

THE JOURNAL OF JAZZ AND IMPROVISED MUSIC

CODA MAGAZINE

MARCH/APRIL 1993 • ISSUE 248

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THE ORCHESTRA ISSUE

THE LONDON JAZZ
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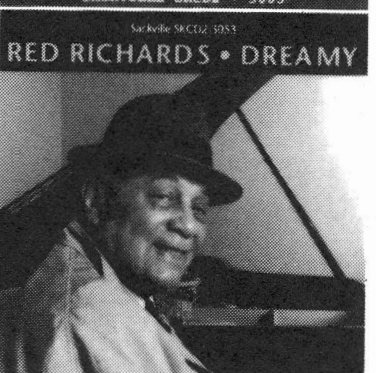
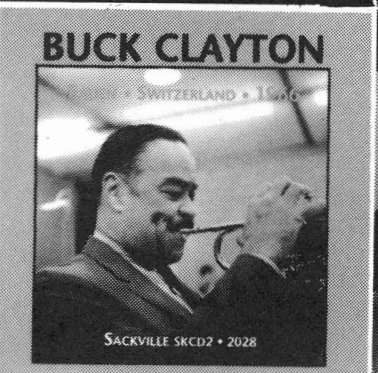
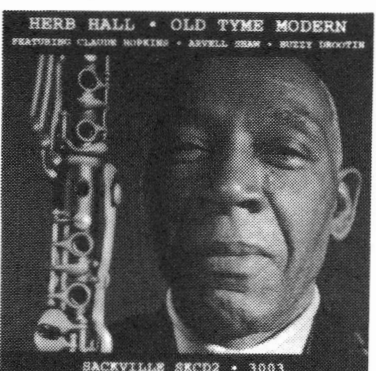
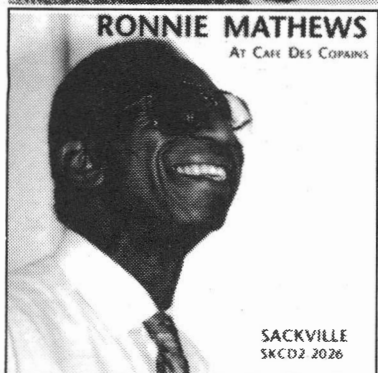
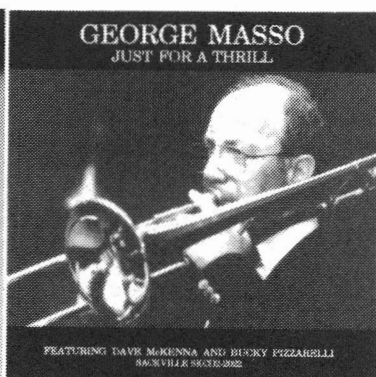
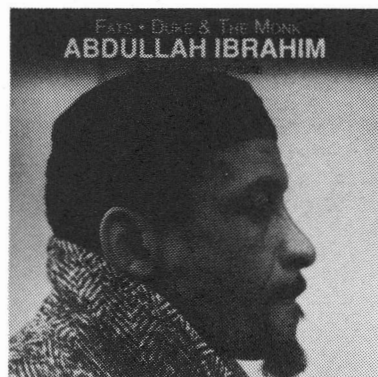


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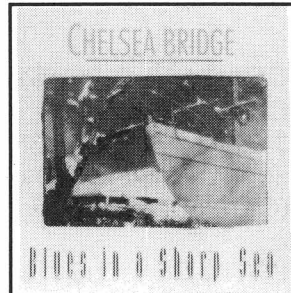
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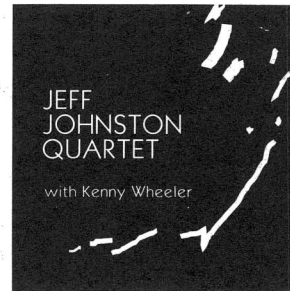
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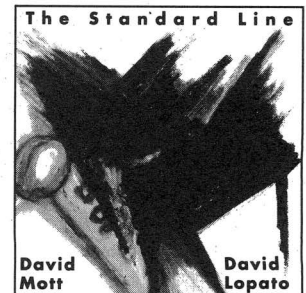
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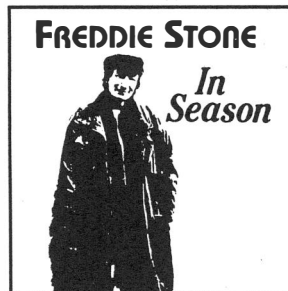
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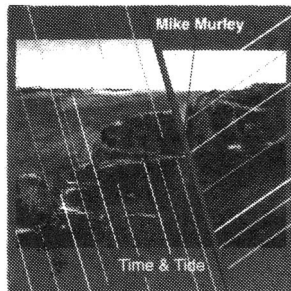
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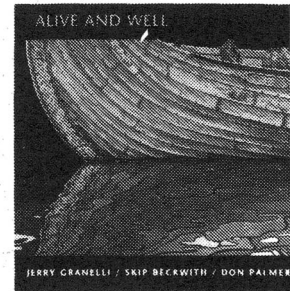
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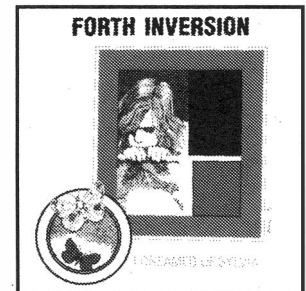
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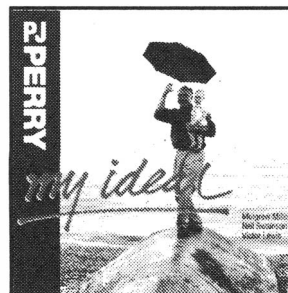
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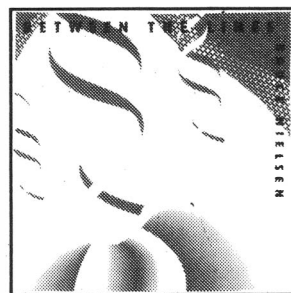
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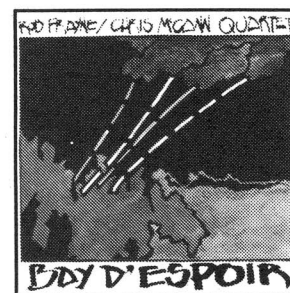
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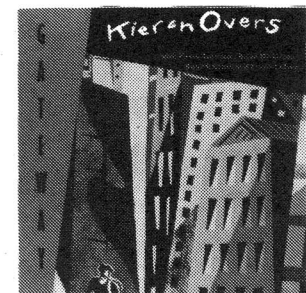
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CODA MAGAZINE

PUBLISHED CONTINUOUSLY SINCE 1958
ISSUE 248 • Published March 1st • 1993

CODA PUBLICATIONS
BOX 87 • STATION J • TORONTO
ONTARIO • M4J 4X8 • CANADA
PHONE / FAX (416) 593-7230

JOHN NORRIS • Founder/Publisher
WILLIAM E. (Bill) SMITH • Editor/Art Director
SHEILA MACPHERSON • Copy Editor
MICHAEL McNAMARA • Graphic Realization

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Coda publishes six issues per year. Rates for a one-year subscription are as follows

CANADA

Regular mail (Incl. GST) **\$25.68**
First class mail (Incl. GST) **\$29.96**

U.S.A.

Regular mail (US funds) **\$24.00**
First class mail (U.S. funds) **\$27.00**

ELSEWHERE (except U.K.)

Regular mail (Cdn. funds) **\$27.00**
Air mail (Cdn. funds) **\$36.00**

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CODA MAGAZINE is published six times per year in *January, March, May, July, September and November*, in CANADA. It is supported by its subscribers and by its advertisers. We also gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the **Canada Council** and the **Ontario Arts Council**. Second class mail registration number R-1134. For availability of current and back issues of Coda on microfilm, contact **University Microfilms International**, 200 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106 USA, 30-32 Mortimer Street, Dept. P.R., London W1N 7RA, England, or **Micromedia Ltd.**, 20 Victoria Street, Toronto, Ontario M5C 2N8 Canada. Indexed in The Canadian Periodical Index and The Music Index.
Printed in Canada. ISSN 0820-926X

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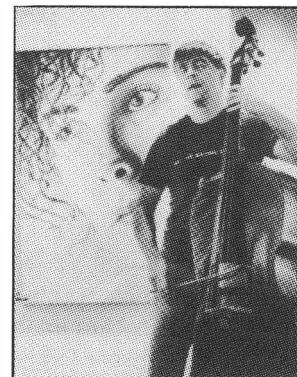
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CANADIAN NOTES

COMPILED BY PUBLISHER JOHN NORRIS

THE RAY BROWN TRIO WAS THE SWAN SONG BOOKING for Toronto's Bermuda Onion. The club closed late September after presenting an impressive array of top talent. Pianist Benny Green and drummer Jeff Hamilton were with Ray Brown for this swinging finale.



DOWNSCALING is fashionable these days and this has occurred within the jazz community as well. Despite a generally gloomy atmosphere the **Pilot Tavern** opened up a new and much larger showcase for jazz in later November. It launched the room with a week of "theme" nights with some of Toronto's most popular jazz artists. A key factor in the room's initial

success has been its "no cover" policy. Other venues are still grappling with the up and down flow of customers.

The **Toronto Downtown Jazz Society** (producers of the DuMaurier Downtown Jazz Festival) has established a membership vehicle for jazz support. Known as the "Friends" of the society it offers discounts on a variety of

events and commodities. In November it co-sponsored a concert with Italian virtuoso **Giorgio Gaslini** and published the initial issue of its newsletter. Call (416) 363-8717 if you are interested in becoming a "friend" of jazz.

Scott Hamilton and Terence Blanchard were instrumental headliners at the Senator during a fall "Festival Of Ameri-

can Song". Carol Sloane, Blossom Dearie and Susannah McCorkle made rare appearances in Toronto and **Trudy Desmond** chose the club as the launching pad for her new recording on Jazz Alliance. **Tailor Made** is the vehicle for an extensive public relations campaign to expand the audience for the Toronto-based singer. She did one nighters at Catalina's (in Los Angeles), Kimball's (in San Francisco), The Blue Note (in New York) and Sculler's (in Boston) immediately following the Senator gig and performed at Blues Alley (in Washington) on January 11th.

In The Key Of Oscar is the title of an in depth documentary on the life and music of **Oscar Peterson**. Its premiere was a gala night at Toronto's Roy Thompson Hall which included a performance set by Peterson's quartet. The Film was then shown on CBC TV and is now being distributed in video form by The National Film Board of Canada. It's a very personal portrait of a complex and highly motivated personality. The sensitive direction by Peterson's niece Sylvia Sweeney is a key to its integrity. Complementing the video is a CD containing five selections by OP's quartet recorded live at the Bermuda Onion and 7 selections drawn from electronic realisations of Peterson's imagination.

Archie Alleyne's *The Evolution Of Jazz* is set for a concert presentation February 14th at

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Artspace in Peterborough. The show has also been adapted for radio presentation in February on the CBC. It will be heard in four weekly segments.

THE FRENCH LANGUAGE network of the CBC has a new jazz program heard Monday to Friday at 10:30 pm. Also heard on a regular basis on Toronto's CJRT are live concerts from the Ontario Science Centre. The December 14th concert by the **Barry Elmes Quintet** attracted a full house and offered excellent music by some of the city's finest jazz performers. Kevin Turcotte, Mike Murley, Ed Bickert, Steve Wallace and Barry Elmes are artists of international stature and the music heard at this concert confirmed this. Upcoming in February and March are concerts featuring Bobbi Sherron, Art Maiste, the Lenny Solomon Trio, the Ken Foretran Quartet and Tenor Madness.

Recordings can be misleading indicators of a musician's abilities. Both Kenny Drew Jr. and Jodie Christian created mesmerising sound tapestries during their solo engagements at the Montreal Jazz Club which went far beyond the promise of their recent recordings. November was also a time for warm reunions with old friends at the club. **Jim Galloway** shared the stage with Jay McShann for a week. A great deal of tenor saxophone was heard as the two collaborated on spur of the moment recollections of past favourites. Concluding the club's music policy for the year was a powerhouse week with **Oliver Jones'** Trio. Bassist Dave Young and drummer Sheri Maricle worked with the pianist.

Pianist **Red Richards** was honoured November 29th at the Montreal for his many contributions to jazz over his long career. The party officially celebrated his 80th birthday with music by the Jim Galloway Quartet, the presentation of an elegant plaque and the launching of his newest Sackville CD - a collection of piano solos under the title *Dreamy*. Dan Matri and George Read joined their former leader for a brief set of music evocative of the days when this rhythm section was the foundation of The Saints and Sinners.

The Senator was the venue for the launch of Gene Lees' latest book on November 23rd. *Jazz Lives* contains 100 portraits of jazz musicians from all generations. It combines the brilliant portrait photography of John Reeves and the written words of Gene Lees. There are some surprising choices and it is reassuring to find adequate representation of musicians from within Canada's jazz community. Music for the event was provided by Don Thompson (piano), Neil Swainson (bass) and Barry Elmes (drums).

The Mezzetta Cafe (681 St. Clair Avenue West) presents Timeshift on February 24th featuring the talents of guitarist Michael Kleniac, percussionist Geordie McDonald and saxophonist Ron Allen...In the lineup at George's Spaghetti house are Hugh Fraser (Feb 8-13), Kevin Turcotte (Feb 15-20), Phil Dwyer (Feb 22-27), Rick Wilkins (March 1-6) and Alex Dean (March 15-20).

José Amer, director of the Havana Jazz Festival, visited Toronto at the end of Novem-

ber to develop closer links between Canada and Cuba's music communities. A group of Canadian jazz fans attend the event and this year's program takes place from February 14-21.

The Hamilton All Star Jazz band, The Niagara Brass Ensemble and Velvet Glove will all be heard February 14th in a special evening of jazz being held at **Hamilton's DuMaurier Centre** in an event co-sponsored by the Canadian Red Cross and Jazz at St. C's.

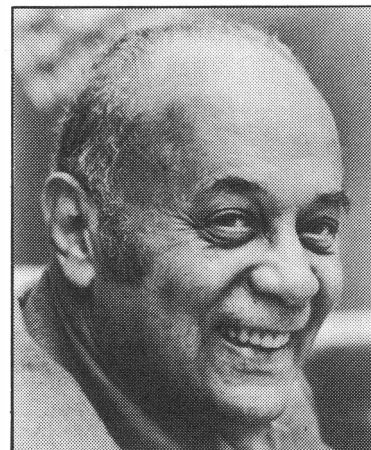
Dave Klinger's Classic Jazz Band and Les Pardoe's Quintet provided the music for the **Classic Jazz Guild of Calgary's** second bash on January 22nd. The embryonic society is on the move and further information is available by calling (403) 261-9888...The **Coastal Jazz & Blues Society** presented Kenny Wheeler in concert January 21st with the Jeff Johnston Quartet and guitarist Joe Pass at Vancouver's East Cultural Centre on January 25th.

The Europeans are coming! The **Willem Breuker Kollektief** are planning a March/April USA/Canada tour and saxophonist **Gerd Dudek's** trio are expected to make the Canadian jazz festival circuit this summer.

There are 820 new entries in the second edition of the **Encyclopedia Of Music In Canada**. The massive tome is the basic reference work for scholars requiring information on all aspects of Canadian music activity. The extensive jazz coverage has been the responsibility of Mark Miller. The book is published

by the University of Toronto Press and has 1500 pages with 3800 entries and 575 illustrations.

California based Terra Nova has issued a debut CD by pianist John Stetch. It features Mike Murley, Jim Vivian and Ted Warren and these musicians helped launch the recording with a cross Canada tour in late October/early November...Unity Records has issued a CD containing the last recordings of composer/flugelhornist Freddie



Stone. John Nugent, P.J. Perry, Mike Murley and Vikrama are others to have new recordings released through Unity...A first volume of music from the recordings made by The Dave McMurdo Jazz Orchestra at the Montreal Bistro are being released by Sackville to coincide with the band's return to the club for the week of February 22-27. □

JIM GALLOWAY & NEIL SWAINSON
PHOTOGRAPH BILL SMITH
RED RICHARDS • PHOTOGRAPHER
UNKNOWN

BARRY GUY

INTERVIEW & PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL SMITH

It seems impossible that you are here in Vancouver playing with an orchestra of this kind so far away from England. It must be very difficult to organise the movement of such an orchestra to Canada, because that can't hardly be done inside of Canada. I'm curious how you could make this happen.



THERE WERE A LOT OF CIRCUMSTANTIAL... lots of things that actually came together, to make this work. The first thing in this tour was the invitation to go to Victoriaville. This is the starting point. Last year when I visited Victoriaville to play a solo concert we talked about the possibility of bringing the orchestra over. The only way we could bring the orchestra over was to enlist the support of the British Council. To enlist the support of the British Council one has to really work on a much grander scale. They are very supportive in some singular concerts, but they prefer us to do more concerts. Especially if they are going to spend the money to get us across the Atlantic, and have us make an appearance in Canada. Ideally the idea would be to capitalise on the initial idea and expand it. So I suppose on the occasion of my visit to Victoriaville last year I started talking to Ken Pickering. We had a kind of joke, I said "Ken it would be really nice since we're coming to Victoriaville, wouldn't it be lovely to come to Vancouver". At the same time as we were having this conversation he said, "Well, one thing I've always wanted was the original album of Ode, (Live Recording from English Bach Festival, Oxford. 22nd April 1972. Released on INCUS 6/7) "Well" I said, "I can probably find you a copy of that. And he said "That's going to cost me a lot of money, isn't it?" So I said "It may cost you a lot of money, but you will have the real orchestra then." So I offered him a copy of Ode for an invitation to Vancouver. One day we got a call from Ken and he said "We'll try to make you happy."

Then the big problem was that Vancouver, is quite a long way from Victoriaville. What do we do with seventeen people on the road, all hanging out, we can't afford that. So we tried to fill in between, and to do that we got various people to investigate the possibilities of other concerts here in Canada. And also we made enquiries into the United States. We came up with not very much. Except John Corbett in Chicago. He didn't normally do this sort of thing, but he worked

his butt off. That's the way it is. Since we were here, it seemed to be a good idea to do, instead of just one concert, two concerts and possibly some small group concerts as well; to have an expanded scenario rather than a reduced one. In that way we made it sensible for seventeen people travelling that far. It means the listeners get a fairly broad aspect of my writing and and the guys playing. And they get to hear small free improvising groups. I hope that's the start of something else. Because there's quite a few appearances of the guys in fairly short concerts, it would be very nice that some of these groups would be able to come under their own names, at different times.

It occurred to me at the rehearsal that sat in the orchestra were a handful of the most important British improvisers who created the whole process of new British improvised music in the latter half of the sixties. There was Paul Rutherford, Trevor Watts, Evan Parker, Paul Lytton, Howard Riley, you, Barre Philips, all to do with that period of music. They are all independently very creative artists on their own, so does the orchestra exist because of that time when you all became friends, and it simply grew and grew?

I WOULD SAY THAT IS PRECISELY IT. I think we have to acknowledge that within the orchestra almost everybody has their own projects. They have their own ideas, their own direction, their own sound, their own desires musically. However, because of that particular time of the late sixties, seventies, when the music was, in a way, formulating, we all became firm friends and we have this tremendous respect for each other. Let's say that the London Jazz Composers Orchestra (LJCO) was a manifestation of that period. It gave us another kind of meeting place. And, dare I say, I do see it as a social institution.

THE LONDON JAZZ COMPOSERS' ORCHESTRA



EVAN PARKER (Seated)
TREVOR WATTS (Standing)

IN THE EARLY DAYS WE HAD QUITE A FEW CONCERTS, and then because of financial considerations, because of my own working situation, there were various problems, we did less concerts, but when we did get together it was always a great thrill. In fact most of the time people were catching up on the local news in the profession. In a way it was a great opportunity to bring together friends that didn't always work together. I've been working with Evan ever since those days of the Little Theatre Club, I've been working with Paul, with Howard Riley. These days I don't play with Howard Riley because he has different ideas of what he wants to promote. So it is wonderful to work again with Howard in the orchestra. Actually he's done every single concert right from the very beginning. I think the point of this is that this special energy, this special input, this special kind of music making, is characterised in this ensemble. So whilst everybody has an individual voice, they have enough time to come along and say - yes we can exercise our particular voices within this context. It is terribly important to have these friends, these important musicians around, and I'm very pleased to have them in the band. I'm glad they haven't run away. Some people have been and gone. Trevor Watts was there early on, he went off for a while to do some things and came back again. It's not an on the road band, it's a project band anyway. I like to have the idea of a series of projects which are ongoing, pieces that grow, slowly grow to become more and more space to allow the musicians to develop. More and more space for the piece to develop. So instead of just going on the road and just playing everything night after night after night, what we have to do is actually work in periods which are financially and artistically acceptable. And then make an intense study of the pieces an intense musical experience. Then we can go off and do our different things. Then I try to mobilise everybody again, as and when the situation seems appropriate.

THE FIRST ORCHESTRA COVERED a very very wide area of music, so I tried through my own compositional methods, to narrow this down a bit, and actually became more and more abstract. Whilst we were experimenting with the improvised music side in the early seventies, of refining the language, I was trying to refine another language which was the compositional side. What I

was doing, to a certain extent, was alienating some of the musicians. Derek Bailey left a little while after that because he found it almost unacceptable to deal with the rigours of this very difficult music. It was very heavily detailed. Very detailed. So I began to understand that I was probably going up a slightly wrong path. But very often you have to do this to discover the other way. What I did was invite any of the musicians who wanted to write pieces to write pieces. Let's see their approach. So Tony Oxley, Paul Rutherford, Howard Riley and Kenny Wheeler wrote pieces. We had a couple of straight pieces as well. We played a piece by Krzysztof Penderecki, which was actually written for the Globe Unity Orchestra. We played a piece by our then director, Buxton Orr, and also a piece by a composer friend of mine, Bernard Rands, who actually teaches in Boston now. So there were these various approaches from the very rigorous side of composing through to the graphic side of Tony Oxley. It was quite a wide palette we were dealing with. Also it gave everybody a slightly different focus; it meant that the composers had to see it from the other side as well. Then it went a little bit quiet, quieter. From 1977 through 1980 we did nothing. It also reflects that I was busy on the road doing some other things. Some straight music. But in 1980 I wrote a piece called Four Pieces For Orchestra, that's when Peter Brotzmann and Peter Kowald were in the band. This in a way signalled another direction. I directed it. I wanted to try another way to run the band, to put more responsibility onto the players. Rather than just having somebody conducting, I wanted some freedom within the sections and freedom with the way the sections were organised. So that meant that some of the players had to take on the role of some of the directing. That was the new direction. Basically the history of LJCO is in three parts. The first part was Ode, the second phase was when all the guys wrote pieces for the orchestra, and the third was when I decided to take the helm again. Because I had a clearer idea of what I wanted to do, it actually

THE LONDON JAZZ

PAUL LYTTON

became fairly obvious which direction to go. And I had learnt a lot as well. Four pieces for Orchestra, Polyhymnia, Harnos, Double Trouble and Theoria. So we're up to date really.

In the period when the orchestra is beginning it seems that there is Globe Unity, Mike Westbrook, The Brotherhood of Breath, all existing in a short period of time. Why was there such a need for orchestras? After all they were difficult to organise and not economically viable.

I DON'T KNOW, IT'S VERY INTERESTING I never thought about that, but you're right, there were quite a few powerful souls. I think orchestras begin because of the initiative of certain people. I enjoyed the writing of large structures I enjoyed the big band sound. Although I wanted to do something about it under my own terms. I think Westbrook did the same and JCOA with Mike Mantler, they had a certain direction they wanted to examine. So I think all of these things tend to be the idea of singular people. I think it's coincidence, but also it's the cohesion of people, the way the people come together at a certain time in history. Very often out of a group of people you will get some nut case like me who will say let's do something as a celebration for us all. Everybody had the same idea, the Brotherhood of Breath, Westbrook's team, when you find this great rising spirit, this great energy, sometimes you just have to get in there and find a way of reacting to it.

There could be some debate in certain circles as to whether or not this is a jazz orchestra. I wonder why you would think it was.

WELL LET'S GO ONTO THE OTHER SIDE. I think we can definitely say it's not a straight orchestra. Now why's it not a straight orchestra? It's not a straight orchestra because we were using improvising musicians, all of whom grew up in the jazz tradition. At one time I had a few so called straight musicians in the band, in the first period when the pieces were getting very difficult, but that was a mistake, it didn't work at all, texturally it was quite interesting, but intellectually it was very unsatisfying. There was no meeting point really. If you define jazz as being time playing and harmonic sequence playing then o.k. you could say the LJCO is not playing jazz. Although we do play some time



things and some sequences. One of the things I was interested in breaking away from was the regular structures of eight, twelve and sixteen bars, the song form. Recurring sequences, recurring rhythmic sequences. The important thing is that we are researching a much wider area of musical language, based upon the jazz tradition. Integrating the researches and the march forward of technical invention, a fantastic movement from individual musicians where the instruments have technically flowered. It can't be straight music, what else can it be if we are using jazz musicians, so it has to be called a jazz orchestra.

Was the American big band history an influence on you?

CHARLES MINGUS WAS VERY INFLUENTIAL. I think he was one of the guys that started to break down the barriers and actually took risks. Took tremendous risks. Really taking the idea of a large ensemble to new areas. From that side I realised it could be done within the jazz ensemble, the big band. From the other side what I found influential, listening to extended straight music pieces, or even symphonies, which I had to do at music college anyway. The question I ask myself is - Why should one deny oneself the opportunity of dealing with the large concept, because it's jazz. Why can't we integrate different sonorities, different time changes, different areas which actually reflect the musician. Why can't we do that, why should we just run through a series of chord changes and a series of solos strung one after the other, when there is no need to do that. Mingus started to break all that down even in his small ensembles. The wonderful time changes he got into, the way he could slip from one area to another and create these marvellous moods. One of my ideas was to get a sonorous and vibrant sound out of the ensemble and if there was ever an inspiration for that, it was Mingus. The way he made his whole

COMPOSERS' ORCHESTRA



PETER McPHAIL
BARRY GUY
HOWARD RILEY

ensemble sing, and he had that freedom, that was certainly very influential. Yes.

You play other styles of music, in chamber music groups and classical orchestras, other than jazz and improvised music?

I USED TO. IN THE LAST FEW YEARS I HAVE DECIDED TO PULL OUT of that area of the music. I haven't completely pulled out, I still do one chamber orchestra and some early music ensembles, but very little now. The reason for that is, as time was marching on, I was constantly on the road or in the studio playing Beethoven and Mozart and Haydn with these various ensembles, and I realised that I was losing time. Not only in terms of looking after the orchestra, not only in terms of composing, but also denying myself playing with small ensembles. One day Evan (Parker) said we're going to lose you if you don't think about this seriously. That was a good moment to say - Hey. Every time they got concerts in Europe I would be on a tour of the States, then I would come back to work in the studio doing all the Beethoven symphonies, or something. So there was very little time in which to do projects. I decided, virtually overnight, to knock the whole lot on the head, and say thank you very much, now it's time to start reconsidering the direction. I've moved out of London to get away from the attraction of the studios. The idea was to focus on a particular area of music that is most important. That is improvisation, the orchestra and composition, solo playing, small groups.

Considering how popular the young gentlemen in suits from the southern United States have become, and how that has become the new standard for jazz, is it more difficult, in England, to play improvised music now than it was in the sixties?

some freer aspects, we tend to get asked. So in one sense the whole thing has closed down, on the other hand because we've stuck to it, some people are saying that we must know what we are doing. We still manage to continue a reasonably healthy existence. But it's much harder, there's no doubt about it. Even for something like the Evan Parker trio (Barry & Paul Lytton) it's very difficult to try to get a series of concerts to make a tour. Improvised music or freer music is seen as lunatics music again. It's gone back to where it started from.

Politically and economically, there's no doubt, that in this last decade, it's been ruinous for the arts. Certainly in England the Thatcher government was promoting the idea that there should be no such thing as governmental help through arts councils and arts bodies. She was promoting the idea that if you want to get some kind of subsidy you would have to get sponsorship directly from the big companies. The big companies of course are as conservative as hell, they're only worried about their image, they're only worried about where the money is going to come from for their share holders and to support their directors. The last thing that enters their minds is that they are going to put some money into an operation like ours, because it's the totally wrong image. On the other hand they can put it into an opera company or a ballet company which is part of the national institution, the fabric of society. Because it has the right resonances within the society in which they move. We don't move within that society, so what Thatcher did, and the various corporate business side of Britain, and the world probably, was take away the consciousness for the new arts. I'm not just talking about music, that's painting, writing, dance, to redirect the peoples consciousness into this almost bleak scenario of finance and self survival.

IT HAS TIGHTENED UP. There is a preoccupation with bebop music again, and there is nothing wrong with that, but the big problem is there seems to be a cut off point for appreciation, their minds have closed up. The doors have closed. On the other hand, because we've been around a little bit longer playing this music, if there is an opportunity where a festival wants

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It turns out that it's not only Britain, but the Canadian prime minister and the American president did exactly the same thing. So obviously it's a whole concept of this modern commercial world. Is there a generation of players coming from the music that you have invented? This amazing music.

I GET THE IMPRESSION THAT SOME PEOPLE HAVE been influenced by some of us, many people acknowledge that Evan has been a great influence. If we are called the first generation, then the so called second generation in a way wanted to do the complete opposite to what we were doing. One of the aspects of the first generation was to work up on a very high technical plain, to get a refinement of language and technique. So the technique was established and therefore you could make your statement without having to worry about struggling with your instrument. So in fact the instrument became part of the self. The way you spoke was with a great amount of fluency, without the instrument getting in the way. To a certain extent, and this is a vast generalisation, the next generation were not interested in our type of technical perfection, it was much more of a grass roots level. Anyone could pick up almost any instrument, it was almost as if they wanted to take it out into the street and give instruments out to everybody. Unrefined. Needless to say because there were some great people involved in it some great music came out of it. They are very brilliant guys, intellectually they're brilliant. Somebody like Steve Beresford had a university degree. It was just a different philosophy, a different way of approaching the music. The first generation came through the rigours of jazz, learning from people like Dolphy, Ornette Coleman, Albert Ayler, Coltrane, Mingus, all those fantastically great Americans. I think there was a need to become familiar with that language, and because it was so highly defined, you had to develop your own. You had virtually to go along the same road for awhile before the change. A lot of the younger generation never went back to there, but started from their own space, from a different philosophy completely. Which is fine, I don't see why everybody should go back to playing bebop. You don't have to go back to dixieland so you can play bebop.

The English jazz element of that generation has gone back to the tradition just like the American suits, playing this conventional imitation music.

I THINK THAT COINCIDED WITH THE HEIGHT OF THATCHERISM and the corporate mentality. Because suddenly everybody wanted managers. I was reading articles in magazines saying my manager is going to do this for me. I remember one player in England, when asked what he wanted out of life, saying that first of all he was going to get his VAT number, which means he was expecting to earn a certain amount per year, and then a wife, and then a house, and have some kids, and I'm going to make a lot of great albums. The only thing I didn't hear, was about music making. When is the music coming into this. It was only to do with business. And this was the whole mentality of the eighties, the whole thing was rushing headlong into business schemes, product.

One of the things about the LJCO, and this music, is that it has kept a fairly low profile because a lot of people don't like it. It's been very carefully considered, the way the music develops, how the language develops. It's something to do with the dialect as well. We all have a different way of speaking but we can all understand each other. You live in Canada you have a different accent to what I have, but we understand each other in terms of the music. It's quite important to realise that some things actually take a long time to come to fruition. Whereas a lot of the eighties so called culture was very very quick turning. It was actually at the mercy of the media. Things would come up one day and then virtually be extinguished a couple of years later. The idea of the short memory, the quick turn over product. Everybody was being encouraged to come up with this yearly product. To keep on changing. It was very unfashionable to have a long term project.

Childrens toys. They change every season. It's not teddy bears, Leggo or building blocks anymore. Every season there are new fashions, even for children.

IT TITILLATES FOR A WHILE, THEN IT'S OUT THE WINDOW. I remember the kids toys that we had like Mechano, at least you were encouraged to look into things, to build things, to understand how something could be more than instantaneous. You research into how you can get your Mechano to be one day a crane and the next day to be a tractor. It actually exercises the mind to be thinking in the future, thinking a little bit long term, thinking about how you could construct things in a very interesting way. I despair at video games, at that mentality, because again it's the idea of the computer providing a short term success. You win your game, then you go up to another level and you win another game, but this gratification is terribly short term, it doesn't actually take you on to thinking about the wider context of things. One of the horrible things about computer games, to my mind, is it's so singular. It doesn't encourage you to communicate with your fellow human beings. Which is another one of the spin off from the politics and the corporate mentality, it seems to have wiped out the idea that we can work together on a direction, to get on with each other as human beings. This is why I value so much, these associations with the LJCO, because it's not for the want of just hanging on to old things, it's actually the best way that I can see of expressing a type of society. A society where human beings get on with each other instead of greedily trying to get ahead of each other. We want to work together in a humane way. I try to write music that expresses that. □

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THE BIG BAND CONTINUUM

A LOT OF MYTHS ARE PERPETUATED, a lot of nonsense talked about the place of big bands in the history of jazz. The accepted view of the development of the big band and the patterns set for scoring is rooted in the work of Don Redman in the twenties with McKinney's Cotton Pickers and Fletcher Henderson. Without denying the importance of Redman and those groups, this is probably an overly simplistic view. James Lincoln Collier in his book about Benny Goodman has an interesting revisionist opinion, suggesting the influence of a wider range of groups, and Ross Russell in his *Jazz Style in Kansas City and the South West* gives a clear indication that in the twenties and thirties a proliferation of territory bands certainly influenced how things developed in big bands.

THE PRINCIPAL MYTH ABOUT BIG BANDS has to do with the swing era. This myth suggests that the heyday of the big band was that period from Goodman's California appearance in 1935 to perhaps the declaration of war at the end of 1941 (though one might suggest that swing dribbled on to about 1950 or so, struggling with a shortage of manpower and small group bop.) These few years saw big band music, with its repertoire of jazz-influenced charts merged with highly commercialized offerings, become a truly popular music. But the myth goes on to state that really from about 1950 on big bands were a dead issue in jazz. I even saw a newspaper review recently claiming that big band jazz was "archaic", a patently absurd statement for this ignores the fact that from that time on, certain big bands persisted, not with the range achieved in the swing era but with more emphasis on jazz-flavoured charts — think of Duke Ellington, Woody Herman, Buddy Rich, Maynard Ferguson, Count Basie who all ran big bands regularly with occasional disbandings.

Not only that. While it is true that the economics of running a big band on that regular basis, as British writer Benny Green once put it, "without ending up in the bankruptcy court,[the leader] must have read, at least three times through, the collected works of Aristotle, Machiavelli, Caesar, Shaw and Churchill," the big band has continued to be very much a part of the history of jazz up to the present.

The difficulties of keeping a big band together with a stable personnel has been solved in a variety of ways. The recent college band phenomenon has grown out of the fact that a student organization can stay together for three of four years, with a constant supply of new blood when necessary. A lot of jazz criti-

cism has denigrated the college band movement as somehow being too self-contained, lacking in that notion of testing skills, that playing in the hot-bed of other experienced musicians, honing improvisation through the examples of mentors. Maybe that is a problem but there's no doubt that the college movement has kept the idea of the big band alive for new generations and some of the best college bands have produced interesting music. Phil Woods has an interesting suggestion to add to the college band curriculum. He says students should learn the rigours of the big band life by being stuffed on a bus day after day, unloading, then having to blow all night before boarding the band bus again!

THEN THERE'S THE REHEARSAL BAND. Many jazz musicians love the idea of playing in a big band and are prepared to give up time and well-paying gigs to participate in making big bands part of their lives so sometimes leaders can rely on stable personnel that way. Surely that's what happened through the fifties and sixties and even later, especially on the West Coast when that large migration of musicians to the studios led to the formation of fine big bands — witness the recordings by Bill Holman, Shorty Rogers, Maynard Ferguson, Marty Paich among others. This kind of situation resulted in the formation of the three best big bands now in existence at present: the Jones/Lewis Jazz Orchestra (continuing as more than a ghost band even after the death of Mel Lewis), the Boss Brass and the Bob Florence Limited Edition. And perhaps the US Forces bands can be slotted in here — they certainly have stable personnel and the Airmen of Note has shown for some years now that it has a distinct personality of its own.

REVIEWS BY PETER STEVENS



PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE THAD JONES/MEL LEWIS ORCHESTRA BY TON VAN WAGENINGEN

Sometimes big bands have existed under the sponsorship of agencies. In Europe big bands still continue — the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has a big band and Scandinavian radio keeps big bands on hand. In fact, while in North America the idea of the death of the big band was formulated, Europe had some fine big bands, including the constantly undervalued (in North America at least) Kenny Clarke/Francy Boland Big Band and bands led by George Gruntz. And let's remember how Europe helped the struggle of Quincy Jones to keep his big band going.

Even during that time when big bands were supposedly a dead issue in jazz, some American cities had big bands which continue to flourish at the present time. And there were some valiant attempts to keep big band music alive in concerts from the sixties on. There was the marvelous Gerry Mulligan Concert Band, for instance, and the continuing presence of Gil Evans.

And even the so-called avant-garde tried its had at stretching ideas in big band format. Anthony Braxton made one splendid foray in 1975 documented on an Arista album and now there is Vinnie Golia's larger ensemble. And the Vienna Art Orchestra.

AT THE OTHER EXTREME, some big band scoring now uses electronic enhancing (if that's the right word) to elaborate and extend the richness of sound, and if one stifles one's antipathies to musical electronics, then some recent CDs can be heard as interesting examples. Bob Belden in his versions of music by Sting (a project originally mooted by Gil Evans) on some cuts scores his music in richly sonorous contrapuntal lines with a little electronic help. At least two cuts on the CD, *Straight From The Heart*, stand up very well in that line of Gil Evans and equalling some of Evans' work. Try *They Dance Alone* and *Roxanne*, for instance. Similarly, two recent CDs by Vince Mendoza, while more uneven, come out of the Evans tradition. While Mendoza makes more commercial concessions, some of this music shows a new approach to big band scoring.

Musicians still love to be a part of that big band idea. Look at the way some continue to cohere around the personality of Hugh Fraser in Canada in the recent recording on *Unity, Veji Now!*. One of the best CDs of last year was Kenny Wheeler's double CD on ECM which featured a lot of music for large ensemble.

Though it may not be a deluge nowadays, big bands still make a splash in the jazz world. The big band does indeed persist — witness this batch of recording under review. Unfortunately, after my long preamble suggesting the

big bands, fails here to do justice to the charts adapted from McShann's 40s band. The brass has little bite or punch so the whole adds up to a pedestrian performance. Ernie Andrews' vocals are only middling, lacking the power of someone like Joe Williams who can always fire up a big band with his rich shouting. Andrews tends to hover between a quiet ordinariness and a strained harshness. This CD is very disappointing and mostly, apart from very few moments, such reliable improvisers as Phil Woods, Jimmy Heath, Clark Terry, James Moody, among others, give the impres-



liveliness of the big band scene in jazz, not much in these recordings would lead a listener to have a sanguine view of the state of big bands for much of the music on these CDs is very ordinary, lacking in character and dynamic drive.

Jay McShann's Paris All Star Bluse (Musicmaster 5052-2-C) certainly has a stellar cast but there's something radically wrong with this big band. It generates very little lift, producing only a stodgy plod (that's strange, given that the best big band drummer, Mel Lewis, is here). The tempos are slightly too slow on most tunes and the solos are uninspired. Ernie Wilkins, an arranger who normally understands the nature of swing in

sion of simply going through the motions, all suffering from an off-night. A turgid mediocrity remains the keynote of this concert recording, a sadly mismanaged tribute to Kansas City swing and early Bird that works neither as nostalgic gimmick nor as felt re-creation.

THE PHILLIP MORRIS COMPANY has sponsored a big band led by pianist Gene Harris for about three years now. The first CD the band recorded was close to a disaster, the section work ragged, the soloing undistinguished. Now the band has got its act together and this second CD under the title of *Gene Harris and the Phillip Morris Superband* (Concord CCD-4443) is an improvement without being anywhere near exhilarating. The arrangements

are nicely straight-ahead, the tempos on the whole right, the ballad performances are melodic, the playing is crisp and bright, the soloing adequate. But somehow the band never lets fly. It rarely creates real power, being generally content to stay in a simple groove without extending itself. The band has a lot of solid veteran big band players and some of the younger musicians who have big band experience so at least the band sounds capable in a rather laid-back Basie ambience. But it's the Basie sound of the last twenty years, a band that was competent without ever reaching the heights of the Basie bands of the 30s and 50s. The Gene Harris Band moves positively but does not dig into any extensive treatments. It falls short by not giving soloists much room and never reaches in its ensembles into rocking riffs to achieve a slowly mounting, burning climax. Maybe it's a matter of dynamics; the range of sound is in a comfortable middle so the music is pleasant but sharp bite and attack are missing. It remains pleasant bordering on the lackadaisical.

AT LEAST THE MCGILL SWING BAND on *Late Late Show* (McGill 750040-2) declares its intentions clearly and stays with them throughout this CD. Its re-creations of swing tunes is briskly efficient, serving the purpose of playing for fund-raising occasions for the university. It's good that young players make contact with that side of the swing/jazz tradition but for die-hard big band jazz fans, there's little here that makes much jazz sense. All the tunes hover around the comfortable Basie groove again, featuring standards and swing classics, even including the notion of band singers as well. The CD is simply a kind of nostalgic concept. McGill alumni might like it, reminding them of dances back in the old days but if you want to sample what a good Canadian university band can do with jazz material, you should listen to this band's earlier *Day & Night*.

THE BOB MINTZER CD *The Art of the Big Band* (DMP CD-479) bows strongly in the direction of the big band swing tradition but lifts off from that into a jazzier feel. Take the version of *Christopher Columbus* here. I hits a sensibly swinging mid-tempo beat, two-beat to start with, then settles in straightahead drive with Scott Robinson's loosely tough tenor. Mintzer then sets up a splashier beat continuing with different contemporary rhythms beyond the tradition.

This scoring is a kind of pattern Mintzer allows the band to establish after a rather inauspicious start with a contemporary back-beat on *Without a Song*. This band has an engaging mellow sound making its point without screaming it out at the listener. Mintzer gives the soloists room to move and his original tunes come across with great verve.

This is a CD worth persevering with. On first hearing, I was misled into thinking it was simply an upbeat contemporary version of swing but in fact on closer listening the band reveals a real feel for understated swing — the title track, *Elvin's Mambo* and *Weird Blues* make forceful statements without raising the band's voice. It blows out powerfully without pushing too hard, its rhythmic moves cleverly bouncing along. Not everything works. Occasionally the band lays back too much but at its best, on the cuts I've mentioned, there's a genuine spirit of commitment to extending a swing tradition beyond itself in fine jazz statements. Its mellowness sometimes gets the better of the band, substituting melodic nuance for sharp attack but half the cuts on this CD give a real sense of enjoyable music-making.

I WISH I COULD BE MORE ENTHUSIASTIC about Lester Bowie's Fantasy *My Way* (DIW, Diw 835) for he is trying for new sounds with four trumpets, two trombones, French horn, tuba, drums and percussion. The lack of acoustic bass leads the group into a persistent heavy sound and often the sound bogs down into thick brass mush. And the music comes out of the most undistinguished side of Bowie's musical character. I've never really understood his fascination with rhythm and blues and soul-funk and he sometimes seems to be parodying those forms. This band pounds on along these lines but no tongue-in-cheek surfaces here; it sinks in repetitive phrasing with thick rhythms. Occasionally the band sets off interesting brass-muted sound against open horns. The percussion is often busy but unfortunately it rarely sets the band going. The group tends to rely on oom-pahish sounds for its rhythmic impetus and often that gibes the music an unwieldy flavour. Added to that is a reliance on vamps and simplistic back-beat drumming. At times the group produces rich sonorities and the solos, especially from trombonists Frank Lacy and Steve Turre, and Bowie's own brand of half-valve, growls and squeals, his lower register smears coming on like a latter-day Rex Stewart, are effective. But on the whole the playing and arrangements

lack adventurous turns so it remains a rather heavy-handed set of tunes.

I CONSIDER THE THAD JONES/MEL LEWIS Jazz Orchestra to be the finest big band after Ellington and Basie. It is to Mel Lewis' credit that he continued the band after the departure of Jones and the albums he recorded under his sole name have never really been given their due. And the Mel Lewis Orchestra is continuing, not merely as a ghost band, and the first CD the band has recorded without Lewis, *To You: A Tribute to Mel Lewis* (Musicmasters 5054-2-C) is certainly the best CD of this batch, exemplifying the possibilities inherent in big band playing by extending the tradition and at the same time defining its own personality, generating its own writers from within its ranks. It harks back to its own past with a fresh re-reading of a Bob Brookmeyer original written years back *ABC Blues*, and Ken Werner opens out the Brookmeyer ambience with his exhilarating tribute to Brookmeyer simply titled with that composer's name. These two tunes are at the centre of the CD, surrounded by a brightly bouncy *Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square*, arranged by Ed Neumeister who provides a brief but plangent trombone solo on the title cut, an old Thad Jones tune.

The CD starts with a quirky tune, *Paper Spoons*, by former pianist with the band Jim McNeeley. It's not entirely successful, a simple repetitive theme that McNeeley pursues through a whirl of stop-and-go variation, back-tracking, repetitions, interspersed with the gutsy tenor of Ralph Lalama.

The band's ensemble playing is crisp, the arrangements pitting the sections against each other but also opening them out with merging and cross-patterns, and the scoring for woodwinds with soprano adds a different sound. And while no big band can really replace Mel Lewis, Dennis Mackrel, coming along under the aegis of Lewis himself, certainly manages to give the band a similar splashy lift like Lewis' but without quite the same verve.

This is the only CD here I can wholeheartedly recommend as a genuine contribution to the tradition of the big band, music that is rooted right and offering its own presence to the continuing development of big band music.



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TWO TAKES ON JELLY ROLL MORTON

Never one for false modesty, **Jelly Roll Morton** would probably accept as his due the fact that two strong musical productions are currently depicting his life.

JELLY'S LAST JAM, A SLAM-BANG, RAZZLE-DAZZLE, multi-million-dollar Broadway musical, has been playing to packed houses at the Virginia Theatre since opening on April 26, 1992. It will no doubt run for years in New York City, and it's a safe bet that touring companies will be taking the show to other cities before too long. In this Broadway show, master tap dancer **Gregory Hines** portrays Morton as so nasty a fellow that if Morton were alive, he could probably sue for character defamation.

Meanwhile, **Jelly Roll Morton: A Me-Memorial**, a beguiling little two-man show starring song-and-dance man **Vernel Bagneris** and pianist **Morten Gunnar Larsen**, originally booked for a four-week-run at Michael's Pub in New York City on October 13, 1992, after some successful try-outs abroad, starting at the 1990 Oslo, Norway, Jazz Festival, is now in its third month. Capturing the pathos as well as the joie de vivre of Morton, this show has less dramatic tension than the Broadway hit but a much greater respect for the truth. Because it is so charming a piece—and, incidentally, quite economical to mount, compared to the Broadway show—it, too, should have considerable potential as a touring vehicle. Bagneris and Larsen would enliven any jazz festival.

THE BROADWAY PRODUCTION is an exciting theatre piece. But audiences who leave the theatre imagining that they have learned the truth about Morton—or have even heard an honest representation of his music—will be sadly mistaken.

Let's recap a little history. Morton was the first major composer in jazz. Oblivious to the uniqueness of Morton's genius, **Jelly's Last Jam** says that Morton basically just set on paper the kind of music that was all around him in New Orleans, belittling him as a "messenger who believed he was the message," who "denied the black soil from which this rhythm was born."

But Morton's music never sounded like typical New Orleans music. While he acknowledged New Orleans as "the cradle of jazz," he wrote out individual lines for the musicians of his 1920s **Red**

Hot Peppers that interwove with a complexity and cohesiveness unprecedented in jazz. Numbers like his famed **Jelly Roll Blues**—which, incidentally was the first published jazz orchestration in history (1915) and, oddly enough, is *not* heard in **Jelly's Last Jam**—wound up being played by jazz bands everywhere. As were other smash hits he composed or co-composed like **Milenberg Joys**, **Wolverine Blues** and **King Porter Stomp**—remembered today as Benny Goodman's first big hit, the number that sparked the Swing Era. None of which you'd know from the Broadway show.

IF MORTON HAD RECEIVED proper royalties for these and other hits, he would have died rich in 1941, rather than as the scuffling musician telling anyone who would listen that he had not gotten all of the recognition he had

deserved. The truth is, Morton had a point. It's a shame that this musical doesn't give him more recognition. As a pianist, Morton was also far ahead of his times. In his recording of **New Orleans Joys** (another Morton number *not* included in the Broadway show), each of his hands plays a slightly different tempo; then they move into separate rhythms—something unprecedented in jazz in the 1920s, and not done by others for many years afterwards. Incidentally, although the Broadway pit band includes some very fine musicians like trombonist Britt Woodman and clarinetist Bill Easeley, it does not include a pianist who plays like Morton. A pity, particularly when there are some pianists around like Butch Thompson, Bob Greene, Terry Waldo, and Morten Gunnar Larsen who have taken the care to really get inside of Morton's music.



A REVIEW BY CHIP DEFFAA

ALTHOUGH THE BROADWAY SHOW uses some strains of Morton's music, it uses them mostly in overly-simplified, slick, and at times anachronistic, adaptations by Luther Henderson. Again, that's a pity, because when Morton's music is played honestly (as jazzmen like Michael White, Bob Wilber, and Bob Greene have shown in concerts over the years) it can still bring audiences to their feet. Some of Morton's best-known numbers, like *The Pearls* and *Grandpa's Spells*, are not heard in the show at all. Other numbers like *Shreveport Stomp* and *Jungle Blues* turn up in sort of piecemeal fashion, mixed in with new music by Henderson. And when Hines (as Morton) scats, he does so in a be-boppy way totally inappropriate to the era being depicted. Only once in the show does the Morton band really sound Morton-ish, really make an attempt to convey what the actual **Red Hot Peppers** were all about. It is when the band is shown on stage playing a number the program identifies as "The Chicago Stomp." Above the band is an enlarged—and quite authentic-looking—vintage Victor 78 bearing the words **Chicago Stomp—Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers**. The problem here is, Morton never wrote a number called "The Chicago Stomp"! What the band is playing is actually Morton's *Burnin' the Iceberg*. It is almost as if the producers felt they *had* to change something; if they were going to leave the music alone for one number, at least they would give it a new title.

Jelly's Last Jam also depicts Morton as repeatedly denying his blackness, and—exercising dramatic license—belittling his best friend, Jack the Bear, as a "nigger." It is true that as a New Orleans Creole born in 1890, Morton did not think in modern-day "black pride" terms, and—like many Creoles—did consider himself to be of a "higher class" than what he referred to, in the parlance of the day, as the "downtown black Negroes." But he also knew—and said—he was a victim of racial prejudice himself; he always had black bands,

and spent most of his life in black communities like Harlem and Watts. The show maintains that Morton denied his heritage by speaking of the fact that he had French ancestry. In truth, Morton *did* state—quite matter-of-factly—that Creoles typically were of mixed French, American Indian, and Negro blood. And this was a reality. He attended the French Opera House frequently in his youth—he considered that to be part of his cultural heritage, no less than any of the Negro folk songs he heard growing up—and drew upon both sources in composing his jazz. And exposure to the classics no doubt contributed to the masterly grasp of form that showed in his compositions.

MORTON ALSO WORKED, at times, as a pimp and a con artist, and believed in the power of voodoo—interesting facts glossed over in the Broadway show, but readily admitted in Bagneris' fine show. Virtually all words uttered in Bagneris' show, incidentally, have been taken by Bagneris verbatim from Morton's own recorded Library of Congress recollections.

Pianist Larsen, a Norwegian-born Morton specialist, brings to life Morton's music accurately with a playfulness and abandon rarely displayed by musicians doing note-for-note re-creation. And when he segues into something like *Mamie's Blues*, he conveys a poignancy that should be—but isn't—heard in the Broadway show.

Bagneris (perhaps best known as the creator and co-star of such acclaimed musical celebrations of oldtime black show business as "One Mo' time" and "Further Mo'") is the real star, though. The warmth and resonance of his voice is winning from the start, and his deceptively casual, eccentric dancing—hand-in-pocket, left leg seeming to lead his body about—is fascinating, and authentic to the period. As a dancer, he hasn't a fraction of the technical prowess of Hines, but he is more successful

at evoking the particular charm of Morton's era. *Jelly's Last Jam* could benefit from having some of Bagneris' whimsical dancing in it. Bagneris' conception of Morton is far more innocently charming and likeable than Hines'—I have a hunch the real Jelly Roll Morton (whose bragging a lot of musicians found off-putting) was probably somewhere between the two.

Bagneris, who has long been an admirer of Morton's music and feels some kinship to him as a fellow Creole from New Orleans, actually began work on a proposed Morton show long before work on *Jelly's Last Jam* got started. In fact, after Bagneris did his first workshop productions of his current show back in 1984 in New York, he was once considered by the producers as a possible writer of *Jelly's Last Jam*. He met with the producers, but his ideas and the producers' ideas did not mesh.

THE ONLY SERIOUS COMPLAINT I had with Bagneris' show was that it was over too quickly. The version I saw was just 50 minutes. He had cut drastically from his original, full-length workshop production, believing that rendering too much of Morton's verbatim recollections could get tiresome. Maybe so. But his singing and dancing (particularly on the exultant *Mr. Jelly Lord*) was so infectious, and Larsen did such a good job of bringing out the nuances in Morton's music, I wanted to hear more.

Jelly Roll Morton, I think, would have liked the idea that he was too big a person to be captured fully in any one show. □

ABOUT THE WRITER

Chip Deffaa is the author of *Swing Legacy* (Scarecrow Press and the Institute of Jazz Studies), *Voices of the Jazz Age* (University of Illinois Press), and *In the Mainstream* (Scarecrow Press and the Institute of Jazz Studies).

GERALD WILSON

MOMENT OF TRUTH

BIG BANDS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FERTILE GROUND FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ARTIST'S MUSICAL SKILLS. THE DISCIPLINE REQUIRED TO BLEND WITH THEIR FELLOW MUSICIANS HAS TO BE COMBINED WITH THE ABILITY TO EXECUTE WITH EXACTITUDE.

GERALD WILSON HAS BEEN nurturing young talent in California for a long time, and his big bands have served as a launching pad for many musicians. As the veteran bandleader noted "We have so many young men who play so well and with such sophistication. When someone joins my band other bandleaders take note of their skills."

Like Duke Ellington before him, Gerald Wilson writes music which enhances the sound of the musicians who play it. And yet, in many ways his approach differs somewhat from Ellington. Where Duke took the individuality of his sidemen as a starting point for many of his creations, Gerald Wilson's music is fully formed regardless of the musicians who interpret it. He acknowledges, too, the ever expanding abilities of the musicians. "Nowadays musicians interpret the music to perfection."

You can hear the difference in the updated performance of his charts written in 1941 for the Jimmie Lunceford band - *Yard Dog Mazurka* and *48 Years Later (Hi Spook)*. These represent the beginning of a lifetime of creative music writing for the Mississippi born musician.

Wilson emphasized that music has always been his life. "At the age of six my mother started me on piano lessons which I didn't like, so I transferred to the trumpet. While still in Memphis I had a couple of years of study - a little band training and trumpet training but no experience with a band at that



PHOTOGRAPH BY GERARD FUTRICK

time. From there the family moved to Detroit and I attended Cass Tech High School. This was probably the best music school in America. It had a complete music department where all kinds of music were studied. You learned symphonic music, marching band music and jazz. You had to take keyboard, percussion, harmony, orchestration, vocals as well as at least one stringed instrument. Bobby Byrne's father was the head of the music department and he had a special system for teaching trumpet which enabled you to hit G above C - which was not common at that time."

LIKE SO MANY OTHER MUSICIANS from that time, he gained most of his experience the hard way - working with local bands in an apprenticeship system which moved a musician forward as his abilities developed. "I had a chance to be around people who could really do things" he noted of his experience with the Cecil Lee band who were made up of professional musicians - many of whom had worked with McKinney's Cotton Pickers at one time. During their residency at the Plantation

AN ARTICLE BY JOHN NORRIS

Club when Gerald was in the band, they backed such excellent singers as Billy Eckstine and Pearl Bailey. "It was a tremendous advantage to have band experience, watching people and trying to learn all at the same time."

It was during this period that Wilson, who had already started writing arrangements while in school, began to develop his skills in this direction. After a short stay with Clarence "Chic" Carter's band from Ohio, Wilson graduated into the Jimmie Lunceford Band where he took Sy Oliver's place in the trumpet section.

In 1942 the navy "took me" to use Gerald's terminology of the reality of being drafted for the armed services. Fortunately he was sent immediately to the Great Lakes Navy Training Station in Chicago where he became a member of the now famous band which was directed by Willie Smith. It was there that the trumpeter made a long lasting friendship with Clark Terry. He had earlier established a similar relationship with Snooky Young when they were both members of the Chic Carter band.

TWO YEARS OF CONTINUOUS WRITING for the navy band gave Gerald Wilson the opportunity to develop the many musical ideas he was hearing, which went beyond the traditional four part harmony of big band writing. These began to be heard in the band he organised in California after getting out of the navy in November 1944. This band worked until the summer of 1946 and it enjoyed great success. There were two tours to the East which included a highly successful week at the Apollo Theater and a ten week stay in Chicago where Joe Williams became the singer. The band recorded for Excelsior and Black And White but most of the titles remain unreissued. A small taste of this band's abilities can be gleaned from a recent Hep collection of big band AFRS performances where the Wilson band are heard on four selections.

Despite its success and the contracts for a tour with Louis Jordan's group who, at that time, were the hottest act on the circuit, Gerald Wilson disbanded his orchestra.

"I realised I had made it to the top too soon. I had not even started to do what I intended to do in music. I returned to California to study. I explored extensively the writing of a lot of classical music and especially Debussy, Stravinsky, Villa-Lobos - those who used advanced and sophisticated harmonics."

His ten years of study also included the experience of writing for Basie and Ellington and playing in a variety of smaller groups. From Basie he developed his sense of swing and from Ellington he gained insight into the textures and colours of the music.

THE FRUITION OF ALL THIS WORK was the extraordinary band he launched in 1961. "I set the style for my band and it was very advanced harmonically at that time." It also reflected his view of the level at which jazz is currently being performed. "Jazz, to me, is a very highly technical music. We know the music and it takes years to develop the skills necessary to play it. There are no short cuts."

All the recordings of the Gerald Wilson Orchestra were produced by Albert Marx and they gave the orchestra the exposure it needed to reach the ears of jazz listeners around the world. Only two of those classic Pacific Jazz releases of the 1960s have so far appeared on CD but both *Moment Of Truth* and *Portraits* contain the essence of Gerald Wilson's musical philosophy.

This was big band music unlike anything else being heard at the time. Dizzy Gillespie's big band had echoed the newest musical ideas of the 1940s and Gerald Wilson's Orchestra reflected the innovations of its time. The passion, the intensity and the drive of this music was unequalled by any other organisation.

Since that time the band has been a fixture on the West Coast and its ongoing recorded legacy has been entirely due to the support given by Gerald's friend Albert Marx. "He was my producer, my friend and a great impresario for jazz. He was for the *music*. He wanted quality".

The 1970s were lean times for jazz and it wasn't until 1981 that the band began a new series of recordings for Albert Marx' revived Discovery/Trend record labels. *Lomelin* the first of four such projects was a transition between the sixties band and the current organisation which is represented by the 1989 date which produced *Jenna*.

Jenna mixes together fresh musical ideas with a retrospective look over the composer/arranger's career. There are new interpretations of such standards as *The Wailer* and *Blues For Yna Yna* as well as five charts from the Swing Era.

Wilson's artistic energies are centred around his writing for his orchestra. "I take time writing my music" so that it truly reflects his imagination.

THERE IS ANOTHER SIDE to Wilson's writing career. He writes prolifically for other artists but noted that "I write what they want to hear." His credits include albums for Al Hibbler, Johnny Hartman, Julie London, Ray Charles and Sarah Vaughan.

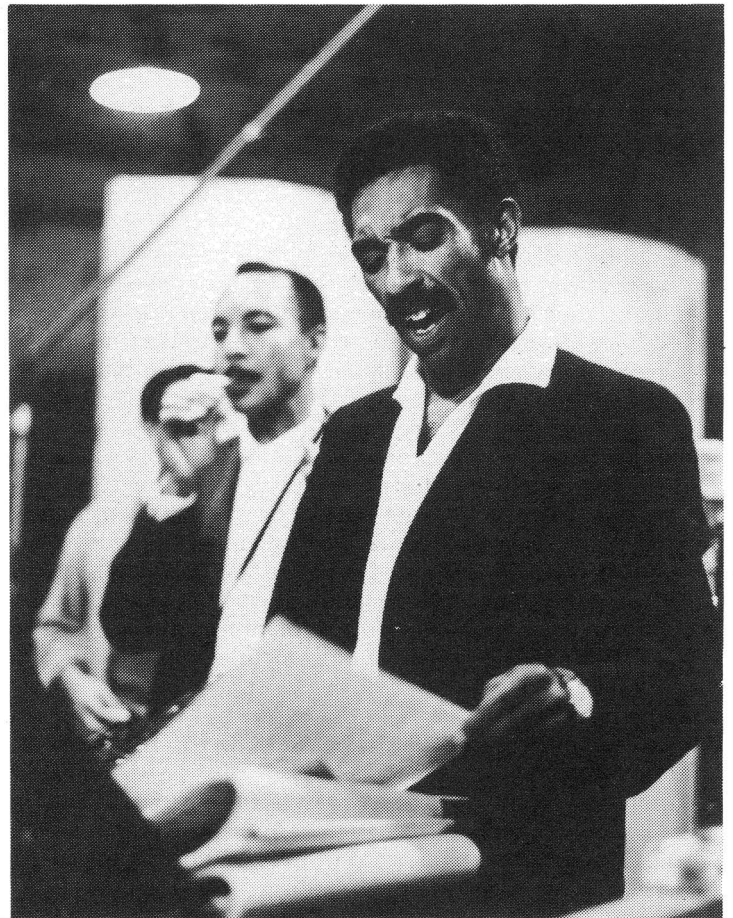
There were also charts for the Duke Ellington Band. Both *Smile* and *Imagine My Frustration* from 1954 are Wilson's while a number of later arrangements are now being heard as more and more of Ellington's recorded legacy is issued. Wilson

arranged *El Gato* for Cat Anderson and wrote and arranged *El Viti* as another feature for the high note trumpeter. His charts of *The Wailer* and *Feelin' Kinda Blue* are also now being heard for the first time in performance by the Ellington band. *Imagine My Frustration* was his contribution to the successful 1966 collaboration between Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington.

IT IS ONE OF GERALD WILSON'S FRUSTRATIONS, too, that so little credit is given to the arrangers and composers of this music. "There would be no big bands without us and, for the most part, the biggest bandleaders knew nothing about the harmonic possibilities of the music." Most arrangements are sold with a one time fee and Wilson feels that they should share in the ongoing proceeds from the performance of the music.

His orchestra remains active but limits its appearances to three or four performances a month. "I only take quality jobs where the remuneration is good although we do perform for trust fund gigs where the music is free for the people listening."

Gerald Wilson has left an indelible mark on the sound and texture of big jazz bands. His early harmonic explorations with Jimmie Lunceford were an inspiration for Stan Kenton, Dizzy Gillespie and other arrangers in the 1940s. Wilson's later bands are among the most individual in jazz. □



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY RAY AVERY

THE RECORDINGS

GERALD WILSON ORCHESTRA

Capitol/Pacific Jazz CDP 7 92928-2 - **MOMENT OF TRUTH** • Capitol/Pacific Jazz CDP 7 93414-2 - **PORTRAITS** • Discovery DSCD 947 - **LOVE YOU MADLY** (1981 & 82) • Discovery DSCD 964 - **JENNA** (1989) • Trend TRCD 537 - **CALAFIA** (1982 & 84) All the music on the LP issue of **LOMELIN** is on **LOVE YOU MADLY**. • All the music on the LP issue of **JESSICA** is on **LOVE YOU MADLY** and **CALAFIA**.

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Classics 620 - **HI SPOOK, YARD DOG MAZURKA** - Jimmie Lunceford (1941) • Capitol (O/P) - **SMILE, IF I GIVE MY HEART TO YOU** - Duke Ellington (1954) • CBS (F) 468436-2 - **EL GATO** - Duke Ellington: Newport 1958 • CBS (F) LP 88654 - **THE WAILER** - Duke Ellington 1956/62 Volume 2 (1960) • Atlantic 7-91232-2 - **WHEN I'M FEELIN' KINDA BLUE, EL VITI** - Duke Ellington (1956/66) • Verve LP V6-4070 - **IMAGINE MY FRUSTRATION** - Ella Fitzgerald/Duke Ellington (1965) • Discovery DSCD 951 - **MIKE WOFFORD TRIO PLAYS GERALD WILSON** (1988)

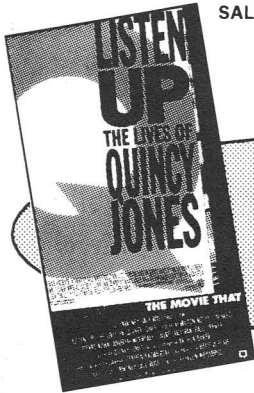
TRUMPET SOLOS BY GERALD WILSON

Classics 565 - **PUT IT AWAY, LUNCEFORD SPECIAL, ROCK IT FOR ME, WHAT'S YOUR STORY MORNING GLORY** - Jimmie Lunceford (1939/40) • Classics 620 - **BATTLE AXE** - Jimmie Lunceford (1941) • Contemporary OJCCD 160-2 - **LEROY VINNEGAR: LEROY WALKS** (1957) • Fresh Sound FRS-CD 173 - **JIMMY WITHERSPOON: MIDNIGHT BLUES** (1958) ex World Pacific • Warner LP 56.295 - **JIMMY WITHERSPOON: ROOTS** (1962) ex Reprise

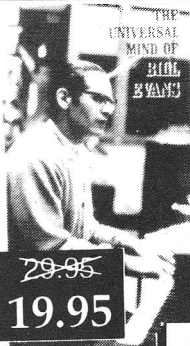
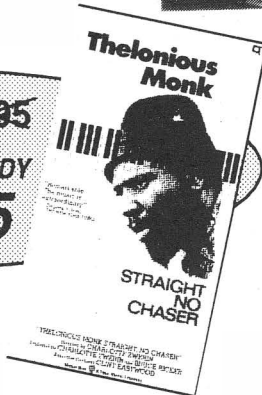
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Where are the lines drawn between a small band and a big band, a big band and an orchestra? The word “orchestra” shifts connotations, depending on the status of improvisation, polyphony or the appeal of larger forms. A small band that really explores its potentials for polyphony and texture is already an orchestra. The musics of Morton and Oliver, of the early Ellington, were *orchestral* musics, whatever the number of players required to produce them. Some small groups led by Charles Mingus and Cecil Taylor have assumed complexity and variety that are essentially orchestral.

If this is the most vital tradition of the jazz orchestra, it runs counter to most big bands. Since the thirties, the form has been largely defined by repetition of function, timbral uniformity, and the anonymous precision of military formations. Frequently, the greater a big band’s pretensions to the status of orchestra the further it moved from improvisation, group interaction, and rhythmic invention. The things that could make a sextet or septet an orchestra were often the very things that big bands couldn’t do.

The jazz (and/or improvising) orchestra is a privileged occasion. As such, it assumes special relations to place and time, whether as presence or absence, and tends to major statements. The orchestras heard here are aware of themselves as unusual opportunities for musical exchange and community. Many of them are in open dialogue with that ambivalent history that the idea involves. There are several novel approaches taken here to renovate ideas about the modern “mainstream,” extended written composition, and (revolution within the revolution) the improvising orchestra. While a few use the traditional resource of the big band, most are more flexible ensembles of eight to eleven pieces. Developed interests in counterpoint and timbre are common here among groups with radically different formal premises.

Suite Mingus (Justin Time: Just 15-2) by the Denny Christianson Big Band (featuring Pepper Adams) resides firmly within big band conventions, both in approach and in its phalanx-like instrumentation: eight or nine brass, five reeds and

five rhythm, plus the leader’s trumpet and flugelhorn and Adams’ baritone. A reissue of a 1987 release, it includes three originals by Alf Clausen, an arrangement of *My Funny Valentine*, and the suite that gives the CD its title *Mingus—Three Hats*: three Mingus tunes—*Slop*, *Fable of Faubus*, and *1 X Love*—arranged and with an interpolated linking theme by Carl Berg. The Montreal band is polished to a high degree, with tight sectional playing and some rhythmic spring, but the polish is often self-defeating: the opening *Lookin for the Back Door* invites comparison with TV theme songs. The late Pepper Adams plays to his usual standard, his burred sound bristling with thought and vitality. His solos on *Slop* and *Faubus* add to Mingus what is to be added here. Otherwise, the arrangement and suite lighten, brighten and tighten the compositions, leaving strong melodies but with little of their original power intact. By the standards of regional big bands this is challenging material, but an arrangement that really examined one of Mingus’ compositions might prove more fruitful than the “medley” approach.

REVIEWS BY STUART BROOMER

Errol Parker and Bobby Zankel use mid-size groups in efforts that redefine and revitalize the bop rooted “mainstream.”

Parker’s *A Night in Tunisia* (Sahara 1015) celebrates the tenth anniversary of the percussionist’s Tentet. Rooted solidly in bop, as the title track indicates, the band acquires its own voice through a dual emphasis on poly-rhythms (North African, Caribbean and Latin) and improvised counterpoint. The leader’s prominence in the mix and his substitution of a conga for the snare in his kit add to the rhythmic emphasis and the characteristic thinness of this band’s sound, though the latter clarifies the kinds of complexity Parker wants. Most of the “solo” space is assigned to two horns at once, another device that immediately changes the band’s character. All of this takes some getting used to, but when it comes together, and it often does, it’s invigorating. The additive approach gives the band’s music feelings of community and exchange. It may seem willfully different, but it sounds fresh.

Philadelphia altoist Bobby Zankel leads an octet and quartet, each heard on five tracks, on *Seeking Spirit* (Cadence CJR 1050). What makes this debut exciting is that Zankel, unlike many younger and more celebrated players, is neither doctrinaire nor formalist. The music is boppish, but it’s bop and hard bop approached from oblique, personal and passionate angles. When Zankel cites influences and associations they include a host of early Jazz Messengers—Blakey, McLean, Timmons, Merritt, and Mobley—as well as Ellington, Monk, Coltrane, Coleman and Taylor. His music has concentrated force and thought and an ideal balance of the tight and the loose. The octet benefits from two other fine, and slightly off-centre, soloists: Johnny Coles and Odean Pope. Like Zankel, they can tend to alternative keys in their solos, sometimes flagrantly. The compositions use dissonance and counterpoint and keep the horns working during one another’s solos. These all contribute to the feel of a larger band, as do Pope’s tenor sound, so thick that it gives the impression of a second baritone in the ensembles, and Tyrone Brown’s steamroller bass. Zankel the saxophonist and Zankel the composer comple-

ment one another well. The player is all forward momentum and drive, sometimes ferocious. The composer tends to tension/frustration devices—riffs, rhythmic shifts, asymmetrical melodies against ostinatos, ostinatos continuing throughout a piece. The friction is cumulative, explosive and celebratory.

Klaus König and Anthony Braxton have composed sharply contrasting, though similarly ambitious, extended works for large orchestras.

König conducts an all star European orchestra of fifteen pieces in *At the End of the Universe* (Enja 6078 2), an extended suite (64 minutes) inspired by the absurdist science fiction writer Douglas Adams. The work is programmatic: each piece in the suite has a fragment of Adams’ writing appended in the notes and König adapts literary modes of the absurd to music. It’s a disconcerting piece that dismantles the traditional oppositional stance of avant-garde art as König mixes themes of extreme banality with smaller group passages of great complexity. At the “end of the universe” the palettes of Les Brown and Karlheinz Stockhausen meet the ambitions of Richard Wagner and Spike Jones. The style is “post modern ironic:” no system of value asserts itself to define or limit parody. König contrasts instruments such as bass saxophone, contra bass clarinet and piccolo and manages some of the highest levels of incongruity between group and solo, and written and improvised, musics that I’ve heard, always finding ways to bring them together. A solo may begin in situation comedy, progress to strong utterance, then move to the circus or the lounge to lead into the next theme. Individual efforts (by Simon Nabatov, Matthias Schubert, and Louis Sclavis, among others) that would be commanding or brilliant in another context come to appear here as the nostalgic residue of self expression. Even the level of performance is ironic: the band performs marvellously, with precision and enthusiasm that would embarrass those big bands that once served filler on late night talk shows.

Nothing could be further from “program music” than *Eugene* (1989) (Black Saint 120137-2), on which Anthony Braxton con-

ducts the Northwest Creative Orchestra in eight of his compositions. As is usual with Braxton, compositions are identified only by number and a diagram. The eight pieces are not enclosed structures and there is often little or no separation. The effect is of a virtually continuous 80 minute piece. The performance of the orchestra—in make up almost a traditional big band of six brass, five reeds and five rhythm, plus Braxton’s alto—is at a very high level, both in ensemble and solo passages (inadequate notes make it impossible to identify brass and reed soloists other than Braxton), and the music is a tribute to the group’s skills and Braxton’s abilities as both composer and conductor. Traditional big band sectional writing and atmospheric orchestration merge in a layering and diffusion of rhythmic and harmonic systems. It’s very difficult to tell what organizational principles are at work at different times, to what extent the musicians exercise choices, and how Braxton has contrived to make these parts cohere. In rhythmic complexity, scale, the unisons of *Compositions No. 112* and *No. 71*, and the integration of percussion and electronics, the altoist approaches an open ended American equivalent of Messiaen’s Tarangalilla Symphony.

Among the other incidental beneficiaries of the CD’s extended length are groups whose more improvisatory character leads to seamless epic. Essays in large ensemble improvisation have always tended to considerable length, whether there are so many possibilities to explore or soloists to edify (consider the CD of Ornette Coleman’s *Free Jazz* in the former regard, and the recent assemblage of *The Major Works of John Coltrane* in both). Some of the following CDs include pieces that would have once required two sides of an LP and in every case it’s a pleasure to hear organic pieces without interruption or artificial fades.

A nine member version of the Globe Unity Orchestra, *Globe Unity Special ‘75* appears on *Rumblin’*, on Berlin’s Free Music Production (FMP CD 40). The CD reunites the halves of a concert originally released on two LPs in 1976, restores the order of performance, and uses the original tapes of the concert rather than the compressed masters employed for the LPs.

IDEAS OF ORCHESTRAS

One now hears Misha Mengelberg's *Alexanders Marschbefehl*, a march for anarchists, as an introduction to all that follows, and Alexander von Schlippenbach's arrangement of Monk's *Evidence* as coda, encore, or restoration, the two relatively orderly statements bracketing the extended pieces, Steve Lacy's *Rumbling* and Evan Parker's two part, 38 minute, *Into the Valley...of Dogs, Dreams, and Death*. Nothing is going to remedy certain deficiencies in the original recording (this is, after all, the most difficult of musics to record, with extreme and unscheduled swings in volume level from segment to segment and among nine individual voices; a dog is listed in the personnel). The central and complex components of Schlippenbach's piano and Paul Lovens' percussion, wherein much of the music's continuity resides, often sound muddy. The nonet

tumbling, rambunctious music that sounds combative, subtle, and more combative still, and might even without the dedication to Joe Louis. Parker's piece possesses greater depth and range. It's opaque and unpredictable and sometimes uses its lack of structure to explore doubt and hesitation. When members of the orchestra come together on a motif, there are moments of exchange and interaction that seem still more foreboding. This is raw, uneasy music that retains its original interest.

The ambitions of Globe Unity (and numerous other groups of the period) are further developed in four recent CDs from Europe. Each group develops distinctive textures through decisions about instrumentation and methodologies for large group improvisation. Some explore a special sense of place, while others investigate historical sources.

more cerebral of the two, is *Second Line Ratoon*, composed and led by Gerry Hemingway. It's in part a brilliant adaptation of a New Orleans parade band — in instrumentation, polyphony and effects (press rolls, trombone smears)—to freer and extended form. There are two trumpets (Leo Smith and Herb Robertson), two trombones (Johannes Bauer and George Lewis), two clarinets (John Carter and Michael Moore), soprano (Anthony Braxton), soprano (Louis Sclavis), and baritone saxophones (Bruno Marini), and two drummers (Hemingway and Han Bennink) and the work really makes the most of brilliant soloists (Carter and Smith stand out in a stellar field), the possibilities for dialogue among its paired instruments (especially the trombones and percussion), and the ensemble's potential for power, contrast and texture. The absence of mid-range saxophones and strings and keyboards lends a special

clarity to the segments of collective improvisation. The best "histories" of jazz (as well as some of the worst) tend to be played (Clarinet Summit, Cecil Taylor and Mary Lou Williams' "Embraced"), and *Second Line Ratoon* is good enough to belong in that company. It manages to move in two directions, covering a traditional path from dirge to march to celebration, while linking the beginnings and present of jazz in a way that renovates and restores both. This piece is essential hearing.

The second half of the CD, *Cruise Button*, is under the direction of cellist Ernst Reijseger. While four musicians are carried over from *Second Line Ratoon* — Hemingway, Robertson, Moore (on alto), and Bauer—the direction is very

different. The Reijseger-led ensemble plays four pieces and their dominant character comes from the mix of African and Caribbean playing of Curacaoan guitarist Franky Douglas (composer of three of the tunes), bass guitarist Gerald Veasley, and Surinam-born



assembles a fine collective of improvisers—the others are Kenny Wheeler, Albert Mangelsdorff and Paul Rutherford, saxophonists Lacy, Parker and Gerd Dudek, and Peter Kowald on bass and tuba—and the extended performances are fairly well sustained. *Rumbling*, three pieces fused, is

October Meeting 87 2 (Bimhuis 002) gathers two quite different performances (each running about thirty seven minutes) from that Dutch festival. Each exploits a tradition of street music, but does it in a markedly different way. The first piece, and certainly the

REVIEWS BY STUART BROOMER

drummer Eddy Veldman. Together they create infectious rhythmic patterns that the horns treat with sometimes delirious abandon. The very presence of Reijseger's cello adds to the joyous incongruity of the mix. There's an occasional instant of hesitancy but generally it's a wonderful merger of third world dance music and freer improvisation. As such, it's a fine complement to the more "serious" Hemingway piece.

Reijseger, Moore, Lewis and Bennink take other trips into tradition on *Bospaadje Konijnhol 1* ("Forest path rabbit-hole") by the ICP (Instant Composers' Pool) Orchestra under the direction of Misha Mengelberg (ICP 028). Though there's plenty of improvisation here, any "instant composition" takes place over Mengelberg's composition and recomposition of earlier composers and styles and sometimes takes the form of instant decomposition. The title tune is a two minute foray into country and western swing (now there's an overlooked goldmine for other musical political satirists) blown to oblivion by tenorist Ab Baars, in much the same way Mengelberg's march was treated by Evan Parker on the Globe Unity recording. Apart from this novelty, the CD collects two long suites by slightly different versions of the ensemble, recorded four years apart. The written ensembles and surreal titles of *The Purple Sofa*, from a 1986 concert in Firenze, are strongly suggestive of Darius Milhaud's cabaret music and miniature concertos and symphonies. The improvised segments, particularly those of Bennink and Lewis, create sharp contrasts with the refined compositions.

Ellington Mix (it would pair beautifully with Hemingway's *Second Line Ratoon*), assembled from concerts in 1990 and 91, revises some of Ellington's best known pieces in *Mooche Mix*, *Moodmixes Indigo*, *Mixed Caravan*, and *Mix Solitude*. In a revealing bit of Mengelberg's verbal wit, the particularly disrupted *It Don't Mean a Thing* becomes *It Don't Mix*. These are hardly recreations of the originals but intriguing probes that are as cognizant of loss as recovery. The ICP uses a maximum of nine players and the size and instrumentation resembles the early Ellington orchestras of the Brunswick and Okeh recordings. They're faithful to the original timbres

(particularly Moore on clarinet and Walter Wierbos on trombone, who sounds Tizol-like on *Caravan Mix*) and melodies, while introducing strange tears and discontinuities into the texture. The improvisational approaches range from the boppish Evert Hekkema on trumpet to the anarcho swing of Moore and Baars. Bennink and Mengelberg fuel and structure this mix admirably.

On *Innocence* (Cadence CJR 1051), percussionist Joe Gallivan leads an eleven piece ensemble of mostly British musicians that makes exceptional use of soloists (saxophonists Evan Parker and Elton Dean; trombonists Paul Rutherford and Ashley Slater; flutist Neil Metcalf; bassist Marcio Mattos; trumpeter Guy Barker) to develop focus and direction. The standard big band is truncated in most regards, leaving two rhythm, three reeds, and two trombones, but with four trumpets. Each of the four pieces builds out of a microcosm provided by an unaccompanied (or very lightly accompanied) soloist. It's a thoughtful approach that succeeds in very different ways with both the linear approaches of Metcalf and the trombonists and the dense, continuous, contrapuntal styles of Parker and Mattos. The pieces are exceptionally well structured, most restricted to two soloists, with very close integration of improvisation and set cues and patterns. The sparing use of the trumpets as primarily a compositional and ensemble device develops tremendous clarity of parts. Their blasting tangle of lines on *Voices of Ancient Children* (composed by Gallivan and unrelated in any conspicuous way but its euphonious and evocative title to George Crumb's "Ancient Voices of Children") is as effective as it is because they aren't overworked elsewhere.

Anyone who has ever pondered, with the late John Cage, "Which is more musical, a truck passing by a factory or a truck passing by a music school?" (in "45 Questions"), will want to hear Klangebrucke Bern on *Selected Soundscape No. 1* (For 4 Ears CD 305), a work that integrates the urban soundscape into the orchestra. The piece, designed by Andres Bosshard, began with a set up of microphones and loudspeakers under a railway bridge over the Aare River and a second setup, mirroring the bridge installation, at the Kunstmuseum

Bern. The musicians began playing at the museum and would gradually leave and make their way to the bridge, the microphones and loudspeakers transmitting sounds back and forth, with tape delays and other electronics further mingling acoustic and broadcast, artificial and natural, intentional and found, sound and space. The concerts took place over a week in June, 1990. As with the recorded documentation of Cage's *Variations IV*, to hear the recording is a way of not being there. Then, no one present at the event would have heard the composition on this CD, 67 minutes culled and overlaid from three days of performance, in effect composed in the editing by Bosshard. The first two segments synthesize the two locations; the third, a brief foray into conventions of site, has the full orchestra at the museum, conducted by Butch Morris; the fourth is at the bridge.

This work is continually engaging in the ways in which it constructs its components and facilitates different kinds of interaction for musicians and listeners alike. The sound palette is deliberate and thoughtful: the orchestra is made up of three trombones, cornet, violin, cello, two voices, and two percussionists; the bridge combines and distorts train sounds, the river, vibrations and echoes, mingling these sounds and processes with the musicians. In the performance, the bridge comes to embody itself symbolically as instrument of linkage and change. At one point the "solo" trombone of Johannes Bauer (the time chart identifying individual musicians is a model from which orchestral recordings without trains would benefit) issues from *inside* the bridge.

Eventually the CD comes to include the sounds of the listener's environment: the running water of an aquarium filter mingles with the Aare, a plane overhead joins the trains of Bern, a cement mixer across the street underpins the trombone choir, and one is in the soundscape, being composed by it and composing with it. □

ERROL PARKER

PHOTOGRAPH BY GERARD FUTRICK

MISHA MENGELBERG

PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL SMITH

SCENES IN THE CITY

Two Views Of New York

By Kevin Whitehead & John Norris

TWO OF NEW YORK'S MOST INTERESTING HORN PLAYERS HAVE NO RECORDS OUT AS LEADERS
ONE'S HARD TO CATCH; THE OTHER QUIETLY TURNS UP ALL OVER.

APPLE SOURCE BY KEVIN WHITEHEAD

NOTORIOUSLY LOW-PROFILE Olu Dara performed two Sunday matinees recently: at the Schomburg Library November 15th, and with Cassandra Wilson as guest, outdoors at the Brooklyn Museum on August 2nd. Like Armstrong, Olu is an entertainer. He's apt to sing, work the crowd or play harmonica as much or more than he plays cornet. Yet no one so offhand with his main axe gets such a gorgeous full-bodied sound. He appears equally indebted to Miles and Cherry, but unlike either he doesn't flub notes. And he's got power: he'll turn toward the back of the stage, off mic, and blow open notes you can hear easily over Alonzo Gardner's electric bass, Kwatei Quartey's Afropop guitar and Coster Massamba's congas. (Joe Johnson played drums in Brooklyn, Greg Bandy in Harlem, where Dona Carter was added on keyboard.)

Olu's long notes—harmon mute in, stem out—catch the mournful sound of a holler across a Delta field at twilight. The same quality comes out in his singing. Just as the lovely-sounding cornet itself is a throwback to earlier generations, Mississippi-born Dara is a griot keeping urban/northern blacks in touch with rural/southern roots (and African roots beyond). One song's based on a Zora Neale Hurston novel, another honours the coal man and okra man. His blues-and-highlife-fla-

vored tunes, his singing and tangy, heavy-vibrato harp work are so engaging, you don't mind much he doesn't blow more horn. Cassandra Wilson, a funny Miss'ippi improviser herself, held her own bantering with him on stage in Brooklyn. That may've been the year's giddiest gig.

If Olu's out of Pops, **Dave Douglas** can sound like a new Bix. He plays unlikely wide-leaping lines, nailing every note as if armed with golden hammer and silver spike. He plays trumpet, but his bell-clear sound is cornet-like; there are times when his tone—not ideas—gets uncannily close to Ruby Braff's. (For the record, these comparisons strike Douglas as farfetched: "What about Louis?") He has a particular love for the music of Kurt Weill, slipping his tunes into sets with his go-for-broke trio (bassist Mark Dresser, drummer Mike Sarin—CBGB's Gallery, October 21) and more composerly String Band (Dresser, Sarin, violinist Mark Feldman and cellist Erik Friedlander—Knitting Factory, November 8).

Lately he also did four Mondays in September at the KnitFac with the co-op quintet New and Used. (One memorable evening, Mark Helias subbed on acoustic bass for Kermit Driscoll, who usually plays electric.) A Douglas trio with drummer Jim Black and guitarist

Brad Schoepf played at a table among the diners a couple of November Fridays at the Bell Cafe on Spring Street, where their low-key blowing bubbled up under the conversational chatter.

Dave's also in **Mark Dresser's** quintet Force Green (Roulette 17 October), with drummer Phil Haynes. The band's most interesting player is Denman Maroney, who gets prepared-piano effects without advance prepping; for instance, he'll strike keys with one hand while sliding a metal bowl up the strings with another, for bottleneck-guitar glisses. Less engaging is Theo Bleckmann, who sings Dresser's thorny charts on pitch, but whose extended-technique improvising is—again, for me—devoid of beauty, lilt or real invention. You can understand Dresser wanting to use the male voice, not exactly overexposed in the new music, but this is a job for Shelley Hirsch.

UPTOWN CULTURE institutions insist jazz now needs a "canon." Along with Ellington, Monk's the first composer canonized. November 11 at the Kitchen, pianist **Anthony Davis** voiced *Evidence* and *Crepuscule with Nellie* with such fidelity, he inhabited them from the inside, which didn't keep him from taking improviser's liberties (the same approach he took with his own pieces, which made up the bulk of the program).

At uptown Merkin Hall three nights earlier, pianist and Monk competition winner **Ted Rosenthal** presented his adaptations of Thelonious for sextet (trumpeter Brian Lynch; Dick Oatts, tenor and soprano; Mark Feldman, violin; Scott Colley, bass; and drummer Smitty Smith, boiling, and sounding better than I've heard him in a while). Best was a piece that took several themes—including *Bolivar Blues*, *Misterioso* and *Blue Monk*—and quilted them, interlocked. But mostly Rosenthal's ambitious/grandiose/overblown charts sounded like a cross between Kenton and George Russell. As we're fortunate now to have several pianists who can play Monk his way, there's room for Rosenthal's against-the-grain approach too. Hearing Monk played without a lot of space in it is a shock, reason enough to do it.

December 2 at Merkin, **Douglas Ewart** assembled a literally all-star band—Don Byron, Henry Threadgill, J.D. Parran, Edward Wilkerson, Mwata Bowden, plus bassist Malachi Favors Maghostut—which worked its way through most every member of the clarinet family (plus a sort of large wooden stritch, made and played by the leader, which had an irresistible earthy sound). Ewart the composer's voice leading is smooth and expert, and his writing smacks neither of Julius

Hemphill nor John Carter, but the music really came alive in collective improvisations where no one grandstanded, and everyone blended with cooperative spirit. Someone record this band.

TWO COMPOSED PIECES by John Zorn heard lately were duds. At Columbia U. on November 13, Newband, performing on Harry Partch's beautiful instruments, premiered John's *The Wanderers*. It confirmed it's pointless for composers who don't know those instruments thoroughly to write for them—scrambling from one to another, the musicians (who know how to play them) were reduced to using them as noise-makers. ● On a Roulette program November 5, pianist Stephen Drury played Zorn's 1991 *Carny*, the sort of slice-and-dice postmodern riot of generic snippets I thought he'd outgrown.

But improvisers should and will write: At the Kitchen on the 12th, composer/pianist Frederic Rzewski played Anthony Braxton's *Composition 139*, at once pianistic, atonal and knotty, but with breathing space between the phrases. At times it was curiously reminiscent of Earl Hines, in the way left-hand eruptions countered a busy right. Had a nice off-a-cliff ending too: boom, done.

A benefit concert was held November 8 at St. Peter's Church, for pianist **Bross Townsend**, stricken with an as-yet undiagnosed ailment which blinded him virtually overnight in May. A fund has been set up to help cover medical expenses. You can send a check earmarked "Townsend fund" to St. Peter's Jazz Ministry, 619 Lexington Ave., NYC NY 10022. It's tax deductible. □



OLU DARA PHOTOGRAPH BY GERARD FUTRICK

ROAD NOTES BY JOHN NORRIS

TIMING IS ALL IMPORTANT when visiting New York. The major jazz showcases are easily determined. Too often they are also overly predictable in content and presentation. But the city personifies the spirit of jazz. It is home for most of the music's major performers and they energise the scene with their presence. Take, for instance, a Sunday night gig at Bradley's with the **Donald Brown Trio**. The pianist's lack of profile was confirmed by the small attendance. This was not an event to be added to a tourist itinerary! A sense that something special was in the air could be discerned by the presence of such heavyweight pianists as Kenny Barron, Kirk

Lightsey, James Williams, Harold Mabern and John Hicks all digging the sounds. Vibist Steve Nelson and bassist Peter Washington combined together in a program based heavily on song standards from the past but given treatments which stretched their parameters in many different ways. This was fascinating music. Conceived spontaneously and created for the pleasure of the participants and yet it reached out and communicated instantly with those present.

Night two was another happy coincidence. **Joe Temperley, Junior Mance and Paul West** are an odd combination. Their week

at Zinno's in the summer had worked well so it was reprised. The empathy between the three was quickly apparent and Temperley's repertoire (so well displayed on his Hep recording *The Nightingale*) was full of surprises. Unknown to the musicians was **Clark Terry's** choice of the club as the venue for his birthday party. Before long such celebrants as Al Grey, Jon Hendricks, Trudy Pitts and CT were all busy doing what they love best - making music. The jazz spirit was alive and well as everyone got down to the business of delivering swinging sounds - right down to the young drummer whose brushwork on a cardboard container symbolised the moment.

NEW YORK IS ALSO the jazz recording centre. Producers come from around the world to capture the sounds being created there. James Williams, whose reputation as a music producer is as good as his image as a pianist, was in the control room for a date with **Charles Thomas**. The Memphis pianist was a guru for the Memphis group. This includes Donald Brown, Mulgrew Miller and James Williams. Brown is a contemporary of Harold Mabern and the roots of their music goes back to Phineas Newborn. Ray Drummond and Alan Dawson completed a tight rhythm section. You can hear the roots of the music inside Thomas' approach to jazz piano. He's an invigorating artist whom many people will like once this recording is circulated. □

PHIL NIMMONS

AN ARTICLE BY
STEVE VICKERY

Long before the current jazz renaissance made the news and a new generation of musicians began scorching the bandstand, composer-clarinetist-bandleader Phil Nimmons was displaying a sure touch for large and small ensemble writing while creating evocative music with his own bands. Awarded the Toronto Arts Award for Creative Excellence and Contribution to Canadian Culture in 1986, Nimmons' time these days is largely spent directing the next generation of musicians on the techniques and language of jazz in his capacity as director of Jazz Studies at the University of Toronto. The occasional club date still is in the mix of tasks, as is the creation of new music. In 1993, the return of Phil Nimmons most-known ensemble, *Nimmons n' nine plus six*, will be heralded by the long-overdue arrival of a new recording project, *TRIBUTES*.



JERRY TOTH (alto) • ROY SMITH (tenor) • BUTCH WATANABE (trombone) • MURRAY LAUDER (bass) • PHIL NIMMONS (clarinet)
ERICH TRAUOGOTT (trumpet) • EDDIE KARAM (baritone) • RON RULLY (drums) • VIC CENTRO (accordion) • ED BICKERT (guitar)

PHILLIP R. NIMMONS, BORN IN THE INTERIOR OF BRITISH COLUMBIA AND RAISED IN THE CITY OF VANCOUVER IN THE 1930S, WAS AWARE OF THE POWER OF MUSIC AS WELL AS ITS POTENTIAL REWARDS FROM AN EARLY AGE. HIS FATHER PUT HIMSELF THROUGH UNIVERSITY BY PLAYING VIOLIN IN PIT ORCHESTRAS AS ACCOMPANIMENT TO SILENT FILMS, A POINT THAT PROVIDES AN IRONIC TWIST TO THE STORY AS HE ADVISED HIS SON TO THINK SERIOUSLY ABOUT A CAREER IN MEDICINE, NOT MUSIC. IT WAS ONLY AFTER FINISHING UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES IN PRE-MED AT THAT PHIL NIMMONS TOOK THE PLUNGE AND BEGAN STUDIES AT NEW YORK'S JULLIARD SCHOOL OF MUSIC.

THIS IS, IN FACT, GETTING AHEAD OF THE STORY.

When the family moved from Kamloops to Vancouver at the onset of the Depression, Phil began to study theory, harmony, and piano, setting the stage for a number of young bands that he formed with school friends. "I started by pulling lines off Count Basie and Artie Shaw records, the Bluebird records, things like *One Foot in the Groove*. I would write these charts, not really having any idea of how it was supposed to be done, but doing it anyway. The bands we formed would rehearse these charts, really unison lead sheet parts, in our parents' houses. Very strange instrumentation in those days we might have a trumpet, clarinet, an accordion, drums, a violin, maybe a piano and no bass. I found the process of the work was one of pure enjoyment. Later when we began to be more sure of ourselves, we would get some money together, everybody would chip in a dime or a quarter, and we would rent a dance-hall or theatre space on a Saturday afternoon, and we would put on a program."

As inauspicious a beginning as this seems, the band began to enter talent contests and attracted attention if for no other reason than the kid on clarinet. Although Nimmons downplays the level of his playing at that time, "yeah, I was a hot-shot clarinet player in Vancouver in those days, which is sort of like being a big drip in a little puddle", the exposure gained by winning opened the doors for Nimmons to work at the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation). An association he credits as being the real turning point for his career. Even as a seventeen year-old in pre-med school, he wrote arrangements for a jazz trio that evolved out of that initial CBC trio, *Serenade In Rhythm*. The radio gig was a god-send for the budding writer, giving him an opportunity to write more and more music, radio themes, background music, and dramatic music for radio plays. Those wild days of live radio saw Nimmons writing well beyond what could normally be expected of such a young composer, but even now that seemed a natural chain of events. The composer's hot seat didn't seem to faze Phil though he sees the opportunity now more as a reflection

ALWAYS THE MUSIC

*IT'S STRANGE, WHEN I SEE THE YOUNG PLAYERS NOW,
THE SUITS WERE DIFFERENT THEN, BUT THE PLAYERS NOW ARE JUST LIKE WE WERE.*

of the scarcity of talent available during the war-years than any indication of the genesis of one of Canada's most prolific composers. His involvement with the CBC chamber orchestra led to some important connections being made with members of the classical music establishment. The composer Henry Brandt, the conductor Frederick Prosnitz, and the wunderkind maestro Leonard Bernstein. Through these contacts, Nimmons successfully applied for the prestigious Juilliard School of Music, where he was accepted as a composition scholarship student. It was a little disconcerting for all concerned when, taking an introductory exam to judge the level of his training, it was recognized that he had no formal training in harmony, orchestration, and counterpoint. "I guess that they felt sorry for me having come all that way from the West coast in order to audition, so it was agreed that I could switch over and study the clarinet, rather than composition, on the scholarship." He attended Juilliard in the years 1945 to 1947, moving to Toronto at that time to fill in the blanks in his training at the Conservatory of Music.

THIS ALSO PUT NIMMONS WITHIN PROXIMITY of what would be his most important employer, the CBC. He picks up the thread of the story by acknowledging this primary stage of his evolution: "Prior to going to Juilliard, it was all, in a sense, self-taught through my activities at the CBC. It was a tremendous exposure for me. I shudder when I think back on it now because I knew nothing of the conventions of writing for any of the instruments, but I went right ahead and did it. I guess it was acceptable somehow or other, but I am in great debt to the CBC because it was my teaching process and it was done literally on the job. I would be asked to write for all sorts of instrumentation, depending on what the quality or character of the script would be. A particular show could call for anything from a trio to a symphony orchestra, with every possible combination in between these two opposites, and I had this great exposure. All kinds of wonderful things happened as a result of this connection. A couple of shows come to mind. One was called *The First Servant*, supposedly set in the times before Christ, so I was sent off up to Ottawa, to research music of that period in the library up there, music collected that was written in that time, which I never would have been exposed to, in my life. On another occasion, we did some shows about the far north, and I was dispatched to Ottawa to research the music of the Eskimos. All kinds of wonderful opportunities."

Though the writing for dramatic programs on radio opened Nimmons' ears to new sound traditions, the ensemble that Phil formed, a loose-knit rehearsal unit of session players, began to give serious consideration to the straight ahead jazz charts that Phil was writing. Consolidated as a unit in 1953, the band played radio features of Nimmons' music in what became a semi-regular spot, Nimmons at nine. Naturally enough, people began to refer to the ten piece unit as "Nimmons 'n'

Nine" and the name stuck. The band worked hard, maintaining a regular broadcast series lasting into the mid-60s with a program called *Variety Showcase*. For particular shows, the regular band would be augmented with more brass players, in order to sweeten the sound of the unit for backing singers on the variety format. Most of the singers, Nimmons acknowledges slyly, were not really good jazz singers at all, so the arrangements began to accommodate this fact by means of extra personnel, usually trumpets and trombones, for a wider orchestral sound. "Nimmons 'n' nine plus six" was coined one evening just before airtime by the late CBC announcer Bruce Marsh, a name that the band worked under for the years that led up to Phil finally deciding that the band should go out on a tour, a serious consideration for the band since they all were active contributors to the busy studio scene in town. "When it was finally decided that we would go on this tour of the Atlantic provinces, eleven members of the band decided that they weren't in a position to leave town, given all the studio activity in those days. So I wound up taking almost a new unit of players, and it was wonderful. There's nothing like the stimulus of playing live every night for a two-week tour to really bring out the life in the music. You have to realize that a lot of the guys would play only in the studio, so by bringing along some younger guys, we generated a real energy in the music."

The resulting tour and the music that was written for it became Phil Nimmons' best-known release, the *Atlantic Suite* (Sackville). Television, radio, and many commissioned works have followed in the years since the *Atlantic Suite's* appearance (a work that was awarded the first JUNO prize for jazz recordings (1976). Nimmons has worked steadily since the late forties crafting a catalogue of work that is as distinctive in its originality as it is wide-reaching, a body of work that spans contemporary classical music with works for piano, string quartet, voice, flute, reeds, chamber ensembles and orchestra, and many works for film, stage shows, television and theatre. Add to this over 400 original jazz compositions and you begin to get the picture. The composer talked about his work in all realms of the music, but the focus more than ever is on the evolutionary process of the music, through education and continuing commitment to the music. The role of jazz educator is of course not a new one for Nimmons. His interest in the development of teaching methods for the modern musician began with the Advanced School of Contemporary Music which he operated from 1960 to 1963 in Toronto with Oscar Peterson and Ray Brown. Nimmons seems pleased after such a long and successful career to contemplate how it all happened, but he also expressed ambivalence at the changes he has witnessed in the Canadian music scene over the last twenty years.

"It was my good fortune to be a part of that whole era because nowadays there is very little left. It is quite amazing to look at the

PHIL NIMMONS • ALWAYS THE MUSIC

changes. In those days, we had two networks, not only was I working, but so was everybody else. One of the reasons I wanted to stay in Canada. I really enjoyed what I was able to do here. At the CBC in those times, you could really do things, not only with music, I think with all aspects of the arts, and all the things we did of an experimental nature. I remember doing a show called "The Barris Beat" with a small band, and Norman Jewison was the producer of it, and I don't remember precise dates, but this might have been close to being the same time as the Steve Allen show, which predated the Johnny Carson show. The ideas also occurred here, and so did the potential for experimentation, for searching out new ideas, new forms. That satisfaction was quite possible.

A whole gang of people got their spawning up here, then moved to the States. Norman Jewison, the staff at Saturday Night Live, Lorne Michaels started here, Norman Campbell is another person. I did a lot of musicals with him on CBC, but all these people really had the chance to do things. I think we all felt really drugged that somehow or other you could never really get accepted here to the same degree as when you go away. You know that old line about a prophet never honoured...? Really though, I was too busy doing what I was doing to think too much about it."

Nimmons' interest in the educational process has been a long standing focus of activity. Even in the early years of his work with guitarist Ray Norris, Nimmons' sense of the music moved him further on in the search of learning new techniques and new ways to develop the music that he was writing. That strong sense of direction still motivates him as a teacher of university level musicians.

"If you're going to teach, you've got to try to keep an open mind and absorb as much information as you can historically to apply to your

teaching, because I believe very strongly in the whole process of evolving. I just didn't start, you know what I mean. Something happened before me, and when you teach, you've got to have a good sense of being able to feel this as much as possible: what has produced what we have today, that tradition. I've had to apply myself with that in mind as a teacher."



CODA: *What individuals influenced you as an instrumentalist?*

"Benny Goodman, for his tone. I related to his sound. It's a funny story. When I went to Julliard, I studied with Arthur Christmann. He was from the German school of clarinet. The German school favours a certain arrangement between the reed and the mouthpiece, that is, a harder reed and a less open mouthpiece. It gives you a less reedy sound. Whereas Artie Shaw used a softer reed and a more open facing, which gave a reedier quality. Those are my influences as far as the clarinet. There are a few other, Barney Bigard... I really related to Duke Ellington, without even knowing what was going on. Immediately. Count Basie. I really just dug it, and this was in my early teens. Lionel Hampton. There was also that band, Alvino Rey. Right from the beginning though, I never liked anything that was even remotely like Lawrence Welk. (laughs) And again, when I say this now, I didn't know anything then about it, this is just what I dug. It all came from listening.

That's what I tell my students every day: you have to use your ears. I want them to throw away the fake book. When we teach an improvisation class here, students will come in, put the fake book up on the music stand, and play *Confirmation* or *Blue In Green* or whatever. Everytime they use it, it becomes a crutch. I get them to put it away, I say I don't care if you make mistakes, just keep doing it without the fakebook. There are ways to teach people to use their ears, but having that book there impedes it. I try to get them to retain everything, lift solos, write melodies constantly. Maybe for a time they will sound like someone else; but given time, the person they are will come through. Having said all this, I have to say that I'm impressed by the level of commitment that the young players have now, to the work, to the music. There are so many distractions, not least of all the stress of the economic situation. The students come in exhausted from working at their jobs, but they're still there, determined. □

NIMMONS N' NINE • PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN
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JAZZ RECORDS 1942-1980. Series edited By Erik Raban.
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AROUND THE WORLD

COMPILED BY PUBLISHER JOHN NORRIS

The face of jazz has changed dramatically in the last decade. Its entire structure is being transformed as new generations of performers and organisers take over. Jazz has become more of a business and less of an art. It is being shaped by the same forces which have altered forever the nature of professional sports and the entire entertainment world.

CHARLIE HADEN PHOTOGRAPH BY CHEUNG CHING MING

JAZZ WAS SHAPED BY THE IMAGINATIONS and personalities of highly motivated individuals whose unlimited visions forged fresh images for the world. The music's infrastructure was also manned by similar personalities. Clubs, recording companies, festivals and record shops were dominated by the personalities of the people who ran them.

In their place today we have faceless corporate entities who dictate exactly what should be heard and how it should be presented. Gone from the world are such iconoclastic merchandisers of jazz recordings as Ray Avery's Rare Records, Doug Dobell's Jazz by Post, and Pierre Voran's Pan Musique. Only Bob Koester's **Jazz Record Mart** is holding the line in the U.S. Canada still has **The Jazz & Blues Record Centre** in Toronto and **Sweet Thunder** in Victoria. The UK has **Ray's Record Shop** and **Mole Jazz** in London and **The Record Centre** in Birmingham while **Jazzmania** is still hanging on in Geneva.

The recordings are now more likely to be purchased at giant supermarkets like HMV, Tower and Virgin who are busy spreading their tentacles across the world. They are inextricably linked to the six corporations who control the flow of more than 90% of the world's recordings. They are easy to identify. Their product is advertised and reviewed within hours of release in the glossier magazines both within and outside the jazz world.

The music is "showcased" in festivals and clubs with a good tourist image. Corporate and government support is essential to their continuance. Night clubs are now a minor hangover from the past. Economic decline and advancing age has dramatically affected the jazz party circuit which grew with the growth of the retirement generations. Gone are notable events in San Diego, Santa Fe, Pensacola, Raleigh, and Toronto. Others are on shaky ground.

Gone too is Warren Vache as editor of **Jersey Jazz**, the best of the publications from the jazz societies who grew in the 1970s in response to a need for alternative presentations of jazz.

To compete in this new world musicians need to conform. A fax machine, a personal manager, a publicity agent, a reputable tailor and a sensibility about the practicality of musical horizons is important.

Music has to be shaped to fit the needs of festival producers, recording company executives and the unyielding conformity of jazz radio.

Most jazz is now an anachronism to the industry even though they survive on its legacy. You know that something is out of kilter when the New England Foundation



For The Arts writes about "Jazz Pioneers **Charlie Haden** and the Liberation Music Orchestra". They are doing a New England tour in March which includes concerts in Hanover, Middletown, Cambridge and Portland.

Haden, of course, is one of the music's vital links. He has consistently resisted industry directions and remains one of the music's free spirits. He is hardly a jazz pioneer. He's certainly an innovative force — which is why people want to listen to him.

The Central Pennsylvania Friends of Jazz have been struggling to overcome a serious financial deficit from last summer's festival. A withdrawal of funding and audience decline created a crisis which now seems to have been resolved through generous membership support. Cedar Walton's Eastern Rebellion and the Buster Williams Quintet were headliners at their Winterfest '93, January 29/30 at the Harrisburg Hilton.

Karl Berger directed the program of Miami's Rhythm Intensive January 4-9...The Emerald Coast Jazz Society's first party was held January 23/24 in Fort Walton.

CONVENTIONS • FESTIVALS • INTERNATIONAL NEWS • LITERATURE

Buddy DeFranco, Clark Terry, Frank Wess, Flip Phillips, Roy Hargrove and Jay McShann were among those performing...The life and work of **Charles Mingus** is being celebrated in Nogales/ Santa Cruz in April. The week-long program is being coordinated by the Tucson Jazz Society...The Harper Brothers and the John Faddis Quintet are presented in concert February 27 at Franklin & Marshal College in Lancaster, PA. The event is under the auspices of the Bessie Smith Society.

Hollywood's **Musicians Institute** is sponsoring a songwriting contest as part of the program to help rebuild Los Angeles. Information on this contest can be obtained by phoning (213) 462-1384...The Los Angeles Symphonic Jazz Orchestra held its annual Garden Musicale on October 14. Their summer newsletter profiled **Edward Karam** who wrote *Stay 'n See* for the orchestra in 1982. In a curious choice of selective biography the profile stated he "began his career as musical director for Paul Anka" rather than pointing out that his extensive work as both musician and arranger for the CBC and his involvement in groups led by Ron Collier, Moe Koffman and Phil Nimmons gave him the necessary experience to not only be music director of Anka but also have the resources to write scores for the LA Symphonic Jazz Orchestra!

Pianist/composer **Glenn Horuichi** continues his exploration of US/Asian connections with new works for his quartet and Shamisen artist **Lillian Nakano**. A recent concert at Harbor College in Wilmington, California debuted this unique combination.

CONVENTIONS • FESTIVALS

The American Federation of Jazz Societies honours Milt Gabler at its convention in Fort Lauderdale, Florida April 16-18...The Chicago Blues Festival is set for May 28-30...The Copenhagen Jazz Festival is from July 2-11...Ellington '93 will be held in New York August 11-15 at the Holiday Inn Crown Plaza Manhattan...The IAJRC convention is being held the previous weekend (August 5-7) at the Glenpointe Marriott in New Jersey.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

The Wangaratta Jazz Festival is a highlight of the Australian season. Music from the November 1991 event can now be more widely heard on a CD released with the support of Subaru (the event's main sponsor) and the cooperation of ABC-FM's Jim McLeod who first presented the music on radio. Showcased here are outstanding Australian jazz artists like Mark Fitzgibbon, Bob Barnard, Don Burrows, Mike Nock, Jex Saarelaht and Bernie McGann. A bonus, both at the event and on this CD, is the performance of Barry Harris who's heard on two selections. **Jazz Import Services**, PO Box 1160, City Road, Victoria 3205, Australia is the way to obtain this music.

The George Gruntz Concert Band finished up a two week Chinese tour with an appearance at the Hong Kong Jazz Festival...The Tampere Jazz Happening is a bright spot on the long Finnish winter scene. The 1992 event was held October 30 - November 1 and featured such artists as Han Bennink, Leroy Jenkins, Trevor Watts' Moire Music, Bobby Previtte, Don Byron, Don Cherry and the Jazz Passengers. The 1993 event is set for November 5-7...Pete Rugolo, Andre Hodier, Ran Blake, Franz Kogelmann, Edward Vesala and Bob Graettinger were all represented in the music performed at the Incident In Jazz, October 2-4 in Vienna's Musik Galerie...Solo 92 was the focus of a three day event (November 6-8) in Stockholm's Cultural Centre. Solo artists of widely varied disciplines performed and all the music was broadcast on Swedish Radio. Marilyn Crispell, Irene Schweizer, Derek Bailey, Barry Guy and Joelle Leandre were among the participating performers.

LITERATURE

From *Birdland To Broadway* is a second collection of memories and observations by Bill Crow from Oxford University Press...**Swinging Big Bands Into The 90s** is a new book by Al Raymond. He's a bandleader and long time participant in the jazz scene. There are 285 photographs in this informal survey of big bands through the decades. It's published by Harmony Press, P.O. Box 726, Broomall, PA 19008...**The Pink Violin** is an anthology of writings about an Australian musical family compiled and edited by Jon Rose and Rainer

Linz. It's available from Frog Peak Music, Box A36, Hanover, NH 03755.

The Compact Disc Handbook is a guide to CD technology by Ken C. Pohlmann. It explains the makeup and structure of this contemporary music storage system which celebrates its tenth anniversary this year. This revised edition is published by A-R Editions Inc, 801 Deming Way, Madison, WI 53717.

A French language dictionary of jazz slang terms is called **Talk That Talk: Le Language du Blues et du Jazz** and is published in Paris by Hatier Communications...**Chet Baker** is the subject of a new French language biography by Gerard Rouy. It is the newest in a series of jazz biographies published by Editions du Limon.

If you need guidance, in book form, for your CD purchases there is a wide variety of sources to choose from. **Best Rated CDs: 1992** is a CD Review Digest Selection Guide. Close to fifty magazines and their reviews are the source for this book's assessments of CDs. Both this book and **All Music Guide** cover all forms of popular music so jazz only represents part of the contents. Just over 200 pages of All Music Guide is devoted to jazz and the listings offer a concise selection from the available recordings by different artists. **The Penguin Guide To Jazz** is much more expansive in its coverage. The book runs more than 1300 pages but the entries are limited to recordings known to the writers rather than offering finite judgments.

JAZZ DISCOGRAPHY is an invaluable adjunct to anyone who *really* listens to jazz music. It augments the often incomplete data available on a recording and helps shape and focus one's appreciation of an artist's evolution.

General discographical information has, in the past, been available in books compiled by Brian Rust (Jazz Records 1897-1942) and Jepson's Jazz Records (1942 - 1960s). More recently the updated editions of Jepson under the editorship of Erik Raban has begun to be published in Denmark by Jazz Media. These new books cover 1942-1980. Their rewritten content represents the work of many researchers. Additional information on newer recordings were partially

RECORDINGS • BLUES & GOSPEL • TRADITIONAL

contained in a series of theme discographies published by Walter Bruyninckx.

1992 saw the publication of the first three volumes of Tom Lord's

The Jazz Discography. It is published by North Country Distributors, Cadence Building, Redwood, NY 13679. The information is computer generated and includes current recordings. The technology will allow easy and quick updating of information. Consequently it is a one stop reference source and will thus appeal to many people. The early volumes, unfortunately, have perpetuated errors in past works - presumably because not all the information was available to the compiler. Fine tuning of the project will continue in subsequent volumes.

Meanwhile Greenwood Press have their own specialised discographies of jazz labels as data sources for other discographers who are busy compiling individual artist listings which go beyond the parameters of a general discography. **Jazz Media's** hard cover volume devoted to **Miles Davis** is a model of its kind, while volume 6 of **Jazz Records** is a single volume devoted to Duke Ellington's post 1942 recordings.

Specialised discographies of **Stan Getz**, **Gerry Mulligan**, **Zoot Sims** and **Dexter Gordon** are available from: Engstrom & Sodring Musikforlag A/S, Palaegade 6, DK-1261 Copenhagen K, Denmark.

Of peripheral interest to our readers are the following: **Keyboard Music of Black Composers** is edited by Aaron Horne and published by Greenwood Press. It is a most peculiar compilation. Quite a number of jazz composers (performers) are listed and yet Duke Ellington, for one, is absent. Jay McShann is listed but Albert Ammons and



Pete Johnson are absent. The criteria for inclusion seem very confused. Also from Greenwood is **Salsiology** - a history of Afro-Cuban Music and the evolution of Salsa in New York City by Vernon W. Boggs...**The Brazilian Sound** is an overview of the popular music of Brazil by Chris McGowan and Ricardo Pessanha and it is published by Billboard.

Inland Book Company Inc, 140 Commerce St., East Haven, CT 06512 is now the US distributor of Valerie Wilmer's **Mama Said There'd Be Days Like This**.

Mike Hefley, 3936 Hilyard, Eugene, OR 97405 is writing a book on **Anthony Braxton** and is looking for opinions and insights into the nature of his music.

RECORDINGS

BLUES & GOSPEL

Bobby Robinson's **Fire/Fury/Enjoy Elmore James** recordings have been reassembled in a delightful two CD set on Capricorn.

Got To Tell It is a new Oxford University Press biography of gospel great **Mahalia Jackson** by Jules Schwerin. There's a second two CD set of her Columbia recordings issued on CD. It mixes both the jewels and the dross of her many years with the label in the same manner as the first volume...**If We Ever Needed the Lord Before** is a **Marion Williams** collection on Columbia/Legacy which includes a recording made by **The Stars Of Faith** on March 25th, 1963 in Brussels and first issued on French CBS. (This information comes from Cedric Hayes' discography of gospel records 1937-1971. None of this is listed in the CD booklet). The balance of the CD contains selections from **The Gospel Sound**.

New CDs from the Specialty Label are being prepared by Fantasy. **Roy Milton**, **Joe Liggins**, **Jimmy Liggins** and **Percy Mayfield** are all represented by a second collection. There will also be further gospel titles by **The Pilgrim Travellers**, **The Soul Stirrers** and **Brother Joe May**.

CONTEMPORARY SOUNDS

Bvhaast Records' new catalogue is now available. Contact them at 99 Princeneiland, 1013LN Amsterdam, Holland for a copy...New on Silkheart are CDs by **David Ware**, **William Hooker**, **Roscoe Mitchell**, **Matthew Shipp** and **Joel Futterman**...Much of the India Navigation catalogue is being reissued on CD. Contact them at 177 Franklin St., New York, NY 10013 for more information...**Anthony Braxton**, **Julius Hemphill** and **Oliver Lake** have new CDs on Music & Arts...**Spirits Rejoice** is the creation of the **Dedication Orchestra** and the music is inspired by the memory and musical influence of the members of **Chris MacGregor's** Brotherhood of Breath. The cream of Britain's jazz community come together to perform music written or arranged by Keith Tippett, Kenny Wheeler, Radu Malfati, Django Bates, John Warren, Mike Westbrook, Jim Dvorak, Eddie Parker and Louis Moholo. The recording is issued on Ogun and distributed by Cadillac whose new address is 61-71 Collier Street, London NI 9DF, England. Revenue will go towards a scholarship fund for young South African musicians to study in England.

TRADITIONAL

Big Easy Records has a new CD by the **Orange Kellin Trio** with John Marks and John Russell...**James Dapogny's** Chicago Jazz Band's new CD on Discovery is **Laughing At Life**...**Swing Song** is the title of Washington, DC's Hot Mustard Jazz Band's new CD with special guest **Buck Hill**...A never before issued session by **Kid Thomas Valentine's** Algiers Stompers is out on the New Jazz Crusade...An archival session by **Ken Colyer's** Jazzband recorded live at London's Studio 51 Club has been issued by Lake Records...Newly reissued recordings of **Bunk Johnson** and **Big Eye Louis Nelson** are now out on American Music as well as archival sessions by **Kid Ory** and a variety of performances from the John Reid Collection.

MAINSTREAM

Roger Kellaway, **Jon Gordon**, **Johnny Costa** and **Dorothy Donegan** have new CDs on Chiaroscuro...**Jessica Williams** and **Ellis Larkins** are the latest to showcase their solo

CONTEMPORARY • MAINSTREAM • REISSUES • OBITUARIES

piano skills in Concord's Maybeck Hall series...**Roy Campbell**, **Jim Cooper** and **Lin Halliday** are further examples of the diversity of talent being showcased by Delmark. They have also dug up an unissued **Art Hodes** date which features clarinetist **Volly DeFaut**. **Coleman Hawkins**, **Willis Jackson** and **Pete Johnson** are all newly reissued by Delmark from the Apollo vaults...**Martial Solal** and **Toots Thielemans** combine in a new release on Erato...Trumpeter **Joe Wilder** is showcased in a small group setting on Evening Star Records with **James Williams** (piano), **Remo Palmier** (guitar), **Jay Leonhart** (bass) and **Sherman Ferguson** (drums). North Country are distributing it and it's also available by mail from InfoMagic, PO Box 338, Pennington, NJ 08534...There'll be a **Wes Montgomery** Box of his Riverside recordings soon. Fantasy is also working on **Dexter Gordon** and **Eric Dolphy** Boxes for late 1993 release...Zootcase is a 1982 Swedish concert performance by **Al Cohn** and **Zoot Sims** now available on Gazell...Jazz Alliance is busy reissuing a variety of material including **Mariam McPartland's** excellent *Plays The Music of Alec Wilder*.

Polygram has new recordings out by **Ray Bryant**, **Teddy Edwards**, **Jimmy Heath** (a big band date), **Hank Jones** and **Lou Levy**...The elaborately packaged **Billie Holiday** 10 CD set is limited to 16000 copies worldwide in this format. All of her Verve recordings are included along with a number of extra bits and pieces of music and chatter.

Spotlite Records has newly recorded CDs by British musicians **Brain Dee**, **Don Rendell** and **Pat Crumly** available and more are expected soon...Los Angeles based Star Line Productions has a European concert recording out on CD by **Peanuts Hucko** with **Randy Sandke**, **Roy Williams** and **Danny Moss** as well as a new recording by the **Page Cavanaugh Trio**.

REISSUES

BMG has reissued further collections by **Duke Ellington**, **Lionel Hampton** and **Artie Shaw** as well as the often overlooked **Phineas Newborn** session *While My Lady Sleeps*. Their one CD of **Art Blakey's** *Jazz Messengers* from Paris' Club St Germain in 1958 only contains part of the music recorded that night. The

complete session is available in Europe on a French RCA 2 CD set (ND74897)...**Julie London's** first two Liberty lps are now on one CD from EMI Records...The IAJRC has issued a CD of the **Joe Venuti Orchestra's** 1934 transcription titles.

CRITICS CHOICE

More favourite recordings from writers who did not make the deadline.

STEVE VICKERY (Toronto) - **PETER KOWALD/Duos** (FMP) - **JOHN HICKS/Live At Maybeck Hall** (Concord) - **BARRY GUY/Elsie Jo** (Maya) - **JULIUS HEMPHILL/Live At The New Music Cafe** (Music Arts) - **JOHN SCOFIELD/Grace Under Pressure** (Bluenote) - **ANTHONY COX/Dark Metals** (Island) - **ROSCOE MITCHELL/Live At The Knitting Factory** (Black Saint) - **KONRAD BAUER/Toronto Tone** (Victo) - **MARILYN CRISPELL/Circles** (Victo) - **JOSEPH SPENCE/Music Of The Bahamas** (Smithsonian)

ROBERT HICKS (Elmhurst, NY) - **ANTHONY DAVIS/X** (Gramavision) - **ASTREJA/Music From Davos** (Leo) - **HOWARD SHORE & ORNETTE COLEMAN/Naked Lunch Soundtrack** (Milan) - **DAVID S. WARE/Flight Of i** (DIW/Columbia) - **MATTHEW SHIPP/Points** (Silkheart) - **MAX ROACH/To The Max** (Mesa/Blue Moon) - **JULIUS HEMPHILL/Fat Man & The Hard Blues** (Black Saint) - **JEFFREY SCHANZER & BERNADETTE SPEACH/Dualities** (Avant) - **JOE MORRIS/Flip & Spike** (Riti) - **MARTY EHRLICH/Side By Side** (Enja)

PETER FRIEDMAN (Rochester, NY) - **KENNY BARRON/The Moment** (Reservoir) - **RUBY BRAFF & HIS NEW ENGLAND SONGHOUNDS** (Concord) - **TOMMY FLANAGAN/Beyond The Bluebird** (Timeless) - **STAN GETZ & KENNY BARRON/People Time** (Verve) - **STEVE GROSSMAN/Do It** (Dreyfus) - **JOHN HICKS/Friends Old & New** (RCA Novus) - **DANNIE D'IMPERIO/Blues For Philly Joe** (V.S.O.P.) - **JIMMY SCOTT/All The Way** (Sire/Warner Bros) - **BUD SHANK & LOU LEVY/Lost In The Stars** (Fresh Sound) - **ZOOT SIMS & AL COHN/Zoot Case** (Sonet)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Although it is always a boost to the ego to be mentioned with or by **Bob Thiele** (**Bob Thiele: Once Again Flying Dutch**, September/October 1992), in this case I must demur. A slip of the tongue or typewriter resulted in my getting credit for being one of the original contributors to *Jazz*, the legendary monthly publication started by **Bob** with **Dan Priest**. That's a credit I would love to have but for which I don't qualify.

In the late 1930s I was even younger than the prodigious **Thiele**, a maximum of five years old, in fact. The credential must go to **Frederic Ramsey** (no relation), one of the pioneers of jazz writing and author of a number of valuable works including *Been Here and Gone*, a great book on black music.

Sincerely, **DOUG RAMSEY**



SWING LOW SWEET CADILLAC COMIN' FOR TO CARRY THEM HOME

Apollo Theatre MC **RALPH COOPER** died August 4... Musician/writer/historian **BILL RUSSELL**, in New Orleans August 9...North Sea Jazz Festival founder **PAUL ACKET**, October 5...Drummer **ED BLACKWELL**, October 7...Drummer **ALVIN STOLLER**, October 19 in Los Angeles...Drummer **FREDDIE MOORE**, November 3...Swedish writer **LENNART STENBECK**, November 6... **RED MITCHELL**, November 9... **HONI COLES**, November 12...tenor saxophonist **GEORGE ADAMS** and New Orleans trumpeter **TEDDY RILEY**, November 14...Bandleader **ANDY KIRK**, December 11...Blues singer **ALBERT KING**, December 21...Australian clarinetist **DON "PIXIE" ROBERTS**, this past fall...Blues singer **VALERIE WELLINGTON**, January 2...**DIZZY GILLESPIE**, January 6.

IN PERFORMANCE



HORACE TAPSCOTT

BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON • SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13/1992

THERE IS A GENTLER more sophisticated side to America than one could imagine from the image portrayed on popular television. Not everywhere is a combat zone. This solo piano concert of Horace Tapscott in the Great Hall of Lairmont Manor brought together two examples of what America could be.

The setting was indeed unlikely; a manor built for a pianist who never experienced the beauty of its wood panelled walls, hand painted designed beams, or the grand piano set in the large bay window. From our vantage point of a small balcony, Mr. Tapscott, resplendent in tuxedoed respectability, capped by Pan African hat, cut an impressive figure among the tinselled Christmas tree, holly wreathes and vases of poinsettias.

Although his recorded music is interesting enough, to hear him for the first time live was a treat. He began his recital with a long rambling introduction of ideas as though unlocking the spirits trapped within the passive grand piano, reaching in to find the song, a child's voice raised in the gospel cry. Blues abound.

The program unfolded over the next hour or so with compositions in keeping with his history, compositions which he introduced to this quite middle class audience in the form of programatic stories. A self explanatory title, *Ancestral Echoes*; sketches based on a story of his childhood memory of a homeless lady named *Drunken Mary*, sober it seems only on Sunday. Drunk she may have been but funky for sure. Compositions by Linda Hill, Randy Weston and Thelonious Monk (*Well You Needn't*) illustrating the great history that he con-

tinues. The occasional Ellington quote in what appeared to be a medley, but unravelled as the mixing of the beauty, the styles, the history that had all been passed on to Horace. A secure acknowledgement of friends, past and present, who not only helped shape the music of this evening, but of the very history itself.

As the winter storm whistled louder around the bay window, as the wine and hors d'ouvres were being prepared for the final social moments, his parting comments, to a most happy audience, left a serious thought. Maybe, he said, by the time your grandchildren are going to school, they will hear this music all the time. Even in elevators.

Thank you Horace Tapscott for opening up our minds with such powerful music. Indeed a giant is awakened. *Bill Smith*

BELFAST FESTIVAL

NORTHERN IRELAND • NOVEMBER 11-28/1992

SIXTEEN PERFORMANCES by eleven headlining acts in eighteen days may seem like no big deal to Coda readers comfortably ensconced in jazz meccas like New York and London. But for Belfast's beleaguered jazz fans the annual Queen's Festival is a unique bonanza, like Saint Patrick's Day, Christmas and your birthday, all rolled into one.

The gigs all take place in a small and basic but atmospheric club known as the *Guinness Spot*.

"What a great room to play in. It's fabulous," enthused **Martin Taylor**, whose solo performances on amplified semi-acoustic guitar enthralled the hushed audience. His extended improvisations on standards such as *Georgia* were full of melodic inventiveness, while his playing on *I Got Rhythm* and *Day Tripper* astonished with its complexity. *I Get Along Without You* was exquisitely performed and utterly poignant.

"Everything we play is for dancing," declared **Roberto Pla** whose Latin Jazz Ensemble comprised a front line of four percussionists, backed by three trumpeters, a saxophonist, an electric bassist and a pianist. He wasn't joking.

The ensemble is multinational and multi-racial, with ten men and two women, and the relentlessly danceable salsa, Latin jazz and Colombian rhythms inevitably worked their irresistible magic on the capacity audience.

The **Julian Joseph** Quartet performed with a white heat intensity that often excited, but occasionally wearied. Their mobhanded instrumental assault was driven by drummer Mark Mondesir, a hyper kinetic blur of perpetual motion, and by the percussive piano playing of Joseph, a sometime Courtney Pine collaborator. Mellow moments were provided by the beautifully controlled tenor saxophone playing of Jean Toussaint, a former Art Blakey Jazz Messenger.

Red Rodney was in ebullient form, even announcing "And I'm Dizzy Gillespie!",

after introducing the member of his band, Red Alert. Forty years after his pioneering bebop partnership with Charlie Parker, Rodney's trumpet and flugelhorn playing was characterised by an attack and a commitment that Dizzy himself might nowadays envy. On numbers like Parker's *My Little Suede Shoes* and *Confirmation* the quintet's ensemble playing scintillated. Chris Potter's saxophone playing was superb.

John Scofield's guitar playing was consistently challenging, adventurous, thoughtful and technically awesome, and invariably eschewed cliché, glibness and flashiness. On *Guinness Spot* - yes, written and recorded in tribute, after an earlier appearance at the club - and others, Joe Lovano's high octave, muscular saxophone playing thrilled. The rhythm section (Dennis Irwin, double bass; Bill Stewart, drums) excelled throughout.

The **Stan Tracey** Octet was a British modern jazz Dream Team, comprising Tracey himself (piano, arrangements), Peter King (alto), Art Themen (tenor, soprano), Don Weller (tenor), Guy Barker (trumpet), Malcolm Griffiths (trombone), Dave Green (bass) and Clarke Tracey (drums), each a maestro and all performing superbly, on Tracey's *One For Gil* and others. *Time Springs* featured an extraordinary piano solo and a witty conversation between the virtuoso saxophones of Weller and Themen.

In the fifties **Jimmy Rogers** recorded tracks like *Hoochie Coochie Man* with Muddy Waters, thus defining forever the classic sound of Chicago blues. His guitar playing remains tasteful and stylish, though basic, while his singing conveyed utter conviction on self written classics such as *That's all Right*. His hotshot backing quintet starred drummer Ted Harvey, who performed with an exemplary lightness of touch and restraint.

Norma Winstone's renditions of standards by the likes of Johnny Mercer and of tunes such as Ralph Towner's *The Glide*,

to which she had added her own rather eccentric lyrics, were technically impressive and emotionally satisfying. Her crystal clear singing was exquisitely accompanied by the John Taylor Trio (piano, bass and drums).

The performance by the **Jim Snidero** Quintet (alto, trumpet/flugelhorn, piano, bass and drums) contained innumerable wonderful moments, although the sort of sustained collective inspiration that happens to a band on a really great night, was largely absent. Tom Harrell contributed many superb trumpet and flugelhorn solos, as on *Dam That Dream* and harmonised beautifully with the hard bop alto playing of Snidero.

Django Bates And Human Chain (keyboards, saxophone, bass guitar, drums), widely recognised as perhaps Britain's most imaginative young jazz band, were quirky and subversive, though sometimes also muddled, and rarely emotionally involving.

Submitted by reader **Trevor Hodgett**.



HORACE TAPSCOTT
PHOTOGRAPH BY LORRAINE TIPALDI
RED RODNEY
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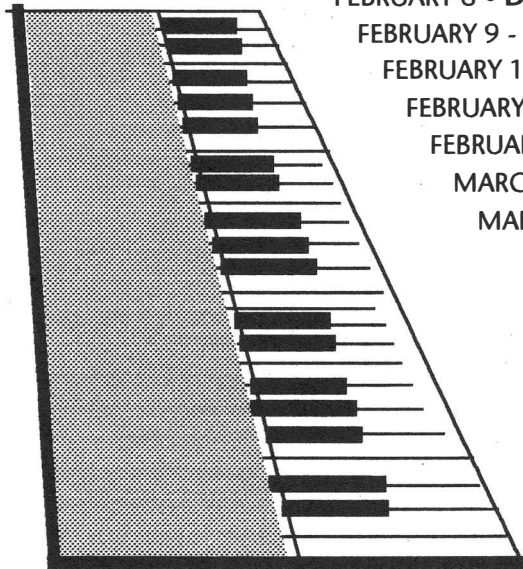
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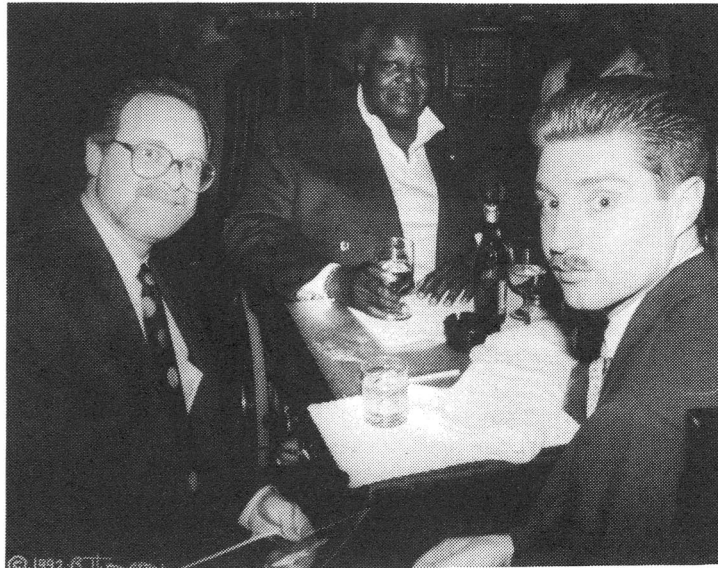
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REVIEWED BY GERARD FUTRICK

Re:Action • **Bernie Senensky Septet** • Unity UTY 123 / Climbing • **Barry Elmes** • Unity UTY 122
Live In Montreal • **Creatures Of Habit** • Justin Time JTR 8422-2 / A Class Act • **Oliver Jones** • Justin Time JUST 41-2
Vision • **Lorraine Demarais** • Les Disques Scherzo SCH CD 1508 / Crepuscule • **Sylvain Gagnon Quartet** • Amplitude JACD 4025
Lonely Universe • CMP CD41 / Mirage • **Jeri Brown With Fred Hersch** • Justin Time JUST 38-2
Streetcar Tracks • **Corry Sobol Sextet** • Word Of Mouth WOMCD 1002-1

LATELY AND WITH MUCH GREATER FREQUENCY the winds of Canadian jazz are blowing in a southerly direction. Evidence of this can be seen in several ways, most notably through the increased availability of Canadian releases, in the larger stateside record outlets, the live recordings made by Sonny Greenwich, soprano saxophonist Jane Bunnett and pianist Oliver Jones at New York's Sweet Basil, and by the growing popularity of musicians like Rob McConnell & his Boss Brass. This latest batch of CDs while breaking no new ground, does contain enough meaty tid bits to satisfy a hearty jazz appetite.



BERNIE SENENSKY • OSCAR PETERSON • BENNY GREEN
Photograph By Barry Thomson

FROM SERVING AS AN ACCOMPANIST to many visiting dignitaries who regularly performed at Bourbon Street (a defunct Toronto club) to holding down the piano chair in reedman Moe Koffman's quintet, Winnipeg native **Bernie Senensky** has been active on the Toronto scene since the late sixties. His own recorded output includes a pair of sides - *New Life* and *Free Spirit* that were distributed through bassist Gene Perla's now defunct PM label plus two self produced trio sessions on Unity. *Re: Action* his most current offering takes a somewhat different turn. Featuring a well oiled septet, it is designed to focus attention on Senensky's considerable skills as composer, arranger and ensemble leader. Orchestrated in such a way as to exploit the deep full richness of the horns, this collection of tunes tends to stretch the boundaries of the post bop genre. An astute choice of motivated, responsive sidemen always helps to enhance a group situation and this crew both individually and collectively hit the mark on a consistent level.

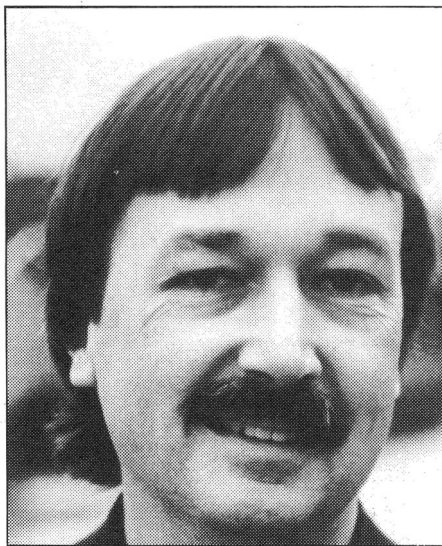
The bold combustible sounds emanating from the horns of trumpeter John McLeod and tenor and soprano saxophonist Alex Dean stand in stark contrast to the more structured, melodic approach subscribed to by trombonist Terry Lukiwsky and alto man Campbell Ryga. With each and every track a sure fire winner, Senensky's nine originals hold up extremely well under repeated listening. There is the jagged edge of *One Never Knows*, the touchingly reflective *Pepper's Gone* (a tribute to Pepper Adams featuring the glowing lyricism of Campbell Ryga's alto), the forceful drive of *New Outlook* and the loose, frantic urgency of the title cut. At the core of this session are the sparkling piano stylings of Senensky whose tasty solos and firm accompaniment move through and around the intricate unison passages thus cementing things into a uniquely personal statement. Also worth mentioning is the staunch, dependable support supplied by bassist Jim Vivian and drummer Barry Elmes.

SPEAKING OF Barry Elmes, he has become one of the most in demand drummers on the Canadian scene. His debut disc *Climbing* not only affords him the opportunity of recording under his own name but like Senensky's album it showcases his writing and arranging talents as well. Basically divided in half, the first five pieces make up Elmes' *1990 Suite* which for the most part is interpreted by a sextet comprised of three horns plus rhythm section. The remaining five tracks utilize a varying combination of players. Regardless of direction, mood or tempo, the drummer and his cohorts have no difficulty whatsoever in dealing with his demanding and adventurous charts. Kevin Turcotte shines on

both trumpet and flugelhorn, trombonist Terry Lukiwsky combines a smooth delivery with a blustery tone and reed master Mike Murley is as usual in top form. *Now Or Never* a medium tempo, minor blues gets things rolling followed by a trio piece for tenor, bass and drums which features the leader's nifty brush and mallet work. *Nothing Changes* lets pianist Gary Williamson limber up a bit, *Memorial* is notable for a splendid duet between Turcotte's muted trumpet and Jim Vivian's bowed bass and on *Climbing* the addition of Alex Dean's flute helps to soften the texture of the ensemble. Showing up on several selections, guitar wiz Ed Bickert gets his creative juices flowing especially on the bopish *It's Goodbye Charlie* and *The New Shim Sham Shimmy* a tune inspired by Dizzy Gillespie. Here the melody line is stated by bassist Steve Wallace with assertive punctuations supplied by the leader's smouldering brushes. In all an invigorating and very worthwhile session.

EXCEPT FOR A LISTING OF PERSONNEL, instrumentation, repertoire and the short statement *Live In Montreal* there is no background information available on *Creatures Of Habit*. As it turns out, *Creatures Of Habit* happen to be a tight, versatile, energetic quintet well deserving of your undivided attention. Getting right to the heart of the matter, they add a refreshingly unorthodox twist to Ram Ramirez' *Loverman* by skilfully utilizing the throaty tenor of Bill Runge over the distorted tonal colorations of guitarist Ron Samworth and Tynerish shadings of Ross Taggart as double threat who can also burn on tenor saxophone. The brief patter of drums ushers in the ebb and flow of *Angular Momentum* one of four compositions by Bill Runge. Once again Runge's tenor is heard to good advantage as is guitarist Ron Samworth who at times brings to mind John Scofield. Not to be outdone, bassist Rene Worst gets off a penetratingly taut solo before the tune draws to a logical conclusion. The *Rhythm Method* a straight ahead swinger offers yet another string of sturdy remarks from all hands while *Up And Down* maintains a peak level of intensity that eventually paves the way for singular efforts by Ron Samworth and Rene Worst. Rather gentle and subdued *G* is like the lull before the storm as tough tenors Bill Runge and Ross Taggart drive Chick Corea's *Matrix* to the ultimate climax. Here's hoping *Creatures Of Habit* continue the habit of turning out many more sessions as satisfying as this one.

SINCE DECIDING TO DEVOTE HIS TIME and energy to jazz on a fulltime basis, pianist Oliver Jones has been quite successful in developing a rather substantial, worldwide reputation. For this his tenth album, *A Class Act*, he is joined by two former Oscar Peterson associates bassist Steve Wallace and drummer Ed Thigpen. Together they delve into a mixed bag beginning with the leader's quick tempoed *Mark My Time*. In all Jones contributes four originals with the Caribbean flavoured *Stan Pat* making the strongest impression. Trumpeter Kenny Wheeler's *Everybody's Song but My Own* is handled in a surprisingly gentle manner along with Bill Evans classic *Very Early* which is transformed into an elegant waltz. The input of Wallace and Thigpen is immeasurable. By remaining totally in-sync throughout, they help provide the kind of support and inspiration that is needed to uplift a performance beyond the ordinary. A prime example



BARRY ELMES
PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

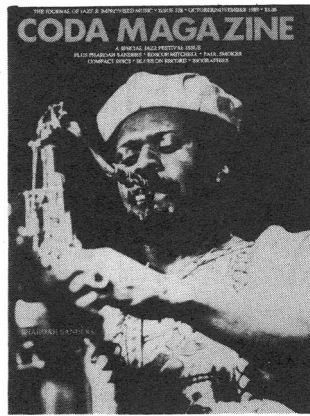
is the closing selection, Oscar Peterson's *Hymn To Freedom*. Following a rubato opening, Thigpen lays down a wicked backbeat prompting Jones to inject a healthy dose of blues and gospel fervour that carries through to the very last note. When summing up the virtues of this particular session, the album title alone speaks volumes.

PERHAPS NOT AS WIDELY CELEBRATED as Jones, pianist Lorraine Demarais is also an astonishing musician with plenty to offer. Sporting incredible chops, her fluid keyboard technique is the direct result of a sound conservatory background. *Vision* is the fourth Demarais disc I have had the opportunity to review. Made up entirely of originals and bringing into play various electric keyboards and synthesizers it is obviously geared to move in a much more commercial direction than her previous efforts. Except for the lovely *Andante* and two intense, unadulterated cookers, the program consists mainly of pleasant but lightweight funk and fusion with a samba thrown in for good measure. Demarais bonds tightly with bassist Michel Donato and drummer Paul Brochu. They are eventually joined by guitarist Michel Cusson whose acoustic and whining, high octane electric explorations are prominently featured. On *Till You* the quartet becomes a quintet as alto saxophonist Jean-Pierre Zanella treats us to a generic David Sanborn impersonation. In the final analysis however, it is the overwhelming charisma of Demarais herself that ultimately saves the day. If you prefer to hear her minus

the hi-tech accoutrements, I suggest you check out her earlier recordings.

BASSIST Sylvain Gagnon's *Crepuscule* shares certain things in common with the previous Demarais outing. There is the implementation of electronics, the hint of fusion here and there and saxophonist Jean-Pierre Zanella is once again on hand, this time for the duration. In both cases the level of musicianship is incredibly high, but this is where the similarities end. While the pianist's set proceeds in a smooth, unencumbered manner, Gagnon's program is inhibited in part by the stiff time keeping of drummer Magella Cormier. The writing (six of the eight pieces are from the pen of Gagnon with keyboardist James Gelfand and Zanella kicking in one apiece) though competent is not very memorable. With the exception of the latin flavoured *Cinconstances*, the Corea like *Amethyste* and *Kayapo* which is dedicated to a native tribe of the Brazilian Amazon, most of the music bears a striking resemblance to the ECM sound of the mid-late seventies. In fact on *Paix Muclair* it is apparent that Gagnon has listened more than once to Eberhard Weber. This is not to infer that his concept is totally derivative, for he is an imaginative improviser who handles his arsenal of basses with skill and precision. Gelfand and Zanella both exhibit a firm command of their respective axes however, while the pianist tastefully integrates his keyboards and solos with conviction, Zanella's playing lacks character and originality. This package has its moments but when it comes to creative music, professionalism alone is simply not enough.

A HODGE PODGE OF ELECTRONIC SOUND effects over ponderous rock rhythms *Lonely Universe* offers very little in the way of true musical exploration. Trumpeter Michael White emerges as the strongest voice of the foursome presented here but his respectable range and clear tone are repeatedly stifled by the screeching guitar of David Torn and bassist Mick Karn whose instrument come across like a gigantic rubber band stretched to the limit. Listed on drums and Mikatron (drum machine?) Michel Lambert's heavy handed pounding doesn't help matters either. Although individual and in some cases joint credit is given for various compositions, that spontaneous, thrown together at the recording session feeling comes seeping through.



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Several of the pieces however would work well as sound tracks for experimental films and the like. In spite of clocking in at only 38:58 (a rather skimpy playing time when it comes to CDs) this recording seems to drag on forever.

Closing things out are a pair of sides that highlight the work of two promising vocalists.

UNLIKE MANY OF HER CONTEMPORARIES who more often than not get by on glitz, glamour and showmanship, **Jeri Brown** brings a mature, highly individualistic approach to her chosen craft. Here she collaborates with Fred Hersch a superb pianist who has distinguished himself in the past with the likes of Art Farmer, Billy Harper and Jane Ira Bloom. Forming an intimate relationship, they bring together a fresh perspective to such pedestrian tunes as *Ebb Tide*, *The Look Of Love* and *For All We Know*. Brown is masterful at setting the mood. She possesses a gift for getting inside a song, treats the lyrics in a very personal way and can swing convincingly. When it comes to scat she can hold her own with the best of 'em as can be heard on several cuts especially Tad Dameron's *Good Bait*. A paragon of impeccable taste, Hersch furnishes close, sympathetic backing, exhilarating solos and several interesting compositions. His *Mirage*, one of my favourites, brings out the Sheila Jordan in Brown's style. Bassist Daniel Lessard pitches in from time to time but this is mainly a Brown and Hersch affair and what a marvellous affair it turns out to be.

A BUNDLE OF UNLIMITED POTENTIAL, **Corry Sobol** is still in the process of shaping a style of her own. Fronting a quintet of stout hearted souls, she breezes through a dozen tunes starting with the jaunty *Givin' In Blues*. This is followed by a novel reading of *Autumn Leaves* in which she incorporates both French and English lyrics. Although she tends to strain a bit on the ballads, Sobol excels when it comes to medium and up tempo material. The influence of Chris Connor seems to surface on the title cut and also on *The Thrill Is Gone*, a Connor signature piece from the fifties. The husky trombone of Hugh Fraser and the sweltering tenor of Phil Dwyer almost succeed in stealing the show while pianist Richard Whiteman, bassist Dave Young and the ubiquitous Barry Elmes hold everything together. Based solely on the evidence of this disc, Corry Sobol is a name well worth remembering. □

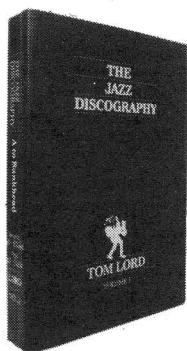
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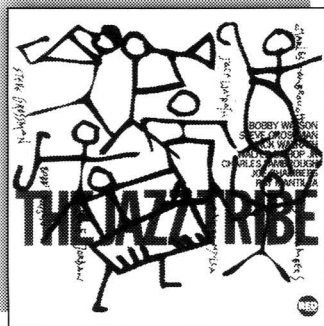
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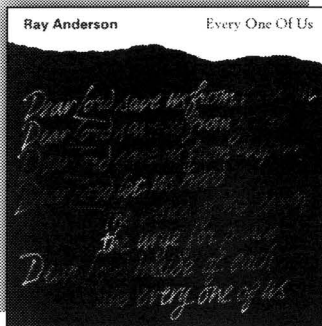
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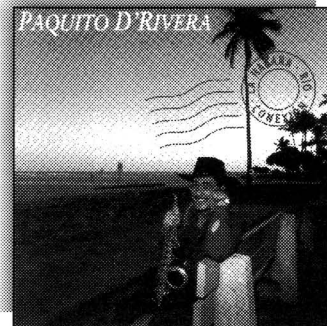
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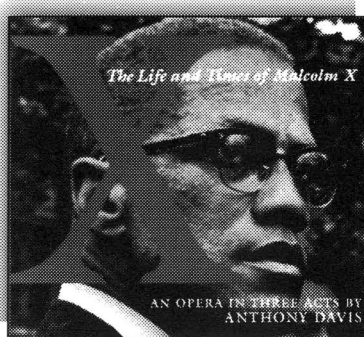
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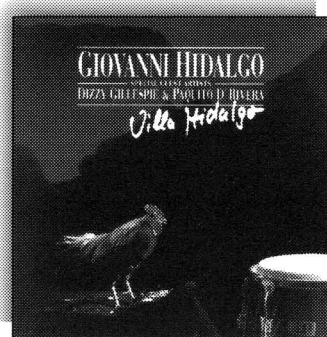
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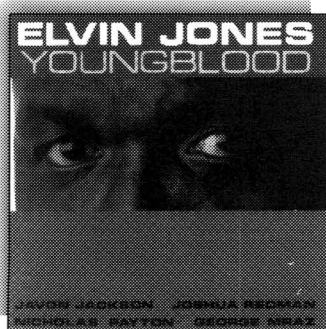
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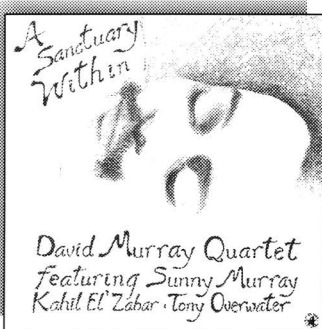
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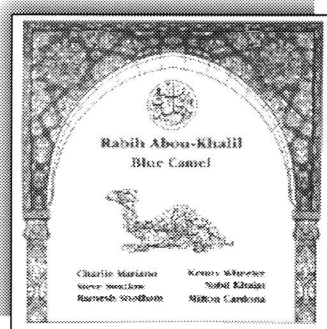
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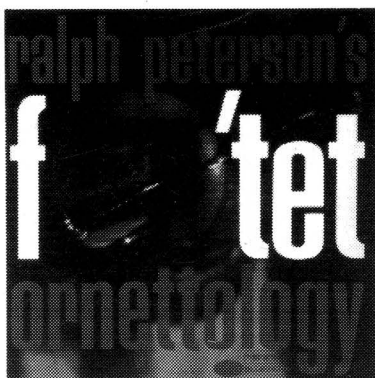
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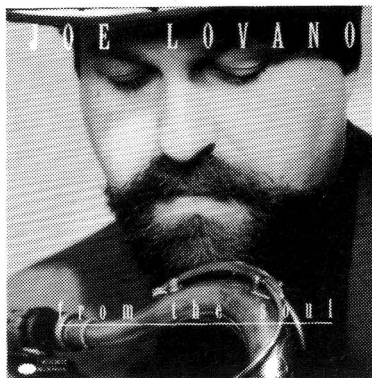
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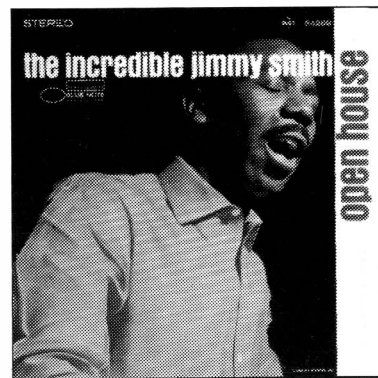
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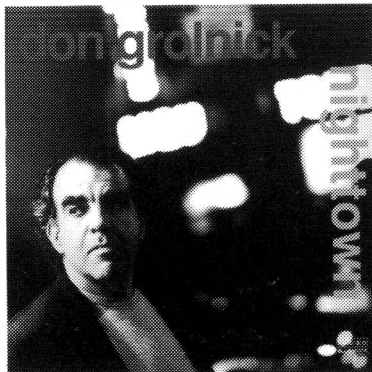
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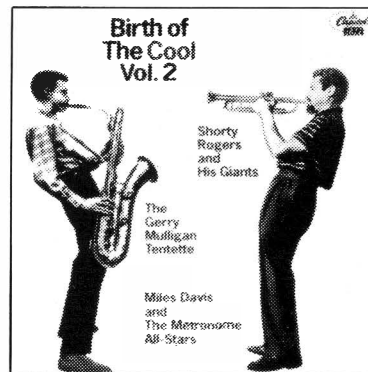
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