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LOS ANGELES

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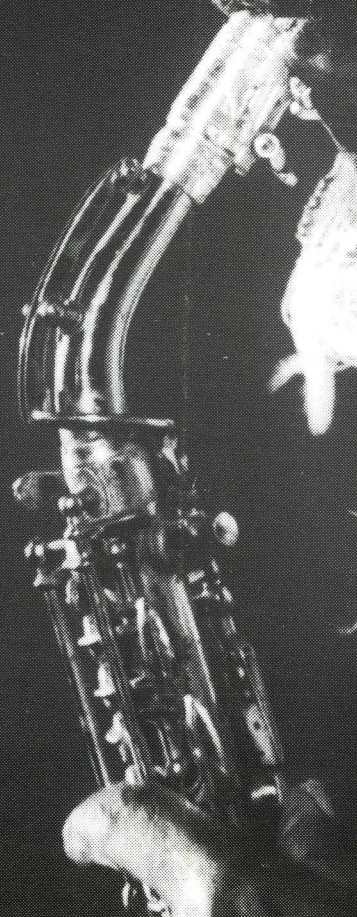
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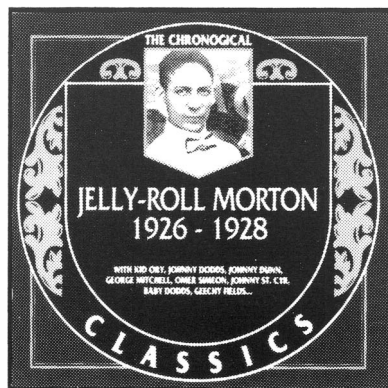
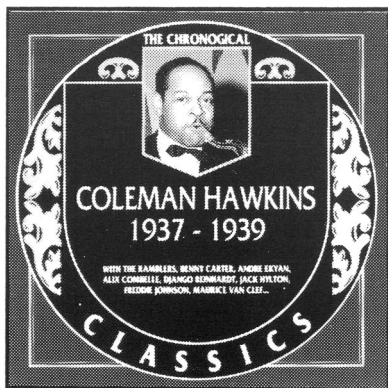
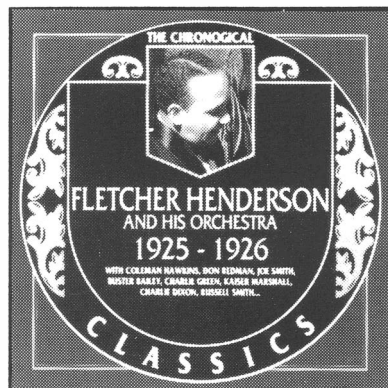
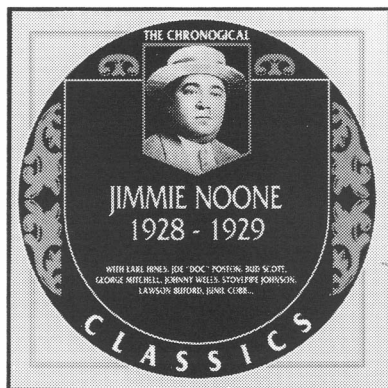
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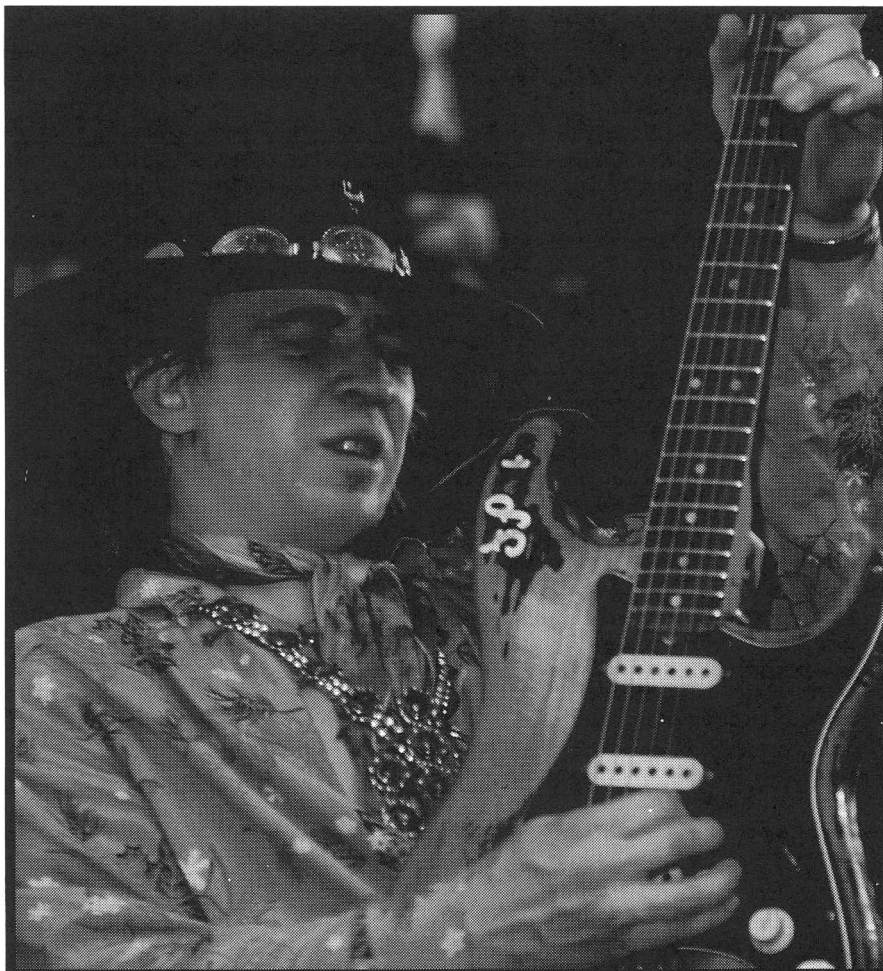
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As with any great artist, particularly those of the blues persuasion, Stevie Ray Vaughan was constantly taking chances, stretching out, discovering new possibilities even in songs he performed nightly. Brother Jimmie Vaughan hit the nail on the head as only he could: "He never played it the same way once, much less twice." As impressive as Stevie's too-brief studio career was, the records represent only freeze-frame stills of songs (and a guitarist) that were continually evolving. And like any self-respecting guitar-slinger, Stevie Ray's flamboyant, in-your-face style blossomed most in front of a live audience. Such was obviously the case one night in 1983 when Double Trouble played Toronto's El Mocambo. Luckily, the entire event was captured on film.

Drummer Chris Layton recalls, "It was just a straight live performance, there just happened to be cameras there." In other words, this wasn't a "studio audience": there were no re-takes, no fixing or sweetening after the fact. Clearly, the El Mocambo crowd witnessed an emerging guitar legend and his top-notch band on an extraordinary night. Even with bassist Tommy Shannon towering over him, Stevie appeared almost larger than life. Four of the songs included here were never released on LP in Vaughan's lifetime. The eight remaining titles include favorites from Double Trouble's early repertoire: "Love Struck Baby," "Pride and Joy," "Mary Had a Little Lamb" and Stevie's homage to his hero Jimi Hendrix, "Voodoo Chile." Another Hendrix vehicle, "Third Stone From the Sun," is a tour de force of acrobatics, both sonic and physical, while "Lenny" reveals the guitarist's lyrical, sensitive side. And his rendition of "Texas Flood" is without a doubt one of the most overwhelming recordings of Stevie Ray (or any guitarist) ever documented—a textbook (make that an *encyclopedia*) of incandescent lick streaming forth like a thunder shower. Like a flood.

—Dan Forte

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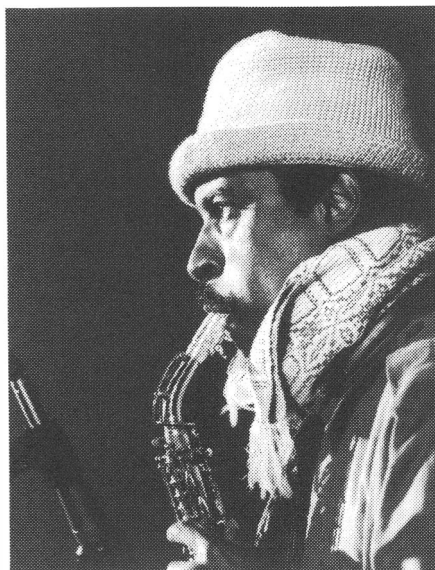
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By Marcus di Francesco

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FESTIVAL MUSIQUE ACTUELLE

A Review Written By Steve Vickery

VICTORIAVILLE • QUEBEC • OCTOBER 10-14

The first thing you notice when visiting the southern Quebec town of Victoriaville is the weather, in particular the fresh, cold air. It is no accident that the finest of the eastern new music festivals, Festival Musique Actuelle and Newfoundland's Sound Symposium, operate well outside of the sprawling metropolitan areas. This relative isolation invites a different sort of listening, the quiet space of these towns allowing the audience the chance to assimilate the experience in an atmosphere removed from the relentless sonic grind of the modern city. The long-standing tradition of French "esprit" is still to be felt, tempered by an attitude of patience toward the often hapless tourist attempting to deal with a language and culture that is not their own. The troubles of the last period concerning Quebec nationhood are addressed by most with a simple affirmative logic.

Electronics artist **Bob Ostertag** made his Canadian solo debut at Victoriaville an opportunity to showcase his formidable talents on the Ensoniq digital sampling keyboard, utilising as well a mass of tape samples of sound and speech, modified and manipulated through the processing stage of his keyboard. The long piece at the centre of the program *Sooner or Later* was a piece that carried with it a tremendous political resonance. Ostertag made use of a tape sample of a child speaking Spanish that was recorded in El Salvador. A percussive

sound, innocent at first, is suddenly recognizable as the sound of a shovel. Amid tears, the child explains the contra he has murdered his father, whom he is burying, summing up his short statement with the words, "sooner or later, I'll get the bastards who did this". The mutations of this sample were very powerful, bringing home the message of war's stupidity in no uncertain terms. It was a remarkable sight to see Ostertag seated at the keyboard, alone on the CEGEP stage, creating a massive sound sculpture, the mutated sound of a child's crying causing the listener to get a choking sensation in the throat. It is also an irony that in an era where the technology of torture and death, smart bombs and their ilk, have allowed some in North America to look away from the obvious and terrible conclusions of the war, an artist like Ostertag is able to use simple technology to create such a devastating portrait of human suffering. Frames of sound flew by, hypnotic.

Denis Schingh Ensemble drew upon the considerable influence of the contemporary orchestral writing, most notably American Composer Steve Reich, in his program of pieces for sextet. The show's opener, a new solo setting for marimba player **Mark Duggan**, got the show off to a good start, but intonation problems in the ensemble marred the next two pieces. The ensemble presented good musicianship throughout the program but this was compro-

mised by a lack of intensity on some of the pieces. The program was rescued midway through with the premiere of Schingh's *Son of Patchwork*, and the performance of an older work, *Emergent Design*.

Friday evening's concerts were both premieres, a tradition at FIMAV where a new work can find an audience at its most receptive. The duo of **Mikhail Alperin** (piano, melodica, voice) and **Arkady Shilkloper** (french horn, bugle, voice) performed in the large cathedral Eglise Ste-Victoire, giving an exceptional concert of first moody melodic tone settings reminiscent of early ECM recordings (not surprising since they are also signed to this company), then through the course of the evening, swinging in a hot, rhythmically exciting fashion. A wonderful mixture of folk themes, jazz and theatre.

The highlight of this year's FIMAV was the world premiere of **Renè Lussier's** *Le Tresor de la Langue*, performed on stage for the first time. A potent example of the succinct brilliance of the contemporary French scene, it was awarded in 1989 the prestigious Paul Gilson prize, an award granted by the Community of French Language Broadcasters for excellence in the field of contemporary tape composition. Live on stage, the ensemble created a joyous event for the festival. The composition explores themes of politics and culture en français, linking the music to the rhythmic nuances of taped voices, taken from interviews where the composer asked people on the streets in Quebec, "How important is it to speak French in

Quebec?" Mixed in the composition were tapes of key historical events in contemporary Quebec culture, notably DeGaulle's 1967 speech that proved a catalyst of political action, and the reading of the FLQ manifesto (from t.v.) a scant three years later. *Le Tresor de la Langue* reflected Lussier's intense commitment to the beauty of French language/culture, and gave him a forum to also demonstrate the high level of creative work that characterizes the current musique actuelle direction.

A feature of the FIMAV that was good for audiences and performers alike was the series of solo concerts staged first thing every day at the CEGEP stage, a small auditorium in the local high school. **Joan Labarbara's** set for solo voice and tapes was a good illustration of the American vocalist's wide-ranging conception and exceptional technique. The feature of her performance was a new work, *In the Dreamtime* where her use of tapes and voice together created a ritual-like soundscape, the politic of language/sound transformed into chant, an unravelling of the mystery. In a remark before the performance, Labarbara related the dreamtime piece to an Australian aboriginal ceremony, where the elders would gather to chant and have visionary experiences, to gain insight into the tribe's future. This meditative quality of the dream was fundamental to the context of listening, though unsettling for some audience members not sufficiently awake/relaxed at that hour. It was an engaging moment when a child in the audience began to respond to the sound

of a child's voice on the tape, creating yet another layer in the voice patterns.

The trio of **Michel Doneda** (soprano sax) **Daunik Lazro** (alto sax) and **Ninh Le Quan** (percussion) used a carefully defined sense of composition and counterpoint in their set. Alto and soprano playing in tight unison through their compositions were complimented by Ninh Le Quan's highly unusual use of percussion, often reminiscent of drumming for the Chinese opera production. At no time did the music miss the conventional bop-style drumming approach, Le Quan's dexterity and inventive use of a table-full of small percussives, foot floor-tom drums and cymbals filling the air. A memorable moment in the performance was Doneda's use of a snare drum as a resonating chamber for his soprano, the drum and horn together creating an intense chainsaw sound that pushed the limits of what this music can be.

The duo concert of **Dave Burrell** (piano) and **David Murray** (tenor sax & bass clarinet) was held in the Ste. Victoire Church, and was a transcendent experience for all in attendance that evening. The real music is naked, needing no introduction. Burrell, a member of the first wave of energy players in early sixties New York City, contributed several fine compositions to the program, soloing powerfully during the concert on the ballad *Daybreak* and selections from an opera setting of his own work. Murray's ability to play strongly from the heart of the music put the meaning behind the expression, "telling a story". The selection *Hope Scope* was a dazzling piece of multinote

high-register play, Murray constantly in motion, rocking the house down. The opposite side of this equation was shown in a performance of his piece, *Ballad for the Black Man*, his low register sound on tenor very evocative and warm. The spirit was moving in the room. Burrell first thunderous then reverent through the two pieces, *Avilla's* blissed-out blues (also from the opera) and a recent composition *Intuitivity*.

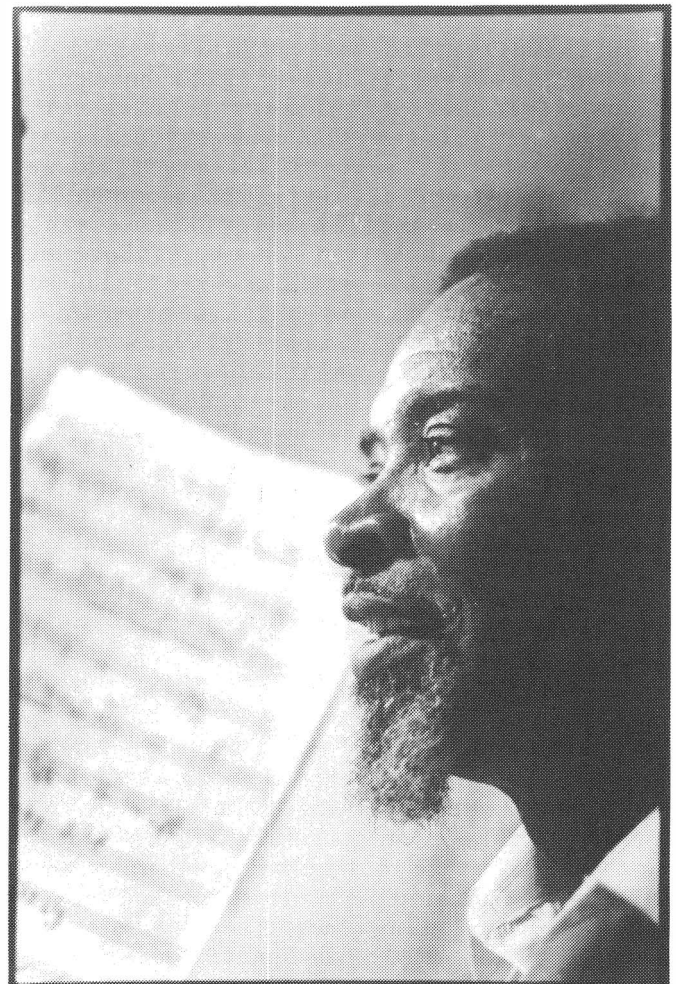
The centre piece of the Saturday evening performance was the long-awaited appearance of **Muhai Richard Abrams Octet**. Looking around the sold-out house, there were faces from all over the country, on edge anticipating this sound master. As the light dims and Festival director **Michel Levasseur** waited for the crowd to settle down, he could not resist smiling at the circus-like atmosphere in the Grand Cafe auditorium. With his introduction Levasseur summed up the feelings of many in the room that night: "Le père spiritual à musique noir American, Muhai Richard Abrams!" The octet featured a percussion and horn trio at the top of the set, with burning solos by tenor saxophonist **Marty Ehrlich** and percussionist **Ray Mantilla**. **Eddie Allen** on trumpet blew over a salsa groove that was strictly "in the pocket", leading into a vibes and horn theme. **Bob Debellis** distinguishing himself on alto saxophone. The audience took some time to warm up to the music, the groove so forceful and the harmonic materials thick with meaning. This complex and beautiful language was at first bewildering to the overflow house, perhaps they were only out to the festival for the one

show, le grand spectacle on Saturday night, but at a certain point, it happened, everyone connected to the pulse of the music. A long risk-taking solo from bassist **Bradley Jones** pushes into a deep percussive groove. It was instructive as well to see the cellular organization within the band. Piano trio, horn trio, percussion trio, piano vibraphone duo, and all possible groupings within the band functioning both together and as individuals. Abrams' own remarks from the program notes were the best insight for the audience; "As the past gets further in front and further behind at the same time, it makes me look in all directions at once to compose and

perform from my impressions". Ending the show with a long blues, the Octet left the room with the impression that they, the audience, had been on a long journey, and this was only the beginning of the next passage.

A late night performance of the ensemble **Justine** ended a long day of listening but the same CEGEP auditorium the next day at one o'clock was jammed for the solo concert by the German trombone virtuoso, **Konrad Bauer**. A brilliant technician and soulful artist, Bauer's set was truly a high point in the FIMAV weekend. Alternating between two microphones, one straight and the other treated

MUHAI RICHARD ABRAMS by Elena Carminati



with electronic delay, Bauer held the room for an hour and a half, with this performance to be issued later this year on the festival's VICTO record label.

A different form was explored in the evening concert of the British ensemble, the **Balanescu Quartet**, a young string quartet performing contemporary works by composers Michael Nyman and Gavin Bryers. Also included in the quartet's program for the evening church concert was an original score written by leader **Alexander Balanescu**, which contrasted nicely the simplistic pop medley arranged from the music of the German computer dance band, Kraftwerk. Evidently the pop leanings of Kronos quartet have been felt by this otherwise interesting ensemble.

Contemporary American composer/bandleader **Anthony Davis** was featured with his octet for the evening concert on Sunday, the most adventurous of the larger ensembles to perform at the festival. Davis went for an unusually orchestral setting of his works for this performance, the ensemble approximating a chamber ensemble. The unit featured all members admirably, showcasing **J.D.Parran** on a composed solo setting that silenced the audience, so rich was his tone. Operatic soprano vocalist **Cynthia Aaronson** turned peoples' heads with her delivery of the Ohulani Davis libretto, *Some Springs* which also featured the leader on piano evoking the work of Cecil Taylor in both his dedication of the piece and his solo that followed. A piece

written by percussionist **Gerry Hemingway** was premiered, the drummer conducting the mixed winds and string ensemble with a sure touch for his *Ghost of Reason*. Also featured in the generous program was Davis' composition *Lost Moon Sisters* with a libretto written by the American poet Diane DiPrima, whose text addressed the women left to cope with a world gone mad. The absence of a doublebass in the rhythm section was minimal with the octet neatly arranged; Aaronson and the woodwinds of J.D.Parran and Marty Ehrlich juxtaposed by the section of bassoonist **Janet Fryce**, violinist **Mark Feldman** and cellist **Tomas Ulrich**. Davis and Hemingway worked well together in a combination of piano and tuneable percussion on the introductory section of *Wayang #4*, part of a larger Davis composition influenced by the music of Bali and East Asia. The **Episteme** ensemble closed the concert with the second movement of Davis' suite, *MAPS* on the selection *Ghost Factory* with a duet of Hemingway and cellist Ulrich that was a good pre-Hallowe'en scare, ghost cries of bowed cymbals and the haunting string flavour carrying the audience out into the cold Quebec night.

The festival's closing day went by in a blur of sounds. The final solo recital in the CEGEP hall was contrabass virtuoso **Barry Guy** who for this performance alternated between a full-size doublebass and a smaller piccolo bass, tuned a fourth higher than the standard instrument and possessed of a sweet, singing tone. Guy quoted throughout his

performance from a text of Native Indian poetry, *The Remembered Earth*. His opening remark from this text was worth its weight in meaning for the audience and the performer on this last day of the festival: "A good chant grows with the singing. A good talk comes with a singing heart". Frenetic, powerful, mobile, Guy demonstrated imaginatively the resources of the instrument, travelling the entire range of its sonic capabilities, sliding harmonics and employing alarming technique on his beloved instrument. The centre-piece of his concert was a round of five (or six) compositions that mixed pre-planned technical studies, moved into and out of moods, from violence to serenity. The finale of his concert was both basses played at the same time with the use of percussion mallets vibrating between the strings of his instruments, though this simple description cannot capture the depth

of Guy's work. His music and poetry is one of affirmation, confirming his reputation as a master musician.

Short mentions should also be made of the following artists performing during the course of the festival. The wonderful Swiss woodwind player **Hans Koch** performing trio with **Martin Schutz** on cello/electronics and percussionist/composer **Fredy Studer**. Worth noting also were appearances by **Zeena Parkins** with a highly original ensemble for her premier *Ursa's Door*, a series of short tuneful pieces that struck a great balance between improvisation/song form and noise. My thanks to the artists that performed, and to the FIMAV festival staff, who were dedicated to the task of presenting this new LIVING MUSIC. Special thanks to FIMAV director Michel Levasseur and good luck for the 10th Anniversary. □

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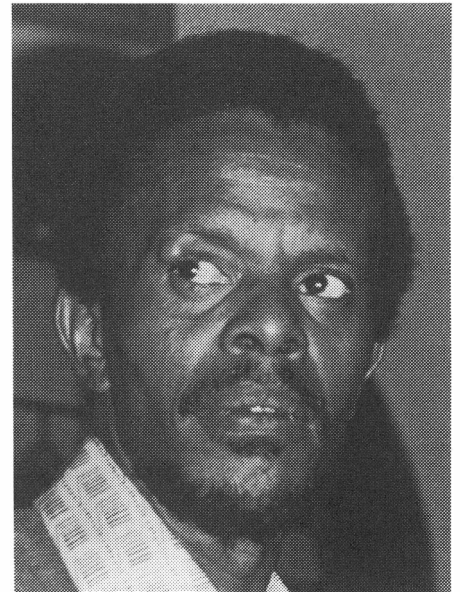
There is a line of reasoning about the current state of jazz that goes this way: Jazz is in a crisis situation. Despite the swelling of the ranks in its younger generation, and despite its record-company success with Wynton Marsalis, jazz may be fated to a use as a mood-setting device for grown-ups who might as well be at the movies or the theatre, or slipping coins into any other cultural charity box. Nowadays, any piece of art which is supposed to reach the public must be thoroughly market-tested. So it's been decided in boardrooms full of executives who probably have little understanding of jazz that it is either older people's music (cf. the rapidly increasing number of "tribute" concerts/albums for old musicians, and the coinage of the term "classical jazz") or young adults' make-out music (commercial pop-jazz, as heard on New York's radio station CD 101). As a consequence of jazz being shrink-wrapped and generally outmuscled in the marketplace, there's hardly any impetus left in the average American community to foster the notion that it is music for everybody, full of our very own hard-earned, legitimate art, and the rhythm and joy of living. As children are shoved away from all thoughtfully evolved jazz, one of our most important cultures is dying on the vine.

Recently, some of New York's professional concert producers put on a jazz concert for children at Carnegie Hall. They hired Geri Allen, Marcus Belgrave, and Ron Carter—all musicians perfectly capable of hypnotizing young listeners with their sureness of touch in every note—and then used their music, in the highlight of the concert, as a backdrop for a man in a Snoopy costume dancing across the stage. How could that have broken down any walls? The only way jazz is going to survive is if more people create jazz for their entire community in a way that's both non-exclusive and uncompromising—otherwise, everyone except those who can afford to pay \$25 to see sophisticated jazz musicians in nightclubs or at Carnegie Hall will think of jazz either as baby-food, or as depressing and outmoded death-bells.

Since there does seem to be something chic—at least in the abstract — about jazz lately, why doesn't someone do something about the problems while the iron is hot?

Enter the **Union of God's Musicians and Artists Ascension** (or UGMAA) of South-Central Los Angeles, and its pianist/leader, Horace Tapscott. Tapscott is 57, certainly too old to have a fuss made of him, and probably a bit too young to be lionized. But he is an extraordinary composer and musician, and it's surprising to learn that his highly personal, rather dark music is only a means to an end. His abiding interest is "community," a word you hear him repeating constantly in conversation. Along with the pianist Linda Hill and trombonist Lester Robertson, Tapscott founded UGMAA in 1961, after he had finished two years of touring with Lionel Hampton. The idea behind UGMAA, created with hardly a dime's worth of capital, was to get Los Angeles youths off the street and into activities which benefited the community. Naturally, playing music was one of the principal activities: Tapscott's magnet was and is his Pan-Afrikan People's Arkestra, a group that he has been conducting, supplying with compositions, and holding together from week to week since the beginning of the UGMAA. But also

AN ARTICLE
BY BEN RATLIFF



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK WEBER

HORACE TAPSCOTT

central to Tapscott's vision of a better world is the larger notion of preserving great African-American music, and setting up a system whereby creative musicians might be appreciated for their work—if not in profit terms, at least in terms of recording the music, keeping it in currency, and teaching it to the next generations.

Stylistically, Tapscott is the pianist most jazz enthusiasts don't talk about when they talk about the true post-Monk school, that strange, shadowy topiary garden which includes Andrew Hill, Mal Waldron and (arguably) Randy Weston, and whose practitioners make music with deep grooves, tart concision, and eclectic variation. The feeling evinced by hearing these pianists isn't sheer sweet content (e.g. Oscar Peterson or Tommy Flanagan), nor the sweaty euphoria of a successful visit to the analyst (Cecil Taylor, Marilyn Crispell). Rather, Tapscott and company offer a kind of left-of-centre, bittersweet, curious pleasure—the satisfaction of understanding an equation, or the recognition of a dry pun. Generally, Tapscott's music identifies itself by what's been left out—its crevices, its gullies, its negative space.

While Hill and Waldron could carry out their early musical ideas in the 1960s through well-conceived recordings (Hill's on Blue Note, Waldron's on Prestige), Tapscott was deeply involved in his L.A. community, far away from the recording scene. Thirty years later—Tapscott is now 57—he is still removed from the cycle of recording, touring, the musician's business grind. But he's continued to evolve, in a nearly total obscurity which he is more than partially responsible for, and which might soon come to an end. His first recording, *The Giant Is Awakened*, made in 1969, has just come back in an RCA Novus reissue (along with a 1969 album by the John Carter/Bobby Bradford Quartet, in *West Coast Hot*, (Novus 3107-2-N); and two new CDs on the Hat ART label, *The Dark Tree, Volumes 1 & 2* (hat ART CD 6053/6083)—recorded in 1989—show, startlingly, that he's one of jazz's most interesting con-

ceptualists and sharpest players. Seen in long view (at last), Tapscott is an interesting contradiction: his moody, uncompromising, oddly sculpted music often sounds at times as if it says “no,” but the total philosophy it works in the service of says “yes” unequivocally.

Tapscott was born in Houston, Texas on April 6, 1934, and he and his mother moved nine years later to Los Angeles. The Tapscotts lived within walking distance of Local 767, L.A.'s black musicians' union, and his mother's persistence in having him musically trained (her name was Mary Malone; she played stride piano, and led a trio in the early '20s in Houston), combined with the encouragement of local musicians like Gerald Wilson and Buddy Collette, led Tapscott to be involved in the Central Avenue scene's golden era by his mid-teens. But in 1951, when Tapscott was 17, two factors coming at about the same time dramatically altered the life of every black Los Angeles jazz musician. The first was that the Central Avenue scene evaporated in a quick flash. It was revealed in the press that white Hollywood stars were driving south from the movie studios to black nightclubs, where they might have heard in an average week the bands of Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Les Hite, or Lionel Hampton. Hollywood photojournalists soon made their own way to these clubs, and took pictures of movie stars like Ava Gardner, smiling and sitting in the laps of black jazzmen. The result, as it's often been written, was that the movie industry—terrified as usual of bad publicity which might arise from the mixing of races—set into motion a blitzkrieg of impromptu police raids and health-board condemnations of the Central Avenue nightclubs. But whoever the force behind them was, the raids worked; sealed off into a segregated outpost of the city, and almost totally politically disempowered, there was little that black Los Angeles musicians could do to fight Hollywood or city hall.

The second factor was the integration of the musicians' unions. The economic facts of the Los Angeles jazz world in the

late forties had been depressing: A white musician in L.A. could make a good living by writing, arranging, or playing music for film and TV, but these jobs were never offered to black musicians by virtue of the separation of the unions. Moreover, as the black multi-reedist and flautist Buddy Collette told Robert Gordon in *Jazz West Coast*, Local 767 “...was like a subsidiary—it wasn't supposed to be, but if a good job happened to come in to the black union, the president would have to call the white union to see if we could take it....Also our dues...were about half that of the white union.” Collette and Charles Mingus spearheaded and eventually won a three-year fight to integrate the unions, and with the formation of the single united Local 47, many black musicians could finally make a decent living—although their new dependency on studio work was even further to the detriment of L.A.'s creative music.

In the golden days before the Central Avenue crackdown, as Tapscott told me, “everybody was working....It was during the time when you could go to the theatre, and you'd see two movies, a cartoon, and a newsreel, and before all of that you could hear live bands! We grew up being used to that. It was a really colourful time at that time in Los Angeles, for the music, and the art—the whole culture scene, as a matter of fact, was rich. People were closer, they spoke to each other, they weren't afraid of each other. You could walk up and down Central, you know, and they were white *and* black. And that was during segregation! The racism won out in its way because the people who were perpetrating it had their hands on all the controls, you dig? So there was nothing much to do; it was all done so-called legally, you know, you could scream as much as you like, but it didn't work.”

I was talking to Tapscott over coffee in New York in September 1991, where he was in the middle of a week's engagement at the Village Vanguard. It was his first time in New York in ten years. His opening night at the Vanguard, the night

before our interview, was the first time he had been in that place for almost thirty years; he and his Los Angeles friend Lester Robertson were at the concert in November 1961 which produced the album *John Coltrane Live at the Village Vanguard*. "Yeah, me and Lester had to beg right after that—we didn't have a place to live, we was on 42nd Street, and Eric Dolphy, Trane, McCoy, and Elvin—between them, they didn't have five dollars. You know what I'm saying? But they wanted to help us, so we went and stayed with them." Rangy (about 6'4") and gently demure, wearing round sunglasses which didn't hide his eyes' wide-open expressiveness, Tapscott had an easy air and a country lilt to his voice, but the rawness of his "you know what I'm saying?" was in it

throughout our conversation. The effect was of an honest man who had just found out something so shattering that he had to constantly pause to comprehend it, even though some of what he was talking about happened over thirty years ago.

He continued his story: after finishing four years of service in the air force in 1957, he started to tour with Hampton, and his first cross-country trips both opened him up and profoundly disappointed him. He had begun to puzzle about how jazz could break out of its juke-joint purgatory, and have meaning for future generations. "I saw all these things happening down South with the band, what kind of music was being



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF HAT ART

accepted or even received in any kind of manner; it was one of those things, the Saturday night kind of attitude about the music, which some of these cats [in the Hampton band] worked so hard to put across. I went back home. I had a different thought about the music—I was raised in music when it was respected, and the ones who gave it out were respected and treated with, I guess, the religion people had for it. The only way I felt like I could get satisfied was to make a move toward preserving the music that black musicians, through the years, have died unknown for, and have contributed so much to this country musically for." Hence, UGMAA.

A short while after Tapscott started his

organization, it seemed as though the Arkestra's music might draw some attention. The country watched Watts explode in August of 1965, and the Arkestra was in the thick of it, working for the safety of the community, playing on the backs of flatbed trucks in the middle of the burning and rioting. At the same time, the spirit of self-sufficiency around the country was resulting in the formation of musician-run collective organizations in almost every major city, including Chicago's AACM, New York's JCOA, and the Detroit Artist's Workshop. In L.A., the Arkestra was hardly the only thing happening: John Carter and Bobby Bradford's band, for example held public rehearsals every week in the Studio Watts,

and the Watts Happening Coffee House presented regular concerts and poetry readings.

But Tapscott's Arkestra was developing a particularly strong cohesion through constant practice at local community centres. "The first years we would rehearse two or three times a week, in the evenings. Different cats in the group had different jobs at the time—some were working at schools, so we were able to get the schools at night to rehearse in. So we would rehearse three times a week, and Saturdays, in the afternoon. It was something that you would look forward to—you'd wake up in the morning knowing you were going to rehearsal some time that day. What did you want to do?"

HORACE TAPSCOTT

What did you want to bring to rehearsal that night? It was therapy, it was all kinds of things to everybody, to be able to go somewhere and expose certain things of yourself through music. We made performances happen every second Sunday. We did that for two or three years, and then we got another venue, a church, where we played every last Sunday of the month, and that went on for nine years. That's a lot of performances. In between, though, there'd be special things that would happen—like the UCLA Black Students' Union would hire us for different things. That's how we got into the schools; we got into the schools so much that I was asked to be a teacher at one of the schools, you know? So I thought, well, that'd be nice; it was outside of Los Angeles about sixty miles. That's when they started riots at the school, the students, so that I could get a job. I started a class in 1968 about the black experience in fine arts, in the country town, at that time, of Riverside.

“Our performances got to a point where we knew we had to stay there for so many years for people to get used to the fact that they had some place to go every last Sunday of the month. After a good five or six years, it started happening on a regular basis—people, that is, coming from as far as the San Fernando Valley. I'm talking about white families with their babies coming to Watts, into the so-called ghettos, where it was dangerous if you stuck your head out the window. But here they are with their babies, loose, and no police around; the police wasn't even hip to it, you dig? When they finally got hip to it, they wanted to mess with it, and we wouldn't allow that. And then the other preachers in the vicinity was getting jealous of this preacher who allowed us to use this church. So they got together to stop him from doing what he was doing. You know, everything was against us. And all we wanted to do was play music. So I knew how important it was for the music to be heard in this *righteous* fashion, and not just over a bunch of smoke, and beer, and cash registers, but a place where people can sit down and bring their babies and enjoy.”

Still, nobody outside of Los Angeles was made aware of Tapscott's Arkestra until 1969, when Bob Thiele's Flying Dutchman record label recorded Tapscott with a quintet which represented the core of his Arkestra. The result was Tapscott's first LP, *The Giant Is Awakened*. The year before, Tapscott had arranged, composed and conducted music for an album featuring (and under the name of) the brilliant L.A. altoist Sonny Criss, *Sonny's Dream (Birth of the New Cool)*. Both these records still have the feel of classics. *Giant* has a direct, foreboding sound and a raw Coltraneish strength, somewhat mitigated by Tapscott's mysterious coolness at the piano; it also bears the first recorded presence of Arthur Blythe's bright, hard alto saxophone lines. *Sonny's Dream* (Prestige 7576), recorded with a ten-piece ensemble including Tommy Flanagan on piano, is an indication of what Tapscott's fuller orchestrations sounded like, and includes some of his more masterful writing, including some rich, dynamic portraits-in-music: Tapscott's son, with girlfriend (*Sandy and Niles*); and Tapscott's grandmother (*The Golden Pearl*.) Neither record was reviewed in *Downbeat*, although *Giant* did get a rave from John Sinclair, the imprisoned head of the White Panther party, who at the time was writing record reviews from jail for *Jazz & Pop*. They soon went out of print. Despite the amount of state and federal money pumped in to L.A.'s arts programs after the riots, Tapscott's Arkestra—and the black Los Angeles creative jazz community as a whole—never got the attention it deserved.

As a result, in the 1970s, most Los Angeles players either went east (including Arkestra alumni Blythe, Butch Morris, and Azar Lawrence, as well as David Murray, Stanley Crouch, and Mark Dresser), or went into teaching (Bobby Bradford, John Carter). Not Tapscott, who prides himself on consistency: he kept the Arkestra together, although in 1980 it stopped giving public concerts. At the beginning of the 1980s, Tapscott and Tom Albach started Nimbus records, not only for the purpose of recording

Tapscott but to record other under recognized artists like Curtis Clark and Burton Green (as Tapscott says, “it's all done for the sake of preserving the music; not to be a bestseller, but for the sake of my grandchildren's grandchildren, you dig?”). Of his own creations for Nimbus, Tapscott recorded a series of solo recitals (*Tapscott Sessions, Volumes 1-6*), as well as a duo session with the drummer Everett Brown, Jr.; live trio concerts with bassist Roberto Miranda and drummer Sonship; and fascinating, wildly diverse, one-of-a-kind recordings by the 16-piece Arkestra itself, *Flight 17* and *Live at I.U.C.C. Volumes 1&2*.

He was also sufficiently recognized during the 80's within the national and international jazz scene to tour Europe several times, and to be booked into Hollywood night clubs. The two volumes of *The Dark Tree* capture him in December, 1989 at the Catalina Bar & Grill with a superb quartet—the slab-toned bassist Cecil McBee, the loose, natural drummer Andrew Cyrille, and the late John Carter (in his last recorded performance), who probably did more than anyone since Jimmy Hamilton for the clarinet's cause in jazz. This is the finest Tapscott on record. The structure of the album's title composition, a piano conga vamp with a woodwind counter-melody (an earlier version, with Arthur Blythe, is found on *West Coast Hot*), has been harmonically widened to make more room for Tapscott and Carter to root around in its depths. There's a version of *The Dark Tree* on each of the two volumes, so you're treated to almost forty minutes of everyone's fresh, reactive soloing, and none of it is wasted time. Spread over the two CDs are also several well-seasoned Tapscott tone poems—*A Dress For Renee* and *Nyja's Theme* (both portraits of Tapscott's daughters), *Sketches of Drunken Mary* (about a woman Tapscott knew in Houston who “stayed drunk all the time, and everybody accepted her”), *Lino's Pad* (“Lino, that's what we used to call Linda Hill. That was her house, guys would be in her pad all the time, rehearsing 24 hours a day”), and the aforementioned

Sandy and Niles. Finally, there are two compositions by other Arkestra members—altoist Michael Session's sly *Bavarian Mist*, and trombonist Thurman Green's mazelike *One For Lately*.

Tapscott likes themes that are just as much determined by rhythm as by melodic shape, and many of his pieces are in odd, insistent time signatures (7/4 in *Lino's Pad*, 8/4 in *The Dark Tree*, 6/8 in *Drunken Mary*). At the Vanguard, where many of us were watching him for the first time, he looked quite methodical, keeping rock-still unless at the peak of a crescendo; at which point he stomped his feet and reared his head back in sudden jerks, as if dodging a punch in the nose. He keeps the sustain pedal down unusually often, and from time to time gets great, ringing, two-handed crescendos, splaying his hands and grabbing great fistfuls of keys. But, like those other post-Monkians, he also has a fondness for the bare minimum, using his left hand as sparsely as possible for the length of an entire piece, and waiting with his right to come down every so often with a few solid, well-placed triads. Because Tapscott's piano-playing and composing vocabulary is so wide and varied, it's lucky that *The Dark Tree* is in two volumes; accordingly, if you go to see Tapscott and only stay for one set, you may only partially glimpse the huge amount of musical ground he covers.

Tapscott's near-future prospects aren't great, but they're somewhat better than before. The bad news is that he and UGMAA certainly haven't profited from the Los Angeles arts boom. The corporate cultural establishment produced by the explosion of commercial development in the 1980s (as well as the founding of the Getty trust, the nation's biggest arts fund) ignored the possibility of cultivating the riches in LA's own immensely troubled backyard. Instead, it subsidized the gleaming new museums in Westwood and Bunker Hill, and imported a lot of culture from New York and the world market. Although Tapscott's organization is still struggling on its home turf, his music is apparently

being feted elsewhere—besides the excellent Hat ART CDs and the surprising reappearance of the Flying Dutchman record, the entire Arkestra (rather than just a Tapscott trio) has finally been invited to play a European festival in 1992.

I asked Tapscott if the 80's—a greedy and violent decade by common consent, but particularly destructive for the gangland of south central L.A.—weren't completely crushing for someone like him, with such fair, Emersonian notions of community. Characteristically, he sees a yes in a mine-field of no. "But that's the best part about it. When the media isn't talking about what people are sharing in the community, there's always that group that's doing it. 'Cause they keep it quiet—they just do it! And all of a sudden, it's recognized by its results. Like, you keep walking through this community, you don't see no more graffiti for two or three weeks, you say 'Hey, what happened here? I'm so used to seeing graffiti here! I don't like it, but I'm so used to seeing it! What happened? I didn't read about this, I didn't see it on television; nobody told me about this as the first thing they said.' But it's *happening*." □

REFERENCES

Horace Tapscott's *Hat ART* and *Nimbus* recordings are available via North Country distributors, Cadence Building, Redwood NY 13679.

Good references on L.A.'s Central Avenue days can be found in Robert Gordon's *Jazz West Coast* (London: Quartet Books, 1986), and Hampton Hawes' autobiography *Raise Up Off Me* (Da Capo, 1979); a fascinating new tome on the modern cultural and economic history of Los Angeles is Mike Davis's *City of Quartz* (London and New York: Verso, 1990).

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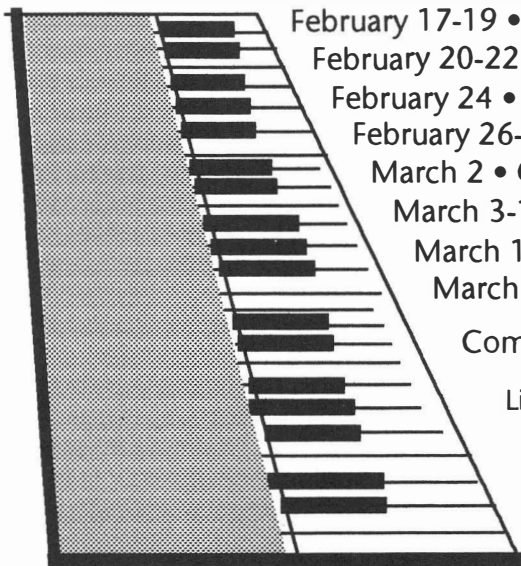
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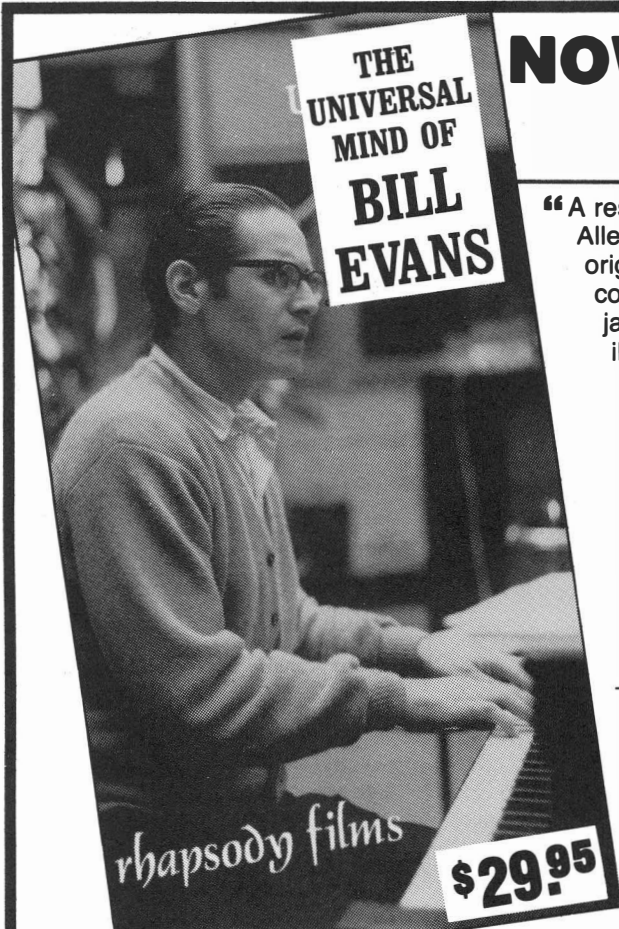
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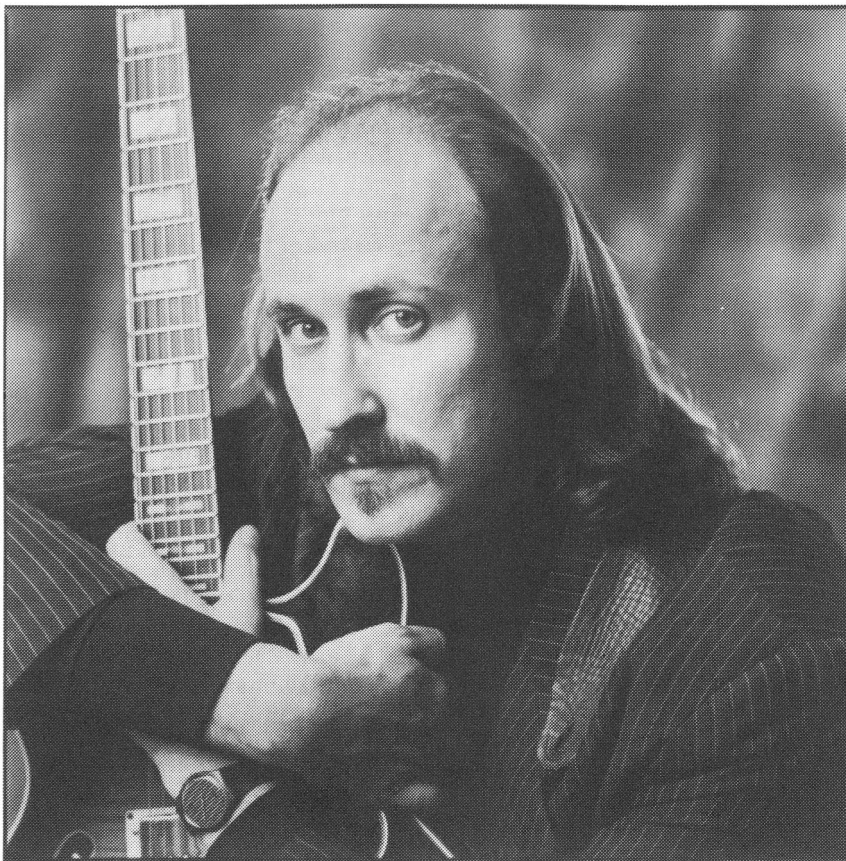
CANADIAN NOTES

A NEWS COLUMN BY JOHN NORRIS

The US Congress has passed legislation to remove the controversial visa restrictions on foreign entertainers. Basically, it means the system will revert to how it was before. Arts groups, concert promoters and artists are all relieved that this situation has been resolved satisfactorily.

Back home in Canada the recent news from the **Canadian Broadcasting Corporation** does not bode well for the arts. In one of their regular purges the CBC has announced it is totally revamping its "popular" FM radio programming. A terse announcement in the Toronto Star reported that *Easy Street* and *The Entertainers* were among several long running programs which will disappear early in 1992. While nothing specific has been announced about their replacements it was suggested that the programming will be more contemporary, in line with what the public expect in this day and age.

No one at the CBC seems to know what kind of programs will actually go on the air. The date for the final *Easy Street* show has already been pushed back because there isn't a replacement program ready. It does seem likely that the programming will be moving into the contemporary popular music world, thus squeezing even smaller the outlets for Canada's creative artists in the jazz field.



JOHN SCOFIELD PHOTOGRAPH BY DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Historically this is nothing new. The successive purges since the 1960s have made the CBC less and less of an innovative voice in both radio and television. The root of the problem is that creative control has gradually shifted from the creative imagination of producers into the hands of administrators whose expertise in matters artistic is usually minimal.

The CBC was responsible for the development of many artists whose continuing contributions have kept Canada's international musical profile at a high level. But this opportunity is not available to today's generation of performers. A small radio station like **CJRT-FM**, for instance, pro-

grams many more hours of live performances of Canadian musicians in the jazz field than can be found on the CBC. It's a total reverse of what used to be a regular part of the corporation's programming.

Perhaps, too, it's time to remind everyone that CBC television in the 1960s was featuring such then unfamiliar names as **Charles Mingus**, Bob Dylan and the **Staple Singers** as well as regularly featuring innovative programs by major figures like Duke Ellington and Canadians **Ron Collier**, **Phil Nimmons** and Oscar Peterson.

Today it is a major struggle to get even a small segment of such music onto a variety

show let alone a complete program. The contrast between the pathetic attitude of the CBC and the state-funded television networks in Europe is staggering. It is common European practice to televise large segments of most jazz festivals and much of the same music is also heard on the radio.

Our government seems determined to downscale the financial viability of the CBC but the corporation seems unable or unwilling to eliminate the weight of its administrative umbrella.

Ultimately it is lessening the sense of nationhood as the country's citizens have fewer and fewer opportunities to enjoy the diverse artistic statements by its regional performers.

TORONTO

The guitar and vibraharp were prominently showcased recently in Toronto. **John Scofield's** contemporary vision of the instrument attracted a lot of listeners at the Bermuda Onion where his hip New York band included saxophonist Joe Lovano. A different, and historically richer, view of the guitar was presented by **Bucky Pizzarelli** and **Howard Alden** at their one night concert at the Montreal Jazz Club. This music was the antithesis of what passes muster today. Their delicate, yet powerful interaction was as close as you could get to acoustic music from the

NEWS • BOOKS • RECORDINGS

electric guitar. The subtlety of their harmonic and rhythmic explorations took your breath away. There were tunes designed to amaze the listener such as a two-guitar rendition of Charlie Christian's solo flight where Pizzarelli's 7-stringed instrument was the ensemble behind Alden's solo lines, but for the most part their performance was an understated exploration of the music's rich guitar lineage. A hushed audience was held spellbound throughout this unique event.

Milt Jackson, the master of the modern vibraharp was in town for four nights at the Bermuda Onion with pianist Mike LeDonne, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Kenny Washington. The repertoire was an adroit mix of jazz originals and standards played with seamless ease by the veteran artist. Much of the heat emanated from pianist LeDonne who managed to ignore the deteriorating condition of the piano.

George's Spaghetti House had already showcased **Don Thompson's** vibraphone playing with the same musicians who grace his Jazz Alliance recording of *Winter Mist*. Then, hard on the heels of Milt Jackson's foray into Toronto, was an opportunity to hear a new vibraphone voice, **Stefan Bauer**. The German musician, now resident in Winnipeg, has exceptional control of the four mallet approach while his unique amplification of the instrument gives it a distinctive sound. His unison lines with pianist **Bernie Senensky** (whose gig it was) was sometimes eerie in its perfection. Bassist Neil Swainson and drummer Barry Romberg were an important part of a quartet which executed Senensky's very rhythmic originals with considerable flair.

Baritone saxophonist **Nick Brignola** was in town for two nights at the Bermuda Onion with **Del Dako's** quartet. It was a rare opportunity to hear

one of the music's master musicians at work. There's always an uncertainty about these kinds of gigs where a star musician sits in with an organized group. The musicians made the transitions necessary for it to work quite smoothly and there were some outstanding solo moments from Brignola while the two-baritone sound created by the horn players was an intriguing variant on the more familiar version of the same idea created by tenor saxophonists.

Other highlights of the fall season included **Don Pullen's** week at the Bermuda Onion with Santi Debriano and Cindy Blackman and the always dynamic **Betty Carter**. The spirit of Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk has hung heavy over the walls of the Montreal Jazz Club with outstanding musical excursions by both **Barry Harris** and **Ronnie Matthews**. A rare Toronto appearance by legendary trumpeter Doc Che-

sound to it, perhaps the result of nine weeks on the road. Bassist Christian McBride and drummer Carl Allen helped create a unified feel to Green's skilful reworking of the jazz piano tradition. The tightness of the arrangements hinted at, but didn't duplicate, the feeling created in Horace Silver's early trio performances. It was a satisfying sound.

A month-long series of jazz presentations at Crickets (180 Bloor Street West) in November featured groups led by Bob McLaren, Brian Dickenson, Pat LaBarbara, Steve Wallace and Kirk MacDonald. . . Hemispheres presented a program of new works at The Music Gallery on November 22. . . The inaugural concert by students of the University of Toronto's new Jazz Ensembles Degree program took place December 7 at the Edward Johnson Building. . . The fifth annual Women's Blues Revue took place November 22 at The Opera House. . . The termination of John Nelson's long running jazz program on CING-FM is another victim of the CRTC's policy changes.

Junior Mance gave balance to the club's presentations.

Benny Green's Trio was at the Senator for a week in mid-November. The music had a settled

For the sixth consecutive year James Pett has produced the series Jazz at A.G.O. in the Walker Court Gallery of the Art Gallery of Ontario. Running four evenings in February (5, 12, 19, 26), the series featured Bob Fenton, Michel Ratte, James Pett and Jean Derome.

ONTARIO

Guitarist **Ed Bickert** was heard in concert at **Peterborough** on December 1 in a quartet setting with Guido Basso, Neil Swainson and Barry Elmes.

PHOTOGRAPH OF HOWARD ALDEN & BUCKY PIZZARELLI BY JOHN AYRISS



The concert, for the Kawartha Jazz Society, was part of their fund raising activities designed to help them acquire a concert grand piano.

The following night Bickert was in **Hamilton** for a concert at St. C's with tenor saxophonist Rick Wilkins and bassist Pat Collins.

Tenor saxophonist Franz Jackson was the guest soloist with Chuck Robinette's Quintet November 30 at the **Wind- sor Art Gallery**.

WESTERN CANADA

The **Westcan Jazz Association** is now a federally incorporated non profit society with Winnipeg Jazz Inc joining the consortium. Festival dates for 1992 are as follows: **Winnipeg**—June 1 - 7, **Victoria/Vancouver**—June 19 - 28, **Calgary**—June 24 - July 1, **Saskatoon**—June 26 - July 4, **Edmonton**—June 26 - July 5.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

The **Vinny Golia Sextet** was at Vancouver's Glass Slipper December 1 and 2. Joe Pass is a January visitor at the Robson Square Theatre and tickets are already on sale for the **Sonny Rollins** concert at Vancouver East Cultural Centre on March 15.

BOOKS & RECORDINGS

Downright Upright is a fascinating history of the Canadian piano industry. The book published by Natural Heritage / Natural History Inc. (P.O. Box 69, Station H, Toronto, Ontario M4C 5H7), documents the growth and eventual decline of the piano makers of Canada, which include such well known brands as Heintzman, Bell and

Sherlock-Manning. John Arpin performed on a vintage Nordheimer grand at the book's official launch in the Victorian mansion of George Brown in Toronto on December 10.

Denon Canada launched their reissue program of classics from the Savoy catalogue with a party at the Silver Rail in Toronto, the bar where **Charlie Parker** hung out during the Massey Hall concert in 1953. Denon has reissued forty titles from the original Savoy LP catalogue. The new reissues are facsimiles of the original LPs rather than being newly assembled packages of the material. The playing time is short but the cost of each CD is in line with the amount of music offered.

Justin Time Records has compiled a CD of performances by pianist **Bill King**. *The Night Passage Years* also features Pat LaBarbara, Dave Young and Joe LaBarbara. . . The same label has issued a solo recording by **Paul Bley** titled *Changing Hands* and the **Ed Thigpen's Trio** recording of *Mr. Taste* with Tony Purrone and Mads Vinding. . . New from Victo is *Oh Moscow* featuring the music of Lindsay Cooper with lyrics by Sally Potter. . . Trumpeter Bobby Harriott has been fronting an eight piece band which plays for dancing at the Royal York Hotel. The arrangements work well and give the ensemble a bigger sound than its instrumentation would suggest. There are jazz flavoured solos in their cassette recording which will appeal to big band fans from the Swing Era. I imagine it is on sale at the hotel. □

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FMP CD 30
OVERLAPPING HANDS:
EIGHT SEGMENTS
 CRISPELL/SCHWEIZER

Marilyn Crispell-p
 Irène Schweizer-p



MARILYN CRISPELL & IRÈNE SCHWEIZER
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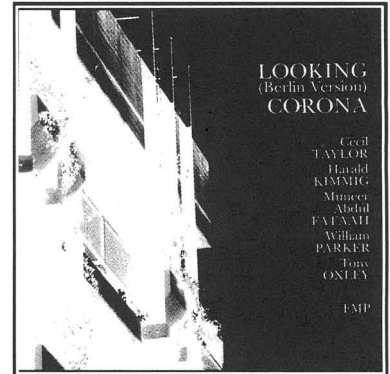


FMP CD 21
DUOS
 EUROPA · AMERICA · JAPAN
 PETER KOWALD
 with

Joëlle Léandre-b, voc,
 Seizan Matsuda-shakuhachi
 Evan Parker-ss, Diamanda Galas-voc
 Conrad Bauer-tb, Tom Cora-cello
 Andrew Cyrille-dr, voc,
 Irène Schweizer-p
 Akira Sakata-as, Masahiko Kono-tb
 Peter Brötzmann-ts, Tadao Sawai-koto
 Derek Bailey-g, Floros Floridis-cl
 Han Bennink-dr, Jeanne Lee-voc
 Keiki Midorikawa-cello,
 Junko Handa-biwa, voc
 Danny Davis-as

FMP CD 31
LOOKING (Berlin Version)
 CORONA
 CORONA

Cecil Taylor-p
 Harald Kimmig-viol
 Muneer Abdul Fataah-cello
 William Parker-b
 Tony Oxley-dr



LOOKING
 (Berlin Version)
 CORONA

Cecil
 TAYLOR
 Harald
 KIMMIG
 Muneer
 ABDUL
 FATAAH
 William
 PARKER
 Tony
 OXLEY

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FMP CD 23
SMOKE
 SCHLIPPENBACH/MURRAY

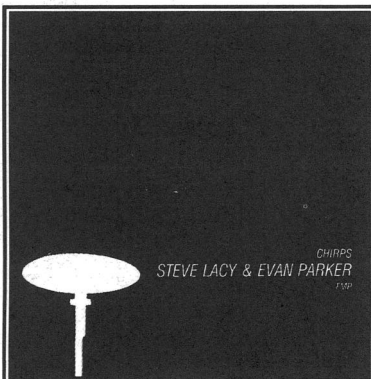
Alexander von Schlippenbach-p
 Sunny Murray-dr

FMP CD 33
X-COMMUNICATION
 X-COMMUNICATION

J. A. Deane-tb, electronics
 Shelley Hirsch-voc
 Jason Hwang-viol
 Hans Koch-reeds
 Paul Lovens-dr, perc
 Butch Morris-c
 Hans Reichel-g, daxophone
 Martin Schütz-cello



X-Communication

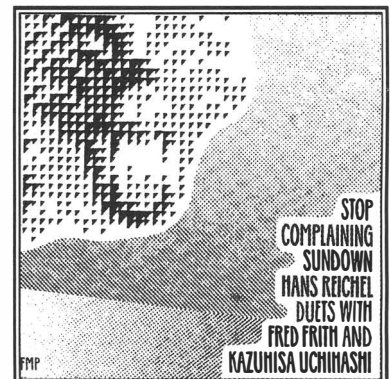


FMP CD 29
CHIRPS
 LACY/PARKER

Steve Lacy-ss
 Evan Parker-ss

FMP CD 36
STOP COMPLAINING · SUNDOWN
 HANS REICHEL
 DUETS with
 FRED FRITH & KAZUHISA UCHIHASHI

Fred Frith-g, voc
 Hans Reichel-g, daxophone
 Kazuhisa Uchihashi-g



STOP
 COMPLAINING
 SUNDOWN
 HANS REICHEL
 DUETS WITH
 FRED FRITH AND
 KAZUHISA UCHIHASHI

SIX JAZZ SAMPLERS

REVIEWED BY
PAUL BAKER

MANY NEW JAZZ RELEASES in the shops are reissues of decades old material in CD format. Some are "samplers," which provide a slice-of-life of an artist's career. Samplers prove valuable for many people: those young enough not to have heard the music the first time it was released, those who have little access to live local jazz, and those who have been exposed to only a few styles that developed over the last 40 years.

Not to mention collectors wishing to replace worn vinyl with theoretically indestructible kryptonite CDs.

Blue Note Records, among others, continues to reissue some "samplers" of classic jazz recordings of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Three Blue Note CDs represent slices of the careers of Sonny Rollins, Art Blakey and Horace Silver. With qualifications noted below, they would provide good starting points for anyone not well acquainted with jazz of the 1950s and 1960s. They all contain classic material, but the claim that they are "the best of" must be seen in perspective.

The Best of Sonny Rollins (Blue Note CDP 7 93203 2) represents only eight months of the Titan's work over 1956/1957. This means you're not getting any material from his dates on competing labels such as Prestige, Riverside, RCA, Impulse, or Milestone (such as the 1954 *Sonny Rollins Quartet*, the 1955 *Work Time*, 1956 *Tenor Madness*, 1957's *The Sound of Sonny*, 1958's *The Freedom Suite*, 1962's *The Bridge*; 1965's *Sonny Rollins on Impulse*, 1966's *East Broadway Run Down*, 1972's *Sonny Rollins' Next Album* through *Sunny Days, Starry Nights* (1984), etc. etc. Surely there's some "best of" material on these as well.

But to the disc at hand. Rollins' sharp edged tone complements the rich, melodic trombone of J.J. Johnson on three tunes including *Why Don't I?* It spurs on Horace Silver and Thelonious Monk, both of whom solo on Monk's tune *Misterioso*,



PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL SMITH

and it inspires pianist Wynton Kelly on a ballad that never quite made it to the Top 10 of the standard classics list: *How Are Things In Glocca Morra?*

Bassist Paul Chambers plays horn-like solos showing that he was capable of playing much more melodically than the regimented four-beat time-keeping role generally allowed.

The fidelity of these takes suffers from the limitations of the technology available at the time. All tunes are mono, except *Tune up*. The studio sounds intimate and warm, but rather dead. The fidelity of the Village Vanguard sessions, recorded on mediocre equipment, leaves a lot to be desired. Elvin's drums sound like cardboard boxes.

The Best of Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers (Blue Note CDP 2 93205 7), recorded 1958-61, offers many gems. But the younger buyer should also be aware of Blakey's work on the Columbia, Fontana, Limelight, Catalyst, and Timeless labels (titles such as *Drum Suite* (1956-57), *Des Femmes Disparaissent* (1958), *Buttcorn Lady* (1966), *Jazz Messengers '70*, *Album of the Year* (1981) etc. etc.).

The Blue Note sampler includes now-classic tunes written by pianist Bobby Timmons and saxophonist Benny Golson. During *Moanin'* and *Dat Dere*, gems of the "soul jazz" style, Timmons uses dynamic contrasts to create musical drama. Trumpeter Lee Morgan and saxophonist Wayne Shorter ride over the chord changes with ease.

During Golson's *Blues March* Blakey plays roll-offs and aggressive march cadences that show off his thunderous style and serve as structural devices to separate horn solos.

Wayne Shorter's *Free For All*, 11 minutes of really aggressive blowing, was recorded in 1964, just as the Beatles were invading the U.S.

Fortunately, Blakey's drums sound better on this recording than Elvin's on the Rollins set. And the newcomer to jazz will hear Blakey's version of "hard bop," "funky jazz" or "soul jazz," as you wish, played by star pupils in the Blakey school of music which incubated talents such as Wayne Shorter, Freddie Hubbard, Cedar Walton, Curtis Fuller and Wynton Marsalis.

Blakey also plays on **The Best of Horace Silver** (Blue Note CDP 7 9114 2), recorded 1953 through 1959. The sampler includes Silver classics *Opus De Funk*, *Doodlin'*, *Room 608*, *The Preacher*, *Senor Blues*, *Peace*, and *Sister Sadie*.

Like Rollins and Blakey, Silver plays with all-star lineups, including trumpeters Kenny Dorham, Donald Byrd, Art Farmer and Blue Mitchell, drummers Louis Hayes and Blakey and saxophonists Hank Mobley and Junior Cook.

Of the three Blue Note samplers reviewed here, the Silver set comes closest to truly being a "best of" collection, both because it represents at least a six year slice of Silver's long career and because Silver recorded almost exclusively for Blue Note.

But again, you get nothing more recent than 1959 which leaves out fine stuff from the albums *Song for My Father* (1964), *The Cape Verdean Blues* (1965), *Silver 'n' Brass* (1975), *Silver 'n' Wood* (1976), etc. etc.

Silver became popular in part because he

kept his music relatively simple. It communicates. He often limits himself to simple chord changes (the gospelly *The Preacher*) and makes much use of 12-bar blues form (on no fewer than seven tunes on this CD). *Got Rhythm* chord changes underlie two tunes, and the remainder are simple AABA or ABAB forms.

To add variety, Silver often exploits dynamic contrasts on tunes such as *Senor Blues* or programs in a counter-melody for the horns to play during the next to last chorus.

compress my remarks of admiration for this music.

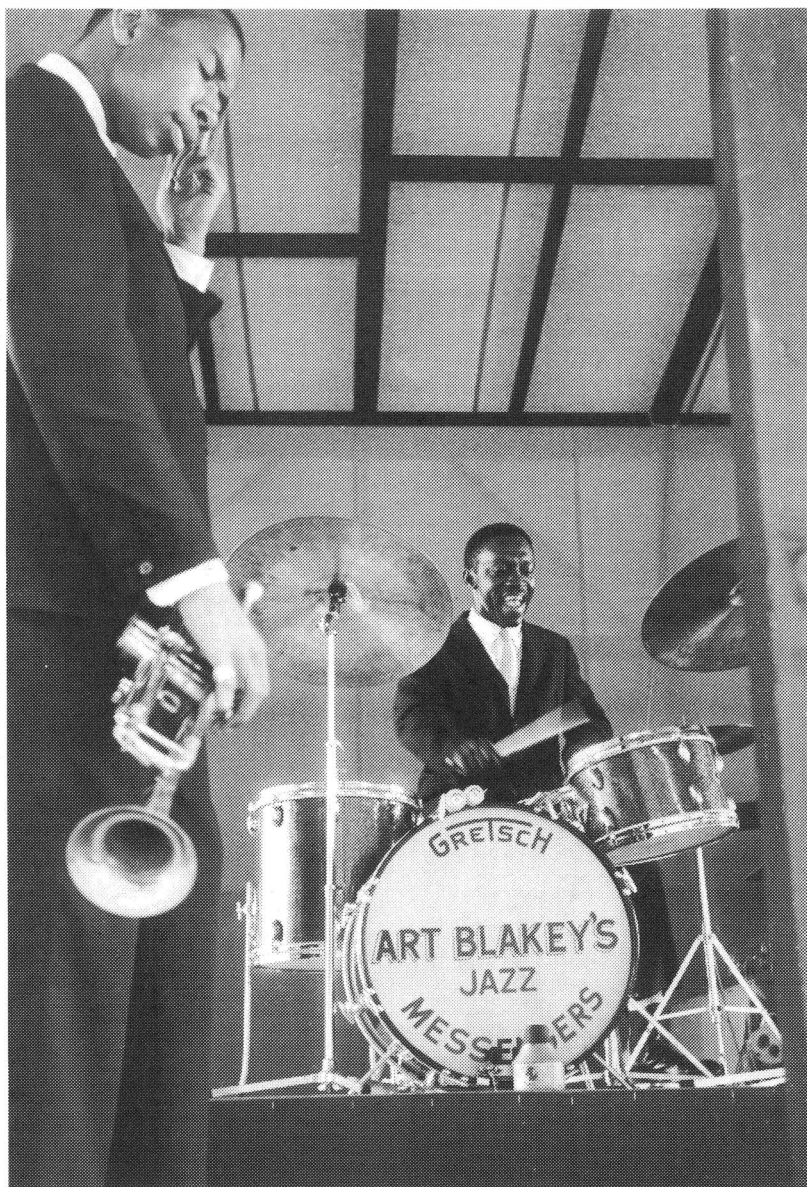
Paul Plimley, a 1989 critic's choice at the Vancouver and Victoriaville festivals, cites as influences Debussy, Boulez, Stockhausen, Cecil Taylor, and Duke Ellington. His piece, *The Future is Now* implies its own evolution of styles through its varied movements and metrical changes.

Drummer and graphic artist **Gregg Simpson** (who painted the cover art for the CD package) manages a wry juxtapo-

The Rollins, Blakey, and Silver bands sometimes functioned as co-ops, in a way, with the fertile interchange of ideas. Even today, one finds music co-ops and collectives that help musicians develop their compositions and present them to the public.

A group of Vancouver composers and improvisers including Paul Plimley and Gregg Simpson founded the New Orchestra Workshop in 1977. The New Orchestra Workshop's **The Future is Now** (9 Winds NWCD 0131) provides a good overview of the Vancouver scene, according to a knowledgeable source. So if you find it somewhat difficult to keep up with the Canadian scene, you'll appreciate this sampler.

The five ensembles represented here consist of Workshop members plus a cross-section of Vancouver improvisers, the liner notes say. Because of space limitations I must ruthlessly



sition of Scottish bagpipes and slide blues guitar on *Harmologic Hilander*. Its Ornette-like repeated riffs and droning march rhythm suggest a Scottish bagpiper turned slide-guitar blues musician taking Hendrix-like solos.

Vocalist Kate Hammett-Vaughan and associates, who bill themselves as **Turnaround**, produce engaging interplay in *Departure*, a ballad not of melodies as much as of bursts of electronics, atonal melodies, and echoey background tones. Lion roars enthusiastically echo Kate's vocalizations.

Unity lives up to his name with a tight reading of *Lookout*. Reminds me a bit of Old & New Dreams. Bassist Paul Blaney plays a repetitive, percussive vamp under a free tenor solo by Graham Ord; they're joined by Daniel Lapp, trumpet and violin, and Roger Baird, drums.

Lunar Adventures' boppish *Son of Styp-todisc* modulates from a complex head line into a *Silent Way*-ish lyrical saxophone improvisation by Coat Cooke. Gregg Simpson, guitarist Ron Samworth, and bassist Clyde Reed round out the band.

Clyde Reed also plays in **Chief Feature** along with tenor player Bruce Freedman, Claude Ranger (the angry drummer who hates drummers), and trumpeter Bill Clark. Their Tibetan *Tears of Joy & Sadness* makes thoughtful use of mood and instrumentation.

Dix Improvisations presents another varied group of performers (Victo CD 09), a unique roster of artists who performed at Victoriaville's 7th International Festival of Music Actuelle, October 6-9, 1989.

My well-placed Canadian sources assure me that **Dix Improvisations** faithfully represents the style of this most important festival, the only one of its kind in North America.

LaDonna Smith and **Davey Williams** come from Alabama, but not with a banjo

on the knee. Their *Phosphorescent Camouflage* pits electric violin and electric guitar against urgent vocalizations and *Nightbird Shadow Blue*, suggests a warped and twisted Howlin' Wolf.

The scarecrow-like **Hans Reichl**, known for his poker-faced performances and his home-built instruments, creates a *North-ern monologue (Green version)* on a "stick" guitar. The pretty, harp like tones sing out over an ominous rumbling and create gentle wells and waves. The *Blue version* employs electric guitar for sustained, cathedral-like tones over the chordal progressions of a rock ballad.

The First and last feeling, a rather dramatic piece, rises and falls in volume and intensity as **Paul Plimley**'s piano jousts and collides with **Lisle Ellis**'s scurrying arco bass. Plimley hits the piano strings with sticks, creating tension that resolves in a long decaying tone.

The **New Winds** trio produces a clear, transparent sound as clarinetist J.D. Parran, altoist Ned Rothenberg, and flutist Robert Dick play various roles on *Power Lines* including high multiphonics and a sustained tone scream.

Parran and **Rothenberg** pair up on altos up for *Mookie*, exploiting high and low extremes as they bob, duck and weave around each other. Rothenberg growls out a seven-minute solo of circular breathing for *Crunchtime* with Rahsaan-like intensity and spinning pinwheels.


A trio of **Maggie Nicols**, voice, **Lindsay Cooper**, bassoon and saxophones and **Irene Schweizer**, piano, energetically purge the collective poison in their souls. Nicols varies her vocal texture from silky to scratchy and the sax mimics her.

Buell Neidlinger's - **Rear View Mirror** (K2B2 Records 2969) provides a scrapbook summary of his varied career, which has included stints with Cecil Taylor, T. Monk, the Boston and Houston Symphony Orchestras, the New York Philharmonic (at age 12), Billie Holiday, Ben Webster, Frank Zappa, Jean Luc Ponty

and a bluegrass group. The ten-year-old material on this disc represents four recordings.

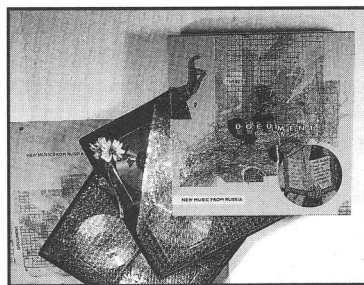
Flowers, *Little Rootie Tootie*, *Bluejerk* and *Blues in White* represent his more-or-less "free jazz" talents. Buell's bass tone reminds me sometimes of Charlie Haden's, yet he's always in motion, from legato to percussive, from pushy to relaxed, as mood dictates. Marty Krystall plays sharp-edged as Dewey Redman on *Blues in White* a slow 12-bar blues.

Crepuscule, *Jackie-ing*, and *Locomotive*, pay homage to his tenure with Monk, and he recalls his bluegrass band, Buellgrass, with readings of *Stardust*, *Jumpin Punkins*, and *Happy Go Lucky Local*. Peter Ivers is a hot mandolin player. □



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APPLE SOURCE

New York Notes By Kevin Whitehead

PHOTOGRAPH OF TIM BERNE BY GERARD FUTRICK



Ground down by years of hype for young neo-conservatives, ground out by hacks and dupes who accept their vision of jazz without innovation, and abetted by record companies who'll sign up anyone under 25 who can run changes, play the melody of a ballad and pick out a suit at Barney's, New York's new music community seems a little dispirited nowadays. The stereotype: the forward-looking under-40 musicians play for a percentage of the door at the Knitting Factory the two times a year they can land a gig there, making their real money on bi-annual European tours. They record for European labels either handled in North America by distributors unknown to retail buyers, or distributed by major labels whose marketing staffs hate the music.

But of course players keep at it, and somehow the music moves ahead. There are still places to play. In recent months, the *New Music Cafe* at Canal and West Broadway has become the KnitFac's overflow venue. Since the club on Houston St. (five years old soon) can only book so many bands so often, NMC attracts musicians just by keeping its doors open—even if they're still playing for the cover. It has yet to attract a hardcore audience—it's more a collegiate watering hole—but as the Knit and the musicians know, not giving up is how you succeed.

Last time I was there, saxophonist **Tim Berne** was playing. Makes sense: he's one of the most enterprising musicians on the scene. On December 7, he appeared with *Lowball*, one of three co-op trios Tim works with. (The others are *Loose Cannon*, with bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Jeff Hirshfield, and *Miniature*, with cellist Hank Roberts and Joey Baron on drums.) *Lowball* has guitarist Allan Jaffe (who, by being on the road with Maceo Parker when Maceo's old boss drafted his band for a pay-per-view special, got to be the only Connecticut-vanguard vet to gig with James Brown) and Tom Rainey, who's quietly established himself as one of the

most precise, tasteful, authoritative and unshowy drummers in New York, even if he is famous for never practicing. What's nice about these trios is that no two are alike; *Loose Cannon* is for blowing and bashing, giving Berne a chance to develop his loud and stompy baritone, which contrasts with his slippery alto (you can still hear the influence of his old teacher Julius Hemphill). *Lowball* can be raucous too, but it's a highwire balancing act, where the perception of who's "soloing" may depend on the most subtle nuances. Berne's feeling for odd and/or submerged structures—maybe influenced by his first saxophone teacher, Anthony Braxton—helps explain why Formanek drafted him for the saxophone chair in his quirky quintet *Wide Open Spaces* (which just recorded its second album), why drummer Phil Haynes asked him to produce the sophomore disc by his 4 Horns & What?, and why he's playing in Reggie Workman's new septet. Even so, neither records nor the local or national press give you a clue to the central place Berne has come to hold on the downtown scene.

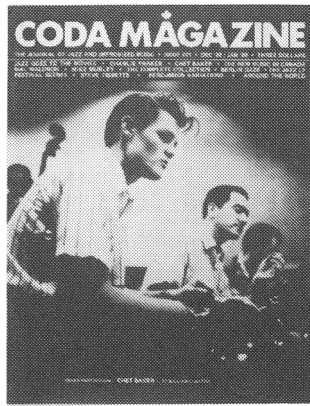
Times being hard for the adventurous, it's no surprise improvisers are branching out into other fields. On December 2 at Merkin Hall, the remarkable Swiss drummer **Fritz Hauser**—an amazing technician who infuses everything he plays with real soul—played North American premieres of ten pieces he commissioned for his compact, travel-ready trap set. Among the four outstanding pieces were Joey Baron's *Fritz*—which called upon Hauser to make as much a racket as possible at strategic points in the score—and Swiss pianist Stephan Grieder's *Passage*, which exploited Fritz's ability to coax uncommonly rich colours and bass tones from his cymbals. (Hauser's the most timbre-conscious drummer I know.) Fritz asked jazz composer Mani Planzer to write a piece after he'd banished uncouth drummers from his own group. Planzer's "aire" cleverly manoeuvred Hauser away from his kit; it ended with him 20-feet from his kit, whirling noise makers around his head. And John Cage's *One 4* confirmed that his graphically-scored, open-ended pieces are exactly as good as their interpreters. Consisting entirely of very long (usually

soft) and very short (usually loud) sounds played on cymbals—most of which Hauser had covered with a sheet, which gave the piece a look as eerie as its sound—it was as organic if forbidding as an unidentified mushroom: a coldly beautiful, haunting work.

Other memorable gigs lately skirted the boundaries of jazz. At Roulette November 24, ex-ROVA saxophonist/flutist **Andrew Voigt** collaborated with **Ed Herrmann**, whose no-keyboard electronics set-up looked like an old telephone switchboard—wires everywhere—and whose style harked back to the glory days of abstract electronic music, the '60s. At the Kitchen the night before, turntable whiz **David Shea** presented a program including a long improvised piece based on Sam Fuller's film *Shock Corridor*, with downtown all-stars like trombonist **Jim Staley**, harpist **Zeena Parkins** and pianist **Anthony Coleman**. But the most satisfying segment was Shea's solo for three turntables, as he spun and scratched ethnic records from around the world into a multi-cultural stew. It was controlled improvisation, but it wasn't what you'd call jazz.

Still, you never know. Anthony Coleman is a leading downtown composer, but at a December party for members at Roulette, he sat down and played a medley of five Jelly Roll Morton tunes, and played them very well. Which goes to show a smart genre-buster knows his roots. And then maybe the neo-con era is ending anyway—on Pearl Harbor Day the New York Post's gossip column trashed the more-arrogant-than-talented Harry Connick, Jr., for a temper tantrum he threw at an AIDS benefit concert. Not exactly a career-crusher, but hey, it's a start.

The best non-festival jazz gig I caught lately was off my usual beat: the trio of pianist Michiel Braam, unamplified but loud bassist Wilbert de Joode and relocated California drummer Michael Vatcher, playing obscure Monk tunes with smart wit at the Aziijnfabriek (means Vinegar Factory) in s' Hertegenbosch, Holland on November 10. How come the Dutch play Monk better than Marcus Roberts? 'Cause they know he's out. □



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ROSCOE MITCHELL

AN INTERESTING BREAKFAST CONVERSATION WITH ROBERT HICKS

Out of the Roscoe Mitchell Sextet evolved the AACM's Art Ensemble of Chicago in the mid-'60s. Now renowned as one of the pivotal jazz bands of the '70s and '80s, the Art Ensemble of Chicago was largely the product of multi-instrumentalist Roscoe Mitchell's bold efforts to merge compositional structure with the freedom of individualized improvisation.

Mitchell's structuralist sensibility and his minimalistic, incremental sound profoundly affected fellow AACM stalwarts Anthony Braxton and Leo Smith. Eclecticism lies at the core of Mitchell's thinking, and like Braxton and Smith, he is intensely aware of the balance between sound and silence.

"I've always believed that music is 50% sound and 50% silence," comments Mitchell. "For instance, if I'm working with something that has a lot of space in it, I'll explain to the musicians which I'm working with that silence allows them to start anew. In terms of improvisation and composition, they parallel one another. Ideally, improvisation sounds just like a composition."



PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL SMITH

In both Mitchell's Space and Sound ensembles, he has explored these sound/silence boundaries in widely divergent ways. Space features Mitchell along with woodwind player Gerald Oshita and vocalist Tom Buckner. Their *New Music for Woodwinds and Voice* (1981) and *An Interesting Breakfast Conversation* (1984) reveal Mitchell's growing interest in collaborating with classically trained musicians who can expand chamber ensemble textures into improvisational dialogue.

Formed in the late '70s, the Space ensemble concentrates on conveying structural unity in improvisation. By juxtaposing textures and timbral combinations, Space explores sound collages and their relation to silence.

While Mitchell was working as musical director for the Summer programs at Woodstock, he met Gerald Oshita, an instructor there at the time. Oshita's work with textural and timbral experimentation and multiphonics coupled with his experience collaborating with visual artists, dancers and poets paralleled Mitchell's interests. Oshita was performing with vocalist Tom Buckner that summer of 1979 and Mitchell invited them to Woodstock for a concert.

Buckner brought his improvisational ideas to the trio from his work as a founding member of San Francisco's Ghost Opera Company, a group of classical musicians who improvised freely with no pre-existing themes. Here Buckner began to explore his concept of full-spectrum voice, a vocal expression grounded in *bel canto* technique.

To expand their range of sounds, Oshita and Mitchell resurrected long-neglected woodwind instruments to complement Buckner's classically trained tenor voice. Their first concert together was arranged at Verna Gillis' Soundscape in New York.

Through Mitchell's association with Buckner and faculty members at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, the Roscoe Mitchell New Chamber Ensemble was formed. Mitchell met violinist Vartan Manogian while performing in a concert with

pianist Joan Wildman at the university. "What impressed me about Vartan was - in the music we played some unison lines together and I was excited by the way that we blended together and shaped different phrases," recalled Mitchell.

From his collaboration with Manoogian, Mitchell wrote *Four Compositions*, a 1988 release on Lovely Music, Ltd. LCD 2021. Including a trio for flute, bassoon and piano; a duet for violin and alto saxophone; a wind quartet and a mixed quartet of voice, bass, saxophone, sarrusophone and triple contrabass viol, *Four Compositions* continues Mitchell's focus on chamber ensemble textures. The preferred structure though is notated composition with inserted fragmentary gestures.

Complementing Buckner and Manoogian in Mitchell's New Chamber Ensemble is new music pianist Joseph Kubera whose extensive work with The Merce Cunningham Dance Company anticipates Mitchell's interest in exploring dance improvisation. In this regard, Mitchell has worked most closely with choreographer Corinne Heath's Synergy which is based in Madison, Wisconsin.

Mitchell's multimedia projects in these areas were realized on November 30, 1990 at New York City's Town Hall on a program featuring Mitchell's New Chamber Ensemble with inventor Steven Sylvester, painter Dennis Nechvatal and dancer Eve Tai as guest artists for the world premiere of "Inventions" from his "Let's Take a Ride" series.

"Inventions" highlighted the Town Hall concert. Painter Dennis Nechvatal constructed eye-like patterns which reflected the black and white motif of Mitchell and Eve Tai's costumes. Tai's stalking movements contrasted well with Manoogian's ethereally expressive violin lines which created kalaidoscopic rhythms. Mitchell used African percussion instruments alongside his serene flute and the contrasting tones of his contrabass sax and soprano sax to evoke shifting textures over the whirling tonality of inventor Sylvester's bicycle windmill machine. The piece was very much a study in the relationship between sight, motion, velocity and sound.

Mitchell later expanded the "Let's Take A Ride" series into "Songs in the Wind" in a concert at the Barrymore Theatre on February 14, 1991 in Madison, Wisconsin by adding another dancer Jo Anna Mraz, guitarist Jaime Guiscafre on prepared guitar and Puerto Rican cuatro, with drummer Vincent Davis. Expanding the series of canvas panels and adding instruments such as pedal powered bull roarers, wind wands and bells to Sylvester's propelled bicycle windmill apparatus, Mitchell explored a broader visual dimension while re-iterating the acoustical focus of the improvisation. "Songs in the Wind" elaborates Mitchell's use of extended structural improvisations so prevalent in his Space ensemble.

Mitchell first met Steven Sylvester at pianist Joan Wildman's house. "He's an inventor and instrument maker," commented Mitchell. "At one time, he repaired motorcycles. He

fixes cars. He builds very expensive bike frames. He's worked in the medical profession perfecting artificial limbs. He repairs and builds basses, cellos, and violas. He's the type of person that can turn any type of material into anything."

Mitchell has no reservations about working with a non-musician. "I'm just looking for people who can compete with me mentally, whatever field they might happen to be from." Sylvester's ability to produce highly rhythmical sound textures and to create new forms from existing ones melds perfectly with Mitchell's concept of improvisation. A precursor to Mitchell's current "Songs in the Wind" project was his 1990 recording of the same name with Richard Davis, bass; Vartan Manoogian, violin; Steven Sylvester, inventor; and Vincent Davis, drums. Victo Recordings CD001.

Mitchell's Sound Ensemble ventured into an entirely new territory for Mitchell in the early '80s. At the time, Mitchell's AACM cohorts Leo Smith and Oliver Lake as well as Black Artist Group co-founder Julius Hemphill were creating hybrid sounds by employing reggae's rhythms and structure alongside creative music improvisation.

With the release of *Snurdy McGurdy and Her Dancin' Shoes* (1980) on Nessa and *3x4 Eye* (1981) on Black Saint, Mitchell delved into dance rhythms ranging from march figures and impressionistic airs to '20s jazz and pop rhythms a la Jelly Roll Morton onward across thematic variations from the Caribbean, Asia and Ornette Coleman. The Sound Ensemble, consisting of Mitchell, A. Spencer Barefield (guitar and piano), Hugh Ragin (trumpet), Jaribu Shahid (bass), and Tani Tabbal (drums) grew out of Mitchell's Michigan Creative Arts Collective in the early '70s. The Sound and Space ensembles joined forces in 1983 on a Black Saint release followed by the Sound Ensemble's *Live In Detroit* (1988). Sound's *Live at the Knitting Factory* is scheduled for release on Black Saint.

Mitchell's solo and ensemble work has been somewhat obscured by his affiliation with the Art Ensemble of Chicago and the AACM. Neglect of Mitchell's stellar work in his own right was rectified rather ironically by his 1988 homage to John Coltrane, *The Flow of Things*, in which Mitchell not only explored Trane's musical language but ingeniously interpolated his own sensibility and phrasing on soprano sax.

"I've always been interested in all phases of Coltrane's career," reflects Mitchell. *The Flow of Things* recording developed from a series of performances in 1987 commemorating the 20th anniversary of Coltrane's death. "There was a series where we had done a concert of some of John Coltrane's music. We did *Bessie's Blues*, *Impressions*, and the Coltrane solo from *Countdown*.... I later did some more recording in the Raccoon Club. After listening to it all, I decided it would be a good thing to just group all of these things together."

Late in 1991 *The Life and Music of John Coltrane*, a video documentary by Byron Multiprises was scheduled to be aired

on PBS's American Masters Series with Mitchell as featured guest artist.

After hearing a trio tape by pianist Matt Shipp with bassist William Parker and drummer Whit Dickey, Mitchell saw in Shipp a musician with whom he could expand his post-Coltrane projects. Shipp's compositions create a broad array of polyrhythmic textures by using block chords, tonal clusters and minimalist phrases. African polyrhythms are as apt to give Shipp's modal structures impetus as are his abstractions from Ellingtonian melodies. Like Coltrane, Shipp employs a scalar vocabulary to govern his improvisational tone poems and suites.

The Roscoe Mitchell Quartet, with pianist Shipp, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Whit Dickey, appeared during the 1991 Knitting Factory What Is Jazz? Festival. Mitchell exhibited his circular breathing technique in sparse wavering phrases in duet with Shipp's pointillistic and percussive lines.

An integral factor in Mitchell's development as a composer/musician is his interest in expanding the outlets for his pieces. Perhaps Mitchell's most famous work "Nonaah" from his 1974 and 1978 solo releases on Sackville and Nessa began his experiments to accommodate his compositions to a variety of performance styles and instrumental groupings. By doing so Mitchell developed a method of generating sounds anew with special attention to changes in pitch and timbre. "Nonaah started out as a solo piece. I had in mind to create the illusion of something being played on two instruments when there's just one by using very wide intervals and skips," remarks Mitchell. "I did a version for flute and piano. There's a completely notated version on Four Compositions for flute, piano and bassoon. There was the saxophone quartet of Joseph Jarman, Wallace McMillan, Anthony Braxton and myself which got me into the notion to do something for strings."

"I had first thought to do something for a string quartet, but decided on four cellos instead. That had three performances on the West coast. A lot of times I'll work like that. When people want pieces right away - sometimes you don't have the time to do a whole new piece. What I'll do is write a transcription which will be almost a completely different work," Mitchell explains.

Using his Space ensemble as a base, Mitchell employs a similar approach to extend his compositions from a

small ensemble to orchestral dimensions. "Well, the first version of "Variations on Sketch from Bamboo No. 1 and 2" for Conn-o-sax, voice, and tenor saxophone was on *New Music for Woodwinds and Voice* which sustains my pattern of ongoing composition. It really didn't have any words."

"I've gone on to write a text for it and I've done two chamber orchestra arrangements. The first one was done by the 1750 Arch Ensemble and the latest one was done a couple of years ago in Madison which was a 26-piece chamber orchestra work with solo sections for bass, violin, and a soprano singer."

What Mitchell remembers about his early musical experiences in Chicago anticipates his fascination with a variety of sounds. "My experience growing up in Chicago was that you could hear a lot of music right in the community. You'd just go right down the street to certain clubs and you'd hear this and that. I always listened to a wide variety of music which is not commonplace now because you have radio stations that play the same thing all day. Then you had radio stations that would play a wide range of things over the course of a day. They were committed to that. We listened to popular singers and jazz. At that time you could go into regular restaurants and the juke boxes would have all sorts of things

on them. When James Moody's *It Might as Well Be Spring* was popular that was on the juke boxes - Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Joe Williams - from R&B, gospel, jazz, popular, all on the same jukebox."

When Mitchell returned to Chicago in 1961 after a stint in the army, he hooked up with the Muhal Richard Abrams' Experimental Band. "Muhal had the Experimental Band and they were meeting every Monday night at a place called CNC. I got involved with that. I met a lot of people who are still in the AACM now. That was the seed material for the idea for the AACM. We would all go down there and Muhal had these exciting compositions that were all different. In Chicago at that time, there had been a transferral of club licenses - you had to have a particular type of



license to perform with more than a trio in the club. A lot of the horn players weren't working that much. There were a lot of sessions and things like that. The things that were really working were the rhythm sections. People wanted to have a venue for presenting concerts of their own music."

"Art Ensemble was also an outgrowth of the Roscoe Mitchell Sextet. Our first record, *Sound*, was on Delmark. The AEC finally became the AEC when we left for Europe in 1969. We had a close bond with Phillip Wilson. He went off with Paul Butterfield. In terms of what we were hearing from percussionists, at that time it was a good thing and a bad thing because Phillip was the one that brought on the situation where we had to think of an alternative and this is when we started to add more percussion through the coaching of Malachi Favors."

That pivotal step taken by Art Ensemble of Chicago to expand its range of percussion instruments and to combine multiple percussive textures with a sense of humour became a AACM trademark. When drummer Phillip Wilson left to tour with Paul Butterfield's Blues Band, "it stimulated people to come up with individualized percussion set ups of their own," explains Mitchell. Henry Threadgill had developed a whole percussion system based on hubcaphones. Anthony Braxton pursued it in a different way with garbage cans. Even within the Art Ensemble of Chicago, each percussion set up is very different."

On "Maze", an improvisational work for 8 percussionists, from Mitchell's 1978 Nessa release, he explored his concept of textural variation for percussion. Mitchell started with the sound levels of various bells moving from dark to bright areas. Beside the bells, he would juxtapose a variety of wood textures gradually developing into the sonic textures of bicycle horns, marimbas and glockenspiels and xylophones. The music flows freely from sound to sound.

Mitchell's percussion work continues today in his Double Rhythm Section Quintet of himself on reeds; Malachi Favors, bass; Tani Tabbal, drums; Jaribu Shahid, bass; and Vincent Davis, drums. They recently toured Europe and appeared at the Ars Musica Festival in Brussels.

"I'm still on the same track as in the AACM days. I'm just exploring and mixing the sounds together to produce different musical settings," observes Mitchell.

During 1991, Mitchell has continued his recording ties with fellow AACM founder Muhal Richard Abrams as well as his work in Art Ensemble of Chicago. His *Solos and Duets with Muhal Richard Abrams at Merkin Hall* on Black Saint is scheduled for release and Art Ensemble performs with featured guest Cecil Taylor on the 1991 DWI release *Thelonious Sphere Monk, Music Inspired by and Dedicated to Thelonious Sphere Monk*.

Another important band from Mitchell's AACM years which helped in the formation of the Art Ensemble of Chicago was his Roscoe Mitchell Art Ensemble which recorded *Congliptious* on Nessa in 1968. "There were many groups that I had in the early '60s. Fred Berry was the first trumpeter that I worked with. Malachi Favors. Alvin Fielder was the drummer on that first record. *Congliptious* was shortly after Phillip left the group. You remember the drummer on that was Robert Crowder. It was solo pieces - one by myself, one by Malachi and one by Lester on one side. On the second side we were joined by Robert Crowder."

"We decided to co-op the group instead of my being out there leading it by myself," explained Mitchell regarding his role in Art Ensemble of Chicago. "We did several records then. *People in Sorrow, A Jackson In Your House, Message To Our Folks*. This guy John Giorgio Carracas who was the owner of BYG Records organized a tour of Europe. When we got there, there was an effort to try to get us to the jazz festival in Algiers. We got there too late. But when that was over, he brought the musicians back to Paris for recording sessions and live concerts. One of the things I did out of that was a record with Grachan Moncur entitled *New Africa*. Andrew Cyrille is on there. Alan Silva. Dave Burrell and Archie Shepp were on one cut. *Reese and the Smooth Ones* was a combined piece. I wrote the Reese part and Lester wrote the Smooth Ones. It was dedicated to Maurice McIntyre."

Even Mitchell's current work with the human voice dates back to his AACM days. "I have a lot of pieces with voices in them. *A Jackson In Your House, The Key*. I got more concentrated in the vocal area when I started working with Thomas Buckner. It's a major interest for me now. I'm doing a work for nine voices. It was the second piece, e.e. cummings *sons* which we did at Town Hall in November, 1990. I now have that written for nine female voices: three 1st sopranos, three 2nd sopranos and three altos; two flutes, two clarinets, a horn, a tuba, two percussionists, solo harp and solo marimba. That was premiered in Madison in March 1991. For that particular work, e.e. cummings poetry suited what I wanted to do at that time. I wasn't really looking for anything that had any rhythmic construction. I felt the poems gave me the freedom that I needed to move around," explains Mitchell in reference to his current use of poetic texts.

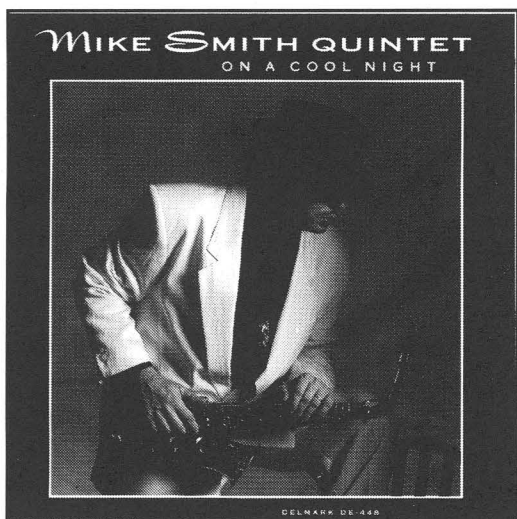
What Mitchell likes to explore in all his myriad compositions and improvisational works are the infinite choices available. With such an open approach to sound, Mitchell feels anything can develop anew. Often in his collaborations Mitchell uses what he terms "scored improvisation" which establishes guidelines for his musicians to follow so that they can produce meaningful improvisations. "It can work so that every time the composition is played it can be different. What I do is provide the musicians with the information that they can relate to in their own way. The goal is to produce an improvisation that is closely knitted with the composition."





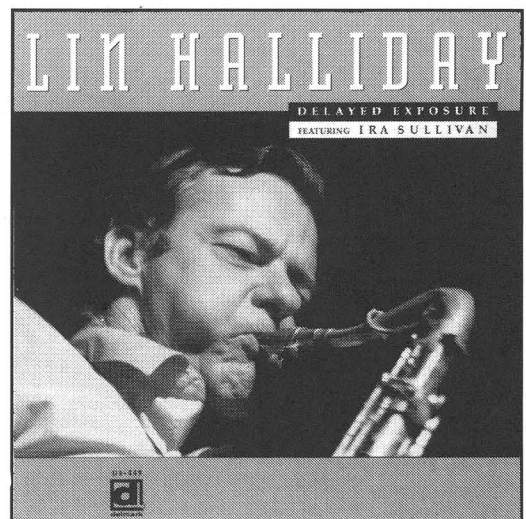
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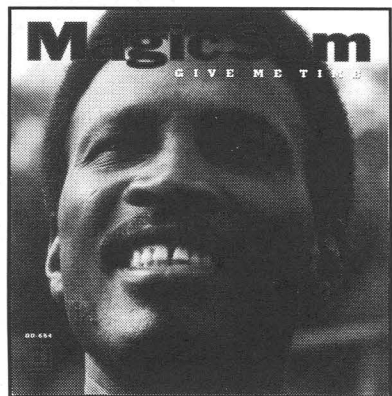
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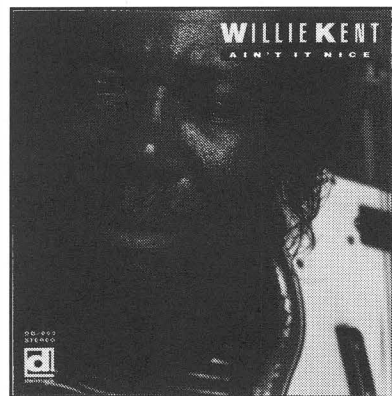


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AROUND THE WORLD



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UNITED STATES

More than a million dollars has been distributed to sixteen jazz presenters by the **Lila Wallace - Reader's Digest** National Jazz Network. It's one of several large scale funding efforts which are making funds available to not-for-profit organizations with the proven ability to showcase jazz talent.

Hopefully this kind of funding will also reach down into neighbourhoods where indigenous local talent can develop and present their skills in environments (i.e. clubs) where people gravitate on a regular basis.

The **Southern Arts Foundation** (one of the recipients of part of the above-mentioned funding) has also embarked upon a "JazzSouth"

radio project. The quarterly radio program, which will be heard on 75 stations, will feature recordings by artists from the South East of the U.S.

Jerry Valburn has donated his extensive Duke Ellington collection to the Library of Congress. It includes 78s, LPs, tapes, films and videos.

Guitarists **John Scofield** and **Peter Leitch** were back to back showcases at Sweet Basil in early December. Sonny Fortune, Kirk Lightsey, Rufus Reid and Marvin Smitty Smith shared the stand with Leitch. The **Manhattan Jazz Quintet** was scheduled to make a live recording from the club at the end of January. . . Tenor saxophonist **David Ware** recorded for DIW in December. His quartet was at the Knit-

ting Factory on December 19 with Matthew Shipp (piano), William Parker (bass) and Marc Edwards (drums).

Muhai Richard Abrams conducted the New England Conservatory's Jazz Big Band November 26 during a two week period when he was artist in residence at the school. . . The first annual brass convention will be held at Holyoke Community College (MA) February 8 and 9. **Lew Soloff** and **Eddie Bert** are among the performers.

The University of Pittsburgh's 21st annual seminar on jazz was held October 29 to November 2. **Illinois Jacquet**, Hank Crawford, Ernie Watts, Nathan Davis, Mike Mossman, Artural Sandoval, **Ron Carter**, Kenny Barron, Eric Gale and Alan

Dawson participated . . . Vocalist **Fionna Duncan** was a guest of The Murphys at their Toledo club November 22 and 23. . . **Karl Berger**, Don Cherry and Nana Vasconcelos participated in the Miami Rhythm Intensive January 1 - 5. . . This year's Pensacola Jazz Party was a one day affair. It took place January 18 with Rick Fay's Hot Seven the featured attraction with Ernie Carson, **Dan Barrett** and John Sheridan guesting with the band. . . Upcoming events for **Tina Marsh** and **The Creative Opportunity Orchestra** in Austin are set for April 25 (which will feature six outstanding female vocalists) and June 14 (their session ending festival). . . Phil Woods' quintet will perform at all three Japanese Blue Note Clubs (in

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

COMPILED BY JOHN NORRIS

Fukuoka, Osaka and Tokyo) before playing a week at the New York club April 28 to May 3.

ROAD NOTES

The highlight of a brief weekend visit to New York was hearing pianist **Chris Anderson** at Bradleys. Anderson has been a New York resident for many years but rarely performs in public. His distinctive approach to the piano was evident years ago in his rarely heard *Jazzland LP, Inverted Images*. He's also credited with being an early mentor for Herbie Hancock. For two sets he fascinated the audience with the fresh view he brought to a widely varied repertoire. The graceful flow of his ideas was matched by the brilliance of his piano sound which floated over and around the solid foundation given his music by Ray Drummond and **Billy Higgins**.

Samantha's is a small but comfortable restaurant uptown on 1st Avenue at 78th Street. **Richard Wyands** was in residence with bassist **Lisle Atkinson**. This was comfortable but highly enjoyable jazz piano by two well-seasoned veterans who always succeed in sounding fresh. The music they perform is not an adaptation of another time or culture, it is part of their life experience. You can hear the difference.

Birdland is a hyper-active West Side Club where only a small percentage of its audience can actually experience the music. It is a venue much used for live recordings for the new version of **Candid Records**. An all-star group which represented musicians who already have their own CDs on the label were strug-

gling to find common ground on a repertoire of originals and tunes associated with Miles Davis at the time of our visit. **Claudio Roditi**, Donald Harrison, **Ricky Ford**, Kenny Barron, **Larry Gales** and Joe Chambers were surrounded by music sheets on what was to be the first of two nights of music making. It's a tough call to make this kind of session work on short notice. Hopefully a good groove was reached by the second night.

Much more relaxed was the set at Zinno's where guitarist Peter Leitch sat in with **Kirk Lightsey** and Cecil McBee. Their easy interplay comes from their compatibility and familiarity with each other's approach to music.

REMEMBRANCES

Trumpeter **Buck Clayton** was a positive role model for both musicians and listeners. His vibrant approach to music left an indelible impression on a generation of jazz listeners in many parts of the world who experienced his mature musical statements in the 1950s / 1960s when he took his music to the world. His many appearances at Toronto's Colonial Tavern were the occasions when a casual acquaintance was solidified into something more meaningful. The emotional intensity of Clayton's trumpet playing never once diminished and he led his band with a sureness which transcended the ordinary. The sheer authority of his presence commanded attention at all times.

Time didn't change his personality, only his physical being. His resilience enabled him to overcome the shattering realization that he would never regain his ability to play

the trumpet following a disastrous calamity with his lip. He enjoyed an Indian summer with his big band. Great musicians interpreted his charts with the imagination and poise he had always brought to his instrument. He even got the chance to tell part of his life story and lived to enjoy the admiration of that achievement given him by his peers and fans. His long journey came to an end December 8 in New York when he passed from the scene. While his band played a gig at Park Avenue Plaza Buck lay in the coma which preceded his death. He was, and is, a giant of this music.

ELSEWHERE

Aruba's Jazz and Latin Music Festival is set for the second and third weekends of June. . . Australia's **Ed Wilson** Jazz Orchestra has issued a CD called *Up The Pace*. The trombonist / arranger can be

reached at 1264 Botany Road, Botany, NSW 2019. . . Drummer **Len Barnard** is writing a book while fellow percussionist John Sangster is working on a second. Sid Bromley also reports that ABC broadcaster Clem Semmler's book *Pictures on the Margin* includes 150 pages of jazz reminiscences. The 1991 Jazz Convention was held in Newcastle with Geelong set to play host in 1992.

Critica Theory Ensemble has accepted an invitation to appear at India's Biennial International Music Festival: Jazz Yatra - 1992, in late February. Their tour will include Bombay, New Delhi, Bangalore and Goa. Pianist **Chris Bakriges**, violinist **Betty MacDonald**, saxist **Clifford Airie**, bassist **Ram Miles** and drummer **Mark McKay** are the players. Also performing at the festival will be **Cedar Walton**, **Billy Higgins**, **Dewey Redman**, and **Henry Threadgills**

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DUDU PUKWANA



Very Very Circus.

Recordings from the 1991 **Jazzpar Project** have been issued by Storyville Records. The Hank Jones Trio (with George Mraz and Al Foster), the Jens Winther Quintet (including Al Foster) and the **Jesper Thilo** Quintet (including Hank Jones) each have separate CDs. Hopefully this music will receive worldwide distribution. Additionally the music performed by **David Murray** (the 1991 overall winner of the prize) and the Pierre Dorge New Jungle Orchestra is to be released on Enja.

Lee Konitz is the 1992 Jazzpar winner and the various concerts will take place in late March. Konitz will be featured with a specially organized Nonet under the direction of **Jens Sondergaard**. **Misha Mengelberg**, the 1992 Jazzpar soloist, will perform with the **John Tchicai** Quartet. Bassist **Steve Swallow** has also been chosen to work with the **Jorgen Emborg** group. The Danish Jazz Center, who co-ordinate all this activity, wish to stress that the prizes

go to "an important artist whose creativity is expected to be fostered and facilitated by the prize. The condition 'SPECIALLY deserving FURTHER fame' can be interpreted with a wide latitude."

The Jazz Department of Radio Bremen held a symposium in November to discuss the situation of improvisation in contemporary music. . . "Emotions for Miles" was the title of a unique concert October 25 in Maastricht Holland when the **Gil Evans** Orchestra and a specially organized small group played the music of **Miles Davis**.

LITERATURE

Arts Midwest has published **A Musician's Guide to Making a Recording**, the fifth in its Insights on Jazz booklets. . . One of the best tributes to Miles Davis was written by **Don Glasgo** and published in Dartmouth College's **Jazzlines** . . . Volume 2 of **The New Real Book** has just been published by Sher Music Co. It contains the music to many classic and contemporary jazz tunes.

VIDEO

A documentary video on the life and times of cornetist **Wild Bill Davison** is now available. Tom Saunders is the producer and it is available from T.T. & T. Network Inc., 1158 Bedford, Grosse Pointe, MI 48230. It sells for \$44.00 p.p. . . Rhapsody Films has released **The Universal Mind of Bill Evans** and also has available the well-received documentary **Musicians In Exile** which features, among others, **Hugh Masekela**, **Paquito D'Rivera** and **Dudu Pukwana**. . . Shanachie has issued three videos by Masters of the Country Blues. The 60 minute videos feature **Mance Lipscomb / Lightnin' Hopkins**, **Bukka White / Son House** and **Rev Gary Davis / Sonny Terry**.

RECORDINGS

The New Blue Note has little musical relationship with the company created by Alfred Lion and Francis Wolff. But then, they might be excited about a company which is charting fresh ground rather than recording artists who are imitations of their past successes. New from Blue note are **A Long Story** by **Eliane Elias**, **From The Heart** by **Terumasa Hino**, **The Blessing** by **Gonzalo Rubalcaba**, **This Is New** by **Rick Margitza**, **Instructions Inside** by **Vince Mendoza** and **Stolen Moments** by **Stanley Jordan**. Upcoming from Blue Note are new releases by **McCoy Tyner**, **Jack De Johnette** and **Don Pullen**. Roulette reissues already out are by **Count Basie**, **Illinois Jacquet**, **Johnny Smith**, **Dinah Washington**, **Stitt & Davis** and **Stan Getz**. Coming soon are Pacific Jazz

reissues by **Gerald Wilson** (**Portraits**), **Bill Perkins** and **Richie Kamuca** (**Tenors Head On**) and **The Artistry of Art Pepper**.

Ralph Moore with the **Ray Brown Trio** is the front runner of a large batch of Concord releases. Others include **Breath of Brazil** by **Joanne Brackeen**, Volume 1 of **New England Songhounds** by **Ruby Braff**, **Redux 78** by **Hal Galper**, **Black And Blue** by **Gene Harris**, **Steve Kuhn** at **Maybeck** and **Minger Painting** by **Pete Minger**. Jazz Alliance, a Concord affiliate, has issued **Don Thompson's Winter Mist** and **Hank** by **Hank Jones** as well as repackaging the Innovation CDs of **Mutual Street** by **Ed Bickert / Rob McConnell** and **Dave McMurdo's Big Band**.

From Fantasy we can look for box sets of **Lightnin' Hopkins**, **John Coltrane** and **Art Tatum**. **Ruth Brown** and **Sonny Rollins** have new recordings available on Fantasy and Milestone respectively. **Donald Byrd** and **Vincent Herring** have newly recorded CDs on Landmark while on Contemporary there are new recordings by **Tom Harrell**, **Frank Morgan / Bud Shank**, **Kenny Burrell** and **Terry Gibbs / Buddy DeFranco**.

The **Charlie Kohlhasse** Quintet's **Research and Development** is on Accurate Records. The same company has issued recordings by the **Jay Blandford** Septet and The **Mandala** Octet. . . Guitarist **Cornell Dupree's Can't Get Through** is on Amazing Records. . . **Sonny Sharrock's Ask The Ages** is on Axiom Records. . . **Everywhere Drums** is the new recording from poet **Jayne Cortez**. **Frank Lowe** and **Ed Blackwell** are among the

guest musicians heard with her band The Firespitters. The CD is available from Bola Press, P.O. Box 96, Village Station, New York, NY 10014) . . . **Why Not Take It With You** is a cassette only recording by saxophonist **Shanek Farray** and trumpeter **Norman Person**. The music, recorded before a live audience, is available from Expressions of a Heritage, P.O. Box 184, Staten Island, NY 10304. . . The **Doky Brothers** - Niels and Christian - are well represented in new Gazell releases, **Close Encounters** and **Appreciation** . . . **No Hands** is a CD featuring the **Jeff Covel Trio** on Original Copy Records (162 Boylston St., #47, Boston, MA 02116) . . . **Nathan Page's** newest recording, **The Other Page**, features him on guitar with Michael Weiss, David Williams and Ben Riley. It's on Hugo Music (874 Little Bend Road, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714) . . . **Return to Bebop** is an LP only release by the **Jim Sharpe Quintet** with special guest **Jack Sheldon**. The baritone saxophonist / leader produced this recording in Hollywood with Ross Thompkins, Bob Maize, Jimmie Smith and Nick Ceroli among the participants at the various sessions. This limited edition audiophile pressing is available from Jim Sharpe, Rt 2, Box 181, Deming, NM 88030. . . The Matt Kendrick Unit's newest release **Unity & Alienation** is on Suitcase Music and is available through Cadence / North Country.

A previously unheard concert recording by **Kid Ory** and **Bunk Johnson** highlights the new releases from George Buck's family of labels. **Bunk Johnson in San Francisco**

includes a concert session with Ory and Wade Whaley. **Kid Ory '44 and '46** comes from Standard Oil broadcasts, many of which have found their way onto LP in the past. Also out are volumes 2 and 3 of the **George Lewis** Ohio sessions as well as American Music reissues by George Lewis and Bunk Johnson... The **Harry Allen - Keith Ingham** Quartet pay tribute to Sammy Fain on Audiophile's **Are You Having Fun?** while **Daryl Sherman** sings the songs of Jimmy McHugh... **Sammy Rimmington's** alto saxophone is featured on Progressive while French trumpeter **Alain Bouchet** is introduced on Jazzology in the company of Warren Vache, Kenny Davern and Ken Peplowski.

Ace Records in England has issued double length CDs by **Dave Brubeck** and Shelly Manne as well as reissuing the early **Howlin' Wolf** sides done for Modern ... Affinity has issued a six CD set containing all of **Louis Armstrong's** 1920s blues accompaniments. . . The **Paris Barcelona Swing Connection** is a nine piece band whose second CD on Blow Records was recorded **Live in Barcelona** . . . Jazzhaus Musik has new CDs available by the **Kolner Saxophon Mafia**, The Red Snapper and **Hans Ludermann** . . . Sonet has issued a live session by **Al Cohn** and Zoot Sims from Sweden called **Zoot Case**. It was recorded in 1982. . . Japanese pianist **Kyoko Kuroda's** solo performances cover a wide spectrum and these are documented on **Something Keeps Me Alive**. It is the debut issue of Omba Records (3-12-18, Kamata, Ohta-ku, Tokyo, Japan 144). □



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Dynasty • Performance video featuring Jackie & Rene McLean playing the repertoire for their Trikola CD. 56 min. **\$20.00**

THE GOLDEN AGE OF JAZZ • BILL GOTTLIEB



Welcoming me into his Great Neck, Long Island, home, Bill Gottlieb is wearing a tee-shirt bearing a shot of Billie Holiday, her head tilted back in full cry. It's the most frequently reproduced portrait of her, and may well be, as Gottlieb believes, the most frequently reproduced portrait in jazz. It's appeared in books, on album covers, posters, postcards, and in ads for an off-Broadway show about Holiday. It's the way many of us *remember* Holiday. And it is, along with countless other shots that help define the early years of modern jazz, a photo Gottlieb took.

Gracing Gottlieb's home are other photos of his, no less familiar, ranging from Louis Armstrong, his trumpet thrust towards the camera, to the definitive 1940s depiction of 52nd Street,

Ellington and Louis Armstrong, who became his lifelong musical idols.

After graduation from college, he was uncertain as to what career he'd pursue. Major corporations in those days were not recruiting Jewish students at Lehigh, he notes. He eventually obtained a position selling advertising at **The Washington Post**, and persuaded the editor to let him write a weekly jazz column, to the best of his knowledge, the first weekly jazz column at any major American newspaper, as a sideline. And he soon began hosting jazz shows on radio, as well. "By the time I was 23," he says, "I was Mr. Jazz in Washington.

"Because The Washington Post was unwilling to pay photog-

which director Clint Eastwood translated to the screen in the film, **Bird**.

Gottlieb's photo book, **The Golden Age of Jazz** (Da Capo Press, \$12.95), is now in its eighth printing, and has sold some 30,000 copies. Touring exhibitions of his photos have been mounted in major cities throughout the world. As I write, there are no less than five exhibitions of his photos this month, in locales ranging from the U.S. to Japan.

Gottlieb hands me a handsomely-printed catalogue from an exhibition of his photos in Osaka, Japan, which has drawn some 12,000 paying customers, and invites me to his opening tomorrow of a month-long exhibition at the small but prestigious Hudson River Museum in Yonkers, New York. He'll be on hand to sign autographs and chat with patrons. The curious thing is, Gottlieb notes, his interests in jazz and photography originally arose almost by chance.

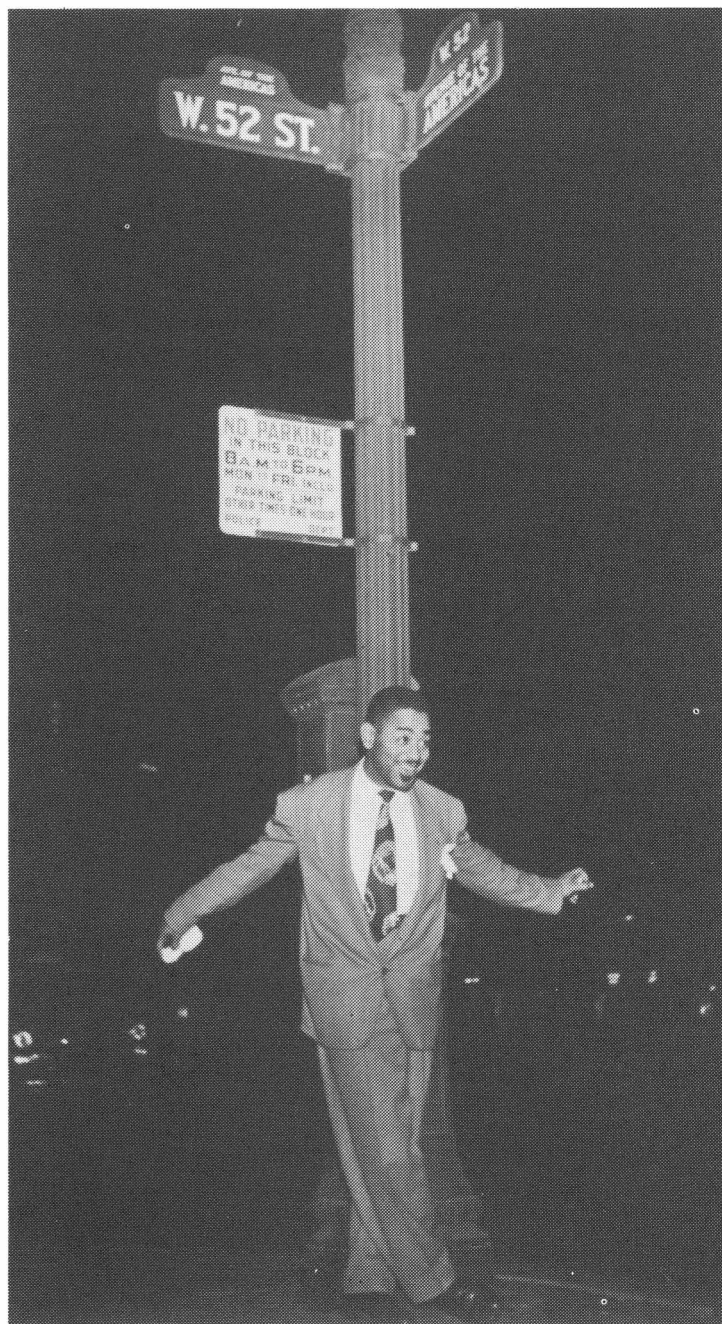
"In 1936, I was served infected pork at my fraternity at Lehigh University, and I got trichinosis," he recalls. "While I was recuperating, a high school friend of mine who played classical piano brought me some music magazines he had from England and France. And it was there that I discovered that jazz was America's great contribution to the arts." During his convalescence, he immersed himself in records of Duke

raphers overtime to accompany him to jazz performances, he got a Speed Graphic camera and began taking his own pictures. And because no one was paying him for his photos, he learned to work very economically, taking only two to three shots for every one published, a ratio he continued when he eventually went on to work for magazines such as *The Record Changer* and *Down Beat*.

As a writer who knew his subjects well, he sought, where possible, to tell stories in his photos: he shot bandleader Jimmie Lunceford alone in the middle of an empty theatre, for example, to underscore the recent departure of Lunceford's star sidemen; he shot volatile bandleader Artie Shaw half in shadows, to convey Shaw's half-in, half-out relationship to the music business. Sometimes, he'd throw in other subjects simply to frame his main subject. In 1947, for instance, he posed a Juilliard student he considered handsome in a shot of trumpeter Howard McGhee; the student, "unknown" at the time, was Miles Davis.

A few major subjects got away. Fats Waller, Gottlieb recalls, "drank his way from Detroit to Washington; when they poured him out of the plane, he was in no condition to do anything." And Glenn Miller "annoyed me in some way, so I said to hell with him." But Gottlieb, along with Herman Leonard and a few other photographers, documented an era.

Gottlieb made his living primarily outside of jazz. He essentially stopped taking jazz photos in 1948 ("I'd had my belly-full of coming home from clubs at four and five in the morning"), preferring to become, as he puts it, "a generalist." He took photos for some 400 filmstrips, and ultimately became president of a division of McGraw-Hill, University Films. He wrote children's books, too, one of which (*Laddie, the Super Dog*, for Golden Books) he says sold a million copies. But nothing's given him



greater satisfaction than the jazz work.

His jazz photos adorn the covers of some 190 albums that he knows about (and he's sure there are various bootleg albums that have used his photos without his knowledge of them). His photos may also be found on nearly 30 posters and more than 30 postcards that he knows about (made by various companies), along with a dozen or so tee-shirts (made by Gear, Inc., Box 5432, Atlanta, GA 30307). And his jazz photos are in the permanent collections of museums as far away as Stockholm and Jerusalem.

Whitney Balliett observed in *The New Yorker* some years back: "Gottlieb stopped photographing musicians in 1948. No one has surpassed him yet." Actually, Gottlieb admits, he didn't quite give up photographing musicians *altogether* in 1948. On very rare occasions, if asked by a musician he likes (such as Doc Cheatham or Dick Hy-

man), he says he's agreed to photograph the musician, but not for money, just as a gesture of friendship.

Has he ever wished he'd been a jazz musician himself? "The jazz life is a lousy life, by and large," he believes. "My wife and I just celebrated our 52nd wedding anniversary. I can't think of more than two or three jazz musicians who've celebrated 50th anniversaries.

ARTICLE BY CHIP DEFFAA

PHOTOGRAPHS

CHARLIE PARKER & TOMMY POTTER / DIZZY GILLESPIE

NEW ORLEANS JAZZ

THE LEGACY OF GEORGE LEWIS & BUNK JOHNSON

BY PUBLISHER JOHN NORRIS

It is now close to fifty years since Bill Russell made the *Climax* recordings of the George Lewis Band. Their original issue created a sensation (and controversy) while the after waves continue to cause a ripple effect around the world.

Their reissue on CD/LP as part of *The Complete Blue Note Recordings of George Lewis* (Mosaic 132) reaffirms their enduring qualities. The passion, joyous drive and sure sense of swing sets these performances apart from most others of the period. The earlier Kid Rena and Bunk Johnson sessions were only an indicator of what had transformed the musical climate of New Orleans since the 1920s when recording virtually ceased in the city.

The New Orleans musicians who took their music to the world in the 1920s presented a fresh concept which married together ragtime, military march music and the blues. Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver, Kid Ory and others had evolved a highly sophisticated way of shaping their music. It provided the impetus for the burgeoning talents of such soloists as Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet and Jimmie Noone who, between them, dramatically affected the evolution of the music.

The musicians who stayed home, like **George Lewis**, had little incentive to make great changes in the way they played. Music only offered marginal financial rewards and its performance was often an emotional escape from the burden of everyday life. Their music was a rhythmic and melodic vehicle for expression. It was untouched by the growing harmonic base upon which much of jazz was to be formed. Its expression remained deep within the African roots of the musicians' heritage.

And yet, by the time of the *Climax* sessions, the music had taken on a new persona. It just didn't sound close to the

recordings made in the 1920s by Sam Morgan, Louis Dumaine and the Jones-Collins Astoria Hot Eight.

The repertoire was clearly affected by the recordings made by King Oliver and Louis Armstrong in the 1920s while later musical ideas had not gone unnoticed. The rhythmic drive of the George Lewis band was linked to the late 1930s swing of Count Basie while the collective ensemble playing had taken on a new intensity and complexity.

Central to the success of these recordings is the incredible trumpet playing of **Avery "Kid" Howard**. He is the catalyst who lifts the music to new heights. His playing is audacious, highly imaginative and widely varied in its tonal qualities. It has left as indelible a mark as when Henry "Red" Allen recorded his landmark sessions for Victor in 1929. Howard is particularly impressive in the lowdown dragged out blues numbers, *Careless Love*, *Dauphine Street* and *Deep Bayou*, as well as his electrifying use of the break in such multi-themed pieces as *Climax Rag*, *Milenburg Joys* and *Fidgety Feet*.

Equally impressive is the playing of George Lewis. He sounds completely relaxed and at ease in this setting and his unique singing sound pervades each piece. The sheer joy which emanates from these first recorded performances in a jazz setting of the spirituals *Just A Closer Walk* and *Just A Little While To Stay Here* is largely due to Lewis' flowing clarinet lines and the buoyant pulse of the rhythm section.

Pianist Walter Decou was scheduled to perform but his absence actually assists

the flow of the music. It eliminates possible harmonic clashes and sharpens the clarity of the ensembles.

Only trombonist **Jim Robinson** seems somewhat subdued. The recording balance may partly be the cause of this impression for his playing lacks the definition he was to show the following year when Russell returned to New Orleans to record prolifically for his own American Music label.

This Mosaic collection contains all the music recorded at the *Climax* session. There are several new alternates in addition to wider distribution being given to titles issued for the first time in the 1970s by Dan Records in Japan. This is the first time that all the material has been collected together on LP/CD. The Blue Note 10" and 12" LPs of the 1950s managed to contain titles which were not common to the different formats.

The Mosaic set also includes the 1954 concert recordings from Bakersfield which were only issued in 1959 on *Blue Note 1208*. This reissue contains the full, unedited rendition of *Closer Walk*. Completing this reissue is all the material from the two days of recording done by the band for Blue Note in 1954 at Rudy Van Gelder's studio.

By the time of that date, the last by the classic 1950s group, banjoist **George Guesnon** had replaced the ailing **Lawrence Marrero**. There are previously unissued alternates of *Gettysburg* (two versions) and *When You Wore A Tulip* as well as a striking performance of *Move The Body Over*.

By the mid 1950s the performances of the George Lewis band had become highly stylized. You can still hear the tremendous drive and exuberant attack which was unlike any other New Orleans band of the time but the performances (and repertoire) had become all too predictable. It was this band, though, which took the message of New Orleans jazz to a much wider audience through its tours of the West Coast and the annual pilgrimage to Ohio. It finally resulted in a New York engagement during which the Blue Note studio date took place. The band's many recordings from the period (notably those for Jazzman and Antone/Delmark) helped widen its impact and ultimately it was the music from this period which had the biggest influence on those learning to play this music around the world.

Newly issued recordings of George Lewis are beginning to filter through the veil of time. Now, more than twenty years after the clarinetist's death, we have available the first of what is planned to be about 15 CDs of the Lewis band in performance in Oxford, Ohio. The recordings were made for research being conducted by the Miami Folk Arts Society and were not originally planned for commercial release.

The George Lewis Ragtime Jazz Band of New Orleans: The Oxford Series Vol. 1 (American Music AMCD-21) is a 1952 performance where **Percy Humphrey's** trumpet gives the music his own special flavour. His measured lead is in contrast to the erratic and flamboyant styles of Kid Howard and Elmer Talbert but not as laid back as Alvin Alcorn. Other examples of Humphrey's playing with this band are limited (there are three titles in the vaults at MCA as well as a concert lp on Jazzology) so this performance will be welcomed by followers of the band. There are good instrumental versions of *Weary*



Blues, *Tin Roof Blues*, *Running Wild* and *I Can't Escape From You* as well as such overdone entertainment vehicles as *Mama Don't Allow* and *The Saints*.

An LP surfaced in Europe a couple of years ago containing music from a 1961 (?) performance from New Hampshire. The band is in good spirits doing what they were paid to do, entertain the audience. Unique to this recording is a performance of *Chinatown*. (Music Mecca 132) has a Copenhagen address and may still be located in European specialty stores.

There's more classic George Lewis reissued on CD from the American Music catalogue. **Bunk Johnson: The King of the Blues** (American Music AMCD 1) and **George Lewis with Kid Shots** (American Music AMCD 2) feature the clarinetist with two New Orleans trumpeters who were stylistic antecedents of the generation which produced Louis Armstrong and Red Allen. The results are wonderful.

The **Bunk Johnson** collection is as surprising as it is effective. Thirteen different blues selections are not in the least bit tedious for there is considerable variety in tempos as well as the bonus of two of **Myrtle Jones'** heartfelt vocals. Above all, though, it is the cohesion of the band and the authoritative way in which Johnson sets the pace which makes the music so dramatic. The performances of *Weary Blues*, *How Long Blues*, *Royal Garden Blues* and *Tishomingo Blues* are versions never issued while *New Iberia Blues* and *C.C. Rider* only appeared on Storyville and Dan issues.

The **Kid Shots Madison** session produced some memorable performances. The trumpeter lays down an economical yet highly rhythmic lead which allows Lewis and Robinson unlimited scope to embellish and augment the basic melodic line. There's great blues playing in *Dumaine Street Drag* and *Bucket's Got A Hole In It*, bristling parade bravura in *High Society* and *Gloryland* as well as a lyrical lilt to *The Sheik* and *When You And I Were Young Maggie*.

In addition to the nine titles with Kid Shots (of which only six were issued originally on AM) this CD includes Lewis' original trio recording of *Burgundy Street Blues*, his unique variation on Louis Armstrong's solo from the Hot Five recording of *Savoy Blues*. Has anyone researched, by the way, whether this was

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an on the spot creation by Armstrong or was the melody already in use in New Orleans at the time? *San Jacinto Blues* is yet another variant on the same theme with the added presence of Jim Robinson's trombone. Best of all, though, is the extraordinary performance of *Ice Cream* by Lewis and Robinson. Bill Russell was correct when he described it as "a miracle of uninhibited joy."

Filling out the CD are three more performances by the Bunk Johnson band. *Sister Kate* is previously unissued while the version of *Weary Blues (Shake It And Break It)* is different to the one on AMCD 1 and was only issued on Dan.

These CDs are a memorial to the greatness of **Baby Dodds**. His drumming, the personification of New Orleans style percussion, was never better recorded in all its many shadings than on these sessions. Russell's understanding of the central strength of the music was confirmed with his decision to bring Dodds to New Orleans. He helps make the music glow with unfettered brilliance.

It should also be mentioned that the sound quality of the music has never sounded as good as it does in these CD reissues.

There's more Bunk Johnson to be heard on a recent CD reissue of *Bunk & Lu* (GTJ 12024-2), an historical curiosity from the period when the trumpeter went to

the West Coast to perform and record with the **Lu Watters** band. His 1944 performances make up half of this CD. The balance of the material is from a 1941 Lu Watters session.

Additional George Lewis material is also

that experienced by B.B. King following his *Live at the Regal* concert recording and his discovery by a wider audience with different tastes to those who had previously supported him.

Jazz In The Classic New Orleans

Tradition (Riverside OJC 1736-2) is a CD reissue of long out of print material from the 1950s. The first six selections are Lewis and his rhythm section reprising material recorded earlier for Bill Russell. The final six selections are by a pick-up band of well known New Orleans musicians. Unfortunately nothing much takes place which can be commended. Definitely an item for completists.

In the 1950s New Orleans' traditional music was at a standstill. There were jobs on Bourbon Street

for those willing to plagiarize their heritage for the tourists in order to eke out a living in music (Papa Celestin, Bill Matthews, Paul Barbarin, Thomas Jefferson are examples of those who made that choice).

All this changed following the opening of **Preservation Hall** in the early 1960s. At first there were just informal sessions at the art gallery space. The arrival of Alan Jaffe marked the transition into full time operations. By then Ken Grayson Mills had made a series of recordings which fluctuated between the incompetent and the brilliant. His documentation of many musicians who had not



BABY DODDS (A.V. Baillie collection)

circulating, some of it for the first time. *George Lewis at Herbert Otto's Party 1949* (Jazzology LP JCE 24) is a legendary performance which has finally surfaced. It has the intriguing presence of **Herb Morand** as trumpeter on some selections. The music is similar in style to the material from the same period issued on Pax and the sound quality is quite acceptable. This release is a real find for it captures the Lewis band at its peak when it was still playing essentially in an ensemble style with relaxed tempos. Still to come were the changes of the 1950s when the band began to attract an international audience. In a sense the music from this period is a watershed similar to

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worked or recorded for many years was conceived with altruistic motives. The bulk of these recordings are still to be found on LPs reissued on Jazzology as part of their *New Orleans: The Legends Live* series. Mills leased a number of his masters to Arhoolie who issued a sampler of "New Orleans Jazz". A different version now exists on CD. *New Orleans Jazz* (Arhoolie CD-346) is far less representative of that period, with only four of the LP selections retained. The CD includes four performances from the **Billie & DeDe Pierce** Folk Lyric session (which Arhoolie owns), four tunes from the **New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra's** Arhoolie LP (1058) and two titles by **The Golden Age Jazz Band** who only seek to emulate the music of the Crescent City, not to be a part of it.

In retrospect it is now clear that the music performed and recorded by the musicians in the 1960s represented a fresh variant of time worn conceptions. Many labels documented a final flowering of music created by this early generation of musicians, many of whom came out of retirement to make one last statement. For many of these players the headlong swing of the George Lewis band in its heyday and, to a lesser extent, the **Paul Barbarin** band of the 1950s which featured the outstanding clarinet work of **Willie Humphrey**, was a more contemporary way of approaching the music. The Barbarin Band's best recording, incidentally, is currently in circulation again on an Atlantic CD. *Paul Barbarin and his New Orleans Jazz* (Atlantic 90977-2) is an uplifting example of the city's music in the 1950s with **Milt Hinton's** bass providing additional rhythmic focus. This recording, like so many of Atlantic's CD reissues, was very much a personal project of Nesuhi Ertegun. His untimely death has robbed us of more gems from Atlantic's large vaults and will probably result in this CD rapidly becoming as much a collectors' item as the original LP.

By the early 1960s George Lewis had returned to New Orleans in weakened health. His classic band was history and his unfortunate recording contract with

Verve had been played out. In his last years he made significant recordings in a variety of settings for Milenburg, San Jacinto, Icon and other labels.

Only now has a concert recording from 1966 been issued. *The Penn/Wiggs New Orleans All Stars Concert Volume One and Two* (GHB BCD 301 & 302) was intended to be an ongoing band co-led by cornetist **Johnny Wiggs** and drummer **Sammy Penn** and featuring George Lewis, trombonist **Louis Nelson**, pianist **Charlie Hamilton** and bassist **Joseph Butler**. Unfortunately illness and death prevented the band from ever performing together again. The concert tapes have remained unissued until now. The repertoire is familiar (New Orleans standards and popular songs) but the enthusiasm of the musicians and the sure swing of the rhythm section are appealing. Despite unfamiliarity with each other's approach the three horn players find common ground on the songs and resolve any uncertainties they may have felt.

On June 5, 1966 Lewis participated in a marathon session with trombonist **Jim Robinson**, pianist **Don Ewell** and drummer **Cie Frazier**. Two thirds of the music was issued shortly thereafter on GHB and Center. The final nine titles lay in the vaults. Originally scheduled for release on Pearl they eventually wound up at Delmark. *George Lewis Reunion with George Lewis* (Delmark LP DS 220) is an important addition to the Lewis discography for, like the other music from the session, most of the tunes were not recorded elsewhere by the clarinetist. There's a solid feel to the performances and the musicians find interesting ways to handle a format which could have become overly predictable.

Don Ewell was no stranger to settings such as this and proves to be an ideal choice. His Morton derived style gives focus to the harmonic roots of the tunes as well as a rhythmic momentum not often found in pianists of Lewis' time. Ewell had been a key contributor to Bunk Johnson's trio session in New York in

1946 when a similar choice of ancient pop songs was the order of the day. Ewell's own Good Time Jazz sessions with Darnell Howard, Pops Foster and Minor Hall, classics of this format, are long overdue for reissue.

Don Ewell was also the pianist in Kid Ory's last great band. One of their residences was at San Francisco's Club Hangover. Broadcast performances from the club have been issued in Denmark on Storyville and give us additional opportunities to hear the concise and rhythmically adroit work of Ewell. *Volume 6* (Storyville SLP 4070) is noteworthy for the presence of clarinetist **Albert Burbank**. It's fascinating to hear the way he adjusted his rather spikey tone to the demands of the band. It gives us an extra dimension on a very stylized musician. Ewell is in great form on these sessions and the band (in 1954) is at its peak.

Kid Ory 1956 (Good Time Jazz GTCD 12016-2) is a CD reissue of the original LP. By then Ewell had left and the pianist is **Lionel Reason**. The studio sound is superb and all the dynamic nuances which made Ory's bands such a delight are clearly evident. This is the second Ory reissue since Fantasy acquired the GTJ label and they seem to be working backwards towards the band's peak years!

All too little of Don Ewell's remarkable solo piano was documented. What set Ewell apart from both Ralph Sutton and Dick Wellstood (the other pianists who functioned within roughly the same parameters while successfully developing highly individual syntheses of their influences) was his ability to utilize the voicings which had made Jelly Roll Morton such a unique artist.

Don Ewell: Chicago '57 (Stomp Off S.O.S. 1077) is an LP containing performances taped in a Chicago apartment. The music evolved over a long evening and is an excellent example of Ewell's mature style. The brilliance of his playing helps one forget the sound limitations inherent in the original recording. Jelly Roll's spirit pervades much of the playing but each

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piece, including Morton's own showcase, *The Pearls*, has its own life under Ewell's hands.

There's no recording date for the *Don Ewell Quintet* (Jazzology J-69), a session recorded while the pianist was on tour in England in the 1970s. **Barry Martyn** organized the date, one of many produced by the drummer over a twenty year period with his own hand-picked choice of UK musicians. Trumpeter **Pat Halcox**, an always-dependable melody man, and clarinetist **John Deferay** (who works out of Albert Nicholas' concepts) share the spotlight with Ewell in this attractive program.

You can hear something of Don Ewell in the playing of **Butch Thompson**. Perhaps it's their common empathy with Morton's music. You can certainly hear the connection in the 1984 *Echoes of New Orleans Volumes 1 and 2* (Stomp Off 1075 & 1116). Rhythmic assistance is provided on both volumes by **Hal Smith**, a drummer who has absorbed the fundamentals of New Orleans styles and his playing dovetails perfectly with the pianist. Volume 2 features the cornet of **Charlie DeVore** and is evocative of the 1946 Bunk Johnson trio date (with Ewell) but is not imitative in its execution.

More recent examples of Butch Thompson's playing can be heard in 1989 sessions which produced *New Orleans Joys* (Daring 3001), *Chicago Breakdown* (Daring 3002) and *New York* (Daring 3003). The pianist performs a broad cross-section of tunes associated with the classic period of jazz. His interpretations are full of delightful touches, evocative of the original texture of the compositions but performed with the vitality necessary to make a performance come alive.

The indigenous music of New Orleans has touched the world in many different ways. It was the city where early jazz was created as well as being the incubator, thanks to Smiley Lewis and Fats Domino, for much of the rock and roll era. More recently the region's cajun flavoured zydeco music has once again turned the music world around.



DON EWELL AND KID ORY
Photograph by Floyd Levin

It's unlikely that Bunk Johnson, George Lewis and Bill Russell had any idea that their modest recording efforts in the 1940s would be the catalyst for the worldwide adoption of this music by a whole generation of musicians who responded forcefully to its simple truths. And yet, in all honesty, much of the music played by

these disciples only touched the surface of the music created in New Orleans.

It was one of the continual frustrations of **Ken Colyer** that he could never get his bands to come close to the music he experienced when living in New Orleans in 1952. At that time, when he wasn't even a professional performing musician, he had come far enough along the path of understanding to not only be welcomed on the stand with the Lewis band but to be offered the trumpet chair for a West Coast tour. Who knows what might have happened if that early international mixing of talents had been allowed to happen. Colyer, instead, spent time in jail: incarcerated for not having a visa permitting him to enjoy the pleasures of the "land of the free and the brave."

Ken Colyer, like Django Reinhardt and only a few others from Europe, intuitively got inside the spiritual essence of the music. Perhaps coming from the disenfranchised undergrowth of British society gave Colyer (as much an outsider as Reinhardt) similar attitudes to those of the New Orleans musicians.

When Dreams Are In Dust is Colyer's highly personal account of his coming of age in wartime Cranford and his postwar career as a merchant seaman and his travels to many parts of the world. These experiences shaped his personality and gave him the resilience to build a career in music. In his travels he encountered jazz in Montreal, New York and other places.

Colyer heard Oscar Peterson at Montreal's Cafe Michel. "The place started to rock. He was powerful and used both hands, all ten fingers. The rhythm section was swinging superbly. As he warmed up his massive frame leant further over the keyboard. The atmosphere was electric. I

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had never heard piano playing like it and the place was in an uproar after each number."

His appreciation of the music at Condon's is one of the best: "Within a couple of numbers they were playing with a power, swing and tonal quality I would not have believed possible. It struck me for the first time that the gramophone record is badly misleading when it comes to jazz. No recording could ever completely capture the greatness of this music. As each number got rocking I seemed to be suspended, just sitting on air. And when the music finished I flopped back on my chair as though physically exhausted. If this is Chicago jazz, I told myself, then it is better than expected - and not far from the New Orleans pattern and sound."

Only one chapter covers Colyer's days with the Crane River and the Christie Brothers, when the first generation of post-war traditionalists were shaping their future.

When Dreams Are In Dust goes beyond the parameters of the typical jazz memoir. The words are Colyer's own and its concerns go far beyond the music. In fact only a small percentage of the narrative deals with Colyer's professional career as a musician. He rightly perceives that his various experiences as a young man were crucial in shaping his future.

The first two hundred pages are but a prelude to the section devoted to his stay in New Orleans. Colyer's observations on the music are full of original ideas, just as his playing became a uniquely individual interpretation of the New Orleans style. And the essence of his approach was already in place by this time. He might well have been viewed as a curiosity by the musicians initially but once he began playing their acceptance of him was warm and positive.

Ken Colyer's book was published by the Ken Colyer Trust (63 Rydal Gardens, Hounslow, Middlesex TW3 2JJ, U.K.) and this organization has also been releasing recordings by Colyer which were not

recorded originally for release. The Trust is continuing Colyer's own initiative in his final years when he released several LPs of his bands from the 1950s. Two of these include performances with George Lewis on tour with Colyer in 1957 and 1959. *1957 - A Very Good Year* (KC-1) captures a live session at Eel Pie Island. It is notable for a performance of *One Sweet Letter From You*, where the drive of the band is close to the spirit of the Lewis Climax session. The four selections with George Lewis come from a rehearsal before their opening concert in Manchester. *When The Sun Goes Down* (KC 3) is a 1959 Dusseldorf concert recording where Lewis is heard on four selections.

Ill health caused Colyer to stop leading a regular band in the early 1970s although he continued to perform frequently for the rest of his life. By this time, some twenty years after the landmark Decca LP with his first band (not counting the early Crane River days), an ever growing pool of musicians had come to understand Colyer's musical philosophy and could provide him with the right kind of setting for his music. One such gig was a series of Tuesday nights at the George in Morden with what he called **His Hand-picked Jazzmen**. The session on January 25, 1972 was recorded but never issued until now. It's different to the best of Colyer's recordings but the band's playing is assured with a keen sense of swing. It is available through the Trust as KCT2R.

Many of Colyer's early recordings for Decca have been reissued in England in the last few years on Lake Records. This is a small, independent company which has been able to lease definitive early recordings of British jazz which have long been out of print. The project will not be completed however due to policy changes at Polygram (who now control most of the significant recordings by British jazz musicians of all styles through their acquisition of Decca and the material produced by Dennis Preston).

The band led by Colyer in the 1950s with clarinetist **Ian Wheeler**, trombonist **Mac**

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Duncan and drummer Colin Bowden is generally considered to be the "classic" band. The long out of print *Club Session With Colyer* (Lake 5006) is as good an example of the band as you're likely to find. Part of the appeal lies in the choice of material, all geared perfectly to the New Orleans idiom. Colyer's band could also handle harmonically more sophisticated popular songs in an ingenious way, adapting them to their style. Their last session was titled *Ken Colyer Plays Standards*. Producer Paul Adams discovered that the band had recorded the same material two months earlier at the Railway Hotel, Hampstead (site of the Club Session performance). Extensive search in the Decca vaults uncovered the tapes, which are now out on *Lonesome Road* (Lake 5010). While the songs are the same we now have a completely new set of performances by the Colyer band close to its peak. By this time Ken had added pianist Ray Foxley and the musical scales were tipped towards the greater control espoused by the Kid Ory bands. This recording is an important find.

The Lake series began with an overall survey of *The Decca Years 1955-1959* (Lake 5001) with titles only issued originally on 45 rpm singles and EPs. A further volume of this material (containing the remaining titles from the EPs *And Back To New Orleans*) were promised but now seem unlikely to appear. Even the Telefunken set from the 1970s didn't include all of those titles.

Barry Martyn is another British musician who has come as close as Ken Colyer to the truth of New Orleans music. His classic band in the 1960s featured trumpeter Cuff Billett, reedmen Sammy Rimmington and Bill Greenow and trombonist Pete Dyer. Martyn, apart from being an exciting and swinging drummer, was a tireless promoter of the music. He brought musicians to England, got them recorded for release on a variety of labels and set up tours which introduced musicians who previously had received little attention.

The Martyn band's rhythmic feel was

looser than Colyer's, leaning imperceptibly closer to the "jump" style of music so popular in New Orleans in the 1950s. It, in turn, had derived in part from the rollicking pulse of such popular bands as Louis Jordan and Earl Bostic. Martyn got to record with many different New Orleans musicians but his greatest achievement was in being the catalyst for the late blooming recording career of Capt John Handy. The altoist preferred his "down home life" playing for dance patrons at the LaVida and had turned down his chance at fame in the 1930s when he declined an offer to work with Fats Waller.

The Handy Sessions (GHB 251) is an exciting taste of the music created by Handy, trumpeter Kid Sheik and the Martyn band in March 1966. The music was recorded, originally, for Doug Dobell's 77 Records and the two volumes of *Handyman* and *In The Groove* are classics. The eight selections included in this LP are tracks from those sessions which were never issued before. Handy was a dramatic musician who could imbue any song with great jazz feeling. Only *Down In Honky Tonk* could be identified as a "traditional" vehicle for New Orleans jazzers in this collection. Perhaps this is why Souchon and Rose were dumb enough to tell us in their *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Portrait* that Handy was "a rock-and-roll type musician limited to the blues." I wonder how many R&R musicians can play *At Sundown, I Want A Little Girl, Sunny Side of the Street, Rosetta* and *I'm Confessin'*, all performed here with eloquence and soulful expression by Handy.

Ken Colyer noted in his book that Bruce Turner had said, "you can't practise jazz." To which Colyer responded, "And I would like to add it's no good playing at playing jazz. There is an enormous difference." Certainly both Ken Colyer and Barry Martyn understood this. Playing this music has been as much a lifetime commitment for them as it was for the musicians who first created the sounds of jazz. They may be gone but the magic of their music is still there for us all to hear. □

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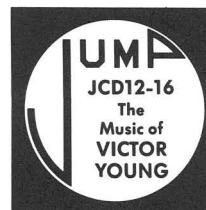
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