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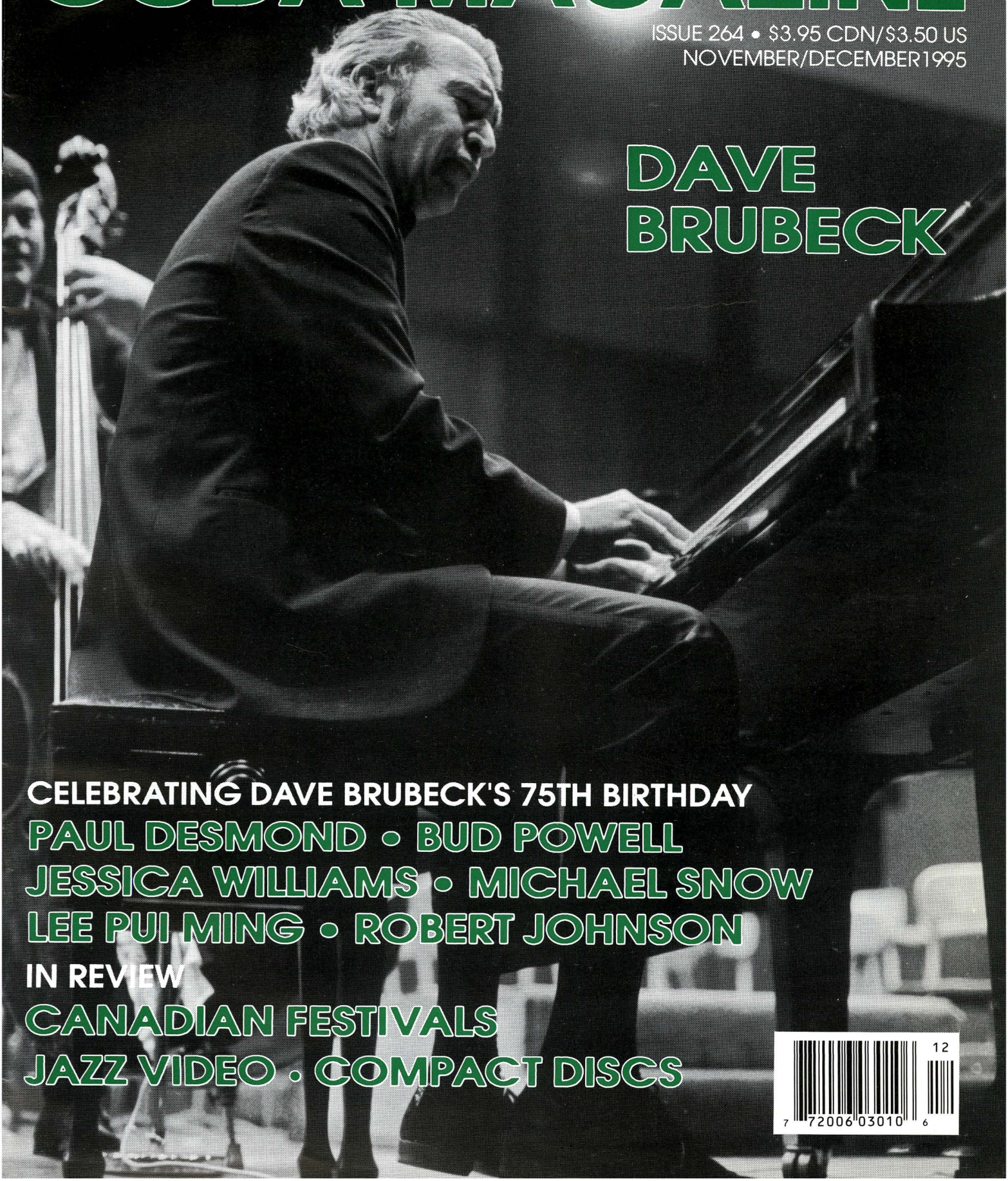

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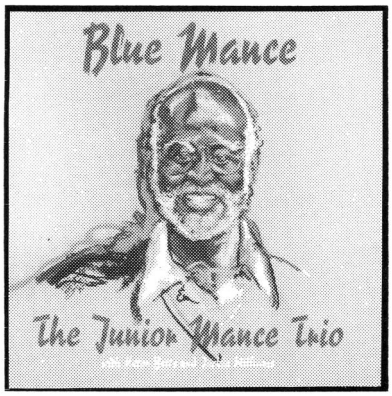

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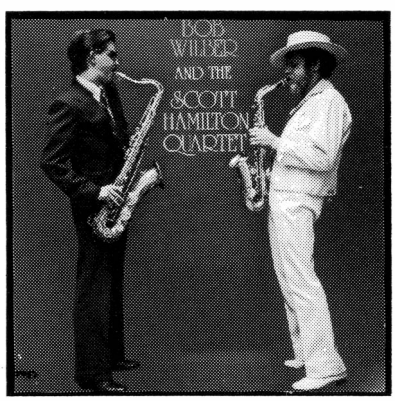

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JOHN NORRIS • Founder/Publisher
WILLIAM E. (Bill) SMITH • Editor/Art Director
SHEILA MACPHERSON • Copy Editor

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH OF
DAVE BRUBECK
BY BILL COPELAND

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1995 CANADIAN FESTIVALS
VANCOUVER, TORONTO & OTTAWA

DU MAURIER LTD. INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL • VANCOUVER • JUNE 23RD - JULY 2ND

Vancouver '95: the year Jimmy Scott shot his cuffs, Evan Parker played a tenor solo perched on a 15-foot ladder, George Lewis made winds obey him by wiggling his fingers, and Tristano loomed large.

Jimmy Scott lives in a dinner jacket; his tuxedo is his instrument as much as the Dinah-Eartha voice. It all feeds the same effect: mesmerism. When he sings the line "taller than the tallest trees," arms stretched out, flashing a foot of either shirt sleeve, he's a tree. His vibrato is big enough to set up interference patterns with itself: waves in a bathtub. You know why David Lynch likes him. He makes *When Did You Leave Heaven?* a crisis of faith.

STEVE BERESFORD PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL SMITH

Scott is a died-in-the-silk performer, master of the outsize gestures that make a textbook good festival set (one to catch the ears of folks hearing five acts a day). So, conspicuously, is James Carter. Some hear his eccentric/historic techniques — slap tongue, plosives, circular breathing, overtones, split tones — as pure schtick (the quotes didn't help). He has a penchant for show-stopping, yeah, but what other twenty-some jazzman knows let alone plays a Don Byas tune or a gaspipe lick; can turn a Roscoe Mitchell staccato into a chugging trainsong in seconds; has as much near-delirious pubescent pep? But I wish the tenor whiz had brought baritone instead of alto and soprano.

J.J. Johnson's showmanship is, in its quiet way, not so different: almost all his set, the middle of a triple bill, was up tempo. Swing may not be everything, but he reminds you how much it counts for. (Expert rhythm section: Billy Childs, Rufus Reid, Bruce Cox — in New York the week before with a different trombonist, Fred Wesley; Dan Faulk played booting tenor with light tone, a good foil for the boss.) Like Carter, J.J. knows one way to get over is to keep the energy up. But his one ballad, *It Never Entered My Mind,* made the case his less noted side is more effective, even when notey enough to imply doubletime. His tone is butter.

Two hours earlier, another different trombonist, George Lewis, was conducting Vanc's NOW Orchestra. Elsewhere NOW also reprised its Victoriaville program of Lussier and Plimley pieces (see last issue) in modified form, but George's conducting of improvisers was more deft than Butch Morris or Misha Mengelberg or any other master I've seen. George knows 90 percent of conduction is pantomime: he'll point at two horn players, waggle a hand back and forth: give me some of this. He'll make 20 such gestures a minute, shaping and co-opting his charts, seemingly making up his vocabulary as he did. He uses common sense; to cue a piece in a continuous set, he just holds up the lead sheet. *Chicken Skin* began with dead-serious string music, then George unleashed Paul Plimley, then the band bok bok bokked like chickens, then Graham Ord played a solo in Boots

Randolph "chicken tenor" style. George squeezed in a few trombone solos, to remind you how good he's sounding.

Of the locals, three NOW members stood out. Dylan van der Schyffe is no (longer a) young player of promise; he's a great listening driving drummer. Cellist Peggy Lee has blossomed mightily; her classical chops have been subsumed into a personal conception notable for what it avoids, mainly other cello improvisers' tacks: no strummed chords, no Delta picker's blue notes, no Bach echoes. Two guitarists — NOW's Ron Samworth and not-NOW Tony Wilson — have risen above their black-box hardware to display individual voices, Samworth's slinky and skronky (playing alongside Lussier can't hurt), Wilson's agreeably clotted, Monkish. (His band Monkaholics revives with great spirit one tune other such cover bands don't touch: *Carolina Moon.)*

We don't think of Paul Plimley as a local anymore. Adding him to Evan Parker's trio for one gig showed how able he is to engage such masters on their terms, bending their conception to his will, jolting the trio out of what amounts to their (elsewhere demonstrated) regular set: tenor piece followed by a circular soprano solo the rhythm section then sneaks in to disrupt.... Free bands from Sam Rivers to Charles Gayle have settled into such useful, none-too-restricting formats. Yet Parker, bassist Barry Guy and drummer Paul Lytton renew your faith in '60s everyone's-equal band-stand democracy. They also managed to get into their deep-listening state no matter how distracting the environment. They played at a bar at the Plaza of Nations (home of the three-stage two-day free gala that concludes the fest yearly) into which sound poured in from an outdoor stage, and under a tent on Granville Island, where families drifted through the big top as the show caromed on undeflected. (Both shows were free.)

Parker has his routines — the things you repeat define your style — but is very much the improviser. That much was confirmed by an ad hoc quartet with drummer Han Bennink, pianist Steve Beresford and bassist Joe Williamson (a Vancouverite who's been living in Holland), a sorta reunion of a Parker-Bennink-Beresford-Arjen Gorter heard at Amsterdam's '91 October Meeting. As then, the combination coaxed Evan into most uncharacteristic behaviour. In Vancouver, Han dragged the ladder out at the onset (he grumbled later that Canadian theatres have too little junk backstage to use as props), and played its rungs with sticks, but it was Parker who gingerly ascended, with tenor, after playing a solo drenched in Texas blues. The piece ended with him stuck up there, looking suitably sheepish.

Bennink and Beresford encourage odd behaviour. Their duo changes fast, going every which way — Steve playing piano, or letting his cheap little samplers run on their own, or singing one of his comic songs in patented droopy voice.... As a trickster, he's Bennink's match. If Han's longtime duo with Misha is like chess, each blocking the other's moves, this duo is more like piling blocks on blocks in the playpen, to see how high they'll stack before collapse.

Bennink was also paired with Willem Breuker, for a periodic reunion of the New Acoustic Swing Duo. Breuker secretly arranged to have his Kollektief's horn players come out one at a time to intervene, bothering Han not a bit. It was a study in contrasts, Holland's spontaneous maniac versus the circus-master who prefers scripted (or at least pre-arranged) mayhem. The hare beat the tortoise. Bennink was also paired with trumpeter Dave Douglas, whose time Han likes a lot; Douglas got into early-jazz two-beat feel and two-bar phrases for much of the set, taking Bennink back to his prebop roots. This was Han's fourth straight Vancouver festival, but he hasn't worn out his welcome or run out of things to do.

Breuker's Kollektief does the same jokes on the road they do in Holland or New York, including a very un-PC belly dance number that's going to get them in trouble sooner or later. (In the bar at the hotel where musicians were quartered, pianist Henk de Jonge and trombonist Nico Nijholt played standards into the wee hours.) Guus Janssen, one great Dutch composer little covered in these pages, performed in trio on disparate conditions — from a makeshift stage on a Gastown street to the always cozy if sweltering Western Front. His sets gave ample play to his wondrously specific (sometimes diamond-hard) keyboard touch, mastery of inside-the-piano dampening and strumming, and fertile compositional mind. Jazz is only one of his sources, but he takes the piano trio format very seriously: it's a jazz classic, as he says. (Ernst Glerum's on bass, bro Wim Janssen on drums.) Guus's jazz transformations include *Stomp,* a rethink of *Stompin' at the Savoy; Hi-Hat,* with the piano's highest notes played in (a cookie-cutter template of) standard hi-hat swing rhythm; *One Bar,* a static Johnny-one-note routine with a swinging four-beat release (which moves on to other territory as soon as the joke has been established); and a series of tributes, *Free After M, "Free After EG, Free After AT, Free After LT.* M is Monk, that God to Dutch pianists; the Tristano piece showed how much his long snaky lines appeal to this classically trained composer. The Tatum was the boldest; three beats of pure Art might be followed by long notes from bowed bass, and jagged drums and piano unison hits, or piano and bass conjunctions, which rely on precise timing to work at all. With Tatum, god-in-the-house is in the details, an idea Guus approaches from an original direction. He makes you think about innovators by thoroughly recasting their ideas.

Tristano boomed through Georg Graewe's solo set, although in this pianist's case you may suspect the correspondence — an obsession with line — is coincidental. Graewe too is a master of technical details: complex disjunctions of keyboard pull-offs and sustain pedal, superb two-handed articulation of single note lines (side of

the left over the fingers of the right). Heritage-wise, Mozart was in there too, and Andrew Hill's radical moment-to-moment shifts in texture, density, register. Still it flows, rhythmically; that's his continuity. What sticks most is his intellectual concentration: with each piece, he creates a world in seconds, explores it a couple of minutes, then snuffs it.

Georg was also heard in a good but not splashy trio, improvising with clarinetist Francois Houle and bassist Joelle Leandre; her cheerfully goofy solo set had ended with her kissing her bass, having sung love songs to it while playing: she came off oddly like Andrea Martin's dotty immigrant domestic on SCTV. And yeah, Francois' trio with Wilson and van der Schyffe sounds better and better — even if I never made the extraordinary claim for him the doctored quote in Red Toucan's shameless ad avers. (Not Houle's idea, by the way.) Tristano also came up on a piece that reminded you how wonderfully scrambled tradition can be.

Fronting a Hollandaise-smooth septet, Vanc trumpeter Alan Matheson announced *One For Warne* would try for a Tristano sound; the piece sounded based on Tadd Dameron's *Hot House* — the drum bombs would not garner Lennie's approval — and the leader quoted *Rockin' In Rhythm* in his solo. A daffy reminder that reading history is rarely simple.

Shorties: Franz Koglmann's brass trio sounded wobbly, playing his Ellington recastings, but soloist Lee Konitz brought the statues to life. (Lee opened with an extraordinary audience-participation solo — *The Song Is You,* fittingly — that played on how little listeners know about music; it was all the more funny because it could have but didn't come off snotty.) Fred Anderson, Hamid Drake and Marilyn Crispell sounded good, but not as good as on that get-it Okkadisc. Gianluigi Trovesi's octet was memorable mostly as showcase for Victo star Pino Minafra, the genius of electric bullhorn faked guitar feedback; yes he's a goof, all prancing pixies are, but he's for real. Jane Bunnett: annoying, but why? The Cuban grooves sound almost convincing, her chipper energy thing may just be my problem, but Jeanne Lee had little of substance to sing, and Andrew Cyrille for the first time in this listener's experience sounded bored. A Joey Baron-Paul Plimley duet: two sweet guys, first date, a love-in, lovely. Rova and guests, *Secret Magritte* — sorry, ear fatigue, it went past me. We wait for the CD.

As always in these parts, the Asian-Canadian and Native Canadian populations so visible in town have made little headway on the local scene, or festival anyway. Still American Indian inflections came out in Sheila Jordan's chant-like scat on her Bird medley. (She and pianist Steve Kuhn opened for Jimmy Scott. Made sense: they sing in the same register.) She's one no-longer-a-kid singer who sounds undiminished. Long may she rave.

J.J. JOHNSON (PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN)

DU MAURIER LTD. DOWNTOWN JAZZ FESTIVAL • TORONTO JUNE 23RD - JULY 2ND

Grab this. The du Maurier Ltd. Downtown Jazz Festival, Toronto pulled in an estimated 670,000 people to witness an array of performers strewn around 50 venues during the 10 days of music. Jazz cropped up in its varied manifestations (how could it be otherwise, with the organizer's intent and 1500 performers) and in so doing showed where the music was, is and may well be, where it has gone and where it shouldn't have. It was in this very stewpot that one could dip and come up with a tasty morsel or crunch on a bone. But at the end of it all there was no denying the well being of satisfaction that warmed the soul.

The old guard was there, assured and assuring. So were the young giants, rising above the hype to cement reputations and bring hope and light into the art form. And now for the music.

Joe Henderson that beautiful soulmate of the tenor sax, came along with Oscar Castro-Neves on guitar, Paulo Braga on drums, Nico Assumpcao on bass and Helio Alves on piano. They played with an exquisite air, Henderson light and feathery, never pushing the tone yet filling each phrase chock full of emotion. He lit a quiet fire under the work of Antonio Carlos Jobim letting the music of Brazil glow in the magic of its rhythm. And his band was perfect, Castro-Neves getting the rhythm to dance and finding a special chemistry with the lilting Alves, while Assumpcao used both hands to fleck an interesting pulse. Felicidade!

J.J. Johnson's cool, collected and distinctive voice on the trombone honed in on an exciting selection of tunes. The brilliance of *Kenya* with it's pulsing beat, the growling blues of *Why Not Indianapolis,* and the four-part *Friendship Suite* came together not only in the solos which spotlighted the stabbing, precise left hand of Billy Childs, but also in the ensemble passages.

Though Charlie Haden found the night air cold and warmed his fingers by blowing on them or holding them over the lights, he was never short of inspired turning in a streamlined performance that never let the moment slip. He had fine support from the elegant, poised Alan Broadbent on piano and from Ernie Watts on saxophone. Though Watts was often tempted to swagger, this did not turn out to be a downer.

Betty Carter opened with *Once Upon A Summertime* and followed it with another slowie *East Of The Sun (And West Of The Moon).* Sure she frequented the nuances, dipped into the valleys, caressed words, held them and looped them. But just as the feeling that this was going to be a sombre night was beginning to inveigle itself into the mind, whap came *Tight* and Carter was up and away scatting with zest and abandon. From then on she balanced her show neatly, turning the melancholy *Useless Landscape* and the edgy *30 Years* into show stoppers. Then it was time for *A-tisket A-tasket* on which she struck a whirlwind conversation with the bass of Eric Revis and one could swear in the silence that greeted this virtuoso performance, that even the traffic on King Street had stopped to listen!

The intimate du Maurier Theatre centre provided the perfect setting for Taborah Johnson. She has a way of communicating with her audience, reaching out and drawing them into her sphere. There she was with a stunning a cappella version of *Can't Help Loving That Man,* a captivating *Jazz Cat* an original that was at times crude but never less than honest and a politically correct *Summertime* on which daddy turned up as a fine "individual"!

Nicholas Payton has vitality and imagination. His phrases can be lean and articulate, pungent and brassy and he never loses focus in the evolution of his sound. The depth of emotion that transpires from his approach was more than evident in the liquid, swinging *You Stepped Out Of A Dream,* the brash, energetic changes that marked *In The Beginning* ("by my mother's favourite composer — me") and in an admirable version of *Body And Soul.*

Christian McBride's intensely melodic bass lines make one want to do cartwheels. He got the bass up and singing right from the opening, the roiling blues of *In A Hurry* with Tim Warfield on tenor sax throwing fast, slambang phrases before he took it into *The Shade Of The Cedar Tree,* written for Cedar Walton, in a workout which cooked, bristled and burst with positive energy. McBride was also well served by the ministrations of Anthony Wonsey on piano and the dynamic accents of Greg "Baby Shaq" Hutchison on drums.

Flourishing swirls and tempestuous crescendos marked the piano style of Cyrus Chestnut. Drawing from his album ***The Dark Before The Dawn***, Chestnut exhibited an easy felicity, light ripples that danced on the keys, emphatic voicings that heightened the emotion and then the gentle tinkling that heralded the calm after the storm.

Call the Dave Holland Quartet brothers of a kindred spirit and the description would be bang on. With Steve Nelson on vibes, Eric Person on saxophone and Gene Jackson on drums, they set up a pulsating canvas with *Triple Dance,* where a spacy air soon moved into a frolicking pulse. They chorded in the deep toned and soul satisfying passion of *Equality* before Monk gave them the edge as they *Played Twice* with elan. An enlivening performance and as much a treat as one could ask for!

The eloquence of Marcus Roberts saw him infuse fresh blood into standards that left a distinct stylistic impress. From the jump-start boogie of *New Orleans Blues,* Roberts dipped into the rhapsodic *Single Petal Of A Rose,* moved into two-handed emphasis while making *Monk's Point* adding to the texture with block chords and luminous runs. Gershwin was in there too and *Rhapsody In Blue* saw Robert's plumb idea upon interesting idea. Just as he seemed to have come to a resolution, he would turn the tune around and add another facet in a radiant display of virtuosity.

Listening to James Carter was like being at a revival meeting. Using soprano, alto and tenor saxes he harrumphed and hollered, blew up a storm and for measure added a whirlwind slew of honks, blats, squawks and slap-tonguing. In the midst of it all he even addressed *John Brown's Body* and *Camptown Races.* He did cool the tempest with quiet lines, oft times melodic, on occasion soft, free and airy. But he was soon back to the rambunctious mode he preferred, propelled to the charge by Craig Taborn (piano), Jaribu Shahid (bass) and Tani Tabbal (drums). It was hot, sweaty stuff alright but there was no mistaking the feeling that Carter was trying too hard and the effect of his ministrations began to pall.

Anthony Davis was a disappointment because he got to play just three jazz tunes, caught as he was in a concert on which the emphasis was on classical music. Davis who is comfortable in both genres, showed an elegant disposition, and yes a classicism, in his solo outings *Of Blues And Dreams* and *Five Moods*

CANADIAN FESTIVALS 1995

From An English Garden before closing with baritone saxman David Mott on a gentle, stylish *It Had To Be You*.

A series of wails rent the air, foreboding, caterwauling, wrapping faint strains of melody in muscular grasp as David S. Ware flaunted his "sheets of sound" craft on the saxophone. The tempo he set was torrid, sending drummer Whit Dickey huffing and puffing even as he unflaggingly pegged the rhythm with bassist William Parker scampering all over the fretboard in fevered intensity!

Unfortunately the much touted Matthew Shipp had little room to ply his craft except for one brief solo where he set up springy soundscapes tempered with pastel shades. Ware was not afraid to delve into the pantheons of freedom that jazz offers brash, brazen, bold and without compromise. The last could have helped, for what Ware failed to show on that night was a sense of humour. This would not only have lightened the evening but would have given his music a needed dimension.
Reviewed By Jerry D' Souza

OTTAWA INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL - JULY 14TH - 23RD

Few people outside of Canada's Capital region seem to realise that Ottawa has a major jazz festival with unique characteristics.

To begin with you got a real "bang for your buck". A $20.00 pre-festival purchased pass admitted the holder to all events spread over a ten day period in mid-July. With the pass you could then attend (if you have a great deal of stamina) all of the concerts. There's no duplication or overlapping of events and the venues were all close together in the heart of Ottawa and less than a stone's throw from the Parliament Buildings. All you needed in the way of equipment was a portable deck chair, plenty of sandwiches, sun and rain protection gear and considerable stamina.

The day began early with the lunchtime events in various downtown malls, office parkettes and in the Confederation Park. This was mostly music from local bands — a lot of dixieland, some fusion and a broad mix of more mainstream styles. An exception was Swiss pianist Moncef Genoud creating magic on a little electric keyboard with assistance from a Montreal bassist and drummer.

The late afternoon "Pianissimo Plus" concerts at the National Art Gallery's concert hall were always popular. You needed to be there at least 30 minutes before showtime to get a good seat. Acoustically it's an excellent venue and also boasts a top quality full sized concert grand piano. This is where it became apparent that Ottawa's programming follows its own muse. Sure, they too had a performance from Mario Grigorov who was sent around Canada by his record company. He masquerades as a jazz performer and so does Judy Carmichael. She has the mechanics of stride piano down pat and over the past decade has created an upbeat concert presentation which went over big in Ottawa. Much more satisfying was Claude Williamson's presentation the following night. He shared the stage with bassist Bill Crow in a program heavily tilted towards his idol Bud Powell. At 68 Williamson has a mellow, easy way with Powell's rhythmically volatile songs and he and Bill Crow offered music full of invention, musicality and honesty. Only the music was the message. It was also good to hear Powell's tunes free of any later stylistic touches. There was not even a hint at the harmonic changes wrought by Bill Evans and McCoy Tyner. Other performers in this series included Aki Takase (from Japan), Dave McKenna, D.D. Jackson and Fred Hersch.

The main stage at Confederation Park (which is where you need your deck chair) can hold up to 6000 people with relative comfort. Each evening two concerts were presented. The early shows programmed "Great Canadian Jazz" and reached across the country for such artists as Joe Sullivan, Bob Mover, the Denny Christianson Jazz Orchestra, Alain Caron, Gene DiNovi, Sylvain Gagnon, Bill King's All Stars (Jake Wilkinson, Mike Murley, Reg Schwager, Shelly Berger, Archie Alleyne) and Al Henderson's Quartet (with Perry White featured on tenor saxophone).

The headline concerts covered much of the jazz spectrum. Unique to Ottawa was an appearance by Harold Land, the vocal stylings of Vanessa Rubin and the power-packed punch of the T.S. Monk band. Further out there were the Willem Breuker Kollektief, Ray Anderson and the Allegatory Band, Medeski Martin & Wood and Jane Bunnett with Sheila Jordan.

Right down the middle was the high energy of the Woody Herman Orchestra under Frank Tiberi's leadership. Even though Woody is long gone the band continues with the same concepts — lots of long and energetic solos from young musicians whose enthusiasm, musicianship and brashness immediately captivated an audience which, for the most part, was as young as the musicians on stage.

Later in the evening cabaret style concerts were held at the National Arts Centre. They alternated between vocalists and more experimental styles of the music. The vocal program included Ranee Lee, Page Cavanaugh, Jackie & Roy Krall and Carla White, while the contemporary program included Eric Person, Michael Marcus, Jane Ira Bloom and Franklin Kiermyer.

There were nightly jam sessions at the Festival hotel and at least ten restaurants showcased jazz.

The unhurried pace of this festival is in keeping with the intimate feel of Ottawa's City Centre. It's a great way to enjoy a mid-summer break.
Reviewed By John Norris

PAUL DESMOND

STILL WATERS RUN DEEP • AN ARTICLE BY DAVE MCELFRESH

ALTO SAXOPHONIST PAUL DESMOND IS ONE OF THE RARE JAZZ FIGURES IDENTIFIABLE literally by a single note. Maybe not coincidentally, he was also a true character whose personality weighs in as prominently as his style and ability. Throughout his career it was common knowledge that he was a confirmed bachelor, a well-read intellectual hobnobbing within the circle of literati, owner of a debilitating wit often quoted, and an unhurried jazzman with little ambition. The latter trait, though, did not sit well with some. His comfort within the Dave Brubeck Quartet made many critics and jazz fans uncomfortable.

Martin Williams' 1963 review of The Dave Brubeck Quartet at Carnegie Hall is a typical assessment of the band held by many critics during the group's heyday. Brubeck is accused of sounding like a "fraternity house pianist," of rummaging "through one cliche lick after another," and of coming "very close to simple mindedness."

The single point for which he is praised is his ability to stay out of the way of Paul Desmond, whose contributions are described as inventive, witty and full of ideas. Desmond, says Williams in the last line of his review, "is still water, and he runs deep."

Desmond's satisfaction with his role in the astoundingly popular Dave Brubeck Quartet was generally seen by critics and hardcore jazz fans as inhibiting his expression. The often-printed desire for him to strike out on his own stemmed from an interest to see where, without the steering of Brubeck, those still, deep waters would run.

Actually, what lay deepest within Desmond was what kept him with Brubeck: the altoist's quintessential characteristic was being the great adapter, always able to make the seemingly disparate fit; be it his smooth style in Brubeck's percussive group, a ludicrous play on words in one of his typical puns, or a standard song quote worked into a bizarre time signature. Above all, though, Desmond saw himself as the odd piece in need of fitting somewhere. And Brubeck's band became his niche for life.

Proof lies in his output recorded outside the quartet. Good but hardly ground breaking solo albums followed his quarter-century ties with Brubeck — hardly what the anti-Brubeck crowd had hoped for. As wonderful as the recordings were, they were ultimately overshadowed by the quality of his last album, a live set honouring the quartet's quarter-century reunion. Following his death in 1977, the reference books summarized his career with a conclusion felt by most jazz listeners: here was a dynamic alto player who could have developed his career much further, but never veered far from the Brubeck camp even when opportunities presented.

NEWPORT FESTIVAL - RHODE ISLAND - JUNE 1959
PHOTOGRAPH BY **PAUL HOEFFLER**

He had his reasons. His math-teacher appearance and smooth playing belied the immensely complex man who needed the roots and relationship offered by the Dave Brubeck Quartet.

Desmond was the supreme joker, but fellow musicians remember him as much for what he guardedly kept to himself. Above all, he avoided any reference to his upbringing. Tenorman Dave Van Kriedt, close friend of Desmond, was one of the few ever to meet his family. He once accompanied Desmond on a visit to his mother, and found the interior of her house cold-looking, lacking rugs, curtains and pictures. Though likeable enough, she was obviously obsessed by the fear of death and disease Desmond had warned him would surface: she fixed the meal wearing rubber dishwashing gloves.

All but a few books tracking Desmond's life state that his removal from the home at age five was due to his mother's illness; almost never mentioned is the fact that it was a mental illness — a then-shameful condition suggesting idiocy or the moral consequences of bad living. The lack of concern regarding the simplest home furnishings coupled with her

HIS MATH-TEACHER APPEARANCE AND SMOOTH PLAYING BELIED THE IMMENSELY COMPLEX MAN WHO NEEDED THE ROOTS AND RELATIONSHIP OFFERED BY THE DAVE BRUBECK QUARTET.

delusional thinking suggest she was schizophrenic or controlled by an obsessive-compulsive personality disorder.

A FIVE YEAR-OLD Desmond found that his presence in the family constituted a problem for his mother. Desmond was sent to live with relatives in New York, three thousand miles away. His father, whom the boy very much loved, evidently approved of the move, or possibly initiated it himself. The young Desmond suffered the changes and learned to adapt, finding himself sent back to his parents seven years later. Kriedt's story shows that even years later she continued to offer a bizarre home environment. "I was kind of a walking vegetable as a kid," Desmond once commented in typical throwaway fashion.

In the meantime, his role in a grammar school music band required him to play a memorised solo on the chimes in "one of those grisly, semi-classical things." He chose instead to improvise and was thrilled with the results. No mention is made of how his teacher or the audience responded, but he describes the results as exhilarating, and feeling like "the Terry Gibbs of Daniel Webster School." A jazzman was born. Desmond moved from a string of school bands into an army band in 1943.

Enter Brubeck. The two collaborated for the first time during their years in the service, immediately experiencing near telepathic, spontaneous playing in counterpoint. Yet not long after joining Brubeck's group, Desmond stole the band for another job — even hiring a different pianist. The altoist returned in 1951, overwhelmed by his shot at the bandleader position, and begged Brubeck to both forgive and hire him. The Dave Brubeck Quartet was formed which would soon, along with Miles Davis, break all previous records in jazz sales. The group released a new record every three or four months for the next decade.

Brubeck carried the business end of the relationship, with Desmond never questioning the band's financial status or his cut of the pay. "When it comes to money, I shouldn't be allowed loose on the street," he once said. Yet he shared equal billing with Brubeck and drew a sizeable percentage of the group's earnings. Brubeck regularly signed contracts with Desmond. Desmond, though, never would reciprocate.

A number of his acquaintances believed that the altoist's difficult childhood had greatly contributed to his adult attitudes; that he lacked the confidence to function as a leader on his own, and had learned that if his mother could surrender him for seven years, it was wise not to trust the idea of commitment, even in the form of a band contract with Brubeck. Confirming their opinions was Desmond's relationship with women. Though a bachelor he most certainly was not lacking female companionship, and had a string of relationships with beautiful models. Women liked him a great deal, said friends who found their interest in him no surprise, and he in turn seemed to appreciate the female's perspective. He never mentioned, let alone bragged, about the gorgeous women to his cohorts, as though his female relationships were awkward for him and not the stuff of normal conversation. Sometimes they definitely weren't: Desmond regularly fell for the wives of his friends, Brubeck's and writer Gene Lees' being two of them, and was often open in expressing his affection for them. Though attracting models, his inclination was to develop feelings for the unattainable, women whom he could safely care for and never lose because he never had them to begin with. (Never much the writer, Desmond the long-distance romantic nonetheless penned *Audrey* for Audrey Hepburn.) Unfortunately, this insecurity was validated when a brief, never mentioned marriage fell apart at the end of his college days.

Lees described Desmond as the loneliest man he ever knew. Considerably less empathic but similar is Eddie Condon's remark that Desmond's sax style reminded him of a female alcoholic. Desmond's sound truly was both very feminine and melancholy.

While many critics considered the Desmond/Brubeck success to have occurred in spite of the presence of one or the other, their success may have been due to a balance between typically masculine and feminine elements: Brubeck's playing was often primitive and bombastic, Desmond's was romantic and light; Brubeck wrote intricate time signature compositions that resembled mathematical puzzles, which Desmond played over with a lyricism Brubeck could never have matched. Brubeck was a leader, an aggressive showman and businessman; Desmond was an introverted player willing to follow Brubeck's direction.

His unassuming manner and lack of flash never kept Desmond from being regularly praised in print for sustaining melodic invention throughout even the lengthiest solo, for imaginative use of sequence in his improvising, and for great complexity in the construction of a solo's direction. His uncanny ability to weave song quotes into his solos is remembered as one of his greatest trademarks, for which there is a direct connection to his sense of humour. Both show much about the way Desmond thought.

Desmond was the ultimate joker, a role he is as known for as Lester Young was for his personal vocabulary of slang, Charlie Parker for his excessive habits and Miles Davis for his perennial abrasiveness. He regularly signed Chet Baker's name when asked for an autograph, and entertained guests at his home by playing *My Funny Valentine* on a touch-tone phone. But his forte was elaborate wordplay.

NEWPORT JAZZ FESTIVAL
RHODE ISLAND • JUNE 1959
PHOTOGRAPH BY **PAUL HOEFFLER**

A **FAMOUS DESMOND** story has him complaining how women frivolously spend time with guys like himself but settle down with men who have money. This is how the world ends, he said, not with a whim but a banker.

An obnoxious reporter once led him to respond, "You're beginning to sound like a cross between David Frost and David Susskind, and that is a cross I cannot bear."

An extremely complex pun of his dates back to at least 1954. The story is too long to repeat, but the punchline is "he's a routine Teuton Eiffel-lootin' Sarnoff goon from Harris Sonar, Rock-Time Carbaggio," a play on the song title *I'm a Rootin' Tootin' High Falutin' Son Of A Gun From Arizona Ragtime Cowboy Joe*. The pun weaves seven separate story elements into a single punchline — no doubt a high point in Desmond's word juggling.

Puns and wordplay force relationships between unrelated elements, and Desmond was a master at creating them. Such complex juxtaposition was just as common in his improvising.

On the quartet's album ***25th Anniversary Reunion***, the group tackles *Three To Get Ready (and Four to Go)*, a treacherous piece where the time signature ping-pongs between 3/4 and 4/4 time every other bar. Nonetheless, within Desmond's solo he manages to quote *Auld Lang Syne* (the beginning, interjected over the last notes of the theme played by Brubeck, in only eight notes portrays a woozy drunk and results in audience laughter), *Drum Boogie, The Gypsy, 52nd Street Theme, Taps Miller* and even *The Organ Grinder Swing*. Desmond's obvious comfort with the difficult terrain is amazing, and the listener wonders what half-dozen quotes he used in sparring with the same song the following night's show. The familiar snippets were not merely strung together haphazardly, nor slapped end to end in a race to see how many song quotes could be crammed into a verse. They surfaced within the context of his own style of playing, like the one-liners that punctuated his conversations.

The process of choosing quotes went far beyond finding bits of melody that fit a chord progression. When playing Montreal, Desmond quoted from *I'm A Dreamer, Aren't We All?* as a stretched reference to the city's name. Numbers were fair game too. Using the numerical division of the scale, Desmond would work into his solo the phone number of a new girlfriend as she entered the club, and Brubeck would warn him of the presence of rival girlfriends by playing both their numbers. Desmond's predicament would be communicated in front of an audience without any of them, the women in question included, having the slightest idea what was being conveyed.

Owners of the quartet's albums may have been just as blind to the inside jokes. On a 1960 recording the band played the Berstein/Sondheim piece *Somewhere* as a round; with Brubeck, Desmond and bassist Eugene Wright entering with the theme a bar behind the other, turning the lyric "somewhere there is a place for me" into a comic take on the skewed arrangement.

The ultimate inside joke came about when Desmond met up with a friend during the intermission at a college concert. Pick any song, he challenged, and I'll fit it into a solo. The friend settled on *Try A Little Tenderness*, and was shocked to hear the altoist fit a lengthy piece of the tune into the 9/8 time of *Blue Rondo a la Turk*. The quartet's rhythm section,

PHOTOGRAPH BY **BERNIE SENENSKY**
BOURBON STREET, TORONTO • CIRCA 1975

however, assumed that Desmond was asking them to bac his solo with a little more tenderness, and the drummer slipped into softer accompaniment. A confused Brubeck who had written the song as a boisterous number, let his objection be known by playing the theme of *You're Driving Me Crazy — What Did I Do?*

BRUBECK, obviously no slouch himself when it came to implementing song quotes, has stated that he and the band were constantly breaking up not just from the wit expressed in Desmond's playing, but, as he told Wayne Enstice in Jazz Spoken Here, "because it was so far out." Desmond could dissect and reconstruct with the dizzying logic of a character from Alice In Wonderland. Jazz writer Nat Hentoff wrote of watching Desmond take a quote used by another musician and "turn it inside out and seven other ways." In his music, as in his life, Hentoff concluded, the absurd cohabitated with the familiar.

Desmond's explanation of his improvising technique was that "the improviser must crawl out on a limb, set one line against another, and try to match them, bring them closer together." The formula is identical for the construction of humour.

A strong sense of humour sometimes grows out of an overwhelming unhappiness associated with elements out of the person's control. While much is seen as unalterable, language remains open to a kind of manipulation that through humour brings about laughter and good feelings. Desmond's improvisation brought about the same results without uttering a word.

Always looking to alter the unalterable, Desmond took on time itself, literally: having concluded that the traffic lights on the road to a club date in Palo Alto could all be found green at 45 mph, he would leave late and attempt to catch them all twice as fast at 90 mph, a frightened Brubeck in tow. He was obviously the perfect companion for Brubeck's time signature experimentation.

Brubeck composing was reaching beyond 4/4 time as far back as 1946, when his octet played the 6/4 piece, *Curtain Music (Closing Theme)*. Much more adventurous time signatures were to follow: 5/4, 7/4, 9/8, 11/4, 13/4, as well as pieces that altered time signatures every few bars. A Brubeck song was often an obstacle course not just for the soloist but every member in the group, the intricacies presenting an entertaining show of mental and rhythmic feats for the endless number of college audiences they drew. (Others, however, found the cognitive style lacking swing and labelled the band's music "Brooks Brothers jazz.")

Ironically, though it was Brubeck whose trademark was composing in odd time signatures, the band's definitive altered meter piece was written by Desmond.

In preparation for their album ***Time Out***, Desmond arrived at band rehearsal with a segment of a song written. It was based on a melody in 5/4 (and in a key with six flats) that had come to mind while listening to the rhythm a slot machine in Reno. (Desmond of course would later claim he wrote the popular piece to regain money lost playing the one-armed bandit.) The song *Take Five* appeared on the 1960 album, and was defined by Downbeat as "Chinese water torture" — a comment that no doubt brought the altoist great pleasure. Due mostly to this Desmond contribution, the album sold over a million copies, almost unheard of for a jazz album then or now. *Take Five* remains the quintessential jazz composition in an odd meter.

Although *Take Five* was their peak moment of exposure, the popular quartet existed for a full 17 years. A musical balance accounts for their longevity. As Eugene Wright once commented, his bass laid the foundation, drummer Morello controlled the often unique time duties, and Brubeck concentrated on polytonality and polyrhythms, leaving Desmond to his solo experimentation above it all. The pianist's response to critics who wondered why Desmond didn't join a more adventurous band was, "He stays because he can't find as much creative freedom anywhere else. If he ever does, he should leave."

Desmond, however, was very content, and always spoke of a potential dissolution of the quartet as most likely resulting from Brubeck choosing to move on. It's an interesting comment when compared to a passionate statement made by Brubeck after the death of Desmond. "He never had a family," said the pianist, "We were his family." Desmond had already lost one family, and almost seemed to expect it to occur again. He most certainly was not entertaining the idea of leaving.

One of the reasons given for the breakup of the quartet in 1967 was Desmond's plan to write a humorous biography based on the band's travels, to be called How Many Of You Are There In The Quartet? Only one chapter was ever written, published in the English humour magazine Punch in January of 1973. Desmond's varying responses to questions regarding its completion suggest that the book was his alibi when others in the group chose to disband. The book was a chance to hang out with the famous writers who frequented Elaine's, one of his preferred hangouts in New York City, he told Doug Ramsey. "The whole book thing, it's kind of silly, really," he admitted to Gene Lees. The book was "largely a fraud," he confessed elsewhere. Nat Hentoff's correspondence with Desmond led him to believe that the altoist was too perfectionistic to seriously delve into the project.

Possibly Desmond had begun with good intentions and found himself in the same dilemma he had once experienced when attempting to explain to a fan how he accomplished an octave reach on his sax: he could not reproduce the effect, nor was he ever able to play it again. The book may also have been lost in becoming the object of his focus. Whatever the reason, the publisher waited for the manuscript for almost eight years. It was never written.

DESMOND did not find the break from the quartet a source of initiative. He made an occasional club appearance and recorded only a few albums between the breakup and 1976, when Brubeck suggested a twenty-fifth anniversary reunion tour. Desmond jumped at the idea. As the reunion album shows, his playing was better than ever. His health, however, was not.

As the group prepared for the European arm of the tour, Desmond visited his doctor for a foot problem. It turned out to be a trivial concern, unlike the spot found on Desmond's lung. The humour of the situation was not lost on Desmond, who expected his health problems to stem from drinking two fifths of whiskey daily. His liver, he was told, was in perfect condition. "Awash in Dewars and full of health," Desmond said. It had been his three packs of cigarettes a day that caught up with him.

Mary Lou Williams called him at the hospital and heard the click of a cigarette lighter as they spoke. "Are you still smoking?" she asked. Of course he was, was his casual response, showing none of his mother's obsessive fear of death.

He opted to drop chemotherapy treatment, briefly toured with Brubeck and his musical sons (who had long referred to Desmond as Uncle Paul), and even contributed a solo to Art Garfunkel's album Watermark (a session never mentioned in overviews of his final days). He recorded a few cuts with Chet Baker in the months preceding his death, and though scheduled to appear on the entire album bowed out due to increasing weakness. His housekeeper found the 53 year-old altoist dead on Memorial Day, 1977. He had left his alto to Brubeck's son, Michael.

Desmond probably did not yet know he was close to death when posing for the cover of his last solo album, but he could not have planned a more Desmond-like final shot if he had. "Live," states a banner in the upper corner (regarding a session recorded the week of Hallowe'en), directly above a photo of the altoist as he sits in a vacated club among upturned chairs, hand on a suitcase and smoking what was to soon send him on The Big Trip. (Guitarist Ed Bickert "smokes more than I do, which is impossible," says Desmond in the liner notes, "and is much healthier, which is easy.") He wears suspenders with a skull and crossbones design and grins devilishly at the listener, as if the prospect of death, even such an early one, was no big deal. Desmond had made a living being very much at home with unnatural timing. □

ABOUT THE WRITER - Dave McElfresh *writes on jazz and Brazillian 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.*

DON THOMPSON & PAUL DESMOND AT BOURBON STREET • CIRCA 1975
PHOTOGRAPH BY **BERNIE SENENSKY**

REVIEW OF THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF MICHAEL SNOW AND RECENT MICHAEL SNOW DISCS

BY AARON COHEN

One of the frequently-uttered complaints against the avant-garde — in musical or visual art — is that the creators tend to ignore an identifiable human element. The usual refrain is that in the development of technique, a personality is buried. A recent compilation of writings by pianist/film maker Michael Snow refutes this charge, as the book vividly displays musings and scribblings that a less vivacious artist would probably want to hide. Two new Snow discs reveal his consummate musicianship along with playful twists on collective improvisation.

Snow's impact resonates in all media he explores. His influential mid-'60s film, "Wavelength," is a 45-minute continuous zoom with a unique synchronization of various sounds. Another of his cinematic achievements of the era, "New York Ear and Eye Control," will probably be remembered for the striking ensemble of Albert Ayler, Don Cherry, and others, who splashed around multi-tonal colours in the background. Rearranging sounds in collages is an important facet in Snow's CCMC musical collective which has been active for more than twenty years.

The Collected Writings of Michael Snow (Wilfrid Laurier University Press) is an assemblage of his essays, interview transcripts, speech texts, scripts and notes. Arranged chronologically, the book successfully shows Snow's own growth, as well as his increasingly perceptive critiques, and insights into the creative process.

This personal development becomes most evident when reading a piece at the beginning, and one near the end, of the Snow anthology. A teenage fan of early jazz, his previously unpublished 1950 essay, "The Real 'New Jazz'", is a rallying cry on behalf of the Dixieland musicians who were seen as quaint relics during the emerging bop era (many of whom are largely forgotten today). No doubt, Snow is embarrassed by some of his post-adolescent statements, particularly, "the negro has apparently and unfortunately disowned himself of his greatest possession: the ability to express himself deeply via the Jazz idiom."

Since that writing, he not only immersed himself in the work of the boppers, but was an early champion of the '60s revolutionaries. The essay's inclusion early in the book provides two functions; not only does it reveal a contrast with his later beliefs, but it also indicates how many of the ideas he had as a youth actually have remained with him throughout his career.

A later piece, the text that accompanies **The Last LP**, seems remarkably different than "The Real 'New Jazz,'" at first. **Last LP** is a collection of folk music from around the world — ranging from Finland to Tibet. Snow's notes are loaded with insights about the cultural meanings of the works he recorded for the project. Although his knowledge shows an awareness he lacked when younger, his determination to preserve, and present, his favourite genres, is remarkably similar to his devotion to Dixieland. And both the early and later essays reflect the prophetic insights he had about the changes to recordings themselves during the early 1950s and late 1980s.

Snow's writings about the musicians and artists he knew are often incredibly moving. The 1978 "Larry Dubin's Music" says loads about Dubin, and conveys the underlying importance of listening to music, in just a short paragraph:

"He played. Of course when he played almost daily (besides the public CCMC nights) at The Music Gallery he was able to use his own cymbals (carefully chosen over many years) and his own (tuned to the tightness he wanted) drums and the walls or chairs or any surface that the simulations simulated nearby. He would play alone but he preferred to play with any sound. Of course there's always sound. A listener isn't really alone."

Situated among Snow's writings on music and art, his film stills, and other of his manuscripts, are his discussions of a considerably personal nature. Sex (with and without a partner) is a high-profile topic for Snow, and his thoughts on the subject are quite amusing.

Since the topics covered in **Collected Writings** are spread among Snow's multi-faceted media interests, readers who would like to know more about his music should also check out **Music/Sound 1948-1993: The Michael Snow Project** (Knopf Canada). **Music/Sound** contains informative articles solely about Snow and the CCMC, and includes a bundle of great photographs.

Jack and Mike (MAPL, 1994) is a duet recording of Snow and drummer Jack Vorvis. The two of them are a high-energy pair; Vorvis' driving cymbal-pounding is a fine compliment to Snow's percussive attacks. And they also build and release succinct tension throughout the disc. Snow also displays effortless delicacy on *2 Chords For 2 Players*. The Snow/Vorvis mix of electricity and refrained spacing certainly owes much to the Cecil Taylor Unit, but Snow's freewheeling humour — punctuated with quotations from throughout jazz history — is certainly his own.

"Hot Real-Time Electro-Acoustic Collective Composition" is the audacious subtitle of the CCMC disc, **Decisive Moments** (MAPL, 1994). The recent line-up of the group includes Snow, Vorvis, vocalist Paul Dutton, guitar synthesizer manipulator Al Mattes, saxophonist John Oswald, and keyboard sampler-er John Kamevaar. They take a lot of risks, as they blend pre-recorded sounds with vocal shrieks, smatters of abstract blank verse, furious drum fills, and a seemingly wandering piano. Except for the pre-recorded samples, the music was recorded with no overdubs. The disc is compelling, especially the drones that break a lengthy silence, and then run throughout *Last Night I Barked*. Sometimes the abrasive noises (according to Snow's liner notes, CCMC may stand for Cries Crashes Murmurs Clanks) are merely amusing. While the disc is rather long, and spots of their experiments don't appear to go anywhere, it's never complacent. Sure, some editing could have made it more palatable, but Michael Snow would never do something that calculating. □

PHOTOGAPH OF **MICHAEL SNOW** BY HANS BOCK - ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO (JANUARY 1992)

BUD

BUD POWELL'S place is as secure as any pianist's in jazz history. He is the turbulent pool into which the best of jazz piano flowed and the wellspring out of which it flowed again, the end of Hines and Tatum and the source of what would follow. One can write the history of jazz piano in its relationship to him: the rhythmic drive and invention of Hines were transformed there into a modernist vocabulary; the vast fluency and elaboration of Tatum were wedded to an expressive urgency that were not present before. Powell practised by the day with Monk and Elmo Hope, and together they created the essential complexity of bop piano. The most distinct and beautiful pianists who came immediately after Powell either built on his work or elaborated aspects of it into styles that had little similarity except in their relation to him. His legacy is shared by players as unalike as Lennie Tristano and Horace Silver, Red Garland and Sonny Clark, Bill Evans and Cecil Taylor.

After decades of relative neglect, Powell has begun getting some of the attention his work and life demand. In 1986, Francis Paudras' monumental memoir and biography, **La Danse des Infideles** (l'instant), appeared in France. In the same year, Bernard Tavernier's heavily mythologized film, **Round Midnight**, was released, based on the relationship between Powell and Paudras. Powell has always fared better in France, but lately the English-speaking world has been catching up. In 1993, Alan Grant and Alyn Shipton published **The Glass Enclosure: The Life of Bud Powell** (Bayou Press: Oxford). **The Village Voice** devoted a **Voice Jazz** special to him (June 28, 1994), with several essays and memoirs. In August of 1994, ***The Complete Bud Powell on Verve*** (314 521 669-2) appeared, its five CDs bound neatly into a 150 page text. Then, just a month later, came the 4 CD ***Complete Blue Note and Roost Recordings*** (CDP 7243 8 30083 2 2).

Powell's life has been a cautionary tale of the outsider artist, mad, black and vic-

PHOTOGRAPH BY **HAROLD ROBINSON** • MASSEY HALL - TORONTO - MAY 15TH/1953

POWELL

A Review/Article By
STUART BROOMER

timized in a world rational, white and exploitive. He belongs in the most select company of Bessie Smith, Charlie Parker, Billie Holliday, and Lester Young (with whom he shares **Round Midnight**: when "Dale Turner" reflects on his past, it is Young's, not Powell's) as both genius and victim. But Powell's time is more mythic still, for Powell was the quintessential jazz genius, perhaps gone before he was ever here.

His head was the site of legendary abuse. In 1945, in Philadelphia as a member of Cootie Williams' band, Powell went to hear his friend Thelonious Monk playing nearby. Monk was being hassled by police outside the club; Powell, according to some accounts, intervened and received a beating about the head that would leave him subject for the rest of his life, some twenty one years, to severe headaches, disorientation, and extended stays in hospitals where he suffered electro-shock therapy. So Powell's life, career, and legend would come to occupy a different kind of time, a genius whose potential was diminished two years before he would make his first records as a leader.

THE RECORDS

While the Blue Notes span 1947 to 1958, with a single track from a 1963 session, and the Verves 1949 to 1956, they seldom overlap. The reissues are dissimilar. Blue Note has been releasing multiple takes of some of Powell's early performances since they first appeared on LP. For this set, Blue Note has simply reissued all the complete takes, previously available on single CDs, adding a lengthy booklet with a brief overview and an insightful interview with Alfred Lion. Verve, on the other hand — in a brave step for a major American label — has reissued every scrap in their vaults, literally, including false starts and abandoned performances. The result is that the Blue Note set is consistently listenable, while the far more ambitious Verve set becomes a confrontation with Powell's most difficult hours in the recording studio.

The lengthy Verve text includes a biographical sketch, essays, and interviews with musicians who were close to him. The strangest aspect of this is a 30 page dialogue between Barry Harris and Michael Weiss in which they comment on the recordings, noting Powell's brilliance and failure by turn. We aren't just getting Bud Powell on Verve, but a matrix for how he is to be received. Each set has a well researched discography of Powell's work with the respective company. Between the two sets there are 177 tracks, representing both the highs and lows of Powell's career, and most of his studio recordings as leader.

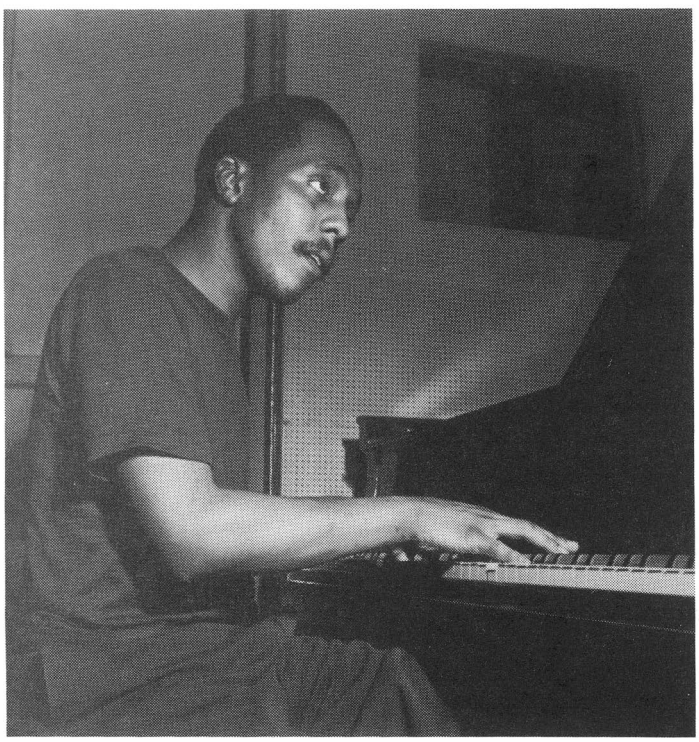
As one wanders through these records, bouncing with Bud from one set to the other to construct a sequence, one wants more than anything else a straight forward chronology of his life, a kind of discography combined with hospital stays. His early recordings, from 1947 to 1951, would be brilliant under any circumstances; it is still more remarkable that they arise in brief intervals of freedom between periods in institutions. Again and again, he would emerge with his Tatum-like technique and unparalleled powers of invention somehow intact.

The Blue Note set begins with eight tunes from 1947, originally released on Roost, with Curly Russell and Max Roach, a session that virtually defined the possibilities of the piano trio in modern jazz. After a lengthy period in hospital, his next sessions are for Norgran (Verve), six tracks with Ray Brown and Roach from early 1949, including *Tempus Fugit, Celia,* and *Cherokee*. After a few more months in hospital, there is a quintet/trio session for Blue Note with Fats Navarro, Sonny Rollins, Tommy Potter and Roy Haines. Then it's over to Verve for a February 1950 trio recording with Russell and Roach, a July 1950 session with Brown and Buddie Rich that produced three takes of *Tea for Two,* and a February 1951 solo date that included *Parisian Thoroughfare* and *Hallucination*. On May 1, 1951, Powell was again recording for Blue Note, with Russell and Roach in the session that produced the extraordinary multiple takes of *Un Poco Loco* and *A Night in Tunisia.* That brings us to the end of the first Verve CD and five tracks into the second Blue Note, and they are among the most important recordings in jazz history, too varied and brilliant to describe. Powell's playing incarnated bebop. He developed a discourse that was conflicted both linearally and vertically, a style in which he developed complex rhythmic and harmonic matrices and out of which his right hand could fly. He would play behind and ahead of the beat in a single phrase, hesitating then exploding into a run. You could use Powell's recordings with Parker, Navarro and Gillespie to debate that bebop was a contrapuntal, not a monophonic, music, and he developed levels of rhythmic invention with Roach unequalled in modern jazz.

In 1951 Powell was arrested with Monk on a charge of marijuana possession, went out of control in a police station, and spent nearly two years in three different mental hospitals. After he emerged, once again, he was still capable of playing brilliantly, as one can hear on the Blue Note sessions with Duvivier and Taylor from that year (*Glass Enclosure* comes from this session) and on several live recordings, including the Massey Hall concert with Parker, Gillespie, Mingus, and Roach. But a marked decline in his playing was about to begin, a decline that was neither consistent nor easy to describe. There are later records where he sometimes approaches the heights of his early years, others where he plays in a simplified but still powerful style, and others where his focus and abilities simply desert him. Powell must belong as much to the mythology of the piano as he does to jazz. There are a few great pianists whose personalities have kept them from performing or have rendered their performances wildly inconsistent. Powell is to jazz what Horowitz, Richter, Michelangeli, Gould or Nyiregyhazi is to European concert music.

The Complete Recordings Of Bud Powell On Verve • Blue Note & Roost And

Among the painful ironies of Powell's career is that he was best documented when he was least able to function, and this applies equally to the records and books. Discs 3, 4, and half of 5 of the Verve CDs come from a five month period in 1954/55. Paudras' vast **La Danse des Infideles** gives Powell's life in great detail from 1959 to 1964.



While we learn little of time spent in mental hospitals, of the control exerted over him by managers (Alfred Lion describes "The Glass Enclosure," the apartment where Birdland manager Oscar Goodstein kept Powell virtual prisoner) and spouses (according to his biographers, his wife Buttercup kept him stunned on largactyl in Paris), listening to the Verve sessions raises issues about his life in the studio. Verve identifies Norman Granz as the producer unless otherwise noted, but the exceptions are telling. Leroy Lovett produced all the sessions from December 16, 1954 to April 27, 1955, about half the material here. The length results from the number of takes required to get something resembling a performance, and much of the previouslyunissued Verve material is from these sessions.

Few will listen more than once to Disc 3 of the Verve set, three days in January, 1955. The interest is clinical rather than musical, and Barry Harris protests the issue of much of it. But even here, the issue is as much one of "artists and repertoire" as it is of Powell's diminished abilities. The first two days are the nadir of his studio recordings, playing with bassist Lloyd Trotman and Art Blakey in a program of show tunes that the pianist doesn't appear to know. The third day, however, with Percy Heath, Kenny Clarke, and a program of bop tunes and originals (including one entitled *Mediocre),* is better, with Powell at least functioning competently. Lovett may have made Powell sound worse than he might have otherwise, but he wasn't recording for anyone else in the period.

The long relationships with the two labels are fascinating, and the later sessions sometimes seem to embody the labels' conceptions of jazz (and themselves) as much as they do Bud Powell. The labels appear to have set the personnel and the style. The later Blue Notes favour medium tempo originals; the later Verves high speed bop, standards and show tunes. By 1957, Powell is recording *Some Soul* for Alfred Lion; by 1958, *Dry Soul.* You can't help thinking the ideal Blue Note pianist was Horace Silver, the ideal Verve, Oscar Peterson. Powell, incommensurately larger however dysfunctional, was somehow expected to fit the mold.

The final session for Verve, September 13, 1956, produced by Granz, reunites Powell with Ray Brown, with Osie Johnson on drums. The material is mostly bop classics — Gillespie's *Woody 'n' You* and *Bebop*, Pettiford's *Blues in the Closet,* Parker's *Now's the Time,* Monk's *52nd Street Theme* — and standards. On familiar ground, Powell's playing is restored, if not to his heights, to a level far beyond that of a year before.

While the later Blue Notes, from 1957-58, sometimes suffer from a certain flatness (the two takes of *Goin' Up* are very dull), the parameters of the music have changed. The slow and medium tempo originals allow Powell to function at a consistent level. Monk's virtuoso interpreter, he has learned from Monk the technique of the anti-virtuoso and sounds like he is teaching the piano to talk. The records are almost a paradigm of the changes that bop underwent in the fifties. It is a music of what was left. The expressive power of Powell's "diminished" performances, and it is often tremendous, includes the implicit presence of what can no longer be articulated, as the composer of the blazing *Tempus Fugit* now plays *Time Waits*. The 1958 session with Sam Jones and Philly Joe Jones is particularly good: witty, joyous, and often dissonant in a new way.

It should go without saying that all these recordings are essential hearing. They are, if some can hear without history (and perhaps that is the only way to hear), sometimes unimaginable performances.

BIOGRAPHIES: THE URBAN LEGEND OF BEBOP

Take the simplest event and a single observer and there is already room for uncertainty. Extend it through the vacillations of time and varied perspectives and the possibilities of uncertainty multiply. This is true of any narrative, but here the circumstances are further exaggerated.

Imagine the life of Bud Powell. I say "imagine" because that's how his biographies are written. It is the story of a man repeatedly incarcerated in mental hospitals. Take a head that was assaulted by police clubs, ammoniated water, electroshock treatment, and heavy doses of largactyl. Add the self-prescribed pharmacopia of the bebop life. Add the stresses of American life for a black artist at mid-century. Don't neglect, of course, schizophrenia, a profound disorder, dis-

PHOTOGRAPH BY **FRANCIS WOLFF** COURTESEY OF MOSAIC IMAGES

tinct from all these circumstances, with onset frequently occuring in the early twenties, and from which all else may proceed, serving only as sociological window dressing.

Now tell this man's story with accounts provided from many who suffered, to one degree or another, the same "reliability" problems. Remember that those closest to him — a manager, a spouse — kept him virtually locked up. Look up accounts in a circumspect jazz press that used the phrase "personal problems" to cover a host of difficulties (as little skirts once covered the "legs" of pianos). Or look them up in a tabloid press recounting "Jazz Babylon." Contact a family that won't release medical records, hospitals that won't discuss treatment regimens, or police departments with similar programs of disinformation.

For the greatest frustration, go to interviews with the man himself. Bob Perlongo published his "Memories of Bud" in these pages a decade ago (Coda 198, October 1984, 4-5). The article is 2,000 words in length, and fewer than 50 are Powell's. The first half is a conversation with Buttercup that takes place while Bud sleeps in the next room. When he finally gets up, he sits and looks out the window. Eventually a brief dialogue occurs in which Perlongo seeks Powell's views of musicians in whom he seems to have no interest. Asked about Ornette Coleman, he replies: "I heard him. I don't know where he's at." Of Jackie McLean, who had guided him about New York in the late forties and who says in a Verve interview, "I used to dress him," Powell says, "Listenin' to him, I feel surrealistic. I hear a line to follow, then it's gone." Of "modern pianists" Powell says, "I'm still listenin'." Powell is no more voluble about old friends. He smiles at the mention of Coleman Hawkins and says of Oscar Pettiford, "Every time he was in town, he'd sit in. That was somethin'." Buttercup again takes over. Having her son John has taught her to be patient with Bud. At the end of the article, she asks Powell to confirm something she's said. He replies, "Buttercup, you talk so much, I forgot to listen."

So in a piece devoted to him, Powell is almost wholly absent. He listens or doesn't listen, hears or doesn't hear, smiles at the mention of old friends and dismisses the unfamiliar. In a recent biography, George Duvivier describes playing with Powell for four years and never feeling that he knew him.

In the recent publications, stories emerge that are very similar to one another, but with key changes in details. Walter Bishop Jr. recalls Fats Navarro "crowning" Powell with his trumpet at the Onyx Club. Elsewhere Leonard Feather describes them at the Three Deuces: there Navarro aims for Powell's hands but hits the piano. Did this actually happen more than once?

Perhaps the most revealing testimony, if not about Powell then about the real difficulty of writing about him, comes in the story about who taught him to act "crazy." Grant has three sources naming three instructors: Dexter Gordon says that Elmo Hope claimed to have given Powell lessons in faking madness; Charlie Parker made the same claim to Lennie Tristano; Thelonious Monk told "his manager's brother" that he was Powell's tutor in this unusual art. The Blue Note commentator, Bob Blumenthal, lists only Hope and Parker. One imagines a Bebop University, more interesting than the Berklee School of Music, where students take Feigning Insanity 327 in lieu of courses in accounting and self-promotion.

Now it seems to me that this isn't "biography" at all, but almost urban legend, one of those repeated tales — "The Vanishing Hitchhiker," "The Mouse in the Cola Bottle" — that have the ring of both the true and the fantastic, and are often painfully funny. The story wants to be interpreted rather than believed:

Powell posed as insane, then became insane, possibly through treatment for his feigned insanity. It's a story about the ironic structure of experience;

Since not even Monk or Parker could take credit for Powell as musician, they took responsibility for his insanity. It's a story about the importance of a good education and a great tradition;

If Powell were not insane, despite all evidence to the contrary, then those who were "less" insane, whatever their difficulties, might be models of mental health. It's a story about self-delusion;

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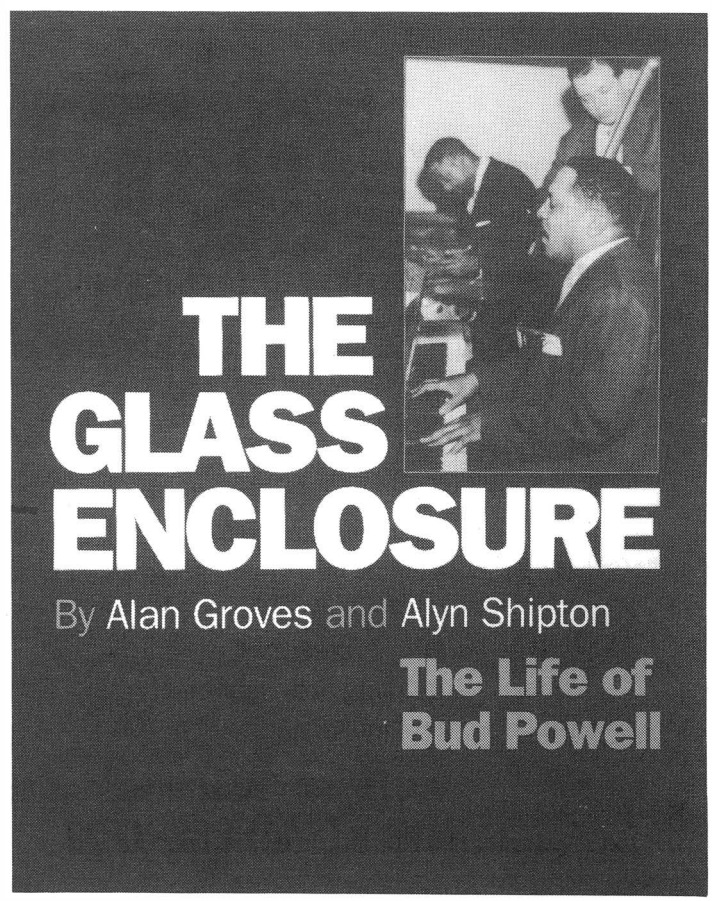

Powell's pain was such that his friends (or chroniclers of acquaintances of friends) tried to take comfort in the idea that it didn't exist at all. It's a story about love.

But this story may tell us nothing about any of these people; it may be an apocryphal long-distance jam on the theme of "I Taught Bud" and the changes of "Crazy Rhythm." Make what you will of this (the psychohistory of bebop, perhaps), you won't make biography or what Powell's life demands and also denies: psychobiography.

The life that emerges in these new texts is a life that resists being told. Grant and Shipton have produced a readable and concise account, with a useful commentary on the recordings, but the material seems too thin or, in its concluding chapters, too dependent on Paudras' memoir. The approach taken by Verve, multiple perspectives on the man and his music, offers more possibilities, but the results aren't always significant. Too many key witnesses are missing, and the effect resembles a testimonial dinner. Somehow the only reliable account is in the music, or in that slim portion that chance has left us.

"Where are you, Bud?" Cecil Taylor asked at the end of his prose poem for ***Unit Structures***, and the question was more than speculative. Near the end of **La Danse des Infidels**, Paudras recounts Powell's disappearance in New York in 1964. Paudras waits, with Ornette Coleman, for some word about him. Taylor enters with Bill Dixon. It feels like a wake, but what is most telling is that Powell, at the climax of his own monument, is missing. But perhaps Powell has merely wandered from Paudras' view. Grant has him found with "friends in Brooklyn." He appears elsewhere, in Bertha Hope's memoir in the Verve set. There he has wandered New York, seeking Elmo. By coincidence, they meet in the street and Bud accompanies Elmo home. It's a matter of point of view. While Paudras waited for the lost Powell to be found, Powell was finding what he had lost.

BUD POWELL'S SILENCE

In all of this recollection and reconstruction, the disappearance of Powell's art is implicit, implicit in the very moment that he is recovered, the recovery and commemoration enshrining the loss itself. According to Grant, when Elmo Hope visited Powell in hospital, Powell had drawn a keyboard on the wall and demonstrated what he was then doing. Paudras heard Powell tell a doctor that he dreamed constantly of playing the piano. In the welter of new texts, both Alfred Lion and Barry Harris tell of Powell playing so no sound would issue from the piano. He did it at Minton's when he was in the worst shape Lion had ever seen him. Harris points out the technique involved in hitting the keys just to the release point so that no sound results. Some other range of meaning accrues here: Powell's work may include these silent performances, as if the best of Powell was what one never heard, as if Powell were his own eraser.

"Where are you, Bud?" Everywhere and nowhere. Always and never. Here one faces the heights and depths of jazz history: its visions, its recyclings, and its silences. Bud's time seems, strangely, to be as much now as ever. □

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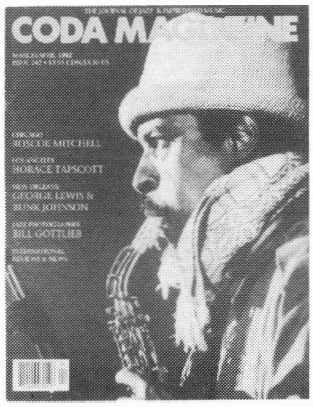

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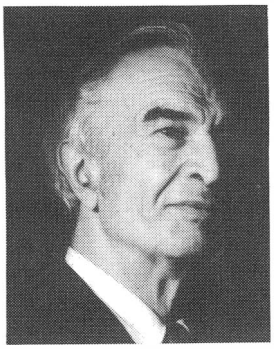

DAVE BRUBECK

Nearly a half-century after his first recordings with his legendary octet, Dave Brubeck remains a creative and very active musician. "Oh boy am I busy," he says. "It never stops. I think about taking time off, but that's as far as it gets."

Born on December 6th, 1920 in Concord, California, Dave Brubeck originally had music lessons from his mother who was a classical pianist. After being inspired by the records of the Billy Kyle trio and Fats Waller, and discovering that he could earn money playing the piano, Brubeck chose to make jazz his career. To sum up his early activities; the young pianist graduated from the College of the Pacific, spent time in the army, got married to Iola (a talented lyricist), met altoist Paul Desmond in 1944 and was discharged from the military two years later. He became a student of composer Darius Milhaud at Mills College, formed a rather radical octet that combined aspects of classical music and odd time signatures with swinging jazz (one Fantasy recording resulted) and, after that group had difficulty securing work, led a popular trio with bassist Ron Crotty and Cal Tjader on drums. The latter group's success was halted when a serious swimming accident put Brubeck out of action for much of a year.

When he returned to full time activity in mid-1951, Brubeck put together a band with altoist Paul Desmond and, after a brief period of struggle, the quartet caught on and became one of the most famous jazz groups of all time. What was particularly remarkable about the Dave Brubeck Quartet was that Brubeck achieved fame and (hopefully) fortune without watering down or altering his music in the slightest. He was always committed to exploring polyrhythms and polytonality and, starting in the late 1950's when his recording of Paul Desmond's *Take Five* became a sensation, for several years he creatively explored different time signatures. Some of the critics who had championed him when he was an unknown, soon turned against Brubeck, feeling that anyone that popular could not be any good, and carping at him for not sounding like Bud Powell. As if developing an original voice was a liability in jazz!. However Brubeck has far µoutlasted his detractors and even the breakup of his group in 1967 did not result in any loss of fame. After spending time composing religious works, Brubeck had a new quartet with baritonist Gerry Mulligan, teamed up with Desmond now and then until the altoist's death in 1977, featured tenor-saxophonist Jerry Bergonozi for a few years and in more recent times headed a quartet with clarinetist Bill Smith and/or Bobby Militello on alto and flute. In addition, Dave Brubeck's musical sons (Chris on bass trombone and bass, drummer Danny, keyboardist Darius and cellist Matthew) have been part of some of his projects and for a period in the 1970's Dave was involved in a band accurately called Two Generations of Brubeck. After a long association with Columbia and briefer ones with Atlantic, Concord, and Music Masters (resulting in over 100 albums as a leader) Brubeck has been recording extensively for Telarc.

Rather than ask Dave Brubeck the usual questions he has answered hundreds of times before, this wide-ranging interview started with a request that he share some memories of a few of the musical giants he has known.

DUKE ELLINGTON

Duke was my favourite composer-arranger-bandleader. The first time I met Duke was just after Jimmy Blanton died. A friend of mine, Junior Raglin, took Jimmy's place on the West Coast so I asked him if he'd introduce me to Duke. He pointed at Duke's dressing room and suggested I go in and say hello. I went in, Duke looked up at me, and I couldn't open my mouth! I didn't say a word and had to turn around and walk out. Years later we were assigned the same dressing room for one concert with all of the sidemen being in one big room backstage. I went in for awhile and again was so awestruck that I ended up staying in the back with my group! Duke had been talking me up ever since he first saw me play in San Francisco and he would have gotten me a job at the Hickory House where Marian McPartland later played but my agent had already put me in Birdland. He was always wonderful to me.

CHARLIE PARKER

We toured together once although I never did actually play with him. He had come out to San Francisco to hear what I was doing. My quartet and his group with Chet Baker, Shelly Manne, Jimmy Rowles and I think Carson Smith on bass played in Seattle, Portland, Oakland and a few other concerts. We got to know each other pretty well on that tour and I also knew him at Birdland. I thought he was a wonderful guy and he played brilliantly when we were in Oakland. Some of the other nights he wasn't quite as sharp but he was really burning in Oakland.

MILES DAVIS

He liked what I was doing. I know that he heard me play *Someday My Prince Will Come* years before he did his album. He also liked *In Your Own Sweet Way* and *The Duke*. We had a lot of laughs and fun, playing many jazz clubs and going on a lot of tours together. I always thought that he had a great sense of humour and he used to just break me up with some of the things he said.

THELONIOUS MONK (their duet rendition of *C Jam Blues* was released on Columbia's ***Summit Sessions***)

PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK MICELOTTA

In Conversation With Scott Yanow

Thelonious invited Iola and myself to dinner with him and his wife before we played together that night in Mexico. He never said a word, hello, goodbye or anything! He was very attentive to the conversations that were going on but I really can't say that I had any real talks with Thelonious. At the concert we mostly just signalled each other when we played.

CHARLES MINGUS (also recorded a duet which appeared on ***Summit Sessions***).

Charlie and I got along very well. The first time I met him was in San Francisco and some beboppers were trying to get together a group to play. I happened to be at the Union and they couldn't find a piano player so they asked me if I knew the bebop changes. I said no so they named off some tunes, I knew some of them, and they told me that I could play but I should be sure not to take any solos. At the first intermission I walked out of the club and Charlie asked me why I wasn't soloing. I told him that the other guys said that I shouldn't and he said "But you're the only guy here that can play!" From then on we were very good friends. Later in New York he would ask me if I knew what I was doing on the last tune and I had to tell him that I couldn't remember! He was usually referring to something like playing seven against four. When we did the duet, we didn't rehearse. We just went out and played spontaneously for the soundtrack of the movie ***All Night Long***.

CECIL TAYLOR

He listened to me play quite a bit when I first came to New York and he used to come in to Birdland and talk to me. I remember hearing him in the Village and thinking that this was about as "out" as it can get. I also remember that my son Darius was really knocked out by Cecil. Darius was only 10 years old at the time but he was very aware and he would be laughing when Cecil was playing, the kind of laugh one has when they really love something. Recently I read that Cecil said that when he is at his best he sounds like Dave Brubeck.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (He played in Dave & Iola Brubeck's musical play ***The Real Ambassadors***).

He was wonderful. He was the first one in the studio, always ready to go and warmed up, and the last to leave. It wasn't a typical show that people had performed before; we were doing it for the first time in the studio. But Louis was so quick, always willing to play with other people and sing in harmony. He was totally magical. I can't imagine anyone else doing what Louis did that quick without rehearsal. And he was always trying to please, never acting like he was the biggest star we've ever had.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GERARD FUTRICK

How many gigs did your late 40's octet actually have?

I used to think three but recently Philip Elwood told me about another gig he had heard me play at Berkeley so probably five or six. I know we opened for Woody Herman once.

Did you ever think about putting together a similar group again?

Unfortunately Dave Van Kreidt just passed away and he had the octet book in Australia, so I don't know if I'll ever see it again. We had many arrangements that were never recorded. Kreidt wrote a lot of beautiful preludes and fugues as did Jack Weeks and Bill Smith. On my 50th wedding anniversary, all the guys who are still alive from the Octet showed up including Dick Collins, Bob Collins, Ron Crotty, Joe Dodge, Jack Weeks, Lloyd Davis and Bill Smith. That's the closest we've come to getting back together. Of course Cal (Tjader) and Paul (Desmond) are gone.

How did Cal Tjader play in those early days with the octet and the trio?

We did some of the odd time signatures with Cal Tjader and he was very good at stretching things. He started working with Latin rhythms after he left the trio but he talked to me about being interested in Latin music while he was still with us. Cal and I

remained good friends up until the time he passed away. He was a natural. One day he asked me if he could bring his vibes to the club. I didn't even know that he played vibes and he said that he really didn't but he'd like to try it a little. Well that night he sounded like someone who'd been playing for years; he was already a phenomenal player, and that was his first time. Ron Crotty, who was 18 or 19 at the time, could also get really out there. Cal called him the first avant-garde bass player because he would do some things we had never heard before on the bass; Ron was really ahead of his time and the trio recordings hint at it. People forget the trio but it was the group that laid the groundwork for the quartet.

Did the quartet have to struggle very long before becoming more secure?

Only if you think it's a struggle to drive from San Francisco to New York and not sleep! We did that a few times.

Whose idea was it to start playing at college campuses?

My wife's. Darius Milhaud set up the first concert at Mills College, a girl's school. And then after we played at the College of the Pacific, Iola wrote to all of the colleges and universities on the West Coast and as a result we really opened up that field. There had been a lot of guys playing dances on colleges before us but no real jazz concerts that I know of. We would do 60 or 70 concerts a year, most of them on college campuses.

Was it a surprise to you how popular the group became?

Oh yes. My great dream was to have a steady job and make scale! We were fortunate and had a wide cross section of fans. The Pittsburgh Courier, a black newspaper, had a poll and we won as the most popular jazz group. We also played the Apollo and many black clubs in the South along with the colleges and later on we started playing with symphony orchestras. It got to the point where the Quartet was too popular for critics to say it was good.

In early 1957 Joe Morello replaced Joe Dodge as your drummer. What would you say were the main differences between their styles?

Both Joes were great while being absolutely different. Joe Dodge was satisfied and almost relieved that he was never featured. One night at the College of the Pacific I did turn around and tell him to take a drum break. That was the only time that he had one with me and people are still talking about it! He just liked to back us and stay steady, keeping the beat going. I didn't want Joe Dodge to leave us but his wife wanted him to come home. Joe Morello, who was well featured, had the ability to come in and do all the odd time signatures and so many of the other things that I thought up. He had an unbelievable capacity and could do four different things at once. Only a few, like Max Roach, Louie Bellson and Buddy Rich, could do that. Joe Morello was the perfect drummer for the Quartet at the time.

After you went through a lot of bassists, Eugene Wright joined the Quartet in 1958. What was it about his playing that made him right for the group?

He loved to be the bottom in the rhythm section and to push the group to swing. He and Joe Morello were a real team. The same happened later with Alan Dawson and Jack Six and now Jack Six and Randy Jones. It is hard to predict which musicians go right together; one player might get ahead of the other guy or way behind. Eugene Wright was always right in the centre.

Why do you think you and Paul Desmond were so compatible musically?

We liked the same types of music whether it was classical or jazz. It was like we spoke the same language musically. The counterpoint between us was very natural and Paul later said that we had E.S.P. We always got along very well through all those years travelling on the road which is hard to do. Paul played his first concert with me and also his very last. It's amazing how many people were influenced by the old Quartet, more now than ever. I'll run into monster piano players who I wouldn't think have ever heard of me and they'll rattle off all kinds of things about my music; that really pleases me.

What are some of your memories of playing at Newport with Gerry Mulligan right before the riot broke out in 1971?

We weren't going to record but Nesuhi Ertugen came up to me right before we went on stage and told me he had the sound truck all ready and asked would I be interested in recording. I told him that we didn't have any new material and he said "Try to think of something!" So I told the guys that when we go on stage to think of the phrase "Blues-For-

PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL COPELAND

New-Port," I sang the phrase to them and that's all the rehearsal we had. I told them to stretch out as far as they could on that rhythm.

How did you happen to record with Anthony Braxton and Lee Konitz in 1974?

Michael Cuscuna thought of that. I had recorded a full side of trios with Alan Dawson and Jack Six of Jimmy Van Heusen songs and wasn't sure what else to put on the record. Michael called Anthony, Lee, Roy Haynes and Jack Six. We had no rehearsal; we just went in and played tunes. That was the only time I ever played with Lee Konitz. Anthony, who has always liked Paul, is wild on that recording, so far from the chord progression yet in a different kind of way his playing makes sense. Years later my son Matthew had on his car radio and he heard *All The Things You Are* from that session, wondering who the pianist was. He told me it was the only time in his life that he didn't know it was me playing!

What do you like best about Bill Smith's playing?

Our roots are the same and I think we think a bit alike. He was in the octet and Bill recorded with me several times before he joined the quartet in 1982. We recorded maybe six albums together in the 50s and 60s, three of which have never come out but hopefully will someday. He would write out a whole album and then record it with me, Joe Morello and Gene Wright. On ***The Riddle*** he took one theme and did a whole album of variations on the same idea while on ***Brubeck A La Mode*** all of the pieces were based on modes. He has always been very advanced in his writing and is constantly imagining strange new ways to approach music. The first time I ever heard the word synthesizer was from Bill Smith in the early 60s and I had to ask him what a synthesizer was!

Is Bill Smith or Bobby Militello in your quartet these days?

Bill Smith teaches at the University of Washington in Seattle and when he finds it difficult to get away then I use Bobby; sometimes I use both horns. It is working out very well.

*I'm surprised that **Night Shift** and the previous **Late Night Brubeck** were recorded at the Blue Note. I didn't know you still played clubs.*

In the old days I used to like playing at Storyville in Boston and usually the Blackhawk in San Francisco but I hadn't played in a club for years. However the Blue Note has a no-smoking policy. I won't work in a club where there's smoke because I'm allergic to it. Also they keep the customers quiet and the waitresses are magnificent at serving as much as they can before I go on and very little while I'm playing. It's all worked out with the idea of pleasing the musicians.

How many performances do you do in a normal year these days?

I try to quit at 80 but always go over. Tomorrow I leave to play near Philadelphia then go on to Kansas City, Tacoma, Washington, come home for a little while and then travel to Europe for six weeks, mostly one nighters. I'm always writing and getting a lot of new things done, recording music that had been overlooked. We are going to record my Mass for Telarc. I've written a Cello Concerto for my son Matthew. It goes on and on and on! □

An AMERICAN DIARY...

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An American Diary
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URI CAINE
Sphere Music
JMT 514 007-2

GRAHAM CONNAH GROUP
Snaps Erupt at Pure Spans
Sour Note 7

GARY BARTZ
Children of Harlem - Episode One
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MARILYN CRISPELL AND EDDIE PREVOST
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JULIUS HEMPHILL SEXTET
Five Chord Stud
Black Saint 120140-2

MYRA MELFORD EXTENDED ENSEMBLE
Even the Sounds Shine
hat ART ARTCD 6161

REVIEWED BY
Randal McIlroy

Chops? Everyone has 'em now. Tunes? Erm...

Of course, writers will always buttonhole you to spare a thought for the hand behind the pen. Even so, jazz invention isn't limited to the playing. Intelligent writing buttresses the discs at hand.

With ***An American Diary***, mallet player and Steps Ahead player **Mike Mainieri** offers the best pocket history of American music since Bill Frisell's catholic Have a Little Faith. No Dylan or Madonna tunes figure in this one, but Copland, Bernstein, Zappa and Barber are on the list. By thinking of improvisational possibilities as well as the colours of a chamber group, and by keeping the focus on strong composition whatever the musical direction, Mainieri finds common ground for all of them.

The line-up is telling. Joe Lovano these days is utterly convincing no matter how breathless his schedule — if it's Tuesday, you must be Gunther Schuller — while Eddie Gomez and Peter Erskine have gladly sought challenge after challenge. Gomez's confident bowing and Erskine's discretion at the cymbals provide valuable shading. Mainieri himself plays not only his usual vibraphone but concert and bass marimbas, xylophone, mallet synthesizer, piano and percussion, coming across in the process as one-man proof for the dazzling adaptability of mallet instruments.

Variety rules, and the brisk pacing and clever programming make the most of that. A waltz treatment of Bernstein's *Somewhere* and the shadowy gongs and skittering percussion of Mainieri's *In The Universe Of Ives* bookend a program that accepts the unhurried blues of *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child* (starring Lovano's burnished tenor), a hard bop take of Aaron Copland's *Piano Sonata (Vivace)* and Erskine's New Orleans-slippery *Song Of My People* just as handily. Whatever the setting, the music is balanced and kinetic. Mainieri himself has a thoughtful style, diluted not one jot by his instrumental switch-hitting. It's marked by the ringing small touches, like the bent blue notes that slyly change the tenor of Roger Session's pensive *Piano Sonata Vol. One*. If a little too diverse to take in at one sitting, this diary is a deep one.

Some of the hippest playing in Don Byron's tribute to klezmer modernist Mickey Katz came from pianist **Uri Caine**. Leading his own date for ***Sphere Music***, Caine is almost always in forward motion. There's something itchy in his playing that can lead to prankishness, as when Caine and Byron detonate a few stink bombs beneath the unassuming jaunt of Caine's *Jelly*, or when Byron's clarinet enters at a deliberately thuggish cant in *Mr. B.C.*. More often, Caine's hard-thinking swing marks out its own logical path through his own compositions, and on that count he's driven with vigour by drummer Ralph Peterson, himself something of a reformed bully. A brisk *Just In Time* and an impressionist clarinet/piano duet in *'Round Midnight* offer relief for different reasons.

Echoes of that occasionally abrasive invention are heard in ***Snaps Erupt At Pure Spans***, the palindromically titled set by young San Francisco pianist **Graham Connah**'s group. His quintet also includes a clarinettist, Ben Goldberg, and some of the set's most gripping moments come when they tangle. The Monkish march of *Hasty Crawl* is charmingly querulous; here as elsewhere, tenorist Rob Sidduth is a hearty partner for Goldberg.

One of the positive surprises of the 1990 Jazz Winnipeg Festival was the passionist craft of altoist **Gary Bartz**. Miles Davis and subsequent fusion projects behind him, Bartz demanded active listening and then some. Last year's alto summit with Sonny Fortune for the Verve label (Alto Memories) was a jaunt through some of the horn's important literature, but Bartz is in even fuller form for ***Episode One - Children Of Harlem***, a trip back through tunes inspired by or associated (however loosely) with that dramatic ground. Bartz, pianist Larry Willis, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Ben Riley live or have lived there. The feeling isn't faked.

There's fun, mind. Bartz opens and closes the set with the Amos 'n Andy theme, playing with a romantic tone that's broader than blackface. *Tico Tico* may be the most famous Latin tune this side of the equator, but Bartz's Cubano bop is undimmed.

Like all experienced romantics, Bartz blows sweet and sour. On the Traneish jazz waltz

If This Isn't Love, his soprano has more vinegar than pith - a problem rectified on *Children Of Harlem,* where his straight-horn tone is clear and assured. *Crazy She Calls Me* is outstanding for the alto balladry and William's cool, sliding bass. Episode Two is awaited with appetite.

This recording, ***Band On The Wall,*** chronicles a May, 1994 concert by the sinewy pianist **Marilyn Crispell** and long-serving AMM percussionist/co-founder **Eddie Prevost**, at the Manchester club of the same name. Pianos and drums really don't resemble each other, but there are moments in this titled but often continuous set *(Slow Chaser, Fragments)* where the density and the unanimity of the playing mark a single mind with extra hands. Prevost's progressively boiling shuffle rhythms subdivide along the racing geometry of Crispell's measured attack so easily that it's a surprise when the pair breaks apart, first for his frisky *Dogbolter,* then for her pensive *Apart.*

Great ears, these two. Later in the program, *Night Moves* threads cymbal details in the keyboard fury. Crispell gradually lays back, first playing chords as Prevost picks up the mallets, then hammering brittle chinoiserie — hell, it could be a cymbalum she's playing — behind the approaching thunderstorm. Danny Zeitlin's tune, *Quiet Now* — the only non-original on the program — sits perfectly as a brief oasis of meditation, beautifully played, before the rolling snare of *Spitfire* changes he music once again. Some night.

The new live disc from **Don Pullen** and the African Brazilian Connection is tinted inevitably by the pianist's passing, on April 22nd/1995, from lymphoma. Yet Pullen's illness had yet to manifest itself at the 1993 Montreaux Festival, where ***Live ... Again*** was recorded, and the 70-minute set frames Pullen in vital, fighting form.

Pullen's pan-global band was a stunner, with Panamanian altoist Carlos Ward and Senegalese percussionist/vocalist Mor Thiam clearing different paths of exploration for those mighty pianisms. This concert promotes that. Ward's Hodges-style balladry warms *Ah George, We Hardly Knew Ya,* Pullen's tribute to former partner and Mingus associate George Adams. Thiam's plaintive singing lifts his own *Kele Mou Bana.* Bassist Nilson Matta and drummer J. T. Lewis cook on the samba, *Capoeira.*

With the aforementioned Byron, **Marty Ehrlich** looks ready to take up from the late John Carter as the new explorer for the clarinet. Few players specialize in that wood voice, and Ehrlich himself triples handily on alto and soprano, yet his virtuosity on the first is one of the major draws of ***Can You Hear A Motion?***

He has a rich tone, licorice only in the hot, liquid sense. Two tributes to Carter (his former mentor) show agility on the strength, leading the hard-bop charge on *Reading The River,* negotiating a tougher course in *The Black Hat.* Stan Strickland's tenor is a worthy match, equally full and fluid. Their lemony blend is even more tantalizing when Ehrlich picks up his alto, with a tangly closing duet on Ornette Coleman's *Comme Il Faut.*

Ehrlich writes deep tunes. Inspired by a dream, *Pictures In A Glass House* plays with slow alto/tenor harmonies, supplemented by Michael Formanek's bowed bass. Quartet drummer Bobby Previtte returns for the airy *One For Robin,* originally commissioned by the New York String Trio but scored here for tenor, rhythm, and Ehrlich's easy soprano.

Heart surgery in 1993 made it virtually impossible to keep playing his alto, but **Julius Hemphill** still had his pen. His alto isn't heard in ***Five Chord Stud***, but the late composer's signature is everywhere.

For all the panegyrics due this line-up of Ehrlich (alto), Tim Berne (alto), Sam Furnace (alto, soprano), James Carter (tenor), Andrew White (tenor) and Fred Ho (baritone), it's the writing that hits first. Building from the lessons of the World Saxophone Quartet, Hemphill's scores push dynamism, from aggressive columns of sound to mobile matrices of detail. With all that's been heard of a capella saxophone groups in recent years, it may be redundant to praise the fullness. Nonetheless, try listening to the opening *Band Theme* without hearing the implied drums and bass.

Such audio slight of hand is the minor success. The range of saxophones and the accommodation of different temperaments corkscrews tension of the best kind. *Five Chord Stud* itself drives jolts of affirmation through a synthesizer-like drone. Mirrors moves naturally from massive group improvisation to a brief, convincing resolution. *Spiritual Chairs* revisits the saxophone's sanctified / romantic ground, down to a melody that winks at *Danny Boy.*

Another vote for the viability of modern jazz composition comes from pianist **Myra Melford**, whose Extended Ensemble brings new colours into play for **Even The Sounds Shine**. This time, her regular team of bassist Lindsey Horner and drummer Reggie Nicholson is expanded by Ehrlich — who gets around — and trumpeter Dave Douglas.

It's not that she needs the extra players to be commanding. Tough as she is on the keyboard, Melford is always on the prowl, not so much a cat that pounces as an eagle that suddenly swoops down on a point of interest. The horns add healthy colours, especially in the Moorish tilt of *La Mezquita Suite,* inspired by an ancient Cordoban mosque, where Douglas dips into the same Middle Easter melancholy that flows through his own music. The 25-minute work builds gloriously, then cools off in bluesy meditations.

Melford writes for the long haul. The point can be lost in the volcanic insistence of her playing, but Melford's music turns up the most interesting shapes. In the title track, the rest of the band swells up from under Douglas. About two-thirds of the way through *That The Peace,* a few brief cannonades of piano suddenly expose insect activity in the rhythm section. With editing, *Evening Might Still* could be a hit tune. We can hope. □

EDDIE PREVOST & MARILYN CRISPELL PHOTOGRAPH BY NICK WHITE

IN FOCUS JESSICA WILLIAMS

INTERVIEW/ARTICLE BY JERRY D'SOUZA

The fear was overwhelming and the memory of that day is still vivid in the mind of Jessica Williams. The scene is the Keystone Corner in San Francisco and Williams has to open for Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, playing solo piano! "You can imagine the anxiety for one thing. They did not know who I was and here I have to go on before this kick-ass six piece band comes on."

The consequences of being unable to deal with her fears took its toll. Williams sought escape in alcohol and drugs. "I was in pain, a lot of people were in pain. Being human we are afraid to say 'I am in pain' and to see how we can deal with it in a more constructive way other than narcoticizing ourselves until we do not feel anything. This did not work and it killed a lot of people. There were a lot of jazz musicians at that time who did not live through that period. It killed Emily Remler. Jaco Pastorius didn't have enough time to work it out. I think in the mid-eighties most of us began realising we deserved better for ourselves."

Having come out of the mists of despair, Williams cast off negative feelings and strengthened her mind. In this new-found attitude came the ability to pave a path that required a lot of discipline and courage. In the process she is now able to absorb negative reactions and not come out the worse for the experience as she did recently during her first performance in Toronto.

"I tend to play at times very quietly. A lot of people didn't get it. It set up a tension within a small group of people at the club, who as one woman put it 'wanted to boogie'. This is the first time I have played in Toronto and the first club I have played in a long time. I did not know it was that kind of aesthetic."

Williams does not let attitudes detract her. She has her direction in focus. This stems from the need of giving love to people through her music and "to get them to hear the sounds within themselves. For me it is a sacred act."

"Of course", she continues, "I could be just a piano player and not a priestess. But I've realised in recent years, in my search for this path, that I can't do it. I wouldn't be true to myself or to my music."

The experience of Toronto is more than effaced by the positive response she has had on her tours of Europe. Williams has hit the roads of that continent five times. The last time she was there she did 16 shows in 30 days and the reaction, to say the least made her heart go pitty-pat with joy.

"Somebody told me that the Brits were very reserved but I found them warm and open with a great sense of humour and the Irish are so sweet! I played at concert halls for 500 to 600 people. I'd walk on and everyone would be so quiet. I could play off the energy of all that power. I was throwing chi and they were throwing it right back at me. There was this marvellous interchange. I understand more and more as I do things like this, why it makes me admire someone like Keith Jarrett. I don't necessarily like everything he plays, but I do admire the courage to bring to the people a unique experience that is beyond the mundane of human existence. That's what I am after, at least at this point."

The experience will stem not only from music but through a combination of factors. She does not use the stage as a platform to preach her beliefs but to communicate by "playing music that couldn't come out of anybody else but the person who believes in something. Many people can hear that in music. I can hear it in Jarrett's music. I keep going back to him because right now he is one of the musicians specifically doing this. Coltrane was another. This was not a guy that was filled with rage and hate. This was a man who was looking for peace. Then there is Randy Weston who is all beauty and light."

What of recognition in America then? Why was the priestess not known to the people at large?

"In America I am becoming more well known in certain parts of the country. Unfortunately there is this thing with advertisements, with hype and name recognition that gives one validity. The primary power of art should always be in art itself. It is unfortunate that in our culture, and probably all cultures, that some of the greatest words, the greatest art or the greatest music may not get seen or heard by large groups of people. As Henry Miller said, 'The guy sitting next to you on the bus is never famous'."

Her mind clicks mental pictures, she lights her cigarette, inhales and through the drifting wisps of smoke, smiles and says, "I don't drink alcohol or do drugs any more but I think I smoke a little too much." And then with a hearty laugh adds, "I think I still smoke because of some anal-retentive oral fixation I developed when I was 10 years old!" Then she gets back on the bus.

"You got somebody in your home town who is kicking butt and people dismiss that person because he is local! My answer to that is Salvador Dali was local. Elvin Jones is local just outside of Detroit where he comes from but does that make him any less a great musician? As I get more name recognition, I get more attention. I am not entirely convinced that I did not deserve that attention 10 years ago because I was making important music. Perhaps it was less focussed but I always had the creative ability. The music is becoming more focussed. I put out six CDs in the last three years and all got great reviews. Don't believe the ink, is one thing to remember. It's only an illusion. Time is the only true test. Will my music be played 20 years from now? I think some of it will. I tend to put my music against what are considered classics like ***Kind Of Blue*** or Coltrane's ***Transition*** or Monk's ***Live At The Five Spot***. These recordings will have meaning a hundred years from now!"

The new focus comes from the way she now looks at the piano. She tries to envision the possibilities and goes after them trying to stretch ideas and to discover something unusual.

"When Coltrane played a note, it was the note. It couldn't be any other. That's the quality I want to hear in my music. I don't always hear it. That is a quest!"

On her recordings Williams not only shows a technique no one can quarrel with but also a high degree of creativity. This not only gives her own compositions sound voice but also new tangents to standards as she plays with clarity of thought and an innate sense of improvisation.

Williams, however, has not used too many originals on her albums. She has her reasons. "I have a way of looking at standards that is quite different from anyone else," she explains matter-of-factly. "I have something original to say. I have a contribution to make to the body of jazz and I have proved that over a period of time. On ***Encounters*** with Leroy Vinnegar we did not do original compositions because we did not have the time to go over them." On her new Jazz Focus release ***Inventions***, Williams has nine tunes, eight of which are originals the ninth being *Tea For Two.*

There is a leaning towards Monk in Williams. Did he influence her?

"I think so," she replies. "The interesting thing is that I did not have but one Monk record until I was in my thirties. I grew up with 'Monk's Time' but it changed me. I had about 10 Miles' albums and about 15 albums by Coltrane but that one Monk record just did something to me. The guy sounded like he was wearing boxing gloves but there was such a wonderful approach to the piano. I never saw him live but I saw a video and the things he did then made sense to me. I picked up a lot of things from the video. I hear people say he played wrong. Well, good! He played the way he needed to play, to play what he needed to say. Monk influenced me, but I do not copy him. I got ideas from the aesthetics of his approach. If I play a Monk tune it won't be like Monk because I am not Monk and I couldn't pretend to be. I can only be me. I never sat down to learn anyone's solos except when I was 12 and learnt Dave Brubeck's solo on *Debby's Waltz*. I just developed without too much conscious work."

Williams has been recognised for her work through two grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockerfeller ITT grant and the Alice B.Toklas award which came her way for the series of compositions on women in jazz among them Mary Lou Williams, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Jane Ira Bloom and Emily Remler which she called "Portraits In Courage".

There have been other awards but it would be amiss not to mention the Guggenheim in 1994, of which Williams is rightly proud. "Very few jazz musicians have won it. Oliver Lake got it in 1993. Benny Golson and I got it last year. That is quite an accomplishment and I have had musicians ask me what I did to deserve that. I just say I worked hard and asked for it! Actually one has to apply for it, they just don't give it. The first time I applied, I was turned down."

PHOTOGRAPH BY LAWRENCE M. SVIRCHEV (VANCOUVER - JUNE 1994)

For the last two years Williams has "done exactly what I have wanted to, which is to play my music where I want to, the way I want to." She has come a long way from the early days and even from the time five years ago, when a record producer with a cigar in his mouth and an honest approach, told her "nobody else will say this but I am - nobody is going to shell out a lot of bucks on a middle aged white woman."

She leans back in her chair and says with the calm of a person who knows what she is doing, "I could have taken that attitude and run with it and be starving in a garret instead of living in Monterey Bay watching the dolphins jump. Right now I am comfortable where my music is going and I am going to let it go for a while" □

3-2-1

COMPACT DISC REVIEWS BY JOHN SUTHERLAND

MARIAN McPARTLAND Photograph By GERARD FUTRICK

I recall what I consider an astute observation (though not the source) that "Chamber music is a conversation among friends." Such a limited format presupposes an intimacy not often revealed through larger aggregations. Both music and musicians stand exposed - open, honest, personal; by that very token, challenges are demanding, paths uncharted, more conducive perhaps to improvisatory expression. For a composer, it can be tantamount to a baring of the soul, a struggle with the essence or scope of musical boundaries; for performers, it becomes a self-revelatory exploration of skills, a test of imaginative, intuitive response, a meeting place for the exchange of ideas.

As you've no doubt guessed by now, my tastes in music, classical or jazz, lie more favourably with small group renditions; in that context, I feel, one comes closest to music and musician as they truly are, stripped of any pretence or veneer, dependent upon the immediacy of the moment. With this in mind, I am overjoyed to have before me for review eleven CD's, all performances in trio, duo or solo presentations.

Ladies first! Baltimore born **Jessica Williams** first cut recordings as leader two decades ago. Classically trained and propelled into jazz, in part, through her admiration for the likes of Monk, Hampton Hawes and Red Garland, among others, she shapes her own musical statements as evidenced on a 1994 release (***Momentum*** - Jazz Focus JF 003), in close rapport with bassist Jeff Johnson and drummer Dick Berk, both of whom can "swing like crazy" as Jessica puts it. Only one tune was recorded in more than a single take, a tribute to the group's cohesiveness. In a blended programme of originals (4) and standards, she shows how admirably she can perform in a trio setting, whether strolling through a blues' number *(Stonewall Blues)*, accepting the interpretative challenge of reworking a Monk composition *(Shuffle Boil)*, or in rendering a standard in a freshly imaginative manner *(You Do Something To Me)*. As the album's title suggests, her vision is always forward looking, a search for new vistas to explore. The trio accomplishes this with unified precision and obvious pleasure.

Marian McPartland needs no introduction. Her music and her musicianship are her legacy, yet she continues to amaze jazz fans, both in her never-ending pursuit of the unexplored corners of jazz and in her ability to assimilate the best of what she discovers with her knowledge and understanding of the past. Anyone familiar with recently released "Piano Jazz" series on CD is aware of the scope of her interest and ability. A 1994 CD (***Marian McPartland Plays The Music Of Mary Lou Williams*** - Concord 4605), in trio format with Bill Douglass (bass) and Omar Clay (drums) fashioning a superb backdrop, is a timely addition for jazz collectors. Marian's attraction to the music of Mary Lou Williams is far-reaching and reflective of her own conviction that "She (Williams) was forever changing and improving ... always wanting to be one jump ahead of whatever was going on ... to be in the vanguard of whatever was being done musically." It's a bond they share. Williams' music is lovingly presented, not in any attempt merely to recreate the originals, but to capture that "immediacy of the moment" in compositions which might too easily be forgotten in an era that sometimes tends to neglect its own past achievements. From *Scratchin' In The Gravel* to *St. Martin de Porres*, the results here are a memorable journey of delight. Had their respective roles been fatefully reversed, I'm certain that a tribute would have been reciprocated. Better still, Marian, do one of your own now please!

Now for a pair of John's (Jon's) - **John Hicks** and **Jon Ballantyne** — the former drawing upon three decades of experience, the latter referred to by Marian McPartland as "one of Canada's young jazz lions." Hicks' ***Some Other Time***, formerly on a Theresa lp, is a 1981 trio reissue on Evidence CD (22097) including three hitherto unissued bonus tracks; Ballantyne's Justin Time CD (65-2) titled ***The Loose*** dates from 1994.

John Hicks served his early apprenticeship in the Blakey aggregation of the 60's, and over the years, became one of the most sought after accompanists, having played, arranged and composed for such jazz notables as Booker Ervin, Hank Mobley, Arthur Blythe, Chico Freeman et al; he has performed in trio and solo settings since the mid-70's. "The great players in America's greatest art form know how to listen and respond to their partners," state the liner notes; bassist Walter Booker and drummer Idris Muhammad show here that they know all about that magical interplay of ideas so fundamental to jazz. Hicks is a forceful player *(Dark Side, Light Side)*, yet capable too of gentle delicacy when the music warrants it *(Naima's Love Song/Ghost Of Yesterday)*, of bouncing to a Latin beat *(Peanut Butter In The Desert)*, or romping freely through a Monk classic *(Epistrophy)*.

Canadian pianist Jon Ballantyne was brought up in Saskatoon on a daily diet of music from his father's recordings — Monk, Oscar Peterson, Red Garland, Miles Davis. By the age of 16 he had transferred his interest from the classical piano to jazz. A stint at North Texas State helped to make him more fully aware of the pianistic freedom one could attain even with the most banal of tunes. Fresh, innovative, eager to expand an ever-growing repertoire, he offers on this CD an appealing mix of originals (5) and selections from Mingus, Monk, Parker and Joe Henderson, as well as a spirited *I Fall in Love Too Easily*. The Peterson influence seems strong on his own *The Loose*, but he approaches Parker's *Ornithology* with a humorous perverseness, and affords the listener a beautifully laid-back *Monk's Mood*. His willingness to explore new avenues of expression is enhanced by the steady support he receives from Drew Gress (bass) and veteran Billy Hart (drums).

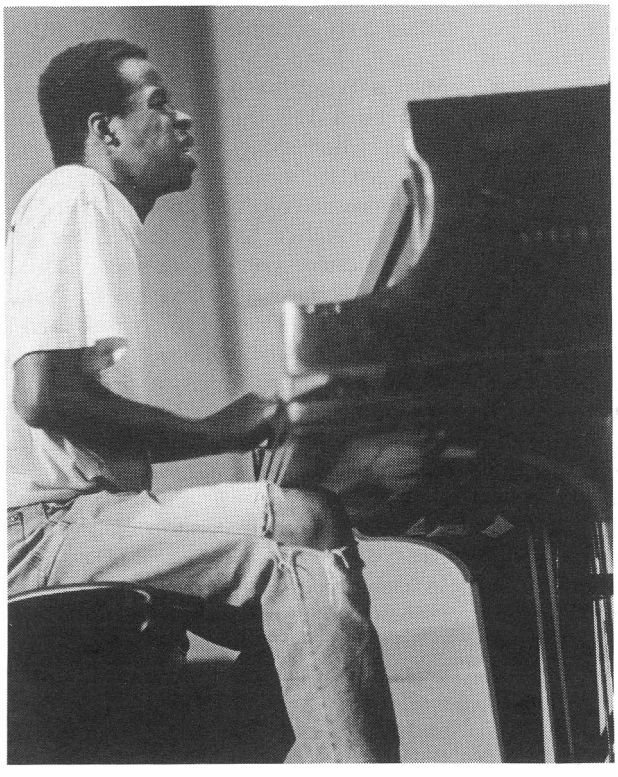
I haven't forgotten still a third John - **Johnny Varro** ***(Everything I Love*** - Arbors 19114) whose name was unfamiliar to me until his January '91 appearance at Toronto's Cafe des Copains. Chiefly a jazz band pianist from the 50's (with Eddie Condon especially), he has, over the years, played with many of the now legendary figures from an earlier era in the progressively changing venues of New York, Florida and southern California. His mentors were Teddy Wilson, Earl Hines, Jess Stacy and Mel Powell, and their respective influences are detectable in much of his playing. The trio of Varro, David Stone (bass) and Gene Estes (drums) provide a sense of enjoyable togetherness on this 1992 California date. His is a voice of musical experience that offers fine sounds, basically standards treated with swinging enthusiasm — a movingly lilting *Some Other Time*, a boisterous *You'd Better Love Me*, a striding *In The Still Of The Night*, to mention a few. No new paths are cut here; the music is for those who like their jazz straight up. Varro feels that too many of today's musicians may be "missing a lot if they don't understand the beginning of jazz, how it evolved into today's music." There is certainly much merit in that viewpoint.

Unfortunately I can offer little information about pianist **Benny Green** ***(The Place To Be*** - Blue Note 7243.8.29268.2.5 - Try remembering that number for your dealer!). Apart from technical details and a lengthy list of "Special Thanks", there is no meaningful information about the artists in the liner notes. I can never understand this. However, I do have the music, and I like what I hear. Any comparisons made are intended not as pigeonholes but as my personal stylistic touchstones; for example, I hear strong traces at times of Bud Powell's bewildering transpositions in tempo, his crystalline clarity (when he was "on") in numbers here such as *Playmate*, Green's own *I Felt That*, even in the Latin tinged *Pensativa*; or the fluidity and keyboard range of Oscar Peterson in *The Gravy Waltz* and *Which Came First?;* moreover, there's the dense, rolling power of a Ray Bryant or a Monty Alexander in *Nice Pants* and *The Place To Be*; add to that the unexpected descents into gorgeous balladry with *I Want To Talk About You* (one of three numbers augmented by brass and reeds), *The Folks Who Live On The Hill*, or Green's *Concertina* (with a melody that's difficult to forget), and one comes away from this disc convinced that Benny Green can really do it all. His appeal, as his style dictates, reaches both forward and back in time — boogie, blues, stride, bop — it's all there in a carefully considered programme to bring out the depth of skill possessed by this multi-faceted performer. And what outstanding accompaniment provided by bassist Christian McBride and drummer Kenny Washington! Had I heard this CD before my submitted list to Coda, it would easily have made my top ten. I'm hooked, and without doubt will search out more music to enjoy by this pianist. But tell me more about the man, Blue Note! It couldn't hurt.

A 1993 September CD recorded in Monster, Holland ***(Gone With The Wind*** 5116) features a trio of Bill Mays (piano), Keith Copeland (drums) and **Martin Wind** (bass). The group is nominally headed by the young German bass player whom Mays and Copeland encouraged to record this session. It's a fortuitous meeting of musical talent. The bassist couldn't have launched his recording career with a more seasoned and supportive duo, and they, having Gone with the Wind (Martin, of course), sound as though they have indeed discovered a musical soulmate much to their liking. The results are a comfortable amalgam of originals and standards which allow ample space for both Mays and Wind to explore the boundaries of their respective talents. However, I wish that the overall feeling had been less tentative and more balanced in keeping, at least in part, with the excitingly propulsive but brief introduction (a 50 second *Gone With The Wind)* which generally belies most of what follows, with the exception of Mays' *High Street* and *Midnite Song For Thalia*. Perhaps, as the liner notes suggest, we do not need to hear another meeting of the three — but, with that thought in mind.

And now for the duos, a 1993 **McCoy Tyner** (piano) / **Bobby Hutcherson** (vibes/Marimba) pairing for ***Manhattan Moods*** - Blue Note 7243.8.28423.2.3, and a 1993 piano (**Matthew Shipp**)/bass (**William Parker**) duet ***(Zo*** - Rise Records 126). The third-man-out format, in my mind, alters the focus for performers significantly. Though the group has diminished in number, musical demands become at once potentially more expansive, more personally challenging, yet more integrally necessary. **>>>>**

Such is the case with the Tyner / Hutcherson CD, two veteran players making mood music together — laying down the melody, stretching it out, toying alternately with it. They are totally attuned in a relaxed, contemplative programme geared for a late, romantic evening with all the suitable props in place — the suggestiveness of soft breezes, a starlit sky, the companionship of a witty, animated *Rosie*. Such gentle accord introduces the album with the title tune and closes it *(For Heaven's Sake)*. When it suits, the resonance of the vibes gives way to the mellower sounds of the marimba in *Blue Monk* and *Isn't This My Sound Around Me?*, a Hutcherson original. Then there's the lightly swinging *Dearly Beloved* and a foot-tapping Tyner's *Travelin' Blues*. Who would want such pensive images shattered?



Contrastingly, the Shipp/Parker disc is not for the faint of heart. Much of the music consists of a three-part suite entitled *Zo*, each section markedly different, each built around a personal tribute. Having listened to the brief opening part, dedicated to his favourite pianist Andrew Hill, with its dense layers of unrelenting sound, I confess I was not, at that point, favourably disposed to what might follow. A lengthy interlude of Gershwin's *Summertime* didn't help, though Shipp's motive was clearly stated, — "... taking that sweet poignant ballad and ... winterizing the melody"; indeed, the two, working together in disharmony, angrily punished the tune. It was not easy listening! However, with *Zo#2*, a 13 minute raucous stay on Moussorgsky's bald mountain, I caught the fever of it, blues and all. I played it again, and began to appreciate how the unity of the players was such an essential prerequisite to this music, each feeding the other into what must have been sheer exhaustion, yet independently free to work out their own details on that basis. *Zo#3*, given over to Ellington, really caught my imagination, bringing forth shreds of recognizable melodies — *Solitude, In A Sentimental Mood*, eventually an *A-Train* at full throttle, into a final rhythmically textured *It Don't Mean a Thing*. Whether I actually heard these things or not doesn't really matter, I was listening hard, and Ellington was in the mix to be sure. I wouldn't have believed it at the onset, but, as the liner notes prophetically forecast, Shipp and Parker "are a combination not be missed ... the listener will always come out fulfilled and rewarded."

It is my belief that the solo performer has the most to gain or lose. There is no active sounding board against which one can share direction, momentum, ideas, only an attentive, passive audience; alone, most vulnerable perhaps to critical judgement (warranted or not), the performer must test his/her improvisational skills based on the immediacy of the moment.

Dave McKenna is that special kind of player who can successfully meet such challenges. He remains one of the most flexible of all pianists, adaptable to any style, tempo or key. Columnist-writer Ira Gitler saw McKenna as "his own rhythm section"; fellow musician Bobby Hackett once described him as "his personal string section." This present disc ***(Solo Piano*** - Chiaroscuro 119) is, in part, a reissue of a 1973 lp, his first solo recording, at that time, since 1955; eight initially unissued renditions augment the CD — four alternate takes, two hitherto unheard performances, including three versions of the Rodgers/Hart *Have You Met Miss Jones?*, each uniquely different. A musician's musician, his solo endeavours remain still too few in number. His repertoire is vast, as evident here — Lennon/McCartney's *Norwegian Wood*, Parker's *Scrapple From The Apple*, Ellington's *C-Jam Blues*, Stevie Wonder's *My Cherie Amour*, a host of standards, a McKenna original, *Chiaroscuro Blues*. His talent speaks for itself. Whatever piano styling appeals to you, McKenna does not disappoint in this long overdue reissue.

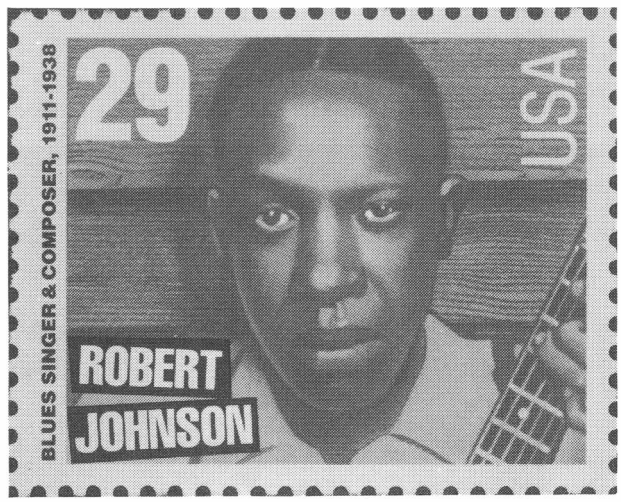
Paul Bley remains one of Canada's most well kept secrets at home, though, over the years, he has readily garnered international laurels as a leading avant-garde pianist. His 1993 CD ***(Sweet Time*** - Justin Time 56-2) only serves to pose the question - why? All compositions are Bley's own, always melodic *(Never Again / Lost Love)*, often fanciful *(Contrary / Turquoise)*, sometimes playfully provocative *(Sweet Time / Pointillist / Final)*. Throughout, there is a kind of eddying of bits and pieces of music that constantly changes, like revolving a kaleidoscope before the eye, — always restructuring, always startling, always gratifying. Wise, insightful liner notes by Andrew Jones say it best, and should be read before and after the playing of Bley's music; the conclusive statement that "The game of jazz shouldn't need to be fully understood to be enjoyed" serves as a reminder to reviewers like myself that the afterflow of words may have little to do with the artistry that preceded them. Bley is not to be missed, as, regrettably, he seems to have been too frequently. Another of my top ten CD's this year! - 'Nuff said. □

MATTHEW SHIPP Photograph By GERARD FUTRICK

LICKED BY ALL

A Postage Stamp of Robert Johnson

BY STUART BROOMER



IN 1994 the U.S. Postal Service issued an eight stamp series commemorating jazz and blues singers, perhaps the most attention the blues has received from the U.S. government since federal agents met with Junior Wells about "VietCong Blues." It's a thoughtful series, though it's hard to ignore the omission of Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald, who probably loom larger than Ma Rainey or Jimmy Rushing or Mildred Bailey. But I don't think anyone could argue with the other five — Billie Holliday from the world of jazz and Bessie Smith, Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters and Howlin Wolf from the blues. If in life Bessie Smith couldn't get into a white American hospital, long after her death she can find herself on a postage stamp.

The most interesting thing about the Johnson stamp is the act of historical revisionism involved in the portrait. Johnson was an obscure talent before his death and was little subject to publicity portraits. The postal service had few images to choose from for their rendering and the one it chose had a cigarette dangling from his mouth. Now political correctness is a two-edged sword. On the one hand it means that a marginalized genius like Johnson can now get attention from the official culture (and Bessie Smith, armed with Medicaid or money might get treated in any hospital). On the other hand, it means that Johnson must be revised, lest the official culture seem to sanction any destructive habit that he practised. Robert Johnson's image had to be cleansed, and the cigarette is gone. Similarly, among the popular singers, Al Jolson is represented without benefit of his "black-face" burnt-cork make-up, rendering him unrecognizable and meaningless in the process. There's a certain Stalinist humour in the simultaneous development of political correctness and digital imaging techniques. The past becomes both revisable and risible.

Now this presents a problem for much of the culture of the blues, which can only be celebrated in its erasure. Jazz usually cultivated grandeur in its naming — King Oliver, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, the Pres' Lester Young, and Lady Day ("Fatha" Hines could, perhaps, be "Fatha" because he was already "Earl"). The blues, however, had an eye for the quickly noted disability. Apart from some early singers with regal titles — "The Queen of the Blues," Bessie Smith, and "The Empress of the Blues," Victoria Spivey — the blues celebrated the infirm (Peg Leg Howell and Cripple Clarence Lofton) and the immature or diminutive (there are, after all, two Sonny Boy Williamsons, the Littles — Walter and Milton, Junior Wells, Memphis Minnie, and Little Brother Montgomery). Above all the visually impaired were singled out, as with Blind Lemon Jefferson, the doubly diminished "Blind Boy" Fuller, Blind Willie Johnson, and Blind Gary Davis before he became the Reverend Gary Davis. There are also the rube (Peetie Wheatstraw and Georgia Pine Boy) and the comatose (Sleepy John Estes).

If you were going to be enhanced by your name, it could come from sports (Champion Jack Dupree) or animals (Howlin Wolf). Usually the best you could hope for was "Big" as in Big Joe Williams or Big Walter Horton, but sometimes this connected to a diminutive, as with Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup. It may simply be that Robert Johnson was chosen over Blind Lemon Jefferson because it's easier to erase a cigarette than a name.

If this weren't bad enough, there were the lyrics, wherein drunkenness is sometimes celebrated as are a range of reprehensible sexual practices. When Bessie Smith or Butterbeans and Suzie sang about "A hot dog for my roll" there was no mention of a prophylactic wrapper for the sausage. When someone sang "Good Mornin', Little School Girl" there was no suggestion that advice on street proofing would be more in order or was about to follow. When Sonny Boy Williamson sang of "some little girl who broke her Daddy's rule," he endorsed the patriarchal order in the most offensive way.

We can rest easy about the cause of Johnson's untimely death, traditionally described as poisoning. He was simply doomed by inappropriate lifestyle choices, and if the poison or the drink or the knives or the "women" hadn't got to him, the nicotine would. If Johnson now resides in some ante-room of the afterlife — limbo or purgatory — he can take posthumous comfort from all this. That wasn't a hell hound on his trail at all. It was just the Surgeon-General. □

REMADE & BRASSY

COMPACT DISC REVIEWS BY
FRANK RUTTER

FRANK MORGAN • Listen To The Dawn • *Verve Antilles 314 918 579*
TOM TALBERT • Bix Duke Fats • *Seabreeze CDSB 3013*
TOM TALBERT • The Warm Cafe • *Seabreeze CDSB 2052*
PEPPER ADAMS • Live In Europe • *Impro 02*
BUD SHANK • I Told You So • *Candid 79533*
CHRIS POTTER • Concentric Circles • *Concord 4595*
GEORGE FREEMAN • Birth Sign • *Delmark 424*
MONTGOMERY BROTHERS • Groove Yard • *Original Jazz Classics 139*
STEVE NELSON • With Bobby Watson • *Red Record 123231*
CHUCK HEDGES • Live At Andy's • *Delmark 465*
CURTIS FULLER QUINTET • Blues-ette • *Savoy 75624*

Hollywood loves remakes. The same movies keep popping up in new clothes: sometimes the new versions are better than the originals, often but pale reflections. In some cases even the first version wasn't worth making. Record companies tend to do the same thing, and they also find it profitable to keep reissuing old stuff in new packages.

In the case of saxophonist Frank Morgan we have what you might call matured wine in new bottles. His early career marred by personal problems, as they say, Morgan resurfaced in the Eighties with a fully-developed style that stunned listeners who had simply never heard of him. Since then he has enjoyed a long Indian summer that doesn't seem to show any sign of turning to Fall. Verve Antilles 314 918 579, recorded in 1993, presents Morgan in an extremely mellow mood. Mellow yet intense. His alto plumbs the depths of emotion. Although he is a much more introspective player, the intensity here reminds me of Art Pepper, another musician who battled many problems but rose musically above them in his later years. The title of Morgan's new album, ***Listen To The Dawn***, is a tune by guitarist Kenny Burrell, a sideman in perfect touch with the alto saxophonist's moods; it's played with haunting simplicity. All the tunes are good, including Duke Ellington's *I Didn't Know About You*, especially *It Might As Well Be Spring*, with another deeply emotive solo from Morgan, and the delightful *Little Waltz*, featuring its composer, bassist Ron Carter. The quartet here is filled out by Grady Tate on drums. Everyone is on top form, fitting like fingers in a glove, and, you know, I never missed the piano one bit. I did miss liner notes, which Verve surely could have provided, but the beautiful music speaks for itself. This is the real stuff and it will move you.

CURTIS FULLER PHOTOGRAPH BY GERARD FUTRICK

An interesting case of old and new wine is offered by the Seabreeze label on two CDs. The first is a reissue of an lp recorded in 1956, in which the teacher and composer **Tom Talbert** led a big band through intricate and, for the time, "modern" arrangements of music by (the album title) ***Bix Duke Fats*** (CDSB 3013). Unfortunately, despite the presence of such fine musicians as Joe Wilder, Oscar Pettiford, Herb Geller and Claude Williamson, it all sounds rather dull today. In reality it did then, too. The composers themselves did much better by this music which is just too clever by half - and half isn't enough. Duke's *Prelude To A Kiss* gets the best treatment because Talbert is faithful to the original and Geller plays superbly. ***The Warm Cafe*** (CDSB 2052) is Talbert 30 years on, presenting a group of his own compositions for big band and featuring mostly musicians who have studied with him. It's more interesting than the earlier pastiche, with fine contributions from baritone saxophonist Jennifer Hall and Bob Efford on tenor, but there are still many better big bands around, and this disc pretty much reveals why nothing has been heard of Talbert between 1956 and 1994.

Pepper Adams enjoyed a long, productive career on the baritone sax, for which there have been less than a handful of virtuoso performers (Mulligan, Carney, Chaloff). Adams went farther afield musically than the other three, though his tone never matched the refinement they displayed. On ***Live in Europe*** (Impro 02), a reissue of a session recorded in France in 1977, Pepper gets sound backing from pianist George Arvanitas in some ballads and blues, along with a tasty bossa of his own devising.

Another old-timer still scuffling around, mostly nowadays in the Pacific Northwest, is **Bud Shank**. He was always an extremely clever musician, but not always extremely inventive. Best in short bursts, he was probably playing better than ever when he made this CD, ***I Told You So*** (Candid 79533), recorded at Birdland in 1992. This is a driving group propelled by Victor Lewis on drums and enhanced by the excellent pianism of Kenny Barron. Apart from the title, which is by pianist George Cables, and sympathetically rendered by Barron in particular, the repertoire is all standard. *My Old Flame* burns pretty well but immortality isn't in these grooves.

Chris Potter is one of a new breed of saxophonists. On ***Concentric Circles*** (Concord 4595), he performs mostly his own music, along with a not very attractive version of *In a Sentimental Mood*. He has a light, thin tone that, despite obeisance to John Coltrane, occasionally descends into New Age. Many of the tracks feature overdubbing of Potter on various reed instruments including bass clarinet, soprano, flute and alto, which some listeners may find untrue to the concept of jazz as spontaneous and improvised. All right as far as it goes. Not quite far enough for most of today's young turks, I suspect.

The **Freeman** family, father and sons, has been belting out R&B, with emphasis on the B, in Chicago for many years. The youngsters, Von on tenor saxophone and his brother George, on guitar, backed by organ and drums, give out with some diluted groove juice on ***Birth Sign*** (Delmark 424). George, who has the honour of being leader, gets most of the attention here and displays a clean, percussive style, sometimes in trio form, and joined by Von on four tracks of which Kurt Weill's *My Ship* sinks without trace beneath a funereal tempo.

Much better musicianship shines through the reissue of a famous **Montgomery Brothers** album, ***Groove Yard***, (Original Jazz Classics 139). Guitarist Wes, brothers Buddy, piano (not vibes on this disc), and Monk bass, are assisted by Bobby Thomas on drums. It's all familiar but it was trail-blazing in 1961, inspiring a whole generation of guitarists. Easy on the ears, perhaps, but nonetheless inventive. *Groove Yard* (the tune) is hip, *If I Should Lose You* is a cool ballad, and *Heart Strings* gets down low.

Steve Nelson, an award-winning vibraphonist, is lucky to have alto saxophonist **Bobby Watson** with him on Red Record 123231 an Italian production recorded at a festival in Acireale in 1989. Watson spices up Nelson's plummy vibe style and the group benefits from some tight drumming by Victor Lewis. Everyone lets his hair down on a 20-minute bash at *Afro Blue*.

The pianist Cedar Walton has organized a group known as Eastern Rebellion, which appears on its second CD, ***Simple Pleasure*** (Music Masters 65081). His recruits include the excellent drummer Billy Higgins, along with a rather inventive young saxophonist, Ralph Moore, and David Williams on bass. I'm not sure what they are rebelling against but it could be a lot of that schlock music that nowadays is often passed off as jazz. Theirs is straight ahead, honest stuff based on blues, with a couple of delightful ballads thrown in. Walton is a real pro who never lets taste get out of hand. You'll get just what the album title promises. Good wine, whatever the vintage.

Next, a throwback. **Chuck Hedges** still memorializes Benny Goodman in Chicago clubs, and he does so on ***Live at Andy's*** (Delmark 465), complete with vibes (by Duane Thomm) and rhythm. What's wrong with that? Nothing, really. And Hedges offers a pleasant hour of competent improvisation on standard themes. Yes, very well played, sir, as they say at cricket games in England, though the boys do get hot on *St. James Infirmary*.

Finally, a good old one. Or is it? I was fooled at first by the title of this CD, ***Blues-ette***, by the **Curtis Fuller Quintet**, Savoy 75624. A reissue of the famous lp by the trombonist (and composer of that tune) along with saxophonist Benny Golson and pianist Tommy Flanagan, no? No. Bassist Ray Drummond wasn't on that one (it was the late Jimmy Garrison) and a closer look at the title discloses it is ***Blues-ette Part II***. And it was recorded in 1993. Nippon Columbia, new owner of the Savoy catalogue, got the boys together in New York to go back over the old ground and add some new flourishes. It worked, wonderfully well. And best of all, they got audiophile sound from engineer Jay Messima. This is a case of a great album made even better. Three of the original tunes are given new versions, *Blues-ette, Love Your Spell is Everywhere*, and *Five Spot After Dark*. There are also two newer Golson tunes, one by Fuller and three by other composers. The original Blues-ette was a hit lp well worth reviving. With the new Blues-ette, a record company has actually outdone Hollywood at the remake game. **>>>>**

Cycles, fads and trends in the history of jazz music have favoured certain instruments during various periods of time. Earliest came the plucked instruments; then, during the flowering of the New Orleans style, the brass. Big bands brought the reeds to the fore; the small groups of the Forties and Fifties often highlighted the piano. Emphasis on solos gave a shot to rhythm sections. But through most of the the past four decades the predominant sound has been the saxophone. Occasionally, however, the brass bites back.

CHET BAKER • But Not for Me • *Stash 584*
RUBY BRAFF • Jazz at the New School • *Chiaroscuro 126*
JON FADDIS • Jon and Billy • *Evidence 22052*
TOM HARRELL • Form • *Contemporary 14059*
VALERY PONAMAREV • At Sweet Basil • *Reservoir 131*
BLUE MITCHELL • Blue Groove • *Prestige 24133*
BRYAN LYNCH • Images of Monk • *Jazz Alliance 10023*
TOM WILLIAMS • A Tribute to Someone • *AudioQuest Music 1022*

Happily some recent compact discs feature brass players who have overcome fashion to establish themselves in the forefront of the music, some of them over a very long period.

One who if anything has found new favour since his death is **Chet Baker**. His unique, if often quaint, style and his unusual personality remain appealing after many a blowhard has come and gone. Delicacy and understatement were Baker's trademarks, along with husky light tenor vocals, dripping melancholy that often reflected personal vicissitudes. Yet he, and his music, were charming. I recall a Baker engagement in Vancouver in the early Eighties. He was on methadone at the time, he said, but border officials still hassled him and confiscated his horn. He managed to borrow a local trumpet and played gloriously at the old Hot Jazz club on West Broadway. He was happy to sit and chew the fat at intermission but what he wanted to talk about mostly was old cars rather than music or his personal problems. Fortunately Baker was a prolific recordist, but a newly discovered session remains an event and this is what we get on ***But Not for Me***, Stash 584, a studio session recorded in New York in 1982. On a couple of tracks, Baker is deliciously partnered by James Newton on flute, notably *Lament*, which is actually *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child*. Baker has a typical, moody, wandering outing on *Prayer For The Newborn* and on the other tracks is an odd couple with Howard Johnson on tuba. Despite the latter's burblings, (perhaps why the session wasn't previously issued) this is vintage Baker, including an idiosyncratic vocal on Miles Davis' *Four*. This is a really enjoyable disc of more value than much of the new stuff being issued these days.

Another long-time survivor is **Ruby Braff**, one of the very few who still champion the cornet over the bigger, bolder trumpet. Like Baker, Braff has a unique style, extremely melodic, often favouring his instrument's bass notes. He weaves filigree and lace around the melody and has always been utterly uncompromising in his approach to music, especially its commercial aspects. Ruby plays what he wants even though sometimes it has cost him in terms of fortune and fame.

One of Braff's best groups was the chamber ensemble he formed in 1973 with guitarist George Barnes; the other members were Michael Moore on bass and Wayne Wright, rhythm guitar. Braff and Barnes were perhaps an unlikely combo because they both could be abrasive and strong-willed. Yet they produced for a fleeting few months much beautiful music together. Chiaroscuro 126 contains a complete ***Jazz at the New School*** concert, recorded in 1974. This is double the music that appeared on the original lp, same number as the CD, and even though off-mike announcements are lost, the music is a relaxing, coherent whole, more than an hour of charm, wit, and musical intelligence. The 20 tracks include many standards but the playing is greatly above standard on such items as Rodgers' *Thou Swell*, Ruby's own composition, *With Time For Love,* Lennon-McCartney's *Here, There And Everywhere,* Gershwin's *Liza* and a trio of Ellington tunes.

Younger trumpets have also made their mark into the Nineties. Two who carried enormous promise from 1970s debuts are **Jon Faddis** and **Tom Harrell**. Neither, unfortunately, has been able to fulfil that promise, but both are still playing brilliantly. Faddis, Dizzy Gillespie's disciple, was overshadowed by Wynton Marsalis and resorted to commercial expediency, appearing on many sessions as a sideman to popular singers and less accomplished

BRIAN LYNCH PHOTOGRAPH BY JERRY MORESI

instrumentalists. Yet every now and then his distinctive horn cuts through the mush. On ***Jon and Billy***, Evidence 22052, you can hear Faddis as he was in 1974 and still could be if he had the chance. This session, recorded in Tokyo, also features the brash tenor saxophonist Billy Harper to advantage. Also on board is the pianist Roland Hanna. Unfortunately Japanese percussion effects, and Hanna's electric tinkling do not enhance some of the tracks.

Harrell, whose brilliant technique and compositional ability were evident as long ago as 1970 when he was a student at Stanford University, where I audited his classes with John Handy, has also tripped over some large stumbling blocks, including a battle with schizophrenia. On Contemporary 14059, a major label gave him a chance to play his own music as leader in 1990. His musical foil here is saxophonist Joe Lovano, whose tough drive spurs Harrell on to considerable heights. All Harrell's compositions are interesting but the long, poetic *January Spring* is special. Charlie Haden, bass, and Paul Motian, drums, give a solid foundation.

Another skilled trumpeter who came too late to bebop to make a big name for himself was the Russian **Valery Ponamarev**, though he has held down steady gigs in Europe and the U.S. for a couple of decades (he was one of many graduates of Art Blakey's long-lived band). On Reservoir 131 he is featured with a group he took to New York's Sweet Basil, including pianist John Hicks, in 1993. He plays mostly his own stuff (including the interesting *Shocking News),* and blows some light-toned, laid-back bop lines without setting the place on fire.

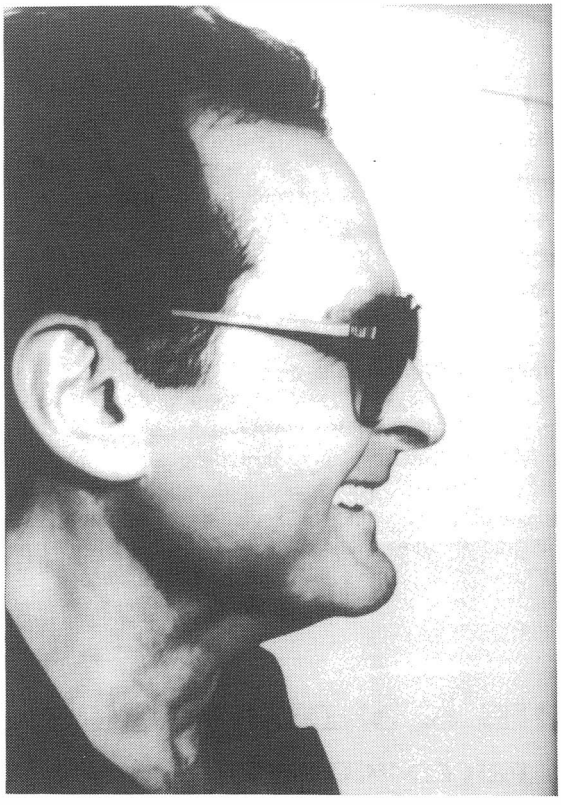
A versatile trumpeter not much heard on disc is **Blue Mitchell**. On ***Blue Groove***, Prestige 24133, he greatly enlivens a couple of tracks with the organist Richard "Groove" Holmes. Another notable guest appearance comes from saxophonist Teddy Edwards, with an appealing *Body And Soul*. Holmes' stuff is fun though not always musically adventurous but on these 1966 and 1967 tracks he displays a lighter and more improvisatory style and Mitchell has a good blow on his two standards, *Things Ain't What They Used To Be* and *There Is No Greater Love*.

New (to me anyway) are the trumpeters **Bryan Lynch** and **Tom Williams**. The latter appears on AudioQuest Music 1022 in a group led by pianist Larry Willis. If you can get over the silly title ***A Tribute to Someone*** you'll hear music mainly in the fingerprints of Herbie Hancock with a few twiddles of Monk thrown in (the ace on the album, drummer Ben Riley, was a sideman of the notable Thelonious). Williams rushes his notes somewhat but everyone sounds good on a catchy blues, *Teasdale Place,* especially the veteran trombonist Curtis Fuller. Lynch, more controlled and imaginative, is on an album that admits to whom it is a tribute, ***Images of Monk***, Jazz Alliance 10023. He, too, benefits from a nifty drummer, Marvin Smitty Smith and most of Monk's familiar music, going round a bunch of *Brilliant Corners, Ruby My Dear,* a blues medley, plus an original by pianist Ted Rosenthal, who leads a sextet including Dick Oatts on saxes and Mark Feldman, violin. Monk has been "in" ever since he died, like Baker, which only goes to show the fickleness of fashion in music. □

VIDEO UPDATE

A REGULAR COLUMN
BY **SCOTT YANOW**

Of the many jazz video tapes that have become available in recent times, the most remarkable is ***At The Jazz Band Ball*** (Yazoo 514). While most jazz videos focus on performances from the past 40 years, this tape includes many of the best existing jazz clips from the 1925-33 era, from Louis Armstrong and the Dorsey Brothers to Bessie Smith and Bix.



Yes, Bix! Actually this recently discovered clip, taken from a newsreel celebrating Paul Whiteman's recent signing in 1928 to Columbia, is a bit of a disappointment. Whiteman conducts his band through part of *My Ohio Home* and Beiderbecke, although visible, merely plays in an ensemble and is barely audible; no solo. However, until something else shows up, this is the only sound film of the legendary cornetist to ever be unearthed.

Other clips are more exciting. In what must be the earliest sound of film of jazz, Ben Bernie and his Orchestra are seen and heard in 1925 (!) playing a hot version of the recent composition *Sweet Georgia Brown;* Jack Pettis, who takes a fine tenor solo, is still alive at this writing. Also from the very early days are two songs by Tommy Christian's excellent dance band in 1928 *(Who Is It? Who* and *Tommy Christian Stomp)* that are quite exciting, the Dorsey Brothers play a couple choruses in 1929 on *Get Out And Get Under The Moon* and the Boswell Sisters (arguably the top jazz vocal group before Lambert, Hendricks and Ross) get hot on *Heebies Jeebies*. Some of the other films are more familiar but no less precious: Duke Ellington's Orchestra in a musical segment from ***Black And Tan Fantasy*** in 1929 and *Old Man Blues* from the 1930 film ***Check And Double Check***, Bessie Smith starring in a long section from the film ***St. Louis Blues*** (although I wish they had just included the full ten-minute short) and Louis Armstrong in 1933 performing *I Cover The Waterfront,* a definitive version of *Dinah* and *Tiger Rag* before a Scandinavian audience. In addition there are some early examples of tap-dancing and a few oddities tossed in to complete this remarkable tape. This gem is essential for all serious jazz video collections (and available from **Shanachie Entertainment**, *37 E. Clinton St, Newton, NJ 07860, U.S.A.).*

Moving up to near-modern times, ***Stan Getz: A Musical Odyssey*** (made available from **The National Centre for Jewish Film**, *Brandeis University, Lown 102, Waltham, MA 02254-9110, U.S.A.)* is a documentary of his three week visit to Israel in 1977; the hour film is narrated by the great tenor-saxophonist himself. Getz, who was Jewish but had never visited Israel before, says that he felt as if he had gone home. There are a few short excerpts of him playing in concert with his regular quartet of the period (pianist Andy LaVerne, bassist Mike Richmond and drummer Billy Hart) including *Lush Life* but much of this film deals with his friendship with the Piamenta Brothers and their musical family. Getz performed a concert with the folk-oriented group (which includes guitar, flute, two singers, bass and drums) and his cool-toned tenor fit logically into the unusual music. Their collaborations are the highlights of this film.

In addition, the open-minded Getz jams (with various degrees of success) with a Klezmer clarinetist (even wailing a bit on clarinet himself), a Kurdish drum and pipe duo, and with a quartet of Arab musicians who clearly do not understand his desire to improvise. Throughout this unusual film, Stan Getz obviously enjoys learning about the different cultures and folk musics and is very respectful to everyone; a class act!

The remaining five videos covered in this article all originated from television shows. In 1962 the Goodyear Tire Company sponsored several 25-minute jazz performancefilms. **VAI** *(158 Linwood Plaza, Suite 301, Fort Lee, NJ 07024, U.S.A.)* has thus far made two available. ***Louis Armstrong*** (69300) features Satch's All-Stars at a time when it included trombonist Trummy Young and clarinetist Joe Darensbourg. The music is typical of an Armstrong set of the period, with the only real surprise being that he does not start off with *Indiana!* Louis is best on *C'Est Si Bon, Someday You'll Be Sorry* and a touching *Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen*. His vocalist Jewel Brown brings some out-of-place soul on *Jerry* and really gets in the way during *The Saints*, getting a disgusted look from Satch at one point!

Duke Ellington (69301) has six songs that give many of Ellington's star sidemen an opportunity to be seen and heard. Highlights include Paul Gonsalves on *Blow By Blow*, Johnny Hodges during *Things Ain't What They Used To Be* and a host of others (including Harry Carney and Cat Anderson) on *VIP Boogie/Jam with Sam*. It is hoped that the other three entries in the short-lived Goodyear series (shows led by Eddie Condon, Wild Bill Davison and Johnny Hodges) will eventually be released on video too.

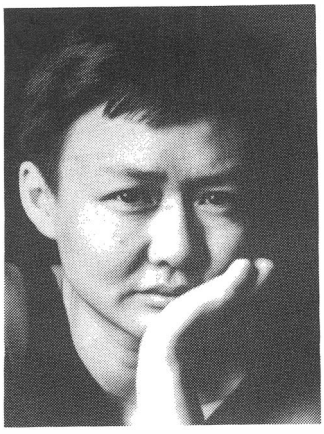
Also from VAI is Lionel Hampton's ***One Night Stand*** (69210). Taped in 1971, this special is typical of how jazz is generally mistreated on television. Nearly every song is overloaded with an excess of talented players, many of whom are barely given cameo appearances. In addition, some pop music is included as if the audience could not be expected to sit still for a full hour of jazz. Despite these faults, there are some special moments in this mishmash.

After the veteran vibraphonist (then 62) plays a quick instrumental with a big band, Mel Torme (who acts as the host) sings *I'm Riding High.* Dusty Springfield (!) drops by for two relatively painless songs and then Gene Krupa is entertaining on a colourful version of *Sing, Sing, Sing.* A dated pop tune written by Hamp *(Traffic Light)* is performed by the vibist along with a vocal trio, a disco dancer (who stands on top of a piano!) and, amazingly enough, the great high-note trumpeter Cat Anderson. Songwriter Johnny Mercer sings a medley of his hits with the assistance of Torme, the forgotten pop group Ocean performs *Put Your Hand In The Hand* with its composer Gene MacLellan and then a potentially remarkable all-star group (including Roy Eldridge, Zoot Sims, Tyree Glenn, Joe Bushkin, Milt Hinton, Gene Krupa and Hamp) are wasted on an overly brief version of *Ring Dem Bells.* Better are versions of *Undecided* and *How High The Moon* that reunite Teddy Wilson with Hampton and Krupa (although the unseen bass of Milt Hinton is so loud in the mix as to be the dominant instrument!). A B.B. King blues leads to an absurd blues medley with Torme, Springfield, Mercer, Krupa, Ocean, Hampton and his vocal trio. Then, as a grand finale, *Flying Home* has some token Gerry Mulligan and an ok drum battle with Krupa, Buddy Rich, Torme and Hampton (while Cat Anderson screams in the background). Perhaps if this show had been three hours long instead of just one, the musicians would have had adequate space in which to stretch out and results might have been coherent instead of downright silly.

The final two videos (both from **Vintage Jazz Classics**, *P.O. Box 427, Magaretville, NY 12455, U.S.A.)* are much more straightforward. Jo Stafford was never a jazz singer but she was a favourite of many musicians (Lester Young thought very highly of her). Stafford always sang in tune and swung softly even if she never tried to really improvise. ***The Jo Stafford Show*** (VJC-2008) features her on three different shows from 1960-61. The first two selections *(The Gentleman Is A Dope* and the satirical hillbilly version of *Temptation* called *Tim-Tay-Shun)* are also available on the video ***The Swingin' Singin' Years.*** Stafford is also seen hosting two of her own shows including one with guests Rosemary Clooney and Mel Torme. Other than a dumb production number *(County Fair)* these performances (mostly ballads by either Stafford or Clooney including *Autumn Leaves, 'Tis Autumn* and *Summertime)* come across quite well. The final episode however mostly showcases Ella Fitzgerald who, not too unexpectedly, cuts everyone. While her renditions of *I Got A Right To Sing The Blues* and *What Is This Thing Called Love* are fairly straight, Ella turns *The Man That Got Away* into a memorable tour-de-force. This tape concludes with a 23-song medley by Jo Stafford and Ella, an optimist vs. pessimist musical discussion about the importance of love.

Of greater interest to jazz viewers is Stan Kenton's ***Music Of The '60s*** (VJC-2007). Kenton was either loved or hated by virtually everyone; there was never any indifference about his music! This one-hour tape from 1962 features Kenton's last significant orchestra, a 23-piece ensemble that included four mellophoniums, giving the band four distinct sections. With the leader doing a fine job of introducing the songs to the live audience and obviously enjoying conducting the ensemble, the big band sounds generally inspired. The solos are consistently brief although such players as altoist Gabe Baltazar, trumpeter Jack Sheldon and tenor-saxophonist Buddy Arnold make impressions. Sue Raney takes two decent middle-of-the-road vocals but The Sportsmen (a singing male quartet) are pompous on *The Green Leaves Of Summer;* fortunately that is their only appearance. Otherwise this is a strong ensemble-oriented set with the repertoire mostly consisting of older (but still fresh) tunes such as *The Peanut Vendor, Limehouse Blues, Malaquena* and *Intermission Riff.* Stan Kenton fans will have to get this tape!

STAN GETZ
PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL MILLER



LEE PUI MING

A PROFILE BY
ROBERT HICKS

PRESS DOWN THE KEY OF A PIANO SLOWLY AND THE SOUND ARISES IN A VIBRATING FIELD. AS THE FINGER LIFTS UP SLOWLY FROM THE IVORY, GRADUALLY THE TONE DISTILS INTO SILENCE. THAT EXPRESSIVE SUBTLETY LIES AT THE HEART OF CHINESE PIANIST LEE PUI MING, WHO SINCE 1985 HAS RESIDED ALONG THE SCARBOROUGH BLUFFS IN ONTARIO, CANADA.

Without replicating the traditional Chinese folk rhythms of her homeland in Hong Kong, Lee evokes an interplay of tones that speaks to the street dances of China. Her music can shimmer with great energy, yet is filled with the humour of Satie and ragtime without any direct phrasing from either source. Her music is uncategorizable, but richly varied in colour.

Even when she slaps her hands upon the woodwork that encases the piano's strings, Lee's rhythms are really about creating a different tonal quality. Sometimes, she will attach forks, spoons and other prepared-piano devices inside her instrument, not as a gimmick, nor as a signature extension of Cagean techniques, but as a means to imbue a rhythmical phrase with a contrasting tonal field. "I initially used the piano and a synthesizer and at times I was dependent on the sound system. That failed me. Artistically, I also started not liking electronic sounds I wanted acoustic sounds. I began to attach things inside the piano. I really wanted to augment colours and I began to realize that a lot of sounds could be got from the piano acoustically," she says. The hollow sound of wood beat with her hands can become a clangy toy while maintaining the same rhythm on the keyboard. In this way, Lee can achieve the mesmerizing effect of repetition while simultaneously enriching that rhythmic pattern with tonal variation. That improvisational bent to her playing speaks both to her Chinese traditions and to her relatively new-found interest in jazz pianists such as Don Pullen and Marilyn Crispell.

"I'm interested in getting as many colours as possible available to me on my instrument," says Lee. At times, she'll make the piano sound like another instrument. "You can't really make the piano sound like a horn, but you can play like a horn would play in terms of style. Sometimes, I get more literal and will actually go inside the piano and pluck the strings to make a bass sound, playing walking bass patterns," she adds.

At the core of Lee's music lies a need for self-expression. Born in Hong Kong on December 15, 1956, Lee, as a youth, had studied a classical repertoire on piano at an American-run missionary school and at the conservatory under Linda Hu. She had heard Chinese pop music at home while her mother, Hui Pui, trained at the Shanghai Conservatory in European opera, would teach young singers and TV actors. Around the house, she would listen to Chopin and hear English pop tunes and Chinese folk music over the radio. Some of these folk tunes she would translate to the piano. By age 19, she found herself in the U.S. studying a standard classical repertoire at The College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, Minnesota, where she took a liking to Prokofiev. Upon graduation, she entered a M.A. program in music at The Catholic University in Washington, D.C. and started playing a lot of Bartok. There she developed an interest in women composers such as Judith Lang Zaimont, Canadian Jean Coulthard and American Ruth Seeger. These years in D.C. also brought her into the realm of jazz, studying under a black woman named Maria, who exposed her to recordings by McCoy Tyner, Herbie Hancock and Bill Evans.

As she continued her graduate studies in music performance at The Catholic University, she soon tired of playing other people's music. Prior to 1985, Lee had visited Toronto twice to visit her brother and it was there that she began to write her own music in 1987 while coming to terms politically and personally with issues of race and gender that so plagued her sense of identity. Under British colonialism, she had taken its flaws for granted, but while feeling a sentimental yearning for her homeland, Lee became more critical of Hong Kong society as politics increasingly figured in her life in Toronto. Nonetheless, she had to confront a sense of loss about her childhood and music helped her come to terms with her racial identity and her culture.

"It's a sense of loss. Some things about your childhood, or chops of experience from your past, you know that you've gone through them and you'll never go through them again. I had a need for self-expression. There was also some kind of a political awakening at that time in terms of race and gender. I realized I was playing a lot of European music composed by men. In D.C. I got involved politically in the Equal Rights Amendment. I put off moving to Canada for a very long time. Part of that was my remembering riding the subway and feeling very uncomfortable, because there were a lot of Asian people there. I just wanted to stay away from a place where there were a lot of faces like myself. When I had no choice — my only way to stay in the States was to remain a student and I was tired of being a student — I moved to Canada. In time, I came to terms in a profound way on a

personal level with my race. A term that people have used to describe my initial misgivings about my race is internalized racism. Through the years, especially growing up under British colonialism, that kind of thing developed. Music is a way of coming to terms with that, especially when I do Chinese music. It's a coming home for me," says Lee.

Her tape ***Ming***, released in 1991, first began to show her incorporation of Chinese traditions and a jazz-based improvisation with her re-interpretation of a Chinese pop song in the style of Cecil Taylor, whom she had first heard on community radio stations in Toronto. She wrote a Chinese rap tune and began to play some inside the piano. Two years later, on ***Nine Fold Heart*** (Pochee - 47 Kelsonia Ave., Scarborough, Ontario M1M 1B2, Canada), Lee invited conservatory-trained Chinese musicians Qui Li Rong on pipa and vocals; Yu Zhi Min on zhong ruan and vocals; Huang Ji Rong on erhu and vocals; Pan Jian Ming on dizi and vocals; Sun Yong on flute; as well as percussionist Salvador Ferraras to join her in an exploration of the range of expression possible on traditional Chinese instruments. From Xinjiang dance rhythms from the western most regions of China, to folk songs telling of generations of warfare and tales of the legendary Monkey King as well as the humorous song *Why Don't We Eat Noodles*, Lee challenges the boundaries normally associated with Chinese music as it meets a European sensibility.

In the late 1980s, Lee began to listen to Don Pullen, especially his early solo work and via radio and record shops became introduced to Jim Pepper, Irene Schweizer, British vocalist Maggie Nichols and pianist Marilyn Crispell, with whom she later took workshops in Toronto. From Crispell, Lee got the tip to focus on a pulse in her improvising rather than on a given time signature. As such, Lee began to play with more fluidity and in phrases rather than along structured bar lines. Her first time improvising in front of an audience came during one of Crispell's workshops and the experience instilled her with a new-found confidence.

Two years ago, Lee heard saxist Jean Derome (whom she performed with in June of this year in Toronto) on the musique actuelle scene in Montreal and later began her interest in Rene Lussier and Pierre Tanguay at Victoriaville. Along with her prepared-piano techniques, which she employed primarily to augment colours, Lee has begun to work with artists from different contexts as she has in performance with the San Francisco Bay area jazz vocalist Rhiannon, British Columbia guitarist David Essiq and percussionist Sal Ferraras, whom she first met at the Vancouver Folk Festival.

Lee's approach to piano shows these new directions as it does her effort to use the piano to incorporate Chinese traditions into her music, namely to explore new sounds on her instrument while keeping in touch with the regular ones associated with its traditions. From Irene Schweizer and Aki Takase, whom she heard on radio and on recordings, Lee added to her bag a mixture of "out" phrasing and straight-ahead statements to achieve a vocal quality to her playing. All these tendencies are brilliantly displayed on her latest solo piano recording, ***Strange Beauty*** (Dorian - 8 Brunswick Rd., Troy, N.Y. 12180-3795 U.S.A. (518) 274-5475).

For the future, Lee plans a trip to China, where she hopes to spend six months studying Chinese folk traditions in Shanghai during the summer of 1996, with travels to other parts of mainland China as her field work. Chinese folk music has an improvisational history which Lee hopes to tap further, because it differs from a jazz approach to improvisation in that the improvisational element arises in Chinese music when the performer adds a personal style as their interpretation of written music. Another recording session, she says, will have to be held off until her return from China, but in the meantime, Lee is writing music for film, mostly independent video and film projects in Toronto, working most recently on Richard Fung's ***Dirty Laundry***, with music for erhu, yangqin and guzhen.

Lee once saw Hong Kong as a stifling, small place with a lot of people but little room for personal expression and creativity. She has plans to return to Hong Kong soon to study its culture and music and re-awaken her sense of Chinese identity. In Canada, Lee initially began to rediscover her racial and gender indentity but now feels ambivalent about her life in Canada. Nonetheless, her self-expression in music holds no boundaries — Indonesian gamelan, and the minority musics of China, Central Asia and India are all her new arena for expanding her palette of sounds. □

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **RAFFY** (LEFT) & **LAIWAN** (BELOW)

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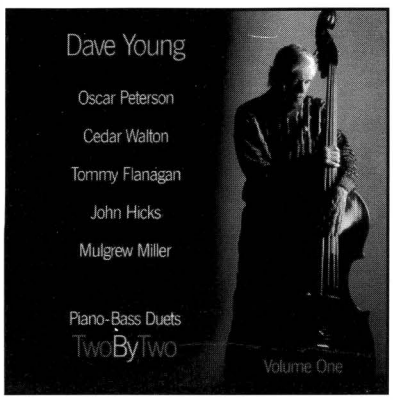

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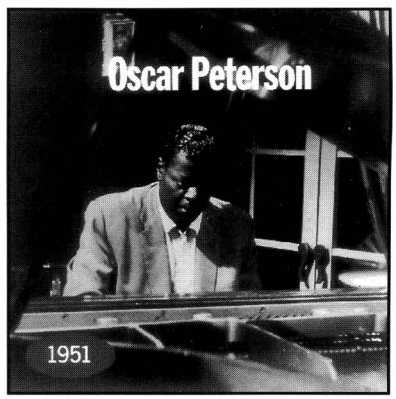

This recording was previously released in the 1950's by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, it has been unavailable since. We've been snooping around the CBC archives and have recovered many lost gems, this is the first release from this project. Peterson's repertoire in this collection amounts to an exploration of some popular tunes of the day like; **Night and Day**, **Tea for Two**, **Body and Soul** and seventeen more great selections.

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