reed and Ranger also inspired **Chief Feature** to the best performance I've seen from them, **Bruce Friedman** striding tall and majestic on tenor and **Bill Clark** wringing every sound and timbre possible from his trumpet. Another top Vancouver group, the **Hugh Fraser Quintet**, continues to improve their neo-bop stylings. Alto saxophonist **Campbell Ryga** is becoming ever more fluid, while tenorplayer **Phil Dwyer** continues to diversify his range as an interpreter. When **P.J. Perry** sat in, they burned through a thrilling version of **Fraser's** *Irene Rosnessity*.

Speaking of Vancouver-born pianist, **Renee Rosnes**, now based in New York, she co-led a quintet with **Dwyer** through one strong and one uneven set, the latter as opener for an enjoyable performance by the **Tony Williams Quintet**. Williams was definitely the star of that group, proving that the years in fusionland have not diminished his chops. **No one** today plays a stronger ride cymbal, and he kicked his quintet, none of whom were outstanding as individual players, through a very swinging, very tight performance. **Rosnes, Ranger**, and bassist **Rene Worst** backed up trumpeter **John Faddis**, who unfortunately proved that all the chops in the world cannot overcome a lack of class and an arrogant, unpleasant stage presence. Toronto's **Jane Bunnett**, playing soprano and flute, showed more personality on the latter. She was joined by the crackerjack Montreal rhythm section of **Jean Beaudet** on piano, **Normand Guilbaut** on bass, and **Michel Ratte** on drums. Ratte was a particular standout with his very individual way of breaking up the beat while maintaining propulsion.

The European Jazz Quartet turned in a very strong set reminiscent of the great John Coltrane Quartet. **Gerd Dudek** (soprano and tenor sax) played long flowing lines on both instruments and bassist **Ali Hauraud** contributed several outstanding solos, while drummer **Tony Levin** was a polyrhythmic machine, generating intense drive. Completed by pianist **Rob van den Broeck**, this is a quartet I'd like to see again. **Vancouver's Unity** contributed their usual fine set of open-ended improvisations based on original compositions, with a special touch contributed by reed player **Graham Ord's** small daughter dancing to the music in front of the bandstand. **Horace Tapscott** brought an L.A. quartet featuring too-little-heard bassist **Roberto Miranda** for three superb nights of mostly mainstream, but with an edge, quartet music at the Landmark.

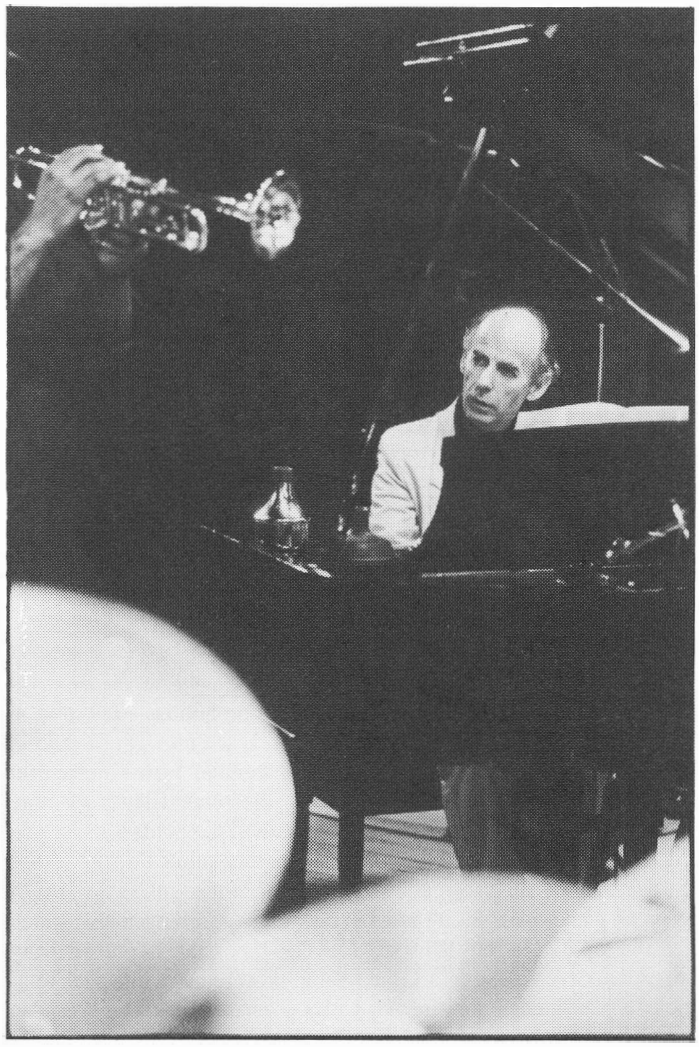
The final concert performance of the festival featured **Craig Harris** and his group **Tailgator Tales**. Like many other midwest groups, these guys, especially the very flexible rhythm section of **Tani Tabbal** on drums and **Jaribu Shihad** on bass, play it all. Their set featured strong compositions interlaced with long solos, occasionally too long in the cases of clarinetist **Don Byron** and guitarist **Brandon Ross**, but the strength of the pieces, the group interaction, and the pyrotechnics of Harris on trombone and dimeridoo--including circular breathing and multiphonics!--made this concert a winning finale to nine days of great music.

- Scott Lewis

10TH EDMONTON JAZZ CITY
JUNE 23 - JULY 1

Sun Ra and his **Omniverse Ultra 21st Century Arkestra** had just marched off the stage and through the audience, singing an appropriately warped version of *Hi Ho*, a tune first made famous by the **Seven Dwarves in *Snow White***. Since Ra's lyrics said "it's home from work we go" rather than the original "It's off to work we go," it seemed logical enough to assume they were finished; they'd already gone from soup to nuts in 90 nonstop minutes, an appreciably longer span than **Tony Williams** on the same stage a couple of nights earlier.

MIKE NOCK (Photograph by Patrick Hinely)



It would have been plenty enough music for this fourth of the nine full days of Jazz City #10, which had begun that morning in a

sunny park in the heart of downtown, there for anyone to walk into, or out of, freely, or to stay for lunch, as **Mike Nock's** trio finally got to bust wide open after too many nights of backing up a last-minute replacement saxophonist who erroneously thought he'd been hired as a bandleader. Nock and company had served under this regime with patience, diplomacy and selflessness far above and beyond what should be expected of mere mortals, and Nock's own tunes at noon had been a glorious vindication of the maxim that good things come to those who wait. Then there was the vespers-hour duo concert by **Carla Bley** and **Steve Swallow**, in a perfect recital hall setting, which had entwined wit, sinew and maturity on Swallow's wheels-within-wheels compositions and Bley's deceptively simple-on-the-surface pieces, and now Ra and his supporting extraterrestrials had rigorously swung us out to Saturn by way of Africa, returning via Disney.

You get the drift: It had already been a full day. Thinking it was over, with one of my favourite combinations, satisfaction and exhaustion, I headed for my room, passing the table where Jazz City Director **Marc Vasey** was sitting with his family. With a customarily subtle high-prairie twinkle in his eyes, he advised me not to leave just yet, as that had only been Ra's *opening* set...

During my last visit to Jazz City, in 1982, as the festival was outgrowing infancy and finding its way by taking those sorts of steps big and bold enough to sometimes still fall flat on its face, I'd asked Vasey what he did for a day job. He'd said he worked in broadcast production. When I asked him the same question this year, he motioned me to look around the room where hundreds were eagerly awaiting **John McLaughlin's** trio and said, "*This* is what I do," with the kind of smile that indicated he finds the work rewarding in more ways than can be converted into bank deposits. He also keeps his hand in at CKUA, with an hour on Saturday afternoons.

The roster of artists was suitably international, every continent save Antarctica being represented, with plenty of Canadians included. There really was something for every taste: take, for example, the big band choices: **Sun Ra**, in the ballroom, or England's **Loose Tubes**, in the Library auditorium, or, over at the Convention Centre, a dance featuring the **Glenn Miller Orchestra**, this last a co-production with said Centre, and a smart move at that. The good word-of-mouth about what a good spread Jazz City puts on will filter through whole new demographic groups, generating increased interest and participation for 1990 and beyond. This is a festival which plans for the long term.

That same sort of low-key yet high-quality community outreach also permeates the "Jazz Street" outdoor all-day-and-into-the-evening performances in Churchill Square, where Mike Nock held forth so well. Number-crunchers from office towers--and even some of their supervisors--could be seen enjoying brown bag delicacies from home or something from the kiosks at one picnic table, while suburbanites for whom the world's biggest shopping mall held less appeal than downtown were munching their quiche at the next, as families on holiday tried to keep their kids within sight or at least out of trouble. It was a beautiful scene, of a sort I'd like to see more of south of the border.

Another thing I'd like to see more of in the U.S. is the sort of cooperative arrangement which makes it possible to pull so many high-powered acts into such relatively small halls. The WestCan booking system, a Vasey brainchild, teams up Edmonton's Jazz City with the festivals in Calgary, Saskatoon, Vancouver and Victoria in doing business with agents and such. Since all the festivals coincide or at least overlap, considerable savings are possible by contracting an artist for two, three or even as many as five consecutive dates in one transaction. There are still plenty of one-shots, too, but this pooling of resources brings many otherwise too pricey artists within reach. This might not work in the States, since it's the sort of common-sense procedure which can only succeed in a land where those with the wherewithal to do such things don't demand the artists' loyalty as lagniappe in return for buying their time. Jazz City easily earned the loyalty of its performers by treating them as artists rather than as merchandise on rental.

Looking over the entire schedule, spread out across the two centre pages of the impressively oversized *Jazzette* programme book, bordered on intimidating. There were four shows a day, every day, downtown in the Square. From there, one simply crossed the street to the Library for the 6 O'Clock series, which let out soon enough to catch a bite and head over to the Chateau LaCombe, festival headquarters, for the Cabaret series, as the ballroom concerts and/or dances were officially called. If you came out of those shows into the twilight of summer's height still wanting more, there were two series of club dates to choose from, at the Sidetrack Cafe or Jazz City Festival Society's own year-round operation, the Yardbird Suite.

I never did make it to the Sidetrack, but several soirees to the Yardbird were enough to make me miss it now. So many clubs mistake fashion for style, coming off like an interior designer's chromium wet dream, or else Beirut contemporary, but Yardbird is tasteful in a subtle way, not at all ostentatious. It is intimately comfortable without the cattle-pen effect of too many famous clubs on both sides of the Atlantic, featuring a sound system with presence and a delicious clarity. And, certainly neither last nor least, the place is friendly, in the same way as all Jazz City events.

The festival opened at Yardbird with the **European Jazz Quartet (Gerd Dudek, Rob van den Broeck, Ali Haurand** and **Tony Levin)** playing the 'warmup' event before Mike Nock's multinational changing cast came in for three nights. Edmontonian bassist **Mike Lent** anchored now-Australian Nock, along with drummer **Terry Clarke**. Angelino **Don Menza** on tenor was a letdown for those Jazz City regulars who had anticipated the scheduled return-at-long-last of Lew Tabackin, but there was still some feeling of old home night with guitarist **Gene Bertoncini**, who in past years had shared Jazz City stages with everyone from Chet Baker to Phil Woods. **Jon Faddis** sat in for a tune one evening, and guitarist **John Stowell** gladly volunteered to sit in on the last night, when Bertoncini had to catch a redeye flight.

Saxophonist **Phil Dwyer**, hot off his gig with **Renee Rosnes** opening for Tony Williams, also volunteered to play by simply walking onstage doing so, but was promptly banished by Menza in a scene which became awkward for all.

Dwyer really had already burned up the ballroom stage, as had pianist Rosnes, coming off as a much more exciting band than **Tony Williams'**, even with a giant like **Mulgrew Miller** at the piano. It seems ironic that most all bands put together by veterans of that Miles period gravitate toward a very similar sound, even more than 20 years later. Williams' was a strange mix between the reined-in passion of that era Miles and the all-out burn of a standard Blakey grouping, which sometimes left trumpeter **Wallace Roney** and saxophonist **Bill Pierce** wondering what to do next.

John Scofield's trio, which had inaugurated the 6 O'Clock series that evening, operated with a much more liberated collective mind. Since leaving his electric funk band phase behind (possibly having worked out all that format's possibilities which he couldn't during his own time with Miles in the early 80s?), Scofield has sounded much more like himself again, using loud volume as an occasional means rather than as the norm one must wail above. The funk is still there, but, like everything else, distilled into a purer form, with Scofield's convoluted swing making all the tunes his own, no matter the source, from Ornette to Doris Day. **Anthony Cox** provided a sturdily shifting foundation on bass and drummer **John Riley** kicked them both around a bit. Scofield's encore was a solo rendition of *Georgia on my Mind,* putting the icing on the cake.

Next day, before heading over to Jazz Street for **Jane Bunnett's** quintet, I caught **John Stowell's** trio playing a brunch gig in one of the Chateau LaCombe's restaurants. Food rather than music seemed more on the minds of most in the room, but that didn't deter Stowell, one of his generation's two most underrecorded guitarists (Tony Purrone being the other). You can tell Stowell loves Jim Hall, but he's taking things in his own direction. Bassist **Bruce Phares** was having the time of his life, and **Mike Gillespie** kept suitably subtle dynamics on drums.

In the park, Bunnett was at the helm of a pianoless quartet, which would have been a bit heady for a weekday crowd, but the Sunday audience seemed to appreciate her as one of Canada's promising new talents. Jazz City was going about its research, too, as volunteers quizzed randomly-chosen civilians with a mercifully brief but thorough questionnaire.

Jon Faddis headlined the 6 O'Clock concert, backed by Nock, Lent and Clarke, and the trumpeter delivered his flawless trademark licks along with a large dose of humour. Nothing new, but a good time and a rare chance to hear some of Faddis' own tunes played by a too-good-to-be-a-pickup band.

JAY McSHANN (Photograph by Peter Danson)

JOHN FADDIS (Photograph by Gerard Futrick)

Soweto's own **Mahlathini** (born **Simon Nkabinde**, with a stage name which translates as "Jungle on His Head") and the **Mahotella Queens**, backed by the **Makgona Tsohle** band, jubilantly filled the stage--and the ballroom--for an orgy of dance and mgqashiyo, which, literally translated, means "the beat that will never die." Indeed. These are the people who were doing Afro-Beat before the Brits discovered it, much less anyone on this side. Mahlathini may have invented it, and their showmanship would give Sun Ra a run for the Aida medal any day.

Steve Swallow was sporting a new five-string bass guitar for his 6 O'Clock show with **Carla Bley**, and that fifth string was no fifth wheel to the world's leader in exploring the nuances of this instrument rather than merely its limits. The duo's sound is skeletal compared to Bley's wonderfully eccentric big band, yet lush in its own subtractive way. What a change it was from the full band's 1982 appearance, during which a visibly nervous Bley seemed to fear a collective collapse into chaos at any moment (which never happened). This time, she was actually having fun. No, she doesn't swing, true, but she defines pointillism in a way that does. This is what 20th-century chamber music may well turn out to be about when future musicologists find all the needles in the haystack. Bley's *Hold It Against Me* was a highlight, with them chasing each other in upward spirals that kept spinning off into new directions. There aren'tmany who can sound sensuous and intellectual at once, but Bley and Swallow are a beautifully yin and yang pairing.

Jazz City and a huge city-wide visual arts festival, **The Works**, co-produced an exhibition of 50 of my photographs of jazz musicians in the Library gallery, adjacent to the auditorium, and it was great fun showing these to Bley and Swallow after the concert.

Trombonist **Julian Priester** and bassist **Junie Booth** were among those suited up for the **Sun Ra** extravaganza, along with of course **John Gilmore** and **Pat Patrick**. Ra can--and did--cover everything from Fletcher Henderson on at the piano, and conducted in a most poetic fashion, with every tiny motion drawing a different sound out of each individual player. The dancers ranged from Nubian ballet beauties to muscled kung fu artists, moving with grace or force as called for by the pan-galactic repertoire. The nonstop pace is historically accurate from the days of full-fledged musical reviews, and if Ra is not a virtuoso vocalist, his spirit and tongue-in-cheek nefariousness make up for that. The spectacles are many, including one robe festooned with miniature electric lights.

Ra can light into a Cecil Taylor and/or John Cage routine and turn it into *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* as Debussy would have played it in Storyville, then in Kansas

City, and so on, without blinking an eye. His proclivity to leap back and forth through history might appear incoherent, but is completely logical if you allow for his own life's experience as the basis for this sense of continuity, which seems to elude even some band members now and then. He is definitely aging more like a fine wine than a sharp cheese, and the Arkestra under any names moves with one mind. The cumulative effect of their show was like having someone beat the crap out of me and having that feel *good*.

Ra is a spiritual terrorist of the highest order. "It's about infinity," is how he summed it up next morning, when I crossed trajectories with him en route to the airport shuttle. "There just isn't enough beauty in this world," he said, slipping as easily into as out of a philosophizing mode that he seems to have been at a while, long enough to realize that the window of opportunity for getting through to the average human is distressingly brief. Plato may have had people like Ra in mind when he worked up his plan for philosopher-kings.

It was two old salts gone sweet when **Jay McShann** and **Big Miller**, now a local of long standing, filled the Library stage, with **Bruce Phares** added on bass and once again having the time of his life. McShann swayed like a leonine Buddha bullfrog, showing exactly what tickling the ivories is really about, while Miller's deadpan demeanour was belied by the warmth and humour of his singing and storytelling. They presented a brief but comprehensive lesson covering Kansas City like a blanket, as only those who were part of that history could do so knowledgeably.

Extra tables were added, and filled, in the ballroom for **John McLaughlin's** trio. Not for nothing is Edmonton known as guitar city, but the star of the evening turned out to be percussionist **Tritok Gurtu**, who held nothing back. Twin-neck bass guitarist **Kai Eckhardt-Karpeh** spoke up now and then with a Jaco-like run but primarily fulfilled what, as Terry Clarke suggested, is known in Indian music as the drone function. McLaughlin, who had last appeared here in 1982 in a circus tent with the piano sisters, was armed this time with only an Ovation-style guitar, and may have, as one of his avid local fans posited to me next morning, basically taken the night off.

I'm not at all sure about that assessment; it could be that McLaughlin held back, mostly keeping himself in the role of continuo player, because he is all too well aware of Gurtu's awesome power, so he was choosing to feed the drummer snippets of ideas to see just how this Indian Elvin would expand, and, often, *explode* on them with his one-of-a-kind abbreviated kit, which was powerfully and prolifically.

Gurtu's own tunes, *Pasha Love*, dedicated to Collin Walcott, whom he replaced in Oregon, and *Mother Tongues*, were the highlights of the evening. McLaughlin does of course still have the fastest hands in the west, and he still squeaks strings, but I suppose that concept is more important to some than execution. Gurtu is well on his way to making an honest man of the guitarist, something no one has done since the days of Shakti.

Passing up the festival-related clubs for this late night, I dropped by Cafe Budapest, where Edmontonian educator **Charlie Austin** was playing solo piano, offering thoughtfully personal interpretations of standards along with some original tunes. Sharing a table with several local and area musicians who had been or were going to be playing on the Jazz Street series was an enjoyably comfortable experience after McLaughlin's high-strung concert. It was good to be reminded that the music does operate out there all the time, and that what Satchmo called just plain folks are the ones who keep it happening. It reinforced the impression I'd been forming since arriving from the U.S., which is that the further north you go on this continent, the more considerate people are, as if, like in an old west saloon one left one's gun at the door, here you leave your pretence. And, like everywhere else, people have work but are always looking for more and/or better.

The Parisian quartet led by saxophonist **Doudou Gouirand** had the midafternoon slot on Jazz Street next day, but they were evidently saving themselves for their evening gig at the Sidetrack, since not even an old hand like drummer **Aldo Romano** seemed to be playing for his life.

Helen Merrill headlined the 6 O'Clock show, backed by Nock, Lent and Clarke, all of whom proved their versatility once again. Merrill's singing is warm and poignant at once, a tough combination in a line of work where being genuine means wearing one's heart on one's sleeve with each tune, mostly love songs, and predominantly sad ones at that. A pleasantly upbeat interlude was a duet with Nock on Jobim's *Wave*. When I told Nock after the gig that I'd really like their arrangement on that one, he gave one of his characteristic grins and said, "Arrangement? What arrangement? We just started out and followed it where it went."

A dinner invitation I couldn't decline made me miss **P.J. Perry's** quartet set, opening for **Peter Erskine**, but by all reports he did well. Erskine introduced his band as his six favourite musicians in all the world, and they very much had the sound of a group in it for the fun. Tenor players **Joe Lovano** and **Bob Mintzer** both have monster chops, as of course does trumpeter **Randy Brecker**. Erskine propelled it all with his trademark snap, crackle and pop, aided and abetted by **Marc Johnson's** sinewy bass. Guitarist **John Abercrombie** wailed from the background as needed, taking the occasional spotlight with equal ease, his usual self, New York's own string king of the cool fire, with face grimacing but music smiling. Pianist **Marc Cohen** had a tendency to be drowned out by the others, at least in my part of the room, but he kept his hand in at what may the most difficult job in this particular grouping. Theirs is a driven kind of swing with plenty of intricate and unlikely twists and turns, negotiated with the sort of facility that only experience brings.

Sweden's **Equinox** was playing their third and final night at Yardbird, with tenor **Tomas Frank** and alto **Hakan Brostrom** in the front line, backed by Tyner disciple **Jurgen Emborg** and a muscular rhythm section in the form of **Christian Spering** on bass and the sphinxlike **Leroy Lowe** on drums. They played with the sort of Scandinavian clarity made famous (or infamous) by ECM, but these guys kept it out of the refrigerator. They can all play at once and maintain beautifully distinct voices, yielding a collective sensuousness one might more readily associate with the Mediterranean than the Baltic.

That was the last I heard at Jazz City 10, jetting out next day and thus missing, among others, Flora and Airto, Jazz Passengers, Edmonton's own award-winning EdJE, Toronto's Manteca, the Glenn Miller Orchestra, Bill Frisell's quartet, Bert Seager, Kenny Neal, Loose Tubes and perennial favourite Phil Woods and quintet, who closed out the ballroom series on Saturday night. Hearing all of them too would have been nice, but festivals as well-programmed and produced as Jazz City are a joy in any quantity. Like good sex, it doesn't matter how long it lasts or how divine it might be, it always ends too soon.

And I never did make it out to the world's biggest shopping mall.

-W. Patrick Hinely ■

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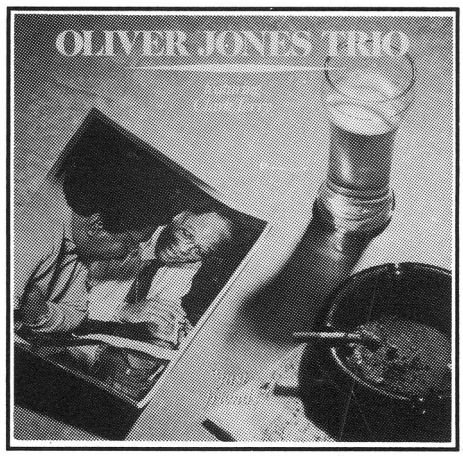

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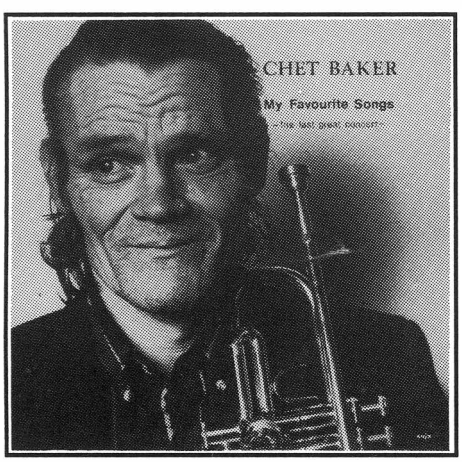

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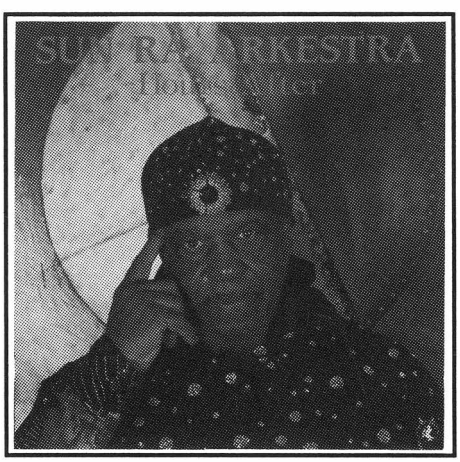

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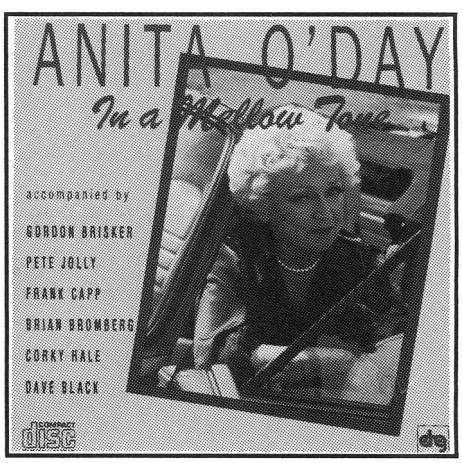

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