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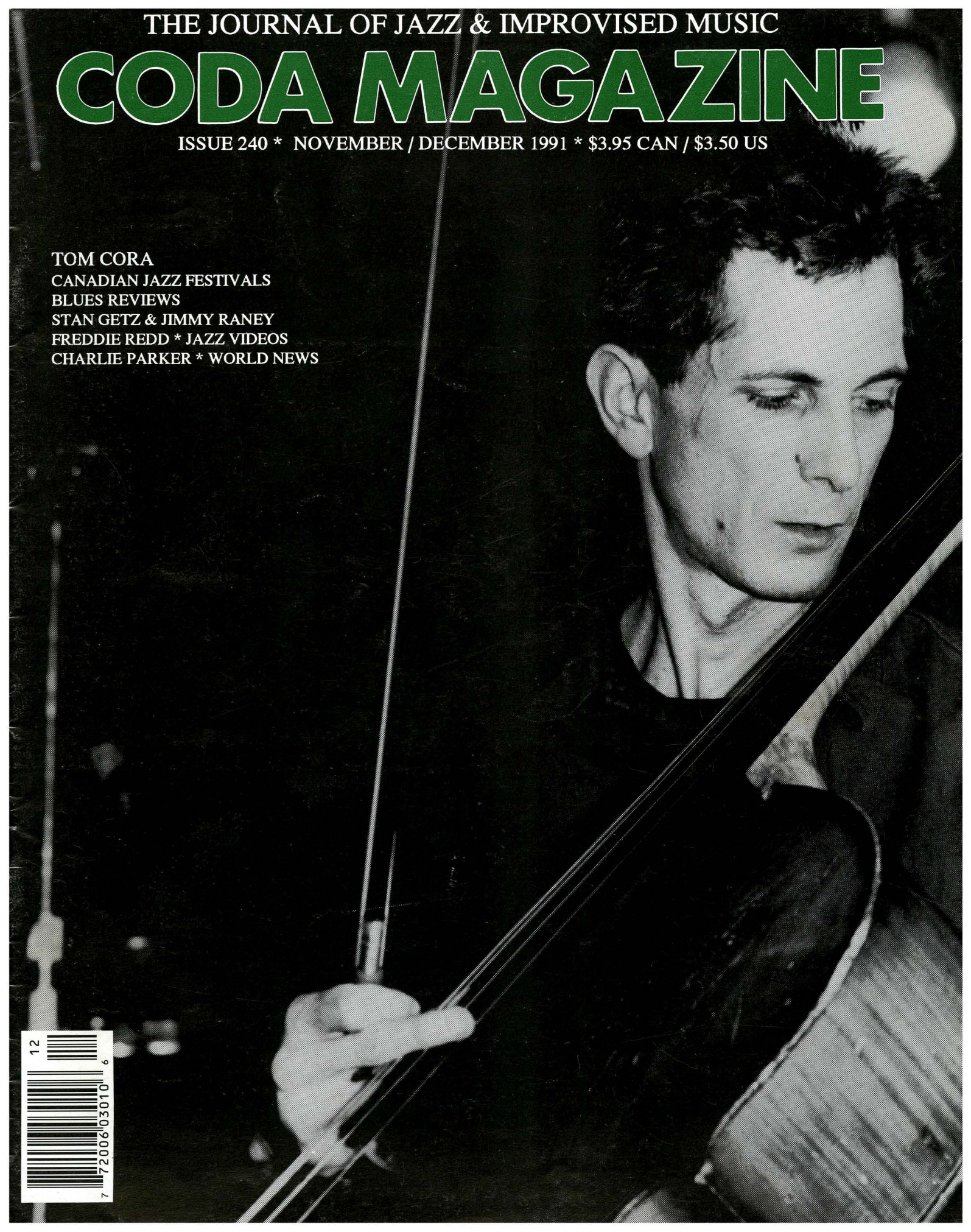

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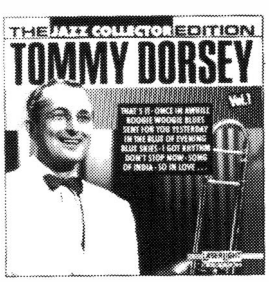

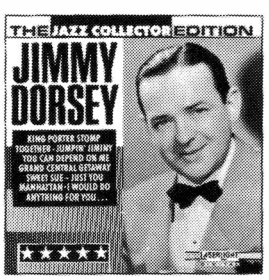

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HAWK, PREZ AND THE DUKE

The Song of the Hawk: The Life and Recordings of Coleman Hawkins
by John Chilton , University of Michigan Press $32.50
You Got To Be Original Man: The Music of Lester Young
by Frank Buchmann-Moller, Greenwood Press
Ellington: The Early Years
by Mark Tucker, University of Illinois Press

Coleman Hawkins, the man who tamed the tenor saxophone in the 1920s and turned it into a definitive solo voice in jazz over the next few decades with his lavish evocative playing, is the subject of ***The Song of the Hawk*** by John Chilton, the first full-length study of Hawkins' life and music. It is written with the same scrupulous scholarship and literate entertaining style that made Chilton's recent study of Sidney Bechet the model for all jazz biographies.

Unlike Bechet however, Hawkins, despite his commanding jazz presence and positive lifestyle, was a somewhat enigmatic figure: he had few close friends, confided little about himself and was notoriously cryptic in many ways, notably about his age and early years.

But Chilton, with painstaking research and interviews on two continents, sifts fact from fiction and the myths surrounding the enigmatic Hawkins to trace the tenor titan's life from the day he was born, on November 21, 1901 (a date confirmed in a signed affidavit by his mother) in St. Louis Missouri, to his last appearance on a Chicago television program one month before he died and shown two days after his funeral, in a morbid post-mortem tribute.

Hawkins' early career with the Fletcher Henderson orchestra (where Louis Armstrong taught him and the band how to swing) from 1923 to 1933 is fully detailed, and his recordings from this period that show Hawk's development from early slap-tongue style to the full rococo sound and lush balladry that made him undisputed master of his horn, are carefully analyzed by Chilton, himself a working musician and busy bandleader in Britain.

It's when Hawkins left to join Jack Hylton's band in London and embark on his magisterial five-year "conquest" of Europe (after Hylton, touring Germany, dropped Hawkins because the Nazis objected to his colour) that Chilton really hits his biographical stride, quoting among other sources, from intense correspondence between Hawkins and a Hungarian girl he met in London that gives rare insights into Hawk's activities in Europe, where he lived in the lavish style of his Henderson years, and his views on the scene.

Hawk's return to New York was one of the epoch making events in jazz history. The young lions who had sharpened their talents and coveted his crown during his absence, were waiting to tear the Hawk apart. But Hawkins, unperturbed, settled the issue when he played and later recorded his classic Body and Soul tour de force that left the competition dazed.

In the 1940s Hawkins stayed on top, dominating the 52nd Street swing scene. Always ahead of the game, he jumped to the forefront of the bebop movement, hiring Thelonious Monk in his band, making the first bebop records with Dizzy Gillespie, playing alongside Charlie Parker, John Coltrane and other "newcomers".

By 1969 however the Hawk was a shell of his old magisterial self, a frail bearded figure racked by alcohol and starvation (ironically he had lost all interest in food). He could barely hold his horn and was liable to collapse on stage, though he continued to produce majestic music to the very end, on that Chicago television date just before his death.

All of which is given in rich detail by a biographer who's the best in the business. It would have been helpful if Chilton, as he did in his Bechet book, had provided a discographical listing of the many Hawkins records he analyzes. Nevertheless ***The Song of the Hawk*** is a tune worthy of its soaring subject, and the melody lingers on.

Lester Leaps In. . .

Lester Young, with his light lyrical style, provided the alternative to Hawkins' lush voluptuous sound. But despite his statute (in 1955 ten leading critics voted him "one of the five most important musicians in the history of jazz"), his life and music are "still the stuff of dreams", says one of Young's biographers, Lewis Porter, in a foreword to a new "solography" of Lester's music: ***You Got To Be Original Man***, by Frank Buchmann-Moller.

In this latest attempt to clarify some of the Lester Young mystique, Bechmann-Moller, a Danish saxophonist / composer - musicologist - librarian, with an astonishing dedication, describes and analyzes, often with musical notation, *every solo* played by Prez, not only on every issued record, but on every scrap of private and unissued material. These include 251 record sessions (chronologically) from the November 6, 1936 Jones-Smith Inc (Basie) date to a March 11, 1959 Paris broadcast in which (as he told an interviewer), Lester was continuing to develop his music.

COLEMAN HAWKINS (Photograph by Len Phillips)

REVIEWED BY AL VAN STARREX

Of course to get a full picture of the Lester Young story, tragic in many respects (drugs, incarceration, depression) as well as his magnificent music, from the buoyancy of his early solos to the tortured utterances of his last recordings, this "solography" should be read in conjunction with Lewis Porter's 1986 biography of Lester (reviewed by **CODA**) and Buchmann-Moller's even more comprehensive biography of Prez (not seen by this reviewer) of which this "solography" was originally intended to be a part.

Because Lester Young's impact (on musicians like Charlie Parker and John Coltrane) was so great, states Porter elsewhere, understanding his music should help scholars as well as "Presophiles" the world over to understand much of jazz since his time. Aside from listening to Prez's peerless records, this definitive study of his music is the best way to do it.

Early Ellington

Most books on Duke Ellington (including Duke's own ***Music Is My Mistress***) give short shrift to Ellington's formative years, before he took the stage at Harlem's Cotton Club and set the jazz world afire.

Yet to understand the origins of Ellington's elegant character and the roots of his genius, this period is most significant. Accordingly Mark Tucker, in his exhaustively researched study of ***Ellington: The Early Years*** sets out to explore "this early and tantalizingly obscure chapter in the Ellington chronicle," leaving no stone or story unturned.

Intriguing facts emerge. Besides learning every aspect of music while growing up in Washington, from playing piano, writing and arranging to bandleading and booking, Ellington was also an accomplished commercial artist. When at twenty he was faced with the responsibilities of supporting his wife Edna and son Mercer (born March 11, 1919), he painted posters, signs, sets and backdrops for local theatres and dance halls (valuable collector's items if still surviving!) by day besides playing jobs and sending out bands under his name at night. He had become in the process a fairly prosperous businessman, with his own home and car.

But raised by doting parents and surrounded by coddling female relatives who told him he could be the best at anything he tried, and growing up in a black community that prided itself in professional achievement, Ellington's ambitions were only beginning. To succeed as a popular musician, there was only one place to go: New York, the entertainment capital of the world.

Ellington's attempts to make it in the Big Apple are given in minute detail, from his first venture with drummer Sonny Greer to his taking over leadership of Elmer Snowden's group, The Washingtonians, which formed the basis of the later Duke Ellington Orchestra at the Kentucky Club, when he began writing songs and making his first records.

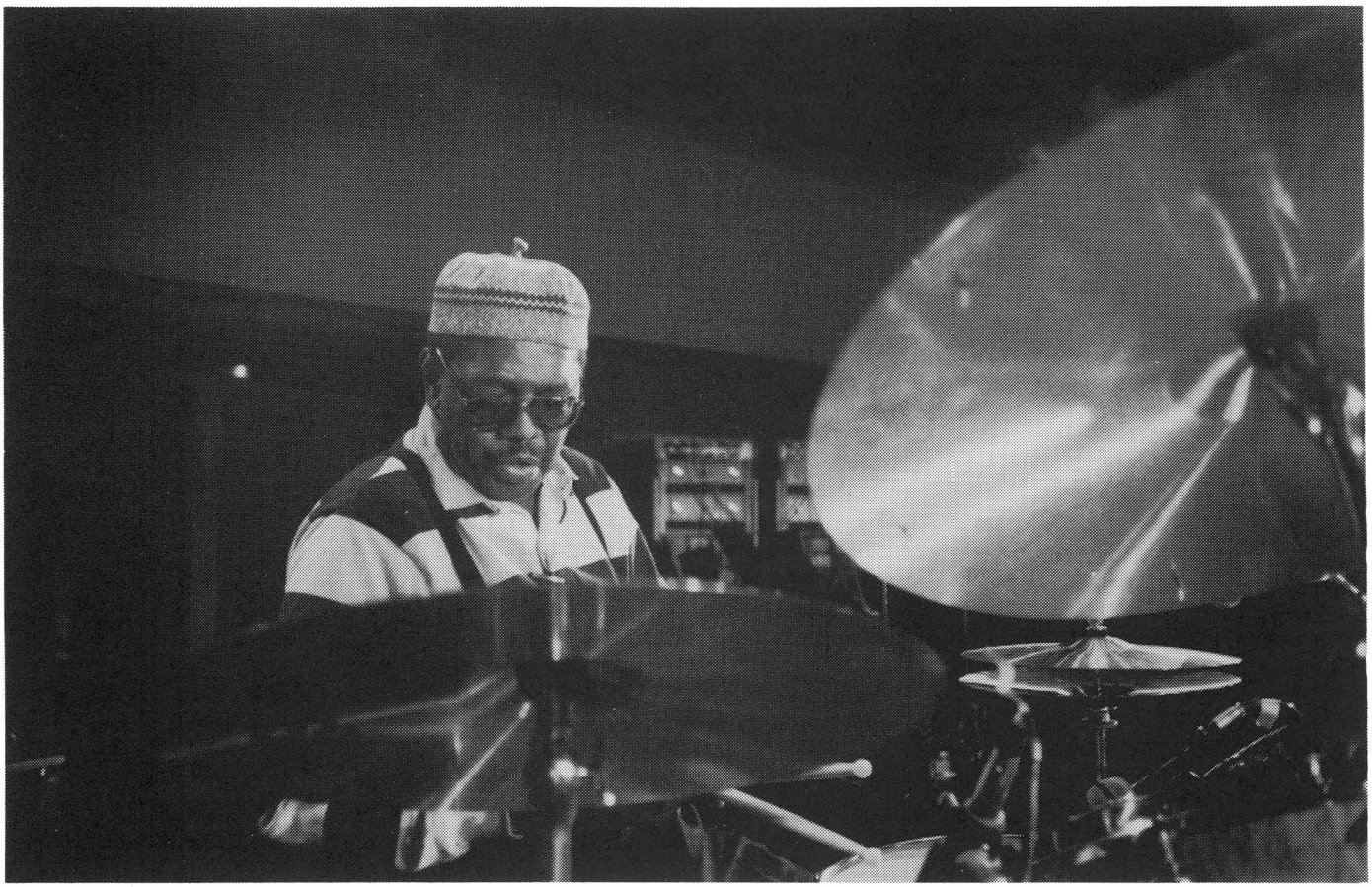
The records were few and far between and not very good, compared to what Duke would soon produce. But Tucker, who specializes in playing early Ellingtonia on piano, analyzes every recording and scrap of music for traces of the Ellington genius, and finds it in some of these early works.

Ellington didn't really make it as a recording artist / composer / arranger until entrepreneur Irving Mills took a hand in Duke's career -- he heard the band at the Kentucky Club -- and began actively promoting him (for 55 percent of Duke's earnings).

Through Mills, Ellington made his first significant recordings, for the Vocalion and Brunswick labels in 1926 (the first St. Louis Toodle-O date), that were moderately successful (one New York dealer got an order from Australia for 100 copies). Then, following a successful tour of New England (with the advertised exhortation: 'Bring Your Asbestos Ear Muffs to Hear the Hottest Blue Blowing Dance Band above the Earth!') and appearances in the Harlem revue **Jazzamania**, came the prestigious Victor date in 1927 that gave the world Black and Tan Fantasy, heralding the Cotton Club era. Which is where this fascinating study ends.

Hopefully Tucker will apply his scholarship (he has access to the Smithsonian's valuable new Duke Ellington Collection) and understanding of Ellington's music to produce an equally compelling study of Duke's work of the 1930s and early 1940s, when the Ellington band was at its peak. It would be, definitively, something to look forward to.

CANADIAN JAZZ FESTIVALS



ED BLACKWELL (Photograph by Bill Smith)

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL
DE JAZZ DE MONTREAL
June 28 - July 7

Regular readers of this publication surely know by now that Montreal has been host to a yearly musical extravaganza, better known as the "Festival international de Jazz de Montréal". A supermarket of sounds (which has its share of jazz to it), this festival (i.e. its organizers) pride every year in its numerical successes (over a million visitors in ten days with a promise of two extra days for next year), while underlining some the "artistic" highpoints of their mammoth undertaking.

Of course, many do complain about the more than fuzzy border between its commercial and artistic vocation, yet when one is able to sift through the onslaught of shows, it is possible to get more than a fair share of worthwhile acts to catch. The trick, though, is to be picky and choosy while wading through the froth.

In the last few years, experience has shown that the whole outdoor scene offers the musical discoveries, while the indoor action is reserved almost exclusively for the big names (read: the American star performers). Once more, this year's program bares out this conclusion and many a good concert was heard scattered around the outdoor stages of the site. Top on this writer's list was a two night presentation entitled "Kölner Jazz Initiative" From Cologne's Stadtgarten, two solo performers and two bands were featured, the first bill opening with a few solos pieces by flautist **Michael Heupel** (including one played on a specially built sub-contrabass flute - which has to be seen to be believed) followed then by the **Kölner Saxophon Mafia**, a multi-reed quintet that played a cohesive set, energetic and free-wheeling, yet compositionally varied in its material. Slated for the second evening was the solo drumming of **Christoph Haberer** with added electronics, a preview to the last group, the **Franck Band,** a new wave punk jazz outfit that was surely more to the taste of the rock crowd. Speaking of electronics, the Japanese trio **Yaz Kaz** was quite a terrifying sight to behold, especially its drummer who showed off the latest in hi-tech gizmos, blasting away at ear-splitting level as well.

Much more traditional, however, was German organist **Barbara Dennerlein**. Showing a lot of fancy footwork on her pedals, she amazed the throngs and will no doubt be headed for jazz stardom pretty soon. Likewise can be said for guitarist **Mark Whitefield,** who brought the outdoor crowd on its feet by milking his neo-Montgomery licks to the hilt. More reflective, though, was Belgian tenorman **Erwin Vann**, whose brooding melodies often kept his neo-Coltranian excursions from getting too far off the ground. Behind him young drummer **Dré Pallemaerts** did much to stoke the fire, while electric bassist **Michel Hatzigeorgiou** played much of the thumpy stylings of that instrument.

Toping the list (with the Mafia) was the quartet of Italian reedman **Carlo Actis Dato**. Madcap theatrics (akin to those of Breuker), folk melodies of European and African extraction complemented nicely the leader's visceral improvisations, aided by his fellow reedman **Piero Ponzo** and abetted by the rhythm team of **Enrico Fazio** and **Fiorenzo Sordini** on bass and drums respectively. My only regret, though, is

that having seen this excellent band make a successful debut in front of a large and wildly enthusiastic crowd, chances to see them back in town are remote to say the least. Of equally high standard as well was **Orange then Blue**, a twelve piece orchestra from Boston under the leadership of drummer **George Schuller**. Fine solos meshed together with detailed, yet flexible charts, resulting in a strong performance from start to finish. Of the high points, one piece by the leader and dedicated to the late Gil Evans was like a kaleidoscope of the departed's writing styles, texturally rich as a whole and made that much more interesting in the solo parts.

Not to be overlooked either outdoors was the whole local scene, which, once again, was kept out on the street for its one and only crack at reaching a wider audience. Larger ensembles, like drummer **Bernard Primeau**'s septet, play the straight ahead hard bop fair, while the seven piece ensemble of guitarist **Luc Bourgeois** (a.k.a. **A Few Colours**) is a springboard for the leader's promising compositional talents. One of the standouts was the quintet of bassist **Normand Guilbault**, which sports a three horn frontline with trombone, trumpet/flugelhorn and clarinet/bass clarinet; for the most part, it features works written by bassists, from Oscar Pettiford to Jaco Pastorius and the leader himself. Unrelenting for his part was drummer **Michel Ratté**'s quintet which featured two guitarists, sax and bass, a fine example of a high calibre band of local talents. Finally, a word of congratulations goes out to pianist **Steve Amirault** and his trio for winning this year's jazz competition.

While the masses squeezed around the outdoor stages, the concert goers moved around and about the theatres, catching the "big name" performers and current day "hot tickets". As jazz has now been in the throws of a youthful tradition revisited movement, so there was an opportunity to catch these new kids on the block. Trumpeters **Roy Hargrove** and **Marlon Jordan**, saxmen **Antonio Hart** and **Tim Warfield,** guitarist **Whitfield** once more, pianist **Bennie Green**, bassist **Christian McBride** and drummer **Carl Allen** jammed the stage for the "Jazz Futures" concert of the fest. By all estimations, however, this concert would have been best titled "back to the future". Mind you, these are talented people with good chops for the most part, but need they be put (wittingly or not) on pedestals so early in their careers?

Since jazz is becoming more of a generational thing nowadays, there were also occasions to see a couple of 'meetings of the clan', so to speak. The most obvious case was that of the father-son team of **Von and Chico Freeman**. Backed by a standard rhythm section, their encounter was essentially a blowing date, with Junior playing second fiddle to Senior in the first half of the show. Nice to have caught the former, even though one had to bear some of the latter's tuning problems. But Chico's trouble is only a slight nuisance compared to the newest alto whizz kid, **Christopher Hollyday**, unquestionably the most squawkiest sound ever achieved this side of Jackie McLean. A walking catalogue of 1950's bop licks, this 21 year-old might impress for his change running, but this is one kid who needs to do some serious thinking about what music is about, not to mention a needed change in his set up. After having cringed a couple of times in the first two numbers... it was time to cut out. As an opening act, Montreal alto man **Dave Turner** played a decent set, though he overextended himself in a convoluted a capella interlude to a ballade, which segued uneasily to a mid tempo tune. Sharing the stage with him were Toronto stalwarts, drummer **Gerry Fuller** and bassist **Dave Young,** as well as the always dependable **Ronnie Mathews** at the piano.

Like the previous two groups, there were many other solid acts in the late night "Jazz dans la Nuit" series, the weather vein of sorts for the indoor jazz action. Caught in those late evening performances were the quintet of **Dewey Redman**, the quartet of **Ed Blackwell** and the recently reunited trio of **Paul Bley**, **Jimmy Giuffre** and **Steve Swallow.** Redman, for his part, brought along with him another tenor player named **Joshua Shedroff.** Totally unknown to me, this young musician was impressive in a concert of mixed blessings. While the first two tunes were lengthy (lasting close to an hour), they came across as rather pedestrian mainstream ramblings. Only when the leader picked up his second horn, the Chinese musette, he seemed to breath new life in the performance which managed to get pretty hot in spots. Ed Blackwell, for his part, looked like he has a brand new lease on life, drumming his beautifully melodic rhythms with such perfect time. His new band with **Carlos Ward**, **Ahmed Abdullah** and **Mark Helias** was joyously melodic from start to finish, a beautiful musical treat with many solid solos along the way. As for the Bley trio, reunited last Fall in Paris after some thirty years, their concert was sheer poetry, improvisation at its clearest and most profound as well. And as fate would have it, this group last played in town on the very same stage they did back in 1961!

In such a big schedule disappointments are always unavoidable, one of them being the **World Saxophone Quartet** for its lack of interesting compositions and an inordinate number of unaccompanied solos. In contrast to the aformentioned "Mafia", it was the parts that counted here much more than the sum. Trumpeter **John Faddis**, for his part, spent more time hamming it up on stage, playing little of consequence in his deliberately show-offish style. Pianist **McCoy Tyner** and his big band in tow also seemed to be wanting as it was mostly filled by subs. Missed, yet receiving rave reviews by those in attendance was the "Four Pianos for Phineas" concert, a tribute to the late Mr. Newborn instigated by **James Williams,** and featuring the talents of **Harold Mabern**, **Mulgrew Miller** and **Geoff Keezer.**

This year's program also marked the introduction of a new solo series, with the bass of **Ray Brown**, the pianos of **Adam Makowicz**, **Marcus Roberts** and **Ben Sidran** as well as the reeds of **John Surman** (who was forced to cancel due to a lung infection) and, last but not least, **Steve Lacy.** A frequent visitor in town, this latest performance was nonetheless special for him as he played a solo concert at the very same venue (a Church) some 15 years previously. After some Monk to warm up, he tackled his own material, deliberately challenging himself and his listeners as he went along. All told, his outing was a most satisfying one, and well received too.

All in all, this year's Montreal musical bonanza was a varied one, with pluses and minuses, yet with enough to keep one's ears more than busy throughout. After all, with an event this size (and given its clout), there are bound to be some things right to it.

Reviewed by
Marc Chénard

OTTAWA JAZZ FESTIVAL
July 12 - July 21

A festival to relax by, Ottawa's event has achieved a deservedly albeit modest degree of success without ever having wanted to become THE jazz festival of the country. Due to other pressing commitments, this reviewer only managed to get there for the second half of the action. Like previous years, its schedule is so devised that no two shows overlap. A swinging affair for the most part, it featured a good slate of Canadian performers with a number of American headliners and some lesser knowns as well.

Indoors, the solo piano series covered a range of styles. Toronto-based pianist **Joe Sealy** played his first unaccompanied performance, working in (rather hesitantly at first) his bluesey soul licks, but sounding more relaxed in the second part of the concert. A native Philadelphian now residing in New York, pianist **Sumi Tanooka** did not generate much spark or swing, given her predominantly impressionistic keyboard musings. The final two acts of that series, however, were the most eagerly awaited ones. From California, **Horace Tapscott** first delivered a public lecture on the development of Black Music on the West Coast (one of many workshop-demonstrations held during the fest), a prelude to his own performance which, without being daring or majestic, was nonetheless highly personal. The closer of the series, **Stanley Cowell**, fiendishly played tons of ideas in a virtuosic demonstration of encyclopedic proportions, a performance of heavy handed pianisms to say the least.

Later that same day, pianist **Andrew Homzy** along with his "Selected Sextet" presented mostly originals, giving the leader the opportunity to concisely solo in a quasi-Monkian manner (a welcome antidote of sorts after the Cowell exhibition). Interestingly enough, Homzy and cohorts threw in a couple of John Kirby vignettes of yester-year, his ensemble having exactly the same instrumentation of that swing-era aggregation.

Amongst the larger ensembles heard, the **Either Orchestra** from Cambridge is a ten piece outfit with an unmistakeable tongue-and-cheek sense of humour. Their show, which started with members of the band wandering through the crowd, however took some time to get off the ground (but when it did, it was good). Co-leading an octet, pianist **Jeannie Cheatham** and trombonist husband **Jimmy** brought the festival to a close with a feel good blues music that the crowd in the outdoor park fully enjoyed.

Of all shows seen, the drum/sax duo of **Paul Flaherty** and **Randall Colborne** was undoubtedly the most corrosive encounter scheduled, and their shot of musical draino was certainly a welcome edge to add in the program. As for Canadian participation, lest we not forget the Unity people from Toronto, who were represented in no less than three different groups. Tops on yours truly's list was the excellent pianoless quartet **Time Warp**, whose saxophonist, **Mike Murley**, has an equally good unit sans piano, also featured at the fest. Finally, an "All Star" combo of artists on the label got together for an evening concert, which did not really gell or create much excitement for that matter. Not to be overlooked either was tenor man **Kirk MacDonald** whose no nonsense hard bop drive was well featured in one afternoon show.

Reviewed by
Marc Chénard

ONE MORE FOR THE ROAD

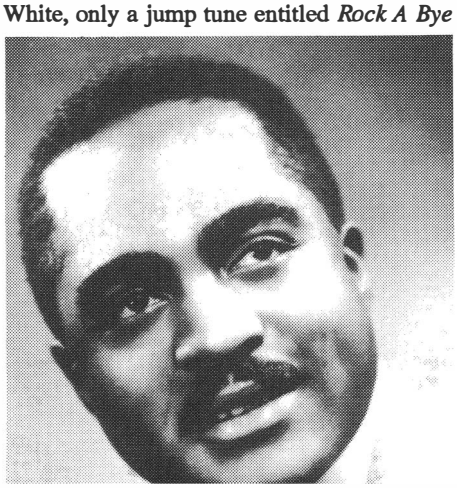
With so many labels deep in their vaults, this is indeed the golden age for the blues collector. I pale when I think back to how it was, in the early '60s, when I started my collection. How little we knew, there was only Blues Unlimited magazine, and how difficult it was to obtain the tunes. Up until ten years ago I was paying between ten and fifteen dollars apiece for Amos Milburn 78s. That was the only way to get his lesser known tunes and just last month I purchased a Milburn CD which contains twenty-three titles for less than thirty bucks. How things have changed. The Robert Johnson three CD box is racked downtown between Madonna and Sting and MCA is now working on a Howlin' Wolf box to follow their excellent Muddy Waters, Bo Diddley and Willie Dixon CD boxes.

At the vortex of this profusion lies the invention of the revolutionary compact disc and the recording industry's almost total switch to this new format. I say almost, because the first two platters I'm going to talk about are vinyl only releases. The reason for this is, I imagine, their obvious limited market. First let's check out ***Cool Playing Blues*** Relic 8025. This is a compilation of cool uptown blues recorded in the 1950s for the late Al Benson's Chicago-based Parrot and Blue Lake labels. The collection reflects the rounder, saxophone dominated, blues of the late forties, early fifties. There is little hard driving blues here and not one blues harp in sight. Don't let that put you off because the music is great, especially the four opening cuts by guitarist, singer, Jody Williams, either by himself or masquerading as Little Papa Joe. I became aware of Jody initially through his superb lead guitar work on several Bo Diddley classics, including *I'm Looking For A Woman* and *Who Do You Love*. He plays some nice slide on *Groan My Blues Away* but it is the rockin' *Looking For My Baby*, driven by Willie Dixon's mammoth slap bass, where Williams really shines. The following two songs are by L.C. McKinley who is a much smoother singer, somewhat in the vein of T. Bone Walker. L.C. is no slouch as a guitar player and the shuffle, *All Alone Blues*, gives him a chance to show off his stuff. McKinley's axe is also featured behind the next couple of tracks by piano playing bluesman Curtis Jones. Both are quite fine. St. Louis Jimmy Oden opens side two with two contributions and they are the only ones on the album which seem to be dubbed from best available disc or acetate. I wasn't too crazy about Oden's version of his own composition, *Going Down Slow*. It pales when compared to Howlin' Wolf's, later, killer interpretation on the legendary Chess, ***Rocking Chair*** LP. Jo Jo Adams is a blues shouter who was obviously influenced by Big Joe Turner, but without the big man's power. Adams would have sounded better if the backing unit had been less jazzy and swung harder. The collection's final three tunes are from a previously unknown Parrot session by tenor sax man, J.T. Brown, recording as Nature Boy Brown. If the names rings a bell, it's because Brown blew his horn behind Elmore James, for most of the fifites. Although James is not on the session, the two instrumentals and slow vocal blues are quite fine. All in all a good but non-essential album of little known Chicago blues. Dick Shurman's liner notes were informative. The pressing quality was top notch by I did think that the cover art was a little busy which might take away from sales.

We move now from the obscure to the really obscure. Initially I only recognized two singers on the ***Long Man Blues*** album, from Delmark / Pearl PL-17 (also on chrome cassette). They were Arbee Stidham and Harold Burrage. The music on this package is very similar to the Relic compilation,

CHARLES BROWN (Photograph by Dave Booth)

representing the massive changes Chicago, in fact American, blues and rhythm & blues was going through in the early fifties. Side one opens with a smooth blues shouter, Jack Cooley, whose *Rain On My Window* has a great blues atmosphere which is amplified by Lafayette Leake's jazzy ivories. I have quite a few discs by Harold Burrage in my collection but I hadn't heard his two contributions before. They date from a 1954 session and I liked both of them. *I Feel So Fine* has a real hard edge to it. As a matter of fact if you replaced the sax with a harmonica you would have what has now come to be known as the classic Chess blues sound. Burrage's other contribution is a slow, shouting blues, packed with soulful emotion. The artist who gives the album its title song is Dennis "Long Man" Binder and his tunes close out side one. The piano playing bluesman is featured on three songs. *I'm A Lover* is a great, tough blues which features some biting, metallic guitar played by Vincent "Guitar Red" Duling. The following selection, *Feel So Good*, is so loose that it can only have been made up on the spot. Finally we have Binder's show-stopper, *Long Man*. It is a novelty rap in which the long policeman hits the long man with his long club and takes him to the long jail. A great bit of lllooonnnggg jive which reminded me of Bo Diddley's classic, *Say Man*. Side two opens with a couple of contributions by a smooth blues singer, Cliff Butler, and are taken from his 1952 session. *Tired Of Being Mistreated* has a definite T. Bone Walker flavour, who was at that time one of the top bluesmen of the day, while *Jealous Hearted* should appeal to fans of the early doo-wop sound, as Cliff is backed on this slow song by a male vocal group, The Doves. Of the next four tracks, again from a '52 session and sung by Edward "Gates" White, only a jump tune entitled *Rock A Bye Baby* did anything for me. The rest, although well performed, were just too smooth. The record's final cut is a fine slow blues by Arbee Stidham highlighting his vibrating vocals and to cap it all is a wonderful, swooping guitar solo, possibly by Earl Hooker. Bill Dahl's liner notes are well researched and the sound quality is excellent. I would have rather had a photo of the musicians on the front cover than George Hanson's goofy cartoons. Once again a nice but non-essential disc to file in your Chicago blues section.



JIMMY WITHERSPOON (Courtesy 'Showtime Archives, Toronto)

One of the benefits of CD, especially the British ones, is their long playing time. No more getting up after six songs to flip the record over. If you and your girl want to set a late night, bluesy mood then Ace's ***Blues Around Midnight*** CD CH235, 20 song compilation is ideal. The moody material is all drawn from the extensive vaults of the west coast label, Modern Records. It contains an even mix of both '50s and '60s recordings, with Jimmy Nelson's wonderful #1 R&B hit T-99 from 1951 being the earliest. How nice and clear it sounds compared to the first time I heard it on one of those old, fuzzy sounding United albums. Another cut which sounds great here is from a year later and is performed by a young Ray Charles. I checked all my pre-Atlantic Charles material and couldn't find *I'm Wonderin' and Wonderin'* anywhere. You can hear that by this time, 1952, Ray was leaving his Charles Brown imitations far behind and getting his own thing together. I wish it were possible to get all that early Ray Charles material on one collection. Frankie Ervin, who replaced Charles Brown in 1950 as vocalist with Johnny Moore's *Three Blazers*, maintains the mood with a couple of smoothies from 1953. Kent / Modern's guitar playing bluesmen are also well represented, with Larry Davis, Lowell Fulson and B.B. King each contributing a couple of songs. It's interesting to note, especially for the completist, that the Beale Street Bluesboy's two tunes, *You're Breaking My Heart* and *Down Now*, come from the flip sides of obscure '60s singles and appear for the first time both in stereo and on CD. The CD's only throw away track is the too smooth saxophone instrumental, *Love Is Here To Stay*, by Lorenzo Holden. I did cringe, however, at the sound of the wah wah guitar on the Johnny Copeland song. God I hate that trick box, it just doesn't mesh with the blues. If it's late night blues you're looking for then stop right here. The sound quality is superb and Ted Carroll's liner notes tell the story. A vinyl version was issued, with fewer tracks, and I imagine you might be able to special order it still.

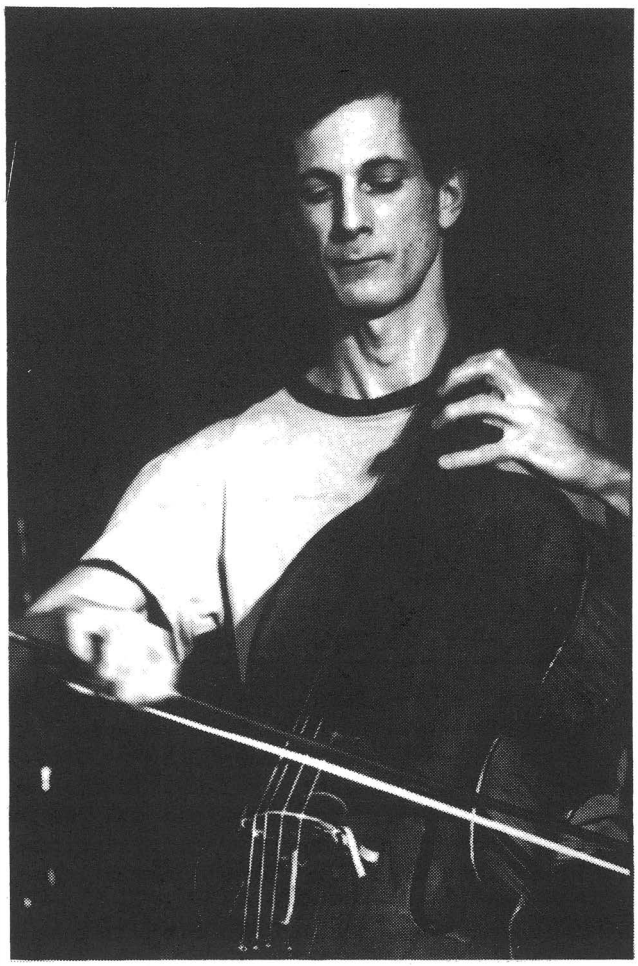
There are two previously unissued Jimmy Witherspoon sides from the fifties on the ***Blues Around Midnight*** CD which could be added to MCA / Chess's recent Witherspoon collection, ***Spoon So Easy*** CHD 93003, and you'd never know it. There never was a Jimmy Witherspoon LP on the Chess / Checker label prior to this CD. The label only issued three singles by 'Spoon before he moved on. I must admit that Witherspoon is not one of my favourite blues singers. A little too supper club for me. However, I was very pleasantly surprised when I gave this CD a spin. It's good. One of the highlights is a great re-recording of his 1949 #1 R&B hit for the Supreme label, *Ain't Nobody's Business*. This 1956 rendition finds Jimmy in excellent vocal form, backed by some nice guitar work and a notable, breathy sax solo. The fourteen track disc is a well balanced mixture of fast and slow songs. One of the finest jumpers is the previously unreleased T.W.A., which was written by Floyd Dixon and recorded by him as *Riding Mighty High* in 1952. It too recently saw the light of day for the first time on the excellent Ace collection ***Kings of the Blues*** CDCH 276. Earlier I was noting my disappointment with St. Louis Jimmy's Parrot version of *Going Down Slow*. Well, I have absolutely no problem with 'Spoon's 1959 version which he recorded in Kansas City with some top notch musicians including Jay McShann on piano. It starts with a very bluesy, muted trumpet setting the despondent mood and then Jimmy's vocal slides in with just the right amount of slap back to give it that alley feel, nice. A lot of the unreleased material is excellent and it makes you wonder why the Chess brothers left it in the can. A couple of gems come from a 1954 Chicago session, *Live So Easy* and *Danger*. They sound as though Willie Dixon produced the session. A trip to the studio a year later gave Jimmy Witherspoon his second Checker 45, *It Ain't No Secret (What my baby can do)*, a straight steal from the gospel tune, *It Is No Secret What God Can Do*, backed with *Why Do I*

Love You Like I Do? Both songs are on the new CD and both feature a maraca player, which got me wondering if perhaps Bo Diddley's maraca man, Jerome Green, was in the studio that day and Dixon commandeered him for this 1955 Witherspoon session. It's nice to see material of this quality finally released, even if, for some reason, both sides of 'Spoon's Checker single #810 were left off. They are both fine blues songs and should have been included. With the exception of slightly muffled sound on the song, Garfield Avenue, the balance has the top notch sonic quality we've come to expect from these MCA / Chess releases.

I recently fulfilled a lifelong ambition to see and meet rhythm and blues legend, Charles Brown. He and his group were in Toronto a few short months ago. They spent a whole week at the Bermuda Onion, to open the club's Legends of R&B series. This was no fading bluesman reprising his hits of the '40s and '50s. On the contrary, Charles was far better than I had hoped. A superb vocalist and an even better pianist. The Onion was packed once the word got out, what a week! His 1990 concert tour with Bonnie Raitt exposed him to a brand new audience, most of whom were not born when he was topping the national R&B charts. This tour, combined with his new CD, ***All My Life***, on Rounder / Bullseye Blues BB 9501 could put him on the trail of John Lee Hooker's recent breakthrough to mass acceptance. Brown's 1986 release on the small Blueside label, ***One More For The Road***, now available on the Alligator label AL 4771, showed that Charles still had the magic, but I think it was too jazzy to break through. On this new project producer Ron Levy takes Brown straight back to the music he helped to create; rhythm and blues. The choice of musicians for this session is superb. They include several of Charles's touring band members. His road guitarman, Danny Caron, shines from beginning to end. Although there are quite a few ballads not all the material is slow and moody. Brown's #2 R&B hit from 1951, *Seven Long Days*, at that time a ballad, is successfully boosted to a red hot jump tempo. Someone must have been listening to Big Maybelle prior to the session because there are versions of a couple of her Savoy rockers included here. *That's A Pretty Good Love* comes off real well, as does *Tell Me Who*, which is done as an uptempo duet, featuring fellow rhythm and blues legend Ruth Brown. For some strange reason, Charles claims to have written the latter tune, but in fact it was scribed by Billy "The Joker" Myles. It was great to hear some new material, especially, for the first time on disc a piano instrumental called *Joyce's Boogie*. For another duet, this time a six minute plus slow blues written especially for the CD, *A Virus Called The Blues*, Charles is joined on vocals by fellow keyboardman, Doctor John. Ron Levy's production is superb, as is the sound. I only hope that Ron will do a similar project with Ruth Brown and take her right back to the real nitty gritty as he has here with Charles Brown. This is an excellent new release which will please both blues and jazz fans.

TOM CORA: ABSOLUTE CELLISMO

Tom Cora is one of those musicians who makes so many *sounds* on his instrument that it is an education just watching him play. Flailing away at the cello, a blur of ectomorphic limbs yanking strings, bowing bridges, chop sticks, metal rods, and steel wires, Cora looks like some sort of manic cello-playing machine producing the *true* soundtrack to Charlie Chaplin's ***Modern Times***. The sounds produced are startling, electric, ironic and abstractly compelling. They are intensely powerful, and you find yourself asking, "All of this from a solo cellist?"



And that's where the argument begins. Even at a time in which it is virtually *de rigueur* for a musician to be "beyond categorization", one gets the idea that Cora is pulling a few legs when he hedges on the definition of "cellist" (small c) and "Cellist" (large C).

"I am a cellist," he says, "but I don't feel so much like a Cellist. I feel like a musician who happens to play cello. It isn't that I'm not committed to the cello and obsessed by the cello, but somehow I don't see myself fitting into that club of Cellists. I don't have, he searches for the word and finds it, "*cellismo*."

Strange sentiment from a man who has devoted nearly two decades to the cello, taken an instrument that was virtually an improvisational blank slate and scrawled all kinds of intriguing designs over it. Though he hasn't had a recording come out in two years, February saw **three**, top-of-the-line, Cora CDs hit the racks, making now a great time to explore those scrawlings.

The first is a studio recording with Curlew (***Bee*** on Cuneiform), the collective out / funk outfit featuring Cora, George Cartwright, Davey Williams, and Pippin Barnett; the second, a compilation of live dates done by the Third Person trio (***The Bends***, on Knitting Factory WORKS), Cora and percussionist Samm Bennett with a different third person invited to each performance; and third, a solo recording, ***Gumption in Limbo*** out on the Sound Aspects Label. Each of these explores a different aspect of Cora's music, different levels of energy and abstraction are touched. Listen to any of these recordings and you'll quickly come to the conclusion that **cellismo** is what Tom Cora has got nothing but.

"At one point," says Cora, "I was a guitar player, and the kinds of things I was involved with didn't have anything to do with the history that the cello is usually attached to. I didn't have any kind of classical training or environment in my upbringing. [When] I took up the cello, it was a completely irrational, impulsive decision. I'd gotten to the point where on guitar I was pretty good at this style, okay at that style, maybe not so great at this other style. I was playing jazz, r&b, blues, country music, playing styles, and I was suddenly struck by the question, 'What's my music?' I was putting my energy into something that was culturally a bit removed from me."

If he had no background in the cello and its idiom, wouldn't that instrument also be culturally removed from him?

"The guitar has a huge history in every idiom, every tradition of music: classical, folk, pop, jazz, every culture has guitar in it. To me, taking up the cello was exciting because it was this open field. There was no history of it outside the classical tradition, which was scary at the same time because I didn't have anybody I could model myself after."

But, obviously, the cello speaks to Cora. There has to be more to the relationship than just a desire to get away from the guitar. Why the cello?

"I knew I wanted a string instrument, I knew I wanted an instrument that was capable of singing, and I was attracted to bass. So I took the cello. It was a very quick, impulsive decision. The things that I had been listening to around that time that had cello in it were the Dolphy things with Ron Carter. Bartok String quartets. These weren't what decided me to play the cello, but the sound of the cello was in my head, and I found that range to really be human, to fit inside my physical response to sound."

So the cello was Tom Cora's instrument, but determining that was only the first step in answering the larger question, "What is my music?" Cora's next steps took him to West Hurly, New York (near Woodstock), and the Creative Music Foundation, an educational organization which boasted such alumni and faculty (the two categories often overlapping) as Anthony Braxton, Pauline Oliveros, Karl Berger, Marilyn Crispell, Oliver Lake, Lee Konitz, Don Cherry, and others. After a five week intensive Cora was offered a job as Dean of Admissions, and suddenly found himself living the life of a government funded musician.

It was a powerful environment for Cora to be in (he had only been playing cello for a year and a half at this point). Coming from "the sticks of Virginia" Cora was immersed in the music of people whom he had greatly

TOM CORA (Photograph by Gerard Futrick)

to be in (he had only been playing cello for a year and a half at this point). Coming from "the sticks of Virginia" Cora was immersed in the music of people whom he had greatly admired, and, for a time, that was exactly what he needed. Eventually, though, he found himself wanting change, a desire that intensified when Reagan got elected and the CMF lost its funding. It became clear to him that the time had come to get to New York.

"I never had that idea, you know, go to New York get in a band. I knew that's where a lot of music that I admired was centered, but somehow I never fabricated an image of myself as a professional musician ahead of the fact." Still, Cora had already formed Curlew with Bill Laswell, George Cartwright, and Mickey Scopilitus, all of whom lived in the City. Further, he had also become involved in "that scene with Chadbourne and Zorn and Polly Bradford."

"That scene," is what has come to be recognized as the "downtown" scene, one branch of which held improvisation sacred and noise sublime. The movement in which Cora took part was about stark discovery, skirting any assumptions about how things are "supposed" to sound, consciously avoiding reference to any past style of music. They were, in the purest sense, non-idiomatic improvisors, inventing literally unheard of languages for their instruments.

"I went through a period making a great effort to play so-called non-idiomatic improvised music. Constructing a kind of spontaneously composed music that was based on noises and sounds, not notes and phrases and referenced idioms. Back in '79 or '80 there was kind of a fascination, and why not? It was fascinating, with the kind of strange and wonderful sounds we were making. Combined anything from raunch to elegance, put together in this context that we created in this scene in New York, with these instruments doing weird things that you don't normally hear them doing. Not that we weren't trying to make music with those sounds, we were, but the sounds were so new they were almost like an end in themselves."

Today, though, Cora's focus is more on what to do with those sounds than the sounds themselves. "I know I have a language that for some people is fascinating because they've never heard a cello do that. For me it's not enough, I've heard myself do it a lot. I'm always looking for new sounds, but it's not my goal in life to find new sounds. A sound is new, by nature, where you put it when."

Of course, the development of Cora's music is not as neatly linear as laid out above. At the same time they were at their non-idiomatic peak, Cora and his compatriots spent a lot of time sequestered in their rooms playing blues licks. "To do non-idiomatic improvising was a prevalent activity of that time, and even though you might spend some time doing that you don't lose what's you, what you heard, what you came up with, what seeped up into your consciousness."

Cora's latest group recordings, with Third Person and Curlew, attest strongly to this. All the Curlew players have impeccable out credentials, but on ***Bee*** (as on the earlier Curlew efforts) that out-ness is driven by a Stax funk sensibility. Curlew has been a constant in Cora's life since his time in West Hurly ("There's always Curlew," he says), and indicates that, for Cora, the whole non-idiomatic route was one out of many.

This isn't to suggest in anyway that Cora has abandoned that route. Third Person, in particular, works to blend the wildness with a song-form aesthetic in a non-obvious way. Throughout the entirely improvised sets, with guests Zeena Parkins, Marc Ribot, George Cartwright, Don Byron and others, references are made and rhythms sound familiar (there's even some straight 4/4 moments), but the stuff stays outside the pale, evincing a fascination with the forms while never actually becoming "song".

Cora explains, "What the minimalist people would do would be to take song form harmonies, or obligato kind of elements and put it into a non-song form, put it into a really processed unfolding long form kind of thing. And if I stop and try to figure it out, what I might be interested in is taking a much larger sound pallet repertoire, from consonance and pure sounds all the way up to percussious stuff, strangled sounds, and what have you, and put it into a song form."

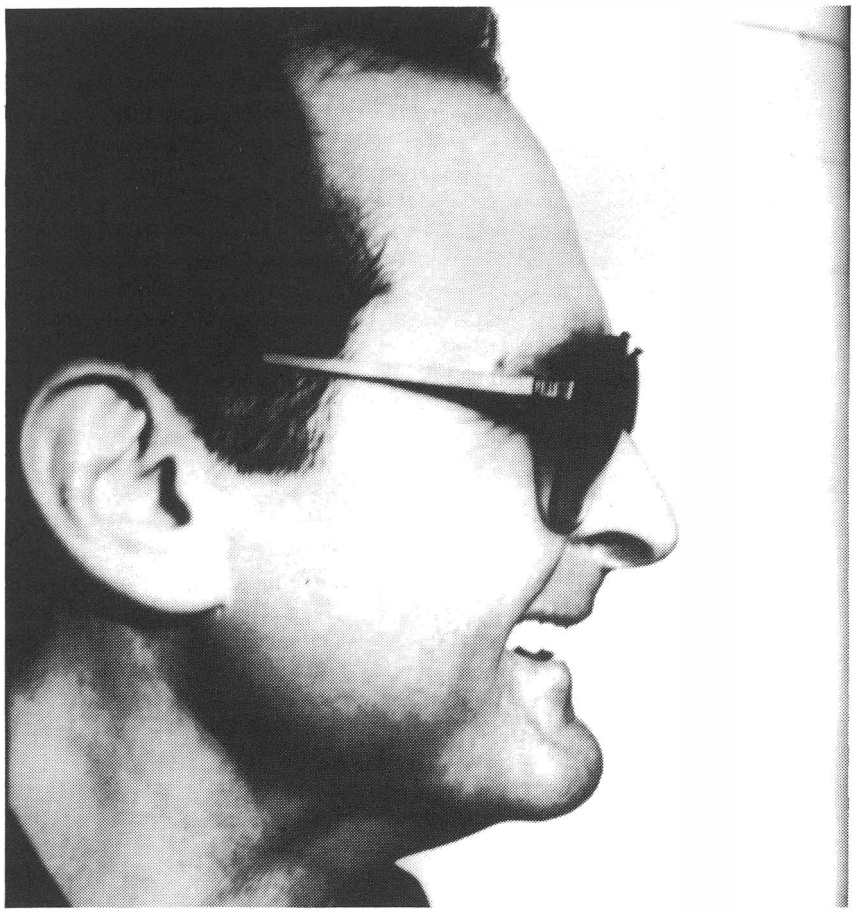
Probably the most intense medium through which one could examine Cora's music is his frequent solo outings. "In the beginning [solo concerts] were just a way to scare myself and challenge myself and learn something. Playing solo and improvising pares down some real important questions about making music, especially about composing, spontaneous composing. You start to get a feeling for what works and what doesn't work. Not that when you are improvising you can be in total command. Part of the trick is to be able to release control of what you are going to do, to make the decisions split second. There's not a formula about it.

"In fact, I played a concert once that I thought was really exciting, like, **I'm on to something**, and the next night I latched on to what I thought I discovered the night before, and that's where I fucked up. You can't try to reproduce something like that. I had this big dilemma in my head about decisions. I said to myself I'm supposed to be improvising; I have to forget this other stuff. What this led into was another pit-fall which is the energy of avoiding, instead of creating something you're spending the energy avoiding something. Ultimately it was like, don't worry about repeating yourself. We all have our language, we all have our material, it's more a matter of what you can do with that material."

Through the current ***Gumption in Limbo*** (as well as 1987's ***Live at the Western Front***) one can get a true appreciation of the instrument and the man's abilities on it. Even the skilled critic is tempted to onomatopoeic absurdity in describing the many voices Cora draws from the cello's envelope ("... the bow *skrontches* across the bridge..."), and a list of source materials ("Ah ha! I hear a reggae influence!") is a straw desperately grasped. Not that these assertions are invalid or even, technically, inaccurate (there are indeed passages on ***Gumption*** that sound *skrontch*-like), but expressing this music in pat terms is just not the point. If Cora's "non-idiomatic" period created a new vocabulary for cello, then the result of his experiments of the late eighties has been a syntax for that vocabulary.

This, then, is the secret to Cora's curious mixture of abstraction and intimacy. Listening to him is like listening to an obscure dialect. Cora ***has*** listened to the blues, Appalachian folk, and jazz. The language is human, it breathes (gasps, coughs, and sneezes). It is odd, exotic, and at times inconceivably dense, but there is also a certain level of familiarity, and where the two touch is where Cora is most successful.

THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS OF THE STAN GETZ



We are indebted yet again to Mosaic Records for another collection of music from one of the best, if short-lived groups of the early 50s, the collaboration of Stan Getz with guitarist Jimmy Raney. While the emphasis is on guitar and tenor, this gathering also illustrates to some extent Getz's seemingly unerring ability to choose superior pianists for his groups: Al Haig, Horace Silver, Duke Jordan and Hall Overton (the last-named, however, probably Raney's choice). It also illustrates Getz's liking for certain kinds of drummers: Tiny Kahn, Roy Haynes and Frank Isola.

While Mosaic has done its usual job on cleaning up the forty-year-old sound of these performances, there is some unevenness of volume on the first CD of this three-CD boxed set, and the sound is a little fuzzy, doubtlessly arising from the fact the recordings were originally made at Storyville in Boston. But the fuzziness, in a paradoxical way, helps to bring out something of a key to the success of the pairing of electric guitar and tenor, but more of that later.

Having started with the usual encomium to Mosaic, something the company must be getting used to by now, let me raise my eyebrows in puzzlement in a quibble about this collection. The title is misleading: surely this is not really the complete recordings of Getz and Raney. It covers all the cuts recorded by the quintet with this pair from August '51 to April '53. But in fact Getz and Raney recorded in the quintet format in the summer of 1948, initially under the leadership of pianist Al Haig, though by the time the cuts were ready for release on the **Sittin' In** label, Getz had emerged into early fame through the release of his solo on ***Early Autumn*** with Woody Herman so the cuts came out under Getz's name. Bill Crow documents this session in his notes to this collection and while these cuts may be difficult to find, they seem to be available. I have this session on a **Spotlite** release issued some years back. This **Spotlite** album, ***Al Haig Meets The Master Saxes Volume Two***, has a whole side devoted to master and alternate takes of this quintet, over twenty minutes of music though Raney dropped out on two takes. Also included on that same side is a Getz cut with a larger group but still with Raney, from later the same year. There is room on the second and third CDs in the Mosaic collection for the inclusion of these cuts. Maybe there were problems with permission. Still, the notes on the discography make no mention of these recordings though there is a comprehensive list of all releases of all the cuts included.

Crow, who played bass with the group on almost half the cuts, details the careers of Getz and Raney and runs down all the sessions included in his solid set of liner notes, though apparently one of his stories may be mythical. Drummer Frank Isola replaced Tiny Kahn who was the drummer for the Storyville gig, and Crow suggests that Isola was eventually ousted somewhat unceremoniously and without warning when he turned up at a gig at Birdland to find Kenny Clarke setting up for the date. Crow implies that Isola was never so much as told by Getz that this was happening. A few weeks ago I called Isola, now living in Detroit, about these sessions he worked with Getz. The drummer's story is that he always got on well with Getz and he had no complaints about his treatment by Getz. When I mentioned this question about his replacement in the group, Isola interrupted me before I had even framed the question. "Oh, that old story!" he said. "That must be Bill Crow, right?" I had not told Isola that Crow had written the notes. Still, Isola never told me just how it came about that he lost his job with the Getz group.

But what about the music gathered here? The first CD is perhaps the best for it gives us the group caught in action in one evening. It's really astonishing that everyone plays so well most of the time though there are a few gaffes, miscues and mix-ups, but that only adds to the listener's pleasure, for we're reminded that these are young musicians, confident, brash, willing to go at the music with no holds barred, pouring out a welter of fine improvisations, some at quite hectic speeds, swallowing their few errors in their headlong career with the sheer enjoyment of revelling in their own interplay and support of each other. A pity that we can only guess at the crispness of Tiny Kahn's drumming, because the recording dulls it most of the time, but we can feel the drive and bounce he provides together with the bass of Teddy Kotick. It's the up-tempo pieces that grab the attention immediately, effortlessly relaxed yet rolling along on a marvelously tense line of

(Photograph by Michael Miller)

QUINTET WITH JIMMY RANEY

adventure and technical fizz: pieces like *Move* and *Parker 51*, and Raney's *Signal* with its slightly unusual form, a piece that turns up on the third CD in the group with Hall Overton on piano.

Though Getz had first come to be recognized through his ballad playing, there are only two ballads in this set. The group also lopes jauntily at mid-tempo through *Thou Swell* and *Pennies From Heaven.* It all makes for an exhilarating set, rising above that fuzziness in the recording and the wayward variations in volume.

I mentioned earlier that perhaps there's a compensation attached to that fuzzy quality. I've long been an admirer of this pairing of Getz and Raney which I first heard on one or two of these cuts when they first appeared, then later when I picked up the **Baronet** recording which was listed under the pairing of Getz with Horace Silver. Those four cuts by that combination open the second CD and these, I think, are the best cuts, though they don't quite equal the extent of the live set: all are fairly short and were recorded in the studio.

It seems to me that the Getz/Raney collaboration, particularly in the 50s, was very highly regarded even though the group lasted little more than two years. I often wondered why this ensemble, that occasionally nearly topples over into the merely slick, was so popular with jazz fans. First, it probably made more sense to a lot of us in the beginning than the harder-hitting, anxiously tense, explosively virile music of Diz and Bird. That took some getting used to, but Getz and Raney smoothed out some of the corners without losing that hell-for-leather pace and many-noted flurrying we expected from bop. Second, it was the quality of the sound. Diz and Bird came at us with their sharp, wailing, intense attack whereas Getz and Raney were smoother but never lost their grip on the jagged feeling, the roller-coaster ride of early bop developments. Of course it helped that Al Haig brought his experience with Diz and Bird to the group and then Horace Silver added his percussive swing as an extra unison voice, together with his hard-hit comping. But more than all that it was the very individual sound that tenor and guitar made in unison, which also remained very clearly melodic and kept the lines clean in the almost fugal interplay. And in the ballads Raney's sure harmonic back-up enhanced that fluidly fluent style of Getz. The sound that the pair got (and this is how I think the fuzzy recording sort of helps) was a unique blend and a real merge. Getz had firmly established his sound, fast-noted inter-twined with some smooth lyricism and languorous honks, dabbing at single notes, mostly staying in the upper register of his instrument, a light texture that he at times undermined by big, fat notes at the lower end. But strangely the big, fat notes in the unison and interplay sections seemed to come from Raney's guitar; from his instrument he managed to obtain a firm, almost unstring-like tone, fingered clearly but adding a fat boost to Getz's tenor sound. And that fuzziness paradoxically seems to enhance the bronzed roundness of their sound.

Perhaps the second and third CDs, except for the cuts with Horace Silver, don't measure up to that live performance on the first CD. But they round out the music the group played for we get some ballad performances with almost no soloing from Raney but with his crystal-clear comping and the sensitive piano of Duke Jordan. It's amazing how these pianists, especially Haig, Silver and Jordan, all fit well with Getz. They all do a superb job but perhaps the real revelation is that it illustrates how wide a range of feeling and power Getz has at this early stage of his career for he plays adeptly and appropriately with the very different styles of these pianists. Raney was the leader on the last session so he probably chose Hall Overton, together with Red Mitchell and Isola.

After listening again to this music I've known over the years (though some of the cuts were new to me) I was sometimes reminded of the music Lennie Tristano produced with the saxophone / guitar in the early Prestige cuts of the late 40s. That also is incredible music and while the sound of saxophone and guitar is reminiscent of what Raney and Getz do here a little later, this is still unique. The sound is a little fuller, not quite as astringent as the Tristano sound, the tunes are more flowing than the jaunty angularity of Tristano. They are not out to prove anything, only that they can play comfortably and exhileratingly together, and you can hear that on almost every cut of this three CD collection. - *Peter Stevens*

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HARBOURFRONT NEW MUSIC SERIES

TORONTO DOWNTOWN
JAZZ FESTIVAL

One of the highlights of Toronto's jazz festival this year was the series at Harbourfront. The five nights of music covered a lot of very different music which, either by accident or design, formed a stimulating and coherent program.

Steve Lacy's Sextet started the series, after a set of originals by the **Barry Livingtone** trio. Livingstone, together with soprano saxophonist **Jane Bunnett** and singer **Rosemary McPhee** were the first of a number of groups in this festival which avoided the standard jazz format of bass, drums etc., concentrating instead on interesting colour combinations, in this case voice and soprano. This format, with arrangements drawing unison voice/soprano lines, suited the simple lyricism of Livingstone's writing.

To enjoy Steve Lacy's band, I find that I have to deal with a number of expectations up front. His recorded work covers such an interesting range of projects setting all kinds of texts from Robert Creeley, to the Tao to Ching to Brion Gyson, duets and small groups with some of the best European improvisors, and performing the work of a composer such Herbie Nichols. So it can be a disappointment to hear this band performing the same material in much the same way as they always do when touring North America, leaving out the more innovative aspects of his work. But this is to miss the point about Lacy's band,

which is that the band itself is a major original achievement all by itself. High seriousness with humour, jazz with French cabaret music, lyricism with formality, song forms with improvisation: you cannot imagine any other other group that could combine these elements in the same way this band does. In a sense Lacy has created his own idiom and it is always enjoyable to see how fresh and innovative it remains. Many of the highlights remain the same: the interaction between **Steve Potts** and Lacy, **Jean-Jaques Avenel's** virtuosity, the cattiness of the melodies and the impeccable logic of Lacy's solos. For me the encore, a duet between Lacy and Potts was the most enjoyable part of the concert, perhaps because it moved beyond the group idiom.

For me, the **Sharon McLeod Trio,** which opened for **David Murray,** was one of the pleasant surprises of the the series. As with Livingstones' group, Jane Bunnett's soprano was combined with voice and piano. In this case however, the combination was more fully exploited by means of interesting selection of tunes and arrangements. The trio showed enough control on the ballads to let the swell and peak. On *I Mean You* and *Bli-Bip* they showed that you don't need bass and drums in order to stomp. **Bob Fenton** kept things rocking on these tunes, particularly on the Ellington piece.

Andrew Cyrille and David Murray, once again showed the possibilities that unusual intrumentation can offer. Although it would have been great to hear Fred Hopkins, as advertised, I thought the absence of bass created rather than limited, the scope of the music. These two very different players were able to combine their very different approaches with wonderful results.

In the opening piece, Murray had the freedom to show his command of the whole range of styles of tenor playing, from Big Jay McNeeley to Albert Ayler, as well as his mastery of the sound of the instrument, especially in the upper register. This focus on the tradition was evident on an up-tempo Monk-like blues and a very lyrical solo rendition of Billy Strayhorn's *Chelsea Bridge.*

Cyrille, on the other hand, while drawing on deep roots in the tradition, especially African percussion musics, is more like an original energy source onto himself. During his first solo, using mallets, he did a kind of dance, silently beating the air, between powerful simple phrases on the drums. As well as amusing the audience, this seemed to have the effect of saying, "listen to the sound of the drums, the message in in there". Like Murray he showed his versatility, moving from a straight ahead well crafted jazz solo on the blues, to a talking drum-style solo which was like actually hearing the spoken word of some unknown language.

The duo seemed to bring out the best in each other, particularly toward the end of the concert when they opened up to some improvised passages. If anything I could have heard more of this sustained high energy improvisation and less of the

ANDREW CYRILLE (Photograph by Bill Smith)

pastiche of style.

Friday was the night of guitars. **NOMA**, led by trombonist **Tom Walsh**, had three of them,a long with two drummers. This brought to mind the great multi-guitar bands, from Muddy Waters bands of the 60's to James Brown to King Sunny Ade. Fortunately, NOMA did not try to be any of these funk-meisters, but rather gave us a set of originals set in intricate and interlocking complex arrangements. Walsh concentrated on directing traffic, rather than trombone. Like Zappa at his best, there was an emphasis of non-stop ideas and dramatic ensemble effects.

In contrast **Ronald Shannon Jackson** and the **Decoding Society** which has recently recorded with three guitars, one of the guitars was replaced by electric violin, effectively acting as a third guitar. Most of the music was made up of highly melodic, high volume guitar and violin solos which went over the top in a way that only the very best rock can do. A lot of this was due to the relentless power of Jacksons drumming, which easily provided the ballast for all four electric instruments put together. In a sense this is probably the best rock band I have ever seen. Too bad they are not playing in the Skydome, instead of Judas Priest. Ah well, in a better world.

The final evening of the series had two absurdly different piano/bass/drum trios. The first, with **Restivo Trio**, provided a energetic set of standards in bebop idiom, displaying their mastery of flexibility and controlled give and take needed to make this kind of trio music work. Although it had the same instrumentation, the **Reggie Workman Trio**, with **Marilyn Crispell** and Gerry **Hemingway,** was a whole other thing. This group provided what I had been waiting for all week, a group that really played as a group, not dependant on arrangements, but in total interaction, through compositions and improvisation. The group moved in and out of a wide range of textures, giving each of Workman's compositions a distinctive musical and dramatic character-comic and tragic pieces, based on texts Beckett and Euripides respectively, stand out in particular in my memory. Throughout, Workman's presence provided a centre, with his Casals like depth and articulation, around which Hemingway and Crispell could develop sustained pointillistic or dense passages. Workman also provided a link with the past, because of his association with many important pioneers of improvised music, including John Coltrane. In many ways this group sounded to me like a true extension of spirit of Coltrane's groups of the 60's, not in any nostalgic sense, but as a genuine outgrowth, combined that high energy with new creative approaches and structures. (The saxophone parts, usually played by Oliver Lake, were brilliantly carried by Crispell). In any case, the overall result was music of great power and beauty.

Reviewed By Arthur Bull

EVERYBODY LOVES A WINNER

Most aficionados listing jazz musicians whose substantial reputations rest on few if any recordings would surely place the name of Buddy Bolden first; some might include somewhere on the list the name of Freddie Redd, who has been active throughout much of the modern jazz era but who has recorded infrequently. Although he participated in twelve recording sessions in the 1950s, beginning in 1951, he did not gain a sub-stantial reputation until the first of his four recordings in the early 1960s, the 1960 Blue Note session at which he played his original score for Jack Gelber's play, ***The Connection***. After 1961, though, Redd did not record again until 1971, for the Futura Swing label in Paris, a session generally unknown because of its unavailability. Then, silence until 1977, when he recorded for Interplay.

Redd recorded nothing more for eight years, at which time his career began to change. Although he surely did not emerge from obscurity with a vengeance, emerge he did, first with two 1985 sessions for Uptown, the first of which was not released until 1989, with the second yet to be issued. But also in 1989 Mosaic released a three-record or two-CD set of Redd's complete Blue Note recordings. Then, in 1990 came a 1988 session on Triloka, and in 1991, a 1990 Milestone date. Suddenly, Redd is, happily, much with us. Remove his name from the Bolden list.

Such sporadic recording has caused Redd to be relatively neglected in representative reference books. Although present in the first two of Leonard Feather's encyclopedias, he is absent from the third. He warrants no entry in ***The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Jazz***, although ***The Connection*** album is mentioned in the entry for Jackie McLean. **Jazz on Record** also has no entry for him; in the section "Post-War Pianists," though, Brian Priestley acknowledges Redd's leadership of and compositions for ***The Connection***, an "outstanding album," but he also offers that Redd's "every cliche has a Silver lining." Cute, but not accurate. I find Redd's playing relatively cliche free, although his compositions and playing occasionally reveal a funky Horace Silver influence. ***The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*** has a perfunctory one-paragraph Redd entry. In it, the author, Gregory E. Smith, evaluates Redd's playing by saying that it "has been described as a barrelhouse equivalent of that of Bud Powell." The passive voice neatly shields the identity of the person who made such a silly statement; alas, because of where it appears, this statement will likely serve the uninitiated as a succinct, quotable, and incorrect assessment of Redd the pianist.

One naturally wonders why Redd has not recorded more frequently than he has. Recent liner note writers comment on the peripatetic nature of Redd's life and imply that his geographical instability might account for his neglect, even though for forty years he has remained an active musician. Such moving about (within the United States and in Mexico and Europe) might well explain his fading into near obscurity. But other jazz nomads have recorded fairly frequently during their travels. One thinks, for example, of James Moody in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and Redd is at least as significant a musician as Moody. Plus, Redd has remained musically active; he has not forsaken his art. His neglect makes little sense. Possibly he did not promote himself or did not care about recording. Perhaps there is no explanation for his years of recording silence. Whatever the case, let us be grateful that a substantial amount of Redd's music is now available.

Why the flurry of releases? There are several reasons, the least being for nostalgia's sake. One reason is that Redd composes attractive, memorable melodies (which occasionally come to mind in my idle moments). Another, he is an engaging, idiosyncratic soloist. And yet another, he generally surrounds himself with excellent musicians, most notably on these recent releases with Jackie McLean, Billy Higgins, and Teddy Edwards.

Perhaps there is little need to comment on Redd's Blue Note recording of his compositions for ***The Connection*** since this is unquestionably and understandably his best-known date. But a few observations are in order, especially since the recording was out-of-print for a quarter century, I believe, before Mosaic reissued it. Here Redd's quartet plays grittily in the hard bop idiom. Each of the seven Redd compositions is attractive, from the spirited *Who Killed Cock Robin* to the middle-groove blues *Wigglin'*; and the playing, especially that of McLean and Redd, is inspired; it displays an urgency which belies the fact that for seven months these musicians (including Michael Mattos and Larry Ritchie) performed this same material in the play before recording it. In her 1960 ***Down Beat*** review of the original release, Barbara Gardner correctly terms its effect "shock exhileration" (sic). My only real reservation about this session is extramusical. Redd titled one of his most lyrical and memorable compositions *O.D.*, as in overdose. There is too great an incongruity between the ugliness of the meaning of the title and the beauty of Redd's creation. (And one wonders if the quartet's performance of *Theme for Sister Salvation* in the play inspired Slide Hampton's *Sister Salvation*, which the trombonist recorded for Atlantic four days before Redd recorded his composition for Blue Note.)

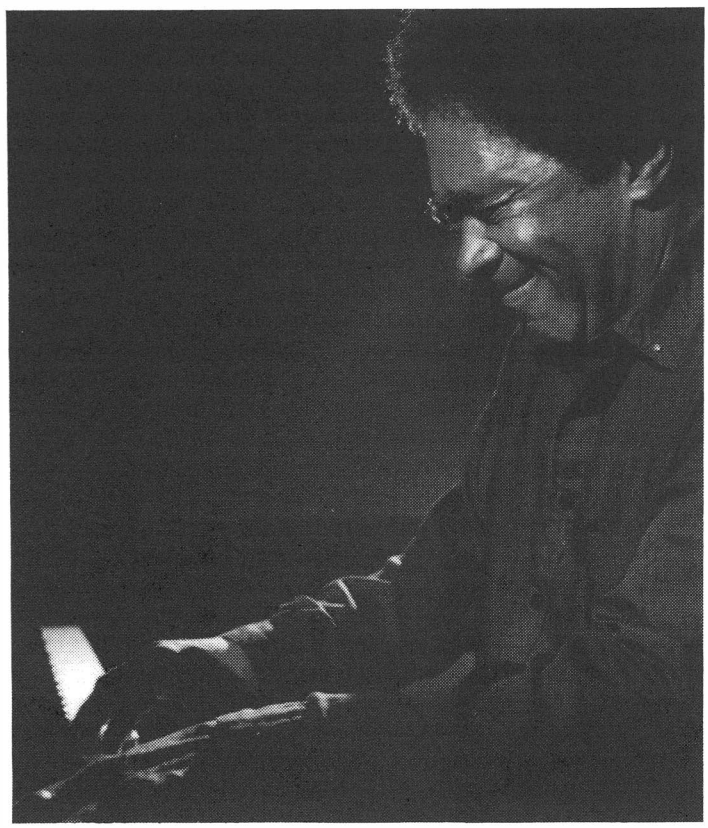
If Redd has been hard to locate, so too has his second Blue Note album, ***Shades of Redd***, which I had neither seen nor heard until the Mosaic reissue. So I listened to it with great anticipation, especially since it includes McLean, plus Tina Brooks. Paul Chambers and Louis Hayes replace Mattos and Ritchie on this session recorded six months after ***The Connection***. Mosaic has included alternate takes of *Melanie* and *Ole* and has issued the entire session in stereo (the original Blue Note release was in mono).

I found this session slightly disappointing, perhaps partly because its reality could hardly be expected to match its almost mythical reputation. But there are other reasons. There is a drop in energy level from ***The Connection*** session, as on the melodic statement of the Monkish *The Thespian*, a fairly lugubrious piece. Occasionally, though, passion reaches the level of the first session, as on *Swift*, the performance of which is in keeping with the title. While some of the compositions, such as *Melanie* (apparently no kin to McLean's *Little Melonae* of a few years earlier), are as attractive and memorable as those at the earlier session, others are unexceptional. The Latin *Ole*, for example, is a routine melody, although the written line soon gives way to straight ahead blowing. If ***Shades of Redd*** has attained considerable reputation (largely based on its unavailability), then

TWO VIEWS OF FREDDIE REDD

Redd's third and last Blue Note session (recorded only eleven months after the first) has a standing not too dissimilar from that of Buddy Bolden's cylinder: until the Mosaic / Blue Note set, neither had been heard. Why Blue Note chose not to release this session is unclear, although in the booklet accompanying the Mosaic release Redd implies that Alfred Lion withheld it in a fit of pique. Whatever the reason, it was unwarranted musically; the unissued session is at least as satisfying as ***Shades of Redd.***

Redd notes that having a tenor-alto (and no brass) front line, as on ***Shades of Redd***, was unusual in 1960. Perhaps so. But the presence of trumpeter Benny Bailey lends a texture and brilliance of sound to the third session that the second lacks and that the first does not need. (The remainder of the personnel remains the same, with the exception of drummer Sir John Godfrey for Hayes.) The trumpet serves as a kind of sounding board against which the other three soloists' playing reverberates. Bailey, though, shines throughout in his own right. He invigorates the attractive *Somewhere*, for example, and rescues from terminal lethargy, *Love Lost*, one of Redd's least effective compositions, which is diminished by being played at a somnolent tempo.



McLean plays exceptionally well on all three sessions; Brooks, present on the second and third, does not match him, although he makes positive contributions. Specifically, on *Somewhere*, Brooks's raw tone seems appropriate; here, also, he reveals the influence of John Coltrane, and therefore of the post-hard bop era, by coming close to producing sheets of sound. This was Brooks's last recording. (For the most representative sample of Brooks at his best, I recommend the Mosaic four-record set of the Blue Note sessions he led. Both ***The Complete Blue Note Recordings of the Tina Brooks Quintets***, Mosaic MR 4-106, and ***The Complete Blue Note Recordings of Freddie Redd***, Mosaic MD 2-124, are available from Mosaic Records, 25 Melrose Place, Stamford, CT 06902 USA.)

One minor non-musical criticism. Mosaic includes eleven performances on each of the two CDs, which makes numerical sense and probably adheres to the recording sequence. This means, though, that the first CD ends with the alternate take of Melanie and the second begins with the master of this same tune. Listeners whose sets accommodate only one CD therefore most change CDs in order to compare the two takes.

The Mosaic Redd collection is without question the most important release of Redd's music. It captures him as an active member of the New York jazz scene, as someone with a dependable, regular job (with ***The Connection***), as a pianist playing daily with excellent musicians, and as a composer interpreting his own engaging material. The quality of this music makes one wonder all the more why a full decade passed before he recorded again.

While the Mosaic / Blue Note release has Redd first in a quartet, then in a quintet, and finally in a sextet, his January 1985 session for Uptown (***Lonely City***, UP 27.30) features him in a septet. Here Clifford Jordan plays approximately as effectively as Tina Brooks on the earlier dates, although Clarence "C" Sharpe is no McLean and Don Sickler is no Benny Bailey. Baritone saxophonist Gerry Cappuccio is limited primarily to ensemble work. George Duvivier and Ben Riley support the others well.

Once again, Redd's group plays the leader's originals, and they are attractive, ranging from the brisk *After the Show* to the staccato *Emily Reno* to the beautiful ballad *Lonely City*, which is faintly reminiscent of Claude Thornhill's theme, *Snowfall*. I am writing about the vinyl release; the CD has, according to the Redd discography in the Mosaic booklet, two extra tunes: an alternate take of *Had Tadd In Mind* and a duet between Redd and Sickler. The latter is surely of some interest since it is apparently Redd's only recorded duet. Most surprisingly, the group plays *Thespian* (with no definite article), which Redd's quintet played to no great effect at the second Blue Note session. Perhaps because the tempo here is fairly quick, I find this rendition more appealing than the earlier one; the solos, though, are ordinary, and especially Sharpe's whose tone also grates somewhat.

Given the presence of Sickler, who also arranged Redd's compositions, the inclusion of Redd original invoking the memory of Tadd Dameron is not surprising. (Sickler played and arranged for Philly Joe Jones's group called Dameronia, which also recorded for Uptown, in the early 1980s.) *Had Tadd in Mind* captures Cameron's spirit so faithfully that it might be mstaken for a Dameron composition. It contains allusions to *Our Delight*, one of Dameron's most famous lines.

In sum, ***Lonely City*** is a rewarding album, significant more for Redd's compositions than for the quality of the soloing. It is also important as Redd's return

(Photograph by William Claxton)

to recording after an eight-year silence.

Live at the Studio Grill (Triloka 182-2) is Redd's only live date, and as such is therefore at least a curiosity. More importantly, it is his only trio session on these new releases, and his first such date to be issued since his 1977 Interplay session. Further, it alone of the new releases has Redd playing pieces by composers other than himself; only three of the eight selections are his. Additionally, it has two tracks of Redd playing solo; they are the highlights of this album. (I use the word "album" for both vinyl and CD. The Triloka date is on CD.)

Redd's three originals (*I'm Gonna Be Happy, Don't Lose the Blues* and *Waltzin' Inn*) are all attractive, with the second being possibly the most engaging performance among them, primarily because of Billy Higgins's excellent work.

Of the non-Redd compositions, only three are well known: *I'll Remember April, Round Midnight,* and *All the Things You Are*. Redd takes the first at a brisk tempo, and the group's playing actually becomes somewhat raucous midway through the piece. The second is a beautiful, appropriate interpretation of Monk's most famous composition. I say appropriate because Monk is the one obvious Redd predecessor who created memorable sounds out of what many once called wrong notes. (I discuss this issue below.) As a result, Redd gives the piece a Monkish feel, especially after beginning to develop his solo. The melodic statement on the third is straight forward, but other parts of it are surprising. Specifically, Higgins, who supports Redd masterfully throughout this session, solos so musically that the obvious comparison is with Max Roach. Of the drummers on all of these recent Redd ablums, Higgins contributes most fruitfully.

On the two remaining tunes, *I'll Keep Loving You* and *For Heaven's Sake*, Redd, unaccompanied, demonstrates his knowledge of and pays respect to the jazz tradition. Bud Powell wrote the first and performed it solo on a May 1949 session for Clef (the *Tempus Fugit* session). While the attractive melody is surely worth reviving, Redd enhances it with his own valid interpretation of this tune by the other (with Monk) primary first generation bop pianist. (Powell also recorded all three of the standards Redd performs here.) But to me the one performance that stands above all on ***Live at the Studio Grill*** is *For Heaven's Sake*, which Billie Holiday recorded memorably in 1958 for what was to become her penultimate album, ***Lady in Satin*** (Columbia). Given the poignancy of her recording, I feared that Redd, or anyone for that matter, might by necessity treat it in a maudlin manner. He does not. Although he clearly has her rendition in mind, playing the two versions back-to-back reveals that Redd's interpretation is practically as moving as Holiday's. Neither strays far from the melody; neither does much more than embellish. Yet, both create genuinely moving music.

Redd's most recent release (***Everybody Loves a Winner***, Milestone MCD 9187-2) is on a label with significant distribution, which is the first time Redd has appeared on such since his Blue Note sessions thirty years earlier. Perhaps this is an omen that his talents have been recognized and that he will be marketed to a degree commensurate with the quality of his music. The title, given Redd's checkered career, seems ironic; I hope, though, that it applies to him and is prophetic.

Once again Redd performs only his originals, and once again he has composed some attractive lines. The most obvious example is the title tune, which is so engaging and memorable that were there a market for jazz singles, this would have a chance at gaining some degree of popularity, once edited down from its almost twelve-minute playing time. It is in conception and execution similar to some of Horace Silver's classic creations. Although it suffers somewhat from Phil Ranelin's halting trombone work, it has good solos by Redd, bassist Bill Langlois, tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards, and alto saxophonist Curtis Peagler.

But there are other highlights, including the brooding *Melancholia*, which is reminiscent of Tadd Dameron's mood pieces and which bows melodically in the direction of *I Wish You Love*. Slow and introspective, it contrasts nicely with the generally jaunty nature of Redd's other pieces. Although Redd solos, it is primarily a unison performance, with Ranelin's trombone lead. *One Down*, an impassioned blues, is also taken at a deliberate tempo. It does not seem to be a continuation of or in

any way related to *One Up*, which is as perky as *One Down* is not.

The remainder of the performances are sprightly, including *So Samba* and *Fuego de Corazon* (the latter has only Redd, Langlois and drummer Larry Hancock). The opening tune, *Give Me A Break*, sets an upbeat mood for the remainder of the album and seems thematically similar to wardell Gray's *Twisted. And Time Marches On*, a funky march indebted to Silver, concludes with rousing, engaging interplay not unlike the texture in some of Charles Mingus's looser recordings.

This is not typical Redd, but it illustrates that thinking him predictable as a composer, or pianist either, for that matter, can be risky. Not only in this obvious example of new direction, but also in such things as turns of phrase, Redd will surprise, and pleasantly so.

Aside from Redd, Teddy Edwards is the major soloist on this album. Often his playing is inspired, particularly on *One Down*, where he plays two exquisite choruses of increasing passion. This is superior blues playing. What appears to me to be his relative inactivity in recent years can only be lamented. The wide distribution, general availability and almost guaranteed air play of this CD will, I hope, bring renewed interest in Edwards, as well as Redd.

Writers often note Redd's indebtedness to Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk. These albums amply demonstrate that although Redd embraces Powell's linear conception, he cannot approach his elder's dexterous execution. (And he certainly does not play barrelhouse Powell.) The Monk issue is more problematic, although some of Redd's compositions are similar in mood to Monk's. One of the fundamental questions about Redd as pianist, though, concerns Monk. Time and again on these four releases Redd employs apparently "wrong" notes. As we all know now, but as most commentators beginning in the 1940s did not, Monk's seemingly incorrect notes were actually the precise ones needed to express his ideas. I am not entirely convinced that the same can be said for Redd in every instance. The first time listeners unfamiliar with Redd hear one of his solos, they will probably wonder why another take was not issued or why the "error" was not edited out.

But they are not errors; they occur so frequently that they cannot be. They are part of his style, his technique. The question, then, is whether this technique enhances his work. Originally I thought not; now, after listening repeatedly to these four albums, I think so. I must admit, though, that this aspect of Redd's playing is an acquired taste.

If I am incorrect in this analysis, that is, if Redd's "wrong" notes are in fact wrong or if they fail to enhance his playing, I am, nevertheless, pleased to hear logical, musical, untampered-with yet technically flawed solos, as opposed to "perfect" takes created by numerous surgical excisions, as I am also gratified to hear emotional, imperfect work as opposed to glossy, emotionally vapid soloing, such as that occasionally present in the work of Oscar Peterson, for example. In other words, be Redd's "wrong" notes intentional or not, they do not, for me, diminish the value of his musical expression. They assist Redd in providing what Whitney Balliett calls the "sound of surprise."

These four recent releases of almost five hours of music, then, reintroduce a significant composer and idiosyncratic pianist, Freddie Redd. The sustained quality of this written and performed music begs the question of how such a musician could be overlooked for so long. Rather than pondering that possibly unanswerable question, though, I recommend listening to all of these releases, Mosaic/Blue Note, Triloka, Uptown and Milestone, for immediate and repeated musical delights.

(Photograph by Steve Maruta)

What are your present musical involvements?

Well, at the present, I just relocated in San Francisco from Los Angeles and I'm basically just becoming familiar with the environment. I've always had a warm spot for San Francisco. This town has so many things about it that I enjoy. It's very relaxed here, and I think that it is one of the few west coast cities that you can sit down in. L.A. is the kind of town where you have to keep moving, just like the traffic. In L.A. the smog starts driving you crazy but, here there are still a few isolated pockets where you still can be with nature a bit.

The main reason I came to San Francisco is because there are a lot of fine musicians in this area, and I want to start working with different kinds of groups. I want to work solo and trio, which I prefer, and I want to experiment some with quartets and some larger orchestras. I've been in contact with an arranger and we want to create some venues for the kinds of things that I like doing.

Are you satisfied with your older recordings? Many of them have recently been reissued.

I'm not trying to sound facetious about this, but I'm really happy with everything that I've done. The main reason is simply because I realize the value of doing them in terms of documentation. Artistically speaking I feel that there is always something to learn, so you are always growing in that sense. But record and concert dates don't wait for you to develop. They simply occur and you have to be up to it. I appreciate the fact that people like what I did then, but of course I feel like I'm so much more developed at this point in time. I really have been getting a lot less traveling and am a lot more settled in. So I'm doing what I used to be able to do years ago, and that is to just sit down and play. That's really where development comes in and I'm finally able to catch up with myself and my ideas.

There are the two versions of The Connection that you recorded on. The version for Blue Note (now Mosaic) and the Felstead release under Howard McGhee's name with you listed under the name I-Ching. How did the Felstead recording come about?

What happened with that is the music publisher I was working with at the time wanted to do an album and I was under contract with Blue Note so I couldn't use my name on the original cast album. So I used an assumed name and did that version for the publisher who came up with the company Felstead. I don't believe that that's in print anymore.

I've seen a Japanese pressing of it recently.

Oh really. I'd really like to know more about that. This is really serious business. I don't mean to dwell or get into sour grapes. But I haven't and many others haven't been treated fairly. As musicians we went out to play music and our motivation has always been focused on playing good. We never took the time to look seriously at the business end of it. We tried to be good musicians and only hoped we'd be treated fair. You know the story there's been enough talk on that subject already. I personally regret a lot of the things that were done to me. So basically what I'm trying to do these days is to simply get what's mine, in terms of money owed to me at the moment. I feel in that sense that I'm a little smarter now.

Could you elaborate a little bit on your feelings about composing compared to playing standards?

Well as far as composing goes, I've always heard melodies. For me my first love was drums, although I never had the opportunity to get into it. I started to study the drums when I was in public school. I did it for about two or three weeks and then they discontinued the program. That really broke my heart at the time. So after that I focused more on piano and I realized then that I heard melody alot. Sometimes now I just hear chord groups and imagine melody out of that. For me writing music is always inspired, I rarely sit down and try to write music.

Do you prefer to compose your own material then, rather than to play standards?

Not necessarily. I really like to just play what feels good to me. And composing often feels good to me so I do that as well as everything else.

I've noticed on your Blue Note dates and on you more recent Uptown release that you use the alto and tenor combination. Is there a conscious effort behind that?

When I first did the alto-tenor thing it was Jackie McLean and Tina Brooks. Tina was Jackie's understudy in the play The Connection. And I like their sound and feel so much that that is what motivated me to record them. It really just happened to be two saxophones, it could have been two trombones for that matter, I just like the feeling that they got together. So it's just a matter of what and who feels good and they did.

I know (Clarence) C. Sharpe just passed away. (recorded on the Uptown release) He has recorded so very little and was such a unique player and is a legend in some circles.

Yes, he was a legend and almost a tragic figure. Not in terms of music but, as far as his personal life is concerned he wasn't too successful and often he was ill. One of the amazing things about him on that uptown date was that he actually played that date with no teeth. Literally no teeth. He constantly was amazing me musically with what he did.

One thing I'd like to say here about the musicians that I like is that these people are dedicated to the music. Regardless of whatever else that they are involved in, whether it's good for them or not, their life revolves around the music itself. And everything that they do is pointed in that direction. Sometimes you know the music is more on than others. But it is always coming from the right place. The music is always first.

When you weren't performing the music for The Connection, Cecil Taylor's group did. This is probably naive of me but I can't imagine him doing your music?

No absolutely not (laughs). No Cecil did his own thing. But to me that was one of the wonderful things that illustrates the openended quality of the play. A lot of people thought I should be more hard-nosed about insisting on the music for it, being my music. But Jack Gelber and I had a discussion about it and I told him that I felt it should be left alone so musicians could work with the play and interpret it on their own terms. Especially when it went on the road. I know Dexter Gordon did a west coast version of it and Cecil sat in, in New York when we went to Europe with it. Other musicians got involved with it as well, like Duke Jordan. It was really interesting. I

wish that there were some recordings of the various music.

The Mosaic label has put together some nice sets. Are you pleased with the compilation that they did on your Blue Note music?

Yes, I'm extremely happy. I feel that it was a classy thing for them to do. I've noticed that most people when they talk about the Mosaic label, they talk like they know Charlie Laurie and Michael Cuscuna.

Why didn't you record between 1961 and 1971?

I've never pursued doing recordings. I have always felt that I was developing and I just sort of try and let my life happen. I've never felt like I wanted to sell myself. I mean really what is there to sell? I believe I have a talent and I enjoy playing music. But as far as recording dates go, I have only been interested in it if someone else approached me to record. I don't like to pursue people on these matters. Because you really can't convince people about those things anyway. I feel I need and like acknowledgement but, I really don't need anybody's approval. Submitting music to somebody to see if they like it never appealed to me.

During 61 and 71 most of that time I was in Europe. I guess I followed in the footsteps of a lot of other expatriots. I must say that I really enjoy the kind of receptivity that the Europeans have for jazz. It is really unheard of in the states. Don't get me wrong there are some really down jazz fans here. But Europe ever since World War I and Jim Reese Europe, have really embraced jazz in a way. And for me it was the kind of thing that I needed to know. The music is accepted as an art form. They see it more as art than just another form of entertainment. Unfortunately in our country everytime someone gets on a bandstand we think that it has to be entertaining by a certain standard. People haven't been educated on how to listen to the music, and there is a general attitude of people not wanting to put any effort out to understand anything. On top of that there is no concerted effort to present the music properly. I'm not talking about flagwaving here, simply creating a right environment for acceptance. I'd also like to make mention here of the little known fact that jazz has been declared a national treasure. A black congressman named John Conyers from Detroit, Michigan came up with the resolution to make jazz a national treasure. When I was in the New York city, I was on the organizing committee. We went to Washington with John, to a meeting that he called together. There were many different jazz organizations and jazz enthusiasts. It was really an inspiring thing to see, and I see this as a starting point to work from, in terms of networking ourselves and as a central point to join forces from. Not in a political sense but, in an artistic sense. Perhaps something can come of this to help artists get in touch with each other. You know its difficult to meet people sometimes. If I don't meet someone in the supermarket there's really no place to hang out. I can't afford to pay cover charges most places. Around the Bay Area here we're staring a non-profit organization called Jazz Network. That's something important to me right now and I'd like to mention that here in closing.

DUMAURIER DOWNTOWN JAZZ FESTIVAL * TORONTO

This year's edition of the DuMaurier Downtown Jazz Festival pleasantly surprised most members of the Toronto music community who had grown accustomed to the engaging yet predictable fare that the series had offered in past seasons. Artistic director Jim Galloway approached the festival with a new mandate in mind, one that would satisfy even the staunchest critic. He chose to present some of the finest players in town alongside of the many guests who were invited to participate with their bands during the solidly-packed week of shows.

The main program showcased a variety of ensembles from the artist-run cooperative **Unity** records, with the acts taking place twice daily in Berczy Park opposite the St. Lawrence Centre, a move that must have surprised many downtowners. Galloway's decision to support this next generation of improvising musicians comes at a critical time. There is a great need to enlighten a young audience to creative music (most of them starved by the commercial vacuity of the radio playlist) but his move begs the question of public support for the creative arts. If it is in fact **public** radio (and assuming that the CRTC still are empowered to control the licensing agreements governing media programming) why are there no radio features now being broadcast of festival highlights? Is it in fact the indifference of the CRTC to the creative future of Canadian artists that allows this to happen? Where is the portion of airtime allotted to creative music on MuchMusic's schedule? With the exception of the pioneering broadcasting offered by the alternative radio stations like CIUT and CKLN, where is the representation of creative music on the public airwaves?

These questions must be addressed now as we enter a period when national cultural and artistic areas are open to discussion within the halls of our government. Please write to the CRTC and CBC with your concerns on this issue.

In their first date of a summer tour of Canada, the **Don Thompson** quartet exemplified the best in current creative jazz, a straight-ahead unit exploring original directions. Thompson featured himself on vibes in this version of the quartet, weaving through the selections resourcefully but seemed unsatisfied with himself, pushing through the program in a determined way. The steady pulse and interaction by the rhythm section of bassist **Pat Collins** and drummer **Barry Elmes** provided a solid foundation for the solos of guitarist **Reg Schwager**. Schwager's tone and tasteful approach are beguiling to the listener, providing a valuable foil to the lines created by Thompson.

Unlike their competition, the **29th Street Saxophone Quartet** follow a middle path between the worlds of 20th century jazz improvising and the groove-enriched soul music of the last twenty years. The marked influence of black vocalists like Marvin Gaye and Al Green was found in the sound of the two lead altos of this unit, Watson in particular going for a vocal inflection on his rich tone. The ensemble formed by **Ed Jackson** in the early eighties served up an approachable presentation for the downtown audience who would have gladly kept them there for hours. While Bobby Watson and Jackson blew credible Post-Motown Bop (Watson's term) over the steady rhythmic undercurrent provided by **Jim Hartog's** baritone, it was left to tenorist **Rich Rothenberg** to fill in all the gaps, something he accomplished with no trouble. The textural effect of the 29th Street Saxophone Quartet is one of a big-band horn section, with particular attention being paid to the shading and colouristic effects in combination with the interlocking rhythmic drive. A great introduction to this band for Toronto.

Nat Adderley's first set at a noon-hour concert for the city was a casual affair at Nathan Phillips Square, ideally suited to the quintet's temperament. The leader made humorous introductions for tunes and generally played the role of host, easing the band into their show at that painful hour of the day. Along the way there were bits of history recounted, Adderley tipping his hat to bassist Sam Jones with the Jones composition, *Unit Seven*, and reminiscing about the first records he cut with his brother, the late Cannonball Adderley. The almost universal blues head, *Work Song*, was performed with the aside that Nat, the tune's composer, hoped its theme would one day be as well known as *Stardust*. **Vincent Herring** on alto was a strong counterpart to Adderley in the front-line, generating most of the heat during the show. It is not ironic that his sound derived a primary influence from the work of the Adderleys, Cannonball another link in the chain to Bird. The quintet's performance of Cannonball's arrangement of the standard, *Autumn Leaves*, was understated and warm, with the leader's muted horn showing a considerable debt to 1960 Miles Davis.

Of the many performances at the two free outdoor venues, the most theatrical of the festival was the appearance of the British big band, the **Happy**

NAT ADDERLY (Photograph by Gerard Futrick)

End. On a stage awash with red banners, the youthful nineteen piece ensemble played a show long on biting political satire, a cartoonish affair that was lost on the audience, mostly office workers slightly mystified by the sentiments expressed in the socialist workers' songs. The level of the musicianship was college stage-band for the most part, and this combined with the material for a generally polite reception.

Faring not much better was the much-lauded **Dirty Dozen Brass Band,** who had the unenviable task of performing on Nathan Phillips Square at the end of a scorching summer afternoon. Their patented New Orleans rhythms and guaranteed good-vibes stage presence largely failed to take off in the hot late afternoon, though for the lucky few sitting in a hastily assembled beer garden, the show must have been marvellous. Presenting the music in such a way cannot serve the audience it is intended to reach. The Dirty Dozen would have done much better to have opted for a night at a venue on Queen West where they could perform their show in its proper context.

Not all visiting artists at the Downtown Jazz Festival were limited to one night showcases. Soprano saxophonist **Jane Ira Bloom** settled in at the Bermuda Onion for a week with a formidable quartet that she co-led with stellar British trumpeter **Kenny Wheeler**. Bloom pursued an electronic tangent with her onstage setup, utilizing stereo miking for the straight horn, altered by a rack of digital processing gear. Otherworldly and dramatic, her sound was effectively contrasted by a dry open horn sound from Wheeler, in top form all week long. The rhythm section of bassist **Anthony Cox** and drummer **Jerry Granelli** (using both standard drumkit and electronic percussion) was a treat for festival fans. Cox was featured on a long introduction to a Dave Holland composition, *Blues for C.M.*, that paid homage both to the tune's composer and to the source of inspiration.

The quintet of tenor saxophonist **Alex Dean** was another highlight of the week. The Unity records artists series consistently presented strong straightahead jazz and Alex Dean was no exception. Big tone and a flood of ideas from the tenor man aligned with an all-star Toronto ensemble of players including the pianist **Mark Eisenman**. Dean's two releases on Unity serve notice that he is a player deserving of wider recognition. Bassist **Kieran Overs** and drummer **Bob McLaren** provided solid inventive section work.

It is difficult to say what saxophonist **Gerry Mulligan** had in mind for his presentation at the Elgin Theatre. Well into his sixties, Mulligan's irascible nature and smooth baritone sound should be enough to carry the show, but his well-intentioned choice of three young Berklee grads as accompanists amounted to a case of "follow the leader". It is unfair to criticize these players by name so instead some general comments would be in order. At this point in time, Mulligan needs a strong band to stimulate his interest to continuing the fine tradition he helped create. A unit unable to swing, surprise, or light a fire under the music is a sorry excuse for a jazz ensemble. Cool goes cold.

The intense changes of the past two years are not lost on soprano saxophonist **Jane Bunnett,** whose set with pianist **Don Pullen** at Berczy Park showed the saxophonist as self-assured and in energetic form. Joined by drummer **Andrew Cyrille,** the quintet played selections from Bunnett's current release, ***Live at Sweet Basil,*** enjoying themselves and entertaining the overflow early evening crowd. Supported in the front line by trumpeter **Larry Cramer,** Bunnett's soprano tangled lines with Pullen's exuberant piano on the tremendous tempos for tunes like *Double Arc Jake* and her own *Hole In One*. A very different mood was created as Bunnett switched over to her first horn, the flute, for a compelling reading of *You don't know what love is*. Her dry sense of humour also came through on the theme, *Big Alice,* where her exchanges with Pullen brought wide smiles to all present.

The **Brian Hughes Group** showcased their new material at the Water's Edge Cafe in a well-received program. Hughes' guitar conception was a pleasing blend of styles that drew heavily on the developments of the last ten years. With a strong sextet that featured Latin percussionist Rick Lazar to great effect, Hughes dug into his modern guitar sound using both heavily-treated arch-top electric and electric nylon-string instruments.

Thank you to all the players at the festival. - *Steven Vickery*

AROUND THE WORLD

Apple Source * New York Update* Kevin Whitehead

Lincoln Center's Classical Jazz series—for the last couple of years, one reason to spend August in New York, and so adroitly run by Wynton Marsalis and Stanley Crouch it gave birth to LC's richly endowed new jazz department—lost a little steam this year. Like a soloist who repeats a well-received chorus ever after, it's in danger of turning vibrant success into tired formula. The root problem is the principals' narrow conception of what jazz is—no one weeps they can't abide fusion, but Crouch hates even Gil Evans.

Of five nights of (impeccably rehearsed) programming, three stuck to proven formulas from previous seasons: one of recreated New Orleans jazz—severely overamplified this time—with clarinetist Michael White, whose spoken intros get longer and more stuffily educational every year (August's King Oliver show was a "young people's concert" for adults); one of straightahead swing (a Kansas City night featuring **Jay McShann** and **Claude Williams**, inexplicably not playing together); one of Ellington suites so faithfully rendered by conductor/transcriber **David Berger** it's invariably the series' high point and justifies the whole week. This year, the program included the *Liberian* and *New Orleans Suites* and a handful of Duke's portraits.

As usual, there was way too much of Wynton's current sidemen—it defied sense, on Kansas City night, to have Frank Wess on stage and give almost every tenor solo to Todd Williams—and a bit too much of Wynton himself. Now that the series is selling out (at $30 a ticket), do they need to flex his drawing power every night? The series should celebrate the jostling diversity of jazz, but Crouch and Marsalis give you the impression jazz offers only a few basic styles. Maybe Classical Jazz exists only to get corporate fatcats (more conspicuously if grimly present every year) to see jazz as one more safe artform suitable for megabuck sponsorship. But it's as if, having reached the gold-stocked tower, the neo-cons have pulled up the ladder behind them—they've got theirs, and everyone else can starve.

Happily, Lincoln Center's jazz department is being directed by **Rob Gibson**, whose programming in Atlanta over the last decade showed a decided openness to newer music, and who's well equipped to fence with Crouch and every other critic in town (this one included) brimming with advice about what he should or shouldn't book. I didn't attend the one show this August he masterminded, a program of Coltrane compositions, but I'm told it was crackling, and that the music went outside for a few minutes. Amid the the Classical Jazz style fare slated for the department's first season (Marcus Roberts doing James P. Johnson, for instance), there's an evening with **Dewey Redman** and friends including **Ed Blackwell** on November 14. Not exactly a deluge of new jazz, but a step in the right direction.

The same week Wynton was indoctrinating the moneyed class uptown, Blackwell was at

MICHEL PORTAL (photograph by Cosmo Laera)

the Vanguard, in quartet with **Ahmed Abdullah**, **Carlos Ward** and **Mark Helias**, honouring the spirit of Ornette's classicism via some fetching charts by Ward, whose individual blue alto reflects Coleman just as Abdullah's sweet harmon-muted trumpet takes in early '60s Cherry. And Helias and Blackwell have achieved one of those classic bass-drum hookups—like Haden and Higgins, say. Part of the week, sitting in was Abdoulaye Epizo Bangoura, a hand drummer from Guinea, who on the night I caught him didn't really add much of substance; one reason may be Blackwell's own strong African retentions—exhibited on one number by a beautiful solo using soft mallets on toms. Like the Blackwell/Helias/Ward trio gig at the Alternative Museum in May, it confirmed the drummer's current good health.

Blackwell showed his unforced open-mindedness on **Jayne Cortez's** cooking March 20 gig at S.O.B.'s. When it comes to jazz-and-poetry, Cortez's sharp wit cuts everyone else ("Everybody wants to be somebody/But nobody needs it")—as does her intensely rhythmic pan-African sensibility, merging rap and James Brown, fundamentalist sermons and a griot's social function. But the funky Afropop inflections of her fevered band (with David Murray, Bern Nix, Al MacDowell, Denardo Coleman and percussionist Ladji Camara) wouldn't pass for jazz at Lincoln Center, despite a long smoking Murray Blackwell duet, and Bern's unexpectedly straightforward and functional Kansas City riffs.

For two of their six sets at the Knitting Factory that same Lincoln Center weekend, **Paul Motian's** trio with **Bill Frisell** and **Joe Lovano** was expanded to quartet by **Lee Konitz**, who was to record with them (plus Charlie Haden) the next week, and wanted to get acquainted. The trio's bassless, slippery music is far from Lee's usual element, but the altoist was up to the task. He quickly latched onto the drummer's lag-and-snap elastic time, the guitarist's keening sustains and high-stress chords, the tenorist's hazy muscular blues (there's a lot of Ornette via Dewey in his thematic approach), and the general freedom to twist or suspend time and structure that playing without a bassist affords them. With their harmonically, rhythmically and melodically free way with written material, this is one of the most interesting bands anywhere. Konitz entered the music totally on its own terms, tempering his lyricism with a harder than usual sonority. In a set where he could have fallen back on what he knew or really and truly improvised, Konitz heroically acted as if the choice didn't exist.

Perhaps one sign of jazz classicism is the prevalence of large ensembles around here lately. **David Murray's** big band conducted by **Butch Morris** did six nights at Condon's beginning April 30. No complaints about the players (including Hugh Ragin and Graham Haynes, Craig Harris, Bob Stewart, James Spaulding, and baritonist Don Byron) or the barrelhouse charts, but it would've been nice if they'd tuned up. Butch conducted his own tentet at the Vanguard in March. It wasn't really a big band, 'cause the lineup was too idiosyncratic: trumpeter Stanton Davis, neocon vibist Monte Croft, downtown harpist Zeena Parkins, Brandon Ross on acoustic guitar, AACM pianist Agedoke Steve Colson, blues tenorist Willie Williams, Tricky Samish Art Baron, the Reggies Workman and Nicholson for rhythm, and J.A. Deane adding sublimely subtle electronic colorations. The program featured Morris's prettiest tonal writing; it lacked the daredevil spark of his wide open conducted improvisations, but maybe he'd like a shot at Lincoln Center himself. France's Laurent Cugny brought his Big Band Lumiere to the KnitFac May 5, and if they proved once more that the French show no great aptitude for funk, Cugny—whose fat and detailed biography of his collaborator Gil Evans has yet to turn up in English—showed how well he'd absorbed the electronic percolations of Gil's late period. After all, what constitutes classical jazz is in the beholder's ear, n'est-ce pas?

Finally, **Henry Threadgill's Very Very Circus** went into the Time Jazz Cafe—a relaxed new venue in a basement at Lafayette and Great Jones, where you know when the southbound six train goes by—on returning from its spring North American roadtrip. VVC played its book seemingly twice as fast as it had a month before, raising their music to a new energy level. It sounded almost like bluegrass—which, one bandmember pointed out, they'd been listening to on the bus. Which goes to show that jazz profits when its practitioners broaden their perspective, not narrow it.

Europa Festival Jazz
Noci 28th - 30th June

So, I returned to Noci. The memories of the last year's festival were strong enough to make me drive all the way from London to the south of Italy.

And what a shocking surprise! **Mario Schiano** can sing! I mean in terms of vocal facilities I wouldn't rate him higher than Chet Baker (and that alone can hardly qualify for a singer) but the feeling was there. A short chorus with which he finished Bruno Tomaso's composition for the all-Italian **Instabile Orchestra**, is still ringing in my ears. It was that good.

The Instabile Orchestra, which consists of the cream of the Italian musicians, was a big step forward in comparison with last year. They still have to read a lot of notations, but this year they were doing it in a much more spontaneous manner. While I was listening to them I couldn't help seeing Cecil Taylor conducting them from the piano. I think they are ready for him.

It was exciting to see the name of the Italian sextet **Nexus** in the programme, for their recordings sounded very interesting. However, their live performance did not fly. The reason, probably, was that they chose to play Albert Ayler's pieces rather than their own.

What can one write about **Willem Breuker Kollektief**

that has not already been written before? I keep on bumping into them everywhere: London, Moscow, Warsaw, and now Noci. Their performances have been compared with that of a clown in the circus, who performs the most difficult acrobatic stunts while pretending to be awkward and funny. But in order to be able to do that, one has to be better than an ordinary acrobat. And this is what they are. Behind their tricks and gimmicks are hidden complete musicians. It is a case where entertainment is employed as a cover up. While listening to them in Noci, however, it has occurred to me for the first time that the sound of their performances becomes more and more polished and they are in danger of blowing their cover. If it happens they will become just entertainers, and that would be tragic.

I had also registered a small change in the **Schlippenbach/Parker/ Lovens Trio** which was opening the festival. These three musicians continue to shatter imagination. The power and intensity of their music is totally absorbing, while the intuitive structures of their performances are growing to become absolutely immaculate. However, this time there were several moments when they sounded like real romantics. Are they mellowing, or is it just a spell of an Italian evening?

No such luck for the Soviets, though. Sudden change in the weather forced the last day of the festival inside. The **Vladimir Tarasov Project** consisting of a Gypsy singer **Valentina Ponomareva**, pianist **Yuri Kuznetsov** and tenorman **Anatoly Vapirov** was a textbook of how to structure a forty minute long piece of music. Four simple notes stated on the bells by the drummer were gradually taken through all possible permutations of rhythm and tonality. With every new cycle the intensity of their music was taken on a new level, and new sounds were added. There was something familiar about the music, yet it could not be expressed with words. The mystery grew. Their crescendo happened to be a great relief, for the four notes were ultimately shaped into a simple and beautiful waltz, which left everybody amazed and speechless.

The highlight of the festival for me personally was the **Michel Portal New Unit** performing on the first night. Powerful, swinging music that was rolling and flowing like a river. The kind of stuff that can be rarely heard from European musicians. The power and passion of this music reminded me of Charles Mingus. What does Michel Portal do when the audience doesn't let him go? He takes the bandoneon and starts playing his rhythms and singing. Totally mesmerising.

The scale of this year's festival was smaller than the year before, three days instead of four, but even if they reduce it to two days next year I shall be there again.

Leo Feigin
July 1991

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CONTEMPORARY MUSIC IN REVIEW

Malachi Thompson
Spirit
Delmark DS-442

The influence of Chicago's AACM early in his career as a trumpeter has had a lasting effect on the work of Malachi Thompson. His recent solo release comes after several years' involvement with Lester Bowie's *Brass Fantasy* project as well as live dates with other prominent players on the east coast (Archie Shepp, Gil Scott-Heron). ***Spirit*** finds the now-expatriate Thompson in good company, joined here by ex-Jazz Messenger Carter Jefferson on tenor saxophone and the late Albert Dailey on piano for an album of hard-bop influenced tunes. Thompson's clarity of tone and complete command of the horn are refreshing, as is his preference to edit his solos to their essence. Jefferson and Dailey both contribute consistently, the saxophonist in particular playing with a smooth firm tone. Less successful is the inclusion here of two vocal selections, one featuring Arnae Burton, the other a blues with Leon Thomas. Thompson is to be admired for wanting to offer a well-rounded program but his voice comes through best on the tracks where the vocalists lay out. *Spirit of Man* and *Dhyia Malika* underline the dedication of the album to the freedom movement in South Africa, the latter track with a lilting waltz feel that recalls Abdullah Ibrahim. Great sound of a Rudy Van Gelder recording makes this recording definitely worth hearing.

Eddie Gale
Live in San Jose
Roof Top GGLP 2001

Trumpeter Eddie Gale, best known for his work on Cecil Taylor's groundbreaking ***Unit Structures***, is featured here on six tracks recorded live to two track digital tape in 1988. Gale's trumpet work, both muted and open-horn, cuts through the flat production sound on this release with some burning playing only slightly marred by a hazy background. Tenor saxophonist Guy Dickinson and baritone saxophonist Lonnie Henderson join the trumpeter here on live takes from clubs and festivals in the San Jose area. Indifferent recording sound on some of the tracks complicates the haphazard quality of this release. *Love is all*, a track that pairs the trumpeter with the electric violin of Oliver Thompson, has a charming mystery about it, the tones of trumpet and violin being so rarely heard together. The urgent tempo of *High Tech* (*Emergency Theme*) is an exciting chart, with the three horns being augmented by guitar, keyboard and electric rhythm section for a long loose workout that is reminiscent of *Bitches Brew* era Miles Davis. Gales plays a lot, soloing with a determination that is rock solid. On the minus side, there is a pair of tracks that seem destined for the FM radio format, one to open each side of the disc, and a throwaway bossa as well, all in all making for an uneven package. Hopefully this calling card will bring Gale some attention and we can look forward to a better presentation of his playing.

Paul Smoker Trio
Alone
Sound Aspects sas 018

Paul Smoker, perhaps best known for his work in the European quartets of composer Anthony Braxton, presents here a trio that takes great delight in playing all manner of jazz-related musics from the twenties to the nineties. Joined by bassist Ron Rohovit and drummer Phil Haynes, Smoker spends most of the disc in a raucous mood playing mostly originals written either by Haynes or by the trio, compositions that sound like improvised sections that have been collated and written out. The trio formation doesn't suffer from a lack of tonal variety as Smoker can and does play convincingly in the styles of the historic trumpet greats. He is technically one of the most well-versed horn men around these days, able to play his own way while still capable of dipping into the long and rich history of the horn. The legacy of Louis Armstrong is paid homage to in the trio's version of the Hot Five classic, *Cornet Chop Suey*, featuring a solo by Ron Rohovit that upends the historical references and brings the tune to the present. The rhythm section of Rohovit and Haynes fit Smoker like a favourite piece of clothing, following all his moves (as the high-speed work on *Caravan* proves). Haynes, now in NYC, originally met the trumpeter while Smoker was on staff at a small community college in Cedar Falls, Iowa, a position he still holds directing a jazz studies program. The long-standing association of this trio (Rohovit also attended the program) makes for an

TREVOR WATTS (Photograph by Mark Miller)

unusual degree of empathy in the music, the players free to take chances with the material that guarantee a fresh provocative listen.

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Way it goes / dance of the soul
Impetus IMP 18611

Joined by the British dummer John Stevens, bassist Johnny Dyani created a unique rhythmic chemistry for the ensemble on these sessions. After an opening five minute section of group playing, Dyani solos with drive and imagination, characteristic of his recorded work since the beginning of the Bluenotes in the middle sixties. His interaction with Stevens is immediate, investigating areas of tension in the time and how they relate to melodic values. Bobby Bradford, an alumnus of the late sixties Ornette Coleman ensemble, is paired with the Norwegian tenor saxophonist Frode Gjerstad, creating a distinctly "O.C." sound at some moments of this disc, which appears to be culled from a single continuous performance. The nature of this music is freely improvised "in the moment" but to simply describe it in those terms is perhaps to miss the point. The artists involved here have achieved this level of improvisation only through a continuous life-process of fine-tuning ear / hand / mind / heart to prepare for these events; in effect, the composition is made in the daily living and musical / mental tuning evolved by each of the participants over time. Detail Plus presents an album here of living creative music that swings while expressing the truth.

Andy Laster
Hippo Stomp
Sound Aspects sas 020

Andy Laster's debut is an ambitious one. Born in 1961 in Long Island, the saxophonist approaches the music here fearlessly and in good company, his band drawn from the ensembles of Paul Smoker and Henry Threadgill. After studies in the Pacific northwest with Gary Peacock and Art Lande, the altoist has settled in New York City, where this disc was recorded, for studies with Dave Liebman and Muhal Richard Abrams. Full-toned and energetic playing that leans away from the mainstream where it is rooted, Laster's writing will require more time to reach its optimum fullness but what is represented here has promise. His horn lines weave in and out of the romping *Agbayac*, an uptempo piece that features a fat-toned boisterous trombone solo from Frank Lacy, Laster's melodic counterpart on this session. Michelle Rosewoman excels on the *Purple Light* with a sympathetic accompaniment for Laster's ballad performance. Phil Haynes contributes a rolling tide of mallets on cymbals and drums in support of the mood as well. It is intriguing at this point in the development of creative music to witness the fruits of ideas planted by the master musicians of the sixties. Certainly Laster has absorbed the lessons of the previous generations but rather than repeat them he looks ahead. Good ideas are in abundance in this debut, from the brawny tone of the unison line writing for the horns to the intuitive connection of bassist Drew Gress and Phil Haynes. He definitely seems to be on the right wavelength.

Anthony Braxton
Ensemble (Victoriaville) 1988
Les Disques Victo 07

For this performance / recording project of his Compositions 141 and 142, Braxton assembled what was in essence an all-star unit of improvisors to create a septet capable of interpreting these pieces. Friends old and new are presented here and the results are, as could be expected, quite remarkable. *Composition 141* is given the lion's share of time in this program and features a number of themes that form a platform for members in the ensemble (individually and in groups of two and three) to play both notated and improvised materials. The music resists description but there are particular interactions / incidents in the piece that stand out. The swift and bracing exchanges of Evan Parker on tenor sax with Braxton on alto revisit a territory that the two reedmen first explored in a formation of the British improvising ensemble, Company. Bright moments also occur in the duet between Paul Smoker on muted trumpet and drummer Gerry Hemingway. Within the piece Braxton assigns cells of activity that are played in juxtaposition. An example of this in part one occurs with the sound overlay of Braxton and vibraphonist Bobby Naughton developing one set of materials while bassist Joelle Léandre and Gerry Hemingway develop a radically different yet compatible set. Sound events will appear out of nowhere, rising into the foreground to capture the attention, and then are followed by another series. One startling event late in the piece was the trio grouping of Paul Smoker, Evan Parker, and Gerry Hemingway. As with most of Braxton's work, it is impossible to tell where the notated material ends and the improvisation begins. Of course, it is also completely unnecessary. The music stands up as music without any analysis, just listen.

Trevor Watts' Moire Music
With One Voice
ARC Arc 03

The music included in this release was originally written by Watts for a tour of the United States and Canada in the summer of 1988 and recorded in the U.K. in the autumn. The music is reflective of the pace of American living, detailed and almost overwhelming at first listen. Watts' ensemble is arranged around keyboards and percussion for this project; three drummers (two on percussion), three keyboards (featuring an unusual choice of piano accordion), two saxophones and electric bass. Musically very dense, the band races through the first section of the *Theme for America* with the leader offering adventurous alto. Liane Carroll is featured as vocalist in the first theme as well, delivering a throaty wordless vocal passage that briefly allows listeners to catch their breath. *Need we ever say goodbye?* begins very calmly but by the midway point Trevor Watts' forceful tone and choice of notes intensifies what began as a relaxed vamp figure into a more insistent pulse. The second theme is a much looser figure than the first treatment, incorporating a variety of influences in the rhythmic drive, with the piano accordion creating an effective tonal bridge between the reeds and the electric piano. Veryan Weston's short piano solo just whets the appetite before the theme changes gears completely, back into the vamp figure. Judging from this recording live at the Rye Festival in Sussex, Watts' Moire Music is an intriguing development for the saxophonist that hopefully will reach these shores again in future. Striking sleeve design by Margaret Richards.

Carlos Ward Quartet w Woody Shaw
LITO
Leo Records LR 166

Taken from a concert at the North Sea Jazz festival in July 1988, this release of the Carlos Ward Quartet is an uneasy last testament to the creative genius of Woody Shaw. The side-long title piece begins disjointedly with Shaw echoing Ward's statement of the theme in an unsettling way, almost as though he were hearing it for the first time. ***LITO*** parts one/two/three is essentially two ostinato bass figures for the rhythm section and a rising harmonic line to begin and end each section. Both Shaw and Ward contribute interesting solos but after ten minutes the static effect of hanging on one chord begins to drain any accumulated energy. Sadly so since the saxophonist plays with strong emotion on both alto sax and flute. Woody Shaw, once past the theme, has something to say and tries his best to put it across despite the lack of chordal support, or interaction with the rhythm section. Thankfully side two redeems this release with a blues theme, *Lee*, giving both horns more to work with in terms of moving a harmonic line, Carlos Ward cooking through his solo in Bird-like fashion. Lack of direct miking spoils what is a good solo from bassist Walter Schmocker on this selection. Shaw sits out on the tune *first love* and this is a pity. Carlos Ward treats the melancholy theme tenderly and it would have been a nice vehicle for both horns. *Sundance*, the final selection, finishes the disc on an up note, with Ward taking a long passionate solo, prompting the drummer to finally react. Shaw glides through his solo, playing with the theme like a puzzle to be unravelled. It's unusual that they didn't title this recording *Sundance*, since it's much closer to the spirit of this band.

Mal Waldron / Jim Pepper
Art of the Duo
Tutu Records (Enja) Tutu 888006

Second in a series of duo recordings from the Enja label in West Germany (the first being a disc of duets between Lee Konitz and Albert Manglesdorff), ***Art of the Duo*** is truth in advertising at last. Mal Waldron is at his best when he is joined by an equally strong partner that keeps him stimulated musically, bringing an extra impulsiveness to his playing. Jim Pepper, a saxophonist who of late has gained ground in presenting his music in the right settings (like Paul Motian's quintet) finds in Mal Waldron a catalyst for some hard-edged tenor work. Growing out of a collaboration on Waldron's *Soul Mates* composition, this release is an intensely personal statement for the two musicians. With no rhythm section to provide propulsive energy, the impetus is on the duo to generate momentum for itself, something that presents no problem. The music takes in many styles beginning the head-long tempo and soaring tenor of *Ticket To Tokyo* and moving through a spectrum of the music's moods. Mal Waldron's playing on the two standards, *Ruby, My Dear* and *Good Bait*, is beguiling, some of his most attractive work on record from the last few years. Jim Pepper is featured solo on two tracks that demonstrate a colourful and agile conception, on tenor the standard, *Somewhere Over The Rainbow*, and on soprano the original, *A Pepper Poem*, a piece that demonstrates yet another side of his playing. There is a very brisk pace to the production of the disc, with pieces pared down to the essence, no lengthy deliberation on solos, just the facts.

Don Pullen
New Beginnings
Blue Note B1-91785

Pullen's work on this release is another confirmation of his status as a piano master in the new tradition, one of the handful of pianists that are actively developing a personal language on the instrument. This recording from New York City December 1988 explores the combination of Pullen's vocabulary with the stellar rhythm section of Gary Peacock and Tony Williams. Peacock and Williams, like Pullen veterans of the mid-sixties birthing of free music, offer steady support and engage the pianist in an on-going conversation throughout. Amiable and relaxed on the opening track, *Jana's Delight*, Pullen proceeds to turn the piano into firewood during *Once Upon A Time* and *Warriors*. Peacock seems restrained in his soloing on this recording, preferring to approach the tunes from a different angle, his sureness of melodic sense guiding Pullen as an undercurrent. Williams plays with energy and conviction throughout the recording as well. Though it

GERRY HEMINGWAY (Photograph by Gerard Futrick)

cannot be seen as a flaw in the recording, the presentation tends to be an exhausting listening experience when taken all at once. One wishes that Pullen had allowed himself a track of solo piano on this release to counter the intensity as well as filling out the length of the disc. At approximately twenty-six minutes of music, ***New Beginnings*** is an unusally lean introduction to this trio.

The Giancarlo Nicolai Trio and John Tchicai
Leo records LR 164

Taken from a live session at Radio Studio Zurich in November, 1987, the Giancarlo Nicolai Trio is joined by the Danish saxophonist John Tchicai in a program of four originals, two each by the leader and Tchicai. Although it has to be agreed that Tchicai is a masterful musician, his presence on this recording raises questions regarding the ethics of hiring "star" sidemen for collaborative projects. In the case of developed yet unknown players, the practice is an acceptable way of introducing oneself in the larger music community in the company of one's peers. This is not the case on this session. As a quartet, the musicians sound interesting but not outstanding,

Tchicai's horn being the prime focus of attention. His rich tone and good ideas lock into the competent backing to create a pleasing variation on the guitar trio's format, but when it is left to the trio to carry the tune, the energy level is lacking. Contrary to the extravagant liner notes praising the ensemble, there is not a great deal of risk-taking involved in this project. Good musicianship can go a long way but cannot make up for lackluster writing. I am afraid I have to disagree with the liner notes description of the music as bold and explosive. This trio are not dealing on the same level as Tchicai though given time may rise to the occasion. What is hinted at here could make the wait worthwhile.

Gerry Hemingway
Tubworks / Solo Percussion
Sound Aspects sas 022

The renowned percussionist from the Anthony Braxton Quartet, Gerry Hemingway goes it alone on this collection of solo percussion pieces recorded between 1985 and 1987. Discussing his work with English biographer Graham Lock, he outlined a philosophy that has found its form in this recording. The concern is sound; to create a variety of sounds that have a certain fluency in their communication so they become tools or vocabulary for composition. The thing about drums is that there is no familiar sense of harmony, melody, to draw people into an awareness of linear structure, so the challenge was to make linear statements that hung together, particularly for the longer forms . . . This release contains a combination of approaches to the elements of the trap drum set, with the first side of the recording given to *Four Studies for Single Instruments*. The four studies, and the full kit pieces that make up the remainder of the disc are hypnotic music, very free in the sense they are not tied to the standard notion of the drum solo, exploring instead the subtle timbral resources in the instrument. *Tubworks*, despite its name, owes more to Harry Partch than to the forties' drum battles its name implies. Hemingway's resourcefulness, already documented in the recordings of Braxton and the drummer's own overlooked quintet (*Outerbridge Crossing*, also on Sound Aspects), is given full rein here, taking the percussionists' craft forward by leaps and bounds.

JAZZ VIDEO UPDATE

The eleven films covered in this "jazz on film" column fall into three categories: Soundies, big bands and drummers.

During 1940-47, a large number of three-minute one-song performances featuring pop and jazz attractions were filmed. These "soundies" were shown in bars and restaurants across the United States for the price of a coin, serving as a visual jukebox and unwittingly preserving the music of the era. Of course if the filmmakers, generally out to make a quick buck, had set out with the main intention of documenting this music for posterity, chances are that more money would have been spent on the sets, there would have been a greater emphasis on truly significant performers, and greater attention would have been paid to matching the music (all of it pre-recorded, sometimes in the same day) with the action.

BMG Video has made available four volumes of Soundies (ranging from 51-58 minutes apiece) in their ***Leonard Maltin Movie Memories*** series. Maltin, a well-known American film critic, gives a brief introduction to each of these shows and then pretty much stays out of the way, introducing clips two or three at a time. Each of these volumes is streaky (and, strangely enough, not every film listed on the outer box is included!), basically a hodgepodge of swing bands, pop music and show biz, but most of the songs are shown in full and there is an impressive amount of rewarding music.

Volume 1: The 1940s Music Machine is highlighted by Louis Armstrong (circa 1942) performing *I'll Be Glad When You're Dead You Rascal You* with Velma Middleton and his big band, the King Cole Trio's *Errand Boy for Rhythm*, Stan Kenton's *Southern Scandal*, the Mills Brothers and Dorothy Dandridge teaming up for a cute version of *Paper Doll*, Duke Ellington's *Cotton Tail* and Cab Calloway's 1941 version of *Minnie the Moocher*. Unfortunately no exact dates are given on any of the volumes, there are a few unnecessary excerpts (Fats Waller's *Honeysuckle Rose* is fouled up by some odd splicing) and many of the other clips contain little jazz, including Les Brown's *My Lost Horizon* (Doris Day's debut on film), Stan Kenton's *This Love Of Mine* (mostly a Cyd Charisse vocal), Les Paul's *Shoo Shoo Baby* (ruined by an excess of mugging), a straight Bea Wain vocal on Larry Clinton's *My Reverie*, and Gray Gordon's *Scrub Me Mama With A Boogie Woogie Beat*.

Volume 2: Singing Stars of the Swing Era has plenty of vocals if few of the real stars. Best are Glenn Miller's Modernaires on a spirited *Jukebox Saturday Night*, Helen O'Connell singing the jive lyrics of *All Reet*, the classic *Thanks For the Boogie Ride* with Anita O'Day, Roy Eldridge and Gene Krupa, the forgotten Lina Romay (then with Xavier Cugat) sounding fine on *Don't Get Around Much Anymore*, Nick Lucas playing guitar and singing *Tip Toe Through The Tulips*, the Delta Rhythm Boys swinging *Take The 'A' Train* and Liz Tilton (Martha's sister) performing *Ah Yes There's Good Blues Tonight* with a Matty Malneck small group that also included muted trumpet, clarinet, accordion, harp and the leader's violin! The less said about Francis Langford, Jimmy Dodd and especially Lanny Ross the better, but Buddy Rogers' *Dreamsville, Ohio* is so bad as to be laughable, and the otherwise dull *Lazy Bones* gives one a rare chance to see Hoagy Carmichael and Dorothy Dandridge together.

Despite some odd departures (Lawrence Welk's *Doin' You Good*, Rio Rita's *Pan Americonga* and Tony Pastor singing at a barndance while wearing a fireman's hat!), ***Volume 3: Big Band Swing*** is one of the strongest of these tapes. Particularly memorable are Gene Krupa's *Let Me Off Uptown* (with Anita and Roy), Johnny Long's classic *In A Shanty In Old Shanty Town*, Will Bradley's *Barnyard Bounce* (featuring Ray McKinley), June Christy's hit *Tampico* with Stan Kenton, an excellent instrumental version of *Dipsy Doodle* by

GENE KRUPA

Larry Clinton, Cab Calloway's *Foo A Little Bally-Hoo* and Ozzie Nelson's humorous short about the typical day of a bandleader called *I've Got the 'Oh What An Easy Job You've Got, All You Do Is Wave A Stick' Blues*. Even most of the other tracks (Charlie Spivak's crew jamming on an Irish folk song, Sonny Dunham's *Skylark*, an encore from Matty Malneck and Count Basie's *Air Mail Special*, with the latter missing part of the storyline) are excellent. Highly recommended.

Volume 4: Harlem Highlights has some great moments but at times promises more than it delivers, with a dumb Fats Waller medley splicing together excerpts from his Soundies. When is a definitive Waller video going to be compiled, with all of his film appearances (probably totalling around 45 minutes), shown complete and in chronological order?

From volume four I most enjoyed *Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby* (featuring the Nat Cole Trio and Ida James), Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson dancing up a storm on *Let's Scuffle*, Cab Calloway's *Virginia, Georgia and Caroline*, the forgotten stride pianist Pat Flowers imitating Waller on *Scotch Boogie*, Maxine Sullivan's *Some Of These Days*, Louis Jordan (in a silly costume) on *Tillie* and Dorothy Dandridge performing a sensual *Cow Cow Boogie*. The Delta Rhythm Boys and the Mills Brothers (heard in straight performances) are cut by the obscure Jubalaires (who sing *Brother Bill*) while Day, Dawn and Dusk offer some good comedy, pitting classical music against swing.

Although certainly not a flawless series, each of the volumes of **Leonard Maltin's Movie Memories** is worth acquiring, at least until these valuable clips are reissued in a more coherent fashion!

Sticking with big bands, **Story of the Big Band Era** (Aero Space AS 1001) is an edition of the Ray Anthony TV show from around 1962. Filmed in black and white, it purports to revisit the swing era but it totally lacks any thrills or spontaneity. Ray Anthony's big band is saddled with cut-down version for the well-known swing hits, leaving little room for soloists. While the Soundies are historical almost despite themselves, the Ray Anthony film is just an instantly dated exercise in hackneyed nostalgia. Anthony, a fine Harry James-inspired swing trumpeter born a decade too late, appears nervous as he introduces the various standards. Charlie Barnet drops by to play soprano on a routine medley of *Cherokee, Pompton Turnpike* and *Skyliner*, Herb Jeffries sings *Flamingo*, Ann Richards displays her average voice on *The Lady Is A Tramp* and Les Brown conducts the orchestra on a medley of *Sentimental Journey* and *I've Got My Love To Keep Me Warm*. The big band includes such players as trombonist Frank Rosolino, altoist Joe Maini, Dave Pell on tenor and clarinetist Abe Most, but they all appear bored and are mostly seen rather than heard. Vicki Carr, the then-unknown middle-of-the-road pop singer is effective on *And The Angels Sing* and *I've Got My Love* but Anthony, whether playing a sampling of his TV theme hits, sounding schmaltzy on *Harlem Nocturne* or recreating overplayed trumpet solos, is consistently predictable. Even *No Name Jive* and *One O'Clock Jump* fail to catch fire, so imagine how *Begin the Beguine* sounds!

Now for a pair of films available from View Video (34 East 23 Street, New York, NY 10010). ***Phil Woods In Concert With Joe Sudler's Swing Machine*** (67 minutes) features the brilliant bop altoist with a fine big band in 1986. Baritonist Sudler's 18-piece orchestra boasts no big names (although Tyrone Brown is on bass) but handles the tricky charts quite well and acts as a perfect foil for Woods. Starting with an original (Charles Christopher) and a version of *Watch What Happens* most notable for some cute choreography by the sax section (a la Glenn Miller), the first half of this tape (including the ballad *Blues In Extacy, Gary* and *Reets Neets*) is surpassed by the last five selections: a roaring *Groovin' High*, a funky 6/4 version of *Willow Weep For Me*, the driving minor blues *Baja Laza*, a quote-filled *Body and Soul* and an exciting tribute to Oliver Nelson called *Dedicated To Ollie*. Phil Woods is consistently passionate throughout the set and the other soloists (keyboardist Urie Caine, trumpeters John Swama and Tony DeSantes and, on *Willow Weep For Me*, the full rhythm section) are not awed by the altoist's presence. Near the end of the final number, Woods looks visibly (and rightfully) pleased with the band's performance.

Gil Evans and his Orchestra (View Video, 57 minutes, 1986) does not actually feature his regular band (despite the presence of trumpeter Lew Soloff and Howard Johnson on tuba and baritone), but a similar all-star group to the one that performed with Louie Bellson in his video in this series. No matter, for Evans' arrangements and his guidance soon have the largely acoustic orchestra sounding like Gil's New York band. The camerawork is excellent and the soloing generally more concise than on his live recordings of the era. The program (*Hotel Me, Friday the 13th, Copenhagen Sights, Stone Free, Waltz, Variations on the Misery, Orange Was the Color of her Dress, Then Blue Silk, Here Comes De Honey Man, Gone, Eleven*) contains several overlapping medleys and covers a wide variety of moods. Randy Brecker is featured on the ominous *Hotel Me*, Howard Johnson engages in some slaptonguing on his baritone during Monk's *Friday the 13th*, french hornist John Clark has several extensive solos and trumpeter Lew Soloff and trombonist Jiggs Whigham get their spots. Also very significant in the ensembles are vibraphonist Mike Mainieri, keyboardist Gil Goldstein and drummer Billy Cobhan although virtually nothing is heard from Benny Bailey, Herb Geller and Michael Brecker. The main focus here is on Gil Evans' charts' his presence is greatly missed today.

Considering how colourful his live shows are, it is surprising that no film has yet done justice to Sun Ra. ***Mystery, Mr. Ra*** (Rhapsody Films, 51 minutes, 1984) has few moments worth remembering. Instead of letting Sun Ra's music speak for itself, director Frank Cassenti and producer Hubert Niogret have unwittingly portrayed Ra as an amusing clown whose band's main importance seems to be its outer space costumes. A European film with voiceovers and subtitles in French, this video wanders around aimlessly. Ra, who is heard philosophising and jiving around with a live audience, is not even seen at a keyboard until this film is past its halfway mark, and he comes across as an overweight rock star whose voice is oddly similar to Dizzy Gillespie's! Whenever it appears that the Arkestra is ready to start playing, the picture fades to backstage scenes. John Gilmore is seen soloing on *Blue Lou* (a voiceover drowns out the music) and Archie Shepp (interviewed in French) plays *Danny Boy* on

the piano (!) but after a half-chorus he is instead seen riding a taxicab. There are a few wild and violent ensembles by the band but these are always cut off prematurely. The most interesting section is when Ra complains about the many musicians who choose to leave his band after a short period instead of sticking around for their entire lives.

What is needed rather than this confusing mess is a straightforward two-hour film of a typical Sun Ra performance, sans interviews, artistic editing or chatter. Time is running out and Ra's unique live shows need to be preserved.

Most of the tapes made available by DCI Music Video (541 Avenue of the Americas, NY, NY 10011) are essentially how-to videos for aspiring musicians, but a few capture valuable performances. ***Max Roach - In Concert / In Session*** is actually two separate half-hour films from 1982 placed on the same tape. First, Roach is featured in a solo concert from that year's Kool Jazz Festival, playing six pieces unaccompanied. One of the very few percussionists who can sustain interest by himself, Max performs *The Smoke That Thundered* (which contrasts his cymbals with a thunderous bass drum), *African Butterfly* (showcasing his mallet work), a medley of unusual time metres, *Where Is The Wind* (featuring his brushes), and the very well-constructed *Drums Unlimited* before he shows how much sound can be made on just one cymbal. Overall this is a classic performance, a real tour-de-force for the masterful percussionist.

Unfortunately the *In Session* half of this tape is of lesser interest. Excerpts are included from the Max Roach Quintet's recording dates that resulted in *Chattahoochie Red*. There are glimpses of trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, tenorman Odean Pope, pianist Walter Bishop Jr. and bassist Calvin Hill, but too much time is allocated to gospel-oriented singer Matilda Haywood and many of the excerpts (especially those showing Roach composing at the piano) are too brief. Each of the songs on the album are covered in part, but the most extended piece, *I Have A Dream*, partly substitutes animation for Roach's opening drum solo! Still, ***In Concert / In Session*** is well worth acquiring for its first half alone.

On October 14, 1989, a special concert was held at the Wiltern Theatre in Los Angeles. The 15-piece Buddy Rich big band was reunited for a performance that would benefit a scholarship program named after the late drummer. Organized by his daughter, Cathy Rich, the event featured six different drummers sitting in with the Rich orchestra and in two unusual trios.

Now the results are being made available on two separate parts: ***Buddy Rich Memorial Scholarship Concert Tapes One and Two*** (DCI Music Video, both 64 minutes apiece). The first film starts off with some footage of Buddy Rich himself taking a ridiculously fast drum solo with his 1967 big band on *Clap Hands, Here Comes Charlie*, as if to remind viewers just how astounding he was. Louie Bellson (*Wind Machine* and *Canaby Street*), Gregg Bissonette (*In A Mellotone, Time Check*) and Dennis Chambers (*Sister Sadie, Dancing Men*) all get a chance to swing with the orchestra and they excel in ensemble work and on lengthy solos; Dennis Chambers (how often does he get to play with a big band?) is a particular revelation. While Steve Marcus on tenor and trumpeter Bobby Shew get some solo work, the emphasis is clearly on the drummers. In a climactic performance the three of them participate in an intense battle with each other that ends up being a loving collaboration. The remarkable Louie Bellson takes individual honours, but not by much! This tape ends with some home video of Buddy Rich in the 1960s soloing in a club, showing that when it came to speed and technique, he had everyone beat!

The second tape follows the same pattern. This time the stars are Dave Weckl (*Mercy, Mercy, Mercy* and *Bugle Call Rag*), Vinnie Colaiuta (*Big Swing Face, Ya Gotta Try*) and Steve Gadd (*Keep the Customers Satisfied, Just In Time*) with Colaiuta's versatility being most impressive. Once again there is some footage of Buddy Rich (playing *Rotten Kid* in 1968 with Buddy Greco sitting in on piano and mugging during a version of *Mexicali Rose*) and a strong drum trio (although the Weckl-Gadd-Colaiuta matchup is not as explosive as the earlier encounter). In addition, Cathy Rich sings a rousing *That's Enough* with the orchestra. Although I'd give the edge to the first tape, fans of drum solos and of Buddy Rich will want both halves of this well-organized and satisfying concert.

CANADIAN JAZZ FESTIVALS

Vancouver International
Jazz Festival
June 21st - July 1st, 1991

Although festivals have become an accepted part of the system of jazz presentation, and bring pleasure to a large audience, there is as always the thought that they do not enlarge the music's future or encourage the general public, who seem to attend these events, to investigate the music on a continuing basis. It seems unlikely that musicians, apart from those that can claim star status, have benefitted from these summer extravaganzas. It is also clear that a good number of these events are booked through agencies, making a circuit of similarity occur. So much so, that if one reads the programming, the only important difference would be the towns and cities in which they are presented. With this in mind, CODA has made the decision to concentrate on festivals presented in Canada, and encourage the development of this process so that the musicians and venues in our country will be afforded the accolades and criticism that had previously been diluted under the guise of internationalism.

Over the years I have been invited, as a musician or reviewer, to a number of Canadian festivals (Victoriaville, Newfoundland, Ottawa, Toronto, Waterloo, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver), all of which have individual character each quite different in nature. From the small town charm of Victoriaville, where you may breakfast with a Braxton or a Taylor, the ocean crashing cliffs of Saint Johns in Newfoundland, the conservatism of government city Ottawa, to the super city attitude of Toronto, one would find a different reason for being in each of them, and indeed would be attending festivals which have quite different musical content, reflecting the tastes their organisers represent.

I read through my notes, that are now more than a month old, and try to formulate a description that can create some notion of what this is all about. To decide what it is that could be of interest for someone who was not actually there. Something more than a catalogue of star-names.

HEARSAY

The lobby orchestra is, in reality, the **Courtney Pine** group checking into the Barclay Hotel, the official lodgings for the majority of performers in this years Vancouver Festival. A package awaits them, containing greetings from the festival staff, an official program, a map of the city, a coupon for a free massage to free your tensions before you perform, a quality t-shirt; a real welcome. *"WOW - this sure is different to the last gig we played, they wanted us to pay $16.00 for the t- shirts."* A small detail perhaps, but none the less the beginning of the feeling that prevailed throughout our week long stay. A real welcome. The mood that has been created by the helpful friendly staff towards the artists, carries out from the stage into the audience. As Oliver Lake exclaimed at the onset of the the World Saxophone Quartet's performance - YEAH ! - VANCOUVER.

When you arrive from the east by airplane the sense of Vancouver's great beauty is so clear, cupped by the forest clad mountains, smoothing down to the Pacific Ocean, tree lined streets, the houses of an architectural style that is indigenous to the west coast, all reflecting the provinces catch phrase - Supernatural British Columbia. The reputation of a slower paced life, even to the casual visitor, becomes a reality almost immediately. There is a certain friendliness that this city exudes, perhaps it is those snow topped mountains and the forever pulsing ocean, perhaps it is the fact that it is separated from Canada to the east, the hum over the horizon, by those very same Rockies, that gives it this most personal character.

The program is a chock-a-block menu full of goodies, with the choice of indulging in obesity or savouring its special delicacies. We have decided to opt for the latter.

Running through this year's events were several themes, and because of the wonderful variety of musics, it was necessary to choose, with care, the individual program that could produce the most pleasurable stimulation. I concentrated on two of them. A series of events that included **Paul Plimley** and **Lisle Ellis**, and the results of having invited a number of Swiss improvisers.

Readers of Coda, will by now, be familiar with the names Paul Plimley and Lisle Ellis. It is not by chance that in recent times information pertaining to their activities has appeared in these pages, but rather because their art, which they have been persistently developing these past two decades, has come to fruition. Both together and apart, they have found that inner key that unlocks the magic door to originality. A small sample can be found on a recording, (***Both Sides of the Same Mirror - Nine Winds CD 0135***) and although this is an example of their talents, nothing can really replace the moment of being there.

GLASS SLIPPER
185 East 11th Avenue

When three men are friends, as in the case of **Roger Baird** and **Real Time**, joining together in a symposium, to be together to make unpreconceived music, to find melodies inherent in the knowledge they share of each other, has no real risk, no standard or pinnacle that they can fall from, because they are all together for the same purpose, to indulge in the very same moments. If they have the creative abilities, possessed by such as these, the result will always be something. This is not an opinion, this is what occurs. If indeed, in ones mind, the result is not clear, then it would

ROGER BAIRD & REAL TIME (Photograph by Bill Smith)

be time to question one's own needs pertaining to what improvised music is supposed to produce for you. They know what it is for them, and we, although not merely, are the observers.
Paul Plimley, blonde locked prancing dancer, clothed in black attire, nuancing the black&white keys of his grand tuned drum. Lisle Ellis, the dancing partner, filling the cracks, pushing pulses in contra-bass motion. Roger Baird, stick-brushing the details and drama.....REAL TIME INDEED. Two separate nights with such different results.

WESTERN FRONT
305 East 8th Avenue
Solo drum concerts have not been musical presentations that I have sought out, although Max Roach with just a high hat is a marvel to behold, and the blur between who is English percussionist Roger Turner alone with a snare can make one wonder. So how many ways are there to play on a snare drum?

It was to be a trio with **Greg Bendian** as the guest of Plimley and Ellis, but the night before the duo had performed in nearby Seattle, it was the Friday in a holiday weekend and the border crossing between America and Canada had its usual horrible delays. Stuck at the border.

Shall I stay to hear this? Solo Drum.

First the snare drum, aroused with use of rubber mallets, dragged, stuck, rubbed, the snare head wires hand manipulated to crackle, sticks everything but tambour militaire and the left handed fill of the jazz style. So the concert begins to take shape, Bendian apparently not fazed by being left alone, considers the vibraphone. Once again a series of techniques not ordinarily associated with it are produced. Glass mallets, a half size student cello bow, chains, rubbed metal, even vibraphone mallets. This display then followed by a reading of Eric Dolphy's - *Out There*.

The backdrop of Western Front is a wall sized white screen, it is early evening, so the sun steals through the slits around the ill fitting window blackout, casting the reflections of the vibraphone's keyboard as a continuously flowing still life upon it.

I am never quite sure if this was complete solo music, but most certainly it was an impressive display of technique.

Quite suddenly Paul and Lisle arrive, and an intermission, so that they can all set up, is compered by Western Front's music curator, **Hank Bull.** A talented performance artist and musician in his own right, makes the interlude, complete with Hank's only jazz joke, and humorous asides from the audience, changed the sound check into a quite funny occasion. Jazz could use more of this.

For Bendian to have come to Canada to perform, as he is not so well known, could not have been under more choice circumstances than to share the stage with such superb Canadian musicians. For the trio music he amalgamated his drum kit, vibraphone, a variety of strikers, the odd bell etc., played all parts of his instruments including the legs, clamps and rims, illiciting a considerable variety of textures. For all of this, the end result was not an enlarging of the music of the duo, only an addition, as his playing gave the feeling of being compressive and tended to distract the natural flow of the music. (Keep a look out for a new CD on ***Music & Arts*** of the duo with drummer Andrew Cyrille).

PLAZA OF NATIONS
DISCOVERY THEATRE
750 Pacific Blvd. South
With three free venues rotating continuously throughout the holiday weekend, the Plaza of Nations, which is the former Expo 86 site, was a very popular location, giving everyone ample opportunity to hear numerous Canadian and foreign players. From Quebec came **Jean Vanasse** with **Pierre St. Jak**, and **Trio Michel Ratte**; **Rob Frayne**, **Chris McCann**, **Bill Grove** and **Bob Fenton** from Ontario; the local Vancouver groups **Chief Feature** and **Francois Houle's Et Cetera**; plus Greg Bendian from America and the **Steve Potts** trio with **Jean-Jacques Avenel** and **John Betsch** from Paris; and all this is only one day of programming. And lest I forget in such a plenitude of talent, a quintet featuring the duo of Plimley and Ellis.

The Discovery Theatre is a large (500 seats) rather governmentalized style of auditorium, with the rows of sharply angled seats illuding amphitheatre design. Concrete walled modernism totally unsuitable for intimate improvised music. Due to this mistaken situation it is necessary to amplify every group, a different one appearing every hour or so. This means a sound set-up and check between each one. What a mess. What an interference to the artists waiting back stage, even if there is free food and drink to be had.
So my final chance to hear a much anticipated group featuring saxophonists Bill Grove and **Vinny Golia** takes place here. Normally, the unknown quantity that exists in freely improvised music is what excites me the most, and theoretically this group, coming as it did from such diverse musical back-

URS BLOCHLINGER TRIO (Photograph by Bill Smith)

grounds and locations (Grove - Toronto / Golia - Los Angeles / Plimley - Vancouver / Ellis - Montreal / Bendian - USA) would present the perfect musical challenge. However, due to the aforementioned description of this location and a reoccurrence of this "rhythm sections" Western Front gig, the most that happened was a couple of good solos. Oh well!

The outdoor stage, complete with hollow sounding sound, did, if nothing else have tables and chairs and a bar, so I managed to spend some precious time socialising with my old buddy **Al Neil.**

THE SWISS MOVEMENT

A few issues back, in a review of a Swiss recording, I made asides about cuckoo clocks and chocolates being the identity associated with this country, so it is with surprise and pleasure that the three groups representing this part of the world are among the most interesting.

Western Front was, for the trombone duo of **Christian Muthspiel** and **Roland Dahinden** (Austria), a quite perfect situation. Originally the lodge of the Knights of Pythias, this rather grand old wood clad walled building has for many years been home to much of the forward thinking art in Canada. Has been for many of us, when performing in Vancouver, not only the place to play but the home one needs when on the road.

The European trombone tradition, especially in modern times, has been a major influence on the jazz world in general, and the influence that has made itself felt on these two young men is Albert Mangelsdorff. Even the first number was dedicated to him. Their formal appearance and European English belie the results which evolved, and as is often the case with contemporary trombone music contained not only the startling techniques of circular breathing, multiphonics etc, but the wonderful push me off the pavement humour inherent in this instrument. One piece was based in the warm up techniques of a trombone player, long tones overlayering each other which in the second part became only the sounds of the lips and mouth, with spit splattering and spraying everywhere. Other pieces formal with songs utilising riff counterpoint. Another the beauty of the mutes. Overall the feeling of a theatre of etudes culminating in an illustration of the physical silliness of the trombone being quizzically disassembled and reassembled incorrectly,to eventually produce in the middle of the floor, a sculpture of its parts. Wonderful fun.

The Glass Slipper feels just like a club should, down the stairs into the basement, an odd collection of chairs and tables, a slightly private sense of being. The headquarters and regular performance space of the New Orchestra Workshop (NOW). Vinny Golia played here, once as the guest of **Jane Bunnett**, and again in a quartet with yours truly; **Steve Lacy** increased the temperature on two evenings, with some powerful saxophone from **Steve Potts**, who also conducted an extraordinary late evening jam session; some fine Ornette inspired music from the **Bruce Freedman** quartet, and a duet performance by the Swiss duo of **Urs Leimgruber** and **Fritz Hauser**.

This was an unsettling two sets, as the music never really seemed to be more than a saxophonist and a percussionist playing at the same time, flirting, with occasional success within many idioms of improvised music. Abstract sound colourisms, minimalist squeaks, circular breathing rampages, air tube tenor without a mouthpiece and finally a somewhat coarse lyricism. There appeared an illusion of convincingly concise logic which seemed to lack an overall content, and even though this had more shape in their second set it never became very clear. Fritz Hauser is an amazing drummer who I would hope to hear in different circumstances in the future.

Of the three Swiss groups, the **Urs Blochlinger** trio, with the leader playing bass and alto saxophones, **Peter Landis**; tenor and soprano and **Jan Schlegel** on electric bass, performed the most interesting music. One set at Yuk - Yuk's Comedy Club, the other venue at the Plaza of Nations, produced a wonderful combination of written and improvised music. Formal with fun. Their well planned performance utilised the spectrum of available textures inherent in the multiple combinations of the horns, intelligent use of the electric bass, showing that the key to success is in variety and programming, making the new music exciting even for those who are not the converted.

Although I have focussed on only two particular movements in this festival, there were of course many other highlights. At the Vancouver East Cultural Centre the **World Saxophone Quartet**, as usual brilliant in the more coherently arranged numbers, and even the out of tune chaos had a fine feeling. **Oliver Lake** and **David Murray** were the outstanding soloists. **Jon Jang** and the **Pan Asian Arkestra** seemed to be a cross between a second rate Singapore dance band, Gene Krupa doing *Sing Sing Sing*, and one of those evenings with Sun Ra. Surprising myself with an exhilarating evening in the presence of **John McLaughlin** at the Commodore Ballroom, with its glitter ceiling, ornate art deco mirrored walls, spider tentacle glass chandeliers and sprung wooden dance floor. Did Duke Ellington, Artie Shaw, Count Basie and Benny Goodman thrill generations past in this amazing room? Was the joy that made those moments long ago ghosting in the air, continuing into what is now today's popular music. I am surprised my own interest in McLaughlin's music has not been sustained, and that my memory is still back there with *Where Fortune Smiles.* The percussionist, **Trilok Gurtu,** a major part of this happy soundscape was startling. **Ton van Wageningens** photoshow, with wonderful pictures from **Eric Dolphy's** - *Last Date* session, at the Alma Street Cafe, and the regular lunchtime events, outdoors on Granville Island, allowing us to hear some of Canada's array of talent. In fact the only really negative "show" was presented by **Clarence Fountain** and the **Five Blind Boys of Alabama**, an evening that seemed artificial and pretentious. Let me quote the power of their religion - *"We have to increase the price of our t-shirts because of the feeble Canadian dollar"* -*"George Bush had his prayers answered and won the Gulf war"* - *"I give daily my body in sacrifice to Jesus"* - plus a drummer that could not keep time and every song in the same key. I would say the only redeeming factor was their two tone shoes and orange gabardine zoot suits. At the time, I left, feeling most annoyed by it all, but as I type this it seems more pathetic than dangerous.

Peculiar to end on this note, but I really did have to get that off my chest, for rubbish like this could have interfered with the joy that I actually received from being at this festival, and in closing would like to thank all those genuine, dedicated folks, who had a truly successful festival for us and themselves alike. You should join us next year.

IN THE LAND OF OO - BLA - DEE

The Dean Benedetti recordings of Charlie Parker have long been a part of the growing body of legend concerning Parker. They were known to certain musicians close to Parker in Parker's lifetime; and music dubbed from them has appeared on record over the years. Yet they eluded discovery until ten years ago, when Benedetti's brother called Bob Porter to say that he had the recordings. Now Mosaic have brought them out complete on seven CDs or ten LPs (The Complete Dean Benedetti Recordings of Charlie Parker, Mosaic MD7 129).

Benedetti himself is also a legendary figure. He is the first character encountered in Ross Russell's Bird Lives, in the largely fictional "Coda: At Billy Bergs" with which it opens. He was one of the cult of admirers of the new be—bop music in the forties on the West Coast. He ran a band that included a teenage Jimmy Knepper. He himself played tenor, in the manner of his first admiration, Coleman Hawkins. After he heard Parker, he wanted to switch to alto and play like his new hero. To assist him, he recorded Parker on his portable disc recorder, and later on a tape recorder, in night clubs in Los Angeles and in New York, to which he followed Parker. He had no success as a musician in New York and returned to his home in Susanville, California. Soon after, he was diagnosed as having an incurable muscular disease. In 1953 he joined his parents, who had returned to Italy, where he died in 1957, less than two years after Parker and the same age of 34. His recordings remained behind in America to gather dust and a legendary fame.

Ross Russell presented Benedetti as a failed musician, who, by the time Parker first came to California in 1946, had been following his idol all over the United States, recording him and living off the proceeds of selling marijuana. Benedetti in fact recorded Parker first in a week long engagement at the Hi—De—Ho Club in Los Angeles from March 1st to 13th 1947, six months after the engagement at Billy Bergs. He later recorded Parker when he opened at the Three Deuces in New York in March 1948; and after that in a week—long engagement at The Onyx Club, also on 52nd Street. The New York recordings were known to collectors through dubbings of the Benedetti recordings. Edited versions of the recordings of the Onyx material held by Jimmy Knepper were issued on Jazz Workshop (JWS 501) and later on Fantasy (6011) as Bird on 52nd Street. The Three Deuces recordings were issued on Spotlite as one side of The Band that Never Was (Spotlite SPJ 141). One number from the Hi—De—Ho Club, "Dee Dee's Dance", was issued on Lullaby in Rhythm (Spotlite 107) from a dubbing, of which the original has never surfaced.

Benedetti was not a record collector making tapes for his collection. He was a musician who recorded Parker so that he could learn to play like Parker. On one record we hear him playing along with Parker's Savoy recordings. In consequence, he recorded, in the main, only when Parker played. The result is that more than half of his recordings consist almost entirely of Parker solos isolated out of context. Most of what is new in the Mosaic set — the four CDs of music from the Hi—De—Ho Club — comes in this form.

Much of the music on the Hi—De—Ho recordings is, to my ears, magnificent. The engagement, under the leadership of Howard McGee, occurred not long after Parker came out of the Camarillo State Hospital, to which he had been confined soon after his collapse at the "*Loverman*" session for Dial. Immediately after his return he had made the "*Home Cooking*" recordings at a party and then the session with Earl Coleman for Dial that culminated in the "*Bird's Nest*"/ "*Cool Blues*" recordings with Erroll Garner. These were followed by the great session for Dial with Howard MacGhee and Wardell Gray and Dodo Marmaroso that produced "*Cheers*", "*Carvin' the Bird*","*Stupendous*" and "*Relaxin' at the Camarillo*", tunes that were part of the repertoire of the group at the Hi—De—Ho and which are heard in numerous versions (by Parker only) on the Benedetti recordings. If you want to know what Parker sounds like on the Hi—De—Ho recordings, listen to any of those four Dial titles.

The group at the Hi—De—Ho included, beside McGhee and Parker, Hampton Hawes on piano, Addison Farmer on bass, and, on drums, Roy Porter (who had played on the Dial "*Night in Tunisia*" session). Parker is superbly relaxed, lyrical and inventive, playing with wonderful aplomb. We hear him improvising on tunes that he never recorded commercially such as '*The Man I Love*", "*The Very Thought of You*", "*Stardust*", and most notably "I'm in the Mood for Love" and the tune that George Shearing was soon to make so much of, "*September in the Rain*". The sound is not of commercial quality, but the balance is in favour of Parker and his tone is captured well. Many of his solos are longer than ones encountered on corresponding commercial recordings of the period, so that he has more opportunity for development.

All this is a tremendous plus for the Benedetti recordings. However, there are over two hundred items in the Hi—De—Ho recordings,

JIMMY KNEPPER, ROY HAYNES & BIRD (photograph courtesy of Jimmy Knepper)

some of which last a few seconds and hardly any of which is longer than two minutes: the average length is about one minute and twenty seconds. Much the same repertoire was used each night. After extended listening, you may never want to hear "*Big Noise*" ("*Wee*") or "*Hot House*" again. In addition, the sudden breaks at the end of the Parker solos, with the music in full flight, are psychologically disconcerting. This effect is exacerbated by the fact that, on many numbers, there is a break followed by a short piece in which Parker came back in at the end of the number. Such truncated listening is far from pleasant; and one is torn between delight at the music and irritation at its fragmentary nature. When one gets a bit of Howard McGhee at his superlative best (as he was at that time) the relief is enormous. Added to it all is the fact that, in the absence of theme statements, it requires considerable familiarity with Parker's music to identify the tunes without the notes; and any diversion of attention (as the pieces come quickly after one another) can result in confusion.

The compilers have done their best to make the four hours from the Hi—De—Ho a pleasant listening experience. Much of the music is taken night by night in the order in which it was played; but some pieces are isolated after the chronological presentation; and some pieces are assembled into artificial "sets". The last fourteen minutes or so are taken up by a group of pieces so badly recorded or so short as to be only of documentary interest. (One is reminded here of the man who had three boxes for used string: long pieces; short pieces; and pieces too short to be of any further use.) Despite the careful and sensitive work of the compilers, one cannot imagine oneself often sitting down to even an hour (or one CD) of these recordings, though a little has great charm.

The recordings from the Three Deuces are from Benedetti's tapes and not from the dubbings used to make the Spotlite issue; but they give us little that is new, apart from a piano solo on "*Half Nelson*" and the vocal on "*All the Things Your Are*". The recording is decidedly clearer here; but I find it harsh, and Parker's tone is more distorted than on the Hi—De—Ho recordings. In addition, while one can hear the rhythm section clearly, the balance is not good and Max Roach's drumming is too loud.

These were obviously exciting performances, as collectors will know, and Parker plays with unusual dash. The group is Parker's regular quintet with Miles Davis, Duke Jordan, Tommy Potter and Roach.

The same group made the recordings from the Onyx Club in July. These were the basis of the LP Bird on Fifty—Second Street, to be found (among other issues) as half of the Prestige double Charlie Parker (24009). Bird on Fifty—Second Street gave seventeen (edited as fifteen) of the fifty—one items found in the Mosaic box, among which are five pieces from an afternoon rehearsal newly issued. On July 10th Carmen McCrae is heard very briefly; while on the following evening Thelonious Monk comes up to replace Duke Jordan on a version of "*Well You Needn't*" (though his solo was not recorded). There is considerable repetition of repertoire from Bird on Fifty Second Street; but versions of pieces found on that LP are more complete here. Parker plays somewhat unevenly, often falling back on his well—known cliches. Once again, the sound is rather harsh (no fault of the compilers) and the rhythm section is too forward and interferes with listening to the soloists.

The music comes to us with the usual Mosaic hype: "In jazz only the locating of the fabled Buddy Bolden cylinder could match our elation at this find." There are, in fact, many artists of whom we know far less than we know of Parker and by whom we wish we could hear more. Who wouldn't go for finding the Victor test of "*Tack 'Em Down*" by Bill Johnson's "Creole Jass Band" from1918? Indeed, there are so many live recordings of Charlie Parker that hardly anybody can have them all. We have had Parker recorded on tenor in a hotel room in 1943 (Birth of the Bebop) (Stash ST 260); or Parker recorded through a dressing—room speaker at the Appolo (Bird at the Appolo) (Charlie Parker CP 503). A recent Italian issue gave us ten LPs of Parker in super-low-fi, beginning with a 1937 home recording of him playing "*Honeysuckle Rose*". One half—expects some day to stumble on a CD entitled The Inaudible Charlie Parker, recorded by his group when he had passed out in the gents.

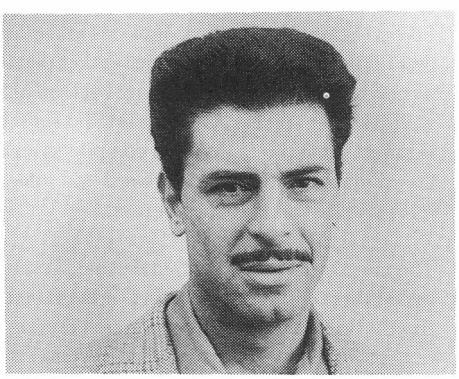
How does the Mosaic set rank against other live recordings by Parker? At the top of my list would be the Carnegie Hall concert of September 29, 1947, originally issued on Black Deuce (Nite at Carnegie Hall Roost 2234 and others). This is arguably the most exciting set of performances by Parker ever recorded, and the sound and balance are acceptable. Close behind would be the Armed Forces Radio Service transcriptions from December 1945 (Spotlite SPJ 123) — especially "*Groovin' High*", where Parker and Gillespie are heard together in good sound at their superlative best. The many recordings made at the Roost in 1947, while of variable sound, have a good balance and offer us complete performances from a time when Parker was in good health and not hung over with drink or drugs. Indeed, the competition is fierce: One Night at Birdland (Columbia JG43808) from June1950 with Fats Navarro and Bud Powell; Bird in Sweden (Spotlite124/125), where Parker plays adventurously, though the sound is variable; and (a sleeper) Yardbird — DC — 53 (VGM 0009), on which he he is heard in three and four minute solos, free of cliches, where he turns the familiar tunes around and around in a manner that shows why people still listened in wonder even in his days of decline in 1953. What the Mosaic set offers is live music from Parker's great period — from 1947 and 1948 — before the days when tape recordings became common. We have very few live recordings from these years; and those with Norman Granz's early "Jazz at the Philharmonic" find Parker cramped by rhythm sections that did not play in the then—new idiom.

At the time of the Hi—De—Ho recordings, Parker was in good shape after coming out of the Camarillo Hospital. His playing was relaxed and lyrical, subtly revealing surprising but unforced harmonic possibilities in the music. The tone is light and rounded, controlled and without squeaks. The superb applomb never deserts him. After he returned to New York at the end of1947, he went back to his old ways and his life certainly deteriorated until he came to exist on the fringes of his profession. It used to be said that his music deteriorated too; though it is difficult, despite the large number of on—the—spot recordings after 1948, to compare Parker's early achievement with his later. Once he had started to record for Norman Granz, there were so few studio sessions that really gave him an opportunity: on the records with strings, or "Charlie Parker plays South of the Border", or "*In the*

Still of the Night" and "*Old Folks*" with the Dave Lambert singers, it was not surprising if cliches abounded. (These records were supposed to bring Parker to a wider public; but some of them are appalling, and one wonders whether music like his needed the assist.) Yet the on—the—spot recordings from these years (when one can really hear what is going on) seem to include rather a lot of off—nights. Running up and down the scale rapidly became a hallmark of Parkerism; though, at his best, both in his early and later work, Parker indulges in it very little.

In the face of this, there is the testimony of those who heard Parker; and some of the later live recordings show him as more adventurous than do the early recordings. His live performances have become the subject of legend; and the Parker legend is very much what the compilers of the Mosaic set are busy about. Ross Russell is criticised for the way in which he presented Benedetti and Parker in Bird Lives (1973) and in his novel The Sound (1961) (praised by Whitney Balliett) — though as a novel it should be allowed to stand on its own two feet and not be read as disguised documentary. Russell, after all, perhaps deserves the odd nod of recognition for giving as the Dial recordings. Parker is presented as a genius abused in life and neglected in the years after his death; though in fact Parker's Savoy and Verve recordings have been kept continuously available, and it was only the lack of a commercial base that prevented the Dial recordings from appearing complete until Tony Williams brought them out on Spotlite in 1970.

The American poet, Kenneth Rexroth — "The Daddy of the Beats" — compared Parker to Dylan Thomas: "As years passed, I saw them each time in the light of a personal conflagration...Both of them overcome by the horror of the world in which they found themselves, because at last they could no longer overcome that world with the weapon of a purely lyrical art." This picture (permeated, in Rexroth's presentation, by the Beat perception of the artist's predicament in the modern world) has become increasingly current in writing like Gary Giddins's Charlie Parker: A Celebration (1987). However, other less attractive aspects of the two men have an uncanny resemblance. The sons of doting mothers, both showed a marked irresponsibility in almost every aspect of life. They dissipated large sums of money and were always broke; they stole from people who befriended them, without apparent remorse; they were completely unreliable; their sexual behaviour affronted usual norms; and they had highly defensive personalities and at times seemed to lie for preference. They deteriorated as time went by, Thomas due to drink and Parker due to drink and drugs, meeting early deaths that were due to their habits. Parker's playing became less consistent, while Thomas wrote less and less after a prolific youth. Parker's music was much more important in its field than Thomas's poetry; but the art of neither of them is well served by trying to see them as tortured visionaries whom the world abused and neglected. Their work is not belittled by their reprehensible behaviour; nor will it be enhanced by making them out to be frustrated saints.



We are often told that the reason for Parker's disasterous life was that he was a black man in white America: as a black man, Parker was unable to attend music conservatories and his music received no acclaim in his lifetime, except among musicians and followers of jazz. T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Picasso were reviled by the academies, and their work got much less attention than Parker's did in their youth. One thing is sure: despite the fact that they attended prestigious academic institutions, they never claimed that doing so was the basis of their artistic achievement. The activity of the new artist has always been to free himself from the conceptions of art institutionalised in the academies. As a bottom line, one has only to ask onself, "Would there have been any jazz if Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Lester Young and Charlie Parker could freely have entered conservatories and equally freely have gone on to careers that flowed from their training there ?" The answer is clearly "No"; and, apart from the fact that Parker was vulnerable to the disgraceful treatment accorded negroes in America, a great deal of what is written about his life is humbug. Dizzy Gillespie was an artist of a stature that approached Parker's, and he led a successful life with considerable recognition; Bix Beiderbecke was a white musician of genius who was offered every opportunity, and he drank himself to an earlier death than Parker's.

Other features of incipient hagiography emerge in the Mosaic notes: "Parker scholars", we are told, will be transcribing the Benedetti material in the future. It is, of course, appropriate that Parker's music should be intensively studied as well as intensely listened too; and this brings us back to the possible public for this Mosaic set. Its compilers seem to see it almost as a monument; and they certainly deserve credit for the very great devotion and perspicacity without which the music could not have been preserved or adequately documented. The 48 page booklet that accompanies the issue is outstanding in its documentation. There are transcriptions of passages with analyses. The sound of the recordings, not always made at standard speeds, has been adjusted in the light of the usual keys for the various tunes. I have already described the music that the set offers and its relation to previous issues; but readers may want to note that, as part of the meticulous documentary presentation, we are given half a CD of recordings that Benedetti made of himself — some on piano; some on alto; and some on tenor, leading his band with solos in the manner of Coleman Hawkins. The documentary interest of these pieces is soon exhausted, as is that of the tracks on which Benedetti plays along with Parker Savoy records — performances that otherwise provide excrutiating listening.

It is a great gesture on the part of Mosaic that they have made these records available in such an impecable manner; though the claim that "In terms of sheer bulk, the Benedetti recordings must be regarded as the greatest single body of Parker recordings" is true only in arithmetical terms. Indeed, given the type of listening experience this issue offers, it is hard to feel that, at $120.00 Canadian, it will be high on the priority list of any but Parker completists, despite its great documentary interest.

DEAN BENEDETTI c. 1950 (photograph courtesy Rick Benedetti)

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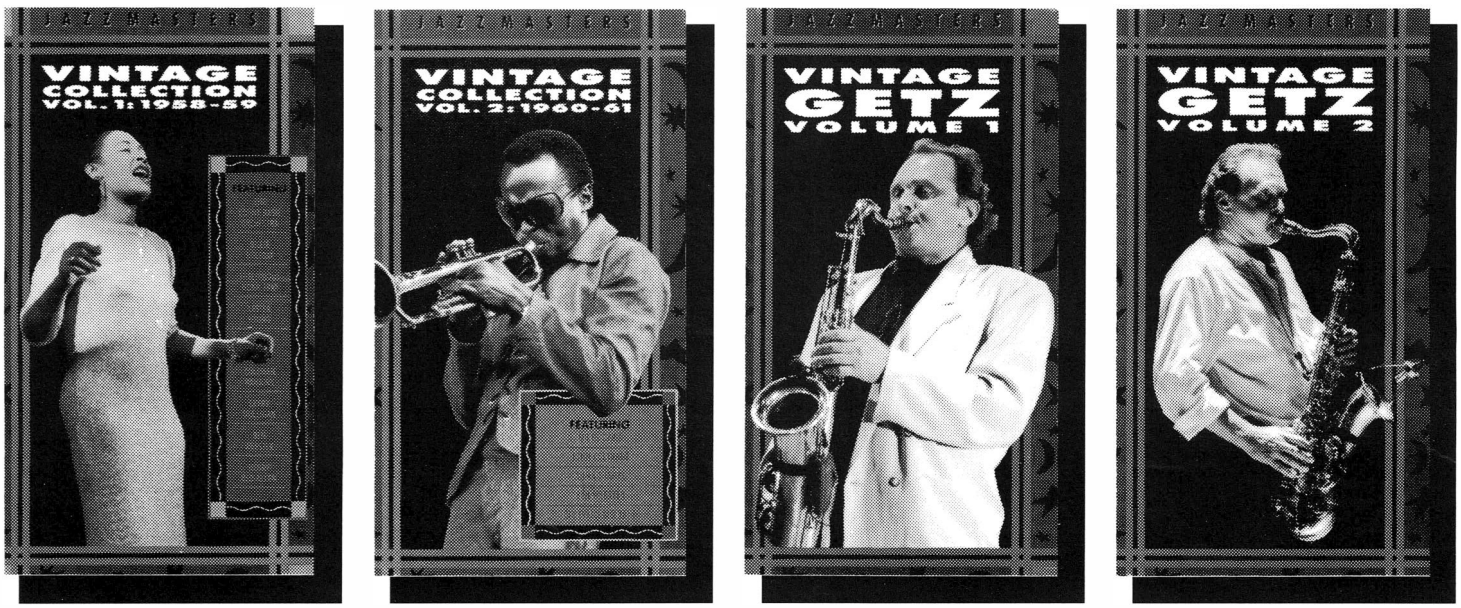

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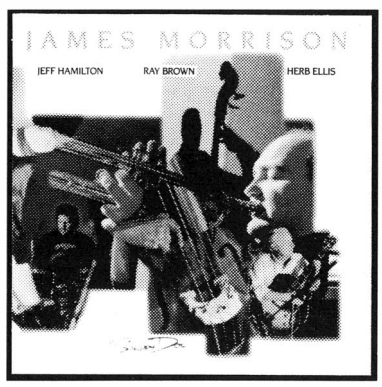

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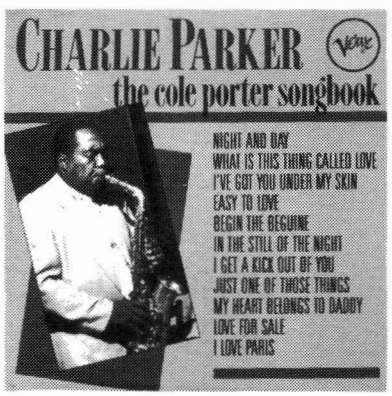

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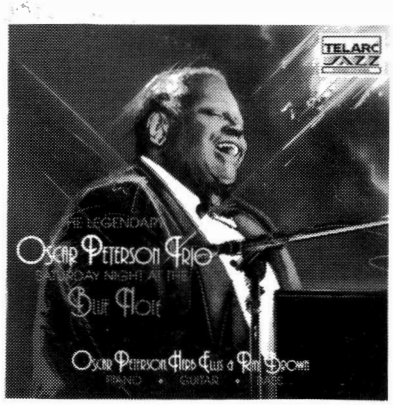

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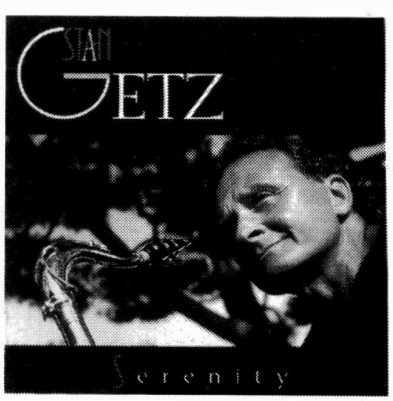

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