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SPECIAL PIANO ISSUE

FEATURING EARL HINES

OSCAR PETERSON • DUKE ELLINGTON
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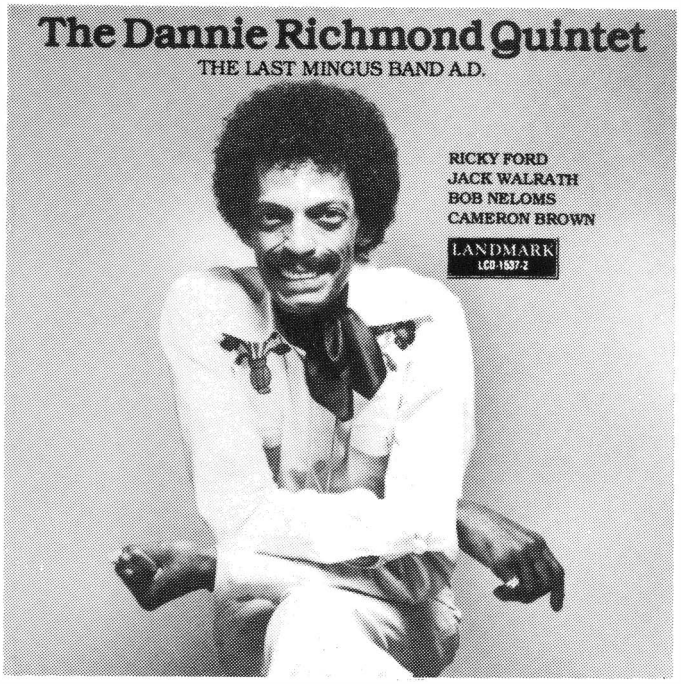

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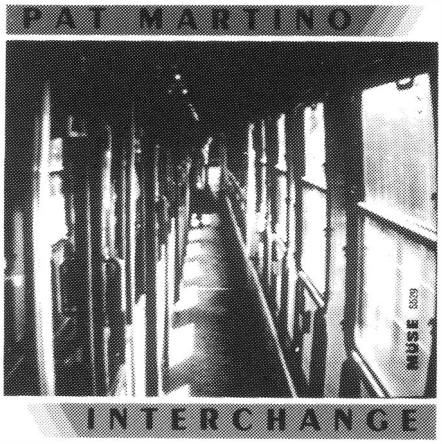

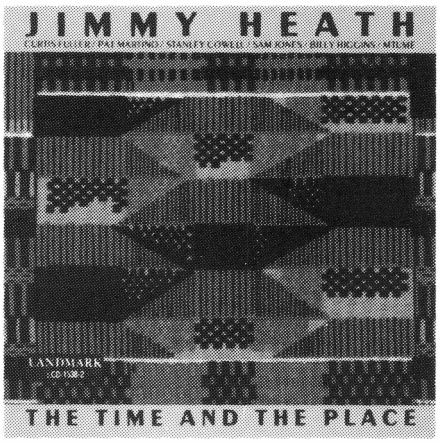

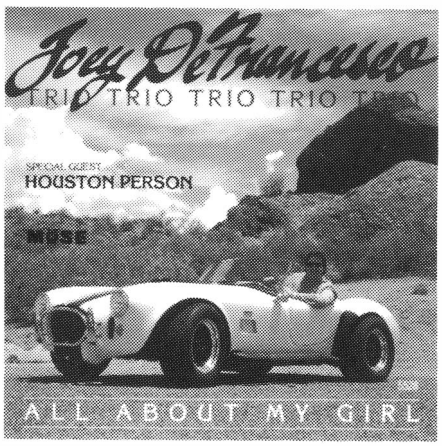

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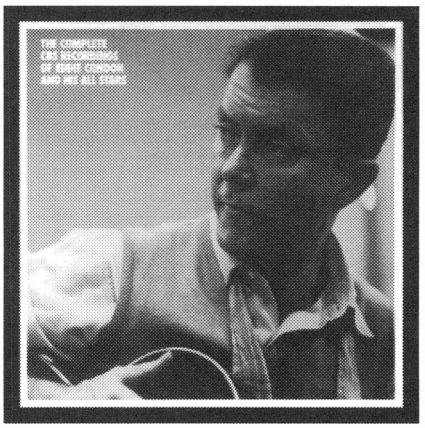

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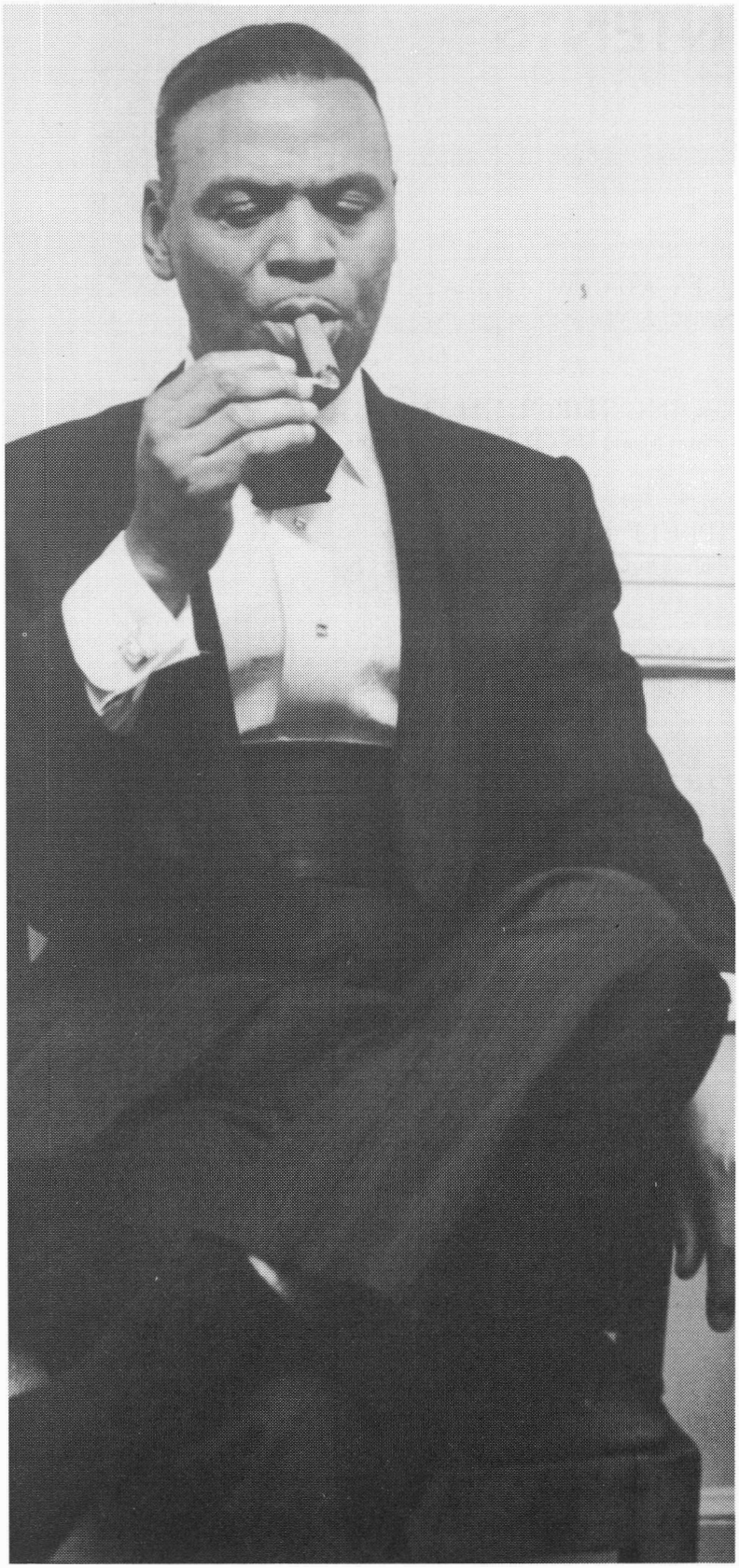
COVER PHOTOGRAPH **EARL HINES** BY BILL SMITH

A DATE WITH FATHA EARL HINES



I CAUGHT UP WITH EARL "FATHA" HINES ONE CRISP WINTER MORNING IN NEW YORK CITY IN 1970. HINES, THE FATHER OF MODERN JAZZ PIANO (WHO INFLUENCED AMONG OTHERS HIS FRIEND AND RIVAL ART TATUM), LEADER OF SEVERAL BIG BANDS (FROM WHOSE RANKS CAME DIZZY GILLESPIE, CHARLIE PARKER AND OTHER SEMINAL BEBOP FIGURES), WAS IN THE HEIGHT OF HIS SECOND LEASE OF FAME. HIS COLLABORATION WITH LOUIS ARMSTRONG ON CLASSIC RECORDINGS IN 1928 ALONE WOULD HAVE ESTABLISHED HIM AS ONE OF THE JAZZ IMMORTALS. BUT AFTER A SHORT FRUSTRATING SPELL TWO DECADES LATER WITH ARMSTRONG'S ALL STARS, VIRTUALLY AS SIDEMAN, HINES LANGUISHED FOR FIVE YEARS AS LEADER OF A DIXIELAND HOUSE BAND IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA AND WAS CONTEMPLATING GIVING UP MUSIC ALTOGETHER TO RUN A NIGHTCLUB WHEN THE FATHA'S FORTUNES WENT INTO ORBIT.

Persuaded by noted jazz authority Stanley Dance, his close friend and unofficial business manager, to play solo piano at a concert at New York's Little Theatre in 1964, Hines gave such a stunning performance that it stood the jazz world on its ear, wondering where the Fatha had been all this time.

There followed a whirlwind of world and national tours, festivals and concert appearances, recording dates and accolades from every aspect of the music industry. "Fatha Hines is the greatest piano player in the world." said Count Basie, a fellow member of the jazz hierarchy. "Earl could go on for 90 years and never be out of date. You get bruised running up against a cat like that."

While Earl, as it turned out, was voluble in his reminiscences of his gangster-ridden Chicago days, when Al Capone gave him a bodyguard on a trip to New York, and his association with Louis Armstrong at the Sunset Cafe, when he developed his famous "trumpet style" of piano playing to be heard over the band, catching up with him on his musical whirl was another story. So when the pianist was playing as the plush Plaza 9, I called up and through Stanley Dance, set up a breakfast interview at the Plaza Hotel, of which the club was a part.

Hines, tall, slender and noble-featured, was at the door, flashing a yard-wide grin that, like his piano playing, wowed audiences everywhere from San Francisco to Sukhumi, (a Russian Black Sea resort where he once played on a State Department tour).

PHOTOGRAPH BY JACK BRADLEY

AN INTERVIEW WITH AL VAN STARREX

"Stanley should be here in three minutes," said Hines, taking our coats and finding us seats. "He's always on time." Precisely at eleven there was a knock on the door and Dance appeared. He was a distinguished looking Englishman whose soft Essex speech contrasted with Hines strident Chicago-out-of-Pittsburgh accents.

As Hines picked up the bedside phone and ordered coffee and rolls for all, Dance brought us up to date on Hines. The piano star, already widely recognized on the Johnny Carson, Mike Douglas and other TV shows, was just winding up a busy schedule of concert dates and tours. Gigs in Toronto's Colonial Tavern, Indianapolis and his old stomping grounds Chicago, immediately preceded the Plaza date. He had also performed at Duke Ellington's 70th birthday party in the White House.

A COUPLE OF YEARS EARLIER Hines became the only musician in history to be offered a "lifetime contract" that guaranteed him a continuous annual income of $20,000 to play at a new San Francisco entertainment complex called The Factory.

"We never did take that contract seriously" laughed Hines, taking a seat at the foot of the bed. "But it's still binding and I can play there whenever I want." (The contract proved worthless.)

A waiter wheeled in a table and set up coffee things and as Hines helped himself to heavily-sugared coffee and cinnamon toast, I asked him about his Chicago days. Was it true, as had been reported, that he was nearby when the St. Valentine's Day massacre took place?

"St. Valentine's day?" Hines took a sip of coffee and sat back. "I was only a block away from there when it happened. I was downtown shopping in a music store... I went by and saw it afterward. There was blood all over the place."

The Grand Terrace ballroom, where Hines was working at the time with his first big band, was gangster controlled like most Chicago clubs during Prohibition and musicians came into direct contact with racketeers who dropped in to collect protection money.

"You see," explained Earl, "the racketeers owned twenty-five percent of the Grand Terrace and everytime they came in, they called the whole staff together and told everybody that we wouldn't be in any trouble as long as we just attended to our business; in other words, you had to be like the three monkeys—hear nothing, see nothing, and say nothing!

"There was pistol play every night during Prohibition. No shooting, just waving guns around. Even some of the waiters had pistols. The racketeers weren't any credit to Chicago, but they kept the money flowing."

"What about Al Capone?" I prompted.

"I knew Al Capone like I'm talking to you," said Hines, lighting up a pipe and settling down to reminisce. "He used to come to the Grand Terrace two or three times a week and he would say,"I don't like your handkerchief." And fix the handkerchief and there was a fifty dollar bill in it. He'd say, 'Good Evenin' how you feelin' Fatha,' I'd say, 'Fine,' and this fifty dollar bill. That's what he was doing, see.

"They didn't bother us at all. They actually protected us. When I came to New York they sent two men with me as bodyguards because they had gangsters in New York and they were afraid something would happen to me.

"He never carried a gun—he had 40 or 50 bodyguards with him all the time. He always treated our band nice and when he gave a big affair, why, we were always called in. I used to go to the hotel, the New Southern Hotel on Michigan Avenue, they owned the top three floors, and it was the same as trying to get into the White House, you had to go through so many guards!"

Hines, barely twenty at the time, was already on his way to fame as a pianist-bandleader. Born in Duqesne, a suburb of Pittsburgh, of a musical family—his mother was an organist and his father played cornet and led a marching band—Earl was steeped in music from an early age.

He wanted to be a concert pianist and majored in music at the Schenley High School in Pittsburgh where he lived with an aunt who was an opera singer. When he was 13 a cousin and an uncle who were "playtime boys" took him to the Leiderhouse, a dance hall, where Earl heard jazz music for the first time, played by a hunchback pianist named Toadlo.

Earl went back home and told his aunt that that was the kind of music he was going to play. Drawing on the styles of several pianists he had heard, Hines extended the rudimentary piano playing of the era—mostly based on ragtime and blues—to classical sophistication while still retaining an inherent feeling for rhythm.

STILL IN HIS TEENS, Earl was playing with a group led by singer Lois Deppe at the Leader House (Leiderhouse) when Eubie Blake, the famous ragtime pianist from New York, heard him play.

"Eubie was going out with my auntie at that time," recalled Hines. "That's how he happened to hear me so often. He was the first one I ever saw who played with one hand while conducting the band with the other.

"All that showmanship, I learned from him. Eubie had a great big band and his showmanship was something! He impressed on me the importance of memory—'know your instrument' he

would say. I got to a place where I do not look at the piano any more—like a typist.

"Eubie said to me, while I was in Pittsburgh, 'You got to get out of Pittsburgh, or you'll be here all your life!' Pittsburgh was the stopping off point for musicians between Chicago and New York, which were the centers, but it was sort of off the beaten track for those who were trying to make it. So Eubie, he used to come with his racoon coat, bowler hat, cane and all, and he said: 'If I catch you here when I come back, I'm gonna take this cane and hit you over the head with it!"

WHEN HINES TOOK BLAKE'S ADVICE and went to Chicago to play at a speakeasy called the Elite No. 2 Club, he found his fame had preceded him. A tap dancer named Lovie Taylor who had heard Hines in Pittsburgh went around raving about the fantastic young pianist who had just come to town.

Taylor slyly engineered contests between Hines and Teddy Weatherford at a club where Weatherford, then the reigning Chicago favourite, was playing. Neither pianist knew what was up.

Hines dethroned Weatherford but the two wound up close friends and when Weatherford left Erskine Tate's band at the Vendome Theater, which included Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines took his place. (They kept in close contact until Weatherford died of Cholera in India in the 1940s.)

Earl learned all he could about conducting and operating a big band from Tate and he put this knowledge into practice when he and Louis Armstrong took over control of Carrol Dickerson's band at the Sunset Cafe.

Remarking on their friendship and how they influenced each other's musical styles, Hines said: "What I liked about Louis was that he was doing things on trumpet that I was doing on the piano. We used to sit there, side by side at the Sunset, and I'd do something and Louis would steal it, and say way down deep in that rumble, 'Thank you, man,' and I'd steal something he did and say 'Thank you' and we'd thank each other for using each other's ideas.

"I developed the so-called 'trumpet style' because there were no amplifiers in those days. Singers were using megaphones, and the poor piano player, playing his little finger thing, you couldn't hear him over the band.

"I knew in my classical training to emphasize certain passages" (Hines pounded the table with his fingers). "So I said I'm gonna use that in the band. And by playing with the same feeling that a trumpet used to have, I could cut through. And that's when all of them started using that idea—so we could be heard!"

Hine's association and numerous records with Armstrong (including the Hot Fives and the astonishing duet *Weather Bird*) and others added to his fame, and at the end of 1928 he opened with a ten-piece band at the new and lavishly appointed Grand Terrace Club on Chicago's South Side. It was the first of several bands, all immensely successful, that he was to lead.

The Grand Terrace represented regular work, but it was hard work, often seven nights a week for six months at a time. Between engagements Hines would go on tour and by 1938 the band had played every state in the union.

From 1934 onwards, two radio wires (WMAQ and WNER) gave it more air time than any other band. (This was the time a radio announcer at the Grand Terrace facetiously called the then baby-faced Hines "Father Hines" and the name stuck. It was a name Hines would rather forget.) Besides noted musicians, the bands also introduced vocalists Sarah Vaughan and Billy Eckstine—both Hines finds —to the public.

THE HINES BAND WAS THE FIRST to "invade" the South. "I always say we were the first Freedom Riders," said Hines, propping himself on his elbows. "Because when we went there it was, oh it was brutal! There were streets we couldn't go down; there were places we could not even look at!

They made us walk on the street off the sidewalk in Fort Lauderdale; at a white dance in Valdosta, Georgia, some hecklers in the crowd turned off the lights and exploded a bomb under the bandstand. Sometimes when we came into a town, the driver of our chartered bus would tell us to move to the back of the bus just to make it look all right and not get anyone riled up. Oh, I could go on and on..."

Hines finally disbanded in 1947. After a brief stint at running his own club in Chicago, he was on the road (and in the recording studios) again, this time as a member of Louis Armstrong's All Stars. Unhappy in his role of sideman (albeit one of the stars) Hines quit Armstrong abruptly in 1951 and went to California to organize a house band at the Hangover Club in Oakland. ('It was what they called a dixieland band and when those old cats started playing that two-beat stuff I almost went out of my mind.') He streamlined the band's antique style of playing (with Muggsy Spanier, Pops Foster, etc.,) and it was so successful that he stayed on for several years.

The Hines saga might have ended there, with the pianist contemplating retirement or going into business (he had a night club for awhile, complete with Irish and Chinese dancers and a Japanese singer) had not Stanley Dance come into the picture.

Dance (who became hooked on Hines in 1928 when the Okeh records with Armstrong were released in England) convinced Hines that he should play a concert series at New York's Little Theatre as a soloist—something Earl had never attempted before. ('I was so nervous, and my hands were shaking,' Hines confessed, 'I was afraid I wouldn't be able to play a note.') The rest, as they say, was musical history.

The New Yorker magazine ran two profiles on the pianist, Down Beat elected Hines to its Hall of Fame. It was the first of many polls Hines was to win as the world's Number One jazz pianist.

HINES REDISCOVERY WENT INTERNATIONAL with several European tours. ('Father of jazz Enlightens Rome' ran one headline. 'Fatha Hines Flies in—And Kills A Myth' headlined the London Daily Mail...'a master at his peak,' said the London Sunday Times. On a six-week tour of Russia for the U.S. State Department, Hines and his band played 35 concerts in 11 Soviet cities to an estimated 92,000 people (even though the Russians, fearing a riot, cancelled appearances in Moscow and Leningrad.)

Hines, then in his mid-60s, had never let up playing. Each performance seemed to be more spirited and inventive than the previous one. Never one for cliches and repeated phrases, he always sounded fresh even when playing such timeworn favourites as *Memories of You* (composed by his mentor Eubie Blake), *Tea for Two*, his own compositions *Rosetta, A Monday Date* or a medley of tunes associated with his close friend Fats Waller.

Hines usually played with his eyes shut tight, teeth clamped in a fixed smile, head sometimes bowed low over the keys, both fists working furiously as if battling each other. ('His face and manner are his music', commented a critic, 'a sort of naked, perfect non-showman showmanship that stops the heart.')

"I'm an explorer," explained Hines. "I keep trying to find what else the piano can do. Sometimes I do things with my left hand that I don't realize what until I hear the record. Then I wonder how the hell I did it myself."

A maid appeared and spirited the coffee things away and Hines stood up and stretched. "I haven't been ill since I was twelve years old," he said, answering the inevitable question about his youthful appearance.

"I was an amateur boxer when I was in Pittsburgh and did a little boxing on the side when I was in Chicago. In the 1930s, when Joe Louis was champion and I was travelling, I used to go to Pompton Lakes and sit up on the fence and talk to him and when he'd go into training I'd go down there with him to the gym and work out with him.

"Why, I just kept up with those calisthenics, " Hines laughed and pummelled his stomach. "I'm in better condition now than Joe is. He just quit, I didn't. I'm still exercising. Joe looked at me the last time he saw me and he said, 'Goddam, you look like what I should be like! And I said, 'Well, why didn't you keep it up—I'm just following what you showed me!"

At two o'clock Hines put on an overcoat and hat to do some last minute Christmas shopping for his wife and two daughters in California. (He was going home to Oakland to spend Christmas with his family after the Plaza date.)

Glancing at some of the material Dance gave me, I saw that Hines had been recently honoured in San Francisco with an outright gift of an antique (1904) Steinway grand piano in mint condition in a celebration by Scott Newhall, executive editor of the San Francisco Chronicle.

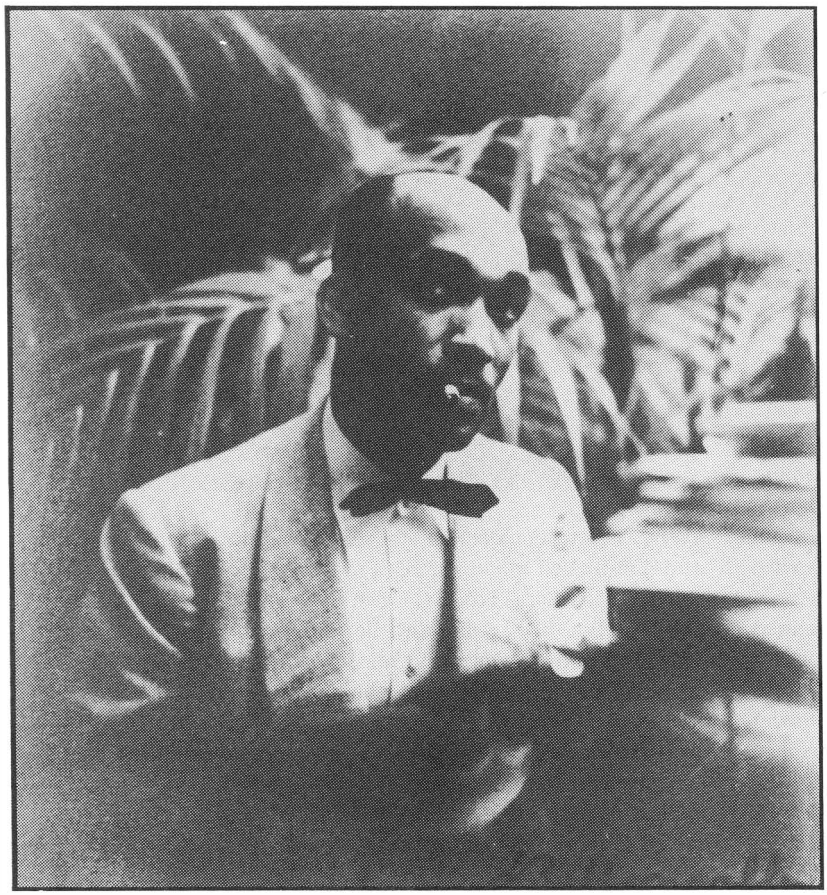
An inscription on a silver plaque attached to the piano lid read: "Presented by jazz lovers from all over the world, this piano is the only one of its kind in the world, and expresses the great genius of a man who has never played a melancholy note in his lifetime on a planet that has often succumbed to despair."

It aptly expressed our feelings for Earl Hines as he waved goodbye and swung jauntily down Fifth Avenue.

Earl Hines continued to perform relentlessly until 1983, when he confessed to feeling a bit tired, collapsed and died, apparently of a heart attack at 77. But, through his music, now widely available, Fatha lives on. □

RECORDING NOTE: Hines' Okeh recordings with Louis Armstrong are available in Columbia's Jazz Legacy series (Sony); his recordings with Jimmy Noone's Apex Club Orchestra are on Decca/GRP; numerous other CD recordings are available on a variety of labels.

PHOTOGRAPHS
EARL HINES *(LEFT)* BY BILL SMITH
EARL HINES WITH **HARRY LIM** *(ABOVE)*
(PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN)



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AS WE MOVE TOWARD THE END OF THE JAZZ CENTURY, THERE IS EVER GREATER INTEREST IN THE HISTORICAL SHAPE OF THE MUSIC. THE TRIUMPH OF THE CD IN THE PAST DECADE HAS FUELLED AN ARCHIVAL MANIA IN WHICH HISTORY THREATENS TO COLLAPSE UNDER ITS OWN MASS. THERE IS A QUEST TO RECORD THE AUTHENTIC, EVEN IF THE AUTHENTIC HAS LEARNED TO SERVE HAPPILY AS BACKGROUND LOUNGE MUSIC FOR DECADES; AND, OF COURSE, THERE IS THE CORRESPONDING ENTHUSIASM OF YOUNGER MUSICIANS TO REPEAT THE PAST. HIP-HOP GROUPS FIND NEW LIFE BY SUBSUMING VAST TRACTS OF LEE MORGAN AND EARLY HERBIE HANCOCK. NEO-CONSERVATIVE HUMAN SAMPLING MACHINES REPRODUCE THEMSELVES AS MILES DAVIS, JACKIE MCLEAN, PHINEAS NEWBORN, AND BILL EVANS. THESE MYRIAD PROCESSES ARE MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE. SOME OLD RECORDS ARE RE-RELEASED THAT ARE SO DUBIOUS THEY ALMOST SERVE TO VALIDATE THE NEW.

REISSUES GIVE US THE ESSENCE of Earl Hines, the marginalia of Bill Evans, and the detritus of Wynton Kelly. First issues of thirty year old material appear from Herman Chittison and Lennie Tristano. Carol Tristano parallels Natalie Cole by appearing on her late father's record, so that Nat Cole and Lennie Tristano find a new common ground beyond their early Hines influence.

Every position is subject to revision. Despite prevailing evolutionary views that things will grow, decay or at least change in time, Milton Sealey somehow produces a vital 1960 record in 1993. In different locales, Roger Miller provides jazz piano with more inspiration than Thelonious Monk.

WELL AGED SOLO

The Collectors' Classics CD of **EARL HINES** brings together all of his solo recordings and alternate takes from his first solo session up until 1940. The bulk of this CD comes from a brief period between December of 1928 and February of 1929. There were numerous fine pianists active at the time, but Hines brought something new to the possibilities of the piano in jazz. He first gained notice for his trumpet-and clarinet-like right hand lines, but his solos possess a rare vitality, bringing liberating rhythmic fluency and invention to his mostly blues and sometimes rag-derived tunes. The three takes of *Love Me Tonight*, from 1932, are instructive, particularly the second in which Hines seems to run out of keyboard and fingers. This is piano playing at the edge, and the brilliance has hardly been dulled by the intervening sixty years.

The recordings, many of which were originally recorded as piano rolls, have been taken from 78s. They haven't been cleaned up to the point of distortion, and a good deal of surface noise remains on some. Hines' playing was as brilliant and assertive even fifty years later, but these are essential performances.

HERMAN CHITTISON was a gifted swing-era pianist who often worked at the fringes of jazz. During his career, he accompanied Stepin Fetchit and Ethel Waters, and even

HERMAN CHITTISON & **EARL HINES** PHOTOGRAPHERS UNKNOWN

THROUGH THE AGES

REVIEWS BY
STUART BROOMER

spent time playing the role of a bar-room piano player on a radio serial. In 1964 he recorded a solo session that he planned to release independently. It has only surfaced now, and it's joined on this CD by a half hour that Chittison recorded on home equipment at a club date a few weeks before his death in 1967.

Chittison had a way of levitating whatever he played to an almost euphoric level, even tunes like Weill's *September Song* or Bernstein's *Tonight* that might easily turn maudlin. Often his left hand chording creates a compact, bright propulsion, very much like the guitar of Freddie Green. It's a gift that must have served him well through years of strange jobs and stranger requests. Tunes that were always bathos—*Danny Boy* and *People*—bounce happily on the same plain. His style filled large and vacant tracts with erratic, florid variations, and he also possessed a two handed chord style that could match the drive of a big band. The CD ends when the tape did, in the middle of a second performance of *Tonight*.

Hayward And Hinton is largely a solo session, from 1987, by the late **LANCE HAYWARD**, a veteran of New York piano bars, with **MILT HINTON** joining in on a few tracks. Hayward shared Chittison's skill in making lively music out of strange material. Here it's Roger Miller's pop/country/novelty *King of the Road* that gets the jazz treatment, a rolling, joyous invention that veers into bitonality.

Regardless of his venues, Hayward was simply a stunning pianist, and his elegance and resourcefulness will delight anyone who loves great piano playing. Every detail and sonority has a specific weight and balance. The tracks with Hinton are especially fine. The Town Crier recording has wonderful room sound that hasn't been over-enhanced.

CONTEMPORARY SOLO RECITAL

While Chittison and Hayward practiced their refined arts to general neglect, there is currently a vogue for solo piano, typified in many ways by the **ROLAND HANNA** and **DENNY ZEITLIN** discs. If solo jazz piano first flourished in bordellos and rent parties, and in large part survived quietly in bars where it wouldn't intrude on conversation, it now resides at the centre of a particularly dull spotlight. While an audience chatters through the "live" portion of the Chittison disc, a reverent silence envelops the Zeitlin concert, the twenty-seventh CD in the four year old Concord series of Maybeck recitals.

It's an unfortunate irony that this spotlight comes far too late for those pianists who matured in the era of piano-specific, two-handed styles (stride, boogie-woogie), and is generally too conventional for thorny, Monk-inspired, minimalists and too conservative for post-Cecil Taylor players. As jazz continues to find ever broader respectability, there is less and less of it to respect.

While there are plenty of pianists making brilliant solo music, the ubiquitous contemporary recital tends to detach many of its players from the post-bop band styles in which they matured, leaving them to pillage European antecedents, usually through Art Tatum, and often through Phineas Newborn, to fill in parts. They simply aren't two-handed improvisors and, unless they have other rare gifts, that's what the form requires. It turns post-bop jazz piano players into something very different, something decorous. Eclecticism is de rigueur. Many such recitals turn into cavalcades of jazz styles and there's a tendency to a late Romantic vagueness, of rhythm as well as harmony. The rhapsodies that once functioned as introductions now make up whole performances.

For the contemporary recital, there is an increasingly codified repertoire, good taste lurching toward the moribund. Hanna and Zeitlin each play an Ellington tune, Hanna *In a Mellotone*, Zeitlin *Sophisticated Lady*, perhaps the most-recorded Ellington tunes. Each plays an up-tempo post-bop tune, Hanna *Oleo*, Zeitlin *Lazy Bird*, which is to the "jazz" recital what a "Paganini Variation" is to the classical. Each plays a Monk tune, and it's the same tune, *Round Midnight*, a piece that gets its original edges dulled with every appearance. Leonard Feather proposed a ten year moratorium on the tune back in his notes to Maybeck number 4, but for some reason Monk must be included in these proceedings, hovering like Poe's raven in some terrible judgment. "I did so much with so little," he seems to squawk, "while you do so little with so much."

(In 1982, Milestone released 22 minutes of Monk rethinking the tune during the

1957 session for ***Thelonious Himself***. It appeared on a Monk/Gerry Mulligan reissue, called ***Round Midnight***, along with Monk's ultimate solo and a quartet version. These recordings are highly recommended).

Given that, they're very different players. Hanna's is a warm record, with some of the same fine room sound that Town Crier gets on the Hayward record (I assume it's the same Baldwin C10 that is credited on both discs). Hanna explores European piano music and early jazz, as well as the modern mainstream. The result often resembles much nationalist-impressionist piano music of the early decades of the century, further warmed and blurred to produce a kind of dream-like feeling. There's often a "spanish tinge" and it sometimes suggests Granados, Falla, and Milhaud, as elsewhere Joplin and Morton are suggested.

Zeitlin is more linear and more improvisatory, flashier and more "modern." There is often a glib shifting from idea to idea, and approaches that might have had substance are fused with the banal. Playing *Round Midnight* on the piano strings or segueing from a Cole Porter tune to one by Coltrane may be inspired or trite, depending on the listener.

There's really little to object to on these records. Hanna and Zeitlin are good pianists. The problem is that eclecticism and the redundancy of the format threaten to make them disappear into mere decorativeness. Despite the spotlight in which such recitals currently appear, more appropriate illumination might be a reading lamp.

VARIATIONS ON THE PIANO TRIO

There really aren't enough recordings of **LENNIE TRISTANO**, so ***Note to Note*** is welcome. Its five tracks were recorded as duets with bassist Sonny Dallas in 1964-65. It was Tristano's wish that the music be released with drums added, so here it is with Carol Tristano playing drums in 1993. How one reconciles this with Tristano's devotion to improvisation is beyond me, but in this too his thinking was at least original. Perhaps he thought of records as things that had drums on them, or drums were something he liked between him and an audience, though the solo recordings for Atlantic are remarkable, and hearing him in solo performance in the early sixties is one of this listener's cherished memories.

The resultant sound mix is good, considering it weds a thirty year old home recording of piano and bass with current studio-quality drums. The drumming is spare and conventional, not particularly interactive, and, once armed with knowledge of how the band was put together, one tends to listen to the CD as if the drumming wasn't there.

Tristano achieved a kind of zero display, carrying the bebop tendency to harmonic abstraction to every corner of his music. His habit of using the chord changes of standards while deleting melody statements is part of that. This set begins with *Just Prez (Just Friends)* and ends with *There Will Always Be You* (but *There Will Never Be Another You?*). Opening and closing with what are already variations, Tristano focuses himself and a listener on the absolute instant of creation, leaving origins and outcomes, beginnings and endings, elsewhere. It's a beautiful form of playing, in which one hears a kind of pure act of concentration, concentration so pure and thought so fleeting there is not even thinking about concentrating.

Tristano remains a paradigm of the jazz musician as laboratory experimenter, and his work continues to be influential, whether among fairly direct descendants, like Liz Gorrill and Connie Crothers, or at some considerable remove, among musicians like Anthony Braxton and Borah Bergman. In recent years his influence has sometimes melded with that of Cecil Taylor.

BILL EVANS was certainly among those influenced by Tristano's cerebral and harmonic approach. ***The Ivory Hunters*** is a 1959 session at which United Artists producer Jack Lewis surprised **BOB BROOKMEYER** and Evans with two pianos in the recording studio. A certain "hook" was almost a prerequisite for United Artists to make a jazz record in that period, and the two piano quartet seems as inspired by stereo as by musical thinking. This material was last released in 1980, following Evans' death, under the title ***As Time Goes By***. The return to the original title and cover art, with the phrase "double-barrelled piano" and a trumpeting elephant with tusks goring photos of the two pianists, is arresting, to say the least.

The tunes are the most familiar standards—*Honeysuckle Rose, I Got Rhythm, The Man I Love, The Way You Look Tonight*—and that's appropriate given how unusual the playing situation was. Brookmeyer had had plenty of experience with contrapuntal approaches in his work with Gerry Mulligan and Jimmy Giuffre, as did the rhythm team of Percy Heath and Connie Kaye with the MJQ, while Evans would explore them throughout his career. The two-piano quartet was a chance for them to resee roles and relations within the small group.

MILTON SEALEY PHOTOGRAPH BY BARRY THOMSON

The result is fascinating: a dense, slightly disordered, and highly improvised session that's often like listening to two conceptions of the piano trio. Evans is his customary self, subtle and harmonically dense, while Brookmeyer is adroit, often emphasizing a bright sound, bluesy inflections, simplicity and propulsive rhythmic playing that demarcates the two pianos in the terrain. The combination of complexity and understatement is intriguing, and the musicians bring new and surprising life to the material.

In some ways a far more typical Evans session, though Evans is unfortunately absent, is Mitchel Forman's recent ***Then and Now***, in which he's joined by alumni of the Evans trio, Eddie Gomez and Jack DeJohnette. A tribute to a mannerist like Evans can easily turn into unconscious parody, but Forman never quite crosses that line. Instead, his approach to Evans is normative, bringing a more conventional approach to *Waltz for Debbie, Nardis*, and other tunes associated with Evans. Forman is more linear and frequently more animated than his subject, and the record works fairly well, a pleasant essay in Evans' customary material and the way he reshaped the piano trio.

In his notes, Forman credits Evans with creating a musical language. Rather, I think it was a dialect that Evans alone spoke with full fluency, though a few collaborators (Scott LaFaro, Jim Hall, Eddie Gomez) and one descendant (Richie Beirach) have come very close. The work of a subtle genius, Evans' music seems to have hinged on some complex relationship between harmony, chord voicings and timing, achieving an ineffable quality that may be recalled by imitation, but which is ultimately out of reach.

WYNTON KELLY, Paul Chambers and Jimmy Cobb, the trio that evolved in the Miles Davis band with the departures of Evans and Philly Joe Jones, were among the best of late fifties/early sixties rhythm sections. They brought wonderful spark to their own records and others (a live Wes Montgomery session with Johnny Griffin stands out in memory).

That said, the ***Last Trio Session***, recorded in 1968 just a few months before Chambers' death, must represent something like the bottom of the reissue barrel. There are moments here (*Kelly's Blues* is typical of this group in good form), but some very bad pop tunes turn the group's strengths; clarity and precision, into weaknesses.

The rendition of Bacharach's *Say a Little Prayer* is appalling (the quality of Kelly's unrelated introduction only makes the "tune" seem worse when it arrives), but it paves the way for The Doors' *Light My Fire*, here given a sort of bossa nova treatment (the commercial fantasies of A & R men could be beyond satire). Following these, McCartney's *Yesterday* doesn't seem so bad. It's a repertoire so dreary that Chittison or Hayward probably couldn't save it (though Spike Jones, Maurizio Kagel, or Han Bennink might).

Admirers of piano trios from the late fifties will be delighted by a new recording by **MILTON SEALEY**, who remains very much in a pure tradition of angular bop piano. Now in his mid-sixties, the Montreal-born pianist comes almost straight from Bud Powell, with some of the simplifications and harder edges brought to the style by Horace Silver, Elmo Hope, and Sonny Clark. The thickening of Red Garland and Evans is absent, and this avoidance leaves him with a clean, anti-mannerist style that's a joy to hear.

The extended *Blue Love* is simply beautiful, comparable in effect to Ellington's late ballad playing with Coltrane and Mingus and Roach, so good it makes this CD worth seeking out. There is good support throughout from bassist Yas Takeda and, especially, Louis Hayes on drums. Recorded at Rudy Van Gelder's studio, the album's sound, style and drumming conspire to give the impression of a 1960 Riverside record.

CECIL TAYLOR has, in recent years, frequently returned to the traditional instrumentation of the piano trio, a format with which he often worked in the late fifties. The Feel Trio presents him with William Parker and Tony Oxley in a concert recorded in Germany in 1990.

Long anchored skyward in the alto saxophone of the late Jimmy Lyons, the trio now locates its fundamental in the subterranean lower register of Parker's bass, breaking up time into vast granite slabs. Oxley's repertoire of sounds includes industrial noise effects that sound like metal scraping against metal, generating new elements.

Taylor's interactions with European percussionists have dovetailed with some alterations in his approach to the improvising situation, with more emphasis on isolated segments and space than the epic continua that once characterized his work. I don't think it represents any shift in his philosophical position, but it reveals other layers of the same complex and convoluting art. Taylor's music has a gravity so profound that it actually reverses itself. Cliffs fly and water seeps upward, while clouds and rainbows plummet to the earth. As usual, most of the great moments in the history of piano music are implicit in his every touch of the keyboard. □

LENNIE TRISTANO PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL SMITH

NOW & THEN KEITH TIPPETT

TRADITIONAL AND IRREVERENT

AT THE SAME TIME, THE BRITISH PRIDE AND CHIDE THE TRADITIONAL THEY FERVENTLY BELIEVE IN. AFTER ALL, ISN'T IT THIS COUNTRY WHICH AT ONCE REGALES IN ITS MONARCHY WHILE LAMPOONING IT VIA THE PRESS AND SUCH ICONOCLASTIC PROGRAMS AS "SPITTING IMAGES"? AND WAS IT NOT THERE THAT AN EXPLOSION OF POP CULTURE OCCURRED A LITTLE MORE THAN A QUARTER OF A CENTURY AGO? OF COURSE, ONE THINKS OF THE PREVALENT ROCK CULTURE (BEATLES, STONES ET AL), BUT SO MUCH MORE WAS GOING ON THAN WHAT THE HEADLINES WERE TELLING US.

In a time where everything seemed possible, people in all fields of the arts were carrying out experiments. In jazz, of course, the whole free music phenomenon came into its own. Both on the continent and in Britain, musicians were discarding all conventions, "improvising for broke" so to speak. John Stevens, Barry Guy, Evan Parker, Trevor Watts and the ring leader himself, Derek Bailey, were abstracting the conventions of jazz into oblivion, and raising the tool of improvisations as a means in itself.

But one must not be led into thinking that the "progressive" and "improvisational" musics of the time were mutually exclusive categories. They were not. Musicians of one or the other persuasion would get together for specific projects or informal sessions, just for the adventure of discovery. One of these musicians was the pianist, improviser, composer and arranger Keith Tippett.

THOSE KNOWLEDGEABLE OF THE ERA will associate his name with guitarist Robert Fripp's ground-breaking band "King Crimson". While never becoming a full-fledged member with this band, he nevertheless attended sessions, invited by Fripp himself. Yet, he too was drawn to the emerging field of improvisers buzzing around London at the time. During this year's Festival International de musique actuelle de Victoriaville, Keith Tippett was invited to perform a solo piano recital, a totally improvised single-piece performance where he chose to exploit the timbres of his instrument thanks to very simple objects. And it is on this topic that the interview started, the conversation gradually working its way back in time to those early beginnings in the hotbed of London circa 1967-68. Yet, for its early effervescence, the British scene has become very bleak for musicians of Tippett's ilk, a subject which he alludes to in a very curt manner.

MARC CHÉNARD: *Hearing you play as a solo pianist is quite fascinating. Many people looked into your piano after your concert to see how you altered the sound. I thought very much of various ethnic musics, African or Far Eastern, so can one say you have been influenced by non-Western cultures in your way of playing.*

KEITH TIPPETT: Ethnic music I must say has in some ways sunk in to my musical subconscious, and I have listened to a lot of different traditions over the last three decades. Now having said that, I must add that a good deal of my piano vocabulary has been stumbled across, almost by accident. I don't think one sets out to be different, but one always hopes to develop some kind of personal vocabulary in maturity. But, if you go forcing that, I think you can be in danger of sounding pretentious or not having soul. Basically, my tech-

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAK KILBY

nique stems from the classical piano tradition - I was four years old when I first started to play. But the actual sounds that you hear in my solo concerts are produced by adding simple pieces of wood and a pebble which move about as the hammers strike the strings. I don't know myself which way they will be moving around, so it is a fun thing for me as well. It is so simple, yet I'm surprised that nobody has really approached it in this way before. I must emphasize, however, that this is not prepared piano, as many critics think. It's not prepared in the Cagian sense, because it's set for the whole piece. In my case, the woodblock can be moved in and out as quickly as my arm will move. In some concerts, I don't even use this at all. For me, it is not a crutch to lean on when I have run out of ideas, it's part of the whole colour. I look at myself as a sound sculptor and my instrument is an orchestra. When I'm performing I wish to be a servant to the people, not a prostitute. And my job is to remove people from chronological time and move them, if I can, and to leave them with an afterglow, hopefully. And if that happens, then my job is done for that day and I just go on to something else.

In this process of discovering these new ways of creating sounds, are there any people who have influenced you in that sense, or is it something entirely personal?

PERSONAL DISCOVERIES REALLY. The piece of wood I use, I just found in a field. Putting a piece of wood in the piano is not new, it's been going on since the 1930's. But I haven't heard anyone else doing it quite in the way I do it. The pebble was given to me at a friend's father's funeral. He didn't have in mind that I would use it this way, it was just from the garden and given to me as a gift. I discovered that it works wonderfully on the strings, and it rolls well because of its egg shape. Now I also add some plastic pan pipes, which give a cymbal-like sound when placed at the end of the strings, and this is something I've stolen from my children's toy box (when they were still small). Finally, I let the bells hang down from the open piano lid, they look nice and I can shake them too if I wish. And when I'm playing at open-air festivals, they blow in the wind, so I can play along with that.

The name MUJICIAN has been associated with you for many years now, how did that come about?

When my daughter was five years old, she had just started school and one of the teachers asked her what her father did. Because she couldn't say 'musician', she said that I was a 'mujician' instead. This combination of magic and music is very neat and there is also the word 'mu' contained in it as well, which some people regard as a sacred word.

Interestingly enough, MUJICIAN started as a designation for your solo piano recordings. Now it is the name of a cooperative quartet.

I did three solo piano albums under that name, the last of which has now been reissued on CD. They were all recorded over a decade and right into the 80's, so I consider these to be a trilogy. More recently, I am part of this quartet with saxophonist Paul Dunmall, bassist Paul Rogers and drummer Tony Levin. Since this is a coop band, we were looking for a group name one day, and we were spending ages trying to come up with one, none of which were very good. I finally suggested 'Mujician' and asked every one if they wanted it. I was ready not to record any more solo albums under that name and once the guys made sure I did not mind, we all agreed to call the band 'Mujician'.

This group now has two recordings out and both are totally improvised, just like your solo concerts. When you play solo, how do you prepare yourself? Do you have a certain design in your mind before starting, or are there certain things you want to do along the way? Or do you just start with a clear mind and let it happen?

IN MOST CASES, it's the latter which occurs. About five or ten minutes before the performance I really start getting keyed (sic) up and I begin to feel nervous. When I walk out on stage, I at least know how I am going to start - maybe not the notes per se - but in what way I will open, it might be playing the keyboard immediately or letting the little bells ring first. For yesterday's concert, I knew that I wanted to start pianissimo and with a lot of space too. I had already made up my mind that that was going to be my opening, but from that point on I had no preconceived idea of what would happen. For the quartet, it is also the same and we even have an ensemble rule and that we do not to speak about the music at all. We may well say after the show that it was a fantastic gig or a not so good one, but there are no post-mortems. This rule specifically applies before we go on: we don't allow ourselves to say: "Well, let's start like this or like that."

Though an important part of your musical output seems to be in a purely improvised mode, you do compose and arrange. I think of your contributions to the recent DEDICATION ORCHESTRA CD and your extended suite back in 1984 ("A loose kite in a gentle wind floating with my will as an anchor" - OGUN OGD 007-008). Do you see composition as something distinct to improvisation, a dichotomy?

NO, IT'S NOT A DICHOTOMY TO ME. It's part of the complete music. If I'm not mistaken, it was Stravinsky who said that composition was frozen improvisation. I like that very much. Improvisation is like sped up composition. So they are not different at all. Free improvisation is spontaneous composition, and I'm just not bothering to notate it. If I was given a tape of my concert here and if I wanted to, I could write down everything I played. It would take me a couple of weeks to sit down and do the work, but I am not going to give myself the trouble of doing that. Still, once it's down, that's a composition, it's notated. It's only the transferring of the ink to the paper that solidifies it. Nowadays, we have the technology that can transfer what you play right on to the paper, so it's no big deal anymore to do this kind of work.

Speaking of technology, your instrument of choice has always been the acoustic piano. What is your perception of electronics in the field of improvised music? Do you personally relate to it?

WELL, I CAN'T EVEN CHANGE A PLUG! If I have to change a light bulb at home, I take a lot of precautions, because I don't really like electricity. So, I wouldn't play any electric instruments, these things can kill you. A piano can't, unless it falls on you! I just feel safe with the piano. But, electricity is as god given as the air we breathe in, so why not use it? - If you want to.

Do you work with people who use electronics?

Not very often. But if I must, I don't have any second thoughts about it. It's okay by me. Since I do play an acoustic instrument, I tend to gravitate more towards other acoustic instruments. For instance, I don't play too often with guitarists.

When you came up in the late sixties, Britain was very much in effervescence. Nowadays, though, and when I speak to your countrymen, they say nothing is happening now, that the scene has in effect dried up.

I think that this British jazz revival that started happening in the 80's has really taken the music back 30 years. Mind you, every generation has talent, but Thatcherism has permeated everything. I'll say no more.

In spite of that situation, there are still plenty of interesting musicians in England, all of whom find their work on the continent, which must also be your case as well. Do you do a lot of touring?

YES I DO. In fact, I have been as far as India, Russia, now North America. Just before last Christmas (1993), I went to Latvia and that was an experience. But I couldn't live in England on the work I get there. In London, where I lived at one time before settling in the countryside, there is still a concentration of high class musicians in the "new music" field, but there is just no work. And that is embarrassing. You can go elsewhere and play with your comrades and they are creating work for you. So you would like to do the same for them and invite them to play in your country, but it's really not possible. It's not that we want to be selfish, or that we are trying to keep others out: there is just no work!

Nevertheless, Derek Bailey has managed to keep his COMPANY WEEK going in London. (Ed. This may be the final year of this event.)

Yes, but that is but once a year for a week. Derek doesn't work that much and when he does, it's out of the country. Now all of this is changing now. In Germany, for instance, there is much less money since reunification. In Italy, there is all of the trouble with political corruption, the mafia and the move towards the right. In France, there is also this turn towards the right. We'll see how they deal with the arts there. In Holland, nothing much is happening, at least as far as I'm concerned. We will just have to wait and see.

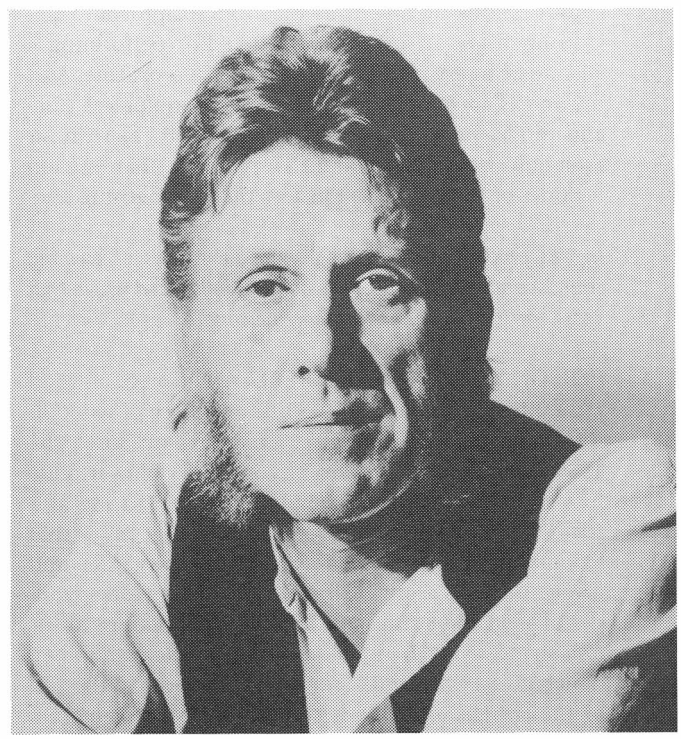
Things really seem to be dicey now.

Well, it might be okay for people like me who...

Have established a name for themselves.

EXACTLY. But it is different for the bright young kids now coming up. When I was a young man, there was every opportunity. Really. And people didn't mind either when it came to experimenting. Nowadays, if you are working and are young, it seems to me you've got to play like the guys in the fifties - at least if you want to work regularly.

This present day situation does not compare too well to your early days on the scene, the late 60's. Around 1966, Ronnie Scott had vacated his first local of his club on Gerrard Street and while the lease was running out, he sort of turned it over to many of the upcoming improvising musicians, the likes of Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, John Stevens, Trevor Watts...



I WAS A BIT YOUNGER than the rest of them, and the place closed before I got to play there. Ronnie had moved his club to Frith Street and many of the "avant garde" players made that their hang out for the short time it lasted. John Stevens also had his place, the Little Theatre, and that was another important spot for musicians. There is one show I saw that I shall remember for the rest of my life and that was the one of the Blue Notes. It was fantastic. I didn't know any of them then. I also heard Mike Westbrook at the Gerrard Street club. Like most young musicians, I scuffled around in London for a while. Then I got a scholarship to study at the Barry Summer School. There I met Elton Dean, Mark Charig, Nick Evans as students. Upon my return to London, the word was out: people were starting to

talk about me. And as you do more gigs and people start talking about you, you then get written up and interviewed too, which leads to more gigs. One day, Giorgio Gomelsky picked me up and signed me to Marmelade records, which went bankrupt not too long after. It was a subsidiary of Polydor, so it picked up the bill. But that was the start of it for me anyway. When I was 14, I lead my first band in Bristol, and that was really the time when I first got interested in improvisation.

For many years now, you have been associated with the label Ogun records and you appear on many of its releases.

I WAS FRIENDS with bassist Harry Miller and his wife Hazel. I played with him and many others too, then got involved in their recording projects. When Harry had a record project, he'd call me up. If Louis Moholo, Elton Dean or Mark Charig had something in the works, they would ring me up. So I became the house pianist. At that time (mid-seventies), I was playing in seven or eight different bands.

That was such an intense period then. There were so many musicians doing so many different things, and not just in jazz.

At that time, you had a lot of very intelligent groups, like "Soft Machine" and "King Crimson" who were coming from a completely different side of things altogether. Today, a 'progressive' rock group - if there are any now - wouldn't be playing to two or three thousand people a night like the "Softs" were doing back then.

You were friends with a lot of these people and played with many of them too. A lot of people not familiar with the jazz or improv fields know you through your association with KING CRIMSON.

MY INVOLVEMENT with that group went something like this. Bob Fripp would ring me up and ask me if I was doing anything on a certain day. If I was free, he'd just ask me to come down to a session, because he wanted a bit of piano in a few places. I did the date, he'd pay me and I went on my way. It was just as simple as that. We were friends and I did stuff for him here and there. Now on this side of the Atlantic, they did not realize that and that led to the belief that I was actually a member of the band, but never was. Yes, I was invited to join and I thought about it very seriously. I was only 22 at the time and I had some music to do first. I look on music as a way of spiritually developing. If I had joined K.C., I would have been travelling around the world and earning a lot of money, I'm sure of that. But I still had a lot of growing to do. As much as I love what that band was doing, it wasn't where I was at. I wanted to carve out a career for myself. The only thing that could have swayed me was the money I could earn. I have too much respect for Robert Fripp, liked the band too much, so I just couldn't do it for money alone. May music never just become another way of making money. That brings me back to this Servant-Prostitute bit, I mentioned earlier. Where do you stand? What is your morality?

So you had come to a crossroads, so to speak? You had a decision to make.

Not really. By that time, my career was well established anyway. I was involved with "Centipede" then. I was known then. Now the choice I had to make was that of moving into a scene where the music was more accessible with a lot more money to invest in it and publicise it as well. King Crimson sold a million records, but I would sell something like 10,000, there is quite a difference.

CENTIPEDE was quite an undertaking. How did that come about?

VERY SIMPLY. With few exceptions, a couple of string players, I knew every one. For me, it was just as simple as ringing them up. I said that I was writing a piece of music for a 50 piece orchestra and would they want to play in it. Everybody was keen on it, though most thought it could never be done. It was just as easy as making those phone calls and to tell them to be at the rehearsal. The work was performed many times, the last time was in Nancy, France in 1976 and we also did Bordeaux in '71-72 and in Rotterdam about a year later. In England, we played at London's Royal Albert Hall as well as in Bristol and Birmingham. From a logistical point of view, I think it would still be possible to play this music now. To do it, we would just charter an airplane for ourselves. It's not so expensive, you know. It would be much cheaper to do that than to buy 70-odd tickets. Just hire a plane.

If somebody offered you to perform the work again, would you?

Somebody has in fact. Maybe at next year's Bath Festival ('95). And yes, I just might ring up most of those who were in the original band, get rehearsals together and just do it. Why not?

Would you perform the same piece, or write anything new?

No, it would be the original one two-hour piece. The solos would be even better this time around. In any event, I don't think I would change a note. Really. It's a youthful composition, but I'm not going to change it just because I'm some 20 years older. Let it stand or fall. As you know, this piece was recorded by RCA, who do not seem to be interested to reissue it at this time. I've heard there is a bootleg of it, which I am rather annoyed about. By the way, not too long ago, I heard Mike Oldfield on the radio who said that he came to see the premiere at the Lyceum when he was a lad and that had inspired him to do his "Tubular Bells" album. Maybe he owes me some money! □

KEITH TIPPETT ON RECORD (all titles in print)
THE DARTINGTON CONCERT (Solo)
MUJICIAN (Solo piano **FMP** - 1982)
MUJICIAN (Quartet with Paul Dunmall, Tony Levin and Paul Rogers)
THE JOURNEY (1990)
POEM ABOUT THE HERO (1994) (Both titles on **CUNEIFORM**)
THE DEDICATION ORCHESTRA (LOUIS MOHOLO) - **OGUN** (1992)

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY SOUTH WEST JAZZ

BEYOND CATEGORY By JOHN HASSE
Simon & Schuster, $25.00US.
THE DUKE ELLINGTON READER
EDITED By MARK TUCKER, *Oxford,$42.00Cdn.*
DUKE ELLINGTON DAY BY DAY + FILM BY FILM By KLAUS STRATEMANN, *Media, $160.00US.*

DUCAL BOOKS

REVIEWS BY **FRANK RUTTER** • PHOTOGRAPH BY **VAL WILMER**

IN THE 20 YEARS SINCE THE DEATH OF EDWARD KENNEDY ELLINGTON, MANY HAVE TRIED AND ALL FAILED, TO EXPLAIN HIM. BUT THREE RECENT BOOKS, EACH IN A DIFFERENT WAY, SHED SOME NEW LIGHT ON THE GENIUS OF DUKE EVEN IF NONE OF THEM SUCCEEDS BIOGRAPHICALLY, CRITICALLY, OR DISCOGRAPHICALLY, IN FULLY PENETRATING HIS CAREFULLY-CONTRIVED PERSONAL ENIGMA AND HIS MUSICAL LEGACY.

THE RECORD PRODUCER Irving Townsend, responsible for some of Ellington's most satisfying Columbia recording collaborations, was one of the first to explore seriously the Duke's posthumous place in the pantheon of music. In a 1977 article in the art publication Horizon, Townsend suggested there was no conventional category that fit the Duke, or the other way around. But he concluded Ellington had concealed himself within his own category, whatever it was.

John Hasse goes a step farther: he finds Ellington to be ***Beyond Category***, the title of his autobiography. This conveniently offers an escape hatch for the author to evade a definitive critical judgment yet at the same time bestows the ultimate compliment on Ellington's genius. There, I've used the word genius twice (three times if you count this one) already. But no apology. Can anyone disagree? Only on defining that status.

Hasse is Curator of American Music at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington and his book coincides with a public travelling exhibition on Ellington, which he organized and which - surprise - is called ***Beyond Category***. The author is in a unique position in being able to draw on the world's greatest collection of Ellington ephemera (though not recordings) which is stored in the National Museum of American History. It includes some 2,500 musical scores, thousands of letters, clippings, financial records, contracts, programs, photographs, memorabilia, books, records and tapes, and even clothing. Hasse therefore has access to previously unpublished and unseen material as well as interviews conducted as an oral history for the museum. Yet it was not until about halfway through his book that I began to feel he was mining this information and presenting anything that hadn't already appeared in print, notably in Mark Tucker's ***Ellington: The Early Years*** (Oxford). However, Hasse does at last give us tantalizing glimpses of the treasures of the Smithsonian - a reference here to a previously unknown musical performance, a quote there from a letter or interview, documentation of a disputed date, and character analysis based on new information. Perhaps it is only natural that the bulk of the Smithsonian material should come from Duke's later years but I couldn't help wondering if I was missing something. Perhaps Hasse hurried his book a bit in order to get it out to accompany the exhibition, travelling across the U.S. through 1966.

THE BOOK ALSO USES a typographical device to interject brief interludes on Ellington recordings, but I found this somewhat irritating as it interrupted the narrative, was often repetitive, and didn't contain enough specific information anyway. Hasse didn't set out to be a discographer or even a musical analyst: his aim was as biographer and that is what he's best at and what the space would have been better used for. Ellington himself was secretive and oblique about his deepest feelings and his opinions. This hinders any biographer. We still know little of what Ellington really thought, believed or even did in private (his womanizing is alluded to here but skated over lightly). But we do get some brilliant flashes of insight such as material from tapes made by Carter Harman, who wrote a Time magazine cover story on Ellington in 1956 and later recorded hours of conversation with the Duke, often as they travelled by car between engagements; Ellington vaguely suggested this would be material for a book which never materialized. Fortunately the tapes are now in the Smithsonian and they shed light on such things as Ellington's views on discrimination and civil rights. Also fascinating are tidbits from the museum's collection such as how much various band members got paid, on Ellington's personal relations with his musicians, and on his work habits. But there could be so much more to tell. Maybe Hasse will dig deeper yet. This is not to diminish a strong and highly readable effort: we can still be grateful for a pretty good shot at an elusive target who, as Hasse concludes, "represented the full flowering of a truly American orchestral idiom."

In ***The Duke Ellington Reader*** Mark Tucker, author of the previously mentioned study of the early Ellington, has collected a fascinating anthology. In its remarkable range of material from articles, books, broadcasts, interviews, liner notes, it, too, tells us a lot about its subject, although - no fault of Tucker's - not enough. Among the most rewarding selections are the earliest - reviews of Ellington's band in performances during the 1920s and early 1930s. Tucker has dug deep and unearthed some real finds, like the 1923 review of the Washingtonians, the Melody Maker character sketches of band members in 1937, and the championship of Ellington by the critic (usually of classical music) R.D. Darrell from 1927 on. There are also samples of Ellington's own writing, sometimes contrived, sometimes revealing, like his 1931 article in the British publication Rhythm, in which he foretold his plan to compose an extended "rhapsody" depicting Black America, something he did not realize for more than a decade as Black, Brown and Beige. Besides these sparks of illumination

THREE BOOKS ON DUKE ELLINGTON

is a vast mosaic of Ellington as others saw him, including a provocative interview from the Christian Science Monitor in 1930, in which Duke was already shying away from use of the word jazz to describe his music. Far from being a creature of fashion, or a victim of latter-day pretensions, as some have seen him, it is now clear that Ellington had long range goals and consistent concepts from an early date.

Here, spelled out, is a famous "feud" between Ellington and the patrician record producer John Hammond (a Basie man - was that the real reason for his antipathy?). And here is the full text of a famous New Yorker article, The Hot Bach by Richard Boyer in 1944.

And more, much more, gathered from around the world. This is an entertaining as well as informative anthology for any reader, whether an Ellington fan (a bedside must) or someone indiscriminately interested in music and a unique American personality.

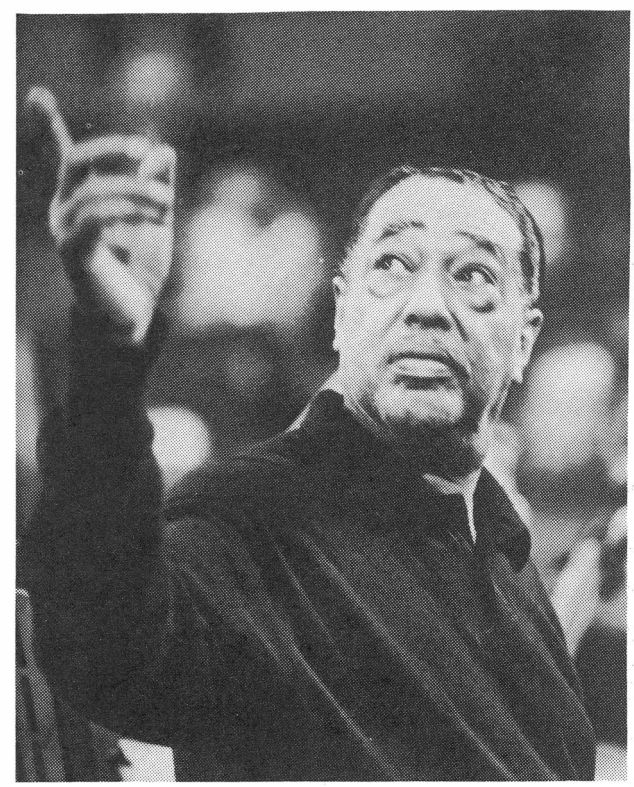
PROBABLY THE MOST AMBITIOUS work ever attempted on Ellington is ***Duke Ellington Day by Day and Film by Film***, by the German dentist Klaus Stratemann. It is a monumental labour of love that took more than a decade to complete. The remarkable thing is that it is almost all original digging, an acquisition of facts rather than research into a goldmine, such as the Smithsonian treasure house; Stratemann painstakingly accumulated his data over the years from hundreds of sources. He started off planning a more modest book about Ellington on film, an area no one else had explored in detail. But along the way he got caught up in the diversity of genius and the "day by day" part of the book was incorporated, with information compiled by the late Joe Igo and Canadian Gordon Ewing, who is still continuing research on a complete "itinerary" of Ellington's musical activities. Once Stratemann expanded his range, he couldn't avoid including discographical and biographical material as well. The result is a huge work of 782 pages, profusely illustrated with movie stills, work sheets, publicity and newspaper photos, reproduced programs, tickets, and advertisements. It's a treasure chest of information, sometimes hard to dig into but always rewarding.

True to his original concept, Stratemann highlights film. Each appearance of Ellington whether as star, accompanist, or background performer, is meticulously documented, with every detail imaginable. Along the way Stratemann occasionally ventures into controversial territory, establishing or correcting dates, times, and places. Sometimes he creates controversies, and his facts will still be disputed, as in the extent of Ellington's participation in the Marx Brothers movie, A Day at the Races. But for sheer wealth of detail, Stratemann's work is unmatched in the Ellington bibliography. If you want to know, for example, where Ellington was on a given day in 1934 and what he did, chances are you will find the information in these pages.

Stratemann sprinkles his chronology with critical and subjective analysis, sometimes by others, sometimes his own. He offers detailed analysis and criticism of the films; it is almost impossible not to draw conclusions from his hearty spadework and very often his is the sole reference point for a fact. He does not devote quite such attention to television, giving details when kinescopes (original films) were made of shows before the era of video cassette taping, but little information about shows that were not "film" as he defines it. Thus many TV shows get just a brief mention. Here is more work for Stratemann or someone else to expand upon.

It's a pity that there are occasional language or typographical lapses (the prominent mispelling of Abbreviations, for example) but perhaps it is petty to single these out from such a wealth of material written and compiled in a language that is not the author's native tongue. In fact all the more praise to Stratemann for not resorting to translation. This is not bedtime reading - it's physically too heavy, for one thing! - but a marvellous reference work for the Ellington specialist to keep handy on the shelf.

EACH OF THESE WORKS, in its way, adds a new dimension to the record. New facts, new light, more detail of the life and work of a remarkable American. If there are flaws they are of omission rather than distortion. The main thing is that dedicated people are continuing the process of exploration. In Ellington's case this can only be healthy because it is clear that his music is going to be around - and heard - now and forever. For the time being, we must agree with Hasse that it is impossible to categorize Ellington as composer, band leader, recording artist, or even human being. We can all recognize his greatness but we cannot yet completely understand it, or him. In any event, history will ensure his place as an American musical genius, perhaps the pre-eminent one. The fact that there remains something of a mystery in the persona is all the more piquant and challenging to future historians and music-lovers alike. □



O.P.

THE HISTORY OF AN ARTIST

AN OVERVIEW OF OSCAR PETERSON RECORDINGS

WRITTEN BY
SCOTT YANOW

PHOTOGRAPH OF
NIELS-HENNING ORSTED PEDERSEN
OSCAR PETERSON
& **JOE PASS**
BY HENRY J. KAHANEK

WRITING ABOUT OSCAR PETERSON HAS RARELY, IF EVER, BEEN AN EASY TASK AND MAY INDIRECTLY ACCOUNT FOR SOME OF THE CRITICISMS HE HAS RECEIVED THROUGH THE YEARS. THINK OF IT: ALL THE SUPERLATIVES THAT COULD BE SAID ABOUT PETERSON'S BRILLIANT PLAYING WERE EXHAUSTED BY THE LATE 1950'S! AS WITH ART TATUM AND CURRENTLY THE REMARKABLE TRUMPETER ARTURO SANDOVAL, PETERSON'S VIRTUOSITY IS SOMETIMES HELD AGAINST HIM; AFTER ALL, CONSTANT RAVE REVIEWS (EVEN WHEN ACCURATE) CAN GET A BIT BORING. IT IS TRUE THAT O.P. HAS ALWAYS USED A LOT OF NOTES TO EXPRESS HIMSELF, HIS STYLE HAS NOT CHANGED RADICALLY DURING THE PAST FORTY YEARS AND HE HAS MADE A COUNTLESS NUMBER OF RECORDS, BUT THESE CAN HARDLY BE CONSIDERED FAULTS. IN REALITY, OSCAR PETERSON IS ONE OF THE MOST AMAZING MUSICIANS EVER TO PLAY JAZZ AND, BEFORE A STROKE FORCED HIS APPARENT RETIREMENT FROM MUSIC, HE HAD QUITE A FORTY FIVE YEAR RUN!

THE REISSUE IN RECENT TIMES of a bunch of Oscar Peterson's recordings serves as a good excuse to revisit his legacy. Born in Montreal on August 15th, 1925, Peterson started on both piano and trumpet when he was five but a serious bout with tuberculosis two years later weakened his lungs and led to him specializing on piano. He developed so quickly that at the age of fourteen, after winning a major amateur contest, Oscar was featured on a weekly radio broadcast called Fifteen Minutes' Piano Rambling. During 1942-47 Peterson was a member of the popular Johnny Holmes Orchestra. Although that band (like far too many Canadian groups of the pre-1960 era) never recorded, the young pianist was fairly well documented during the latter half of the 1940's. The lp ***Jazz And Hot Dance In Canada*** (Harlequin 2023), a set with a wide span of music, contains the earliest documentation of Peterson, two

numbers *Flying Home* and *If I Could Be With You,* with a trio from a December 1944 broadcast. Particularly well worth searching for are the two lp's ***I Got Rhythm*** (RCA FXM1-7233) and ***Rockin' In Rhythm*** (RCA FXM1-7327) which contain all 32 of the trio recordings that O.P. made in Montreal during 1945-49. At the time he already possessed an enviable technique and, although known as a bit of a boogie-woogie specialist, he performed a variety of swing tunes and had an open ear towards the emerging bop music.

When Norman Granz presented Oscar Peterson as a guest at one of the Jazz At The Philharmonic concerts in September 1949, it really jump started Peterson's career and the momentum, which was fueled by a hit version of *Tenderly*, would barely slow down during any part of the next four decades. While Verve, in celebrating the 50th anniversary of the initial JATP concert, has been reissuing a lot of material, there is relatively little available of its early Oscar Peterson records. His thirteen little-known duets with bassist Major Holley from May 8th, 1950 remain in the vaults as do Peterson's many duets with Ray Brown and his 1952 performances in a trio with Brown and guitarist Irving Ashby. Guitarist Barney Kessel's year with the Peterson Trio (1952-53) also remain largely untouched including the 50+ selections that the group cut in December 1952 and a rare vocal album from the following year. Of the latter, Peterson's striking resemblance as a singer to Nat King Cole, who he has often cited as a key influence on his piano style, has largely cut short that potential career although his 1965 ***With Respect To Nat*** (Mercury 82029) remains a classic.

Barney Kessel's reluctance to travel led to Herb Ellis becoming a key member of the Oscar Peterson Trio for almost five years (1953-58). Of this classic group's many recordings, the one most widely remembered is ***At The Stratford Shakespearian Festival*** (Verve 314 513 752) which is happily out on CD. This particular unit constantly rehearsed with Ellis and Brown working out intricate ensembles to challenge the pianist. Many of their performances almost became cutting contests and the competitive atmosphere really inspired the pianist. Whether it be a rapid *Falling In Love With Love*, a tasteful *Nuages* (one of two previously unissued selections on the CD along with the lengthy *Daisy's Dream*) or a fiery *52nd Street Theme*, the consistently exciting ***At The Stratford Shakespearian Festival*** is essential for all serious Oscar Peterson collections.

When Herb Ellis left the Trio in 1958, it was decided by Peterson and Brown that, rather than try to find another guitarist with the fire and creativity that Ellis had brought to the group (a difficult task), they would instead add a versatile and highly supportive drummer. After a brief search, Ed Thigpen became the new third member, staying with Peterson for over six years. Because Thigpen was not a major soloist himself, the focus of the Trio really shifted to Oscar Peterson and though the masterful pianist had little difficulty assuming the extra responsibility, one would miss some of the fire and combativeness that had sparked his earlier Trio.

Producer Norman Granz, in seeking to "introduce" the new group, really went overboard. Between July 14th - August 9th, 1959 the Trio recorded no less than ten full albums of material. Although the music was well played, their interpretations of the 114 selections obviously involved little forethought and the group mostly jammed through the dozens of standards. Two months later they returned to the studios for the recently issued ***Oscar Peterson Plays Porgy & Bess*** (Verve 314 519 807), a set of ten numbers from the George Gershwin opera. Although Peterson turns *There's A Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon For New York* into a mere medium-up tempo blues (discarding the melody quickly), his tender version of *I Loves You Porgy* is sensitive and in general he, Brown and Thigpen add taste and swing to these famous melodies. This CD will not make one forget the Miles Davis/Gil Evans ***Porgy & Bess*** collaboration but it is enjoyable in its own right.

The ***Oscar Peterson Trio Live At The London House*** (Verve 422 847 569) from 1962 combines together the two former lp's ***Put On A Happy Face*** and ***Something Warm***, both of which were recorded before an attentive audience in Chicago. Peterson had adjusted easily to the piano-bass-drums trio format and, although the musicians sound quite comfortable with each other, this group does indulge in a few killer tempos along with the ballads. Like Tatum, who (even with some nods on this version of *Yesterdays*) remained an inspiration rather than a direct influence, Peterson had long since developed his own musical personality and he did not often play anything truly surprising but, unlike Tatum, O.P. avoided set pieces and always chose to improvise. The impressive popularity that he achieved was

gained through continued excellence. As with Errol Garner, Dave Brubeck and George Shearing, Peterson's style found its own audience without him having to water down his music or indulge in gimmicks in order to attract followers. In addition to Oscar's seemingly effortless but still nearly impossible solos, and the debut of two of his compositions, *Diablo* and *The Lonesome One*, a key reason to acquire this set is to hear Ray Brown's accompaniment which sounds impossibly relaxed and authoritative.

Starting on an informal basis in 1963 and particularly during 1967-71, Oscar Peterson recorded a series of excellent sets for MPS and producer Hans George Brunner-Schwer at Villingen in the Black Forest of Germany. The first six of the fifteen lp's (originally titled ***Action, Girl Talk, The Way I Really Play, My Favorite Instrument, Mellow Mood*** and ***Travelin' On***) have been reissued in full on the four-CD set ***Exclusively For My Friends*** (Verve 314 513 830) and, even if my personal favourite MPS album ***Tracks***, is missing, these recordings do deserve the acclaim they have received. The first six numbers feature Peterson with Ray Brown and Ed Thigpen during 1963-64 and two songs have transitional trios (either Brown or bassist Sam Jones with drummer Louis Hayes); all the other performances (except for the final disc) match Peterson with his regular trio of 1967-69 (Sam Jones and drummer Bobby Durham). Not every selection is a classic although the pianist is in consistently inventive form, uplifting such potentially sticky songs as *On A Clear Day, Girl Talk, Moon River* and *Who Can I Turn To;* even a seventeen minute version of *I'm In The Mood For Love* holds ones interest throughout. Actually the best is saved for last for the final nine numbers comprise Oscar Peterson's first solo album; why didn't Norman Granz think of that in the 1950's? During an era when most veteran jazz artists were struggling to make ends meet, Oscar Peterson continued to flourish and record timeless music.

In 1972 Oscar Peterson became an important artist on the roster of Norman Granz's new label Pablo. One of his first projects was to records a retrospective, ***History Of An Artist*** (Pablo 2PACD-2625-702) that would eventually be released in two volumes, three lp's in all. All of the contents have been included on this double-CD and they serve as a strong retrospective of Peterson's career up to that point. Such former sidemen as Herb Ellis, Barney Kessel, Irving Ashby, Ray Brown, Sam Jones, George Mraz, Louis Hayes and Bobby Durham in addition to his current partners guitarist Joe Pass and bassist Niels-Henning Orsted Pedersen are heard in different trio combinations (Brown even teams up with Peterson on two duets) and only Ed Thigpen, then in Europe, is missing. The music, ranging from standards and Ellington songs to a few original blues and even a remake of *Tenderly*, is enthusiastic and mostly pretty inspired.

Peterson, if my arithmetic is correct, would record twenty nine other albums as a leader for Pablo during 1972-86 including five in duets with classic trumpeters, a few with all-star groups, collaborations with Joe Pass and Milt Jackson, several trio dates, a few wondrous solo recitals and a countless number of other recordings as a sideman including five in small groups with Count Basie. ***The Trio*** (Pablo 2310-701), with Pass and Niels Pedersen, is as good a place as any to begin exploring the remarkable series of hard-swinging sessions led by O.P. during his Pablo years which only ended with Norman Granz's retirement.

Oscar Peterson's final recordings to date are from a reunion with Herb Ellis and Ray Brown that took place at the Blue Note from March 16th-18th, 1990. Somehow it is typical that no less than four CD's have been released from this highly publicized engagement: ***Live At The Blue Note*** (Telarc 83304), ***Saturday Night At The Blue Note*** (Telarc 83306), ***Last Call At The Blue Note*** (Telarc 83314) and ***Encore At The Blue Note*** (Telarc 83356). Because drummer Bobby Durham makes the group a quartet and takes care of the timekeeping, his presence unwittingly eliminated some of the excitement and challenge for these veterans but Ellis and Brown show that they were still able to not only keep up with the pianist but consistently inspire him. Although one can argue that releasing four CD's from this three-day event is a bit excessive, none of the sets can be safely eliminated without losing some very valuable music.

Oscar Peterson, who is now 69, was certainly never under recorded during his career and his legacy is quite safe but he is still greatly missed. One can only hope that eventually he will recover from his stroke and go back to showing listeners and fellow musicians alike the amazing feats that he can perform on the piano. □

ABOUT THE WRITER
SCOTT YANOW resides in Los Angeles and is published internationally in nine music magazines.

PHOTOGRAPH OF
OSCAR PETERSON • HERB ELLIS & RAY BROWN
BY BILL SMITH

LEO & F.M.P. INDEPENDENCE

AN UPDATE BY **STEVE VICKERY**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **BILL SMITH**

IN A TIME OF NARROWING EXPOSURE FOR NON-COMMERCIAL MUSIC FORMS VIA MASS MEDIA, THE UPSWING HAS REACHED THE IMPROVISED MUSIC WORLD. MORE ARTISTS ARE RELEASING MATERIAL THAN EVER BEFORE AND THIS POINTS TO A KIND OF RENAISSANCE FOR THE NEW MUSIC, A HOT NEW PERIOD THAT IS AT LAST IN FULL BLOOM.

LEO RECORDS AND FREE MUSIC PRODUCTIONS are two of the leading labels in the field, responsible for some of the best new music currently available. With the state of the economy in crisis, the business of selling improvised music has not gotten any better as a financial prospect. Witness the urgency of producer Leo Feigin's advertisement in recent years, admonishing the avant-garde audience to purchase the new releases so that he might fend off the creditors after the collapse of New Music Distribution Service, a fall that crushed many hopes for an enlightened network of supply and distribution. Similarly, the approach to business at F.M.P. has been a long story of marginal existence, as though the value of the music, its importance to the research that is ongoing in the improvising community internationally were worth the lack of return for the entrepreneurs involved. It is not an accident that the material was released and remains available now; it is a funny notion that the history and documentation of a major contemporary music form comes down to the determination of a few artists themselves to carry it off. As Alex von Schlippenbach says, "when J. E. Berendt writes that we (Globe Unity) were the first to play pure improvised jazz in a big orchestral formation, we should not set too much store by it, although he's right of course". The tone of the pianist's comments underlines the general feeling that the improvising artist is interested in a profound way in the music, not the sociology of the marketplace.

Taken over twenty-five years, the material that has been documented by the two labels shows the genesis of a music that is still in process, one still as much a mystery as before. Its affinity with American jazz no longer at issue, the music has grown in a way that could not be predicted but one that seems natural.

The majority of the artists mentioned in this review are likely not to be heard on commercial radio, a sad but true statement due to the nature of media control. Marginalizing all but the most transparent concepts, media control outlets have determined that improvised music will not sell soap. It is at the last an art form that requires searching, blind risks, dead ends on occasion, and often euphoric moments that justify the whole endeavour.

Fantastically funny at first, repeat listening to **PHIL MINTON** and **ROGER TURNER**'s ***Dada-da*** (Leo 192) reveals a sure-footed rhythmic improvisation in progress. Minton and Turner's long-standing duo caper and jolt through this set of improvised pieces for voice and percussion, though attempts to pin the pair down as anarchists fail. The connecting thread in this release is an invisible one that challenges the listener to let go their preconceptions and simply listen without analysizing the sound. As with most improvised duos, the temptation arises in the listener to create vignettes to explain the music, to populate the worlds that these improvisors create, since no clues are given as to the subjects of these pieces, no narrative focus. There is instead an active spirit of opposition in the music here, an undermining of the expectations, that catches the attention. Recorded live in London, Minton and Turner pull out the stops here, investigating subtle tones and textures that most free players miss in their pursuit of the big picture. Minton, renowned for his work with the Mike Westbrook band and later sessions with Lindsay Cooper's ***Oh, Moscow*** presents a very different approach here that some may find too abstract initially. The sounds of nature, machinery, and snatches of language merge in Minton's voice, coupled with overtone singing and cartoonish roars that leave no obvious explanation. For the listener accustomed to this level of free play, ***Dada-da*** sheds a bright light on extended voice techniques. Roger Turner seldom strays from a pots and pans/collage tumult while accompanying Minton, but is a fearless partner for the vocalist in this setting. Smoother than their previous release ***Ammo***, this recording still confronts the listener with its unusual mix of order and disarray.

F.M.P.'s repackaging of two early sessions from the work of string artist **HANS REICHEL** gives audiences a second chance at the idiosyncratic music that Reichel creates. Utilizing an instrument of his own creation (the full-fret guitar, an acoustic instrument altering to include more strings, opening new possibilities for manipulation) Reichel improvises in real time with no electronic effects added. The music that results is an unusual combination of western and eastern influences, particularly the music of Africa and Asia. The full-fret guitar echoes the tonal qualities of the Chinese koto with its percussive elasticity, as well as inviting comparisons to the early 1970s recordings of guitarist Derek Bailey. There is a bracing element of atonality to this reissue, the same refreshing quality that emerges in Bailey's explorations. It is difficult to judge this music in relation to

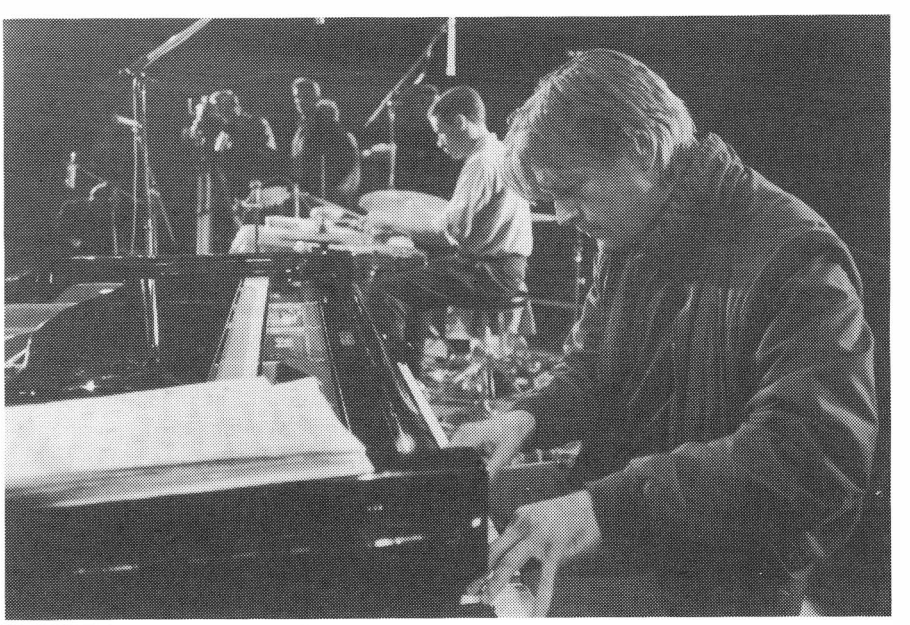
any existing tradition other than this one. F.M.P. have opened another realm of sound with this reissue (FMP CD 54 joins together the 1979 ***Death Of The Rare Bird Ymir*** and the 1981 ***Bonobo Beach*** releases, previously unavailable in North America). It would be a liberating experience for a guitarist in the bluegrass or classical tradition to be exposed to this music: an anarchist inventor turning the standard instrument vocabulary on its head.

Heavy quartet sounds from London are the foundation of the new release from reedman **JOHN LLOYD**'s ensemble. ***Head*** offers a finely tuned set of originals here, a capsule view of currents in the contemporary improvising scene. This abundant collection (Leo 186) gathers material from three concerts with the focus on the quartet's Queen Elizabeth Hall show, January 21, 1993. Good sound quality and a dearth of good compositions propels the saxophonist on this set. Bassist Paul Rogers and drummer Mark Sanders contribute lyrical soloing and reinforce the reeds and piano throughout. The quartet's pianist, John Law, an authoritative player who can challenge his colleagues with streams of notes, seems also partial to silences and sound textures not normally heard in an improvised setting. The darkly ominous introduction by Law on *parabola* lingers, moving through the composition creating a moody atmosphere effect. Surprises are plenty in this set with the composition suddenly leading into a free passage, then ending abruptly. The sprightly *Jump* features Lloyd on alto, his tart plaintive tone reminiscent of Jackie McLean in early years. The rhythm section duet on the energetic *Slingback*, Sanders' minimalist soloing a model of restrained energy. Lots of sparks and plenty of heat in this band, but the amount of material on this CD staggers even the most committed listener with ideas. With a total time of seventy-five minutes, the weight of this music can be numbing, so many avenues are explored. It is an exceptionally strong and vital sound in development here that is not easily consumed in a single sitting. It would be interesting to see Lloyd given the opportunity to tour this ensemble and allow the public a chance to absorb its powerful distillation of composed and free playing.

Anyone who has fallen under the spell of the vocal style made famous by the Bulgarian Womens Choir will be elated to discover the music of **SAINKO NAMCHYLAK**, a Tuvan born singer who draws on the traditions of Central Asia to form a sometimes frightening personal sound. Namchylak's singing is a rare thing, reflective of her roots in the expansive region of Southern Siberia, on the northern border of Mongolia. This highly unusual culture, formed in a region of intense isolation, makes for a musical expression that is other-worldly. Her command of the vocal nuances often associated with native throat singers, a moaning chant-like cry achieved by Namchylak splitting tones as she sings, brings a little-known area of solo voice performance to light on ***Lost Rivers*** (FMP CD 42). Produced by Peter Kowald, the disc has an edgy quality that will immediately divide listeners into those willing to be moved and those less willing to make the leap of faith. The voice lulls, provokes, bewilders and soothes. There is remarkable variety in Namchylak's approach, a blend of murmurs, ghost voices and the distinctive "khomel" singing, a Mongolian word for throat or larynx. Vocal allusions are made to the Butoh style of Japanese story-telling as well in *Tovarishi*, sounds that startle yet never break the spell. Connections to modern European music are also made apparent as Namchylak careens through the piece, *White Food*, her machine gun-like delivery not unlike an Evan Parker soprano solo. An altogether strange introduction to a singer that will baffle many and hypnotize the adventurous few.

The range and vivid emotional depth that Sainko Namchylak displays as a solo performer enriches this ensemble setting ***Letters*** (Leo CD190). With the addition of a European improving sensibility, Namchylak and the Kieloor Entartet wind through seven improv/compositions. A series of duo settings and two long ensemble pieces make up the body of the disc. The duos are where the most noticeable decisions concerning improvising are being made, most interestingly in the duos with Sten Sandell and Joelle Leandre. Namchylak's delivery is free-flowing, the direction of the development suggesting music traditions outside her own. The harmonic singing of her earlier solo CD is also essayed here in a live recording taken from a Zurich concert in 1992.

Letters, dedicated to the singer's father, alludes to the exchange of information between confidants, a convenient frame for improvisors to discover the path as they travel. Namchylak juggles rhythms gracefully alongside bassist Leandre, the two on familiar ground given the bassists own vocal explorations on solo projects. A duet with



baritone saxophonist Matts Gustafsson takes a different tack, slowly finding its focus over a long building of form. The duo with pianist Sten Sandell works best, a dream-like reverie with dramatic sustained notes by Namchylak. Though the first ensemble piece veers dangerously close to lounge music, the second *(Letter 6)* captures the inspired curve of sound that distinguishes this ensemble.

KING UBU ORCHESTRA blurs the line dividing free improvisation from form that suggests notation with this 1992 Berlin session, ***Binaurality*** (FMP CD 49). The ten-piece Ubu under the direction of **Wolfgang Fuchs** blends three strong reeds (Fuchs, Peter Van Bergen, Luk Houtkamp) with a solid brass section (trombones Gunter Christmann and Radu Malfatti joined by tuba Melvyn Poore). The sonic effect of electronics/computer synthesist Georg Katzer, with additional electronics from violinist Phil Wachsmann and drummer Paul Lytton, is a significant element in the music. This combination of reeds and brass, anchored by bassist Torsten Muller, is a winning one, though the CD requires a close listen to appreciate what is happening. Two concepts are at work simultaneously: the first a free improvising orchestra formed along traditional section lines (reeds, brass, rhythm), the second, a mutable ensemble whose roles of support and vertical harmony are dismissed. Fuchs has chosen players whose concept clearly matches his own so much so that he is able to direct the flow of improvising as deftly as any conductor. Connections to the jazz tradition are mostly absent from this program. No attempt is made to make the music swing, no Coltranesque tenor solos, no cliches of jazz style. What we have here is instead an ensemble of unique players reacting to each other "in the moment". Not an easy listening foray, ***Binaurality*** reveals over time a collective structural understanding that is highly refined.

A live set from Berlin's 1986 jazz festival, **GLOBE UNITY ORCHESTRA** ***20th Anniversary*** (FMP CD 45) marks the end of a distinctive ensemble project, one that succeeded in overturning many peoples assumptions about improvised music along the way. This final release draws no conclusions but offers some spirited music, a host of ideas tumbling one over another. Pianist Alex von Schlippenbach, bassist Alan Silva, and drummer Paul Lovens provide a point of balance for this twelve-piece unit of seasoned improvisors. That this revolutionary orchestra has lasted so long seems ironic, an irony that is echoed in the disc's liner notes. There is no mistaking the commitment of these performers to the forceful level of creative music-making and this intensity is undeniable here. Its worth noting that Globe Unity's final concert in Chicago was heard by 92,000 people. There is a compression of ideas as soloists overlap into ensemble statements then back into solos that takes some getting used to. Quartets and trios form and divide throughout the program with unexpected speed. Bassist Silva's duet with Schlippenbach and two reeds is indicative of the working plan, a brief but striking tableau in this long unfolding story. Kenny Wheeler plays with characteristic warmth crafting a solo that drifts across the music with a languid mood. Episodic music for free players, the 20th anniversary of Globe Unity remains as a blueprint for young players (and old) in the mysterious art of large ensemble free improvising.

MARILYN CRISPELL returns to the quartet formation for this project with long-time compadre/drummer Gerry Hemingway. Joined by cellist Hank Roberts and violinist Mark Feldman, the composer follows a new tangent on ***Santuerio*** (Leo CD 191). Crispell sounds relaxed here, her long partnership with Hemingway giving her a medium for dramatic shifts in rhythmic/harmonic exploration. Of the discs on review, this one would benefit most from repeated listening, the music full of detail and wit. After intense work as a duo and as a trio with bassist Reggie Workman, the pianist revisits territory that first surfaced on her 1983 release, ***Quartet in Berlin*** featuring violinist Billy Bang. Feldman makes his own mark here with a stunning track, *Repercussions of Light*, the theme of the first ensemble piece used as the basis for an extended improvisation. A human vocal quality rings through Feldman's violin tone, his vibrato a singing tone that reminds one of Chinese opera. Hank Roberts provides sublime accompaniment throughout the program that pulses along below Feldman's high-wire act. The title track, *Santuerio*, confirms the importance of Gerry Hemingway's technique of composing in the solo, taking it out while remaining the centre of gravity. The incredible time feel of *Red Shift* turns things around with Roberts covering a bass line walking notes on the cello while the other three gradually build into a fierce statement of the theme. Hemingway's voice as a soloist builds up large popping scribbles of sound on *Burning air/wood*, hot as an iron stove.

A thematic table of the elements, Crispell's quartet here confirms her growing status as an innovative composer. It will be interesting to see the next development in her progression.

One must study an object a long time, as Matisse has said, to know what its sign is. The music of composer **CECIL TAYLOR** continues to grow before our eyes. Caught here ***Live in Bologna*** (Leo CD 100) in the fall of 1987, the blues remain central to the poetry of this explosive music, with alto saxophonist Carlos Ward now fully integrated into the Unit's sound. Ward smokes through the live sound mix, his alto tone personal and searching. Midway through the program, he switches to flute and retains his unhurried stance despite the menacing backdrop of sound that violinist Leroy Jenkins sets up. Jenkins' feature in this set is soothing once initial thinness in the sound mix is corrected. Taylor's opposite number on this session, percussionist Thurman Barker, fills much the same capacity with the pianist as did the late Jimmy Lyons, restlessly shadowing Taylor and laying a foundation for exploration. Barker's directional input, switching to mallet percussion after a chant section midway in the performance, contrasts the brilliant tone of the leader's piano, softening the transition to Taylor's theme statement. The startling left-turn entrance of the drums into the next theme signals the change in gravity Taylor delivers. What can be said about the piano now? Taylor stunning in motion, is completely engaged here, building a moving statement in the centre of a dense structure. To those with ears, it's still a gift, Taylor's fiery music saying yes to sound-ritual drama in all forms, deep as a river. The closing duo of drums and piano are very active, the dance again dissolving to chants, spirit voicing, night-time sounds.

GLOBE UNITY • MARILYN CRISPELL • CECIL TAYLOR PETER KOWALD

PETER KOWALD emphasizes the international character of today's improvising artist with this three-record set, ***Duos: Europa/America/Japan*** (FMP 1200 series). Kowald's concept for this series of duos with his associates worldwide began as an attempt to document the many situations that Kowald has participated in musically. There are varying degrees of composition and improvisation on these recordings. An added bonus is that the records and CDs boast different selections and alternate takes from the same artists. Documenting the period of his work in 1986 to 1989, Kowald began this project with the idea of recording the many new friends he had worked with in New York City. After realizing that there were many alliances to record, the concept widened to take in his working relationships in Europe and Japan as well. Kowald has gathered an exceptional series of pieces in this project, showing the interplay of many music traditions in a way that distances the anthology from exclusively free music, jazz, or classical systems. ***Duos: Europa*** (FMP 1260) captures some well-known improvising artists in a new light: the five minute limitation on tracks brings out a focus that is sometimes not as apparent on a full length project. Derek Bailey, Han Bennink, Evan Parker and Conrad Bauer all contribute pieces that are immediately identifiable (certainly the aim of any improvisor is to have a recognizable voice as these artists do) but stop short of new discovery. Improvisors like Marilyn Mazur and Floros Floridis make impressive entries, but the duos created by Kowald with Swiss pianist Irene Schweizer and with bassist Joelle Leandre invite repeated listening. It would be intriguing to hear new compilations from the FMP back catalogue of all Kowald's earlier ensemble sessions, another spin on the anthology series, perhaps a CD of different quartets.

Duos: Japan (FMP 1280) came to be after Kowald began to look farther afield in his plan to document his work. The Japan duos stretch the concept of improvising the most, taking in all manner of instrumental and vocal performances. There is a wonderful duo setting of Kowald improvising with Junko Handa, a biwa player who sings a plaintive ancient melody, Power without power. This collection is farthest removed from the jazz tradition yet there is an undeniable connection to the path of Japanese music presented here when the work of Cecil Taylor is examined. The modern element of western instrumentation is also addressed in this set, with strong samples of the work of alto saxophonist Akira Sakata *(sign 245 e.d. plus)* and trombonist Masahiko Kono *(Basic)*. Kowald delights here in undermining the listener's assumption about global improvisors, presenting here both sides of the coin. The hurried pace of his duet with percussionist Yoshisaburo Toyozumi suddenly shifts into a meditative low register growling amidst bowed bass and gongs, and then into a passage resembling taiko drumming. String players offer the most unusual possibilities for Kowald to experiment. It seems as though the string instruments reclaim here the original percussiveness that was filtered out of their tradition by the European classical pedagogy. There is in Kowald's duo with koto artist Tadao Sawai *(the further float)* an element that recurs in the bassist's duet with guitarist Derek Bailey. This would appear to be Kowald's thesis, that all music is interconnected regardless of place of origin.

Duos: America (FMP 1270) The starting place for this international anthology, this release documents Kowald with artists both well-known and less-exposed within the recording world. Vocalist Diamanda Galas, composer/conductor Butch Morris, and drummer Andrew Cyrille contribute pieces that incorporate elements of their solo techniques into the duo format, but don't communicate a sense of risk. This sense of mutual discovery is most strongly felt in the duos involving harpist Anne LeBaron *(minimally fleshy)*, vocalist Jeanne Lee *(He who laughs...)* and alto saxophonist Julius Hemphill *(Balances and Cloves)*. Communication is also strongly felt where there are mutual technique considerations, as in the duo of strings with harpist Zeena Parkins *(Woods and Wires)*, or where there is a spirit of instant composition (Tom Cora's track, *and then you will see*). Peter Kowald plays with strength and subtlety all through these three collections, supporting the other artists as well as pushing the boundaries of his own art. □

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PIANIST & COMPOSER SUMI TONOOKA

AN INTERVIEW BY WILLIAM MINOR

ADVANCED PUBLICITY FOR THE 36TH ANNUAL MONTEREY JAZZ FESTIVAL ANNOUNCED THE APPEARANCE OF A "BRILLIANT" YOUNG JAPANESE PIANIST, PERFORMING WITH VETERAN BASSIST RUFUS REID AND DRUMMER LEWIS NASH. I WAS EXCITED BY THE POSSIBILITY OF HEARING HER, FOR I WAS CONTEMPLATING A "JAZZ JOURNEY" THROUGH JAPAN, SIMILAR TO A NINE CITY, 9000 KILOMETRE TREK I HAD TAKEN IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION. I EVEN ARRANGED TO HAVE AN INTERPRETER ASSIST ME ON AN INTERVIEW. WHEN I COMMENCED MORE HOMEWORK, HOWEVER, I DISCOVERED THAT SUMI TONOOKA, ALTHOUGH SHE IS BRILLIANT (AS BOTH PIANIST AND COMPOSER) AND RELATIVELY YOUNG (37), WAS BORN IN PHILADELPHIA, THE CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE: CHILD OF AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN FATHER AND JAPANESE-AMERICAN MOTHER, AS "HOMEGROWN" AS THE PROVERBIAL APPLE PIE, SUSHI AND DELTA BLUES.

PERSONABLE, PURPOSEFUL AND VERY PRETTY, sporting a warm maternal edge, yet full of still youthful zest and intentionality, Sumi made her first Monterey Jazz Festival appearance at a clinic held on composition. Hair as black as the mud snail's bowels (to borrow a singular image from the Man'yoshu, an 8th century compilation of Japanese poetry), wearing slacks and a dark blue loose jersey (the elbow-length cuffs of which got hiked up as she played), Sumi and her clinic were announced as "a first of sorts for Monterey."

"It's funny," she told me after, "I'm starting to get some national and international attention now, and people are referring to me as this 'bright light,' you know, a young new face, but I've been playing professionally since I was eighteen, so that's over twenty years now."

Indeed, at the clinic, she conducted herself like a seasoned pro, in the company of Reid and Ben Riley (not Nash). Sumi began by saying that composition was "a very mysterious process," that the process, for her, commences with "something very personal," something felt: "a picture of someone I know, or a very vivid picture in my mind." She then played a tune she'd written called *Phantom Carousel*, one inspired by a vision of a carousel turning round and round on a mountain shrouded in mist, the voices of children "in the air" but no children present. The piece also commenced as an exercise given her by a teacher who requested she use the six notes of an Egyptian scale: C, C#, E, F, G#, A.

She then switched from original compositions to the work of the "greatest American composer we've ever had," Duke Ellington, a person who, according to Sumi, always created with specific band members in mind, a composer who thought "our limits are what make us great." She played *Warm Valley*, her interpretation rich yet paradoxically spare, based on "the silky sensuous sound" of Johnny Hodges.

Because what was turning into a set had been billed as a clinic, Sumi now played another original composition and asked the audience to title it. "We'll see how close you can get," she said, following a maze-like, stuttering, somewhat crabbed theme with cagey rhythms, seesaw hesitations, slashing chords.

"I found a Monk composition walkin' down the street," someone called out.

"I'll take that as a compliment," Sumi said.

"'Monk Thunder'?" someone else cried.

Then, "Indecision ... here we go again ... a day in the life," a third person chanted.

"That's incredible," Sumi said to this last volunteer, "for this piece is called 'In the Void.' And you got it!"

LATER, WHEN I TALKED to her alone, Sumi said, "That woman hit it right on the head. The three things she mentioned were exactly the state of mind I was in when I wrote the tune. A lot of the time you write and things don't transfer over. People bring their own experiences and backgrounds, so it's going to be

different, how different people perceive the music, right? So that was interesting to me today, to get to hear what that woman said."

At the clinic, Sumi paid homage to those who had associated the piece with Monk. "My parents took me to see him when I was thirteen, " she said, "and that's when I decided to be a jazz musician."

SHE SWITCHED TO THE TOPIC of arranging, talking about ways in which a performer can put his or her own individual expression in a tune, "making it your own, like an actor who has something deep within himself in order to make a role come alive." She demonstrated this potential by way of the "skeleton" of the standard *Night and Day*, first playing the tune as it was written, Reid complaining before they started, "I can't play it straight no more." But the trio did, and then Sumi's way: up tempo, sharp-edged, driving, snare embellished, some nice yang/yin, man/woman, day/night tension formed by way of her interaction with Riley's drums.

The pianist then surprised Reid, announcing another of her own tunes ("kind of an involved piece") called *Susumu* (*Progress* in Japanese).

"I didn't know you were going to play that!" the bassist said, some wag in the audience shouting, "Let him improvise!" Reid went offstage momentarily and returned with a large chart, crying out, "You watch!" The tune commenced with bowed bass, cello mournful, then rich percussive piano built on an eight note refrain: this piece part of a larger suite called *Out From the Silence* which, in full performance, also employs koto and shakuhachi combined with saxophones, trumpets, trombones, violin, clarinet, vibes.

"This piece is one of the biggest things I've ever attempted to do, about 55 minutes long," Sumi also said later. "We're trying to get a decent recording of it. Actually in December, on the 17th, I have a performance scheduled. There's also a half-hour documentary, with excerpts and me talking about why I wrote it."

I heard Sumi with her trio playing *Susumu* again that night—abrasive and lyrical, dramatic—on the jazz festival's main stage. Every person who announced her unfortunately passed over the Japanese double vowel (To-no-o-ka) and made her name sound like tuna fish, but Sumi herself was splendid, garbed in a blazing red jacket and black trousers with a large gold circular buckle. She started out with *Night and Day*, then played one of her own compositions, *Long Ago Today*, dipping her head in swan-like syncronicity with its fine simple melody, the subtle meditation handsomely fleshed out, kneaded into shape, by Riley and Reid, lyricism fused with genuine force or chikara ("strength" in Japanese), tension with restraint. Following an excellent performance, Sumi proved she was merely human by inadvertently thanking the "San Diego" crowd for the warm reception. That's where she'd been the previous night.

Sumi Tonooka is a well-trained musician, getting out of high school early (at fifteen), setting out on her own to study in Boston, Philadelphia and Detroit. One of her more influential teachers was Madame Margaret Chaloff. "She taught me a very special technique or system," Sumi says, "where one of the main ideas is that you don't really use force. You use your energy in such a way that it's a very relaxed means of playing, yet it's very powerful. When I'd first met Madame Chaloff she was like, 'You must come here; you must study with me.' She told me she thought I was some kind of Biblical figure from another life. She was wonderfully eccentric, crazy. So it took time for the points to sink in, to internalize my lessons with her, but they were very valuable."

I recalled a statement that Sumi had made about "breath-length phrases," actually "breathing" through your fingers to avoid a pianist's inclination to sound "cluttered".

"When you play the piano," Sumi responded, "it's easy to just run on because your hands aren't necessarily connected to your breathing. Yet we have to breathe to live, right? You need to pause before you move on to the next thing. This gives you time and space to develop. It's more natural, so I definitely try to think about that when I'm playing."

"How 'bout Mary Lou Williams? You studied with her also ..."

"I like to talk about Mary Lou," Sumi replied. "I was about eighteen, before I went to college, after I'd come back from Boston and Detroit. I just called her up one day and asked her if she taught and she said, 'Sure.' My mother went with me to my first lesson. I remember it was winter and we had to walk through Central Park." Mary Lou Williams was living in Harlem in a flat she'd occupied for some time. Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell had "hung out at her place" and used to play her piano.

"I played the same piano they'd played," Sumi says. "It was very inspiring. Mary Lou said to me, 'You don't need to study. All you need to do is get out there and play.' And all she did was play for me. I watched and I learned a lot, just by that. She didn't work on technical aspects at all. It was all feeling. A lot about the blues, 'cause that's really what her playing stems from, even though she'd always had this incredibly modern, fresh approach to everything she did: She was very warm, beautiful, very spiritual."

WHEN I MENTIONED the full extent of her training (Sumi also attended the Philadelphia School of the Arts and the New School of Music), whether she felt it's all stood her in good stead, she said, "I think so. I'm still searching out teachers. It's an ongoing process. You can always benefit from others. I think Barry Harris is taking classical piano lessons now. I noticed that his whole approach has changed, his technique. That's really inspiring. Being an artist is not something that happens overnight. I don't care how talented you are, how young. The whole thing is about a lifetime, a lifelong pursuit, trying to get it and keeping on ..."

Although Sumi Tonooka proved not to be a musical artist from Japan, I discovered a link or bond that turned out to be even more immediate and meaningful. When I was eighteen, living in New York, alone, I was befriended by a remarkable couple up in "Hell's Kitchen." Bill and Mary Kochiyama, who shared very cramped project quarters with their six children, ran a Nisei Service Organization and handled about a million other charitable functions that put huge demands on their selfless time. "Bill and Mary are good friends of mine," Sumi said, when I told her of this. "They're like notorious in New York. A very famous family, politically." The last time I'd seen Mary Kochiyama had been on TV, addressing the

SUMI TONOOKA

congressional hearings on reparation. This led us back to Sumi's major work, the *Out From the Silence* suite.

"The problem when I wrote this piece was I had never experienced the camps myself," she said. "Usually when I write I base a composition on stuff I've been through, but this was a bit different. It happened to my mom." Sumi decided to help deal with her own feelings by way of research on poetry and prose written by people who'd been interned: an Issei tanka called "The Arrest," her mother's account of the Nisei experience, and the work of Russell Endo, a Japanese-American of Sumi's own, Sansei, generation. She wanted to address each generation's experience of what happened, and show this musically. "The first piece, which is Issei, is most traditionally Japanese in its feeling."

"Do you play shakuhachi?"

"No. What I did was: I had long sessions with a guy who does, excellently, in New York. He, Ronnie Nyogetsu Seldin performed on the *Out From the Silence* piece, along with Fusako Yoshida, who plays koto. I had sessions with her also, not so much to learn how to play the instrument, but to learn about it, how it functions, what the notation is, the aesthetics. When I learned that koto had a different notation system than shakuhachi, I was like 'What am I going to do here?' I had to work out a compatible system of how we were going to communicate, and it worked out very well."

"I liked something you said back in the clinic: that standards at one time were all originals ..."

"Well, people forget this! It's really important for new music to be played and written. Anything trying to do something new combining different musics—that's good! I learned so much from writing these pieces. The way I got into the piano was through composing. I used to make stuff up all the time. The same with classical music. I would start messing around with a piece, doing something different to it ..."

"What about putting together a suite with the magnitude of 'Out From the Silence'?"

"I had the idea," she replied, "so I applied for a grant and got it. After that I thought, 'Oh no! how am I ever going to do this?' I didn't realize, at the time, just how long it would take, or how much work was going to get involved. But you just have to dive right in there."

"Ganbatte!" ("Go for it!"), I said.

"Yeh, that's it," Sumi concurred.

I asked about her very "pictorial" approach to musical composition, one which suggests elements of storytelling.

"I was torn between being a sculptor and a musician," Sumi said. "I'm very visual. That's another thing I want to do more of, say, writing for film. I've done some projects and I want to do more. I love film! But not every piece I write do I see something. A lot of the time a composition is just based on what I've felt or experienced, or a poem that I love. Something that's a part of me."

"Such as the piece you wrote for your son, 'Here Comes Kai'?" I asked. "It's bouncy, like a kid. Right at the start. He just arrives!"

"Kai's very joyous, really fun to be around," Sumi said. "So I felt the piece needed something buoyant, something very active, something he'd like to hear, something he would dance to. And I wrote a song for my daughter also. It's more of a ballad. My daughter is ten months old." Sticking to the home front, I mentioned a tune I much liked on her ***Here Comes Kai*** CD—one called *At Home*, serene, graceful, suitably comfortable, rich with simple joys building to full celebration. "It has a simple melody," I said. "Hearing it, I thought, 'Where am I going to find this number?' But when I tried it on the piano ..."

"There it was, right?" Sumi said, laughing. "Yeh, that's just the feeling I have about my home and my family, being there and the fact that, also, you should be able to take that feeling with you ..."

"A Russian poet, Osip Mandelstam, once wrote about 'a lifelong house that you can carry everywhere' ..."

"That's right," Sumi said. "I hear that."

I commented on her ability to combine stark percussive playing with more meditative or lyrical moods—her range of expression, dynamics.

"I liked Ahmad Jamal for that reason," Sumi said, "the fact that when he plays soft it's so soft, but when he plays strong, it's like 'Bam!' And he uses the whole piano. He uses it like an orchestra. I like to think like that, so when I play, the drama has to be there. I want to try to get as much expression out of the piano as possible. It's not just playing the notes. It's how you play—the quality you get. That's playing the instrument."

I sat in the Monterey Jazz Festival's Night Club, listening to Sumi Tonooka's last set of that Saturday night—one rounded off with the joyous, lurching steps of *Here Comes Kai*, a celebration effected by way of tight parallel hand lines, breathing within the bright context of Riley's drums, keeping on yet bringing it all back home: intimate, vivid, varied music that one can carry anywhere. Sumi had had a busy day: the clinic, the main stage performance, now this. I thought of the last thing she'd said to me:

"I don't have a steady gig, but I've been working more than ever. This year was very fortunate because I got my first major commission: a big piece I will be premiering, one which combines taiko drumming with jazz instrumentation, based on the eight trigrams of the I Ching. I also have a ten month old at home, so I'm trying to raise my family. It seems as though everything happens at once. Sometimes I feel totally tapped out; like 'How am I going to do all of this?' But it's great because it's all good stuff. I've dedicated my life to music. And within the course of my life I'm sure I'll get around to doing all the things I want to do." □

DISCOGRAPHY

AS LEADER: **With An Open Heart** (Radiant RR5601 - 1986), **Taking Time** (Candid CCD79502 - 1991), **Here Comes Kai** (Candid CCD 79516 - 1992), **Secret Places** (Unreleased)
AS SIDE-PERSON: JOHN BLAKE's **A New Beginning** (Gramavision 18-8808-2 - 1988), BOBBY ZANKEL's **Seeking Spirit** (Cadence Jazz CJR 1050 - 1991)

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NAMES & NUMBERS

ART HODES • CARICATURE BY HAILE HENDRIX

IT'S TRULY MIND-BOGGLING what people seem inclined to collect nowadays. The flourishing of garage and lawn sales and collectable "shoppes" attracts hordes of prospective fleamarket gatherers searching for that elusive bottle cap, a rare liquor label, or a missing Klussendorf cancellation. Alas, I have also been bitten by the bug!

It began innocently enough with a friends query: "You don't happen to have in your collection of jazz recordings any number with my name (Peter) in the title, do you?" With some searching I uncovered forty-two relevant samples. He was impressed. I was impressed. Together we shared an evening of those musical discoveries - completely petered out by the end of it, you might say. It was his departing challenge, however, that hooked me: "I'll wager you don't have anything with the name Beelzebub," he joked. It took me some time after to locate George Russell's 1956 recording, but I did. Hence began my addictive quest for names, a journey that has witnessed my purchase of some very unusual jazz recordings, items I would probably, in many instances, have totally ignored. Nevertheless, the rewards have thus far greatly outweighed the disappointments. Prior to this affliction, I had, over the years, been drawn to certain numbers or compositions (about twelve in all) such as *Body and Soul, Stardust, Solitude* - pieces long affiliated with my past. These too often played some role in determining my selection of what to buy; but that was "small potatoes" in comparison to what has become my "collectable obsession".

I TELL YOU THIS IN ADVANCE, as a judgemental precaution, for I have just received a new batch of CDs for review, and, without having heard any of them yet, solely on the basis of feeding my collectable "needs", they do not disappoint me.

Take for example, the CD release of **DON FRIEDMAN**'s 1984 ***I Hear A Rhapsody*** (Stash 577), originally an Empathy lp (reviewed favourably by yours truly in Coda #213) but supplemented here by four additional selections hitherto unreleased. It's a masterful solo outing by the San Francisco born pianist who makes all too few recordings in this format. The disc provides me, more to the point, with three collectables - a gorgeously introspective *Round Midnight*, a pensively beautiful original, *Olivia* (my sole reference for that name), and an intricately demanding *Body and Soul*. Joe Carter, founder of the Empathy label and liner note commentator for the CD, states: "His music takes on a character of itself. It excites, it soothes, it swings... it's just great piano playing." Indeed, it's the artistry expressive of hills and dales, shadows and sunshine, gentle breezes and sudden thunder.

In contrast, **MULGREW MILLER** (***With Our Own Eyes*** - Novus 63171-2) conjures up stronger images of sprawling cities charged with propulsive energy *(New Wheels, Carousel, Somewhere Else)* yet tempered at times into cooler shades of blue *(Summer Me, Winter Me* and *Dreamin')*. As the title might suggest, all numbers but one are Miller originals, that exception being the standard, *Body and Soul* (now my 192nd rendition). The trio of Miller, bassist Richie Goods and drummer Tony Reedus offers an intriguing presentation with the pianist weaving the familiar thematic pattern from shreds and shards of melody, keyboard clusters inserted exploratively into the fabric of bass and drums. A worthy item for my collection!

My larder of names and numbers is well served by three pianists long associated with the stride school of piano interpretation, though not necessarily limited by that appellation, namely Art Hodes, Ralph Sutton and Chuck Folds.

I've been a **ART HODES** devotee longer that I care to remember, - back to a cramped shop on Spadina Road near Harbord Street in Toronto, if my memory holds, a place that bore the slogan, "Let us put hot wax in your ear", and where you could purchase, up to a dollar and a half per 78, imports on such unheralded labels as Solo Art, Jazz Record, Black & White, Signature, Session. Art playing Ellington's *The Mooche* was an early acquisition there. I still have it. Now, sadly, I have before me a CD: ***Art Hodes - Last Sessions*** (Music & Arts CD-782), a compendium (1990) of studio recordings and selections from two live performances from Toronto's Cafe des Copains. Jim Galloway joins him at the Cafe, while Kenny Davern makes it a trio in the studio date a few weeks later. Liner notes are extensive and most informative; the music is simply wonderful. Moreover, the Galloway/Hodes duo for *Alexander's Ragtime Band* and Stephen Foster's *Oh Susanna* affords me yet two more name samples. Both are given characteristic up tempo treatments, but the rapport between soprano and piano — perhaps best described as a state of sublime togetherness — works magic on me. This is a disc not to be missed.

Neither is Sackville's second offering of concert performances by **RALPH SUTTON** form the now defunct Cafe des Copains, Toronto, in 1988 and 1989 (***More Ralph Sutton*** - Sackville 3-2036). Originally taped exclusively for CJRT-FM, a Toronto radio

station, it is now made widely available on CD. Besides satisfying my own personal quest (*Dinah* - #55, *Willow Weep For Me* - #56, *Sophisticated Lady* - in medley context here), it provides the listener with selections infrequently heard. *'Sposin', Baby Brown, Through For The Day, Worryin' The Life Out Of Me* et al (the last two composed by Willie 'The Lion' Smith and Miff Mole respectively). Perhaps John Norris sums up this music most succinctly: "This is the obverse side to Ralph Sutton's highly charged 'stride' specialties which he delivers for concert audiences worldwide." For example under the capable tutelage of Sutton, *Dinah* is given a dual nature, first as a sedate young woman, redolent with elegant grace, and then transformed into the buoyant, self-assured girl, a role generally assigned to her. The same blend of moods applied to the "sad as I can be" *Willow Weep For Me*, according it an uncharacteristic (almost) happy ending. Throughout, the pace is relaxed, the fingers sure, the results charmingly fresh. That's Ralph Sutton.

And then there's **CHUCK FOLDS**, veteran trumpeter Doc Cheatham's favourite pianist! His credentials in a supporting role read like a who's who of jazz - Red Allen, Max Kaminsky, Tony Parenti, Bob Crosby, Pee Wee Russell, Eddie Condon, Joe Venuti, Buck Clayton - ad infinitum, it seems. Of the twenty-one selections from this 1992 solo CD (Arbors 19117), including such rarely heard *Love Is A Merry-Go-Round, How Can You Face Me?* (a too long forgotten Waller ballad), *Mule Walk, Summer Moon, Wherever There's Love*, and *I'll Try*, three fit readily into my slot of collectable names: a flouncy *Rose Of The Rio Grande*, an equally effervescent *Cinderella (Stay In My Arms)*, and a circuitously circumspect *Johnny Come Lately*. Chuck Folds, indeed, "knows a lot of tunes", offers much more than just an assortment of stride specialties (despite the album title - ***Hitting His Stride***), and is a very entertaining performer outside of his more familiar big band context.

MAL WALDRON's 1972 solo tribute to Billie Holiday, ***Blues For Lady Day***, recorded in Holland and originally released on an Arista lp, is now available on CD (Black Lion 760193). As accompanist to Billie in the few years before her death, he gained special insight into that repertoire of songs that both popularized and mirrored the artist: *You Don't Know What Love Is, Strange Fruit, Just Friends, Don't Blame Me*. His own brief *Blues For Lady Day* restrained and melancholic, captures the inherent sad beauty that so characterized much of her recorded output and her life.

The two bonus tracks, recorded at the Jazzzolden Hot House, Leiden, just four days later with bassist Henk Haverhoek and drummer Pierre Courbois, are extended performances of Waldron originals (initially released on the Dutch Intercord label), the first conceding me my only "collectable" on the CD - an hypnotic, minimalist *A.L.B.O.M. (A Little Bit Of Miles)*. The club date is in strong contrast to the earlier solo studio date, with Waldron brash and aggressive, encompassing the entire expanse of the keyboard (as the second number *Here, There And Everywhere*, implies) to the insistent prodding of impeccable bass and drums.

JOHN HICKS (***Beyond Expectations*** - Reservoir 130) furnishes me with yet two more items for my compilation of names - Stella (#35) and Bud (#52). Hicks, who has recorded in trio settings since the mid-70's and had served his apprenticeship well with Blakey, Herman and Mobley among others is joined here by Ray Drummond (bass) and Marvin 'Smitty' Smith (drums) in a rhythmically well-balanced and palatable assortment of standards, originals and not so commonly heard morsels, such as Freddie Hubbard's *Up Jumped Spring*, Horace Silver's *Peace*, and Jobim's *Once I Loved*. More to my interest, perhaps, is *Stella By Starlight*, Victor Young's mid-40's romantic ballad hit, the lady in question is permitted to dissolve in incandescence under the persistent interplay of piano, bass and drums, while, with *Bouncing With Bud*, the trio unravels the intricacies of Powell with accelerated thoroughness. This date certainly supports liner note claims that Hicks can "...build a solo... tell a story... increase the intensity in a series of climaxes...". He also knows how to hold the attention of a listener for seventy-two minutes - and did!

It perturbs me no end to come upon a recording that is noteworthy for its paucity of information about the performer - especially a Canadian artist who surely, in an age when high profile seems often to shape success, is not deserving of such Canadian understatement. And pianist **MARILYN LERNER**'s recent Winnipeg sessions (***Miss Overboard*** - Justin Time 63-2) should not be underrated. Though all the compositions are originals (I generally prefer a standard or two as a jumping off point into the unknown), there is no lack of confident ability in her keyboard approach, from the charmingly animated daughter-inspired *Miss Overboard* to the touching tenderness of *Healing Hands*. My thirst for names, moreover, is quenched in a brief but moving portrait, *Song For Mary*, a composition fashioned out of respect and love for "a truly inspirational friend"; as well, there is *NaiAdam And NaiEve* (a punning glance at human relationships?), filled with impulsive chord changes, blocked rhythmic patterns, and tongue-in-cheek melodic nuances. There seems no limit to the challenges she sets for herself, and she meets them admirably. I enjoyed the varied musical journey charted here by Marilyn Lerner, and only regret that I know so little about the player/composer herself.

The Chicago-based **BRADLEY WILLIAMS** trio (***The Next Sound You Hear*** - Lake Shore Jazz Of Chicago 002) doles out the 18th and 19th contributions to slake my insatiable appetite for names and numbers. The album, from the beginning, conveys a sense of the unexpected. Unlike Ralph Sutton's dual interpretation of *Willow Weep For Me*, Wiliams' kicks up a continuous storm that sent me scurrying back to Billie Holiday and June Christy to check the lyrics. Romantic ballads are given blistering, novel treatment - a drunken *There Is No Greater Love*, a torrid *I'm Getting Sentimental Over You*, a Latin-flavoured *You Stepped Out Of A Dream*. Nevertheless, with two originals, *Looking Back* and *Portrait*, or the standard *For All We Know*, the response is impressionable, sensitively subdued, while Horace Silver's *Juicy Lucy* (#8) remains wilfully true to her nature. Overall, it's an enjoyable listening experience offered in a refreshing manner by very inventive musicians.

Though I've added considerably to my stock of names and numbers, I'm always on the lookout for the unlisted. If you have a Sabina, a Hilary, or an Ebenezer to share, I'd be overjoyed to hear from you. So far, I've drawn a blank. □

WAY OUT WEST

WINNIPEG JAZZ FESTIVAL
JUNE 20TH - 26TH

REVIEWED BY
RANDAL McILROY

***AN ALLIGATOR WAS THE MOTIF** FOR THE FIFTH ANNUAL JAZZ WINNIPEG FESTIVAL — THE THEME (LOOSE) WAS NEW ORLEANS — BUT BIGGER QUESTIONS HUNG ON THE YOUNG LIONS. SPECIFICALLY, ONE: JOSHUA REDMAN. THE 25-YEAR-OLD TENORIST HAS GARNERED SO MUCH PRAISE AND RARE SALES FIGURES FOR A JAZZ ACT THAT A BACKLASH CAN'T BE FAR AWAY. BUT IT WON'T START HERE.*

Caught in the first of two sold-out shows at the Art Gallery, **JOSHUA REDMAN** put his all into his music. He's set himself to be a long-haul tenor, and he has the lungs, the tone, and usually the ideas to pull it off. Launching into *Blues On Sunday*, then *Echoes*, he seized on little nuggets of ideas and turned them again and again. A weakness for transposing some of those ideas across the scales was a little wearying at times, but no great failure.

He's reaching, too. Sam Rivers' *Beatrice* introduced the Redman soprano, a high, lithe voice that sounded fine for the ballad study.

The band is hungry. Bassist Christian McBride lived up to his formidable advance billing, investigating ideas of his own while never losing the groove. Brian Blade had ferocity but also the sense to lay back. The best surprise was pianist Brad Meldau, a stylish and witty player with the toughness to meet his mates' challenges, the alertness to propose alternatives to a musical punch-up.

Although he's been around longer than Redman, **TERENCE BLANCHARD** also came attended by question marks. Lately he's been running a parallel career in film, soundtracking for Spike Lee and others. For the Winnipeg show he was once again split, this time between showmanship and research.

On the second count, the long study of the Billie Holiday/Mal Waldron song *Left Alone* was outstanding. Blanchard's burnished trumpet tone, coddled notes and penchant for squeezing the last drop out of an arresting idea turned a blues into an experience. The band was hip; Chris Thomas held a mantric bass line, drummer Troy Davis kept aggression in check, and Bruce Barth scattered shards of interesting notes instead of politely comping. Dipping between New Orleans and now, Blanchard played with feeling, chops, and a feline humour that likewise called Lester Bowie to mind.

He played hard too. Given a bop standard like Au Privave or one of his own tracks from the Malcolm X score, Blanchard worked muscle into the elegance. Davis was ferocious. Elsewhere the leader was marking time. The deadpan blues act was funny the first time around, less so once similar mugging (with Barth, then with Davis again) felt like filibuster. Too often those great chops sounded like sops to the indiscriminate (which is always a peril at this festival). Possibly he was compensating for guest singer Jeanie Bryson. Reprising her role on Blanchard's recent Billie Holiday Songbook disc, Bryson was tuneful but a sparrow-weight singer, not so much respectful as virtually invisible in her numbers.

More fun by far was **THE NEW ORLEANS ALL-STARS**, a quartet of young Crescent City contenders including native Winnipegger Glen Patscha on piano. Billing aside, this wasn't a nostalgia trip but a chance for four cats to test their claws in public.

Spiritual patriarch Ellis Marsalis figured in the songbook. So did Bird and Workin'-vintage Miles. The big figure, though, was Harry Connick Jr., who has been helping trumpeter **NICHOLAS DAVENPORT** with his singing. Davenport's deadpan croon was callow Frankie via Harry, and his laconic charm went down a treat, but his trumpet style promises a more lasting ticket. Patscha didn't let down the homies, and bassist Neal Caine and elevating drummer Martin Butler played their arses off.

The lounge scene has taken on a life of its own at the festival. As the All-Stars drew capacity-plus crowds at tiny Cajun Joe's, The **catholics** were putting bums on seats, windowsills, and other stationary surfaces at Windows Lounge. A stiff back was a small price to pay.

The lower-case 'c' in the Australian septet's name denotes the secular interpretation, and the music confirmed it. At times, when Sandy Evans' saxophones and James Greening's trombone dug into the boiling mix of guitars and percussion, Ornette Coleman was in the house. Then they switched paths, bringing out the skitterish highlife guitar and South African horn hymns to invoke the spirits of Dudu Pukwana and Mongezi Feza. Between those points they drove a steaming, Latinized *Bye-Ya*, where kit drummer Tony Buck and percussionist Sammila Sithole duetted with such canny force you could hear Monk's chord changes.

The groove was huge, but it was never all. Evans' dark tenor and hot soprano, Greening's trombone and leader **LLOYD SWANTON**'s bass were always strong on detail, as were the licks of a pedal steel guitarist. Great tunes, too. Small wonder the festival organizers are already mulling bringing the Antipodes back next summer for a larger stage.

Your man had to leave The catholics early to catch **RONNIE JORDAN**'s spin on the new jazz-funk sound. In fact, it sounded a lot like the old jazz-funk sound, say 1972, with two racks of digital keyboards offering the only audible proof that this wasn't one of Creed Taylor's bubbling CTI label dates. The raps and samples from the Englishman's two discs were missing. Without them, Jordan was a competent Wes Mongomeryite, leading a band that was too smooth and polite to be funky.

FESTIVAL REVIEWS FROM WINNIPEG AND VANCOUVER

The final night of the festival framed the greatest adventures from opposing ends of the spectrum. Representing the composer's side was the French quartet led by **LOUIS SCLAVIS** (clarinet, bass clarinet) and Dominique Pifarely (violin) with Marc Ducret (6 and 12 string guitars) and Bruno Cevilon (bass). Championing improvisation — instant composition, if you will — was the trio of Canadians **PAUL PLIMLEY** and **LISLE ELLIS** with their American partner **JOE MCPHEE** (tenor saxophone and bass clarinet).

In a night without electric instruments or drums the French quartet reaffirmed that you need neither for intensity. The program's works (written either by Sclavis or Pifarely, and drawn mainly from the new ECM disc) capitalized on the chamber blend of bass clarinet with bowed strings, acoustic guitars with pizzicato violin and bass, but used those consonant voices as a launch point for exacting arrangements and what might have been improvised solos, with Sclavis' shuddering bass clarinet cadenza goosing spontaneous applause.

Plimley, Ellis and McPhee headed for the spaces between the lines. Their single 50-minute improvisation shifted like silk in the wind; sometimes transparent, sometimes dense and opaque, always in motion even when motion was gentle. McPhee with his horns tended to command attention, albeit with the more lower-end rumination than traditionally expected from saxes gone free, which could be why he was so graceful about stepping to the wings when presumably he had said all he needed for the moment. Plimley entered the music from odd angles, always illuminating. Ellis was the mediator; at one point he slid in with a beautiful bowed solo.

In conversation after the show, Ellis said the trio will be recording a set of Max Roach tunes for hat Art this fall. Start saving now.

In most respects this year's festival ran smoothly, with capacity crowds predominating. Regretfully, it played light on Winnipeg players for the main stages. Good word came through about some of the local turns in the clubs and on the afternoon free stages, but the affirmative festival vote was pianist **EARL MACDONALD** opening for Redman.

MacDonald was already turning out good tunes before he left Winnipeg last year to study under Kenny Barron at Rutgers University. With the estimable Barron recording MacDonald's tune *Wanton Spirit* for a forthcoming CD, MacDonald sounded twice as good for the homecoming. *Wanton Spirit* was an airy charmer, but MacDonald's hearing is trained to the off-kilter — the Monk-in-the-playroom joy of Schroeder's *Tantrum*, the angular *Glow In The Dark*. Saxophonist Bill Prouten slotted snugly into the patterns, while the owlish trumpet/flugelhorn man Frank Burke was once again almost palpably excited by the charts. In a good world, MacDonald gets to keep the bass and drums of Steve Hamilton and Rob Siwik on permanent call.

1994 du MAURIER LTD. INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL VANCOUVER

JUNE 24TH - JULY 3RD
REIVIEWED BY
KEVIN WHITEHEAD

EDITOR BILL SMITH, B.C. RESIDENT, *BRISTLES AT "BORING NEW YORK STORIES": SECTARIAN BATTLES ABOUT THE SCOPE OF JAZZ. THIS YEAR'S VANCOUVER FEST HELPED ME UNDERSTAND HIS IMPATIENCE. IN WORLDWIDE PRACTICE, JAZZ'S FRAME OF REFERENCE HAS PANASCOPED. AS STEPHEN JAY GOULD SAYS, CULTURAL EVOLUTION IS LAMARCKIAN, NOT DARWINIAN. ANY IDEA CAN JUMP TO ANYONE, INSTANTLY; MUTATION NEEDN'T WAIT A GENERATION OR RESPECT BLOODLINES. JAZZ'S DISTINCTIVE TANG IS ELUSIVE YET PERVASIVE. WHO ALIVE TODAY DOESN'T HAVE BLUES IN THEIR BONES, HASN'T HEARD IT IN SOME FORM FOR A*

JOSHUA REDMAN PHOTOGRAPH BY GERARD FUTRICK

lifetime? So while some—like Medeski Martin & Wood—disavow they're really "jazz musicians," some unlikely candidates embrace it. In Vancouver, the arty Swiss/Scottish trio **DAY & TAXI** let you know they want to swing, even if they don't too well; art-rock altoist Amy Denio of the **BILLY TIPTON MEMORIAL SAXOPHONE QUARTET** slid a long gliss into a line to indicate she'd been listening to Johnny Hodges.

Misha Mengelberg's (sometimes swinging, sometimes not) **ICP ORCHESTRA** limns the approaches open to the open-eared. As pianist, Misha can evoke Monk and a fumbling cocktail noodler, simultaneously. Feigned chaos is part of his plan: he breaks rules for its own sake. Pieces end in the middle of a head, a phrase, a bar. The eight-piece orchestra moves from anarchic breakdown to free jazz to Shorty Rogers swing in no time. The playing is typically Dutch—the ensembles immaculate, the solos often rigourous and spare.

But there's a lacy openness to Misha's writing that gives it odd warmth, and he keeps players engaged by giving them the last word, on the stand. Vancouver's ninth annual followed the usual plan: ten days, lots of venues from big theatres to small clubs, plenty of free gigs either weekend, Afropop stars at the ballroom, a steady stream of accessible (Canadian, American, European) mainstreamers—and multiple appearances by international outcats, exploited fully as long as they're in town. A good jazz festival is about juxtaposition, makes you think about one set in the context of others. On a given evening you could hear tenors Pharoah Sanders, Charles Gayle and John Tchicai; bassists Barry Guy, Mark Dresser and Lisle Ellis; Euro-drummers Han Bennink and Paul Lovens.

One serendipitous motif was the showmanship of jazz drummers. **JOSHUA REDMAN**'s one-more-night-on-the-road—even Chris McBride sounded blah—was redeemed by Brian Blade, who like Ralph Peterson is fond of a striking roundhouse punch that sweeps across his kit, threatening to topple it. He projected to the top of the balcony in the reborn deco Vogue Theatre, a new and welcome venue. Flashiest of all was show woman **CINDY BLACKMAN**, who often drowned out and rendered superfluous the rest of Pharoah's rhythm section (save that they fill the long stretches when Pharoah lays out). She revels in traditional drum-solo chops, on view like her legs for the duration of a set. Her vavoom stagewear is part of the joke: she dares you to concentrate on something besides her in your face but functional technique (and preparation: she'd tuned her toms meticulously). When Pharoah did pick up the horn, she made him play.

Hearing Lovens follow Bennink's **CLUSONE 3** (clarinetist/altoist Michael Moore, cellist Ernst Reijseger) confirmed Paul's conceptual daring. He may be the quietest of master drummers. Bennink inhales the world: plays the floor, the walls, found junk, even the audience if he loses his grip on a stick. Lovens at work, in signature white shirt and tie, looks like an exec rearranging junk on his desk. He'll take a small hand cymbal and clomp it on the head of a floor tom. (Instead of his own kit assembled from round-the-world components—like the first trap set—Lovens like most percussionists here used homegrown Ayotte drums, a significant subliminal factor in defining the tough sound of jazz at this festival, yearly). He'll place that little cymbal at various spots inside the rim, and listen to the pitch and timbre shift as he moves it around. He'll shunt the cymbal sideways to smack the inside rim; he'll flip it over and press it into the head for tabla-like bends. He'll hold a struck cymbal just above a head, so the whole drum acts as a resonator. He'll bow the cymbal and (almost alone among drummers) make it interesting. A signature: he'll spin that cymbal on a head and, when it spirals to a quiet stop, kiss it off with one gentle bass-drum beat. And hand cymbal is just one of his tools. But no matter how quiet he gets, he always projects, and listens to everyone else, and keeps it moving. He builds, literally, on top of the jazz traps tradition. (I'm told he warmed up playing jazz licks.)

Lovens played with four-fifths of **NEWS FROM THE SHED** (minus sidelined Radu Malfatti), with amplified violinist Phil Durrant. The band is scaled to Lovens' esthetic. At one show he had telepathic hookup with unamplified guitarist John Russell, at the other with tenor/soprano saxist John Butcher. Hard to tell who played what: was that a split-tone screech or bowed cymbal? It's as if Butcher knew the exact pitch and value of every sound Lovens can make.

PAUL LOVENS PHOTOGRAPH BY GERARD FUTRICK

(Jazz cliche: they got loud once, just before their last set ended. It's as close as Lovens got to a drum solo.)

For me the festival's other high point was equally quiet: the start of the second set by **JOE MCPHEE**, **LISLE ELLIS**, and a Vancouverite who's yet to get his due, drummer **ROGER BAIRD**, whose cymbals arrayed high and perpendicular before him makes his kit look like it has antlers. He's a cocky provocateur, but when he's uncouth there's a reason. Showman? More like shaman. McPhee dislikes loud drummers; for the trio's first set at the Glass Slipper—the cosiest, smallest, most hospitable of fest venues—Baird was loud, favouring his trash-lid cymbal sonorities. Joe responded with passionate, bristling, hoarse-toned (but never very loud) tenor, vintage McPhee. He's the tenor's quiet man, but Baird drew him out.

During the interval, Roger asked Joe what he wanted to hear in the second set. It began very, very quietly, Lisle laying out at first, Baird playing an enormous (Native Canadian?) frame drum, Joe's tenor oozing a pulsing circular figure (Evan Parker's influence was evident in Butcher, McPhee, Francois Houle, Louis Sclavis), and long, precariously balanced split-tones, fragile and beautiful. He listens as closely as Lovens—now that'd be a duo. (Later, Baird graciously made way for drummer Kenny Wollesen, when he and Ben Goldberg sat in.) A McPhee/Ellis/Paul Plimley trio set was stillborn, however. They played music by or associated with Max Roach, an obtuse (record producer's) concept they valiantly tried to bring to life. When Plimley's not animated, something's seriously wrong.

Baird also played two gigs in a quartet, the **NAFTA** Ensemble, with Seattle's trumpeter Jim Knodle and bassist Michael Bisio, and Vanc's David Say on alto and big, sometimes mournful tenor. Their second gig was indoors at the old World's Fair site, where three stages run off and on all day the final weekend. Roger played time, displaying a light touch; the band fell into organic free jazz, often pleasantly Ornetty, the horns weaving and leapfrogging on spontaneous heads. But they reserved the right to change things up quickly, using silence as punctuation. Say slid some highlife into one alto line, when the sound of an Afropop band playing outside slashed into the room anytime a door was opened. (The next day in the same room, Say played more out of Coltrane, in master drummer **CLAUDE RANGER**'s trio with bassist Clyde Reed. Ranger kept swinging on his ride cymbal even when the music went out; a half hour later on the outdoor stage, Claude supplied the big beat for pianist Miles Hill's mainstream quartet.)

I heard musicians say the reprise of Barry Guy's collaboration with the **NOW ORCHESTRA** (Coda 256) improved on the recorded version, but I prefer the CD, where one's not distracted by visual elements. Guy's shaping of elements via live "conduction" and "game"-style entrance cues gave the players ideas to work from in the future, but these tactics were pretty elementary by, uh, New York standards. One standout was Peggy Lee, whose cello sound has gotten much raunchier in the past year. Band pianist Plimley and Guy opened the show duo; Paul needs no publicity here, except to say that in the company of world class improvisers, he's a peer. Best festival snapshot: Pitt Gallery, 1:15 am. An improvisation has just ended. French hornist Tom Varner rubs sore jaws, Dresser is ready to put down his bass, and a grinning Plimley assures the house, "Stick around! The night is young!"

The future of jazz? Postmodern style crunching continues to play/burn itself out, for good or ill. For **MARCUS ROBERTS'** trio, the collage principal is manifest in synchronized leaps into doubletime for a few bars, or in chains of consecutive choruses that shift neatly from one rhythmic tack to another. He formalizes what Earl Hines did spontaneously. In effect, the evident amount of (paid) time spent rehearsing bassist Reuben Rogers and drummer Marty Morrison is offered as proof of the music's quality: you hear where the money went. Roberts' command of the stride idiom is dramatically improved, and not overly flaunted. But it wasn't till trumpeter **MARCUS PRINTUP** came out, and the music got more straightahead and less gimmicky, that Roberts was heard to best advantage.

Chicago's **VANDERMARK QUARTET** has an integrated style, cobbled from the electric crank of Chicago blues (mostly from guitarist Dan Scanlan), and a herkyjerk momentum you might trace to Beefheart, Dolphy and David Murray. (Ken plays bass clarinet and tenor; Hal Russell alum Kent Kessler's on bass, Michael Zerang on drums.) One critic I greatly respect hated **MEDESKI MARTIN & WOOD**'s heedless indifference to organ-group conventions; Medeski doesn't even use bass pedals (though his Fender Rhodes work shows retro awareness). Their saving grace for me is that bassist Wood specializes in stuff pedals can't replicate: slaps, slides, triplestop power chords, exaggerated timbral effects.

ELLERY ESKELIN's new trio puts a more creative and baffling spin on that same tradition. It's audacious (and concept-driven) even by his standards. Ellery thrives on harmonic subtlety, but Andrea Parkins, on accordion or organ, delivers only minimal harmonic info; the set climaxes at the end of "40 West," which begins as a duet for tenor and Jim Black's drums. For the close, Parkins eases in, outlining a basic B-flat blues using bare fifths, with deliberately bland tone. The lone major third in the V chord sounds unbelievably rich in this context. Ellery has said that in the right context he can make a C triad in the key of C sound radical; this disorienting/fascinating restructuralist group shows what he means.

The sheer number of clarinetists on hand celebrated the good health of the little wood horn. Ab Baars and Michael Moore came with ICP, and played several other gigs, including a clarinet trio with Goldberg. Baars and trumpeter Thomas Heberer (terrific Bowie-ish cup-muted wahs) co-led an ICP-splinter quartet with bassist Ernst Glerum (beautiful natural bass tone) and ringer **GERRY HEMINGWAY**, swinging. They'd never played in this combination, and some of the music was so recent it was written on hotel stationary, but they sounded like a real band—a trick pulled off by other ad hoc units (like a Goldberg/Varner/Dresser/Wollesen quartet). On a bouncy Curtis Clark riff tune, Baars took a clarinet solo full of Pee Wee-ish asides, which resolved itself over a long arc, seemingly independent of the light underlying structure. It was a fine example of improvisation as instant composition.

DON BYRON's once strident sound continues to ripen, and is perfect for **BILL FRISELL**'s cover of Copland's *Billy the Kid* and Bill's Copland-wannabe originals. Frisell will not make false distinctions between black and white roots, because they've been mingling far too long for this to be an issue. Goldberg, gravitating away from klezmer and towards the bebop repertoire on recent gigs, keeps sounding more assured too. **LOUIS SCLAVIS** has chops galore, but

his quartet—violinist Dominique Pifarely, Bruno Chevillon on bass, Marc Ducret evoking Ralph Towner on acoustic guitars—smacks of French bistro music and fusion spitfire rhythms, even as it flirts with Jazz Lite. Still, Sclavis has fast, clear articulation, an even sound in all clarinet/bass clarinet registers, and smoothly flowing ideas. (He also played in a free trio with **MARILYN CRISPELL** and drummer **PHIL HAYNES**.) Year after year, Francois Houle's playing frankly reveals who he's been listening to or studying with: Lacy, John Carter, Giuffre, and now corkscrewy Evan Parker. Houle gets away with it though, because by the following season, each strain has been assimilated into his own growing conception.

Brooklyn's Haynes and Seattle's Bisio had never met before they teamed up for four gigs as roaming rhythm section. The first was shaky—a trio with pianist Glenna Powrie—and the last sounded like a seasoned working group: a quartet with Crispell and John Tchicai. Crispell asked for and gave no quarter, but Tchicai's and Marguerite Tchicai's tunes always gave her something fresh to work from: cheery highlife diatonics, or Monkish intervals, or both at once. Tchicai (as on a nice pick-up gig with Baird, guitarist Tony Wilson, bassist Paul Blaney and conguero Geronimo) favoured his chewy middle register, to show off his dark, rich timbre. He likes blues gestures and repeating, permuting phrases; he worries each phrase into a new one, like Mal Waldron. You can always hear the chords go by in his lines.

Bisio and Haynes also played with **VINNY GOLIA**, who says he gets called mostly for his clarinet and bass clarinet these days; he also brought soprano sax and flute. On clarinet, his long antic lines bridged the fiendish register break as if no peril existed. He's also that rare circular breather not overtly out of Evan; instead he played long notes that evolved into a closed-circuit hornpipe melody. Haynes never lacks raw power, but of late he's gotten into detailed, textural use of rims and shells, a la Joey Baron. (It's conceptually related to Lovens too, no matter how different the particulars.) Bisio showed his sensitivity to every situation: running pre-set or spontaneous changes, playing all the way outside, riffing on modes, making musical jokes.

Bisio had played with Charles Gayle on tour last spring; Haynes had never had the pleasure. Like Wollesen, Phil knows you don't have to play loud all the time to be intense. (Gayle is always intense; he begins where Pharoah peaks.) Besides tenor and bass clarinet, Charles has taken to playing piano when one's on hand. Gayle at the keys is lounge act subverted. He starts with spare chords—later he'll erupt into a fair evocation of early Cecil—and declaims into a microphone: "Don't just let people entertain you, ask for truth.... Love songs are okay for jazz, but when you try to make it about salvation, they tell you it's not suitable. I'm trying to change that." (Sidebar: Gayle's mood may have been affected by his distaste for the liner notes to a new CD of his, which he'd just read. He feels the writer—me—drew too fine a distinction between being homeless and being a squatter. My quarrel was with those critics who treat him as a sociological rather than musical phenomenon, but Charles read it as criticism of him.)

Overall, the social scene was a pleasure to partake in and observe. There is a floating community of international improvisers (and friends) who meet up at festivals in such places as Vancouver, Victoriaville, Amsterdam and Berlin; ideas are exchanged, contacts are made, conceptual windows are opened, and future projects begin to germinate. If that weren't encouraging enough, Vancouver's local scene has tendrils that extend far south, as well: Seattle, Goldberg's San Francisco, Golia's Los Angeles.

More and more, Vancouver is an important crossroads, one visibly transformed by a construction boom tied to an influx of money from Hong Kong. Glass towers spring up like weeds around False Creek. It's rather like '80s Miami for the Pacific Rim: a port of entry between hemispheres. (It's also gearing up to choke itself in the traditional West Coast manner, as it thrives; a tobacco-sponsored jazz festival like du Maurier is the perfect objective correlative.) The notion of the crossroads as locus of stylistic advancement predates Robert Johnson, of course, and possibilities for the future could be glimpsed in Australian bassist **LLOYD SWANTON**'s septet The catholics (five rhythm) where African highlife, outback C&W and Polynesian strains wafted through Michel Rose's pedal steel guitar.

Jazz is a global phenomenon, no matter where it started—to say only Americans can play jazz 'cause they invented it is like saying only the French can make movies. Swing and blues are no longer the sole soul of jazz, which like any cultural movement or expanding city stubbornly goes where it will. There's always room for everyone. At Vancouver, Marcus Roberts and Ernst Reijseger are equally welcome, and if they didn't play together, there's always next year. □

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AROUND & ABOUT
WITH JOHN NORRIS

GEORGE'S SPAGHETTI HOUSE, THE LAST OF TORONTO'S PIONEER JAZZ ESTABLISHMENTS, FINALLY CLOSED DOWN IN MID AUGUST. IT HAD LONG BEEN BESET BY FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES AND HAD GONE THROUGH A SUCCESSION OF OWNERS SINCE DOUG COLE, IT'S FOUNDER, HAD RETIRED A DECADE AGO.

FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS it had been a showcase for local talent and the only venue which offered musicians a six night residency. In its early days it was a creative outlet for musicians who made a good living in the studios (Donte's provided the same service in L.A.) but over the last decade it had increasingly become a spot where today's generation of jazz musicians developed the rapport necessary to shape their music. Performing together on a nightly basis has been a key factor in the growth of the many groups who now record in Canada, and perform internationally.

As long ago as 1968 then owner Doug Cole expressed, in a Coda article, reservations about how much longer the club could survive. It says much for the tenacity of everyone that it stuck around for another 25 years. Overseeing this activity has been the responsibility of Moe Koffman—himself one of the first Canadian jazz musicians to establish an international reputation. He achieved this by booking his quartet into George's on a regular basis. Indeed, guitarist Ed Bickert has been with him since his first weekend gigs at Georges in 1955. Pianist Bernie Senensky has been a fixture with Koffman since the early 1970s.

Much has altered on the jazz scene over the duration of George's existence. What hasn't altered is musicians' ability to secure financial security through the performance of jazz. When George's came on the scene musicians worked in dance bands and the studios and played $10.00 jazz gigs in after hours clubs. Today they are faculty members in the jazz departments of educational institutions and take $20.00 gigs in cafes and restaurants while waiting for the summer festival season to start.

Clubs offering a six night residency are becoming dinosaurs of the jazz scene. In the 1950s they were central to the music's existence. As John Lewis explained in a fascinating talk he gave at Ellington 94 in Stockholm, musicians worked their way upwards from local organizations to a chair in the top level echelons of the business (in the same way that baseball players eventually reach the major leagues). A musician, once he had proven himself in the major league, would go on to become a bandleader in his own right. Basically, only up and coming musicians and veterans who had tired of the road were available for one night jobs. Each generation of jazz musicians has developed its own repertoire but that material continued to be incorporated into the pool of songs used for performance into the 1970s.

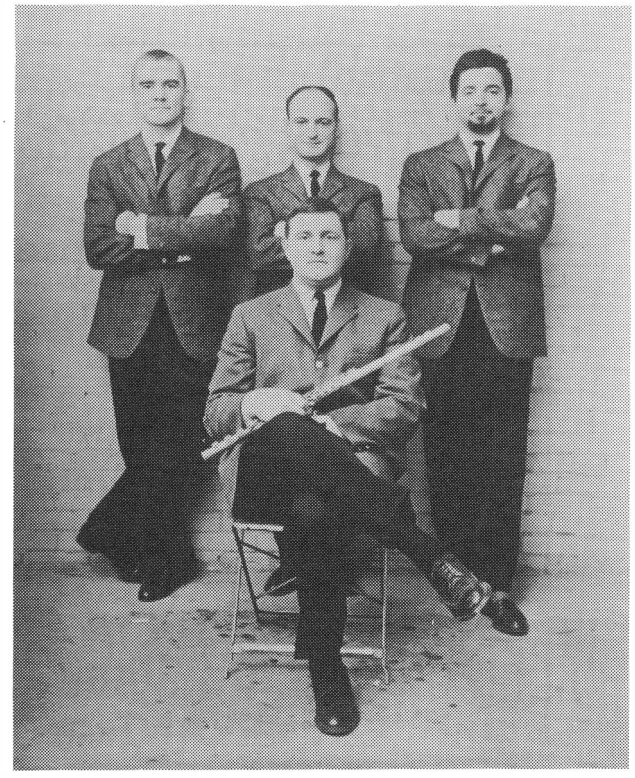
All this began to change by the 1960s. Urban riots in the U.S. burned out the ghetto clubs and city downtown cores became deserted as the population fled to the suburbs. The breakdown of these traditions has substantially altered the entire makeup of the music and this is reflected in the kind of sounds which dominate the music today.

The presentation of jazz was managed by such movers and shakers as Joe Glaser and Willard Alexander. They played a significant role in who became popular successes in the old days but rarely intervened in the musical policy of a band. Much of what we listen to today is determined by forces beyond the reach of musicians. Jazz, like other products, is sanitized and packaged. Jazz education, for instance, has become big business. This past January 4500 people (mostly teachers and music students) attended the annual convention in Boston of the International Association of Jazz Educators (IAJE). For three days workshops, panels, presentations and concerts kept everyone hopping. Central to the event, though, were the product merchandise booths trying to obtain contracts from schools for instruments, band arrangements and other goodies useful to academic faculties.

There were nightly concerts by jazz acts being touted by the major companies in auditoriums which were so vast you needed binoculars to actually see the musicians if you were unlucky enough to not grab a seat in the first ten rows. The nightly music programs ran simultaneously in two venues separated by a ten minute walk within the vast complex so it was impossible to hear everyone. In such a setting it is hardly surprising that the best received groups were those with high visual/entertainment elements. Sweden's Real Group, for instance, was highly acclaimed but their slick Hi Lo's styled arrangements (with group members simulating instrumental sounds) was more appropriate to a Las Vegas lounge than a jazz(?) event.

They overshadowed the accomplishments of the T.S. Monk band, Geoff Keezer's and other groups which were musically more challenging. The personal interaction which is an inherent part of jazz was more noticeable in the corridors than on stage. The IAJE's preoccupation with bebop being the be all and end all of jazz is a reflection of their understanding that teaching students to run chord changes is much easier than developing aesthetic impulses which will lead to the students finding their own voices. In a smaller venue it would have been an experience for them to have heard the way Clark Terry, Jimmy Heath and a rhythm section of James Williams, Rufus Reid and Ed Thigpen put together a set of music. What communicated best, though, was Clark's patented vocalising rather than the group's instrumental skills.

The demise of clubs and organised bands has changed jazz dramatically. The Jam Session has become an important performance vehicle for all but a few from the past who can fill a 2000-seat concert hall. The post Coltrane generations of musicians devote much of their time to organizing special projects - tours and recordings which join together musicians for a brief moment before moving on to something else. There's an insatiable demand for change and newness from festival producers, tour directors, management groups and record companies.



LEFT TO RIGHT **ED BICKERT, HUGH CURRIE, RON RULLY** WITH **MOE KOFFMAN** (c. 1957/58)

The ultimate "jam sessions" are the jazz parties which have proliferated since Dick Gibson pioneered the genre in the early 1970s. They mix and match musicians in permutations over a brief weekend of activity. Most jazz parties are "not for profit" ventures by dedicated supporters of the music. The ones that work best are usually those where the musical direction is actually in the hands of a musician.

In February the first Hilton Head Island Jazz Party was part of an island celebration of the arts. Dick Hyman gave a pre-party concert on the history of jazz to a well attended and largely local audience. Only a small number of people were signed up for the weekend bash.

Jack Lesberg was Hilton Head's music director and his choice of musicians took the music into a swing to bebop stance. Even Ralph Sutton was heard comping to a couple of bebop lines (the harmony was nothing new to him!) set up by Conte Condoli, Carl Fontana and Urbie Green. In fact, the challenges and twists of the musical choices seemed to spark within the musicians hidden reserve of imagination and knowledge.

If even a handful of the students in attendance at Boston could have experienced the instantaneous chemistry of these performances they would have gained far greater insight into the mysteries of the music. Perhaps their parents and/or sponsors should be sending them to events such as Hilton Head where they can get close to the music.

Meadville, PA is not a major jazz centre and without it being Joe Boughton's hometown there wouldn't be any jazz music performed there! His Alleghany Jazz Society is a one person (with volunteer help) crusade for his kind of music - loosely hinged around the Commodore legacy and Eddie Condon's musical ideas. Somewhat surprisingly, perhaps, most of the musicians at this year's event were considerably younger than their audience. Boughton presents concerts every winter as well as running a summer weekend bash in a turn of the century wooden hotel at nearby Conneault Lake. The hotel is now part of a large recreation/vacation centre but is isolated enough that it has a dated charm of its own. Intimate settings such as Conneault Lake are a rarity today. Jazz is presented in a grand manner - on giant outdoor stages or concert halls which seat thousands of people.

The nation's capitol, Ottawa, also presents a jazz festival with a difference. For starters it's one of the best bargains you'll find anywhere. $20.00 gets you into every event spread over ten days. It's a festival on a human scale. There is also a measured (even unhurried) pace to the concerts. The day begins for most people at the National Gallery for the Pianissimo Plus series. Over three successive days I heard the contrasting styles of Harold Mabern, Geoff Keezer and Frank Strazzeri (the latter in tandem with saxophonist Bill Perkins). A gentle stroll back to Confederation Park (at the heart of the city) - a venue that is a reminder of the size and scope of the original Newport Festival - gets you there in time for the early evening concert showcase for Canadian performers. George Robert's touring band (with guitarist Oliver Gannon), Diana Krall and Dave McMurdo's Sextet were among those heard this year. The evening headliner concert followed. 10,000 people showed up for the Count Basie Orchestra (directed by Frank Foster) but most nights the audience was considerably less with space enough for people to set up their own deck chairs or blankets on the grass. The Tana/Reid band and Billy Bang are not your average festival performers but they were certainly projecting their individuality in Ottawa. Just up the street is the National Arts Centre - venue for the late evening (10:30 p.m.) concerts which this year offered an alternating schedule of contemporary and vocal performers. Those preferring more straight ahead sounds could hang out at the host hotel for nightly jam sessions.

Alternatives to a corporate vision of jazz exist but they don't have the big bucks and are often under publicized. But the musical rewards are usually greater for both musicians and audiences and they seem to project a sense of togetherness often absent from the more glitzy events. □

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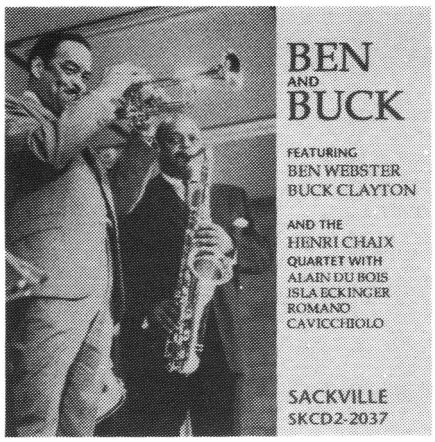

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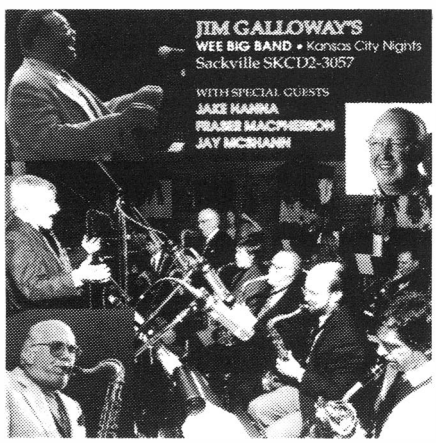

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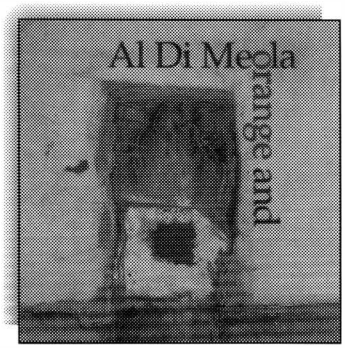

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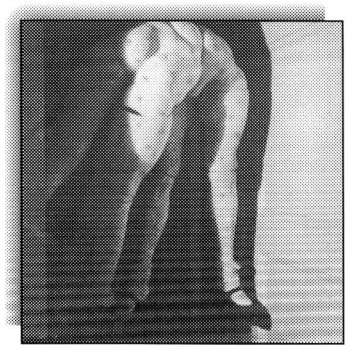

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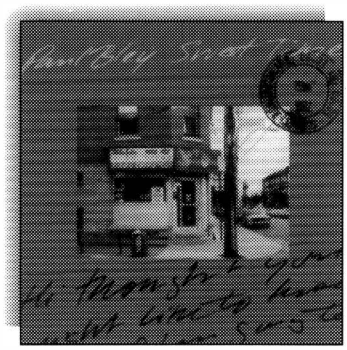

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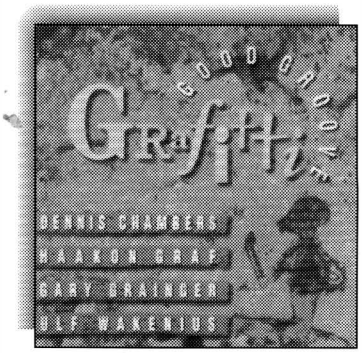

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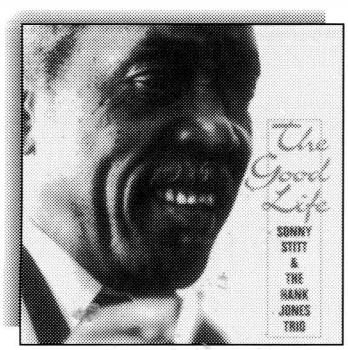

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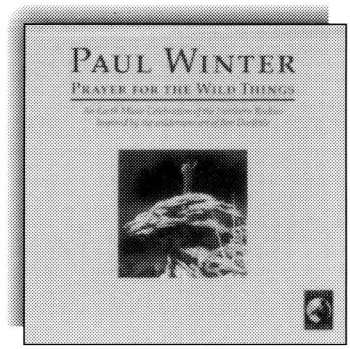

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