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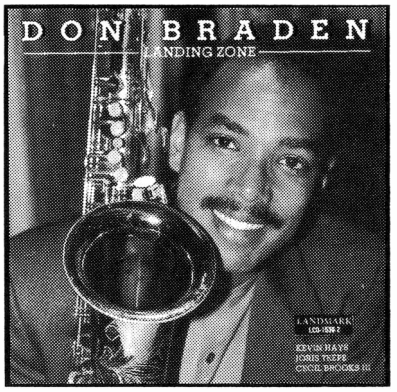

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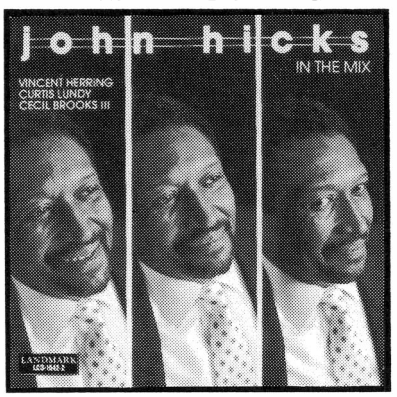

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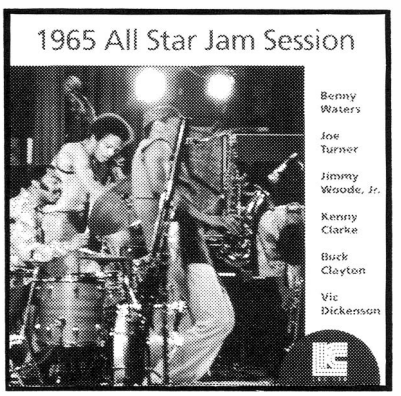

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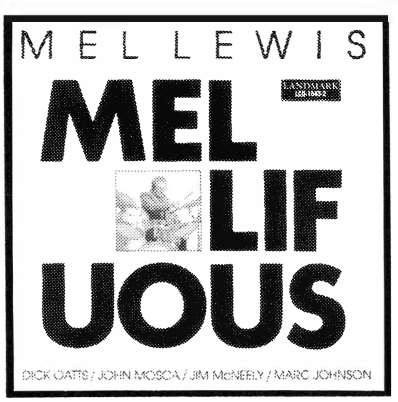

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH OF
ELLA FITZGERALD & DIZZY GILLESPIE
BY BILL GOTTLIEB

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THE ELUSIVE ELLA

THE RECORDINGS OF ELLA FITZGERALD
AN OVERVIEW BY **PHILLIP D. ATTEBERRY**

THOUGH SHE HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF FOUR BIOGRAPHIES IN THE LAST TEN YEARS, ELLA FITZGERALD REMAINS AN ELUSIVE FIGURE. EVEN HER BIRTH DATE HAS CAUSED CONFUSION. AFTER THE MUCH HERALDED RELEASE OF HER "40TH" BIRTHDAY CONCERT IN 1988 AND A PLETHORA OF 1993 RELEASES CELEBRATING HER "75TH" BIRTHDAY, BIOGRAPHER STUART NICHOLSON TURNED UP A BIRTH CERTIFICATE SHOWING ELLA TO HAVE BEEN BORN IN 1917 RATHER THAN 1918. (THE CONFUSION AROSE WHEN SHE MADE A MISTAKE ABOUT HER AGE ON HER MARRIAGE LICENSE TO RAY BROWN IN 1947.)

AND THUS IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN WITH ELLA. The facts seldom validate the assumptions. Legend has it, for example, that her career began by winning the Apollo Theatre's Amateur night with two Connee Boswell hits, *The Object of My Affection* and *Judy*. In truth, Connee Boswell hadn't yet recorded the former and never recorded the latter. Legend further maintains that Chick Webb and his wife adopted Ella "as a daughter." In truth, Ella was a box office asset for the band that forced an uneasy alteration of its identity. Ella herself insists that she was once married, to Ray Brown from 1947-52. A marriage license, however, shows that in 1941 she wed con-man Ben Kornegay, though Decca executives had the marriage annulled and the details hushed up. One could go on. The point is not so much that Ella is hard to know, but that the elusiveness of her life is reflected in her career. No sooner do we ask "Who is Ella?" than we are confronted with the question "Which Ella?" The early, pop-singing Ella? The big band Ella? The Songbook Ella? The Be-Bop Ella? The Concert Ella? Her work is so varied and arises from so many influences that she eludes critical generalization.

Perhaps the most serious mis-perception about Ella's career is that the Decca years, from 1935 to 1955, are an apprenticeship for the Golden Verve years from 1956 to 1966. The well-honed Verve publicity machine helped perpetrate that myth, but so did Decca by keeping Ella's worthiest early recordings unavailable. Even though Ella's "Greatest Hits" have been available since 1987 in three volumes of Decca CD's, the albums contain many of her most commercial and least rewarding efforts.

Happily, Ella's worthiest Decca recordings are now emerging. In 1993, GRP released a two volume compilation ***Ella Fitzgerald: 75th Birthday Celebration***. The early jazz hits and frothy novelty numbers *(A-Tisket, A-Tasket* and *Stone Cold Dead in the Market)* are still copiously represented, but sprinkled throughout are also well-crafted, long unavailable performances (with a Billy Kyle-led quartet, with Benny Carter's orchestra, and with Louis Armstrong and Sy Oliver.) These glimpses into the Decca vaults suggest that Ella's early years have been unfairly stereotyped. The 1994 release of ***Pure Ella*** (collaborations with Ellis Larkins from 1950 and 1954) immeasurably strengthen that suggestion, for finer vocal performances have never been recorded. Ella's voice has just reached maturity but not yet lost its girlish inflections. Her pitch and diction are flawless, and her rhythmic affinity with Larkins' accompaniment synchronized to the last turn of every phrase. Ella's finesse has always been best showcased with a solitary piano, as further demonstrated by her 1960 collaboration with Paul Smith, ***Let No Man Write My Epitaph*** (released on CD as ***The Intimate Ella*** in 1991). But as fine as ***The Intimate Ella*** is, the Ellis Larkins collaborations are better because they incorporate a greater variety of tunes and thus more diversely modulated moods and lyric challenges. Ella's Decca years are undoubtedly less consistent than her Verve years, but as the vaults are opened, those early years are proving to be more worthy than previously imagined.

IN 1956, NORMAN GRANZ FINALLY WRESTED ELLA AWAY FROM DECCA and launched her on the most prolific and artistically successful recording decade any singer has ever had. Ella averaged three albums a year during this period, most of which have become vocal classics.

Ironically, the project for which she is best known — the fabled ***Songbook Cycle*** — has recently met with critical apathy. Ella's straightforward approach seems inappropriately tame to contemporary ears, especially in light of her explosive live performances. The songbooks, however, should be viewed as Ella's shrine to the composers, lyricists, and arrangers whose works are showcased. Her obvious goal was not to show off her own skills, but the artistic fertility of those who created and arranged the songs. For this reason, I disagree with those who, feeling vaguely dissatisfied with the songbooks but finding nothing amiss in Ella's performances, point the finger of disapprobation at the arrangers. Buddy Bregman, who arranged the Cole Porter and Rodgers and Hart Songbooks (1956), has endured the most criticism. Will Friedwald, author of the wonderful **Jazz Singing** (1991), finds Bregman's arrangements "unimaginative," and Stuart Nicholson, author of the best and most recent Ella biography, finds them riddled with "glossy superficiality." But Bregman's glossiness is similar to an MGM musical's — bright and effusive — which make these songbooks not only glittering testaments to the composers but enduring period pieces reflecting the musical Zeitgeist of the 50's, and thus valuable documents for the nineties.

The ***Irving Berlin Songbook*** of 1958, by contrast, is more timeless than timely. Paul Weston's deft strings, combined with an active, independent rhythm section provide swinging, innovative backdrops that freshen even the most lavender-scented tunes. The domestically quaint, *You Can Have Him* and urbanely archaic *Slummin' On Park Avenue* wriggle to life at Ella and Paul Weston's touch.

Perhaps the riskiest venture is ***The Harold Arlen Songbook*** (1961). Arlen's tunes are more thoroughly blues drenched than those in the other songbooks, and Ella was never successful as a pure blues singer (as demonstrated by her 1963 album of Bessie Smith notables, These are the Blues), but thanks to the unrelentingly swinging arrangements of Billy May, The Harold Arlen Songbook works spectacularly and in a jazzier idiom — the strings are used less, the brass more, and instrumental solos are more frequent, providing Ella with a familiar and stimulating environment.

The two best of the cycle, however, (and the most ambitious) are ***The Duke Ellington Songbook*** (1957) and The ***George And Ira Gershwin Songbook*** (1959). The former was originally released as four lp's and the latter five (and each has been re-released as a three CD set).

Though the details have almost been forgotten, producer Norman Granz was disappointed in the Ellington project. He had worked for months to schedule Ellington and his orchestra with Ella, and Ellington was to have written new arrangements for the occasion. Of course he didn't. Ellington was never one to work on somebody else's schedule, especially for somebody else's album. He showed up with his orchestra on September 16, 1957, but without the arrangements. Granz's only recourse was to work from old charts, utilizing Ella where possible, and piece together the gaps with small groups. The session had all the makings of a disaster, but resulted in triumph. The band is comfortable, playing with energy and more precision than is often the case with Ellington's band, while Ella bubbles along, scatting freely, trading fours and eights with the musicians, and otherwise making herself at home. Most of the small group cuts utilize a Paul Smith-led sextet, though five cuts feature an Oscar Peterson quintet. Ben Webster is prominently displayed throughout the small group numbers, and Ella teams up with Barney Kessell for three duos. The result is a varied, spontaneous, free swinging affair.

The George and Ira Gershwin Songbook excels for different reasons. Nelson Riddle had work ethics antithetical to Ellington's. He was meticulous, organized, and workmanlike, which accounts for his prodigious output. It also accounts for his greatest strength — consistency — and his greatest weakness — predictability. But Norman Granz gave Riddle nearly two years to work on the Gershwin arrangements, and the freedom from a strict deadline resulted in charts that are more diverse and rich in nuance than anything else he ever did. Riddle's other collaborations with Ella, ***Ella Swings Brightly*** (1961), ***Ella Swings Gently*** (1962), The ***Jerome Kern Songbook*** (1963), and The ***Johnny Mercer Songbook*** (1964), are pleasing, but lack the subtlety and diversity of the Gershwin project.

In short, the songbook cycle is one of the most ambitious, musically challenging, and commercially successful projects any jazz singer has ever undertaken. Had Ella done nothing else during the Verve years, she would have exceeded the number of quality albums most vocalists produce in a lifetime. But to talk so much about the songbooks is to create yet another mis-impression, for Ella had what amounted to two other careers going simultaneously.

One of those is best exemplified by the 1958 album, ***Ella Swings Lightly***, with a posse of Marty Paich jazz men. This album represents the antithesis of the songbooks. The tune selections eschew the Broadway/pop "classics" in favour of more obscure swingers — *720 in the Books, You're An Old Smoothie, Little White Lies* — and the charts abandon complexity for straight ahead simplicity. Ella Swings Lightly reveals Ella's unmatched abilities for swing and improvisation.

These abilities are further displayed in ***Ella Wishes You a Swinging Christmas*** (1960), an often overlooked album with Frank DeVol and a liberal sprinkling of jazz sidemen, and in ***Clap Hands! Here Comes Charlie*** (1961), with her regular trio — these in addition to three high quality collaborations with Louis Armstrong and rollicking dates with the orchestras of Bill Doggett (***Rhythm is My Business***, 1962) and Count Basie (***On the Sunny Side of the Street***, 1963). In other words, while Ella was creating the songbooks, she was simultaneously establishing her credentials as the most prolific and enduring jazz singer ever to walk into a studio.

And yet to acknowledge this prodigious output is still not to present a balanced portrait of Ella, for it ignores her live

recordings. However good Ella's studio work, she is often constrained by the three to five minute standard cut length and the impersonal environment. Her live albums, by contrast, explode with energy, spontaneity, and imagination. Her most notable live recordings are ***Ella in Rome*** (1958 [first released in 1988]), ***At the Opera House*** (1958), ***Ella in Berlin*** (1960), ***Ella Returns to Berlin*** (1961 [first released in 1991]), and ***Ella in Hollywood*** (1961 [though not yet available on CD]).

SCAT SINGING IS DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS. The slightest error in judgment or failure of technique can produce embarrassment, prompting even the most accomplished scatters — Mel Torme, Anita O'Day, Joe Williams — to scat sparingly and in carefully controlled situations. Ella, by contrast, had the "chops" to scat whenever she wanted and as extensively. This was partly due to the breadth of her range, the precision of her pitch (it was Andre Previn who said that an orchestra could tune up to Ella's singing an A), but mainly to her remarkable imagination, which produced infinitely coherent, varied, and rhythmic musical phrases. "There was nothing staged about Ella's scat numbers," her long time accompanist Paul Smith told me in a 1992 interview. "She walked on the stage and let loose. I knew which tunes in the set were the scat tunes, but beyond that I never knew what was coming. I just knew they would work because Ella had a thoroughly musical mind and the technique to sing anything she could think."

This "thoroughly musical mind" resulted in one of the most famous cuts in the vocal jazz canon, *Mack The Knife*, from Ella in Berlin. Legend has it that Ella forgot the lyrics, spontaneously made up her own, and created a classic. After years of listening to the album (and knowing what I do about Ella's elusiveness) I doubted the legend. But Paul Smith and bassist Wilfred Middlebrooks verified the familiar details when I interviewed them.

Wilfred Middlebrooks remembers the event this way: "About a year before we played Berlin, we were in Minneapolis, and a guy asked Ella to sing *Mack The Knife*. She told him she didn't know it, but he pulled out the sheet music and sort of put her on the spot. So she stood behind Lou Levy, who was our pianist at the time, and sang it through, very straight — nothing fancy.

"A year later, we found ourselves in Berlin in front of twelve thousand people. We were at the end of a midnight concert. We had played Brussels earlier, flown to Berlin, and been up for twenty-two hours. We were all so tired we couldn't hold our heads up, when Ella turns around and says, 'Let's do *Mack The Knife*.' That was like her. She'd go weeks without deviating from the plan, then call for something out of the blue.

"My heart sank. I was too tired. We were in front of too many people to try something crazy, and I knew Ella didn't know the tune, but that never stopped her because she was such a good scat singer. I looked at Paul, and he just grinned. Of course he could play anything, but I was a young cat and needed to run things down once. Paul said, 'I'll start us with the *Here Comes Charlie* vamp in G.' Well I could handle that, so we commenced. And just about the time I started feeling good (after a couple of choruses), Ella gave Paul a hand signal and switched to A-flat. She had great pitch, and I could hear just where she was going, but staying with her was something else. Paul just looked at me and grinned.

" I thought, 'Well, I know she doesn't know this tune, so surely she'll stay put,' but I'll be damned if she didn't change keys again at the end of the next chorus, and the next and the next. We ended that thing in D-flat. It was all Paul could do to keep from laughing at me. I remember thinking at the end of the fourth or fifth chorus, 'Well, she's about as lost as she can get, Louis Armstrong will show up any minute,' because when Ella got lost in a swing number, she usually fell back on her Louis imitation, which was a sure fire crowd pleaser. And sure enough, about that time, here came Louis.

"I was so tired and bothered that night, that I didn't really hear the tune. It was only later, after the record came out, that I realized what a great performance it was. And it was absolutely spontaneous. Fortunately, when we did the tune the following year on the Ella Returns to Berlin album, we had rehearsed it and used only one key change — though Ella still didn't get the lyrics quite right."

In 1966 Verve declined to renew Ella's contract. (Even though Norman Granz still managed her career and supervised her recordings, he had sold Verve in 1960 to MGM.) Through no fault of her own, Ella made three disappointing albums for Capitol and two for Reprise, all of which miss the Norman Granz touch for selecting tunes, venues, and sidemen.

PHOTOGRAPH BY **BILL SMITH**

AN OVERVIEW BY PHILLIP D. ATTEBERRY

FORTUNATELY, BY 1973 GRANZ WAS BACK IN THE RECORD BUSINESS with the scaled down, jazz-focused Pablo. Ella was immediately contracted, and the albums once again flowed prolifically — big band albums, trio, duo, and live albums. But Ella's best years were behind her. Paul Smith put it this way: "Ella never studied singing, so she never learned how to preserve her vocal equipment. She had great talent, strength, and desire, so she sang as much as she could as long as she could — night after night, year after year, country after country. She held up longer than anybody else, but in the end her voice wore out."

And that is true. But Ella's decline during the post-Verve years has been over emphasized, creating yet another mis-impression about her career. Had her Verve years not been so spectacular, her later deficiencies would not be so thoroughly dwelt upon, for Ella's 70's output is more impressive than virtually any other jazz singer's.

Take Love Easy (1973), a duo collaboration with Joe Pass, is perhaps her best. Pass' deft accompaniment rekindles some of the intimacy of Ella's earlier ventures with Ellis Larkins and Paul Smith. Even though her voice has darkened some and her vibrato is less meticulously controlled, she manoeuvres smoothly and skilfully, putting her experience to good use.

Her other duo album from this period, ***Ella And Oscar*** (1975), suffers only by comparison to the Pass album. (Ray Brown, by the way, appears on three cuts.) Peterson's accompaniment, though technically brilliant, lacks Larkins' sensitivity, making the swing numbers more effective than the ballads and resulting in an album that, though less consistent than the Take Love Easy, is still sprinkled with fine moments.

Ella's two live recordings from this period, ***Ella In Nice*** (1971) and ***Ella In London*** (1974), are also notable achievements. At their best, these albums swing tremendously, even though Ella's voice at times betrays more fraying around the edges. Ella in London is the better album because it is better recorded and represents Ella's return from a lengthy series of illnesses. Her own enthusiasm for performance and the audience's excitement at her return endow the album with energy and warmth.

Both albums, however, are marred by ill-considered attempts to be trendy, a characteristic of all Ella's albums during this period. Ella in Nice juxtaposes a swinging *They Can't Take That Away From Me* with a tedious *Close To You*. Ella in London does the same with *The Very Thought Of You* and *You've Got A Friend*. Ella always had her eye on the popular market and distinguished less than her critics between a good song and a hit song.

Not until 1975-6, with ***Ella: Montreaux***, 1975 and ***Ella And Pass... Again*** (1976),. did Ella's declining powers significantly affect her recording efforts. Tommy Flannagan's spectacularly swinging accompaniment does much to carry the Montreaux album, for Ella is strained by the hot numbers. She sounds better in the second Pass album because the circumstances are more controlled, though she obviously manoeuvres within a substantially narrowed framework. The fascination of the album is listening to a wily artist make the most of her remaining abilities.

Health problems plagued Ella during the second half of the 1970's and took an even greater toll on her voice, but in 1979 and 1980 she recorded two albums with Count Basie ***(A Classy Pair*** and ***A Perfect Match)*** which reveal some of her earlier form. The Basie band at this time teemed with youth, precision, and energy, and Ella seems infected by it, regaining a portion of the explosive form so characteristic of her early, live recordings. A Perfect Match ends splendidly, with Ella trading scat passages among the young, Basie instrumentalists.

Ella's Pablo output has typically received less attention than it should because her Verve output is so phenomenal. But it is not fair to judge the 70's Ella by her achievements in the 50's and 60's. It is more reasonable to judge her by what others were doing at the time. When, from the vantage of the 1990's, we survey the 1970's musical landscape, Ella clearly remained a dominant figure.

Ella continued to work, as health permitted, until 1989. Paul Smith, who returned as her musical director in 1978, summed up her last years like this. "Her performances became less consistent, though even at the end she could still — once in a while — swing like nobody else. But the audiences forgave her even when she didn't. They had fallen in love with her through all those great albums over all those years, and they came to pay homage."

In 1991, Ella won a Grammy for ***All That Jazz***, which had been recorded in 1989 with an all star group including "Sweets" Edison, Clark Terry, Benny Carter, and Al Grey. The Grammy is perhaps the last in a long series of misperceptions that have permeated Ella's career, for the album fails sadly. The award was clearly awarded for Ella's past accomplishments. No one who has luxuriated in Ella's prodigious output can listen to All That Jazz without regret. A voice that once soared clearly and effortlessly is now forced and scratchy. Even though Norman Granz continued to record her through 1991 and claims to have enough material for yet another album, one cannot, after hearing All That Jazz, look forward to it.

Early in 1994, Ella's publicist announced, in a brief statement, that both of her legs had been amputated several months earlier. At this writing, it seems certain that she will neither record nor perform again. And yet as we lament Ella's decline, we must be grateful for a recorded legacy that will continue to surprise and delight for years. Though much of Ella's best work is available on CD, much remains to appear. Among other things, her euphoric ***Rhythm Is My Business*** (1962) and the stunning ***Ella In Hollywood*** (1961) are yet to appear on disk. In addition, more than two dozen other sessions — from the 60's, 70's, and 80's — await release for the first time. A decade or two from now, when critics reconsider Ella and her recorded legacy, they will no doubt discover that we have once again failed to define fully this elusive figure's place on the musical landscape. □

CASSANDRA WILSON

FINDS THE GROOVE

A CONVERSATION WITH
Kate Hammett-Vaughan

If you be still and fail to move
you're gonna dig yourself a well-intentioned rut
and think you've found a groove."
Jon Hendricks (lyrics to Miles Davis' solo on *Now's The Time*)

JON HENDRICKS, the great vocalese pioneer, may well be a philosopher too. Taken to heart, these lyrics of his have helped to define my personal artistic path, leading me to places I had never imagined I would go. Whether or not Cassandra Wilson has ever even heard this particular recording, her artistic development appears to be following a similar directive. Her earliest recordings, ***Point of View*** and ***Days Aweigh***, freely mixed funk, standards, free jazz and garage rock. The freshness of the musical approach combined with her smoky Betty Carter-influenced phrasing created some very hip sounds. Then, taking a radical right turn, she recorded ***Blue Skies***, a straight-ahead collection of standard tunes with a piano / bass / drums rhythm section. Jazz fans everywhere breathed a sigh of relief. At last, just when it seemed that the "jazz singer" as we knew it was dangerously close to becoming a thing of the past, here was a fresh voice, obviously rooted in the tradition but with a view to the future. Critics raved and fans settled into their seats, confident that she had found "her thing" and would continue to record what they wanted to hear. Wilson didn't give them much time to get comfortable. Her next recording, ***Jumpworld***, was a foray into the world of hip-hop, and her subsequent recordings have been filled with a mixture of musical influences that reflect her restless artistic spirit.

Still, Wilson's jazz roots are deep enough that they colour her every phrase. So much so that, despite the fact that ***Blue Skies*** is now eight years old, writers are still calling her "the most important singer to come along in jazz in the last ten years" (*New York Times*) and "the most accomplished jazz singer of her generation" (*Time*). ***Blue Skies*** marked her "arrival" as an artist for many people. If this is so, her current recording, ***Blue Light Til Dawn***, signals an arrival of a different sort, a homecoming. She's smoothed out the rough edges that kept her earlier mixed-bag recordings off the play lists and has dusted off her Southern blues roots and put them proudly on display. Rather than changing her style, she simply sounds like more of what she has always been, as if her whole career has been a process of unfolding, or a peeling off of layers, to reveal the essence of the artist within.

Blue Light Til Dawn features one of the quirkiest song lists I've ever seen, including compositions by Joni Mitchell, Robert Johnson, Van Morrison, Ann Peebles, and Wilson herself. In my opinion, the song list alone defies record store managers to put it in their jazz section, but the artistic success of the album is due more to the musical concept than to the material. Wilson has surrounded herself with a group of stellar players who share a willingness to subvert their egos in the service of the music. The result is moody, haunting, multi-textured, acoustic, electric, and soulful music. Wilson's covers of two Robert Johnson classics, *Come On In My Kitchen* and *Hellhound On My Trail*, are among my personal favourites. Her languid, quiet interpretations redefine these tunes that I thought had already been definitively recorded. Less successful is Joni Mitchell's *Black Crow* which fails to capture for me the essence of the original or to find something new and exciting in the piece. But these are subjective points. Ultimately, ***Blue Light Til Dawn*** deserves to be heard and judged on a personal basis by each listener.

MY TRAIL to Cassandra Wilson's door began several weeks before her Vancouver appearance on October 1st. Many faxes and phone calls (and a lot of waiting) later, my fantasy interview of a comfortable 45-minute chat materialized as 15 minutes in her small room at the back of her tour bus, a mere half hour before her concert was to begin. So much for easing into the questions... Despite the rushed nature of the interview and the lateness of the hour, Wilson was gracious and very friendly.

PHOTOGRAPH BY **BARRY THOMSON**

THERE IS A STRANGE movement taking place in pop culture these days. Watch any pop music awards show and you'll notice that the boundaries between musical genres are becoming less and less defined. This seems to be not so much a post-modern movement toward the melding of influences as an over-riding set of production values that make all the records and artists sound the same. To my ears, the "new" country and gospel and R&B (and what the marketing wizards call 'jazz') all sound pretty much alike. And yet an artist like Cassandra Wilson, who is *defining her own sound* and moving towards a music that actually does incorporate her many influences, continues to be labelled as a jazz singer. Aware of pop culture's need to drop artists into slots, Wilson seems willing to accept the label, but insists that she considers herself "a singer, I call myself a musician. I don't put labels on what I do. I can sing jazz certainly. I come from that kind of a background. I was schooled in that music and that's part of what I do, but I don't call myself a jazz singer."

But what is a jazz singer in the 1990s? As jazz absorbs more world musics and as artists from other genres incorporate jazz principles and sounds, definitions will inevitably change. Maybe the critics are right, and Wilson really does represent the new jazz vocalist. Since *she* doesn't call herself a jazz singer, does she have a definition to judge other artists by?

"Mmmm, no. Because I don't use that kind of language. So you know, I know what it means for people certainly, but I don't use that kind of language to describe other singers who sing that style. I just think of them as brilliant women or brilliant men who are musicians who perform this wonderful music."

Still, anyone who has heard ***Blue Skies*** knows that Wilson knows what jazz is and what a jazz singer does. Her father was a jazz guitarist, and growing up around that music has left an indelible imprint on her music. Feeling a bit like a dog who won't let go of a bone, I sidestepped her dislike of labels and asked outright just how important jazz is to her current musical concept. Is it something so ingrained that it just comes out or is she trying consciously to incorporate her jazz roots into what she's doing? A tough question, I guess, and I received a suitably vague but heartfelt answer.

"Well for me jazz is a word that's really large, it goes beyond a specific kind of music, it's a way of living, you know, it's a way of bringing something out of nothing, a way of creating, it's a way of... it's such a big word for me."

Fair enough. I'm on her team.

In various publications, ***Blue Skies*** has been touted as Wilson's finest work. I personally like the record, but her most exciting work for me is on a recording like ***Point of View***. I really loved the sound of that record when I first heard it, how fresh it was... it felt like she was diving into something, and her newest record has a similar effect on me, the feeling of another door opening. In fact, a birds-eye view of her recorded career reveals ***Blue Skies*** as an anomaly. What precipitated that recording? Was it something that she always wanted to do, or did her record company somebody advise it? And does it feel like an anomaly to her?

"Well, it was an anomaly for me... but *all* of them have been in a sense, you know, the way that *I* approach music. And then again they haven't been. They're like... whatever comes up, you know? The process or the... the music dictates the process, and the way you're living, what you're absorbing, what you're feeling, what you're experiencing, the people you're meeting, the musicians you come in contact with. I've worked hard at not limiting myself... I'm very conscious about being unconscious, which is a way I like to put it, to describe it to people. You know, it's very much intuitive for me. I've done the homework, I've studied music. I just like to be fresh about what it is and always to play with it. That way it's always a joy for me instead of a job."

Being a working musician and keeping the music fresh are almost mutually exclusive states. Wilson is one of a handful of artists who enjoys enough fame to keep her working in concert situations where it is undeniably easier to keep the music alive. Many artists labour for years at day jobs to pay the rent and keep their music in a "safe" place. Wilson has been touring a lot recently though, and it must be difficult to keep it fresh from night to night on the road.

"It hasn't been hard this tour because we have a lot of new material, a lot of new challenges. Playing the guitar and singing is a new challenge for me, so that's really exciting now, and we've got a couple of new tunes that we're trying to work into the set. And of course the music that we are doing is from ***Blue Light Til Dawn***, but that music has really expanded, you know, it's grown, it's become something else, and that's really interesting to me to watch it evolve."

It's also a cooperative thing, the responsibility of all the members of the group to maintain the right perspective on keeping the music fresh, and she reacted positively to my choice of the word "organic" to describe the growing process the music goes through.

BUT THAT DOG INSIDE of me still won't let go of the jazz bone it's sunk it's teeth into. Back to ***Blue Skies***. Responding to my questions, she assured me that she had a great time making that recording and that it was the right thing to do at the time. And when she looks back at it ... if she compares the way she sang then to how she sings a standard now (for example *You Don't Know What Love Is* on ***Blue Light***)? Her current interpretations seem not only deeper but somehow broader too. Does she feel that she has grown in that context as a singer of (in quotes, I'm catching on) "jazz" standards?

"I don't think about that that often. I don't really gauge that. I've found that when I do go back to that material, you know the music that I cut my teeth on, I find that I have a freshness for it, which is good, because I really love that music. I just, uh... choose to create this as I go along, and sometimes singing that music doesn't exactly do that for me because it often sits in a particular place in time, lyrically it does. And a lot of the time musically it does too, so it anchors you to that place in a sense. So I don't go there unless, hey, I have the feeling that 'I want to go there'. It's got to be a decision made based on the moment or the time, or whatever is happening."

MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE has certainly borne this out. And my explorations into contemporary music, free improvisation, and extended vocal techniques have definitely coloured my own approach to standards.

In a recent interview in *Vogue* magazine, Wilson made a reference to the "jazz police". I was interested to know how she sees what she laughingly refers to as "a nameless crew". Are they part of the commercialisation process that's going on in jazz music? In ***Blue Light Til Dawn***, a mixture of so many influences and essentially a pop recording, Wilson still sings more jazz than all the new "jazz" singers in little black dresses rolled into one. I struggle almost daily with this "image versus art" thing the media has created. Is this movement in marketing something that causes her concern?

"It is, and I just don't even think about it, 'cause what you're saying is true, it's real. I mean, packaging, and marketing,... it's all about placing things inside of a context that's safe for people to deal with. So, if you sing these songs, and you put your flower in your hair, and you wear the black dress then we can accept you because that's our idea of what you're supposed to be doing."

And the sound of the music is almost immaterial. The jazz police are part of that for me. And they're also the people that want to put the music in a box, and say that if it doesn't sound like be-bop, then it's not jazz.

"Which is ludicrous when you think about it because the whole idea behind this music, for me, has always been that it's an evolving form, it's not static. It can't be static. It's what I love about it."

Wilson has achieved considerable commercial success while resolutely making personal choices and steering away from the pre-packaged, sterilized jazz thing that so many artists are pushed into by their managers and record labels. This gives me hope. It's great to know that there are artists out there who are being applauded for their individuality and creativity. Her response to this?

"Yeah, well I don't think I have any choice. I never felt that I could fit inside of that. Never. It just was always uncomfortable."

So what's next? Is she content to sit still for a time and explore her newest musical format? Does it satisfy her restless spirit?

"I like this context, I really do. I love the guitars and I love the textures, it's so new to me still, you know, and it's still really fascinating for me. I think I will hang with it for a minute more. But hey I don't know, I can't predict what's gonna happen down the road, but right now I enjoy it, and I'm still able to find... or open up new doors with it, so I'll be dealing with it on my next recording."

OUR TIME WAS UP, and she had a gig to play. 15 minutes later my road-weary interviewee emerged as the artist they're all talking about. Playing to a packed house at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre (with at least twice as much gear as the hall required; a personal pet peeve) Wilson and her band, ably led by the remarkable guitarist Brandon Ross, performed two beautiful sets of music, mostly pulled from ***Blue Light Til Dawn***. (The mountains of gear were necessary to reproduce the sound of the record I guess, but I would have preferred to hear the acoustic instruments sounding acoustic, and to hear the natural beauty of Wilson's voice ringing in the hall. Shouldn't sound technicians deal with real sound?) The audience was clearly swept away and applauded until she and Ross emerged for a stellar encore of *Hellhound On My Trail*.

Post-show, I handed her Garbo's Hat CD she had graciously requested and asked her this. Does she have an ultimate goal; something that she visualizes for herself, artistically, commercially, or personally? Perhaps a combination of those things?

"Well, you know, I don't think so much about the trappings. The important thing for me is the music, because that's what I'm here for, I have to really be (she pauses to think of the right word)... vigilant. That's the goal, is to deal with the music, to be true to it, and there are some places that I want to go musically. I have goals musically, and spiritually. I guess that's... did I answer the question?" □

PHOTOGRAPH BY **CHRIS CALLAS**

CASSANDRA WILSON DISCOGRAPHY

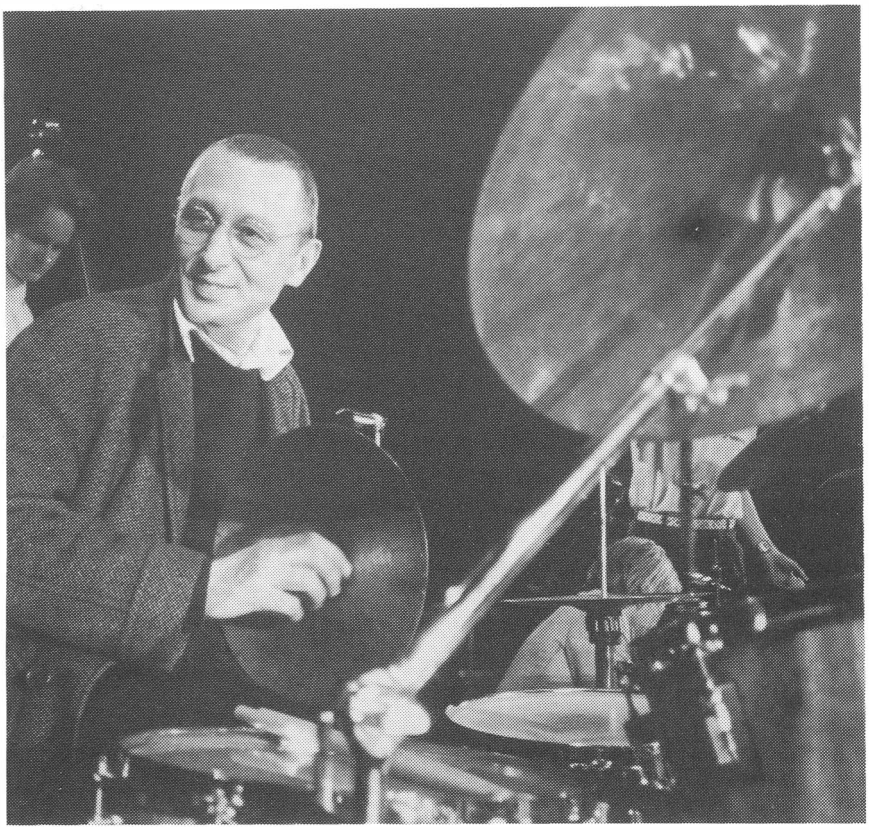
POINT OF VIEW (JMT) - 1985 • **DAYS AWEIGH** (JMT) - 1987 • **BLUE SKIES** (JMT) - 1988 • **JUMPWORLD** (JMT) - 1989 • **SHE WHO WEEPS** (JMT) - 1990 • **LIVE** (JMT) - 1990 • **BLUE LIGHT TIL DAWN** (Blue Note) - 1993

KATE HAMMETT-VAUGHAN *is a Vancouver-based vocalist who still calls herself a jazz singer. She leads her own mainstream group and is a member of the acclaimed inside-outside trio Garbo's Hat and Vancouver's 13-piece improvising ensemble the NOW Orchestra. For recordings and other information please call or fax (604) 254-5016.*

KATE HAMMETT-VAUGHAN DISCOGRAPHY

THE FUTURE IS NOW (Nine Winds compilation CD) with Turnaround - 1990 • Garbo's Hat • **HATS ALIVE!** (independent cassette) - 1990 • Kate Hammett-Vaughan, **STANDARD ISSUE** (independent cassette) - 1991 • **NOW YOU HEAR IT** (Nine Winds compilation CD) with Garbo's Hat - 1992 • **SONGPOSTS VOLUME 1** (Word of Mouth compilation CD) with Garbo's Hat - 1992 • Garbo's Hat, **FACE THE MUSIC** (Word of Mouth CD) - 1993 • **WITCHGONG GAME II/10** (Maya CD) with Barry Guy and the NOW Orchestra - 1994

JOHN STEVENS 1940 1994



ONE TIME, the Spontaneous Music Ensemble had a concert in Spain. During this period - early 70s, I think - the ensemble came in all shapes and sizes. This was one of the more rarefied versions: John Stevens on a pared-down version of his small kit; Kent Carter, cello; Trevor Watts, soprano sax; Roger Smith and me on acoustic guitars. We played what Kent used to call insect music. He was probably referring to the combination of ceaseless activity and virtual inaudibility which characterised some of the stuff we played.

The gig was prestigious and the setting bucolic: a big festival in San Sebastien, an open-air amphitheatre, a warm moonlit evening and an audience of some 4000 people. (Or People, as they were referred to in those days).

The outfit on before us was a gospel group called The Stars of Faith. They were a sensation. The People loved them and cheered and shouted and stomped until they got a string of encores. The People, it was apparent, were having a very good time. We went on. Unlike the Stars of Faith, we didn't use the PA. We'd always played 'acoustic' before and we saw no reason to change now. We started.

We had been playing for maybe 3 or 4 minutes - quite intense, fast playing - when the People seemed to detect that something was happening. How much they could actually hear of what we were playing wasn't clear but it was enough to convince them that they didn't like it. They let us know they didn't like it.

I don't know if you have ever experienced the synchronised hatred and derision of 4000 people. It can be a considerable distraction. Not only that, but deprived of the customary dose of bombast, rant and posturing they were entitled to expect at a music festival, the People started to provide it. Slow hand claps, boos, shouts, jeers, hoots, screams; we were treated to their complete vocabulary of hysterical rejection.

Although still playing - by now at a terrific rate - we, the SME, were of course completely inaudible now which seemed somehow to infuriate the People even more. Additionally, I produced a rubber fish from the sound hole of the guitar and dangled it on the end of a guitar string in front of the noses of the front row. The People flipped.

At this point, we were joined on stage by what appeared to be a bunch of assorted psychos. We carried on playing - faster, if anything. A particularly murderous-looking psycho grabbed one of John's drum sticks and threatened him with it. John - beautiful John - carefully selected his trumpet, put it to his lips and delivered a terrific blast right into psycho's face. Psycho fell back, appalled, and John carried on blasting - now you could certainly hear HIM - while we carried on scratching and squeaking and plinking and plonking. And while he continued blasting away, accompanied by us and the roar of the People who were now on their feet cheering and hollering and applauding, the whole thrashing ensemble - SME plus assorted psychos - subsided under the previously spectating Spanish policemen and security guards.

Well, there's a lot more to this story but maybe that's enough to indicate some of the things I loved about John. Like his courage, like how he attracted melodrama, his fantastic reactions, the way he was so completely - I guess the current phrase is 'in yer face', - shit or bust. His vividness.

Recently, apparently, we were advised that he would be remembered 'with affection'. For the chronically cagey, maybe. But John Stevens dealt in the major emotional currencies and I would have thought that they are the feelings he will evoke - love, frustration, joy, anger, laughter - those kind of things. Anyway, he does for me. Indelibly. □

DEREK BAILEY • NOVEMBER 1994

PHOTOGRAPH BY **BILL SMITH** • BERLIN, NOVEMBER 1986

ACTUELLE A DIARY OF NEW MUSIC FROM **DAVID LEE**

TUNES ON THE LOOSE

OKAY, I'M PREOCCUPIED BY FREE IMPROVISATION, BUT WHEN I HEAR THE WORD "SONG" I DON'T REACH FOR MY GUN. IN FACT I'VE BEEN KNOWN TO *PLAY* SONGS AFTER A FASHION. BUT LIKE A LOT OF IMPROVISORS I KNOW, RATHER THAN STARTING IN THE SONG FORM AND LOOKING FOR WAYS OUT OF IT, I'VE CONCENTRATED ON THE INSTRUMENT ITSELF AND ON THE CHOREOGRAPHY OF GROUP IMPROVISATION, AND ONLY APPROACHED SONGS WHEN SOMEONE ELSE ASKED ME TO. AS A RESULT, IF WE'RE TALKING "JAZZ," I'M A PERENNIAL NOVICE, WHO TENDS TO REGARD THE SONG FORM THE SAME WAY I LOOK AT A CIRCUS FIRE-EATER: I'D MUCH RATHER WATCH *HIM* DO IT THAN TRY IT MYSELF.

HOWEVER, IN THE MID-EIGHTIES I PLAYED BASS IN SOME AL NEIL PROJECTS AT THE WESTERN FRONT IN VANCOUVER, IN WHICH JAZZ STANDARDS — FOR EXAMPLE, *AS TIME GOES BY* AND *IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT* — WERE PLAYED NOT TO "GROUND" THE PROGRAM OR TO PROVE "WE COULD REALLY PLAY" BUT AS PART OF AN APPRECIATION THAT AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR IMPROVISATION — AND SOMETIMES YOU NEED ONE — A GOOD SONG AT LEAST GIVES YOU A MOOD. IN FACT, IF YOU'RE GOING TO PLAY THOSE SONGS THAT ARE KNOWN AS "JAZZ STANDARDS" (AS OPPOSED TO COMPOSITIONS IN THE SONG FORM, THAT WERE NEVER INTENDED TO CONVEY A LYRIC) YOU'RE MUCH BETTER OFF KNOWING THE WORDS. THEY CAN BE A LIFESAVER, ESPECIALLY AT THOSE DESPERATE MOMENTS WHEN HARMONICALLY AND RHYTHMICALLY, YOU'VE TOTALLY LOST IT.

ALLEN LOWE AND THE AMERICAN SONG PROJECT FEATURING **ROSWELL RUDD** • Dark Was the Night — Cold Was the Ground • *Music & Arts CD 811*

None of the above is much use in understanding what the "American Song Project" is about, but a writer has to avoid the temptation to criticize liner notes and the names of bands. Except for pieces by Skip James, King Oliver and others, the idea is that these are Lowe compositions "built from" famous pieces by artists such as Bix Beiderbecke and W.C. Handy. The source melodies have been removed, but without exception the new melodies, although buttressed by clever voicings for trumpet, clarinet, trombone and saxophone, have none of the vitality of the originals. The result is a curious Music Minus One feel, redeemed on occasion by the soloists. The best things on the disc are Lowe's Hawkins-like tenor, and of course Rudd's "wrong side of the tracks" trombone sound, which sustains the music even when the lyrical ideas thin out. Rudd's solos are more spacious than ever — put him in a band with Paul Bley, Leo Smith and Charlie Haden and we'd get the most fantastic silences in the history of jazz.

BERNIE McGANN • Ugly Beauty • *Spiral Scratch 0010*

After the skewed orthodoxy of the American Song Project, it's a relief to listen to a jazz player who can put an exciting spin on the song form and make it sound natural. Does every country in the world have a closet where it keeps its Great Unsung Bebop Alto Player? Here in Canada we have P.J. Perry, Holland has Piet Nordijk... and obviously Australia has Bernie McGann. The music that comes to mind is Sonny Rollins in his "Our Man in Jazz" period, just imagine the rhythm section as Charlie Haden and Elvin Jones. Except that Lloyd Swanton is, if anything, a fleeter bassist than Haden and John Pochée's drumming is not quite the Jones Niagara. Here the comparisons end. All that McGann shares with Rollins is *attack* — not how he blows his horn, but the pugilistic way that he comes out swinging at a tune. He keeps up such a barrage of ideas that only the very best and most beautiful parts of the pieces by Monk/Bird/Duke & others manage to shine through. The music sounds free, but the compositional structures are preserved, so that a better word than free is simply *loose*. The bassist and drummer deserve as much credit as McGann for the open feel of the music.

ERIC PAKULA / PANDELIS KARAYORGIS & ERIC ROSENTHAL • Between Speech & Song • *Cadence CJR 1055*

"Between speech and song" might be an apt description of jazz music as it hovered in the post-bebop framework of the late fifties, when Miles, Monk, Herbie Nichols and others were writing music that seemed to make the song form denser and more complex, yet at unexpected moments beckoned toward a wider freedom.

I know I just wrote that reviewers shouldn't write about the liner notes, but Pakula's images of intense, joyous woodshedding bring to mind the late-fifties milieu that Roswell Rudd described in the great piece on Herbie Nichols that he wrote for a long-gone Blue Note "twofer." Indeed it is Nichols' work, of the above composers, that this music most evokes, with its deceptively simple constructions that build to startling and passionate climaxes within a few bars. Pakula's and Karayorgis' compositions are more overtly complex, but work the territory between structure and freedom with similar effectiveness. In

BERNIE McGANN PHOTOGRAPH BY LARRY SVIRCHEV

doing so, they bring to mind that period (circa 1960), with its intense debates over freedom versus "form." That debate hardly seems timely now, and there is a welcome gusto to the "free" elements here — free not only harmonically but free of the need to explain every note in terms of its context. Because nowhere between speech and song does the music have to explain itself. □

THE SIXTIES

IT'S MUCH EASIER TO WRITE ABOUT SEVERAL RECORDS AT ONCE IF THEY HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON BESIDES ALL BEING "JAZZ" — A CATEGORY THAT FORCES THE CRITIC TO CONNECT MOE KOFFMAN AND EVAN PARKER AS IMPROVISING SAXOPHONISTS, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THEIR MOTIVATIONS AND PERSPECTIVES ARE FROM DIFFERENT PLANETS. BUT IF YOU CAN'T DEAL WITH OVERRIDING PRINCIPLES OF WHY AND HOW AND WHEN THE MUSIC IS DONE, THE REVIEWER IS REDUCED TO SAYING I DON'T LIKE THIS RECORD, BUT I LIKE THIS ONE....

I suppose in every decade jazz turns around and becomes something else, but the 1960s seem to be the pivot of this music, as they were for so much of western culture. If Archie Shepp is the only "sixties" artist here — it was then that he came on the scene and defined who he was for the jazz audience — the other ensembles all depend heavily on idioms that date from that decade: Cecil Taylor's "unit structures" (FMRJE), mid-late period Coltrane (Kiermyer) and Albert Ayler-style "free jazz" (NRG, but more on this later). The only exception being the Shepp record itself, documenting as it does a time when Shepp had long since smoothed out his stormy relationship with the song form (compare his mellow solo introduction to *In A Sentimental Mood* with that on his live San Francisco date eleven years earlier).

FULL METAL REVOLUTIONARY JAZZ ENSEMBLE • Very Live • *FMRJE Prod.*

The FMRJE's music is heavily influenced by Cecil Taylor, with whom trumpeter Raphé Malik played for some years. The lack of a pianist of Taylor's density is conspicuous, and the ensemble makes up for it with electric guitar and extra percussion. In this context, the tenseness of Malik's playing with Taylor has mellowed into a tight focus and an enjoyably hoarse, expressive tone. The rhythm players shift between active relationships with the horns, and an ongoing symphony of their own that provides a background for soloists. Later in the program the "unit structures" loosen up a bit; there is a blues, *Quick Shift* and a percussion/musette trio that broaden the group's palette. Recorded live in Cambridge Massachusetts, this is a set that might take a few listenings to accept on its own terms, where it works very well indeed.

FRANKLIN KIERMYER • Solomon's Daughter • *Evidence ECD 22083*

This music will first hit you with its eerie replication of the classic Coltrane quartet with McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones. Listeners should have no problem with that, provided that they already love that quartet, and don't insist that improvisers invent a whole new idiom every time they get up to play. Pianist John Esposito stays close to scripture in his left hand but his right is, if anything, more adventurous than Tyner. Drew Gress' bass playing is more precise, more filigreed than Garrison's (there were few bassists less fancy than Jimmy Garrison). But Kiermyer and Pharoah Sanders manage to sound astonishingly like Elvin Jones and John Coltrane. Still, the band's dynamics sound genuine; rather than being stuck in the sixties, they're out to prove that the spirit of Coltrane's music never died, but is still living and growing. This would be a great band to hear live.

NRG ENSEMBLE • Calling All Mothers • *Quinnah Q05*

Regardless of the musical bloodlines represented here, "sixties free-jazz" is only a small part of what NRG does. NRG has always represented a sardonic, almost Dutch eclecticism that gleefully accepts all attempts to categorize it, regardless of implicit contradictions. Along with free jazz and AACM-styled compositions and improvisational set-ups, the band crosses over into "freebop" and has a recurring tendency towards electronic noise. The stylistic palette is wide, and the improvising has a virile virtuosity to it; all the players (Mars Williams, Ken Vandermark reeds; Brian Sandstrom, Kent Kessler basses etc.; Steve Hunt drums) attack the music with a lot of gusto. Steve Lake's liner notes, full of descriptives such as "firepower," "sonic assault," "sharpshooter," "electrifying," "feverish," "industrial strength," describe the music's ambience as accurately as anything.

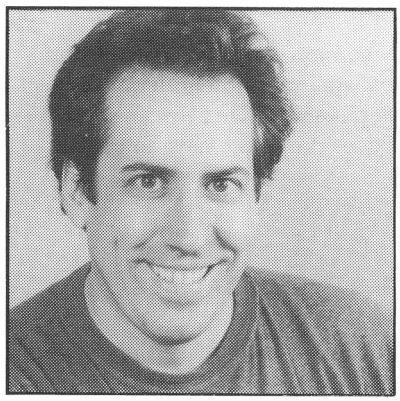
ARCHIE SHEPP • The Rising Sun Collection • *Justa Memory RSCD 00005*

If I was in — god forbid — a sarcastic frame of mind, it would be easy to ridicule this CD for its excessive paeans to Doudou Boicel, owner of the defunct Montreal jazz club The Rising Sun, in both its notes and visuals (there are two photos of Boicel — one of them in the company of three blues giants who have nothing to do with this recording). However, I've just visited Montreal, and the city's stunning lack of a jazz club of any kind casts a nostalgic haze over the era of The Rising Sun. From the midst of that haze, I'd like to relax my critical faculties and say that this is "like sitting in the front row of the Rising Sun on a good night," but I don't remember the actual club ever having such bad sound as there is on this CD. The credits list three people involved in "digital restoration" alone so I can't imagine what the master tape sounded like; if it weren't for the length of the tracks, I'd guess that they used a wire recorder and drilled a hole through the floor above à la Dean Benedetti, but missed the bandstand and lowered their crystal microphone into the kitchen freezer. However Shepp comes through pretty well, and from what you can hear of the band (Dave Burrell, Cameron Brown, Charlie Persip) they were having a good night. Whatever else can be said about this CD, it makes me wish I'd been there. □

ABOUT THE WRITER

DAVID LEE is a musician (bass & cello), fiction writer, and Paul Bley biographer, who lives on the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia.

JEAN DEROME



OF DANGEROUS MEN AND OTHER ADVENTURES

A CONVERSATION WITH **ANNIE LANDREVILLE**

JEAN DEROME *is one of the most highly regarded musicians on Montreal's new music scene. A multi-instrumentalist who first started playing flute, he pursued his studies at the Collegiate level, then at the City's Music Conservatory. By the time he was 18 (in 1973), he put together his first group, Nébu, with pianist Pierre St-Jak and bassist Pierre Cartier, two musicians with whom he still plays. Over the years, he has had the occasion to play with such musicians as Konrad Bauer, Tom Cora, Fred Frith, Elliot Sharp and John Zorn; close to home as well as on the international scene.*

BECOMING A MUSICIAN

JEAN DEROME: When I was a child, I found an old flute, which was my mother's, and I started to play with it. At school, music was the most complicated and abstract subject for me: we had to learn things by heart, and as there is no logic in music theory, it meant nothing to me. So one day my parents told me to stop or to go practice in the basement. I actually decided to become a musician when I made up my mind not to stop playing. While in school, I remember that the teachers and personnel were almost obliged to push me and other students out after the practicing hours because we always wanted to play. At this time, I was studying classical music, mostly of the baroque period.

I taught from '71 to '84, and I stopped as soon as I was able to get away from that whole scene. So I finally made up my mind to get out of classical music entirely. My own musical interests and performances were simply incompatible with what I had to teach; in fact, I was now doing everything I was telling my students not to do.

You first earned your reputation as a flutist, but then you started playing saxophone a little later.

That was in '83 or '84, and, as you say, I had a good reputation as a flutist, but I was bored. In fact, it was the label that bothered me. I remember a little comment made in a magazine and it described me as being a "super Canadian flutist". For me, I felt I was lacking a new challenge. I was in a band at this time called Jonas, both Pierre Cartier and René Lussier were in it, and I had to play very loud. So, that is what brought me to the saxophone. I never took any lessons and it was just a process of going from one discovery to the next. By the way, I have always played around with a lot of little instruments, which are not always real instruments: the tuned beer bottle, different kinds of flutes, toy instruments and the like. I always fooled around with these types of things.

WORKING AS AN IMPROVISER AND COMPOSER

Jean Derome once wrote that he was not interested in playing the music of somebody he was not able to reach by phone. (See Musicworks 49, Winter 91). Yet, just last year, he recorded with his long time partners Pierre Cartier and drummer Pierre Tanguay, an album of music by Thelonious Monk. This coop trio called Evidence has been working together since 1985.

Composition is really important for me. What I always wanted to do was play my music or those of my friends. But Monk is an exception to that rule. In fact, he's the only one. Actually, I always preferred to listen to some musicians as composers more than instrumentalists, like Lacy, Mingus, Braxton... I don't judge people but I don't want to follow recipes either. Classical music is for me like a cake mix and I'm not interested by that. Whether it be learning be-bop or folk music of any kind, it's all the same thing to me. You may have improvisation in be-bop, but you had to go about by learning everybody's solo on each song and it would come to a point where you don't really know if what you play is in fact original. To me, I always try to go to the creative part of it.

For me, there are no social classes in music. I do prefer a good country singer to an ordinary classical musician. I take all styles seriously and I love all of them. Sometimes, when we are inspired by traditional music, some people think that we are laughing at that music, but not so. Some kinds of music go with a certain life-style. Like, a blues line is more than the notes. And everybody has some reference points to classical music. If somebody starts to sing a Strauss waltz, anybody around can respond and hum the melody. And the more you listen to music, the more kinds of music you can get to know. Folk, pop, hip hop etc... I have to know about those musics when I write, like when I do work for film scores. Nowadays, I am listening a lot to different musics of the world. As Québécois musicians, we have to ask ourselves "Who we are? And what is our music?" We can't find ourselves in Mozart, nor in the jazz or the samba.

Is that the reason why you do a lot of improvising? Do you have the feeling of finding your own musical identity through improvisation?

Sometimes, I have the feeling of finding myself that way, but it is never clear. Composing and improvising are two things I pursue actively, but there is a point of tension between them and that is where I really find myself. I hear some music, find it beautiful and want to play it. But when you play, you are never sure that it is really from you. It's like being a child who is learning to speak: you acquire words to express some ideas, but the only ideas you can express are the ones you learned with the words which have been taught to you. It's a really complex thing. In any event, I try to integrate different styles in my own music.

Some of those international influences can be heard in your Dangereux Zhoms project. But we cannot really put a label on your music.

You can try to put a label on it. Like saying: "O.K., I'm doing 'funk', 'folk' or whatever." I can't see it like that. For me, it's like being a painter and saying: "Well, I paint in blue and nothing else". I play music. Not jazz or anything else for that matter. Just music. Today, we can not live and say that we will eat only steak and potatoes. You cannot ignore cheese, falafel, sushi etc... We don't have this lack of awareness to live that way. I work with musicians of all stripes, dancers, actors and what not.

Tell me a bit about your strategies or ways of going about improvising in these contexts.

Improvising as a duo is easy, it's even O.K for three, then gets more complex when you add a fourth member. But after that, you are obliged to have some sort of structure.

Does working with dancers instead of musicians change a lot of things for you?

With musicians, the interaction changes a lot of things. I like to be very interactive with the environment I am in. A melody or a note I like a lot may seem ordinary to another person. With dancers, the relation can be more with regards to the time or the movements. There are relations of time and space that are created. I try to find what we have in common, and forget if it is a dancer, a musician or a text. I want to find something deeper and translate that in my music. I work like that when I write for a movie. For example, I don't know why I hear a bassoon there, but I hear it. Everything happens in your brain anyway. Sounds and colours go somewhere, relations are created between them and we don't know how, when and where they are.

ON-GOING PARTNERSHIPS

It is difficult to talk about Jean Derome without talking of René Lussier: self-taught, this composer-guitarist - he also plays Hans Reichel's invention, the daxophone - has been a close associate of Jean Derome, working with him on a variety of contemporary and electro-acoustic projects as well as on a series of soundtracks. In 1989, Lussier was awarded the prestigious Paul Gilson prize in Switzerland for ***Le Trésor de la langue*** *(of which Derome is an integral part). Moreover, they worked as a duet known as Les Granules.*

René comes more from rock music. I started with him in '78 when he was in the artist's collective Conventum with (guitarist) André Duchesne. He was 17 back then. We played a lot in duo, composed music for documentaries and the likes... In '82, we did a concert called "Ambiances magnétiques", with a lot of invented instruments, tapes, all of this structured like a day in the life of the common man. Our first album was **Soyez vigilants, restez vivants**. We did it while working on movie music. The next one was called **Les Granules**. The follow-up was called, quite obviously, **Le retour des Granules** (The return of...) and the name stuck.

After all of these years playing together, are you still able to surprise each other during an improvisation?

Oh yes! A good musician will always surprise you. No two musicians will have the same reaction when they are confronted with the same given material. Questions sometimes arise about the playing style. Even in what is called the avant-garde, there is a certain amount of aimlessness and that is where we have to question ourselves.

ABOUT SELF-PRODUCTION

You are always involved in a lot of productions and projects at the same time, but when we take a look at what you do, we can see that you seem to like working in cycles. Do you agree with that?

Yes. In fact, one music cures me from another one. When I am somewhere for too long a time, I can discover something else, and realize that it's good to change. I don't work fast, you know. I collaborate with a lot of musicians and it takes time for me to do my things, like making a record. I like to compose for big ensembles, like 10 musicians, but it is almost impossible to survive with a big band like that in Canada. With the Dangereux Zhoms, we have toured throughout the country, with gigs in Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton, Vancouver, all of this following the premiere in 1992 at the festival in Victoriaville. The band is a sextet and it is always too big. But, on the other hand, I also work a lot in duo, with René or, at times, with Pierre Cartier.

LES DANGEREUX ZHOMS • René Lussier • Guillaume Dostaler • Jean Derome • Tom Walsh • Pierre Cartier • Pierre Tanguay
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOSÉE LAMBERT

DISCOGRAPHY

JEAN DEROME ET LES DANGEUREUX ZHOMS • Carnets De Voyage • *AM 032CD*
ÉVIDENCE • Musique De Thelonius Monk • *AM 028 CD*
LES GRANULES • Au Royaume Du silencieux • *AM 018 CD*
(A good example of his collaboration with René Lussier)
RENÉ LUSSIER • Le Trésor De La Langue • *AM 015 CD*
ENSEMBLE PIERRE CARTIER • Chanson Du Fil • *Amplitude CD*
FRED FRITH • Top Of His Head • *Made To Measure*

APPLE SOURCE

NEW YORK NOTES
KEVIN WHITEHEAD

WILLIAM PARKER • PHOTOGRAPH BY GERARD FUTRICK

NEW YORK HAS A LONG TRADITION of big bands that set up shop once a week: Maria Schneider's still plays Mondays at Visiones, as does the Vanguard orchestra (descendant of the Mel Lewis band) at the Vanguard, as does the successor to remnants of Gil Evans' work at Sweet Basil. A couple of other large ensembles set up temporary weekly residencies of late. At Context Studios on Avenue A, the **NEW YORK COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA** played Tuesdays in December. As usual, NYCO mostly showcased charts by Wayne Horvitz, Marty Ehrlich and Robin Holcomb, whose orchestrations convey her feel for authentic Americana better than the faux folk songs on her records. One extended Holcomb piece (I scribbled down the title as *Always...* - the announcements tended to be mumbled) was particularly striking, a quick change piece with lyrical, plainspoken passages that could have wafted out of a summer bandshell. The gig had an informal, workshop air, with personnel changing from week to week, depending on who was available. On December 13, Patience Higgins, Andy Laster and Chris Speed were among the reeds, Herb Robertson, Jack Walrath, Vincent Chancey and Art Baron in the brass section, and Horvitz, Lindsey Horner and Bobby Previte anchored the rhythm.

Bassist **WILLIAM PARKER**'s 20 strong **LITTLE HUEY CREATIVE ORCHESTRA** began an (at least) two-month Sunday series at the new Knitting Factory on January 8. Two weeks along, master Dennis Charles capably subbed for the band's very fine young drummer Susie Ibarra (she's aggressive, she listens, she swings). Many of the regulars - who include Ron Brown, Wil Connell and Marco Eneidi on saxes, Roy Campbell, Kono Masahiko, Steve Swell and tubist Dave Hofstra in the brass, and Hal Onserud and William on basses - are drawn from the **IMPROVISERS COLLECTIVE**, who still play self-produced concerts at Context on a regular basis. With Little Huey, Parker deftly blends the massed energy of an Ascension-style rave-up with the sectional writing of a conventional big band. He deploys unbridled players in orderly ways. A swarm of saxophones will sneak up under a soloist, then - when things are already very intense - the third of the band that had been laying out will fall in, to raise the intensity level even more. Or, in the midst of the dense chattering of saxes, the trombones will gingerly enter, playing a slow, undulating, (dis)harmonized written line. The band is wooly and very satisfying, and some smart record company should sign them up; why does the great William Parker not record under his own name when so many lesser lights do?

Trumpeter Campbell sounding very strong, was also heard with pianist **YUKO FUJIYAMA** at the Knit's cramped downstairs room on January 16. Two pianists grinning approvingly in the back of the room will have tipped you to her stylistic lineage: Cecil Taylor and Marilyn Crispell. Fujiyama copped Cecil's group esthetic - Bobby Zankel's alto playing paid frank homage to that pianist's much missed foil (I heard Jimmy Lyons tonight, Taylor told Zankel after the set, definitely meaning it as a compliment), the fine young bassist Reuben Radding strummed or bowed maniacally, and drummer Rashid Bakr finely modulated the energy level - but the leader's own piano playing asserts her individuality. Yuko leaves more open space in her lines, uses sustain pedal a bit more liberally. Her set was a well conceived double feature. After a 45-minute blowout, she called up Mark Feldman for a short duo coda. The violinist used spiccato as a

structural motif, and the pianist tended to play in a more overtly romantic way. Their improvisation almost had the flavour of an Ives duo sonata, in sharp and effective contrast to what preceded it.

SMALLS, a venue which opened last year on West 10th at Seventh Avenue South, feels rather like the kid brother of the Vanguard, a few short blocks north: it's a cozy basement, where for a $10 tab you get soft drinks and a buffet meal - We don't sell anything, the proprietor informed me - along with three sets of music, followed by a jam session advertised as running till eight a.m. Bands change nightly, and the place has become a home for (among others) younger players a little more mainstream than musicians who've found a home at the Knit. On January 12 the band was Mark Turner on tenor, electric guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel, walking bassist Ben Street and listening drummer Jeff Ballard. (The latter two are something of a team; I heard them a year ago in yet another Village basement, with singer Dominique Eade,) It's a nice quartet, not least for their kind of oddball material, including *Rosenwinkel's Synthetics*, an Ornetty bounce with stoptime quirks, and some evergreens one doesn't hear quite enough: Monk's *Work*; Mingus' *Reincarnation Of A Lovebird*, slightly exploded; a beautiful ballad Kurt had to identify for stumped listeners - *Deep Song*, which Billie Holiday recorded for Decca. Rosenwinkel is maybe a shade too fond of black-box chorus effects, but he constructs solos well. His lines move in unexpected directions, wending unusual paths through the chords and sometimes leaping several octaves. Turner favours wide-interval jumps in his (sometimes jagged) lines too; their interplay might remind you of Scofield and Lovano on a good day.

German trombonist **JOHANNES BAUER** and soprano and alto saxophonist **DIETMAR DIESNER** play together in the electro-acoustic quartet Slawterhaus, but reportedly hadn't played as a duo in 15 years, before their Roulette recital December 9. Hard to believe. The contrast and complement of Bauer's guttural multiphonics and Diesner's reed sputter was profoundly satisfying, and the strong visual element was often hilarious. They worked the small room's acoustics, sometimes blowing toward the four points of the compass, sometimes turning in slow circles while holding long notes. Diesner accented his military look - short hair, pressed suit - by striking abrupt, parade-drill poses. He'd hold his straight horn out in front of him like a rifle: present arms. He's the voguing soprano. Diesner ended the set by putting down his horn and folding his hands behind his head, somehow looking both like a man relaxing in front of the TV and a suspect waiting to be frisked. The combination of free music and rigid poses defied sense, and worked beautifully.

Composer/sampler wiz **BOB OSTERTAG** brought his conceptually bizarre Say No More project to Merkin Hall on December 7, at the behest of the World Music Institute. Ostertag solicited solo tapes from drummer Gerry Hemingway, bassist Mark Dresser and vocal acrobat Phil Minton, then digitally edited them into fragments and stuttering repeats, and layered the shards into synthetic group music, which he issued on CD. Then Ostertag asked the players to learn that assembled piece, to play it live. The results became a second CD, which curiously sounded less organic than the first. But they'd played the music on the road since, and by the time they reached New York, they'd made the music Ostertag had assembled come alive. (They played as a trio, with Bob conducting, and as quartet, with Ostertag manipulating samples of the original tapes.) His sidefolk took an impossible task, and made it sing. Ostertag now plans to edit one more composite piece from the live tapes - and that, he swears, will be the end of that. □

BLUE NOTE FOR AFICIONADOS

DOUBLETIME

ART BLAKEY & THE JAZZ MESSENGERS
AT THE JAZZ CORNER OF THE WORLD • *CDP 7243 8 28888 2 6*

STANLEY TURRENTINE
UP AT MINTON'S • *CDP 7243 8 28885 2 9*

JOE HENDERSON
THE STATE OF THE TENOR • *CDP 7243 8 28879 2 8*

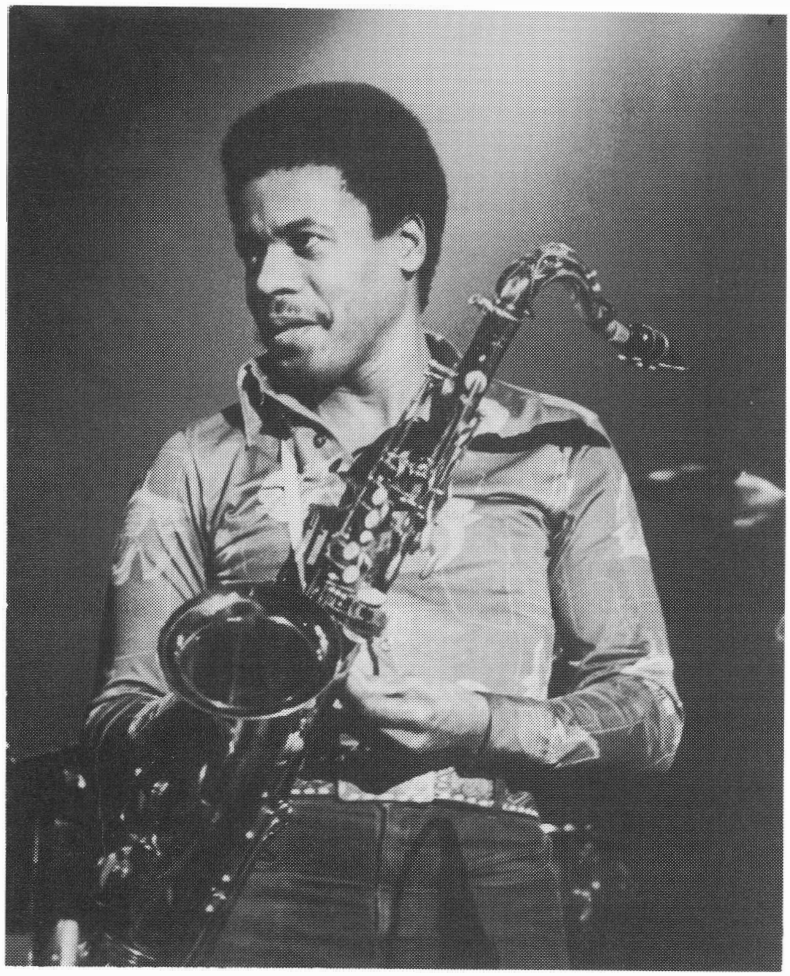
CONNOISSEUR

ANDREW HILL
JUDGMENT • *CDP 7243 8 28981 2 2*

BOBBY HUTCHERSON
COMPONENTS • *CDP 7243 8 29027 2 0*

WAYNE SHORTER
THE ALL SEEING EYE • *CDP 7243 8 29100 2 2*

ORNETTE COLEMAN
THE EMPTY FOXHOLE • *CDP 7243 8 28982 2 1*



WAYNE SHORTER PHOTOGRAPH BY JØRGEN BO

IN ASSESSING THE CURRENT STATE OF JAZZ RE-ISSUES, ONE MAY CONCLUDE THAT THESE ARE INDEED THE GLORY DAYS. A HEAD-SPINNING AMOUNT OF GREAT MUSIC FROM THE PRE-DIGITAL ERA HAS ALREADY BEEN RE-ISSUED ON CD, AND EVERYONE, FROM THE MAJOR LABELS LIKE POLYGRAM AND SONY TO SUCH STALWART MINORS AS EVIDENCE AND ENJA SHOW NO SIGNS OF STOPPING THE FLOW. AND JUST WHEN IT SEEMED LIKE THE PEOPLE AT CAPITOL WERE BEGINNING TO TRIM THEIR CATALOGUE BY DELETING SUCH IMPORTANT ARTISTS AS BOBBY HUTCHERSON AND RANDY WESTON, PRODUCER MICHAEL CUSCUNA CAME UP WITH TWO BRAINSTORMS: THE DOUBLETIME 2-CD SETS OF HISTORIC LIVE RECORDINGS; AND THE CONNOISSEUR SERIES OF UNDERGROUND CLASSICS, NOW RELEASED ON CD AND HIGH-GRADE VINYL.

IN ADDITION to the legendary ***Night Of The Cookers*** set (Blue Note CDP 7243 8 28882 2 2 — not reviewed here), known for the trumpet battle Lee Morgan and Freddie Hubbard and the strong conga sound of Big Black, the **DOUBLETIME SERIES** has offered three more 2-CD sets, which we will review in chronological order of the original recording. Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers' ***At The Jazz Corner Of The World***, a Spring of 1959 remote made by Rudy Van Gelder at the original Birdland in New York City, features Lee Morgan's trumpet, Hank Mobley's tenor sax, Bobby Timmons' piano, Jymie Merritt's bass and Buhaina's drums. At The Jazz Corner is a showcase for what was perhaps the earthiest Messengers band next to the 1956 group which included Mobley, Horace Silver, Donald Byrd and Doug Watkins. That all of the players were comfortable with each other and adept at grooving is manifest in the consistency they maintained over both volumes of At The Jazz Corner. While Mobley's writing provides the hard-bop foundation (he wrote three of the nine songs), these recordings are also enhanced by tight ensemble statements and exciting solos from Morgan, Timmons and Blakey. This was a band that was not only able to cruise through Thelonious Monk's *Evidence* (here listed as *Justice*), but could also turn the standard *Close Your Eyes* into a soulful treat, and look ahead to the '60s with a cooking rendition of Gildo Mahones' modally-influenced *Art's Revelation*. The only real criticisms here are that Mobley is not at his best (his tenor squeaks one-too-many times), and the short version of *The Theme* seems superfluous now that the long version has been issued in this same set.

IMMEDIATELY after leaving Max Roach's combine in 1960, tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine signed with Blue Note. Turrentine then recorded his first lp as a leader, Look Out!, backed by one of the best rhythm sections of the period: Horace Parlan on piano, George Tucker on bass, and Al Harewood at the

drums. A couple of recordings later, producer Alfred Lion decided it was time to feature Turrentine on a live recording that would solidify his image as a player for the people. To this end, Lion put together ***Up At Minton's***, culled from an engagement at the famous Harlem playhouse. Up At Minton's would be a one-of-a-kind meeting of Turrentine, Parlan's trio and guitar sensation Grant Green. That all of the players involved were young modernists who also were known for their ability to swing the blues was not lost on Lion. This conjunction of similar styles, and the fact that critics were then already comparing Green favourably to one-time Minton's denizen and guitar prophet Charlie Christian, made for a packed house on that February night in 1961. Since the end of the Swing Era, it has been common practice for jazz groups playing in Harlem to somehow memorialize both the musicians and the communal feeling of its lost ballrooms. One can hear this in the repertoire of Up At Minton's (which even includes the Swing flagwaver *Broadway*), as well as in the way that Turrentine allows a Coleman Hawkins influence to inform his work here more than on his studio albums from this period. On such tunes as *Yesterdays* (a favourite Hawkins ballad) and *Come Rain or Come Shine*, Turrentine evokes the legend with his use of arpeggios, a certain tonal gruffness, and an appropriation of Hawkins' trademark cry followed by a lower register run - something which Charlie Rouse (particularly when he played with Monk) and Eric Dolphy (especially on alto sax) were also fond of doing. The leader is most consistently effective when blowing out of his own bag, however. He and the Horace Parlan Trio are at their best on the two blues, *Stanley's Time* and *Later at Minton's*, and on the lengthy and highly percussive version of *Love For Sale*. Guest star Green, who had recorded his first lp as a leader, *Grant's First Stand*, just weeks before this engagement, solos with the same assured lyricism and rhythmic maturity that would characterize his playing on later Blue Note albums.

WHILE ***Up At Minton's*** features a young quintet performing conventional sets of music uptown, Joe Henderson's ***The State Of The Tenor*** has something different: a trio of veterans taking on an uncommon mix of standards and lesser-known jazz originals at at downtown club. As is true for solo saxophone excursions, a tenor sax-bass-drums trio is at its best when the musicians and the material work together to create a distinctive world of sound despite the lack of harmonic colouring from keyboards or guitars. The State Of the Tenor is such an exceptional musical self-portrait in black-and-white. Taped at the Village Vanguard 38 years to the month of Sonny Rollins' 1957 trio recordings there, The State Of The Tenor finds Henderson in the company of Ron Carter on bass and Al Foster on drums. The union of this trio proved to be classic, as three wise and technically proficient artists came together at the right time and place, and with the right material. Henderson, Carter and Foster manage to create some of the best recorded renditions of the three Monk originals included *(Friday the 13th, Ask Me Now and Boo Boo's Birthday)*, they also breathe new life into Charles Mingus' *Portrait* and swing unabashedly on Carter's funky original *Loose Change* and Henderson's infectious *Y Ya La Quiero*. The trio even pays tribute to Rollins by performing *All The Things You Are* as his trio did in 1957, with Henderson showing how much he learned from Sonny by approximating both his tone and phrasing at high speed toward the end of his solo. Indeed, the way these musicians listen to each other, their overall artistry, and their ability to execute seamless rhythmic and mood changes (check them out on Henderson's *The Bead Game*), sets a standard for the tenor sax, bass and drums trio.

The **CONNOISSEUR SERIES** debut set includes 12 single albums, four of which we will now review in chronological order. Andrew Hill's ***Judgment***, recorded early in 1964, is a great example of what many Jazz aficionados are looking for: an outstanding album which had never been reissued in North America for economic reasons. On Judgment, Andrew Hill shows how, like Mingus, he frequently coaxed extraordinary improvisations out of the musicians who assayed his difficult charts. Here, Hill gets the most out of drummer Elvin Jones, vibist Bobby Hutcherson, and bassist Richard Davis. This maximization of the artists' potential is evident from the album's opener, *Siete Ocho*, a 7/8 piece in which melody and rhythm merge into an enthralling whole. Elvin Jones, then in his fourth year as John Coltrane's drummer, is at his most powerful on *Siete Ocho*, his solo seemingly erupting from the accompaniment he had offered seconds earlier. Yet this piece blurs the distinction between accompanist and lead voice, as all involved are caught up in a whirl of rhythm and the melody is more implied than stated. Davis is the subtle backbone of these proceedings while Hutcherson, the group's youngest member at 22, moves through Hill's music with an understanding well beyond his years. The vibist plays most effectively on the title track and its slower-moving sequel, *Reconciliation*, where he adds an appropriately haunting touch. It is only regrettable that this program of Hill's music no longer concludes with *Reconciliation* but with the less successful take of the satirical *Yokada, Yokada*.

WHEN Bobby Hutcherson included compositions by Hill and Joe Chambers on his first album as a leader, Dialogue, it was an indicator not only of his respect for those artists but also of his own musical direction. Similarly, his second lp under his own name, ***Components***, reflects his division between the Mainstream, Soul Jazz and Avant Garde camps at the time this was recorded. The first four compositions on Components (originally Side One of the album) are Hutcherson's, and bear the more conventional influences of leaders he had worked with such as Dexter Gordon and Grant Green. The last four more experimental pieces on Components are by Chambers, and it is no accident that he and Hutcherson would perform together a few weeks after this session at the 1965

Newport Jazz Festival as part of Archie Shepp's Quartet. Hutcherson's wistful *Little B's Poem* (for his son, Barry) is probably the best known piece from this date and, like the title track, benefits from tight ensemble work and solid statements from both the leader and flutist/alto saxophonist James Spaulding. On the poignant waltz, *Tranquillity*, and the flamboyant blues, *West 22nd Street Theme*, Freddie Hubbard steals the show with his soaring yet thoughtful trumpet solos. With the exception of the brief closing piece, *Pastoral*, Joe Chambers' compositions are rhythmically varied juxtapositions of free and written elements with a premium placed on the interplay between the different musicians. Unfortunately, the only successful one of these experiments is *Juba Dance*, which is anchored by Ron Carter's bass lines and Chambers' dramatic effects while everyone contributes effectively to the contemplative funky mood. Herbie Hancock who, like Hutcherson, had one foot in the mainstream (Miles Davis' Quintet and sessions by Lee Morgan and Wes Montgomery); one in the New Thing (recording with Grachan Moncur III and spending months with Dolphy's quintet), performs more than ably in every context and even plays some Sun Ra-inspired electric piano on Chambers' *Air*.

WHILE *Components* proved to be an overly-ambitious undertaking, Wayne Shorter's ***The All Seeing Eye*** succeeds in capturing the abstract through skilful writing and inspired improvisation. If it had been recorded in 1975 instead of 1965, The All Seeing Eye would have been produced with a full-colour cover depicting scenes of earthly creation and destruction with the implacable Creator looking down from beyond the Sun. Instead, we have the sepia-tinted existential glance of Wayne Shorter, because this recording was made years before there were the sound paintings of Jimi Hendrix, Miles Davis or Shorter and Joe Zawinul's 1970s unit, Weather Report, and all the attendant hype. The All Seeing Eye is concerned with cosmology and human fate, just as numerous pieces in the Psychedelic Rock and Electric Jazz canons would be. Wayne Shorter's *The All Seeing Eye, Genesis, Chaos and Face of the Deep*, and his brother Alan's *Mephistopheles*, tell an album-length story of spiritual evolution, first from the vantage point of the omniscient Creator of our paradoxically imperfect Earth, then, in the final section, from the perspective of mortal man coming face-to-face with Evil. Recorded just four months after Components, Wayne's colleagues here include the same rhythm section of Hancock, Carter, and Chambers, Hubbard again on trumpet (and flugelhorn) and Spaulding on alto sax, plus Grachan Moncur's trombone and Alan Shorter's flugelhorn (as is implied in the liner notes, Alan *does* play throughout but only solos on *Mephistopheles*.) The arrangements are tight, reminiscent of such other tone poem pieces as Duke Ellington's *Harlem*, although there is plenty of freedom in the improvisations. Wayne Shorter's tenor saxophone work is some of his best on record, and he is the main soloist on the first three pieces. Again, Herbie Hancock is the perfectly versatile accompanist and emotionally in-tune soloist — one wonders if he could still muster the intensity for his statement on *Chaos* today. Everyone acquits themselves well and with understanding throughout The All Seeing Eye. Ample proof of this is found in *Mephistopheles*, where the soloists and rhythm section purposefully raise the level of emotional intensity until it culminates with Joe Chambers' stalking and talking drum solo and the ensemble's chilling reprise of the theme. Perhaps this recording was too far ahead of its time to be appreciated fully in 1965. Now it can be seen that ***The All Seeing Eye*** is a classic deserving far wider recognition.

Lastly, Ornette Coleman's ***The Empty Foxhole***, recorded late in 1966, was Coleman's first studio recording for an American label in 5 1/2 years. It was also the first involving his son Ornette Denardo, then aged 10, as the drummer. As with his European recordings during the mid-1960s, Coleman used a trio on The Empty Foxhole and played alto sax as well as his recently acquired trumpet and violin. For the bass role, Coleman called on Charlie Haden, whom he hadn't played with since the original Atlantic Quartet broke up in '61. Haden is the glue that holds these somewhat disjointed proceedings together. Denardo's playing is more undisciplined than it should have been, and is not as inventive as that found on the Impulse albums he would make with his father a few years later. On the longest track, *Freeway Express*, one gets the feeling that Haden is trying valiantly to get the elder and younger Colemans to play together and, because of this, the bassist's contributions are ultimately the most interesting. The best realized pieces of this session are the ones which feature Coleman the altoist: the catchy country blues, *Good Old Days*, the pensive dirge, *Faithful*, and the spritely *Zig Zag*. Here, on his main axe, Ornette is able to develop moods with more consistency and technical agility, Haden is granted (albeit brief) solos, and Denardo's work is more concise as an accompanist. In all fairness to Denardo Coleman, his playing on these pieces supports the contention that his contributions to The Empty Foxhole would have been better had the elder Coleman been a more articulate improviser on trumpet and violin and not expected his 10-year-old son to be a co-lead voice for much of this session.

IN CLOSING, there are two suggestions concerning these latest Blue Note reissue projects. The first is that the design of the Doubletime packaging accomodate a standard replacement CD case in the event that the original is damaged. The second is this aficionado's wish list for the next 12 releases in the Connoisseur Series: Art Blakey & the Afro-Drum Ensemble, The African Beat; Don Cherry, Complete Communion; Curtis Fuller, The Opener; Eddie Gale, Ghetto Music; Andrew Hill, Compulsion; Bobby Hutcherson, Now; Jackie McLean, Destination Out; Hank Mobley, Hank; Lee Morgan, Leeway; Freddie Redd, Shades of Redd; Charlie Rouse, Bossa Nova Bacchanal; and McCoy Tyner, Extensions. Let's hope. □

THE INCREDIBLE JAZZ GUITAR OF
WES MONTGOMERY
AN ARTICLE BY **DAVE MCELFRESH**

I LOANED A FISTFUL OF WES MONTGOMERY'S RIVERSIDE RECORDINGS TO A FELLOW THERAPIST FRIEND OF MINE WHO, ALREADY KNOWLEDGEABLE OF JAZZ VOCALISTS AND PIANISTS, NOW WANTED TO PURSUE THE GUITARISTS. "SORRY," HE SAID WHEN RETURNING THE DISCS A WEEK LATER, "I JUST DON'T HEAR IT."

HE WAS MORE THAN A LITTLE SURPRISED when told that in the estimation of many, Montgomery ranks with Django Reinhardt and Charlie Christian as one of the three most influential guitarists in the history of jazz.

Yet what left my friend unimpressed may have been one of the many remarkable qualities that gained the guitarist his worthy legendary status. Montgomery, having developed a fingering technique so novel as to make him immediately recognizable, shunned the use of a pick. Not only did he play with a soft, edgeless tone, he was a far less hurried player than any jazz guitarist to date.

He is also remembered for an unfortunate late-life career move that validated jazz-weakening trends in the music industry. Although he would dread the association were he alive today, Montgomery is considered a primary trail blazer and advocate of the pop-jazz sensibilities that permeate the present jazz scene. Great stylist and jazz improviser though he was, he is no less famous for his willingness to alter his art at the request of a record company.

But, oddly, had he not been as easily persuaded to alter himself many years earlier, at the beginning of his affair with the jazz guitar, he would not have developed the signature approach that made him the jazz legend he came to be.

Although his brother Monk states that Wes was fairly skilled on the instrument as far back as 1935, when the young Montgomery was twelve or thirteen, jazz didn't enter his life until a 1943 dance in hometown Indianapolis led him to hear Charlie Christian's "Solo Flight." So stricken was he that the following morning he bought an amplifier and electric guitar for an unaffordable $350, from then on spending what time he wasn't working at his milk company job practicing. (He later admitted to interviewers that he felt compelled to become adept at playing in order to assuage the guilt he felt for spending the money.) For the first month he practiced after work, using a pick as is standard for nearly all jazz guitarists. But the volume consistently brought complaints from neighbours trying to sleep. Montgomery did away with the pick and moved to the backroom of the house. The result was a quieter approach that allowed him to practice throughout the night.

Playing with his thumb lessened the volume problem. Using two fretboard fingers to play the same note an octave apart gave the note a fuller sound. And brushing the strings rather than picking them brought the volume down even more. His neighbours were happy, and Montgomery was the father of an entirely unique approach to guitar soloing designed, ironically, so that no one could hear it. Overlook the meekness of Wes Montgomery and his need to keep peace with the folks next door, and the source of his playing style is missed - this being only the first of many clues to his singular path uncovered by looking at the man behind the guitar.

CONTRARY TO JAZZ STEREOTYPES, Montgomery's personal life offers nothing tawdry. He didn't drink, use drugs or womanize, and was instead a family man with a wife and, eventually, seven children. It was his dedication to home life that kept him working the dreary local clubs of Indianapolis longer than his career development required. Instant adulation by the jazz community came about when this fully developed guitar monster was finally coaxed out of Indianapolis to begin releasing records. The timid Montgomery was soon barraged with the degree of international acclaim that aggressive, aspiring jazz figures spend years attempting to acquire.

From the very beginning Montgomery was a self-deprecating figure burdened with an insecurity about his playing skills that would haunt him his entire career. (The closest he ever came to acknowledging his ability was when, at his peak, he frequently stated that he "played better fifteen years ago.") In the years preceding his fame, the young perfectionist/ family man fell into a grueling routine of following his day job and home responsibilities with skill-honing late night gigs at local dives and supper clubs. His sleep schedule was broken into several-hour fragments when time allowed. The developing guitarist later succumbed to several uneventful years on the road with Lionel Hampton.

Family, this time in the form of brothers Monk on bass and Buddy on piano and vibes, became the core of Wes' next band. So promising were the results that the two brothers - minus Wes - moved to San Francisco and scored a recording contract with Pacific Jazz Records. Montgomery visited them occasionally and played on several sessions that garnered quite favourable reviews, but always returned to his wife, children and the jazz dives of Indianapolis.

IT WAS BECOMING JUST A MATTER OF TIME before this self driven (but never self-promoting) figure would eventually arrive on the national jazz scene in full bloom, having avoided the usual pattern of moving to a jazz city and working up through the ranks.

PHOTOGRAPH BY
TON VAN WAGENINGEN

When Cannonball Adderley passed through town on a bill with George Shearing and Lennie Tristano in 1959, he was floored upon hearing the guitarist at a local club. An immediate phonecall by Adderley to Riverside's Orin Keepnews guaranteed Montgomery a recording contract.

Thus the reticent Montgomery found himself thrown into a world of great acclaim. Nineteen albums were recorded in the next five years, among them one with Adderley, another with Milt Jackson and two where the guitarist chose to headline his brothers. In 1961-2, he won both the critics' and the readers' polls in Downbeat.

At no point was Montgomery's fame due to merely milking the octave-playing that personified his style. A typical song would begin with a single-string solo, its continuation eventually played in octaves, and commencing with an even more difficult improvisation built on strings of chords. The guitarist proved himself to be no less a superb player on the choruses taken where his octave playing was absent. All of Montgomery's Riverside albums are meaty jazz outings, with three of the earliest releases, ***So Much Guitar***, ***Incredible Jazz Guitar*** and ***Movin' Along***, presenting the unleashed guitarist at his best.

Montgomery was floored by the attention his guitar style brought him during the Riverside years, and denied that he deserved the fame. Successful sessions with the quintet of Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, McCoy Tyner, Reggie Workman and Elvin Jones - both a San Francisco Jazz Workshop and a 1961 gig at the Monterey Jazz Festival - resulted in Coltrane asking Montgomery to join his group. But the guitarist declined, stating privately that he considered himself musically inferior to Coltrane and the others.

As unfortunate as it was for the world of jazz, Montgomery's refusal was understandable in the light of his constant self-deprecation. It would not be the last time he squirmed in the presence of adulation and opportunity. In fact, his uncanny abilities made him regularly feel more than a bit freakish in the presence of other, less magical jazzmen.

Musicians who worked with Montgomery almost always express their awe over his prowess in spite of no formal training. While other prominent jazz musicians have been unable to read or write charts, Montgomery could not make sense of even the chord symbols most non-readers rely on for direction. The explanation he gave for such skill in spite of his complete musical illiteracy was simply that he "knew" a chord or note when he heard it. All credit for his musicianship he unrealistically attributed to having learned the solos on Charlie Christian's records.

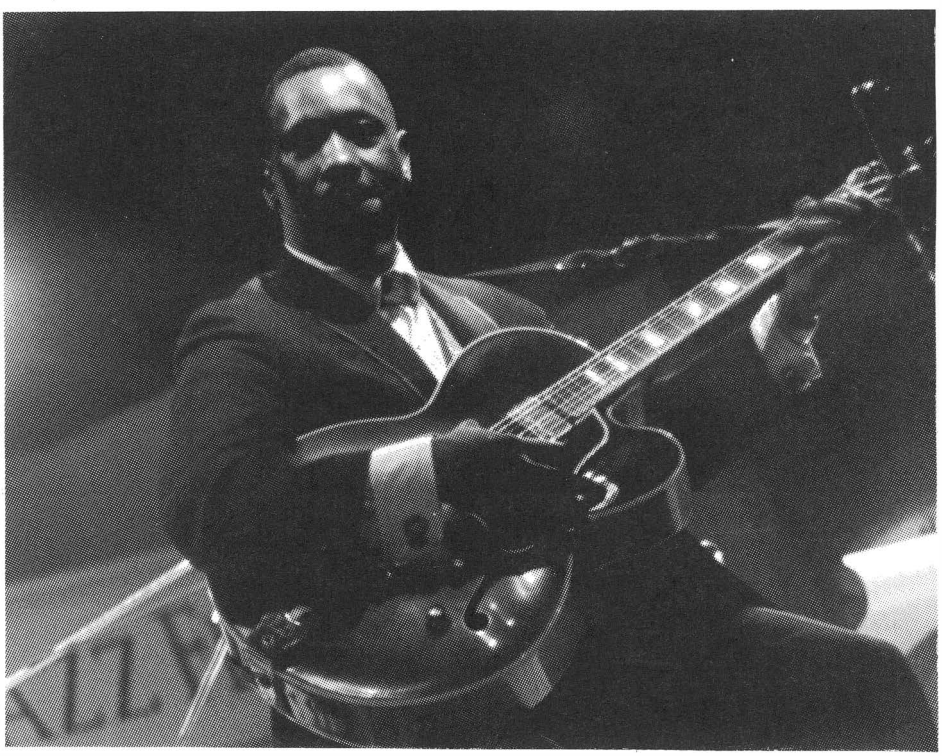
Nor, amazingly, did he need to practice once his career was in full swing, his reasoning being either that it drained him at the expense of the show that night or that he wasn't going to risk trying to learn something he didn't already know.

Montgomery's explanations reveal nothing about what lay behind his near superhuman abilities, and only point toward his really having no idea how he came to play and create at the level he did. Writer John Duarte discovered that Montgomery had not created an alternative musical system of his own making when learning to play jazz, but had found himself capable of finding anything he sought on the guitar neck without ever bowing to a theoretical comprehension of the fretboard's organization.

PRODUCER CREED TAYLOR, who would figure prominently in his career a few years later, stated that even late in Montgomery's career he remained extremely self conscious about his inability to read music. Musically blessed as he was, it was to Montgomery's great discomfort that he found himself crowned king in a land where he not only didn't speak the language but could not explain his surpassing those who did.

THE INCREDIBLE JAZZ GUITAR OF WES MONTGOMERY

THE FANS AND PLAYERS who acknowledged the inexplicable artistry of Wes Montgomery found themselves faced with a near-embodiment of the transcendent element of jazz. For most, the supreme moment in jazz playing occurs when the musician becomes oblivious to chords and scales, then ascends into creative expression unencumbered by reference to learned patterns and the mathematics of theory, with no explanation for the surprising outpouring apart from a sense that an outside force has momentarily replaced one's usual cognitive direction. By this definition, Wes Montgomery's playing continually points to the transcendent. Others strive for those occasional solos where they become oblivious to the protocol of musical construct, for Montgomery there was no system to forget.



There was, however, another kind of outside force Montgomery was to find himself facing. Unfortunately, this one permanently disabled the guitarist's career: the Riverside label was sold in 1964, and the new owners chose to put a halt to its jazz output. Montgomery moved to Verve Records and quickly churned out ***Movin' Wes, Bumpin'*** and ***Smokin' At the Half Note***. The pseudo-hip title wording was a warning of encroaching limp jazz sensibilities.

Smokin' and the ensuing ***Willow Weep For Me*** coupled the guitarist with Miles Davis' backup trio of Wynton Kelly, Jimmy Cobb and Paul Chambers. Two later releases placed Montgomery in the solid company of Jimmy Smith's organ playing. But the guitarist soon fell into consistently releasing albums comprised of two-minute covers of mostly pop songs, drowned in the sappy arrangements of Don Sebesky and Claus Ogerman and sanctioned by producer Creed Taylor. With each limp Montgomery release, Verve seemed to be hoggishly attempting to pursue both the jazz audience and the aging fans of Ray Coniff and Andy Williams.

The mid-'60s found Montgomery unintentionally crippling jazz by succumbing to the increasing power held by corporate record labels. Bix Biederbecke's association with the vacuous Paul Whiteman was nowhere near as debilitating as the musical castration Montgomery allowed himself to tolerate at the hands of a marketing department. Beiderbecke may have coupled with a lame bandleader and his weak chart writers, but Montgomery's dilution was the result of a major record company intentionally reshaping the already amazing guitarist into not only a product, but an inferior one at that.

The insipid ***Goin' Out of My Head*** appeared in 1965, and although Montgomery was accompanied in the studio by the likes of Herbie Hancock and Donald Byrd (two jazz figures who also later moved into the pop-jazz arena), the guitarist admitted to a Downbeat writer in 1967 that he initially had no confidence in the material presented to him by his new label. What changed his mind, he told Leonard Feather, was discovering that the record had thus far sold eighty thousand copies and was still moving well.

MONTGOMERY'S LIVE APPEARANCES CONTINUED to present the intense, extended jams he previously recorded with Riverside. And, he admitted to jazz critics that his newest releases were definitely commercial pop music and to be called such. Yet behind the scenes he confided to Barney Kessel that it was irritating finding the majority of his live audiences only interested in hearing him play his brief hit songs note for note.

Montgomery was at least somewhat uncomfortable with his pop fame, yet for some reason continued to allow its severely constricting development. The simple guitarist was hardly the type to harbour dreams of wealth, hoping that his Verve recordings would bring them fruition. We can also discount the possibility of Montgomery being driven by a need for acclaim - otherwise he would have stayed with his brothers when the three of them began making a name for themselves on the Pacific Jazz label. (In fact, as far as career development went, he was not driven at all. Success came to him without invitation.)

How could Montgomery, who passed on an offer by Coltrane, say yes to the easy-listening production values of Verve as they were gradually foisted upon him? Since they had well recorded him in his element on the earliest albums, was there a reason why he allowed the dilution of beloved music?

PHOTOGRAPH BY **BILL SMITH**

Interestingly, Montgomery began recording the weak ***Goin' Out of My Head*** in 1965, only months after the death of Nat King Cole, the jazz pianist who gained fame and fortune by not playing jazz.

Like Cole, the guitarist had much to gain. His family now numbered a whopping seven children. Accustomed to the usual financial problems facing a jazzman, the sensitive Montgomery's concerns regarding the support of so sizeable a family must have been constant. In addition, the guitarist's fear of flying left him in the position of having to drive sometimes huge distances to each club date, taking even more time from his family life. Even his final Riverside session on November 27, 1963, was a hurried affair, pushed in order that Montgomery might be able to make it home for Thanksgiving.

NO DOUBT THE SUBSTANTIAL SALES of ***Goin' Out of My Head***, both preceding and following the accompanying Grammy award, brought Montgomery paycheques that were put to good use back home in Indianapolis. As for himself, he may have experienced great appreciation for the suddenly huge crowd of fans whose record-buying spoke more highly of the guitarist than he was ever able to feel about himself.

That Montgomery's love of jazz never diminished is evident even in the last - and most insubstantial - recordings of his life. Following Creed Taylor to A&M Records in 1966, the guitarist recorded ***A Day In the Life, Down Here On the Ground*** and ***Road Song***. (Taylor would soon veer back into somewhat stronger jazz values with his CTI label, leading the listener to believe that the A&M albums taught him how not to present stellar jazz players.) Unfortunately, all three albums are violin-drenched and focus on pop ditties as thin and ill-chosen as the Association's *Windy* and the pseudo-folk anthem *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?*

Yet what the most discerning Montgomery fan will discover is that although the time allotted for improvising on all three albums is never more than a fraction of a minute, Montgomery plays with the same strength and creativity he conveyed on his best with Riverside. And, strangely, it is because the string arrangements are so blatantly unsuitable that Montgomery's guitar sound is inadvertently allowed to stand alone in a manner his best recordings are too successfully interactive to highlight. Listening to *When A Man Loves A Woman* or *Down Here On the Ground,* with Montgomery playing alone to an orchestra in the echo-heavy studio of Creed Taylor, one hears how plaintive his signature guitar approach sounds. They exemplify how dense is his tone, and difficult the style - which he admitted had given him blinding headaches through its years of development. Even his silliest pop cover versions are anchored by an attack that, as was the case with Ben Webster, always conveys intensity and pensiveness.

Be they earlier and later recordings, everywhere is evidence of the push/pull struggle of his career: Montgomery emulating Charlie Christian who amplified his guitar in order to be heard, then dampening his playing style in order to keep peace in the neighbourhood; laying the foundation of a stupendous jazz career but confining himself to the dead-end club circuit of Indianapolis for the sake of family responsibilities; falling into the flashy production of Verve and A&M, yet drawing back from the promising possibilities offered by Coltrane. One wonders if Montgomery was ever at a point in his career where he played without either appeasing someone else or regretting a path not taken. Little surprise then that his smooth approach is also remarkably solemn.

Like Montgomery himself, his proteges have also been split, generally into one of two camps. Many musicians, regardless of instrument, copy his descent into the pop realm and use the guitarist as validation of their jazz posturing - and the money it brings. No doubt this explains why George Benson and Lee Ritenour, two skilled jazz guitarists who prefer to release best-selling albums of easy listening music, have both recorded tributes to Wes Montgomery. (Benson also kept in touch with Montgomery until the latter's death.) The superior Benson, who has a catalogue of great early releases that every jazz fan should own, knows better than to interpret Montgomery's prodigality as permission to dilute jazz. Nonetheless, it could not have been of any benefit to Benson's jazz sensibilities when Creed Taylor long ago picked up on Benson after his guitar stints in the organ trios of his youth and placed him alongside Montgomery on A&M, the results sounding nearly as tepid.

Yet Benson can also be added to those who best incorporated Montgomery's influence into their own playing styles - Pat Martino, the late Emily Remler and Pat Metheny being the finest of the rest. Like Montgomery, all four could be given the most banal tune with only seconds of solo time to prove their heritage and be immediately capable of shining as jazz players. Quite a different scenario than is offered by the banal pseudo-jazz players who spend entire careers bereft of even seconds of true jazz.

Montgomery's playing will remain an influence and, unfortunately, so will memory of his financially successful marriage to label expectations. Nonetheless, he has exemplified standards as to what a player must be capable of before calling himself a jazzman, regardless of the music at hand.

BEFORE DYING OF A HEART ATTACK at age 43 in 1968, the guitarist was still cramming snippets of jazz into covers of B-movie themes and Top-40 hits. Montgomery finished his career much the way he began it: looking at the world of jazz from the periphery, first from the futureless club scene of Indianapolis, and finally from the futureless studios of A&M. What speaks most highly of the man's artistry is that, in spite of his many attempts to hide, deny or discolour his gift, he could not hush the magnificent intensity of his quiet guitar. □

ABOUT THE WRITER:

DAVE MCELFRESH *writes on jazz and Brazilian music for a number of regional, national and international publications. He is also a therapist, educator and administrator in the area of behavioral health services.*

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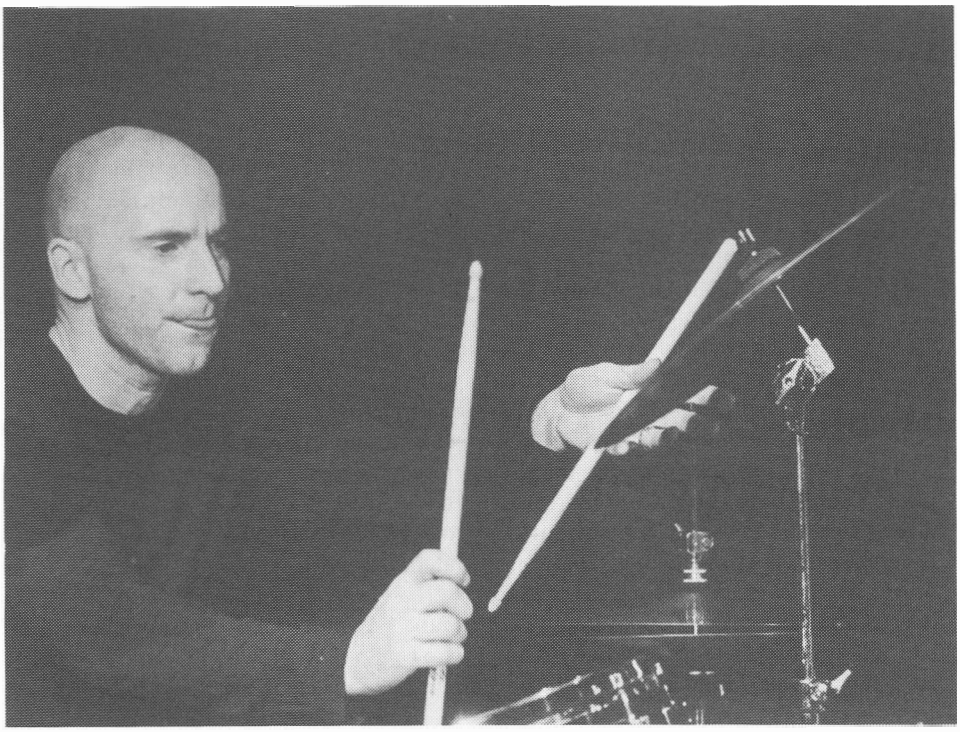
POST-ORNETTE PIANOLESS MUSIC

PHIL HAYNES' 4 HORNS & WHAT? • 4 Horn Lore • (Open Minds OM 2413-2)
RANDY MCKEAN • So Dig This Big Crux • (Rastascan Records BRD-012)
STEUART LIEBIG'S QUARTETTO STIG • Hommages Obliques • (9 Winds NWCD 0158)
PETER BROTZMANN, TOSHINORI KONDO, WILLIAM PARKER, HAMID DRAKE • Die Like A Dog • (FMP CD 64)
THE MARCO ENEIDI COALITION • (Botticelli Records 1010)
MARC EDWARDS • Time & Space Vol. 1 • (Alpha Phonics APCD2)
JOEY BARON • Raised Pleasure Dot • (New World Records/CounterCurrents 80449-2)
TOM VARNER • The Mystery of Compassion • (Soul Note 121217-2)

REVIEWS BY SPIKE TAYLOR



JOEY BARON • PHOTOGRAPH BY GERARD FUTRICK

A RECENT EDITION OF THIS MAGAZINE sang un-apologetic praise of the piano. Good for it. Called itself the 'Special Piano Edition', even. Yet now, some months later, I sit constructing careful prose praise of music that exists beyond the 88-key, chord-punching machine. I, too, am a piano player and this feels like a treason or worse - an acknowledgement that life goes on fastidiously and all full of fun once the piano is dropped from the mix, freeing-up the others.

Reviewing a current pile of boldly stated horn-centric material conjures up those eventful dates in the late 1950's when the Ornette Coleman Quartet said not-so-much 'goodbyes' to Paul Bley and Walter Norris but voiced their full embrace of a free space in which to blow and ramble. Since those days our world of music has surely shifted toward the free and for the better. Today there's much activity in the music collectives, composers' pools and festival circuits in the spirit of free-form music and sound and this is a healthy condition. The pianists are still in there, too, toughing it out, freeing it up in clusters, speedy runs and free as can be. Paul Plimley, Myra Melford, Marilyn Crispell, Matthew Shipp, Lee Pui Ming and Irene Schweizer, to name a notable few, are cutting into new territories not so unlike the ones described by the artists I'm to review here. But the differences in approach between the axes are present and palpable. Is this simply the difference between the struck and the blown, the strings and the brass? Is it that old choppy rhythm symptom first diagnosed in the late '50's? Whatever it is, I believe that there is plenty of room for all musicians in free fields and that differences should be celebrated instead of put-down or left-out. We have at least come that far since the narrow mindset of the '50's. Further still are the changes of today as evidenced by the following recordings, each to their own and stigma-free.

From the Corner Store Syndicate comes **Phil Haynes' 4 Horns & What?**: ***4 Horn Lore*** (Open Minds OM 2413-2) and these four hornmen represent some of the best blown ideas thunk. They are Ellery Eskelin, Paul Smoker, Herb Robertson and Andy Laster, driven by the frantic pulse of drummer Phil Haynes (he's the 'What?'). This recording goes to show the extent of accomplishment that can be achieved in an extended group improvisation. The titles are all composed by Haynes but feature the brimming full bags of the four horn players. A listener would never feel a loss of the bass and piano in the spaces of the group's workings for this is where a sweet tension has been created in place. This tension is evident throughout 4 Horn Lore and it strengthens the spare gem *Sweep* in the same way that it funks out in the skitterish *Goofus*, featuring Laster's particularly goofy baritone saxophone groove. It's right to begin this review piece with a recording as confident and loopy as ***4 Horn Lore*** - an exemplary follow-up to all that's been gained since the jazz world's rhythm sections broke free.

PETER BROTZMANN • PHOTOGRAPH BY GERARD FUTRICK

HAYNES AND SMOKER reappear in the pile under the leadership of multi-reedist **Randy McKean** on ***So Dig This Big Crux*** (Rastascan Records BRD-012). It's a roomy recording with something to say on a wide variety of topics. Take for example the beautiful, high pitched shrill repeated throughout the introspection entitled *Haze*. It's a masterly understatement draped over Drew Gress' heavy-hearted bass figures. There is much light-heartedness here, too. Smoker and McKean make brilliant play off each other during Roscoe Mitchell's *Line Fine Lyon Seven* and the leader's bass clarinet driven *Quilt*. Both of these numbers can be pointed out as particular standouts on a standout CD. Like I mentioned, there are many players out there in the free fields but when something sounds like ***Dig This Big Crux***, it ought to make a lot of players stop and listen to a very real thing going on and learn from a cohesive, shared, studied vibe. The compositions are entirely unique constructs admitting the listener with a roominess to spare and when things get to freeing up and spreading out among the players, you just know you're going gladly.

One never quite knows what will turn up in a mixed bag of piano-less quartet efforts and I'm still not so sure about **Steuart Liebig's Quartetto Stig**: ***Hommages Obliques*** (9 Winds Records NWCD 0158). It generally suffers under a base desire to create tension where very little organic tension lies. So, ***Hommages Obliques*** tends to sound overly dramatic. It's well played and the instrumentation of electric bass, electric violin, trumpet and drums makes for a satisfying fusion of sound but the compositional setups leave the listener in a position to fall. This fall is particularly long and hard after the opening minutes of the two 20 minute pieces *Commedia* and *Hojo No Umi* which take all of their time to say not very much. A fundamental wrong here is that this music seeks to exact the science of the quartet and free music does not invite the sort of approach evidenced here. This CD's most human trait is it's fallibility.

If it's the art of the quartet you're looking for then please seek and find ***Die Like A Dog*** (FMP CD 64) from **Peter Brotzmann, Toshinori Kondo, William Parker** and **Hamid Drake.** Subtitled "fragments of music, life and death of Albert Ayler" this live recording represents a toughness and sincerity that too rarely lives this large. It's raw energy, and anyone can go out and buy it and I recommend that you do. When Brotzmann's tenor meets Kondo's bleeding, outraged trumpet, the listener can be struck by visions of the facial strains that must've bared themselves to the concert audience on this night in August 1993. William Parker's lightning-quickness and sensitivity propel and drive the quartet in turn from the bass position and likewise and louder from drummer Hamid Drake. Their's is a bottomless bag of musical ideas springing from the inspiration of Albert Ayler and edging it somewhere very close to the life, death and music of the subtitle. If you follow Brotzmann's recordings, you'll find him and his bandmates in no finer, edgier form than ***Die Like A Dog*** - a most important release this year.

Ayler is a point of reference for **The Marco Eneidi Coalition**, too, on their fiercely-stated, self-titled explosion upon the free fields (Botticelli Records 1010). Jimmy Lyons is represented as well with two beautifully rendered pieces of his making, *Diads* and *Never*. This is a very strong group effort which belongs on that seeking list next to ***Die Like A Dog***. William Parker, again, is featured punching it out against a percussive wail from Eneidi, Raphé Malik, Jackson Krall and the brilliant Glenn Spearman. There is brilliance here from all concerned. There is a self-awareness in effect upon the whole of this recording that tells all and truthfully, without apology for its aggression in your face. Though this article speaks from the post-Ornette: Pianoless Music corner, it's truly amazing to feel the vitality of music that's freer still, passed along from the likes of Ayler and Lyons and many underrated others.

Marc Edwards drums up the support of alto wailers Rob Brown and Cara Silvernail plus Hill Green's fearless bass in his outer space adventure ***Time & Space Vol. 1*** (Alpha Phonics APCD2). I've never read such fondness in liner notes as Edwards' thanks to the inspiration of Star Trek and Nichelle Nichols among other planes of there. This is a spirited recording that takes off after the players have shaken off the constraints of Edwards' compositions - especially where Brown and Silvernail are paired note-for-note in what sound like themes for overstating television documentaries. Still, each of the players can blow like mad and do so throughout lengthy exercises that tell oft-told tales. The individuals are each at their best in the formless settings which clock in most of the CD's duration, the listener might be wanting for more compositional integrity to find a pulse to tap into and then share in the exploration.

Raised Pleasure Dot (New World Records/ CounterCurrents 80449-2) is a full-out

and too much pleasure from Barondown, the trio led by drummer **Joey Baron** with Ellery Eskelin on tenor saxophone and trombonist Steve Swell. Baron is a freak for concision and precision and has never sounded tighter and more at ease. His compositions ought to be pumping loudly from the radio in the open window for sharing with the neighbourhood. Eskelin and Swell are a laugh together. They squirm through Baron's looping holes a shade or two lower in the mix from the leader and they work it out fun when it's for fun and with a gentility in the quieter pieces. The opening number *Peckerwood* is a stop-slide-start exercise in the rhythmic pulse that puts Baron a far and away identifiable voice behind the drums, way up front. Their *Girl From Ipanema* goes walking to a beat and wail that has never been suggested in all her previous incarnations. They are Barondown and no bass or piano players need apply.

There is one last recording for to consider here and it's the most fully realized of all the previous ones mentioned herein. It's by french horn player **Tom Varner**, it's called ***The Mystery of Compassion*** (Soul Note 121217-2) and it's a beauty and a rare thing. The excellence shown in Varner's arrangements for the core quintet (himself, Ed Jackson, Rich Rothenberg, Mike Richmond and Tom Rainey) is a careful, never cautious thing. Some of what sets this recording apart is the french horn in the lead but there is so much more going on. Each composition is in itself a short story or a character study of the sum of the individuals blowing there. There is funk, blues, dirge, noise, and simply stated, beautiful writing. "Compassion" is only one of many mysteries revealed on this outstanding effort and I look for more of Varner's works with much hope.

So, although it was already widely known, the state of Post-Ornette: Pianoless Music is a vibrant field with fast runners in many directions. It's a wide one, too, encompassing Post-Ayler and Post-Lyons zones and more. It's all the same to me if played well and with a degree of honesty and imagination and that's all we're looking for to listen to anyway, right? So look for these recordings and listen... □

BIG BANDS: ONE

REVIEWS BY
RANDAL McILROY

SOME WORKS DEMAND a larger canvas and more colours. Working to the larger scale then becomes a matter of justification. Either you plump for the giant-sized gesture or the greater network of detail. Sometimes, rarely, you can do both.

Ever since spiralling costs and changing tastes thinned the big band ranks, leaders are more pressed to vindicate the many extra hands. Adversity has a way of encouraging, fortunately, and a recent batch of big-band sessions shows a variety of innovative responses. One thing is clear: orchestral thinking (layering the colours, playing cells of activity against each other, measuring the tension, etc.) holds sway. Somewhere Gil Evans is grinning.

SUN RA continues to report from beyond the grave, or beyond this planet at least, with two decidedly different interstellar communiques. ***The Magic City*** (Evidence ECD 22069-2) dates from 1965. Ra and his (Solar) Arkestra had recently moved to New York from Chicago, and according to Ra biographer John F. Szwed's valuable liner essay quickly found their home in a scene that embraced art without barriers.

Both the 27-minute title track and *The Shadow World* find Ra and his musicians conjuring shapes from the shadows. In the first, the high, shuddering, siren of Ra's clavioline, echoed by flute, piccolo, and bass clarinet, summons the Arkestra's collective power, with John Gilmore's whalesong tenor leading the first assault.The amorphous opening is situated musically somewhere between the 'little instrument' scratching of the early AACM bands and the later explorations of such early German rock alchemists as Amon Duul II, though neither would produce such might, nor show such a sense of galvanizing purpose. In the second, Ra prowls between tympani, piano, and amplified celeste as the horns spiral.

Completed with two short tracks *(Abstract Eye and Abstract 'I')* that never develop beyond some ominous rumblings, ***The Magic City*** frames Ra as the man with the vision. That's a useful reminder when listening to another Evidence release, the soundtrack to Jim Newman's Ra biopic ***Space Is The Place*** (Evidence ECD 22070-2). Where ***The Magic City*** is about sweat and precision in the rehearsal loft, ***Space Is The Place*** is all about the showmanship of the stage, complete with invocations, poetry, and chants. Such adventures brooked no middle ground. Ra, bless him, could go on a bit, and the tedious "I am the Wind" declamations in *Blackman/Love in Outer Space* for one strike these outside ears as a near-endless preamble to the good stuff — here, Marshall Allen's wailing Morocco-via-Saturn oboe and the boiling drums. It would be wrong to disregard the recitations and other dramatics as extraneous when Ra lived his art, but this time the music works better without them. It may be fitting that a chart called *Discipline 33* cues some of the hottest playing, underpinned by Danny Thompson's grooving baritone sax. *Satellites Are Spinning* is a poignant reminder that singer June Tyson, gone now like Ra, never got her due beyond the family.

One of Ra's greatest strengths as a bandleader was his orchestration of uncommon colours, especially in reeds and percussion. Where a big band typically involves the terracing of different voices in one drive, he pitched colours in virtual competition with each other.

VINNY GOLIA marshalls enough reeds to be an orchestra unto himself. The Large Ensemble displayed on ***Decennium Dans Axlan*** (Nine Winds NWCD 0140) saves him the bother.

The 25-member ensemble numbers a staggering list of voices, including violin, cello and tuned percussion in addition to a hefty brass section and five multi-woodwind players including Golia himself. Yet it remains a writer's vehicle — he founded the ensemble in 1982 to perform his larger works — and the four long compositions make full use of those colours.

CARLA BLEY • PHOTOGRAPH BY GERARD FUTRICK

The mood is tense, with Golia raising dissension to make the skin itch. *In Tapestry of Things Before*, the crosshatched marimbas nag like Steve Reich's patterns while the strings rise slowly. An acapella bass conversation in *Front Back* gives way to a furious swing session, with Bill Plake sounding like Eric Dolphy on tenor. Tolling brass figures shadow the darting clarinet and loose swinging drums of Mr. Justice. Jeff Gauthier's opening violin solo in *Man in a Bottle* suspends like ice over a crevice.

There's always something happening, and it always makes sense. Golia paints on a larger canvas than most, but he justifies every inch. It's a shame that unsentimental economic realities prevent the ensemble from performing live more often.

WITH a looser game plan that encourages open improvising by way of a score that promotes options over unanimity, English bassist /composer BARRY GUY's ***Witch Gong Game II/10*** (Maya MCD 9402) would seem to be the diametric opposite to Golia's planning. Yet the players of the Vancouver-based NOW ORCHESTRA react with such empathy and robust individuality that the effect is much the same — a large force in multiple, with ample contrast and no waste.

These two long works (16 and 53 minutes respectively) are episodic but organic. Like a garden, there's order and chaos in such naturally occuring proportions that the division soon seems irrelevent. The three basses and one cello loom, large brass/woodwind shapes emerge, then break in various simultaneous motions, to recombine and dissolve again and again. Occasionally a soloist emerges — Saul Berson's alto sax and Kate Hammet-Vaughan's voice compelled frenzied note-taking — but in a wild garden you don't fix on one bloom for long. Just dip in, but remember those heady fragrances can be heady in multitude.

GERMAN pianist/composer ALEXANDER VON SCHLIPPENBACH has worked in that raw territory even longer, notably with Globe Unity. ***The Morlocks and Other Pieces*** (FMP CD 61) is likewise beyond borders in every respect, blending structure and personal initiative, group identity and ego, and using an international cast. This time, he even shares piano and conducting duties with Japan's Ali Takase.

Everyone contributes, but Evan Parker still rates a paragraph of his own. There's a thrilling moment in *Contrareflection*, for example, where all other action suddenly cuts out for a good minute of the Englishman's impossible soprano multiphonics. Some kind of hummingbird, Parker is often darting through the surging horns and Schlippenbach's trap-door approach to piano continuity.

Schlippenbach's compositions span 10 years of writing, with the diversity that suggests. *Jackhammer* swings without irony, much less apology. Marcia di Saturno is at once sombre and romantic, with tenorist Walter Gauchel plumbing both streams. The leader's stated interest in providing "the highest possible level of attention to an individual musical idea or a compositional concept, and try to observe and trace its inmost laws of momentum to the utmost, and then use this to create larger forms" is most electric in *The Morlocks* itself, where twin prepared pianos provide the brittle foundation for a mad circus parade of marching brass, dizzy piccolo and Parker's circular soprano.

DIFFERENT orchestral ideas abound in ***Joy*** (Candid CCD 79531), soprano saxophonist DAVID LIEBMAN's latest tribute to John Coltrane ("the major inspirational figure in jazz for me"). This time, he's used the James Madison University Jazz Ensemble under Gunnar Mossblad, along with the university's flute choir and a few guest soloists, to create frameworks for his straight-horn explorations.

The key word is enhancement. Forget any starchy notions of Trane mollified for the masses. The flute choir adds an unearthly grace to *After The Rain*. Strings and brass bring out the devotional beauty of the music. It's Liebman who cuts to the heart of the sound, though, with a keen technique on soprano that Trane himself had the chance to develop. The fiery leaps of *India* and the jeweller's-sharp melody in *Naima* confirm Liebman as one of the best on a notoriously difficult horn; what price a duet with Steve Lacy?

RAY ANDERSON is the trombone's cheeky virtuoso, unafraid to acknowledge the comic potential of the instrument's voice (in the same way that Don Byron accommodates that aspect of the clarinet) as a noble part of the heritage. His technique is wide, but he's also self-effacing to the degree in which he looks for context before expression, trying to find the best way to show what he can do.

Big Band Record (Gramavision R2 79497) is very much a collaboration with pianist/leader George Gruntz, who paces Anderson's catholicity with the charts to match. The New Orleans hilarity of *Seven Monsters*, the wild Latin dances of *The Literary Lizard* and the quietude of *My Wish* sit together naturally, cajoled or cushioned by layers of brass and reeds. Anderson is all over his horn, especially in the fluid structure of *Annabel At One* and the playful *Raven-A-Ning*, but there's plenty of room left for some of his formidable partners, notably in the clarinet and violin passages (Marty Ehrlich and Mark Feldman respectively) in *My Wish*.

This time, Anderson saves his vocal turn for the end, with the testifying *Don't Mow Your Lawn* suggesting he could always find work in the amen corner.

BIG-BAND history may be implicit rather than explicit in most of the aforementioned. Not so with the COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA on the live ***Basie's Bag*** (Telarc Jazz CD83358), where the spry hands of the gone Basie are never too far away. Granted, Frank Foster's band sometimes owes more to Las Vegas than Kansas City, down to the *One O'Clock Jump* coda. The Basie swagger rises only occasionally; these players sound happier with the tidier memories, like the natty piano and rhythm guitar intro to *Way Out Basie*. Foster has some sturdy players on board, though, including hungry drummer David Gibson and trombonist Robert Trowers, and his own tenor chops are still on the strength.

ELLINGTON as well as Basie is also echoed in ***Diggin' In*** (Sea Breeze CDSB2049), a lively mainstream excursion by the JAZZ MEMBERS BIG BAND OF CHICAGO. Leaders Jeff Lindberg and Steve Jensen have a good band that's especially well served by its saxophones (alto Chris Lega and tenor Jerry DiMuzio are hot *Presidental Manor*; Eddie Johnson is nicely Hawkish in *Hey, Jealous Lover)*. There are some nice little touches. too, like the way the ballad For the Last Time goes into double time for the trumpet solo, or the acapella horn break in *Watch What Happens*.

DENNY CHRISTIANSON's Montreal big band veers a little left of the common course in ***Shark Bait*** (Justin Time JUST 60-2). A lot of thought has gone into the band's bottom end, with bassist Sylvain Gagnon slapping some funk on several tracks and harmonizing with trombone and bass clarinet in *Franz*. *C'est Quoi* cuts back even deeper to show the rhythm section of Gagnon, guitarist Richard Ring and drummer Jim Hillman. Jazz rock it isn't, but they've been listening to the modern dance, and the kick is noticeable. The band taps a number of bright writers and even brighter soloists, including the tough altoist Jean-Pierre Zanella and cool keysman Jan Jarczyk.

FINALLY, it's good to report that CARLA BLEY has tamed her whimsy to get back into something more charming. ***Big Band Theory*** (ECM 78118-23125-2) is a timely reminder that Bley is one of the cleverest writers in the larger ensemble, with an Ellingtonian ear for distinctive soloists. This time there's a mix of old friends like Gary Valente with his broad trombone, newer associates like the wiry tenorist Andy Sheppard, and one surprise in violinist Alexander Balanescu. Usually found in a different kind of new music through his own own string quartet or with Michael Nyman, Balanescu more than copes with the narrative demands of *Birds Of Paradise*, a typical Bley blend of jazz, gospel, and more polite bits.

The cover of Mingus's *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat* seems too obvious a ploy, even though Valente and trumpeter Lew Soloff take it beyond the realm of dry reverence. There again, Bley's intoxicating potpourri owes something of its greatness of spirit to Mingus, and like Mingus she never lets a composer's discipline dampen good old-fashioned raucousness. □

BIG BANDS: TWO

REVIEWS BY
JAMES ROZZI

THE BIG BAND ERA MAY HAVE FOLDED for a number of reasons, but one was surely economic. With this in mind, it is creditable that so many large ensemble recordings are being released currently. Largesse is a formidable consideration in the recording process alone, even if the band never hits the road.

Back in the mid-1950s, arranger/composer/brassman Shorty Rogers was the first to take advantage of a new, highly proficient breed of musician who needed little rehearsal to cut a quality record. Hence, the first recording studio big bands developed under his guidance. Mentioned in this group of reviews are assemblages of this sort, along with those fortunate enough to be working on a regular basis. Some are even blessed to spread their sounds beyond immediate parameters out to an audience which — in part because of an indelible sense of history — never can seem to get enough of the subtle colours and sheer ferocity available only from a large acoustic ensemble.

SLIDE HAMPTON & THE JAZZMASTERS: ***Dedicated to Diz*** (Telarc 83323) makes no qualms about its commemorative precepts to both Gillespie and jazz's finest hour. While third millenium musical creativity may be the topic of numerous roundtable discussions, here the younger players get to strut their stuff with no pretence of innovation. Roy Hargrove (tpt), Antonio Hart (ss, as), Danilo Pérez (p), and David Sanchez (ts, ss, fl) all excel at incorporating bop vocabulary with more current ideas. But unquestionably, their's is a style based on the modern — and yes, the adjective still fits. Jon Faddis, Claudio Roditi (tpt), Jimmy Heath (ts), Steve Turre (tbn), Douglas Purviance (b tbn, tuba), George Mraz (b), and Lewis Nash (d) round out the personnel who join Hampton (tbn) on a well-chosen set of mostly Gillespie compositions *(Overture: Con Alma, Ow!, Bebop, I Waited for You, Blue & Boogie; San Sabastian; Lover Man; Bebop; Diddy Wah Diddy; Tour de Force; A Night in Tunisia)*. The fresh Hampton arrangements (i.e. *A Night in Tunisia* ala Latin funk) and consistently blistering solos culminate in a thoroughly exciting 72-minute set, live from the Village Vanguard.

SLIDE HAMPTON • PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER DANSON

THE DAVE MCMURDO JAZZ ORCHESTRA: ***Different Paths*** (Sackville 2034) is truly serious music, from beginning to end. Thoughtful writing is evident throughout the eight compositions, with all but two (George Shearing's bopping *Conception,* and Phil Nimmon's gorgeous ballad, *Quest)* penned by band members. Changes occur in tempi and grooves; chordal writing combines with counterpoint lines; classic ensembles (i.e. saxophone solis) join more innovative layers of sound. These are but several of the orchestral devices chosen to depict a broad compositional gamut that ranges from obtuse bop (guitarist Reg Schwager's *What News)* to melancholy bossa (McMurdo's *Cee Song)* to the 23-minute, visually arousing benchmark suite (Don Thompson's *Don't/Wintermist).* Fine soloists abound in Pat LaBarbera, Michael Stuart (ts); Mark Promane, Don Englert (as); Don Thompson (p); Reg Schwager (g); Mike Malone, Kevin Turcotte, Chase Sanborn (tpt); Perry White (bs); and leader Dave McMurdo (tbn). An outstanding concerted effort continues to evolve through McMurdo's second Sackville release.

A LESS traditional big band approach is KENNY WHEELER: ***Kayak*** (ah um 012). Wheeler's trumpet or flugelhorn is the principal voice soaring above a little big band of French horn, trombone, bass trombone (or tuba), two saxophones (both tenor doubling soprano), and rhythm section. An additional trombone and John Horler's piano (hence, two pianos) are added for the closing, lengthy impressionistic suite.

Whereas McMurdo's big band swung from the rafters, Wheeler takes a more subtle approach. Gentle water colours replace bold oils; soft pastels depict a world of tempered personal vision, not so well defined by conventional values. Improvisation is at the forefront here, with Wheeler's textured ensemble passages devised mainly as a means of stating his romantic themes. Wheeler has chosen his sidemen wisely: pianist John Taylor, valve trombonist Dave Horler, and saxophone/flautist Stan Sulzmann are fine soloists. Drummer Peter Erskine interprets and reacts sensitively. Tenor saxophonist Julian Argüelles is particularly expressive, with a sound and style steeped in an optimal blend of Prez and Trane. Compared to his pensive writing, Wheeler's soloing shoots from the hip, never fearing the inevitable fluff, adding fallibility to an enjoyable depiction of human contrasts.

MALACHI THOMPSON & AFRICA BRASS: ***Lift Every Voice*** (Delmark 463), boasting six trumpets and four trombones, has a premise built around a group within a group. Specifically, Carter Jefferson (ts), Kirk Brown (p), Avreeayl Ra (d), and Harrison Bankhead (b) comprise Thompson's hard-blowing Freebop Band, who, along with Thompson on trumpet, negotiate most of the solo work with a great deal of fire and passion.

As Kenny Wheeler used the round, polished sounds of the flugelhorn, tuba, and French horn obbligato for ascertainment of a near-orchestral timbre, Thompson's personnel explore the opposite extreme: purely raw emotion through brass playing seemingly bent more on exhibiting individual sounds than blending as an ensemble. It's equally appreciable, even when listened to back-to-back with Wheeler's much smoother endeavours. With a stately repertoire equally influenced by a pair of rivers (the Mississippi and the Nile), Thompson's Chicago-based, heavily percussive, famously named brass band successfully relates two worlds as one music.

MANY a debate has raged over the existence of a true "West Coast" sound. Whereas the 1950s exhibited a division across the board in soloing as well as ensemble playing, today the dispute is confined more to the latter. Speaking of, if a California sound has survived, it lives through JOEY SELLERS' JAZZ AGGREGATION: ***Pastels, Ashes*** (9 Winds 0153). To Sellers (a recipient of the Gil Evans fellowship), composition and arranging seem equally as important as blowing. The six originals here, while not necessarily of the hum-along variety (with the exception of the beautiful trumpet ballad, *Marie),* have been orchestrated for 11 pieces with a great deal of thought and sensitivity. Tutti passages alternate with improvisations, often in mid-solo. Woodwind doubles are heard throughout, giving a light texture to a quantity of the material. This is not to say that the soloists confine their blowing to marshmallow mediocrity, for they obviously do not. Jerry Pinter (ts, ss, fl, cl); Kim Richmond (ss, as, fl, cl); Kei Akagi (p); Clay Jenkins, Ron King (tpt); Alex Iles, Bruce Fowler, and Joey Sellers (tbn) take the bull by the horns, muscling the rhythm section into upbeat compliance almost in spite of some sparsely written backgrounds.

DARRELL KATZ JAZZ COMPOSERS ALLIANCE ORCHESTRA: ***Dreamland*** (Cadence 1053) probes a cross-section of devices and styles. For the most part, linear contrapuntal writing succeeds at divulging tonal centres that pass from one phrase to the next like amoebas changing shape. Just when the listener feels locked into Katz's methods, he utilizes basic chordal writing for dramatic effect. Although strict 4/4 and 3/4 are the common denominators, rhythmic shifts and changes of tempo create contrast and interest. Aside from one straight-ahead blues with a twist *(Left Overs,* dedicated to the type of music Katz found himself performing as a young player in Kansas City), and one realignment of Strayhorn/Ellingtonia *(Tonk),* originals comprise the bulk of this Bostonian assemblage's repertoire which often plays first fiddle to the composer's funny bone. Fine soloists include Diana Herold (mallets), Rob Scheps (ts), Bob Pilkerton (tbn), Doug Johnson (p), and John Dirac (g).

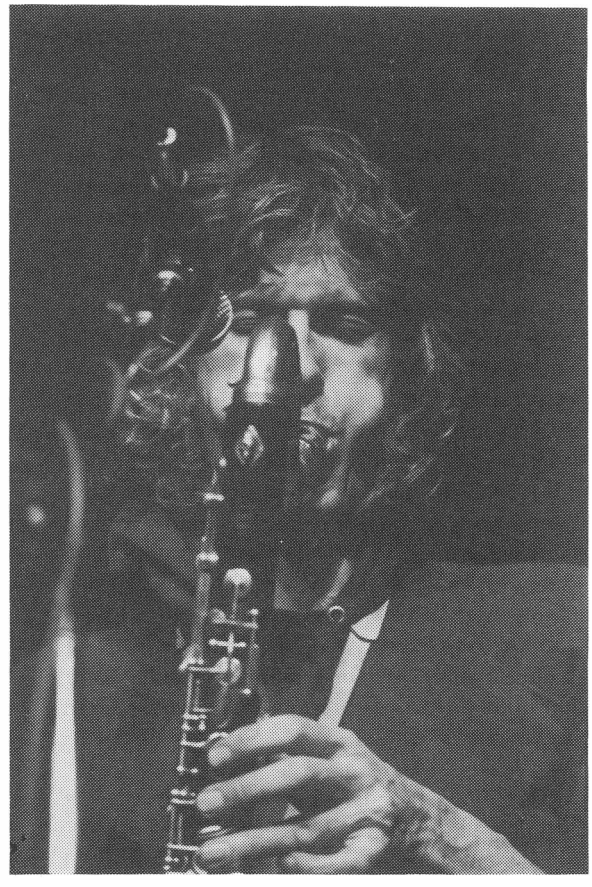
FREEDOM rings from yet another Boston big band with a number of the same players: MARK HARVEY & THE AARDVARK JAZZ ORCHESTRA: ***Aardvark Steps Out*** (9 Winds 0155). Alternating sounds portraying the plodding gait of its namesake with those much lighter, Harvey's large, bottom-heavy band may begin a given composition by slogging along, but always gains buoyancy with reliance on soloing from a variety of personalities. Often, the rhythm section remains silent while a soloist finds direction through absence of any sonic distractions. In this regard, Aardvark is truly an adventurous clan. One song for saxophones only

(For Edward), and one that explores timbrel variations for four trumpets *(Mutant Trumpets)* round out an eclectic set which never confines the creative whims of its members.

ANTHONY BRAXTON: ***4 (Ensemble) Compositions 1992*** (Black Saint 120124) contains *Composition No. 100; Composition No. 96; Composition No. 164; and Composition No. 163*. Heavily reliant on the improvisational abilities of a handpicked ensemble of heavyweights (Don Byron, Marty Ehrlich, Jay Hoggard, Amina Claudine Myers, etc.), Braxton's two earlier opuses once again come to life here, inviting comparison to earlier recordings regarding the personal basis of his genre. The higher numbered pieces are being documented for the first time.

Unjustly overshadowed by his small group undertakings, Braxton's larger essays are expanding and contracting tone poems, using space, silence, and personalized wind and percussion sounds to depict the intricacies or simplistic hermitages of life as Braxton and his musicians see it.

ON the other hand, the CD reissue of 1985's GUNTER HAMPEL NEW YORK ORCHESTRA: ***Fresh Heat, Live at Sweet Basil*** (Birth 0039) is as straight-ahead a big band as you'll find these days excepting those named after some deceased bandleaders. Marvin "Smitty" Smith kicks the living daylights out of a hard blowing entourage of mostly second-call Northeasterners as they plow, undaunted, through a set of six lengthy, stretched out, opened up originals. Two vocalists (Jeanne Lee, Art Jenkins) give a slightly more humanized element to the proceedings with vocalese from within the band (the scats section?). Relentless, aromatic swing is in the air at Sweet Basil, courtesy of the leader's compositions, arrangements and aggressive personnel. □



GUNTER HAMPEL • PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN VOCI

BIG BANDS: THREE

REVIEWS BY MARC CHÉNARD

BY NOW IT'S A CLICHÉ to talk of the demise of the big bands and such questions as "When will they ever come back?" are hackneyed, if not spurious. Though they were once prevalent, their impact within the music's evolution has not been as decisive as, say, the many small group performances of innovative soloists. Of course, the Count Basie Orchestra and Duke Ellington's band survive, but they owe their longevity to the glories of yesteryear, in spite of the many personnel turnovers and incorporation of new material in their books. In fact, Stan Kenton had it right when he said that his band would go when he would. (Mind you, some were of the idea it should have gone much before, but that is another matter altogether.)

Yet, this larger format has always been an enticing medium for composers and arrangers, if not for the musicians themselves. Few performers are really averse to the experience of wailing away with a brass or reed section offering harmonic counterpoint or chordal blasts. While large orchestras are pretty well luxuries nowadays, save for their prevalence in educational institutions (nice way to get a student body working together), they have a place within the wider picture of the music, albeit a peripheral one. More than anything else, the big band is still the best place to learn about the give and take, the sharing of common and divergent experiences of its participants, which are put into focus by the compositions and arrangements of their writers. And was it not Duke himself who once opined that he did not really compose for the instruments per se, but for the very people who played them?

IN the jazz big band idiom, this has always been of paramount importance, especially for those who have had the chance to built a repertoire for an orchestra with a reasonably stable personnel. Granted, there are not too many of them working on a regular basis, but there are some. Of these, there has been a New York tradition of Monday Night jazz orchestras, starting back with the legendary Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Vanguard band, not forgetting the Gil Evans outfit featured at Sweet Basil. To that list, we can now add the orchestra of MARIA SCHNEIDER, holding fort at Visiones for over a year now.

Just last year, she made her debut recording, the CD entitled ***Evanescence*** (Enja 8048-2). Not only does she have a solid formal training (a Masters in composition at the Eastman School of Music), but she has honed her craft through private studies with Bob Brookmeyer and a tenure as understudy with Gil Evans. It is no coincidence then, that her debut release pays tribute to the late pianist, and the disc's title cut evokes some of the harmonies and moods inherent to her mentor's textured orchestrations. While the first part of the piece has an urgent straight ahead swing feel (representative of the early to mid-Evans period, one could say), the second part segues into an ostinato rhythmic groove (reminiscent of his "electric" period).

But Schneider is not really an Evans clone, for her writing is more involved melodically and structurally than Evans' orchestral sketch-like works. In effect, her style owes a lot to Brookmeyer's sophisticated writing techniques. A non-performer herself, she relies on a group of lesser-known players, though pianist Kenny Werner, tenorman Rick Margitza, trumpeter Tim Hagans (a Lovano associate), trombonist John Fedchock and drummer Dennis Mackrel are about the best known players of this 17 piece outfit. (Just a thought in passing: Evans first acquired his reputation as an arranger and non-player, though he eventually joined his groups as pianist-keyboardist. Will Schneider do the same one day?...) Nine tracks fill up this disc, offering a full program (72 minutes worth) of well-polished scores, with a good allowance for extended solos at the same time (Margitza showing off his Brecker chops on a couple of good outings, too). Indeed, Maria Schneider has much to say in her chosen medium and while her writing shows great maturity already, maybe a little more flexibility (and some rough edges) would give a little more freedom to her band and get some more sparks flying as well.

IF SCHNEIDER'S band may be a little too clean for some, the Boston-areas's own ORANGE THEN BLUE surely comes across as a looser-sounding aggregation. Its new release, ***While You Were Out*** (GM Records 3028) is a double set recorded back in '92 at the renown Banff Centre of Performing Arts. While headed by drummer George Schuller, this 12 piece orchestra is a collective in the sense that no one person is its main composer or arranger. Contributors to the book here are tenorman Chris Speed, trumpeter Dave Douglas, french hornist Mark Taylor and the leader himself, with the title cut and, coincidentally, a quasi-identically titled Gil Evans tribute entitled... *Evanescent* (This set's centre-piece). Added to these originals are a couple of numbers derived from various folk musics, from regions as diverse as Bulgaria *(Ganika Horo)*, Venezuela *(La Partida)* or Ireland *(Three Reels & An Air)*. Add to that a lilting tribute to Albert Ayler *(Truth Is Marching In)* and one has a varied but never diffuse-sounding body of music. The moods are joyous, reflective and quirky and one senses a great flexibility in the writing and the interpretation of the players. This is very much a group effort and no one player here dominates the proceedings with a razzle-dazzle type of solo. In effect, this band has much of the looseness and flexibility of a small combo, as though it was not only playing the music, but rather through it. Anyone who thinks that orchestras are too confining should check this one out.

A MUSICIAN once active in the Cambridge area, trumpeter KEN SCHAPHORST has now moved on to Wisconsin where he pursues a career as an educator. After a couple of releases on the Accurate label and a contribution to the Jazz Composer's Alliance band (on Northeastern), he returns to the former label for his latest CD, ***When The Moon Jumps*** (Accurate AC-4023). This time around, he heads (but does not play with) a scaled-down 10 piece group, for which he has written and/or arranged all of the material. Of the nine tracks, two are standards (a modally revamped *All The Things...* and a rhythmically varied treatment of Dizzy's *Con Alma* - shades of reggae even!); the remaining cuts are all originals, the final three entitled *Concerto For John Medeski*, featuring here the keyboardist of the highly publicized Medeski-Martin and Wood trio (the rhythm section of this ensemble in fact). Despite its title, there is nothing pompous or grandiose in this suite. Conceptually, it is a three part work, whose first and last movements are diatonic and chromatic variants of its middle part. While the first pieces on the disc seem more conventional in their orchestrations, little twists appear as one moves on, (i..e. the standards) and his orchestral textures become a little more adventurous (for instance the cluster-like voicings in *Perfect Machine*). The twenty minute *Concerto*, finally, flows swiftly with good ensemble work and strong soloing by the pianist. With an hour's worth of well crafted music, this is a fine release, all the more so given its appropriate running time.

WERE it not for its musical interest, the Texas-based Orchestra of TINA MARSH (Tina Marsh & the C02, as in Creative Opportunity Orchestra), ***The Heaven Line*** (CREOP Music 002) would be a rather long listening haul. At close to 75 minutes, this disc presents a band totally new to me (then again, who in these snowy Northern climes is aware of the scene down in that state's capital, Austin?). For starters, a large groups lead by a singer is an unusual occurrence; those who may then think the band is merely a backdrop for another "Chantootsie" are mistaken, since Ms. Marsh vocalises like another horn, and is not compelled to solo on each cut either. Only on the short out piece *Marvellous Error* does she sing a lyric, backed by a synthesizer wash. For the most part, the music seems culled from a live concert (though applause are heard at the end of a couple of cuts only) and, as is often the case in live big band dates, the sound seems a tad distant. A somewhat moody and introspective feeling permeates the grooves of this disc, but it never gets vapid or laconic either. Here and there, there are some gritty moments, like a feisty baritone excursion on the opening cut by John Mills (though credited as playing alto on the personnel listing), and John Coke's split-toned circular breathing flute episode on the following track. Of the thirteen musicians, Los Angeles bassist Ken Filiano, drummer Billy Mintz and trumpeter Dennis Gonzales may only ring a bell. But musical interest is not dependant on the reputation of its players (as well all know, or should at least); in fact, one of the greatest pleasures of the journalist is precisely discovering that

group or player that has something fresh to say. C02, in its own way, has made a good first statement, neither radical nor innovative as such, but not really conventional either. In spite of the blurry out of focus picture of the singer on the cover, the leaflet does provide the listener with some useful bearings on this intriguing group.

A MYSTERY in his own right, though a more than well-documented one, SUN RA has now moved on to some distant galaxy. But for all of us earthlings, he has left quite a sizeable legacy of recordings. Since his departure in 1993, more material has (re)surfaced, his Saturn albums now readily available on Evidence and more recent issues available on a variety of labels. Of these, Leo Records has put its hands on some later material, two of which present the Arkestra in somewhat unclear settings (just like in those good ol' Saturn days). ***A Quiet Place In The Universe*** (Leo CD 198) is such a release, culled from a concert issued earlier on ***A Night In East Berlin*** with added tracks from an unknown date of the late 70's. Ra expert and annotator Chris Trent offers his detective work, even listing a possible personnel at the bottom of the leaflet. But no real indication is given as to which are the Berlin tracks and which are the others. These considerations apart, about all tunes included here figure elsewhere, though a Pat Patrick alto feature on *I'll Never Be The Same* is a lagniappe of sorts. In any event, this is for Ra completists, and there are quite a few of them around too.

OF LATE, one orchestra leader whose name and band have grown stronger and more visible is that of GEORGE GRUNTZ and his Concert Jazz Band. A busy globe-trotter, and now as recently retired artistic director of the Berlin Jazz Fest, Gruntz will be able to devote even more time to his musical projects. Though primarily active in Europe, the CJB's personnel has been mainly American and in each of its editions, the pianist has always been keen to pick up-and-comers on the New York scene; of late, he has included trumpeters Herb Robertson and John Dearth to his line-up, as well as tenorman Ellery Eskelin, with Marty Ehrlich also on board. Some two years ago, however, his crew journeyed to faraway China to play a few concerts in what is indubitably the most remote land to jazz on this planet. Considerable red tape (sic) had to be surmounted before the twenty-odd men, camera crew, sound technicians and sundry hangers-on crossed the world. Results of this trip can now be heard on an almost 79 minute disc, ***Beyond Another Wall*** (TCB 94102). Band veterans Lew Soloff, Mike Richmond, Larry Schneider, Howard Johnson are there as are his stalwart bonemen Ray Anderson, Art Baron and Dave Taylor (a.k.a. the Lucifers). The energy and enthusiasm of this band comes across loud and clear on this recording, though the recording quality seems very compressed and rather strident. Added to the band are Chicago bluesmen Carl Weathersby and Billy Branch (associates of the leader since his Chicago Jazz Cantata premiere). On the whole, one gets the feeling of George and friends giving a jazz and blues primer to the virgin ears of their audiences. In effect, there is a wow-them-at-all-costs rule that seems apparent here. While there is plenty of excitement, almost 80 minutes of the stuff gets a bit tedious. Only the brief two minute closer *Farewell To China* with Schneider on a Chinese flute offers a release. Elsewhere, thought, three blues numbers with all the licks you've heard before cover some 35 minutes of the disc (a bit much for my taste). Hearing this band in concert may have been great, but on a record of this length, one wonders: "How much is too much?"

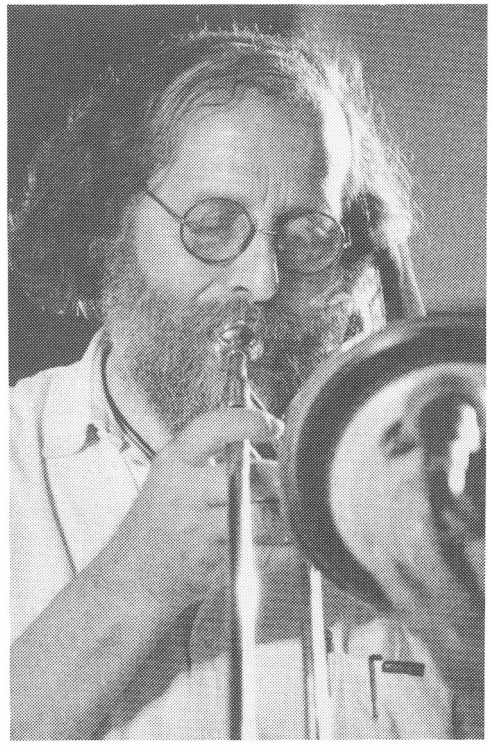
AS is the case of Maria Schneider in the States, KLAUS KÖNIG is essentially a non-performer, though he plays trombone on parts of his first recording ("Times of Devastation/Poco a Poco" on Enja). An ambitious writer, he has recorded four suite-long pieces since emerging in 1989. As a follow up to his rather spectacular "Song of Songs" album (for orchestra, voice soloists and Montreal's Jubilation Gospel Choir), his newest work ***Time Fragments*** (Enja 8076-2) marks a return to an all instrumental format. A 13 piece Euro-American line-up tackles a multi-movement suite, subtitled by the composer as *Seven Studies In Time And Motion*. On board for the ride are such noteworthy players as Mark Dresser, Gerry Hemingway, Robert Dick, Mark Feldman, and Kenny Wheeler. As in each of his suites, König varies his instrumentation, here using the marimba

GEORGE GRUNTZ • PHOTOGRAPH BY GERARD FUTRICK

of Stefan Bauer rather than a piano. To aid the listener in this journey, the wonderful fold-out liner sheet includes a detailed graphic score of the work, a good set of notes by Patrick Hinely backed by a full panoramic colour shot of the band in performance.

All but the last cut bear dedications to composers from the jazz and classical realm, i.e. Alban Berg/Charles Mingus or Igor Stravinski/Anthony Braxton to give but two examples. Moreover, two musicians are featured as soloists in each cut, with everyone chipping in on the closer *Fine Nelly In Fin Alley*. First and foremost, though, it is the whole that counts more than any of the individual contributions (yet the Gratkowski alto solo and Feldman's violin spot are strong statements nevertheless). In comparison to his previous efforts, this one might lack some of the razzle dazzle, but it does comes across as a more concentrated and, dare we say, 'mature' piece. Bearing this in mind, König is already at work on the final instalment of this cycle, which he plans to call "Reviewed Reviews Revue". Critics and nay sayers, please stay tuned...

LET'S move on to three all-European outfits. First off, the ITALIAN INSTABILE ORCHESTRA ***Live At Noci And Rive De Gier*** (Leo CD 182) is a veritable who's who of contemporary Italian jazz, amongst them: reedmen Carlo Actis Dato and Gianluigi Trovesi, trumpeter (and Noci's Europas Jazz Fest honcho) Pino Minafra, trombonist Giancarlo Schiaffini, drummer Tiziano Tononi and the best know of them all, pianist Giorgio Gaslini. Once more, this is an extended program (72 minutes) with 5 long pieces (ranging from 8 to 15 minutes) and a short epilogue of a minute rounding things off. Just in the first cut, the music moves from quasi bel canto singing to a freeish collective to a swinging big band passage, a capsule of the multiple styles that occur throughout this disc. Through it all, there is that latin flair of great fun and not taking themselves too seriously. Come to think of it, the Italians do certainly project the most playful and good natured music on the European scene (must have something to do with their 'Dolce Vita'). In any event, the lightness of their folk music provides them with good material for their impish romps. Forceful without being frenetic, whimsical without being corny, the Instabile Orchestra is a band which that would really be enjoyable to see live, both for the show as for the music itself. (An Italian Kollektief? Hmm...) A lot of music for sure, but once again, the length of the recording somehow overstates their case. For best effect, listen to this one in two or three sittings.



ANOTHER big band made-in-Italy is the JAZZ CHROMATIC ENSEMBLE, here presenting its first release ***Evening Standards And New Music*** (JCH Productions 001). Sporting a 13 man band led by bassist Angiolo Tarocchi, this group of mainly unknowns on this side of the Atlantic nevertheless has two holdovers from the Instabile, saxman Danielle Cavallanti and drummer Tononi. Musically, this orchestra has all of the markings of a rehearsal type outfit, a get together of friends playing more for their own pleasure than for an audience. But this is not to say that it sounds like a semi-professional group because its playing level is indeed very proficient. Its repertoire is basically drawn from the jazz book of standards: *Ezzthetic* (with a solid alto solo by Tiziano Tracanna), *Nardis, Alabama* and *Orange Was The Colour Of Her Dress* are all given substantial treatments. The leader provides a conventional *Blues For Seven*, while Cavallanti's piece *Moods For Dewey* is a funky nod towards Mr. Redman. To offset these longer tracks (from 6 minutes plus to 15), five short interludes are inserted (vignettes culled from a movie score on the history of photography). Cleverly, these short spots give a little respite to the listener, before going in to the next excursion. A fine touch which helps maintain interest throughout this ca. 75 minute side. Apart from a very freeish collective on the Coltrane number, the rest of the music is very much set in the big band mould: swinging, well executed but short on surprises, orchestral or soloistic.

FROM the previous traditional band lore, the final disc under review here is much more of a rattle-and-shake proposition. Front and centre is the twenty-odd man MOSCOW'S COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA with guest composer and pianist, Vladimir Miller (British born but of Russian descendant). A concert recording, the program of four compositions-cum-orchestral sketches are featured on the release ***Kings And Cabbages*** (Leo Lab CD 005). Ranging from 11 to 17 minutes, these very loosely structured pieces are held together by a couple of melodic or rhythmic ideas, fragmented into a number of collective improvisations, some of these rather blustery. While the first two pieces *Incomplete Silences* and *Theme, No theme, Yet A Recurring Dream* have rather limited thematic material and explicit written orchestrations, the latter two (*Friendly Devil* and the title cut) offer more discernible compositional substance. As the former builds over a recurring bass ostinato, the latter spells out the most distinctive melodic line of the set. In listening to these cuts, one's ears may be reminded of Barry Guy's London Jazz Composers Orchestra (a model for Miller?) and, to a lesser degree, the Globe Unity Orchestra. Very much in line with the Euro-Free orchestra tradition, this band is not short on energy, quite powerful in spite of some diffuse energies. Yet, the work of the guest composer remains somewhat unclear here, though one only hopes to hear more from him in the future. □

GIANCARLO SCHIAFFINI • PHOTOGRAPH BY COSMO LAERA

SOMEWHERE BETWEEN

CASSANDRA WILSON - Blue Light Til Dawn - *Blue Note CDP 0777 7 81357 2 2*
CHRISTINE CORREA & **RAN BLAKE** - Roundabout - *Music & Arts CD-807*
CHRISTINE CORREA & **FRANK CARLBERG** - Ugly Beauty - *Northeastern NR 5015-CD*
JACKIE ALLEN - Never Let Me Go - *Lake Shore Jazz LSJCD-005*
MARILYN CRISPELL - Santuerio - *Leo Records CD LR 191*
JESSICA WILLIAMS - Arrival - *Jazz Focus Records JFCD 001*
LILY WHITE - Somewhere Between Truth & Fiction - *Knitting Factory Works KFW 153*
CERCIE MILLER QUARTET - Dedication - *Stash Records ST-CD-580*
MARLENE ROSENBERG - Waimea - *Lake Shore Jazz LSJCD-004*

ALTHOUGH WOMEN HAVE ALWAYS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF JAZZ, IT IS ONLY WITHIN THE LAST DECADE OR SO THAT A STEADILY GROWING FEMALE PRESENCE HAS BEGUN TO EMERGE ON BOTH THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SCENES. LIKE THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS, THERE ARE THOSE WHO PREFER THE RELATIVE SAFETY OF STRUCTURE AND TRADITION, WHILE OTHERS CHOOSE THE UNCERTAINTY OF CRISS-CROSSING GENRES OR OF BOLDLY PUSHING FORWARD INTO FREER, UNCHARTED DIRECTIONS. COMBINING THE EFFORTS OF VOCALISTS AND INSTRUMENTALISTS ALIKE, THIS COLLECTION OF CD'S TENDS TO REFLECT THIS SENSE OF STYLISTIC DIVERSITY.

CASSANDRA WILSON is unquestionably one of the most original and imaginative singers to come along in quite some time. Inspired by the likes of Sarah Vaughn and Betty Carter, Wilson possesses the unique ability to incorporate and blend a variety of influences into a remarkably distinctive approach. ***Blue Light Til Dawn*** her first session for Blue Note is by far her best recording to date. It begins with a lovely rendition of the standard *You Don't Know What Love Is* and then proceeds to zig zag through an exciting program consisting primarily of an African flavoured original or two, a couple of tunes by legendary bluesman Robert Johnson and some folk pop material courtesy of Joni Mitchell and Van Morrison. Accompaniment for the most part is cut to a minimum as personnel and instrumentation change from cut to cut. Clarinetist Don Byron brings a lift to *Black Crow*, Brandon Ross successfully juggles the apparent difficulty of switching from acoustic classical to blues guitar and Olu Dara's cornet snaps at the heels of Johnson's *Hellhound On My Trail*. But the main focus here however is on Wilson whose exceptional timing, jazz inflected phrasing and impeccable artistry make this a disc not to be missed.

Coming originally from Bombay, India, **CHRISTINE CORREA** relocated to the U.S. in 1979 where she attended the New England Conservatory of Music, graduating from the Third Stream Department. Since then, she has performed in the U.S., Europe and India. On ***Roundabout*** she is joined by pianist Ran Blake, a union that begs comparison with his former association with Jeanne Lee. While certain similarities do exist, it soon becomes apparent that Correa is set on carving out her own special niche. Blake's introspective piano covers a broad spectrum of moods. Often spare and restrained, there are times when he does play forcefully, contrasting dissonant with more lyrical passages. Forming the perfect partnership, they explore the familiar, the obscure and the original. Scattered among Blake's own thought provoking themes are works by some of America's finest composers and song writers (Vernon Duke, Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, Matt Dennis, Cole Porter) plus much more. The end result is a well conceived effort that sustains interest throughout its lengthy 16 track run.

Ugly Beauty another Correa showcase is practically a mirror image of the previous outing. For this set her collaborator is Finnish pianist Frank Carlberg. Again there are several standards, a touch of Ellington, a pair by Monk (including the haunting title track) and a few miscellaneous things. But the main difference here is the introduction of certain traditional Indian folk elements; an area where Ms. Correa excels. Carlberg, a most able accompanist, always seems to provide just the right note, chord or embellishment. Traces of Ran Blake turn up from time to time but on the whole, Carlberg is well on his way to developing a keyboard voice of his own. Both principles mesh into a cozy relationship that impacts profoundly on this most enjoyable endeavour.

Born in Milwaukee, vocalist **JACKIE ALLEN** grew up in Madison where she attended the University of Wisconsin studying with bassist Richard Davis and pianist John Wildman among others. Moving to Chicago in 1990, she gained invaluable experience at various jazz clubs and cabarets. ***Never Let Me Go*** her debut date is a model of understated elegance. Backed by a crack contingent of Chi-Town musicians, (Willie Pickens or Brad Williams piano, Larry Gray bass, and Robert Shy or Joel Spencer drums)

JESSICA WILLIAMS PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILLIP BARKER

TRUTH & FICTION WOMEN IN JAZZ REVIEWED BY GERARD FUTRICK

Allen casts a magical spell with an interesting mix of low key swingers and heartfelt ballads. Organist Melvin Rhyne's sultry *Teach Me A Song* opens side one. Taken at an easy lilt, it features a contemplative tenor solo by saxophonist Edward Peterson. *I Didn't Know What Time It Was* follows at just a slightly faster tempo. Allen proves herself an able composer *(I Chase The Sun)* and lyricist *(What We Thought Was Real, So Wrong)* while her exuberant scatting in unison with Ed Peterson's tenor makes a strong impression on *Old Chair*. *It's All Right With Me* the only real flagwaver, bristles with yet another forceful appearance by Peterson this time joined by trumpeter Art Davis. My particular favourites include the charming *Lucky To Be Me*, Alec Wilder's *Moon And Sand* which is given a gently samba treatment, and that old Billie Holiday staple *Detour Ahead*. Based solely on the merits of this sterling performance, it is safe to assume that Allen can look forward to a long and fruitful career.

Pianist **MARILYN CRISPELL**'s unswerving devotion to a fresh, innovative musical philosophy has placed her squarely on the cutting edge of today's new jazz movement. Her close ties to Anthony Braxton, Reggie Workman and others, plus her own personal projects help to bear this out. ***Santuerio*** is a welcome addition to her aesthetically rewarding and varied discography. Enlisting the talents of violinist Mark Feldman, cellist Hank Roberts (who comprise two-thirds of the string trio Arcado) and her long time associate Gerry Hemingway, Crispell maps out a series of original compositions that range from fleeting moments of serenity to quick, sharp, energetic exchanges. Each member of this quintet has chops to spare and everyone gets plenty of room to stretch out. Bowing and plucking effectively, both string players bring a myriad of tonal shadings and rhythmic variations to the almost constant and at times fiercely demonic interplay. Feldman's pure, radiant sound cuts like a laser while Robert's deep, dark tone meshes seamlessly with the overall dialogue of the ensemble. Utilizing every inch of his drum kit, Hemingway helps to sweeten the pot by stirring up a seemingly endless stream of shifting rhythms and special sound effects. From delicate, almost inaudible tinkles to explosive, earth shattering eruptions. Crispell is a highly motivated, intensely driven pianist whose firm, percussive attack owes a debt to Cecil Taylor. Moving from tranquil interludes to crashing chordal clusters and high velocity runs, she molds, shapes and ultimately transforms each of these stunning, multi-faceted themes into a lustrous suite-like presentation.

While the past accomplishments of pianist **JESSICA WILLIAMS** are probably no secret to most readers of this publication, she has never really received the recognition she so justly deserves. ***Arrival*** should help to change all that. Going it alone, Williams puts together a thoroughly delightful recital that serves as sort of an unofficial tip of the hat to such jazz legends as Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Randy Weston and Duke Ellington. A graduate of Peabody Conservatory, her flawless technical dexterity and masterful pedal control are the obvious results of an extensive classical background. Her clever intro to *Birk's Works* (a manipulation of the piano's strings and hammers) eases into an amazing tour de force as her rock solid left hand bass line fully compliments the agility of her roving right. An obvious affection for Monk has no doubt prompted the inclusion of *Misterioso, Ruby My Dear, Japanese Folk Song* and *Lulu's Back In Town*. On standards like *I've Never Been In Love Before* and *Wrap You're Troubles In Dreams*, Williams adopts a no frills, straight-from-the-shoulder-stance, periodically displaying flashes of absolute brilliance. Much of the same can be said of her two attractive originals as well as the stunning overhaul she does on Pharoah Sander's *The Creator Has A Master Plan*. Randy Weston's *Blues For Strayhorn* settles into a relaxed, after hours groove and the ever popular *Mood Indigo* is given a new lease on life. After drinking in this entire session, it should become abundantly clear that this album's one word title just about says it all.

With the exception of Vi Redd who gained a certain amount of prominence in the 50's and 60's, the saxophone in all its shapes and sizes is an instrument that has largely been dominated by the male segment of the jazz community. Gradually, this trend has begun to shift as reed players like Jane Ira Bloom, Jane Bunnett, Fostina Dixon, Barbara Thompson, Kathy Strobart, Sue Terry, Mary Fettig Park, Lindsay Cooper and Candy Dulfer are turning up with greater regularity. Add to this swelling list the names of Lily White and Cercie Miller.

LILY WHITE's ***Somewhere Between Truth & Fiction*** contains a wealth of titillating surprises. By consolidating her complete mastery of the tenor, alto and soprano saxophones, with a list of pleasingly unpredictable charts and a superb selection of strong, sympathetic sidemen, White has come up with a compellingly original formula for success. The rhythm section, consisting of pianist Michael Jefry Stevens, bassist Chris Wood and drummer Mike Sarin not only provides dependable support but also inspires the other members of the group. Weaving his violin into the fabric of the ensembles, Mark Feldman's solos overflow with vim and vigour. Conrad Herwig's trombone adds some muscle and guitarist David Phelps splashes his metallic grunge here and there. Whether walking the straight and narrow or standing precariously on the edge, White is a resourceful improvisor who challenges her cohorts and listeners alike. All of the tunes are hers with the exception of *Paris* which was penned by Danish guitarist Jon Hemmersam whose acoustic instrument is heard on this track only. Although this disc may have fallen short of my 10 best of 1994 list, it certainly qualifies within the top 20. »»»»

Hailing from Washington, D.C., **CERCIE MILLER** has been knocking around the Boston area for quite some time. ***Dedication***, her maiden voyage, is a more conventional, modern mainstream affair where above average originals coexist with tried and true standards. Except for *St. John* and *Garnet Canyon* where she is heard on tenor, Miller prefers to stick to alto. She handles both horns equally well: exhibiting smooth articulation, a biting tone and a logical flow of ideas when constructing her solos. Playing organ on *The Blue Note*, pianist Bruce Katz shares the piano bench with James Brough for the remainder of the date while Harvie Swartz and David Clark split the bass chores almost down the middle. Trumpeter Tiger Okoshi is along for the ride on a couple of tracks and drummer Bob Savine is a model of tasteful restraint. Generally a worthwhile and satisfying romp, ***Dedication*** is slightly undermined by too many fade out endings and a run through of *The Nearness Of You* that gets bogged down in an attempt to turn it into a funky, soul drenched ballad. I'm sure we will be hearing more from Cercie Miller in the not too distant future and it will be interesting to check out what she comes up with the next time around.

Windy City bassist **MARLENE ROSENBERG** has gigged with Joe Henderson, Frank Morgan and Ed Thigpen. On ***Waimea*** she fronts a tight knit unit that clicks from start to finish. All of her imaginative originals were skilfully arranged by pianist Dennis Luxion who appears on several cuts including *Gone A-Stray* a graceful duet with the bassist and *Urban Kaos* where compositional form is nudged to the outer limits. Rosenberg's thick, supple bass lines figure prominently into the overall concept of this album. Working closely with drummer Mark Walker, she helps to create a churning undercurrent beneath guitarist David Onderdonk whose phrasing falls somewhere between John Abercrombie and John Scofield. The bottom line is an intelligently constructed and well executed project that should appeal to most serious jazz listeners. □

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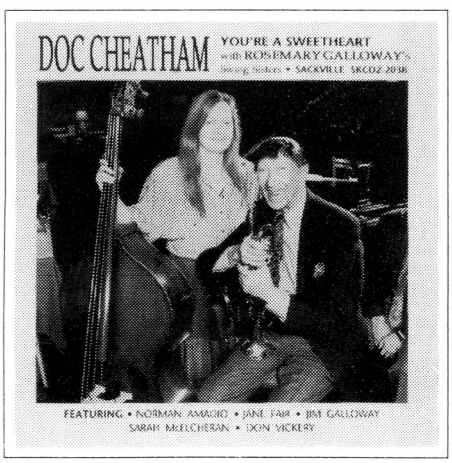

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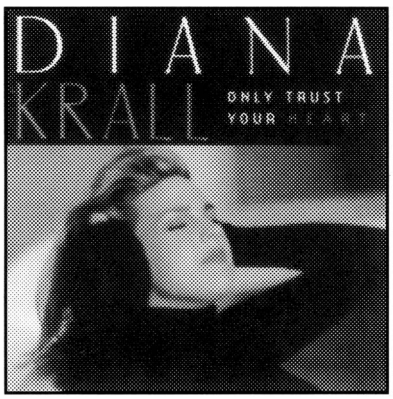
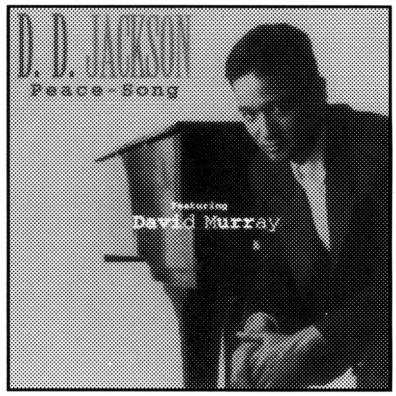
Diana Krall
Only Trust Your Heart



In the jazz tradition of Dinah Washington, Shirley Horn and Carmen McRae, Diana Krall is both an extaordinary singer and pianist. Diana is joined by Ray Brown and Christian McBride, who divide the bass playing, Lewis Nash on drums as well as the soulful tenor sax of Stanley Turrentine.

D. D. Jackson
Peace Song



This great debut album from pianist D. D. Jackson features Jean Martin on drums, John Geggie on bass as well as the great tenor saxophonist David Murray.

Featuring David Murray

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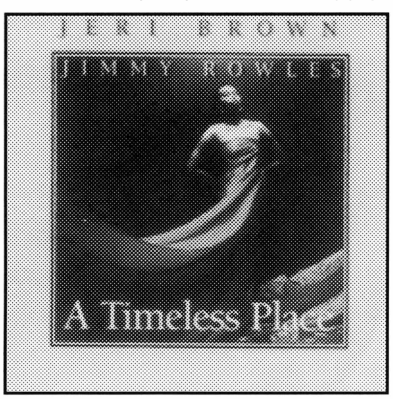

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With Jimmy Rowles

Paul Bley & Sonny Greenwich
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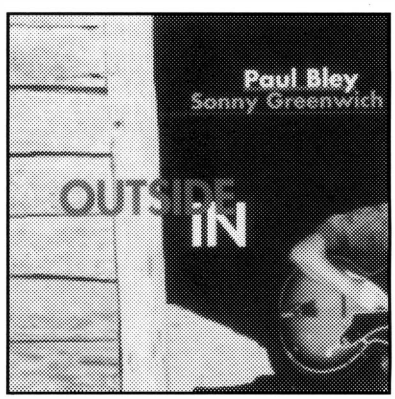

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