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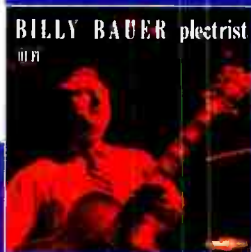
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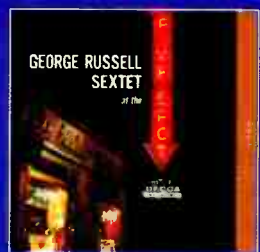
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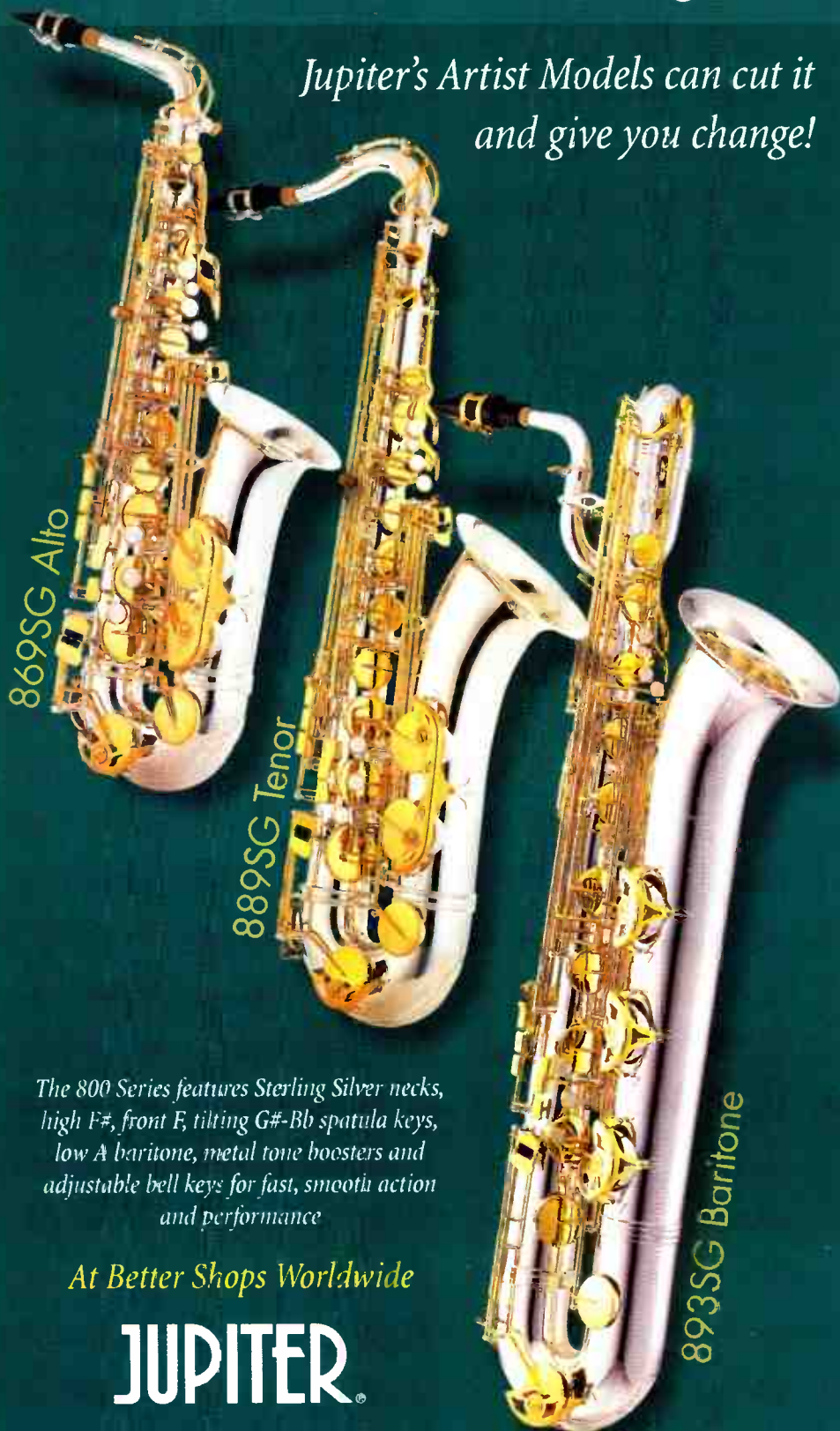
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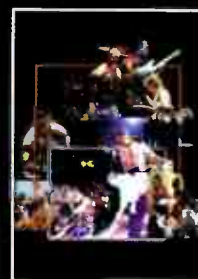
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# Still Grand @300

Billy Joel and the Diana Krall Trio share a laugh during the spring taping of "Piano Grand, A Smithsonian Celebration."

Produced by Maryland Public Television with grant help from NAMM (the international music products association), The Irving Caesar Lifetime Trust and MENC (the national music education association), Piano Grand has started airing nationally during local PBS affiliate fundraising drives.

With an array of acts like Joel, Krall, Dave Brubeck, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Cyrus Chestnut, Robert Levin with the Smithsonian Masterworks Jazz Orchestra, Eliane Elias, Jerry Lee Lewis and more, Piano Grand serves as part of a year-long Smithsonian party in honor of the 300th anniversary of the piano.

The show delivers moments that would make Bartolomeo Cristofori, the piano's inventor, cry "Bravissimo!" For more information, check with your local PBS affiliate or visit [www.piano300.org](http://www.piano300.org).

photo by Robert Smith





# DOWN BEAT

inside

## 24 Danilo Perez

### Tales From The Motherland

Pianist Danilo Perez loves to spread the music from his native Panama to the world. His new album, *Motherland*, draws from his experiences in Panama to comment on a shared Latin American heritage, and to present images of his travels in the region. Take into account his recent appointment as Cultural Ambassador of Panama, and his job teaching at the New England Conservatory of Music, and Perez finds himself in the ideal position to bridge jazz and Latin musics in the new millennium.

By Aaron Cohen

Cover photography by Michael Halsband

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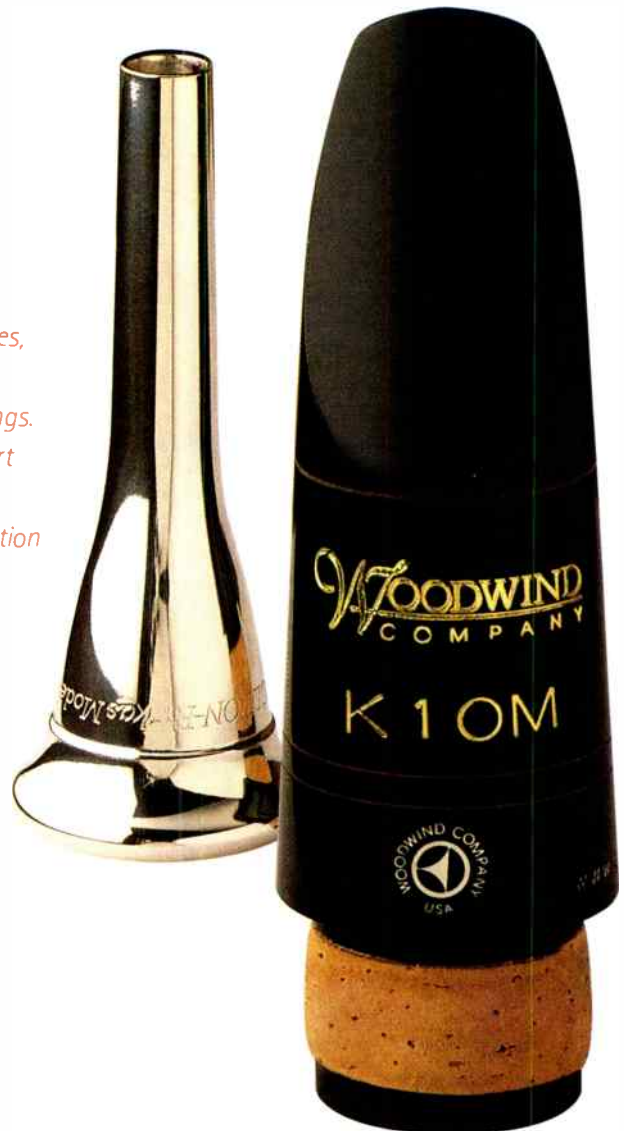
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## chords & discords

### MISSING TRUMPETER

It's a real drag that in your trumpet article on New Orleans ("A Family Affair," July 2000) you omitted Marlon Jordan. He came down the pike right after Wynton Marsalis. Check him out live from Birdland on Donald Harrison's *For Art's Sake* (Candid) or his Columbia recordings.

Don Maitland  
New Orleans

### LACY'S DISCONTENT

Your review of my CD *Monk's Dream* ("CD Reviews," July 2000) was a terrible let-down for me and an insult to my wife, Irene Aebi, who has been collaborating with me for more than 30 years.

Not every artist can conform to your preconceived idea of how they should sound, especially when performing original works not yet "learned" by listeners. Irene does not sing "standards." Experimentation and study with excellent teachers and coaches have helped her perfect the challenging things I have fashioned for her.

Especially hurtful was your suggestion to let Roswell [Rudd] say the words of the pieces, as if there is no difference between speech and song, when my whole search has been to achieve a lifting of the quality of lyrics in jazz to a higher plane of art song. Jazz is a language structure. I learned this from Cecil Taylor back in the '50s. I also learned from him and others that the more original the work, the more misunderstanding and resistance there will be.

Steve Lacy  
Paris, France

### PHINE PHISH

There's no doubt that your magazine will catch considerable flack from many jazz fans for featuring Phish on



### PUMP UP LOUIS

Your Louis Armstrong Tribute issue (July 2000) was as refreshing as a full tank of gas!

Dennis Hendley  
Milwaukee, Wis.

the cover of your June issue. While Phish is not a jazz band, they hold a key to a new generation of music fans that may develop into the next audience jazz so desperately needs. Keep up the great work.

Mac Roberts  
New York City

### THANK YOU

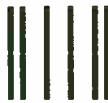
I just wanted to say thanks so much for the article on David Fiuczynski in the July issue ("Players"). It came out great and we really appreciate your support. For independents like us, your willingness to feature David really goes a long way.

Lian Amber  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

### ELECTRIC PIANISMS

Congratulations on your choices of some wonderful pianists to review in your July 2000 issue ("CD Reviews"). In particular, I was happy to see Ethan Iverson garner attention. At a recent performance his playing invoked music making that put the room on a heightened electrical level.

Pete Malinverni  
New York City



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chad wackerman

# Scream

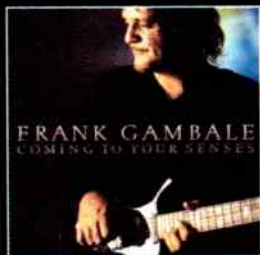
Drummer Chad Wackerman's third solo album, *Scream*, is a fusion of rock, jazz and intricate improvisations by highly proficient players. Well known as the drummer for Frank Zappa and Alan Holdsworth, Wackerman's drumming combines the power and conviction of rock with the sensitivity and finesse of jazz.

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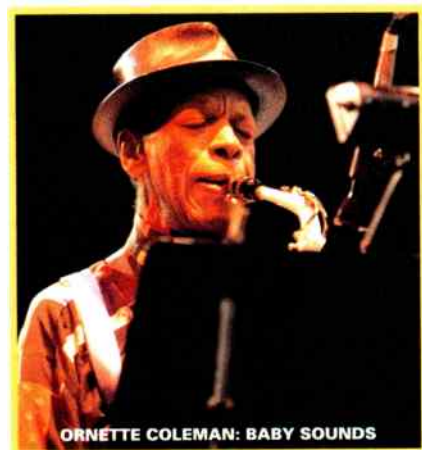
© 2000 Favored Nations Records FN2020-2

## on the beat

Toward the middle of Ornette Coleman's performance with his classic trio of bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Billy Higgins at KnitMedia's Bell Atlantic Jazz Festival in June, a baby started to cry. Held in her mother's arms, she was not close to the stage at New York's Battery Park, but way back on the lawn, in the middle of a mass of fans transfixed by the trio's sparse, signature sound at this historic show.

And while this little girl cried, a remarkable synergy occurred. Ornette's alto saxophone solo weaved in and out of the tears, as he stopped and started riffs in conjunction with her sobs, combining the two sources into one sonic palette.

But there was absolutely no way that Ornette heard this child. However, what Ornette does hear is his heart, and over the course of his life as a musician he has perpetually strived to strip extraneous sounds from his music. Today, the fact that his playing can meld with the cries of a baby, one of the purest human outpourings of emotion, shows that Ornette has achieved an astonishing connection to his human experience, and that he has truly learned how to convey this through his horns.



## Emotional CONNECTION

In putting together this month's issue of *Down Beat*, which has a focus on pianists, we looked for artists who are successful in conveying their emotions through their music. In our cover feature (Page 24), pianist Danilo Perez discusses composing and performing music linked to his experiences in his native Panama—from the thrill of witnessing his country being handed control of the Panama Canal last year to his horror of the United States' 1989 invasion of Panama.

When writer Howard Mandel, bassist Dominique Duval and drummer Jackson Krall sat down for dinner with piano legend Cecil Taylor, they knew that they were in store for an unpredictable night. And as the stream-of-consciousness conversation unfolds on Page 34, Taylor shows the same fire and intensity as he does in his playing: He fears nothing, and has an insatiable hunger to follow his own inner-vision.

Also in this issue, on Page 30, pianist Matthew Shipp discusses the spirituality he strives for in his approach to performing and recording jazz.

May your jazz listening be as filled with the same emotions that these artists use to create their music.

DB

by jason koransky

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# backstage *with*...

In the case of **Lavay Smith & Her Red Hot Skillet Lickers**, don't judge a neo-swing blues band by its cover. Their recent album, *Everybody's Talkin' 'Bout Miss Thing!* (Fat Note), is fronted by the sexy Smith perched atop a tiki bar in an alluring '50s pinup pose, but unlike so many trendy retro outfits, this popular San Francisco-based big band has plenty of substance to go along with the style. They've been around for more than a decade, and several veteran members once played alongside the likes of Benny Goodman and Duke Ellington, which explains why they exude unmistakably authentic, danceable swing on classics and obscurities from the '30s, '40s and '50s, as well as zesty originals. And Smith is far more than eye-candy. Her lush contralto evokes Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington and Little Esther Phillips, while retaining her own spunky, modern spirit.

We spoke with Smith and musical director/pianist Chris Siebert after a lively show in June at the House of Blues in New Orleans.

#### HOW IMPORTANT IS IMAGE AND SHOW-BIZ TO YOUR BAND?

**SIEBERT:** The music is always first. That's why we do this. And compared to a lot of the bands that hit a few years back in the swing scene, the image of this band is fairly minimal. We're an independent label, so we're free to make music our way, without worrying about presenting a certain image, for instance of eight young white males dressed in zoot suits. We put out the best music we can, and let it speak for itself. Of course, we enjoy the art involved in creating a beautiful album cover, and we're fortunate to have a sexy, glamorous singer. But we also feature interesting arrangements and soulful soloists. Jazz and blues can stand on its own without elements of rock or lounge music grafted on top to make it more popular.

**SMITH:** I agree, but I also think having a fun image allows us to reach more people, not just jazz fans, even teenagers. We have fans from age 12 to 80, which is unusual.

#### HAS THE "NEO-SWING" TREND HAD ANY NEGATIVE EFFECTS?

**SIEBERT:** A lot of people who normally would jump right in and

say, "Man, I love Duke Ellington, I love Count Basie," might have avoided this whole swing scene because they heard a band they didn't like. I think that happened in the jazz press, and in the jazz and blues audiences, but we find that whenever we get a fair shot at playing for that crowd, we go over great.

**SMITH:** And a lot of great swing and jump-blues bands came out of this scene that are still out there, like the Sultans of Swing and the Yallopin' Hounds from New York, and Steve Lucky and the Rhumba Bums in San Francisco. We've noticed the bad ones have been kicked to the curb.

#### SO DARWINISM HAS TAKEN EFFECT?

**SIEBERT:** To a certain extent. That scene is sort of fading. Now it's exciting because people are looking at what really counts, which is the music, not the image, not the hype. We're glad to see it, because we always wanted the focus to be on this huge universe of jazz, blues and r&b, and the people who are still carrying on those traditions. It's America's classical music, and it shouldn't just exist on records like a museum piece. It should be performed and interpreted by new performers for new audiences.

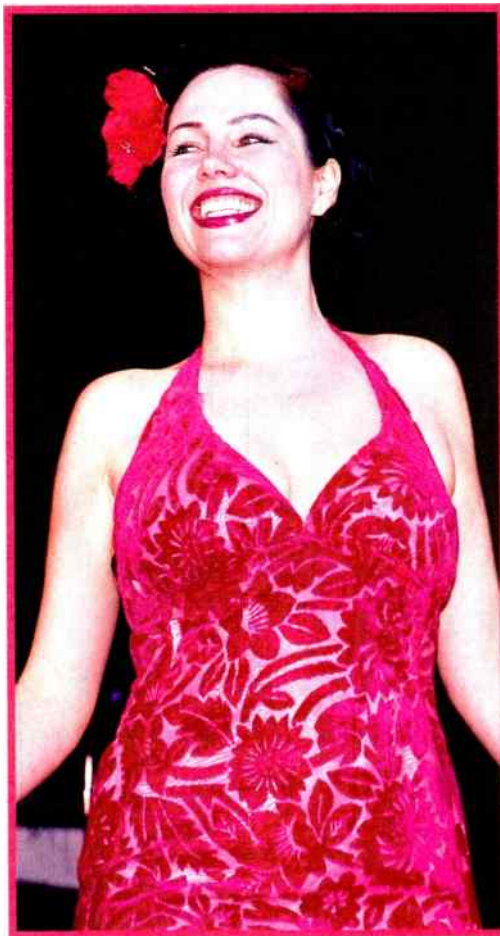
#### HOW DO YOU CHOOSE MATERIAL?

**SIEBERT:** The best thing is to write your own, which we do, but there are lots of obscure gems out there, even within the Ellington and Basie books. You've got to dig around and collect records to find them. It doesn't take much thinking to know whether we want to add a song to our book. There's no arguing with laughter, tears or chills up your spine—

you know a song or artist is speaking to you.

**SMITH:** I like songs that deal with universal themes like love and sex, but approach them from the standpoint of a liberated woman. African-American women who sang jazz and blues from the '20s onward often sang with an independent, liberated voice. And they often used humor to make their point. Laughter is good for you, and people are receptive to ideas, including feminist ideas, when they are presented in humorous and ironic terms. It makes things more real and personal.

DB



## lavay smith & Her Red Hot Skillet Lickers

by jonathan tabak



**RHINO**  
HOME VIDEO

# RALPH GLEASON'S Jazz CASUAL

In the early 1960s, *Down Beat* and *Rolling Stone* critic Ralph J. Gleason created, produced, and hosted *Jazz Casual*, an intimate performance forum for public television. Not seen in over 25 years, each episode of *Jazz Casual* has been remastered and includes a bonus special chronicling Ralph's life and the genesis of *Jazz Casual*.

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# jazz

news from around the swing globe



**TOP BIRD:** Legendary trombonist **J.J. Johnson** captured this year's international Bird Award, presented by the North Sea Jazz Festival organization. Clarinetist Michael Moore won Holland's national Bird award, and Criss Cross Jazz producer Gerry Teekens received the Bird award in the Special Appreciation category. The winners each received a bronze statue. —Jaap Lüdeke

## REMEMBERING HAL:

Ari Brown played the role of late multi-instrumentalist Hal Russell during the second set of "**A Tribute To Hal Russell**," held June 21 as part of the Seventh Annual Southport Festival. The show, held at Chicago's swanky club Pops For Champagne, celebrated the release of Russell's CD *Albert's Lullaby*, recorded in 1991 (a year before he died)

and recently put out by Southport Records. Sharing the stage with Brown were bassist Mike Staron, pianist Bradley Parker-Sparrow, drummer Rick Shandling and reedist Rich Fudoli (during the first set). Other performers during the week-long showcase by the prolific Chicago-based label included guitarist George Freeman, bassist Tatsu Aoki and vocalist Joanie Pallatto. —Jason Koransky

**BYE BYE JASON:** Drummer **Jason Marsalis** has left Los Hombres Calientes, the New Orleans-based jazz/Latin band that, with trumpeter Irvin Mayfield and percussionist Bill Summers, he helped lead to critical and popular acclaim over the past couple of years. Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez will replace Marsalis, who wants to do more work with his own quintet and Marcus Roberts' trio, and felt that he wasn't being fair to Los Hombres Calientes by picking and choosing when to play with them. —Jason Koransky



**DORN'S BACK:** Only a few months after leaving the successful 32 Jazz, producer **Joel Dorn** returns with **Label M**, a record label that will build its release schedule around a mix of "live" previously unreleased jazz, blues and r&b recordings; classic album reissues; compilations and select artist signings. For the label's live material, Dorn will draw from a variety of tape collections he's been gathering since the mid '80s, including the "Left Bank Jazz Society" archives, which contain more than 350 hours of performances from the major names of jazz in the '60s and '70s. "People will be stunned by what we've found. There's never-before-heard tapes by Stan Getz, Yusef Lateef, Lee Morgan, Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Sonny Stitt," Dorn says.

The first releases for Label M, tentatively set for Sept. 26, include: a Sonny Stitt recording with Don Patterson on organ, a reissue of Joe Williams' *A Man Ain't Supposed To Cry* and *The Complete Reprise Recordings By Morgana King*.

# World

**STOCKHOLM SOCIAL CLUB:** Multi-instrumentalist **Ale Moller** of the Swedish folk group Frifot and saxophonist **Jonas Knutsson** recently issued the album *Latitudes Crossing* (Warner Bros./Atrium), featuring 14 Sweden-based musicians from 11 different countries (Sweden, Turkey, Gambia, Senegal, India, Cuba, Japan, Mexico, Brazil, Greece and areas of Lapland). The results

could have been chaotic, But as Moller says, "The idea was to compose new music and weave in the traditional music and themes of each of the musicians." While the roots of this project go back to 1998 with the Stockholm Folk Big Band, Moller says the idea came about through constant touring and contact with other musicians.

—Hugh Gregory

**TRUMPETING BERN 2000:** Anytime one can catch the Roy Hargrove and Joshua Redman quintets on the same night is a good evening, but to witness three solid quintets all in one evening—the third being drummer Lewis Nash's with Regina Carter and Kenny Barron—should be considered a musical bonanza. The impressive 25th anniversary celebration of May's week-long **International Jazz Festival Bern** provided this bonanza as part of a diversified lineup of straight-ahead jazz, blues and gospel, in addition to a rich selection of trumpeters in recognition of the Louis Armstrong centennial.

Trumpeter Nicholas Payton's band set a high benchmark as the riveting lead-off act in a dedication to the Louis Armstrong centennial, and was followed by trumpeter Byron Stripling fronting the Big Band of Lausanne. A trumpet "summit" related to Pops himself comprised the talents of Clark Terry, Hargrove, Payton and Stripling, in a variety of styles, which included a touching appearance by past Armstrong alumnus Arvell Shaw on bass and vocals.

Still, the most compelling set at the festival belonged to singer Dianne Reeves, who with her band in perfect synch and sounding amazingly fresh, was joined by Terry, who originally "discovered" her, in an interplay of scat singing and trumpet play in an unforgettable duet.

—Keith Brickhouse



DIANNE REEVES AND CLARK TERRY

**CLASSICAL COLLABORATION:**

In late May, bassist **Ron Carter** went to Japan for a series of concerts with the country's most popular classical saxophonist, **Nobuya Sugawa**. The tour came on the heels of the release of *Air* (EMI), the



pair's recent bass-saxophone classical release that includes such classical repertoire as J.S. Bach's "Air," M. De Falla's "Danza Ritual Del Fuego," and standards like "I Got Rhythm" and "Summertime," done with a wonderful mixture of sophisticated musicianship, brilliant tones and a touch of jazz. After their successful tour, Carter said he enjoyed the challenges enormously and praised Sugawa's musicianship.

—Kiyoshi Koyama



JOHN ZORN

**HOLY JAMS:** There'll be some swingin' in the Holy Land once again this summer, as the 14th Annual **Red Sea Jazz Festival** in Eilat, Israel, runs from Aug. 28–31. Artists featured on the fest's four stages include Abbey Lincoln, John Zorn & Masada, Astral Project, Manhattan Transfer and 10 top Israeli jazz groups. During the festival, this popular resort town explodes with 26 concerts, eight clinics and plenty of late-night jam sessions.

# STOP-TIME



**COLLEY:** Recording is part of an ongoing process: practicing, writing, rehearsing, playing live and then recording. I try to put the same focus and energy in every one of these elements.

Photos and text by Lourdes Delgado



# Columbia house jazz



**Dave Koz—The Dance**  
(Capitol) 314930

- Quincy Jones—Walking In Space (Verve) 393694
- Jay Beckenstein—Eye Contact** (Windham Hill Jazz) 392993
- Elton John—Grt. Hits (Polydor) 471011
- Ella Fitzgerald—The Best Of The Songbooks** (Verve) 468231
- The Genius Of Charlie Parker** (Savoy Jazz) 456160
- Frank Sinatra—Sinatra Reprise/The Very Good Years** (Reprise) 430363
- Duke Ellington—Okeh Ellington** (Columbia/Jazz Legacy) 427922
- Best Of Thelonious Monk** (Blue Note) 419663
- Ella Fitzgerald—In The Groove** (Buddha Records) 393710
- Louis Armstrong—Sings** (Back Through The Years) (MCA) 393702
- The Paul Desmond Quartet Live** (Verve) 393666
- Ronny Jordan—A Brighter Day** (Blue Note) 393595
- Jackie McLean—Nature Boy (Blue Note) 371013
- Graver Washington, Jr.—20th Century Masters: The Best Of... The Millennium Collection** (Motown) 392761
- Vaesssa Williams—Greatest Hits: The First Ten Years** (Mercury) 392399
- Ornette Coleman—Dancing In Your Head** (Verve) 393256
- Roy Haynes Trio** (Verve) 393173
- D.D. Jackson—Anthem** (RCA Victor) 392373
- Tom Grant—Tune It In** (Windham Hill Jazz) 391771
- Greg Osby—The Invisible Hand** (Blue Note) 390807
- Terence Blanchard—Wandering Moon** (Sony Classical) 390021
- Steve Tyrell—A New Standard** (Atlantic) 389676
- Harry Connick, Jr.—"When Harry Met Sally"** (Music From Movie) (Columbia) 386821
- Eliane Elias—Everything I Love** (Blue Note) 382218
- Dee Dee Bridgewater—Live At Yoshi's** (Verve) 367821



**Dr. John—Duke Elegant**  
(Blue Note) 389841

- Mark Shim—Turbulent Flow** (Blue Note) 392357
- Bill Frisell—Ghost Town** (Nonesuch) 390906
- Miles Davis—Amandla** (Warner Bros.) 381756
- Herbie Hancock—Future Shock** (Remastered) (Columbia/Jazz Legacy) 378380
- Return To Forever—Romantic Warrior** (Remastered) (Columbia/Jazz Legacy) 377556
- Chico Hamilton—Timely** (Wild Pitch) 370916
- New Directions** (Blue Note) 369876
- Kenny Barron—Spirit Song** (Verve) 367888
- Marvin Gaye's Grt. Hits** (Motown) 367565
- Nicholas Payton—Nick @ Night** (Verve) 366799
- Mark Turner—Ballad Session** (Warner Bros.) 363713
- Wynton Marsalis—Marsalis Standard Time** (Columbia) 357640
- John Coltrane—The Bethlehem Years** (Avenue Jazz) 355149
- Don Cherry & John Coltrane—The Avant-Garde** (Atlantic/Rhino) 354944
- Van Morrison—Moondance** (Warner Bros.) 349803
- Dave Douglas—Soul On Soul** (RCA Victor) 348086
- Ray Barretto—Portraits In Jazz And Clave** (RCA Victor) 344176
- Kurt Rosenwinkel—The Enemies Of Energy** (Verve) 343632
- Kurt Elling—Live In Chicago** (Blue Note) 343442
- Duke Ellington—The Carnegie Hall Concerts, December 1944** (Prestige) 339382
- Duke Ellington—The Carnegie Hall Concerts, January 1943** (Prestige) 339374



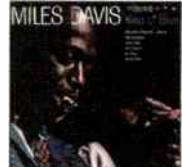
**Joshua Redman—Beyond** (Warner Bros.) 392258

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- Charlie Parker—At Storyville** (Blue Note) 337931
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- Dizzy Gillespie And His Big Band** (GNP Crescendo) 332569
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- John Pizzarelli—Kisses In The Rain** (Telarc) 383117
- Brian Culbertson—Somethin' Bout Love** (Atlantic) 320408
- Pieces Of A Dream—Ahead To The Past** (Blue Note) 318535
- Mahavishnu Orchestra—The Lost Trident Sessions** (Columbia) 317503
- Brian McKnight—Back At One** (Motown) 316141
- Linda Eder—It's No Secret Anymore** (Atlantic) 315796
- Earth, Wind & Fire—The Best Of Vol. 1** (Remastered) (Legacy) 310599
- "Magnolia"—Aimee Mann, more.** (Reprise) 350066
- "The Sopranos"** (Playtone/Columbia) 349746
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- Luther Vandross—Greatest Hits** (Epic/Legacy) 339028
- "The Talented Mr. Ripley"—Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, more** (Sony Classical) 338852



**Miles Davis—Kind Of Blue** (Remastered) (Columbia/Legacy) 185587

**Norman Brown—Celebration** (Warner Bros.) 289082

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**Kenny Garrett—Simply Said** (Warner Bros.) 285965

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Love Songs (Columbia/Legacy) 273144

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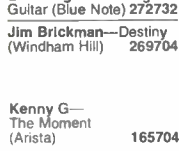
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With Love (Qwest/Warner Bros.) 274415

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Best Of Smooth Jazz, Vol. 2 (Warner Bros.) 250753

Best Of Smooth Jazz, Vol. 3 (Warner Bros.) 250811



## Jazz For A Lazy Day

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(Warner Bros.) 250845

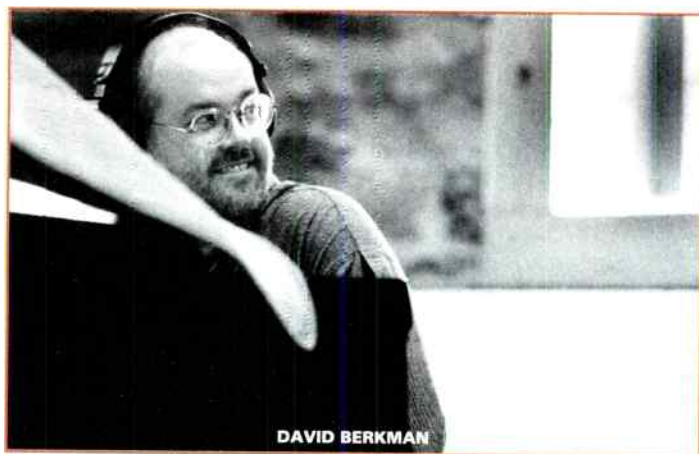
## Best Of Brasil—A. Caram,

H. Mann, P. D'Rivera, more. (Chesky Records) 187922

## Talkin' Verve (Roots Of Acid Jazz)

(Verve) 129551

On March 26, saxophonist Joel Frahm, pianist David Berkman, bassist Scott Colley and drummer Billy Drummond went into Palmetto Records' Maggie's Farm recording studio in Buck's County, Pa., to cut Frahm's recently released sophomore CD, **The Navigator** (Palmetto). Here, we try to unlock the secrets behind the work and preparation that went into this successful jazz recording session.



**BERKMAN:** Whenever you are playing you are always busy. You are having your thoughts, interacting with yourself. When you listen to your own recording, it's the only time you really hear it from outside, without being in the middle of it.

**DRUMMOND:** The ideal mind set during recording sessions is to be able to reach the point where you don't differentiate between playing live or in the studio. Sometimes the best moments—in both settings—are when chances are being taken and the music goes to an unexpected place.



**FRAHM:** Recording is like looking in a mirror or watching a snapshot of yourself. It's an honest gauge of what you really sound like.



by eliot tiegel

Half of our gigs are out of the Bay Area. Since three-quarters of the members have families, we go out on weekends rather than doing road trips.

**WHAT DOES IT COST TO TAKE THE BAND ON THE ROAD?**

It costs \$20,000 for a runout on a weekend for the 12 players plus a tour manager and sound engineer.

**Anthony Brown** and his **Asian American Orchestra** made history this year by becoming the first Asian-American Grammy nominee in the Large Ensemble Performance category for its album *Far East Suite*. Brown's interpretation of the 1966 Duke Ellington-Billy Strayhorn composition rings with the sounds and instruments of the Orient; and while the Asian Improv Records recording



**Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra**

lost out to Bob Florence's *Serendipity*, it was nonetheless a major accomplishment for the 46-year-old arranger/composer/drummer, whose father is African-American with Choctaw ancestry, and whose mother is Japanese. Brown's Asian American Orchestra, consisting of 12 musicians from the San Francisco area, debuted on Asian Improv in 1998 with *Big Bands Behind Barbed Wire*.

**WITH THE ORCHESTRA'S MUSIC SO SPECIALIZED, DO YOU HAVE TO PLAY CITIES WITH LARGE ASIAN POPULATIONS?**

Not necessarily. We see every color of the rainbow, if that's the demography of the place. Of course, we get a great response when we're appearing before a large Asian population. When we play colleges there's this exoticism of seeing and hearing all those Asian instruments within the band.

**WHAT HAS THE GRAMMY NOMINATION DONE FOR THE BAND?**

It's validated what we've been doing by getting recognition from the record industry. It's also given us the impetus to continue. But no one turned around and offered us national distribution, which is something Asian Improv doesn't have.

**YOUR CULTURAL HERITAGE THROUGH NOT ONLY YOUR MUSIC BUT YOUR PERSONAL LIFE AS WELL.**

Of my racial mixture, there are an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 black and Japanese offspring as a result of the Korean War. My first album as a leader, before the orchestra was formed, was the 1996 CD *Family*, which focused on the 50th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. **DB**

**WHAT DOES THE ORCHESTRA SYMBOLIZE?**

It represents a movement within the San Francisco Asian musical community during the last 20 years to blend Asian instruments within a jazz context.

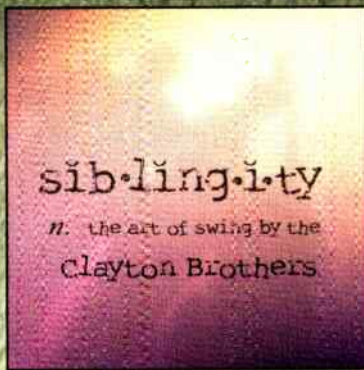
**HOW DOES THE ORCHESTRA FIT INTO THE JAZZ LANDSCAPE?**

We look at jazz as a tonal palette, always adding new colors, and I see our role as making jazz a much more multilingual language. I look at music as a language.

**HOW MANY SHOWS DOES THE BAND DO IN A YEAR?**

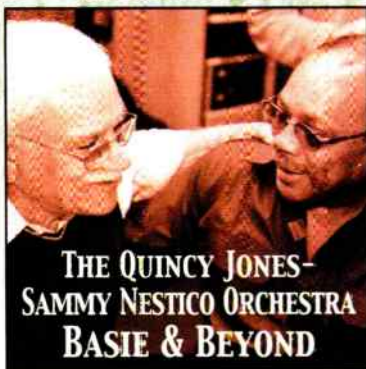
We do around 12-15, primarily playing at festivals and colleges. We've appeared at the Chicago, San Francisco and Monterey festivals, and this July we're going to Europe for two weeks to play festivals.

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**W**ith the plethora of reissued jazz being released, how does a record label make old material appealing?

"Our repackaging, how it sounds," says Glenn Stone, vice president of Avenue Records/Bethlehem Archives. "We're giving the product its best presentation."

For nearly a year now, Avenue Jazz has been releasing material, approxi-

## Bethlehem's



mately two recordings per month, from the wellspring of Bethlehem Records. In the '50s, Bethlehem was one of the jazz world's most successful labels, ranked with the likes of Columbia, Emarcy and Capitol. And this kind of prestige is an obvious draw for collectors and jazz nuts.

"The mail I get is incredible, from collectors, people who can't believe that Bethlehem is back on the streets again," says Eddie Levine, executive A&R coordinator of the project.

Bethlehem boasts many of the time period's most influential musicians. The names Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, Charles Mingus and Mel Tormé are bound to draw even casual jazz listeners to Bethlehem. Add to that the occasional historical oddity: In 1956, Bethlehem released the first jazz interpretation of George Gershwin's "Porgy And Bess." Virtually every notable musician associated with the label was enlisted for the project, which featured Tormé, Frances Faye, Betty Roché, George Kirby, Johnny Hartman, Frank Rosolino and others. The undertaking cost a fortune and ended up essentially bankrupting Bethlehem. "In 1954, it cost about \$1.4 million," Levine laughs. "Today, that

would be \$10 million!"

But, history aside, the label is intent on attracting a more diverse, youthful audience. Thus, Bethlehem is planning to record new artists to rejuvenate the label.

"We have to cut new artists to stimulate the Bethlehem catalog. That's exactly what we did at Blue Note," says Levine, who spent time at Blue Note in the late '60s and early '70s.

Although the Bethlehem catalog has approximately 230 titles, enough to continue releasing obscure recordings by

innovators like Herbie Nichols or Roland Kirk for another four years, achieving the same kind of success as Blue Note could prove more difficult for a traditional catalog in today's jazz market. "Naturally, there is a lot of competition these days between smooth jazz and straightahead jazz," says Levine. Stone agrees, explaining that "the only unfortunate aspect of this (reissuing Bethlehem) has been how little space retail will devote to it. There are so many retailers where their jazz department is Kenny G." —John Uhl

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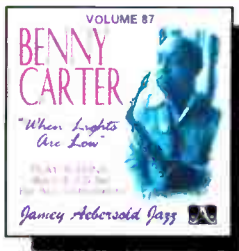
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Andy Laverne, piano; John Goldsby, bass; John Riley, drums.



## Volume 91

### Players' Choice

Masters of the Craft

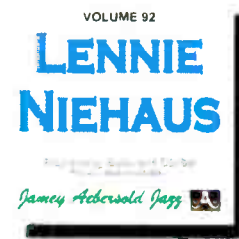
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A collection of excellent songs well known to all working musicians because they've been recorded countless of times and are called frequently at jam sessions.

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**By Aaron Cohen**

**Photo by Michael Halsband**

# TALES

## From The Motherland

**Danilo Perez Immerses Jazz  
In His Panamanian Heritage**



A few months ago, Danilo Perez took an afternoon away from his tour with the Roy Haynes Trio to talk with students and an audience at the Ravinia Festival's Martin Theater in suburban Chicago. Time constraints pressured the pianist/composer/diplomat, but his ineffable charm never seemed restricted. After answering questions about a mentor—Dizzy Gillespie—and talking about his own background, Perez brought the group of teenage and twentysomething musicians onstage. He was showing them how they could recombine different beats when Ravinia officials whisked him away so he could catch a flight to Michigan. While everyone had thought Perez had left the building, his directives could still be heard from the wings: “Keep playing! Keep playing!”

Many people have given Perez similar encouragement. He justifies their support.

Throughout five albums under his own name, Perez moves from poignant and original interpretations of American standards to his own visionary compositions. As a sideman, his bandleaders know he's as deeply immersed in Latin structures as he is in jazz, and that he fluently blends and detaches those idioms. Along with his musical accolades, he became the Panamanian Cultural Ambassador to the world in February.

A recent collaborator, Steve Lacy, has performed with such legends as Thelonious Monk and Cecil Taylor. After saying that those encounters have made him “not so easily amused by pianists,” Lacy's enthusiasm for Perez is unbridled.

“There is nobody like Danilo,” Lacy says. “What I especially like is his sense of rhythm, color and form. He's studied, he's open, he's flexible, generous and sweet. Listen: This guy's got everything, all the qualities there are. What more can I say? One player's got a good tone, another's got a good beat, but he has everything. He can fly—that's what my wife says—and she's not easily amused, either.”

Two recent recordings encapsulate these attributes. On a disc from the Haynes Trio, Perez and bassist John Patitucci stretch the harmonies of familiar jazz compositions in directions that the drummer remarks is “a challenging situation that's paying off.” On the CD, Perez challenges his instrument's lineage itself, since pianists Monk, Duke Ellington and Bud Powell penned much of the trio's repertoire.

On the other album, his own new disc, *Motherland*, his performance as an instrumentalist sits largely in the background. That project features his songs as vehicles for a multinational crew of instrumentalists and singers. “For this project, I wanted it to be more of a baseball team,” he says. Maybe it's no coincidence that when Perez made the comparison, the Panamanian leftfielder Carlos Lee began racking up selfless RBIs for the Chicago White Sox.

On *Motherland*, Perez draws from his experiences to comment on a shared Latin American heritage, and to present images of his travels in the region. While a key source is the indigenous music from Panama, Perez's years in that country were spent absorbing an array of sounds.

Perez was born 34 years ago, and he started playing music even before he could be considered a child prodigy. His father (also named Danilo) is a sonero singer, with improvisation being important to the act. “It's like in salsa where they make up lyrics, almost like a rapper in the Latin style,” Perez says. The younger Danilo was often included.

“He would take me, when I was 3 years old, with a pair of bongos, to rehearsals,” Perez says. “And at that time there were big orchestras—like Marcelino Alvarez's band, who he worked with in Panama. And I would go there and on the side I would play the bongos and the clave. Then I would play guitar when I was 5, 6 years old. I would do everything that he would do. He would pick up the guitar, I would pick up the guitar, too. He would teach me some chords and I would learn like that.”

“And he loved piano,” Perez recalls. “So he would know the solos by people like Papo Luca, or the great Cuban bands. He would play me all these old records and say, ‘Listen to the piano.’ That was my first early period of transcription. Because I would learn the solos and play along with it.”

These early experiences partly explain why Perez includes singers on all of his discs. Vocalists are especially prominent on *Motherland*.

"For me, if I had the choice, I would be a vocalist," Perez says. "I think vocals and percussion are the closest instruments to human beings, to the Earth, to true emotions. Everything else has to go through something else. The trumpet has to go through a mouthpiece, the saxophone has to go through a reed, but the voice comes out of you and it goes."

Even when the Perez family wasn't onstage, they were constantly hearing music and performing for themselves. Along with his grandparents, they would get together and sing, play tangos or listen to the opera. A neighbor blasted Wes Montgomery and Freddie Hubbard records. Ruben Blades, who sang on Perez's 1993 eponymous debut, says that the eclectic comes naturally to Panamanians.

"In Panama, we have coasts on both sides, so we have always been a sort of place like Liverpool," Blades says. "It's not an accident that the Beatles came out of Liverpool, because it's a port town so they got everything as soon as it came out somewhere else. We were constantly listening to things that came from all over the world."

Another advantage for a young Panamanian musician is the National Conservatory in Panama City, which Perez began attending when he was 8. A Chilean teacher, Cecilia Nunez, gave him Mozart and Bach preludes, which he continues to practice. Another discipline she taught was a classical sense of structure and arranging, which Perez uses today.

As a teenager, Perez received a scholarship to study electronic engineering in the United States. He came to this country in 1984, and while he attended Indiana University in Pennsylvania he determined what course he really wanted to pursue. Back in Panama City, Perez heard saxophonist Reggie Johnson and pianist Victor Boa—who he calls "The Latin Art Tatum"—but it was a Chick Corea jazz concert at Indiana that he says made him tell himself, "This is what I want to do."

"My mother still wanted me to take electronics classes, and I said, 'Well, maybe if it works,'" Perez says. "But I never did."



After Perez decided to be a jazz pianist, he began attending Berklee College of Music in 1985 where his teachers included Herb Pomeroy, Donald Brown, Phil Wilson and Victor Mendoza. For a while, Perez played salsa and merengue gigs around Boston, but cut back on those when he decided to concentrate on his main genre. On Brown's recommendation, Perez played with Jon Hendricks from 1986-'88 and says that his style at the time was so straightahead, "you wouldn't know I was from Panama.

"As a matter of fact," Perez continues, "Hendricks said to me, 'Don't talk and nobody would ever know.'"

While Perez never renounced his background, he took the opportunity of playing with Hendricks—and hard bop with Tom Harrell and Joe Lovano—to expand his repertoire. He still draws from that period. During the time Perez worked with Hendricks, Brown recommended him to Claudio Roditi, who subsequently introduced him to Paquito D'Rivera in 1987.

"Claudio called me one night and said, 'We're playing at the Blue Note and I

want you to come and I want Paquito to hear you,'" Perez says. "And that's how it happened. He took me to the Blue Note, and I played one tune, and Paquito said, 'You got it, man!' He called me for a gig, and the first real gig with Paquito was in my hometown, can you believe it?"

D'Rivera remembers that Perez was so committed to the music, that he never bothered to comb his hair. But the saxophonist relied on that dedication, and made him and bassist Oscar Stagnaro the researchers for his band.

"He plays Brazilian music very well and can explain the use of the clave in Cuban music a lot better than I can," D'Rivera says. "I have that in my veins, I was born on the island of Cuba, but he can teach that, he can do a clinic."

About a year after he left Berklee in 1988, Perez was preparing for the Thelonious Monk Competition when he got the call to join up with Gillespie. Since Perez was the youngest member of Gillespie's last United Nations Orchestra, the trumpeter had a particular affinity for him.

"I learned a lot of tunes, and he taught me about economy, not to play everything I know and to pace myself," Perez says. "Phrasing is so important in music and a lot that I learned was from watching him do his stuff. He would play the same idea, but come in at different spaces. He taught me a lot about how to get from one chord to another. He said, 'You gotta find that one note that you can sweep through all these changes.' The difference was, he had a very simple vocabulary for it. You really had to look for the question and ask him and he would show you."

Gillespie's death pushed Perez into what he says was "a place of reconciliation," that resulted in the introspective writing on his second disc, *The Journey*. Most of Perez's self-titled debut was comprised of his takes on standards, including a subtly riveting version of "Body And Soul." But *The Journey* included only his own compositions; extended pieces for different combinations of musicians were featured. His thoughts on the 1989 U.S. invasion of Panama also came across on the disc.

"[The invasion] was very controversial for me," Perez says. "Because on one side I was very thankful for the U.S., a place where I was able to learn and grow

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- 1) Vote once only. You need not vote in every category. Just fill out the ballot, sign it and mail.
- 2) Ballots must be postmarked before midnight Sept. 1, 2000.
- 3) Use official ballot only. Please type or print.
- 4) Jazz, Blues & Beyond Musicians of the Year: Vote for the musicians you feel have contributed the most to their art form during the past year.
- 5) Hall of Fame: Vote for the musician, living or dead, who you believe has made the greatest contribution to jazz and blues. The following musicians are already in the Hall: Cannonball Adderley, Louis Armstrong, Albert Ayler, Ed Blackwell, Chet Baker, Count Basie, Sidney Bechet, Bix Beiderbecke, Art Blakey, Lester Bowie, Clifford Brown, Dave Brubeck, Benny Carter, Betty Carter, John Carter, Charlie Christian, Kenny Clarke, Nat 'King' Cole, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Paul Desmond, Johnny Dodds, Eric Dolphy, Roy Eldridge, Duke Ellington, Bill Evans, Gil Evans, Maynard Ferguson, Ella Fitzgerald, Stan Getz, Dizzy Gillespie, Benny Goodman, Dexter Gordon, Stephane Grappelli, Lionel Hampton, Coleman Hawkins, Julius Hemphill, Fletcher Henderson, Jimi Hendrix, Woody Herman, Earl Hines, Johnny Hodges, Billie Holiday,

Milt Jackson, J.J. Johnson, James P. Johnson, Flvin Jones, Thad Jones, Stan Kenton, Raheem Roland Kirk, Gene Krupa, Glenn Miller, Charles Mingus, Thelonious Monk, Wes Montgomery, Lee Morgan, Jelly Roll Morton, Gerry Mulligan, Fats Navarro, King Oliver, Charlie Parker, Jaco Pastorius, Art Pepper, Oscar Peterson, Bud Powell, Sun Ra, Django Reinhardt, Buddy Rich, Max Roach, Red Rodney, Sonny Rollins, Pee Wee Russell, Woody Shaw, Horace Silver, Zoot Sims, Bessie Smith, Frank Sinatra, Billy Strayhorn, Art Tatum, Cecil Taylor, Jack Teagarden, Lennie Tristano, Sarah Vaughan, Ine Venuti, Fats Waller, Ben Webster, Mary Lou Williams, Tony Williams, Teddy Wilson, Lester Young and Frank Zappa.

- 6) Miscellaneous Instrument: Instruments not having their own category, with these exceptions: valve trombone, included in trombone category; cornet and flugelhorn, included in the trumpet category.
- 7) Jazz, Blues & Beyond CDs of the Year: Select only CDs issued during the past 12 months (Sept. 1, 1999–Aug. 31, 2000). Include full CD title and artist's name. If your choice is part of a series, indicate volume number.
- 8) Only one selection counted in each category.

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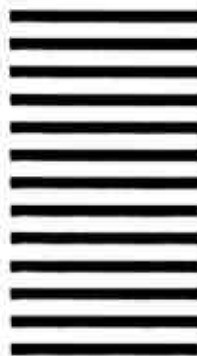
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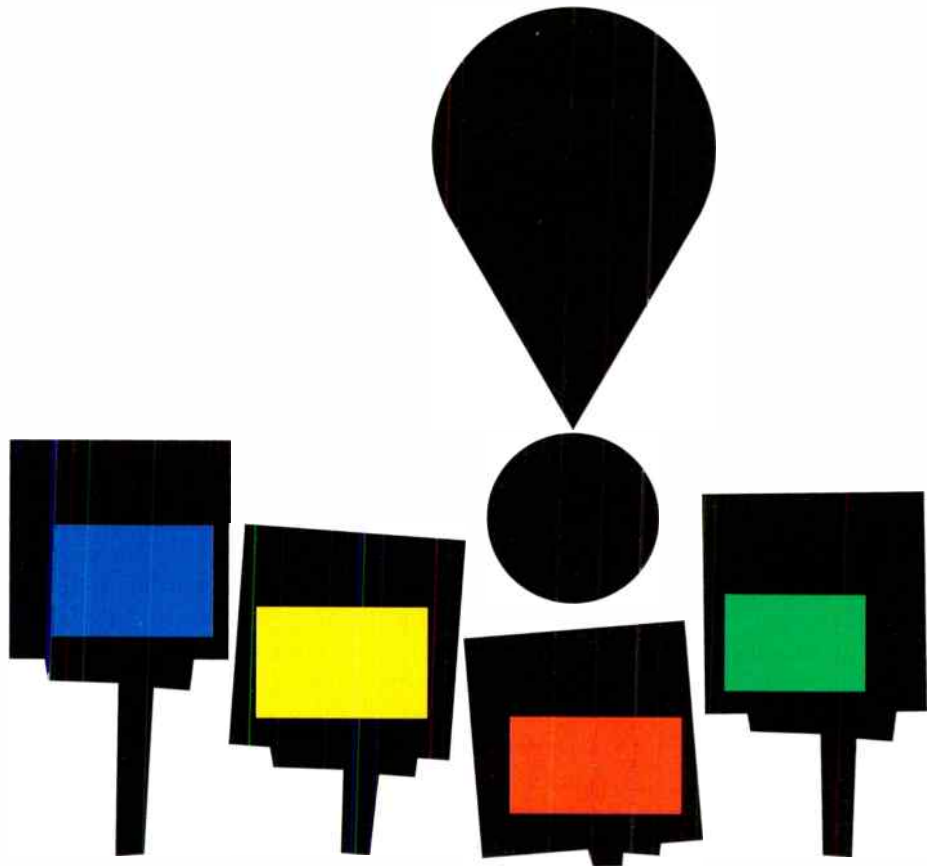
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as a professional, but on another side, I don't think that was the best way to deal with that situation. I was hurt. Musically, emotionally, what that brought was a series of feelings that ended up in *The Journey*. So I started writing, and a lot of the writing came out from convictions like, 'What about breaking the patterns of the clave and making my own clave?' And that's how it began for me."

A stint with Wynton Marsalis in 1995 encouraged Perez to look more closely at Monk's repertoire. Perez's tribute to the pianist, *Panamonk*, was his way of saying how Monk's music helped him strengthen his ties to jazz and Latin traditions.

"It has to do with the rhythmic thing that hit me—that I can play very free rhythmically," Perez says about Monk's impact. "All of a sudden, Monk turned out to be the man who really made me not change myself when I play a swing beat or a Latin beat. His phrasings had clave, and his jazz swing had rhythms that hooked it up for me.

Monk's work is also prominent on the Haynes Trio disc, and Perez explains how he combines those phrasings on their rendition of "Green Chimneys."

"On 'Green Chimneys', I started vamping almost like a montuno in my left hand. Before, I would end up out of tempo because in Latin music, the rhythm is played with a little more evenness. It took me a while to really put it together—to step back a little bit, it's really not perfect. When I play with Roy, the beat goes forward or backward, but it's not steady. I would say the beat in jazz has the possibility to really pull back to almost drag sometimes and feel way up top. It's more related to bata music where you hear the changes on the beat."

Frequently, Perez turns international folk music roots such as bata into his own statements. He delved into Panamanian, Argentinean and Afro-Cuban themes on 1998's *Central Avenue*, and used traditional meyorana singer Raul Vital on "Panama Blues."

"I am really not somebody who is the best example of the folkloric material of the music, even though I have the roots," Perez says. "Like on *Central Avenue*, what the singer was doing was such a shock in my country because the singer who sings from the mountains is singing in a whole different context with a jazz drummer."

Perez returned to Panama City in 1999 to see the United States turn over control of the Panama Canal. His emotions were far different than what he felt during the invasion.

"It was pretty amazing," Perez says. "There's a saying, 'Panama, bridge of the world; heart of the universe.' And I finally knew what that meant when I saw all those people and I saw what it had meant for us to have the canal, for us to take care of that ourselves and see people who fought for it. My mother (Elizabeth Perez) was a big part of that movement. That created a lot of inspiration for new music to come."

Perez's trip to Cuba in 1998 to perform at the Havana International Jazz Festival provided other incentives for new works. He was touched that Cuban musicians he met had videos of him performing in clubs. Some of the Cuban styles he heard—such as street rumba bands—are prominent on *Motherland*. That trip also was an occasion for Perez to meet with board members of the Jazz Institute of Chicago, who commissioned him to write the piece "Suite For The Americas," which he performed at the Chicago Jazz Festival the following summer.

"Suite For The Americas" appears in two parts on *Motherland*, and the entire disc is filled with a graceful sense of movement. What makes the cohesion even more remarkable is that the musicians from North America, South America and Africa had about two days to learn the charts. Sometimes Perez's piano and Fender Rhodes send cues to the large band and vocalists Claudia Acuña, Luciana Souza and Richard Bona. Other times, they instinctively respond to each other. Such surprising moments as Afro-Cuban drumming on "Song To The Land" and Regina Carter's violin lead on "Elegant Dance" never sound like a pastiche. Perez's own piano solo on "Baile" is brief, but he brings an amazing dark tone to the higher notes of the keyboard, which is a compelling contrast to the larger group. Perez says that audible choreography is intentional, as he brought the Panamanian punto dance, African-derived tamborito beats and indigenous rhythms as the base for much of the disc.

In the early part of the 20th century, American composer William Grant Still used these dances for his "Danzas Da

Panama." Since that time, such traditional Panamanian music has been neglected in the U.S. and in Panama itself. Not only does Perez adopt these rhythms to ignite a new century of jazz composition, he wants to use his position as Cultural Ambassador to make sure that they're properly documented, and that the world will hear them.

"We should follow the example of Cuba," says Perez, who has been officially sanctioned to promote Panamanian arts in his new government position. "They've been able to enterprise their own music, believe in it and put it out there. For us, it's taking us a while. But I think it definitely will change. One of my goals is to do a series of works of music that people are still doing in their original form, to try to record them, have a Panamanian music series and go out there and have clinics and explain what this means."

As a teacher at the New England Conservatory of Music, Perez would have no trouble presenting these clinics anywhere. He's never relied on an orthodox classroom approach. Usually, he says, students come to his house, they play all day, and he sees what is important to them in that moment. "Inspiration through osmosis," is what he calls it. Because of his extensive touring schedule, working trio with bassist Carlos Henriquez and drummer Antonio Sanchez, and an ongoing recording project with Wayne Shorter, he often has to reassess how many students he can manage.

"I still gotta find time to practice, to get up, to write new music. You have to do this because you love it and that's it."

A few minutes before Perez appeared at his Ravinia master class, he leaned on a piano backstage to draw a graph that would delineate how African 6/8 rhythms were transformed when they reached the Americas. He began to talk about how beats from the African abakua religion changed when European 4/4 time signatures were applied to them. Just when he started to clap in time, a few of the musician students saw the impromptu lesson and joined him. Perez called on everybody who happened to be standing around to learn the patterns as he repeated them. About an hour later, they had them down solid when their afternoon teacher was being led away.

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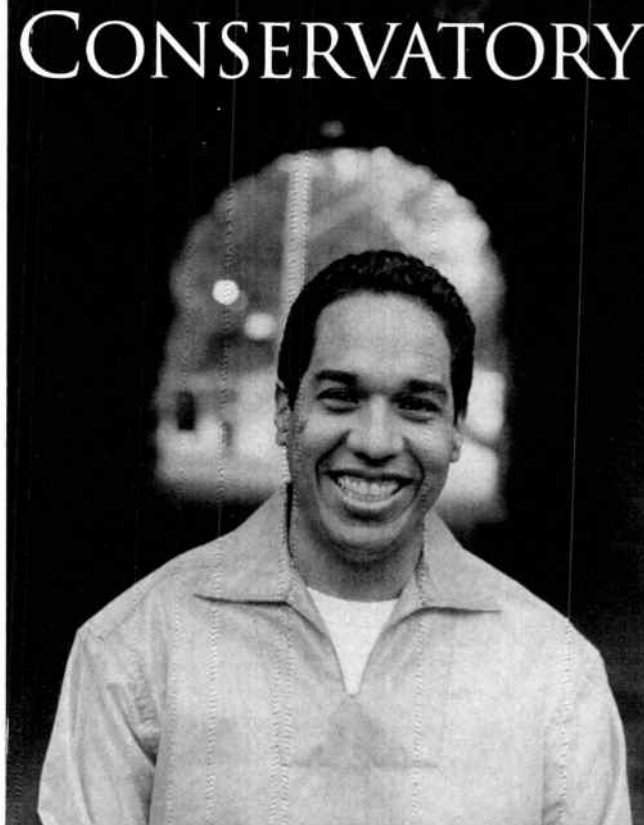
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# Recording Resurgence

# Matthew Shipp's Inner Voice Guides His New Career As Record Label Artistic Director



Come upon pianist Matthew Shipp stalking through lower Manhattan's streets, and he looks like an Alberto Giacometti statue just awakened—gaunt yet purposeful; painfully aware of his individuality, but determined not to let it isolate him; a man who means to stay alert, pursue his best connections and leave a mark.

Catch Shipp playing the piano—in any of the gigs he leads himself around the world, in the groups of such friends as bassist William Parker, violinist Mat Maneri and guitarist Joe Morris, or in AACM master Roscoe Mitchell's Note Factory or tenor saxophonist David S. Ware's quartet—and he appears like a just-launched rocket. His long torso shoots forth at a 45-degree angle over the keys and soundboard, his long arms stretch to length across the ivories on which his long fingers flutter and probe, his legs work furiously at trying to find a comfort zone with his rhythms.

Shipp's thoughts seem lucid, perhaps too candid and unpretentious, befitting of a member of the younger generation of jazz intuitives. He's one of a group of musicians who, regardless of their early training, are notably self-directed. Who, in the spirit of Albert Ayler, John Coltrane, Sun Ra, Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor, undertake to explore jazz-derived music's farthest reaches as a quest of honor toward attaining higher consciousness or fulfilling their destination, rather than as events of the entertainment industry or contributions to the maintenance of time-honored traditions.

From Shipp's first recording (*Sonic Explorations*, in duo with alto saxophonist Rob Brown, circa 1990), his discography has grown to comprise some 18 or 19 albums as a leader (his count), including six (not all of which have been released) on the Swiss hatART imprint. Last fall, Shipp announced his retirement from recording, based on his suspicion he'd put out enough recordings and had sufficiently documented his musical persona. However, this proved short-lived, as this spring he reversed himself after being named artistic director of ex-Black Flag hardcore singer Henry Rollins' Thirsty Ear Record's new jazz line, the Blue Series. Shipp's first production with the label, *Pastoral Composure*, released in April, featured himself, bassist Parker, brassman Roy Campbell and drummer Gerald Cleaver. For the rest of 2000, Shipp has lined up a production roster that comprises a William Parker trio disc with Chicago drummer Hamid Drake and ecstatic New York multi-instrumentalist Daniel Carter; a Mat Maneri quartet album with Shipp's Note Factory fellow pianist Craig Taborn, Parker and Cleaver; and a Taborn album with Cleaver and bassist Chris Lightcap.

The musicians Shipp calls on for the Blue Series, and several dozen others identified with New York's annual musician-pro-

duced Vision Festival and scrappy independent labels, have been identified as "the ecstatic movement." Shipp takes exception to this labeling.

"That's a marketing term, period," Shipp, now 39 years old, maintains. "I view myself as myself, and I'm not part of any movement or school. The only thing I would say I'm a part of is the world that centers around William Parker. I play in a lot of situations, all different; even within my own music, I go for different things in different groups, though they're held together by the texture of my playing. I'm just a musician; not an ecstatic musician, not a this or that musician, just a musician.

"But being what you might call 'communitarian' about making music—that to me is one of the best ways to make music, because the people in your environment and your environment itself are what inform you. If you get to know people over a period of time and see them every day, the opportunities to rehearse become more organic, less forced by deadlines and things like that. It's a more natural way of getting going with people. You really find out who your friends are."

Born in Wilmington, Del., and a New Yorker since 1984, Shipp began playing piano at age 5. His parents spun records by Ellington, Basie, Brubeck and Miles Davis around the house, and he decided to become a jazz pianist after seeing Ahmad Jamal on public broadcast television.

While growing up, though, he was well aware that he was the odd man out. His friends listened to pop, rock & roll and soul, so he kept the avant-garde jazz records he was buying on sale as cutouts in his room to listen to on headphones. At school, like the other guys, he talked about Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Wonder. When he jammed in pickup bands, it was usually on a Fender Rhodes electric piano, and for a time he thought he might end up in Grover Washington Jr.'s band, because some other young Wilmington players had won the saxophonist's invitation to join him in Philadelphia.

Upon graduating from high school at 17, Shipp attended the University of Delaware at his father's insistence, but dropped out after a year. "I studied with Coltrane's teacher Dennis Sandole for a while," Shipp shrugs, "and went to New England Conservatory for a couple years. By the time I arrived in New York, I was completely into what I'm stylistically into."

After scuffling for half a dozen years in the lowest rent gigs New York's non-conforming musicians can expect, Shipp's career profile ratcheted up a notch when he began playing with tenor furiouso Ware in '89. Soon thereafter, Shipp became an unlikely icon on the "alternative" scene, thrilling rock-oriented musicians and audiences open to other evidently uncompromising styles.

So what, or is the question who, generated Shipp?

By Howard Mandel

Photo by Laurie Stalter

"I knew Roscoe Mitchell's *Nonaah*, and his album *Sound*," he says without pause. "I liked his sense of trying to operate in a post-Coltrane way with his own sound. Today, I like what he goes after on soprano sax in extended improvisations with different groups, and how he tries to steer things and yet trust the improvisers in his groups.

"I grew up listening to Cecil Taylor, too," Shipp says of the pianist to whom he's most often compared. Shipp, like Taylor, takes an abstract view of melody, works up roiling movements from fragments and cellular motifs, reconceives Western harmony in a personal manner that's at times atonal, and at times adopts several tonal centers. Like Taylor, Shipp is at ease with suspended rhythms and can seem to lose himself in intense, extended physical attack. "Cecil Taylor's definitely in the jazz pantheon of pianists, and definitely someone whose music I greatly admired.

"But I knew at an early age that though I enjoyed his music, I had to get completely away from it. I had to develop my own sound and identity, and I knew that being too into him was dangerous. So I proceeded to extricate myself from Taylor's sound world and came to my own. I greatly admire him as a pioneer, but I moved on 20 some years ago.

"I equally love Fats Waller, Bud Powell, Monk, Duke Ellington's piano, Andrew Hill, Paul Bley, Bill Evans, Herbie Hancock," he claims, "and the list goes on from there. I listened to and tried to learn something from all of them. And I tried to listen to and learn from my inner voice, too, something which has nothing to do with any of them. I mean, I don't descend from Cecil Taylor—I descend from the supercomputer of God!

"I am a jazz player, though, through and through. All my life I've been a fan of the jazz continuum. I've considered calling myself a universal musician, meaning that I approach music in the way Coltrane did, trying to study music from all around the world, and to appropriate rhythms from all cultures: African drum music, Indian classical music, whatever—for the chance to really understand what language is. How the brain generates language, how the brain generates rhythm, how and why the brain generates these patterns called music that massage the brain and give us pleasure.

"I've always searched for a style of playing that is Matthew Shipp. Finding my own attack, my own colors, my own lines, I can theoretically apply that to anything. I'm not looking to be a chameleon, I'm looking always to be me. I've always written tunes that have more of a straight-ahead edge to them, but haven't recorded them in the past. I recorded them in *Pastoral Composure* because Roy Campbell is a great straight-ahead trumpet player, in addition to what he's also known for in the downtown William Parker school of music."

**P**art of Shipp's job with Thirsty Ear is to cultivate a record-buying audience for a genre of music that has difficulty attracting listeners. This is no small challenge.

"Let's face it, most people who buy jazz albums now will be dead in 20 or 30 years," Shipp says. "So the whole idea is to educate a group of younger people. Naturally they're going to gravitate to something that has energy to it, something that has life to it—they're not going to buy a Modern Jazz Quartet album. People have preconceptions, and a new generation comes to wipe those preconceptions off the face of the earth, establishing a whole new marketplace and new milieu for acceptance of their ideas. That's one thing jazz has always been about.

"It hit me early on that the only way to make a career in jazz was to bypass the standard jazz ways of thinking and go directly to what music is supposed to be. Go to young people who will buy into what you do because you're doing it with your two hands, and life is attached to it.

"I remember a scene in *Straight No Chaser*, the movie on Monk, when his manager got that idea to get Monk that long engagement at the Five Spot. The audience was all young, like New York University students. I'm sure at the time Monk had a hard time breaking through to a lot of people in the music industry who had certain preconceptions. But the students just accepted him for who he was: a talented musician with his own ideas, sweating and making music with his own two hands, not trying to live out any idealized version of what was acceptable."

Since he'll turn 40 in December, does Shipp think about younger musicians behind him?

"That's a hard one," he sighs. "On the

one hand, since now I'm a record producer, I obviously have to keep an eye out for what's going on. But at the same time I'm trying to cut myself off from the world; I want to live in my own little world. The people younger than me I think of are Mat Maneri, Susie Ibarra—they're just turning 30. But there are at least two generations behind them.

"Sixteen years is not a long time. A lot of people have been here for 30, 40 years, and some people, after 30 or 40 years still haven't gotten the critical acclaim I have. But it's been a real uphill battle.

"I don't want to become part of the system. Like any musician, I want to be accepted for who I am and what I do. On the other hand, my career's been fueled by my not being accepted. So if I were accepted, how could I make great music? There is that part of my personality that likes to battle the enemy and win."

And Shipp's inner voice—what does it say?

"Right now it's telling me to extricate myself from recording jazz albums," he laughs, "but I'll never say I'm stopping recording again! My inner voice tells me to utilize the visionary abilities Thirsty Ear believes I have as a producer. It's telling me to keep performing. I'm a working musician, after all, I've got to keep gigging. The best thing is solid activity. To be gigging a lot and have your music accepted, to see in peoples' faces that they're getting something out of your music—that's so good it surpasses any of the drag of political intrigue over business. It's tonic for the soul. My inner voice tells me to keep hanging around William Parker, who is a fountainhead of wisdom and greatness, who's at a point of consciousness in which he understands the historical continuum of what the so-called jazz avant-garde was and what it hopes to be. Look at who he studied with: Jimmy Garrison, Milt Hinton, Richard Davis, Wilbur Ware. He also had a 10-year apprenticeship with Cecil Taylor, and he'd be the first one to tell you the importance of that.

"And my inner voice is telling me things will unfold in their own time, as they should. It's telling me don't rush anything, take stock of what you have done in the 16 years that you've been in New York. And just proceed as you have been."

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World Radio History

A black and white close-up portrait of Cecil Taylor. He has a mustache and is wearing a striped shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

*By Howard Mandel*

*Photo by Chris Felver*

# MY DINNER *With Cecil*



The greatest living improvising pianist, Cecil Taylor, who confronts Western music, literature and dance as an outlaw jazz genius living large in New York and the world, also has an amiable side. "I want to get together with some musicians I think are important," Taylor stipulated on the phone from his Brooklyn brownstone. A few nights later, I joined bassist Dominique Duval, drummer Jackson Krall and Taylor at an East Village bistro for sophisticated fare: risotto, salad, cigarettes, drinks and an outpouring of uninhibited opinion ranging over everyone and everything that's happened in music, among other arts and sciences, since World War II, and a bit before.

At 71, Taylor has a physical intensity that would be the envy of an athlete of 20—indeed, he's best known for his power and stamina, for ferocious attacks on the piano as a representative and conveyance of convention. He has, since the mid 1950s, fearlessly advanced on such big bear as the total reconception of melodic extrapolation and the far reaches of compositional abstraction, the absolute mastery of micro and macro dynamics, utter engagement with polyrhythms, multitempos, extended duration, harmonic reach and expressive revelation.

He delights in pitching himself into battle against these challenges, and, it sometimes seems, against the musicians with whom he collaborates. Duval, the self-described "musician who plays bass" who first encountered Taylor at the Knitting Factory in '96, sees it differently: "Cecil's sounds always subsume but also bend to those of the people around him. He fits what he does to what others do. But few have played Cecil's music without paying him their due.

"What's his music about? It's a love song. Even the stuff that seems fast and furious—it's a song about what he feels that day. He practices maybe 10 to 12 hours daily, when he has concerts coming up. Not to play better; rather, he's figuring out what comes together as songs, with fast and slow sections, all of his colorations. When he goes on the bandstand, he's got it all figured out, starting with maybe three motifs and an organic process he wants to get across.

"He doesn't go back in any single performance to the same rhythmic materials, and he wants the tonality he's dealing with to change all the time. His music's like a collage—happy, sad, violent, inclusive of all the colors. He's developed a way of playing that's like a dancer, so I've tried to learn to play my instrument that way, too, foregoing stan-

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dard techniques to develop my own fingerings, double stops, arpeggios, guitaristic things and chord sequences."

Taylor typically influences his fellow players in such a manner. When we met, Duval and Krall had recently performed with him in Minneapolis, after a lengthy layoff. They'd recorded *Qu'a* and *Qu'a Yuba: Live At The Iridium* volumes one and two, in Taylor's quartet with soprano saxophonist Harri Sjöström in March '98. "But I hadn't played with Cecil for a year," mentioned Krall, as we awaited the pianist's arrival. "Dominique hadn't played with him for a year and a half. We were supposed to play with him in Chicago, but were snowed out, so he performed solo. In Minneapolis we just hit—no rehearsal. And the music was miraculous, amazing. We picked up right where we had left off, and I reached a point in my own playing I'd never reached before."

In just this past year Taylor has created equally galvanizing music in several duets with such heavyweight champions as Elvin Jones (at New York City's Blue Note club, following the release of *Momentum Space* (Verve), their under-noted trio masterpiece with Dewey Redman), Amiri Baraka (in a night of profane and arcane readings at St. Mark's Poetry Project), and the amelodic British guitar anti-star Derek Bailey at Tonic, Manhattan's most exciting Lower East Side music room. Also, in June at a free-to-the-public concert produced for the Bell Atlantic Jazz Festival by KnitMedia, Taylor brought his gargantuan drive, his innate desire to de- and reconstruct the piano and music and everything ever supposed about them, face to face with the imposing structures and energies of the right reverend Max Roach for the third time. It was a historic event you had to be there to see and hear. It may become a legend.

"don't mind the legends," Taylor announced upon arriving at the table. "Give me more!" He wore a sweater and slacks the same tan shade as the restaurant's walls; a dark, soft hat that he didn't remove; a light mustache, glasses, heavy bracelets on his right wrist, and a silver Anzai necklace with dangling totems. The legends he proceeded to tell didn't particularly follow one from the next, but rather spiraled around, turning back on themselves, sometimes dribbling off inconclusively and most often turning on a nuance of inflection, a lifted eyebrow, a grimace or flash of teeth. But Duval, Krall and I sat for four hours, filling in the blanks for ourselves and infrequently chiming in

as Taylor smoked half a pack of cigarettes, left the arugula he'd ordered untouched, and drank half a dozen champagnes. It was a delight to meet Taylor on his own terms, whether or not I caught all his references and narrative connections. He began without introduction, recalling legends of New York in the '50s.

"... with Allen Ginsberg, I had a wonderful time, talking to Chet [Baker]—I was there when he first played with Gerry Mulligan, who asked would I consider giving his wife piano lessons? Well, you know the answer to *that*.

"Chet was striking looking. That was the era of James Dean, you know. When I came off the bandstand, Chet wanted me to talk to someone who had just come in. 'I'm the greatest writer in America,' this fellow told me. And I was a big 23, so I said, 'I'm the greatest pianist in America.' Then I went up again to play, and when I came off, Jack Kerouac said, 'Well, you are!' And he gave me a manuscript and a wonderful walking stick.

"We were at the Cedar Bar (a Village hangout of the abstract expressionist painters and Beats during the '50s). Allen says, 'This is my poem "Howl." I'd like you to do the music.' Well, I'm not going to do this. Then Leroi Jones, (aka Amiri Baraka) says, 'Allen, jazz musicians are not literate!' Leroi, the most controversial poet in America. You think 'Howl' was something? Well, [late poet] Bob Kaufman, is the one who started the beat movement. Allen, Peter [Orlovsky], Roi and Bob Kaufman had an apartment together, you know."

Then, switching gears: "Dominique, I've got some music for you. But sometimes you have to wait."

**Duval:** "I've been studying that tape you gave me. I need your help."

**Taylor:** "We can help each other. You've got four strings; the double and triple stops I wrote are merely range areas. It will be interesting to see how they're interpreted. You know, it's a wonderful thing about the piano—if you love Ellington, you end up writing orchestrally *anyway* ...

"Perhaps you can imagine Mr. [Al] Haig's reaction [upon hearing me] around 1955. Haig left; he wasn't happy. As opposed to Zoot Sims, who came to a loft session where I was involved. Zoot just listened, which is all you can ask of anyone. Ira Sullivan was playing trumpet, Pee Wee Russell was there. Now, Mr. Sims may seem several steps removed, but these people were, in some ways, one's ancestors. We had a wonderful conversation.

"You remember [trumpeter] Benny Bailey? He was the first guy who asked me, 'What are you doing?' That was very nice. This was in Europe, in Nimes; he was playing with Lionel Hampton's big band and had said Hamp had gotten salty with the band, soloing for three hours, permitting no one else to solo. Benny asked me, 'What's your sign?' I said Aries, and he said, 'Oh, just like Hampton,' and left the table. Whereon one of the great geniuses of American music came and sat down. This was probably '75 or '76. Hamp said he'd been promised houses in Harlem if the GOP won the upcoming election. Well, they built the houses, but, when he was playing in front of them, people rioted and they stopped the music. That was one of only three performances I'd seen

broadcast on the morning Today show. They had to give it up to Hamp, and also to Little Richard."

**Krall:** "You know, a book on Mary Lou Williams has been published."

**Taylor:** "Besides being one of the great musicians, she was so beautiful. You know, I heard 'The Zodiac Suite' when I was 12, with all these strings and harps . . . it made quite an impression. And back when Benny Goodman was mistakenly called the King of Swing, the piece for us was her composition 'Roll 'Em.' You know Andy Cyrille's first gig was with Mary Lou? I met her the first time at the Cookery, and she told me that when Art Blakey was 18, she'd said to him, 'If you don't get to New York, I'll kill you.'

"Another one of my favorite pianists is Fats Waller. I was coming up in the time of Art Tatum, Bud Powell and Teddy Wilson, but I always preferred Fats. Listen to him on the Esquire All-Star records: Fats Waller was one of the finest technicians the piano has ever had. Every note he plays is distinct, with a space between them. And he was also famous as a theater organ player. His son was at school with me. ..."

**Krall:** "But Fats died at age 39."

**Taylor:** "Yes, and Bird died at age 35 in '55. I myself had two marvelous meals today, and drank a lot of fruit juice and water."

Taylor's conversation continued to skitter from name to name. He'd talk about Eubie Blake ("The only chance I had to converse with him, in East St. Louis—he had enormous fingers") and naturally segue to Noble Sissle ("They revolutionized the musical with 'Shuffle Along'") then to the comic Bert Williams ("a light-skinned black man they put blackface on for his stage act") and to W.C. Fields ("who I prefer to Chaplin as I prefer Keaton to Chaplin; Fields called Williams, 'the funniest and saddest man I've ever seen'"), Mae West ("a tough babe"), Marilyn Monroe, Kim Novak and Sammy Davis Jr.

More names came up: Aboudou Diallo, Al Sharpton ("he says, correctly, 'Don't emulate the police'"), poet James Merrill, Franklin Delano Roosevelt ("a bastard, but *our* bastard"), and Eleanor Roosevelt ("she went to Tuskegee University, to say, 'Yes, they [African-Americans] can fly planes'").

"There's a smothering of the great American spirits," Taylor maintained. "Look what happened to Frances Farmer, Lenny Bruce, Orson Welles, Paul Robeson. Oh, they're going to get you.

"When James Brown was put in jail, I went into the kitchen at the Village Vanguard to talk about this, and a guy there says, 'Well, he's a criminal.' I said, 'When Jean Genet (French writer/thief) was put in jail, Sartre, De Beauvoir and Camus went to Andre Malraux (France's cultural minister) and Genet walked. When James Brown is in jail, where is Aretha? Where is Michael Jackson? What the oppressors do to you in your community, you adopt that behavior. You adopt the attitude of your oppressors.

"You know about when the [jazz] musicians [in the '60s went on television and as a guerrilla theater protest] stopped

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the shows? We went to Dick Cavett, who said, 'Where's Jesse Jackson?' Jesse was the commercial hook, but he was not going to be there. I said, 'Where are the dressing rooms?' And we were each given one. Before we went on to perform, [Cavett's bandleader] Bobby Rosengarden played 'It Don't Mean A Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing).' Cavett said, 'You're not on television because you're the avant-garde.' I said, 'But you've never had Duke Ellington's band on this show, either.' And Cavett said, 'We had him as a pianist.' Well, Steve Allen sits down to play piano on these shows, too.

"In those days, a corporation would have one black guy around to represent it. Nothing has changed, except for Quincy [Jones]. Max [Roach] asked me what I was doing on New Year's Eve—he said, 'I was at the White House. And the President was very affable.' But then I watch Bryant Gumbel, who has Q as a guest, and it turns out Q was responsible for all the entertainment at the White House that night. ... Well, politics is the lifeblood of the nation."

**Mandel:** "I think art is the lifeblood of the nation."

**Taylor:** "Well, yes, I couldn't agree with you more. But it really depends who you know, and where you are. Bill Evans, being called *the* pianist of my generation! Really! Now, Don Pullen—talk about an interesting pianist. Or John Lewis. The Modern Jazz Quartet was magisterial. It was genius of Monte Kay to put them in tuxes. To me, the MJQ was always about Milt [Jackson], he was always beautiful. But if you listen to the delicate things John Lewis is playing behind him ...

"When I met Matt Shipp, he talked about Lennie Tristano. Well, yes, Lennie Tristano. But you say Horace Silver can't play? I said, 'Young man, even if you're the greatest pianist who ever lived, I wouldn't have to see you!'"

"You know what's sad? The most interesting musician in McCoy's band has been [bassist] Avery Sharpe. All the joy is gone, it seems. McCoy's worked steadily since John [Coltrane] died, and yet, nothing has changed.

"Andrew Hill? He's an interesting guy. He's written some interesting music. Mal [Waldron] wrote some interesting music. I must mention Randy Weston. Lowell Davidson—he had an idea but, well, he died. Delmar Brown—he just makes rhythmical sounds, but because of his personality, they make an impression.

"I'll say that Jaki Byard knew as much about the piano as any man in the world. What I choose to remember of him is when I heard him at age 17. Also, Oscar Dennard. Richard Twardzik. Eddie Costa. Great pianists, so many of them, died before they were 30.

"Oh, all these basements you play in: The music transforms them into temples. But it takes, what, 30 years? You have to keep steppin'. I mean, at one point Hilton Ruiz was No. 1, playing at Bradley's. And one night, [Michel] Petrucciani was here. Well, Hilton gave us 'The Star-Spangled Banner' like Horowitz banging it out. Petrucciani lit a cigarette, put that cigarette in his mouth, in his nostrils, in his ears. You know 'Isn't She Lovely,' Stevie Wonder's tune? Hilton made that tune happen!

"One must consider drummers, too. Max Roach is a virtuoso, but [Art] Blakey had the heart. Elvin [Jones] has that. It's passion. Of course, when I think of what Max did at the Beehive [with Clifford Brown], he's clearly a mf.

"And if you don't know Sunny Murray, or Milford Graves, or Tony Oxley, well ... Han Bennink, his sense of comedy is not mine. But Sunny Murray's a mf, he can play those drums. Tony—yes, Max, yes, and Blakey—but Sunny!

"In '63, we played two weeks opposite Sonny Rollins at the Vanguard. There was a matinee on Sunday, and Newk came to me and said, 'Don't ever let them stop you from doing that!' When Max Gordon (longtime owner of the Village Vanguard) died, he had still not really *heard* Sunny. But he'd heard Andrew [Cyrille]. Andrew was there.

"Ah, the way Andrew Cyrille played! Once, at Ronnie Scott's, Monk was backstage. My other master. He said to Andrew, 'What was that? You can't play that fast!' And then to me, 'Just keep that drummer hot!'"

"You know, I wanted Ted Curson on *Coltrane Time*, but they wouldn't let me

have him. It had to be Kenny Dorham. Well, first thing we played was a blues, and Kenny Dorham wasn't happy. Then 'Caravan.' Trane said to Kenny, trying to turn him around about me, 'He's a young Monk.' Then Trane said, 'What do you want to play?' And I said, "All Or Nothing At All." Trane said OK, but Kenny Dorham said no. After that recording Kenny Dorham decided to study harmony at NYU, and one day he ran into me in Washington Square Park—and he said, 'I want to talk to you.' But that was too little, too late. He died soon after."

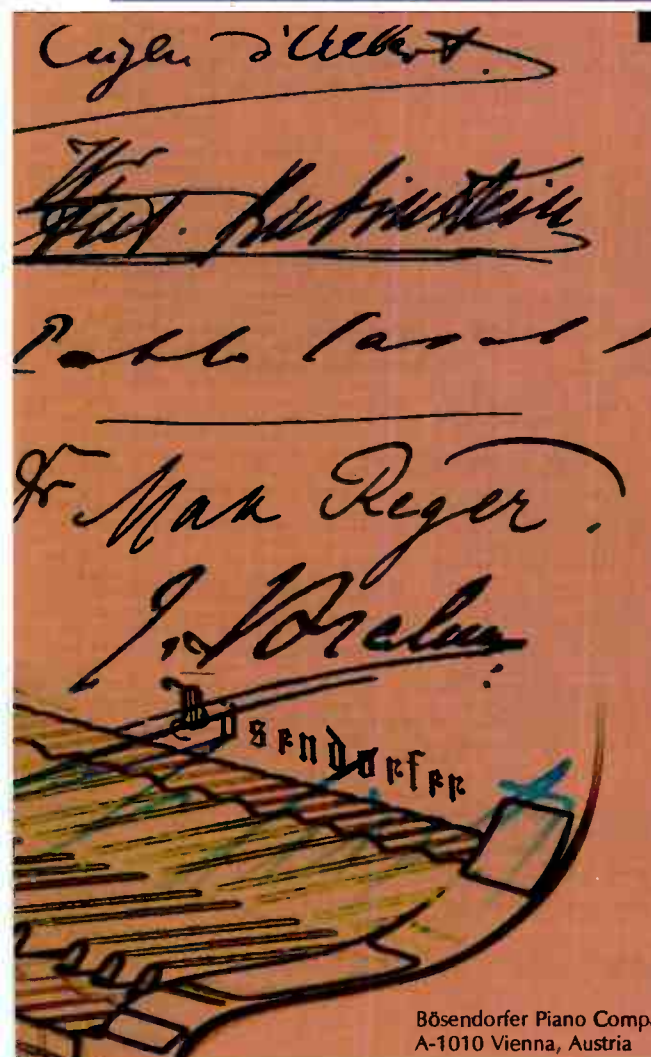
We were the last ones in the restaurant; the waiters were waiting for us to leave—Duval, Krall and me to our homes, Taylor into a cab, heading toward an after-hours club. The conversation echoed in my head for weeks, and then I heard the Taylor-Roach duo at June's Bell Atlantic Jazz Festival.

This event took place smack dab mid-campus of Columbia University, in front of some 6,000 awestruck listeners (my estimate and observation), and I saw some hand-held documentation in the crowd. But there was no authorized recording of the third Taylor-Roach encounter. According to producer Michael Dorf, "They said they didn't want it recorded." A cryin' shame, because Taylor and Roach were gorgeously lit, brilliantly mixed and seriously inspired, mesmerizing for an eternal hour-and-a-half, like wizards in deadly combat.

From their direct approaches to grand piano and low-slung, tipped-in traps with a tympani-like add-on, Taylor and Roach wrestled with all their might. Taylor was unimaginably articulate all over the ivories, almost stripping off the keys with his hyperfast fingerwork, simply the manifestation of completely impassioned being. Roach gave him no slack—he knew just what to lay down to make guideposts for Taylor's full roar, and he often laid a course Taylor had no choice but to pursue. After about an hour of the most intense improv, Taylor stood away from the piano, and Roach soloed muscularly for about eight minutes. Then he stood to announce that the rest of the concert was dedicated to Tito Puente.

The drummer and the pianist resumed their dialog for another 15 or 20 minutes. They were orchestrally monumental, leaping upon each other's moves, as if to create beautiful grandeur which would be forever gone, unretrievable, in the instant after its impulse. Together, Taylor and Roach pounded out an inflamed cry—"I am"—against anything (including that in each other) which insisted, "You're not."

The stage was set up against neoclassical pillars of the building housing Columbia University's English department, a few yards from Columbia's Miller Theatre, which had been McMillin Theatre, where Taylor and Roach first collaborated on Dec. 15, 1979. That concert is preserved on an enduring album, *Historic Concerts* (Soul Note). No proof of the legends of 2000? Listeners of the future will have to search for that. **DB**



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## Down Beat FIRST-PERSON PROJECT

It's the opening night of Chico O'Farrill's week-long run at New York's Iridium jazz club, several blocks from Birdland, where he and his big band have been Monday night mainstays for nearly three years. With his charts spread out in front of him on a music stand, the legendary composer/arranger/bandleader leads his crack orchestra into a 90-minute set of roiling rhythms, horn-driven tempo surges and sublime mood swings ranging from ruminative to exhilarating. It's not a salsa bash, but a brilliant fusion of Afro-Cuban, jazz and classical music sensibilities masterminded by one of the founding fathers of Latin jazz.

O'Farrill jerks his arms together as if pumping an accordion, then shoots his right arm forward in a baseball-tossing motion. The band responds accordingly, making the tune soar. The conductor urges his personnel on, then beams a wide smile. He's having a blast as the orchestra explodes into rhythm drive.

At one point in his career, O'Farrill was quoted as saying that his music had a roar. When asked if that's a fair characterization, he adopts a befuddled look and innocently replies, "A roar? I said that? I'm afraid I might have after a big margarita," he laughs. "Well, the band can be loud. It's very difficult to get an orchestra to tone down and play pianissimo. But we do play soft."

then groans in jest as he contemplates leaving his warm, spacious Upper West Side apartment on this cold, rainy winter afternoon. "Actually, I like just staying in town, but it will be fun going to San Francisco and Los Angeles."

Sitting on a couch below his oil portrait (circa the early 1960s) painted by Mexican artist Falcón, the diminutive O'Farrill is enjoying spinning tales of his jazz story. He interjects with a twinkle in his brown eyes little fibs about his age (he jokingly insists he was born in 1951, not 1921) and funny off-the-record anecdotes about his former employers, including swing star Benny Goodman, who hired the arranger in 1949 to help him renew his career as a bebopper.

"At first I couldn't believe I was working with Benny because he was my hero, he was one of the big band leaders who inspired me to play jazz," says O'Farrill, casually attired in blue jeans and a blue-striped cotton jersey. "But even though he had a hit with my composition 'Undercurrent Blues,' he let me go because I kept bringing in daring material."

O'Farrill was born into a well-heeled Irish-German-Cuban family. As a child he heard plenty of danzon-style Cuban music played

# CHICO O'FARRILL'S AFRO-CUBAN PASSIONS

Tragically, proper praise too often comes posthumously to legends. Thankfully that's not the story with O'Farrill, who's in the midst of a career resuscitation. While his acknowledgement may have been late in coming, the septuagenarian is not complaining.

A maestro who worked with such high-profile Afro-Cuban jazz explorers as Machito and Dizzy Gillespie in the late '40s and early '50s, O'Farrill vanished into jazz limbo for more than 30 years. But thanks to the support of a simpatico producer (jazz entrepreneur Todd Barkan) and a supportive record company (Milestone, owned by Fantasy Records), O'Farrill, who was instrumental in putting the clave into jazz, was rediscovered a few years ago.

Since then he has emerged from semi-retirement to receive long-overdue plaudits as a Latin jazz pioneer. Today, the Havana-born, New York-based O'Farrill—at 78 still as spry and charming as he must have been when he arrived in the U.S. in 1948—has not only recorded a remarkable new CD, *Heart Of A Legend*, which serves as a career retrospective, but he's also active at the helm of his 18-piece big band at home and on the road.

"It's been a great pleasure working with my orchestra every Monday night at Birdland," O'Farrill says. "And I love going on tour," he adds, shortly before launching off for several West Coast dates. Always the jokester, O'Farrill takes a comic pause

on violins, flutes and various rhythm instruments, but he didn't become smitten by music until his first stay in the United States. His story is a classic case of making the best out of a bad situation. For disciplinary reasons, O'Farrill's father sent his recalcitrant teenaged son to an American military school. It was there that the youngster heard jazz for the first time.

"I heard big bands led by Glenn Miller and Artie Shaw on the radio," O'Farrill recalls. "I fell in love with the music. I picked up a trumpet and learned how to play it, although I don't remember exactly how. Soon I joined the marching band and then the school band so I could play swing tunes."

When he returned to Havana, O'Farrill was determined to become a professional musician. However, he first had to jump some major hurdles related to family expectations. "My father had planned a life for me as an attorney," he says. "And I even went to law school in Havana, but I quit after one year because I was playing so much in local bands. Once I started playing, I never quit."

Even though he was still disappointed in his son's choice of occupation, O'Farrill's father reluctantly gave his approval and arranged for his son to study with Cuban composer Felix Guerrero. It didn't take long for the young jazz enthu-

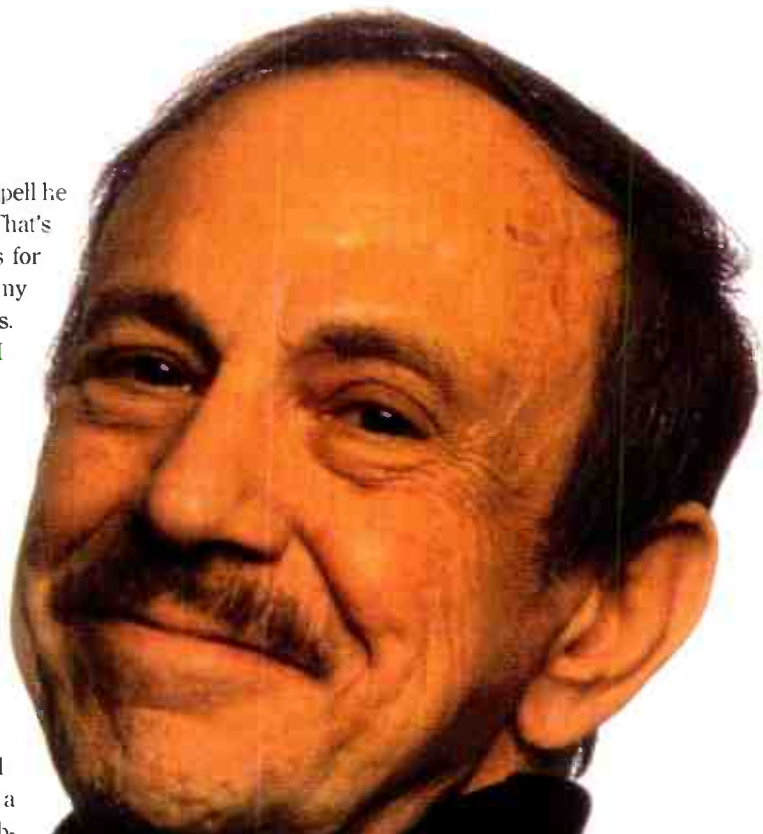
BY DAN OUELLETTE • PHOTO BY STEVE MAROTA

siast to make his presence felt on the scene. However, after a spell he found himself getting bored of playing stock arrangements. That's when O'Farrill began experimenting with writing new charts for the popular dance band Orquestra Bellemar. "They liked my arrangements, so I kept writing more for the group," he says. "Eventually I got so intensely involved in arranging that I almost quit playing my trumpet."

But O'Farrill was restless. There wasn't much demand for jazz writing in Cuba at the time, and he was eager to immerse himself in the new jazz stirrings in the U.S. "A group of us in Havana used to sit around and listen to jazz records," he recalls. "One friend went to New York and brought back a Dizzy Gillespie album. It was the first time I heard bebop and I thought, What is this thing happening in double time? I immediately fell in love with it. I thought to myself that's how I want to write."

So O'Farrill moved to New York in 1948 to try his luck. He got a job working as a ghost writer for arranger Gil Fuller, which led to his gig with Goodman. Even though being fired by the bandleader because of his adventurous charts was a major letdown, by then O'Farrill had begun to become established. Producer Norman Granz hired him to write arrangements. "At that time it was becoming fashionable to write extended pieces that lasted 10 to 15 minutes," O'Farrill says. "Norman asked me to try my hand at that, so I came up with 'Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite' for the Machito Orchestra. That's what opened up all kinds of doors for me."

O'Farrill recalls that the piece was supposed to be recorded with guest soloists Flip Phillips and Fats Navarro.



"But Fats never showed up, so Norman sent for Bird. I remember Bird coming in and being nervous. But as soon as they started recording, it was as if he had been playing the piece all his life."

Signed by Granz to his own recording contract, O'Farrill began exploring the fusion of jazz and Afro-Cuban music with his own orchestra in the early '50s. "It's a very delicate marriage," he says. "You can't go too much one way or the other. It has to be a blend. I loved the idea of putting the two musics together, marrying the rhythms of Cuba with the richness of instrumentation and harmonies in jazz. It would have been easy just to play the mambo, which was the pop music of the day, but I wanted to look forward."

Even today, O'Farrill insists, the jazz-Latin mix requires careful attention, especially when it comes to clave. "Cubans are raised on the clave, but it's important not to be enslaved to it," he cautions. "You can bend it or not even play it. But when you're constructing phrases you have to be aware of it, to be comfortable enough to break the rules without violating the principle."

When big bands waned in popularity in the mid '50s, O'Farrill relocated to Los Angeles and then in 1955 to Mexico, where he found steady work as a bandleader. Nearly a decade later, in 1964, he moved back to New York where he enjoyed behind-the-scenes success arranging for the Count Basie Orchestra.

"Writing for Count Basie was one of the happiest moments of my life," says O'Farrill, who wrote more than 80 arrangements on albums for Basie. "He was the epitome of swing. He had such a unique style and his personality permeated the whole band."

Even though O'Farrill also worked with Gillespie, Clark Terry and Gato Barbieri, for much of the '70s, '80s and early '90s the arranger was forced to pursue other options to make ends meet. He gravitated to the lucrative business of writing jingles for television commercials broadcast in Latin America. "Jazz had died and rock was the big industry," he says. "It was a hard time providing for my family."

Chico's son Arturo, who recalls how his dad's commercial jingle for Kent cigarettes became a big hit in Colombia, says, "Even though he was ghost writing, he wasn't just going through the motions. Even if he was commissioned to do a McDonald's commercial, he wrote eloquent music."

During this time O'Farrill also composed the film score for Cuban director Jorge Ulla's *Guaguasi*, wrote pieces recorded by the World Saxophone Quartet and performed by Venezuela's Caracas Philharmonic and orchestrated three songs for pop singer David Bowie's 1993 album *Black Tie White Noise*. But, as for recording a new album of his own, O'Farrill vowed not to return to playing jazz unless the conditions were right.

Arturo (a fine pianist who plays with Jerry Gonzalez's Fort Apache Latin jazz band and today serves as artistic director of his dad's big band) remembers Barkan inquiring about his dad a few years ago. "When Todd heard that Chico was just doing commercials, he said, 'We can't have that,'" Arturo explains. "Within a year Todd arranged with Ralph Kaffel at Fantasy to set into motion Chico's first album in 30 years. We thought they'd say see

you later when we presented our budget for the big band session, but they didn't flinch."

The elder O'Farrill pipes in. "Todd was very much an angel," but then quickly quips, "but don't tell him that."

The album *Pure Emotion* not only garnered O'Farrill a Grammy nomination in 1996, but it also swung the door wide open for him to finally receive his due. As a result, his Afro-Cuban Jazz Big Band scored its weekly Birdland gig, filmmaker Ulla began filming a documentary on his life and the new, appropriately titled album, *Heart Of A Legend*, is getting rave reviews. O'Farrill's latest project is composing the music for a Broadway version of *The Mambo Kings*.



When asked about the current buzz on all things Cuban, O'Farrill sighs. He hasn't been back to the island nation since 1960, when he was invited there to perform a concert. Even if the United States-Cuba political relationship continues to thaw and American citizens are allowed to travel there, the native son is undecided about returning for a visit. "I've been thinking about it," he says. "But it would be very sad to go back to the old places. They'll be very different. I saw the movie *Buena Vista Social Club* and it depressed me seeing the conditions of Havana. Plus, I don't have any family left there."

However, O'Farrill brightens when asked about Cuba's musical talent. He mentions Paquito D'Rivera and Arturo Sandoval, both of whom have been in the States awhile, and expresses his enthusiasm that such important Cuban musicians as Chucho Valdés and Frank Emilio have been able to perform here. "False modesty aside, I will say one thing: Cuba has always produced good musicians," he says, then adds with a laugh, "maybe it's the soil."

As for the growth of Latin jazz, O'Farrill is also upbeat. He mentions that in addition to the Afro-Cuban rhythms, there are plenty of resources in Puerto Rican and Colombian music that can be tapped. "Jazz is constantly growing toward new horizons. But you have to be careful with how different styles come together. Otherwise music labeled Latin jazz could end up being like Glenn Miller with maracas or Benny Goodman with congas. Latin jazz is much deeper than that." **DB**

**T**he remaining "First-Person Project" schedule for 2000 is as follows:  
**OCTOBER:** Barry Harris  
**NOVEMBER:** Anita O'Day  
**DECEMBER:** Ray Brown and Stanley Turrentine





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# Bennie Wallace

By Ted Panken

Photo by Enid Farber

**O**n a clear late winter morning, not one man-made object impedes the treetop-skimming southern view of the Long Island Sound from Bennie Wallace's second-floor home studio in suburban Connecticut. The walls are blanketed with albums, CDs and books on music; spread on a long table abutting the window are a Macintosh computer and mixing equipment. Wallace is a slender, stoop-shouldered 53-year-old with an iron grip. He speaks with courtly diction in precisely modulated tones that give away his southern roots. The veteran tenor saxophonist, a native of Chattanooga, Tenn., is every inch the country gentleman.

You wouldn't recognize the blue-jeaned firebrand as the man whose idiosyncratic style impressed devotees of hardcore jazz on a yearly succession of albums for enja between 1978 and 1984 with the likes of Tommy Flanagan, Chick Corea, Eddie Gomez, Dave Holland, Eldie Moore, Dannie Richmond and Elvin Jones. These albums still hold up for their individuality and passion; and in the past two years, Wallace has released a pair of lyric, songbook-oriented quartet albums with first class New York rhythm sections—*Someone To Watch Over Me* (enja, 1999), an all-Gershwin recital, and *Bennie Wallace* (AudioQuest, 1998)—that bring his mature style into deep relief. His approach features surging, torrentially arpeggiated lines marked by jagged intervals that limn the instrument's extremes as though Thelonious Monk were playing a saxophone. Every note's articulated in a fat tone marked by a turbulent, almost Gothic timbral sensibility, all at the service of an architectural command of harmony and innate narrative authority.

Unlike much of his early baby boom

peer group, who were obsessed with perfecting the language of John Coltrane. Wallace developed an elemental link to the Coleman Hawkins branch of the tenor saxophone tree, with particular attention to the Sonny Rollins-Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis-Red Prysock school of expressionistic saxophone dynamics. "The idea of playing like Coltrane to me was totally antithetical to Coltrane's set of esthetics," Wallace says. "The message I got from Coltrane was the fact that he kept exploring and changing, and that he didn't sound like anybody else. Art is about self-expression, and past the learning stages it's not about emulation. The craft is about emulation, but the art isn't."

Performance is only one component of Wallace's recent activity. He spent much of 1999 writing and recording

scores for 22 episodes comprising the single season run of "The Hoop Life," a Showtime series about a professional basketball team with a "behind the scenes" perspective. Operating out of Brooklyn's Systems Two studio, Wallace recruited a who's who of New York improvisers to express their personalities in relation to the picture appearing before them on the video monitors.

In episodes 5, 17 and 18, the music seamlessly complements and comments on the flow. Piercing atonal string quartets frame psychological flashpoints, a variety of minor trumpet blues counterpoint action-resolution moments, a thrilling drum chant accompanies a montage telescoping the course of a championship game. In the studio in January for the show's final recording session, Wallace prepares Billy Drummond, Steve Kroon and Don Eaton to play for the latter sequence. He mentions that he'd like to achieve the rubato three feel that Elvin Jones put on "Alabama," a clear analogy that prompts an apropos response.

"The narrative is in the preparation," Wallace reflects. "Before I recorded *Someone To Watch Over Me*, I listened intently to Frank Sinatra singing it, I listened to Gene Ammons playing it, I listened to every good recording to learn the words and the way great people interpreted it emotionally. When I actually played, I didn't think about anything, but just let it all come out. The experience of

writing for narratives in the movies is analogous to playing without thinking about it. Technique is out the window. It's all about expressing the emotions and eliminating the extraneous. That's one of the fortunate lessons I learned when I was in Los Angeles."

"The Hoop Life" followed on the heels of a bittersweet five-year tenure as a Los Angeles film composer/music director. The wheels for this career-shifting left turn were set in motion when Wallace signed with Blue Note in 1985. "They wanted to exploit the fact that I was from the South," he notes drolly. "Which turned out to be a nice idea, because I met Dr. John, who became a great friend and associate. It gave me a chance to revisit some of the

day out of the blue I called Jimmy Rowles out of the phone book and asked if I could study piano with him to learn his harmonic concept and the way he approached tunes. He told me to come on over, and he educated me, showed me outrageous stuff. After that we became great friends. He was restricted from emphysema and wasn't working much, but I would pick his brain all the time. His memory was phenomenal and his knowledge was encyclopedic. Jimmy always focused on what a song means—that narrative aspect."

In his maturity, Wallace seems comfortable balancing the pragmatic dictates of business in the big leagues of entertainment with the call of pure esthetics. "I returned East because I missed my music

## Forgets Hollywood

tunes that I used to play when I was a kid in the way I fantasized about doing them."

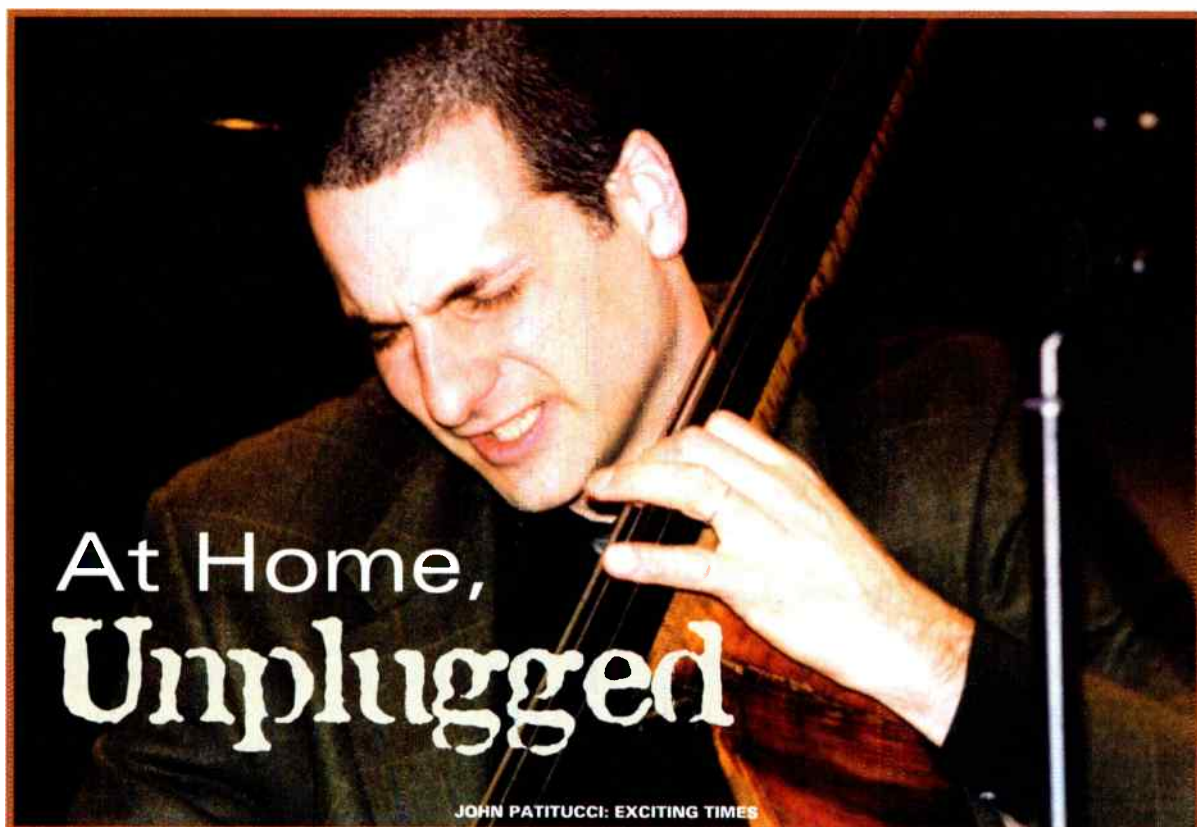
During those formative early high school years, Wallace dual-tracked, playing classical music on clarinet in the school orchestra well enough to win a state championship, while moonlighting in jam sessions from 11 p.m. to 4 a.m. at after-hour chitlin' circuit joints in Chattanooga's black section, "with people going crazy, playing the blues and bebop tunes with good players who traveled to small clubs around the country. I told my parents I was working in a hillbilly club. The owner took me under his wing and started giving me work."

Returning to the Blue Note years, Wallace reflects: "In the midst of it all, out of the blue one day I got a call from someone in California who had heard my first Blue Note record and wanted to use some of it in the movie *Bull Durham*, for which he wanted me to write something."

In 1991, Wallace left his dark Washington Heights apartment for a rented house with an ocean view on the Pacific Palisades. He scored *Blaze*, and the uncompleted animated feature *Betty Boop*, music-directed *White Men Can't Jump*, and composed the title track for Jeff Goldblum's Oscar-nominated short film, *Little Surprises*, among other projects, while attempting to sustain his performing career. "I felt like a fish out of water in Los Angeles," Wallace recounts. "I was very self-conscious that I would stagnate. One

being the focal point of my life rather than writing film music," he says. "When I went to L.A., I thought it would be worth doing if I could make enough money to pay my musicians so everybody feels good about the gig, and not worry about pleasing a record company whether my music is going to fit the concept they want. I did it for a few years, but didn't get it to the point I wanted. Somewhere along the way I had to turn down a European tour because of a big project I got involved in, and I decided I wouldn't take any more tours until I could afford to. Finally, I reached a point where I couldn't go on any longer without being back here and playing. I spent the last two years practicing the saxophone and taking occasional gigs in Europe—getting into 'Hoop Life' was a happy accident.

"I did a lot of things in California that weren't what I would do as an artist, but they taught me a lot about the craft. It was always a learning experience. I learned a lot of positive things about show business which are very helpful now that I'm back dealing with the jazz business, and things about composition that give me a wider vocabulary on the saxophone and come out in my solos. I want to bring some of the craft I learned into my writing for albums. Many of the things we did on 'Hoop Life' were just as unconventional for jazz as for film music, and I met musicians on that project who I want to record with. I'll never again turn down music for money." **DB**



**D**uring John Patitucci's decade with Chick Corea, when he began to make his mark as a six-string electric and acoustic bass virtuoso, his deep connection to and affinity for jazz's main stem was somewhat muted. So listeners who think of the bassist solely as a premier fusion man, fluent and elegant in the electric idiom, will be taken unaware by the emotional range of the searing compositions and savvy improvisations that mark Patitucci's three recent acoustic dates for Concord and the mercurial interplay and rooted foundation he imparts to a new and rampantly imaginative trio session with Roy Haynes and Danilo Perez on Verve.

A fixture in Los Angeles since 1980, Patitucci left Corea in 1995 to pursue personal projects and plot future directions. In quick succession, he married and moved back to New York to begin a family and satisfy creative hungers by plunging headlong into hardcore jazz. "If anybody was really listening, I don't think I ever sounded 'West Coast,'" Patitucci remarks from the well-equipped basement studio in his comfortable new home just north of New York City, a half-hour drive from the East Flatbush section of Brooklyn, the Italian-Jewish working-class neighborhood where he spent his first 12 years. While we wait for a pot of orichette and lentils (pasta fagioli, a family recipe) to reach the proper consistency, Patitucci, who at 40 has the compact muscular frame and focused alertness of a prototype baseball catcher, discusses his disdain for being pigeonholed.

"People labeled me with the term 'fusion,' and I resented it," he says. "I came up in jazz a lot ... well, everything from r&b to classical to free music inspired by the Art Ensemble of Chicago. My major in college was Double Bass Performance, playing classical music and also in

the jazz groups, and from my early days in Los Angeles I played with Victor Feldman, Joe Farrell, Freddie Hubbard, Hubert Laws, Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter and a lot of other older guys. Though I started on electric bass when I was 10, I didn't get back into electric until after college, when I realized that I had to get both instruments together to get work. For a while with Chick and on my earlier recordings, I played a lot on the six-string bass because it was a new instrument that I wanted to explore. I've always been after the line. Either it's a line that's interesting, that has shapes and dynamics, flows, is musical and lyrical, or it's just scales—no matter what speed you play it. I want to have freedom and be lyrical. I want to have a strong foundation and be able to anchor any group that I'm in, and when it's my turn to stretch out, I want to contribute."

Patitucci honed those qualities during his productive tenure with Corea. "Whatever label people put on Chick's music, it was always creative and amazing, and I learned a lot playing with him," he emphasizes. "He got me a record deal and encouraged me to write. During my last

three years I only played in his acoustic groups—the trio and quartet. It was more a practical matter than not wanting to play electric music. He was very busy, and I didn't want to do double duty on the touring. I felt I hadn't shown a huge part of my personality on my records, and I wanted to experiment and explore and demonstrate some of this other music that I have inside.

"I started to realize that a lot of the people I wanted to play with more extensively were in New York. There are a lot of great players in Los Angeles, but the town is geared toward pop music and the movies, and there isn't much support for people who try to reach and stretch. In New York it's not rose-colored glasses, but there's an amazing concentration of creative musicians, an actual scene, more than anywhere else in the world. Stylistically and artistically, I always felt like I belonged here; most of the bassists who are my heroes, the diverse musical minds on the instrument—Ron Carter, Ray Brown, Paul Chambers, George Mraz, Scott LaFaro, Dave Holland, Charlie Haden, Mingus, Steve Swallow, Jaco Pastorius—who influenced the way I hear and play lived here. I was more than a little concerned about coming back to the town where my heroes work, and I certainly was respectful of the scene. But I got encouragement from people like Michael Brecker and Jack DeJohnette, who told me I'd be fine."

Once in New York, Patitucci's acoustic output started to flow, as he recorded *One More Angel*, *Now* and *Imprint* for Concord. On the latter, which could not have been conceptualized nor executed anywhere else but New York City, Patitucci presents the full scope of his comprehensive esthetic. He assembles and deploys in a variety of configurations a cast of first-tier improvisers—young tenorists Chris Potter and Mark Turner, pianists Danilo Perez and John Beasley, trapset masters DeJohnette and Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez, and state-of-the-art hand drummer Giovanni Hidalgo. He offered them a set of original compositions that span a capacious terrain of ambiance and groove, from spirit-catching drum chant to aria-like ballads, incorporating a flexible template of rhythmic signatures.

Patitucci stokes the fires throughout the recent bebop-to-the-future Roy Haynes Trio release, switching on a dime from foundational to soloistic functions with relentless intensity and almost devotional consonance. "I've played with a ton of different drummers over the years," he notes, "and I've tried to sustain an attitude of keeping the doors wide open, enjoying everybody's ideas of playing the drums and molding in and learning from it. I like to try to get inside the rhythm section and lock in with the soloist, without preconceived ideas. I mean, you play the way you play anyway, and hopefully you do find your voice. But it's so much richer if you're open to be the catalyst. As the bass player you're sitting right in the middle of the music. It's exciting!"

As the delicious pasta fagioli meal winds down, Patitucci peers out the dining room window into the twilight at his snow-blanketed backyard, honing in on the dimly outlined snowman he'd constructed earlier that day with toddler daughter Sachi Grace, an indefatigable 2-year-old who keeps metronomic time on the basement trapset. "Jazz got into my soul when I was so young," he reflects. "It touched off something in me. I love the improvisational aspect of it, that there's room for individual expression and the excitement of actually co-creating stuff on the fly. I had plenty of opportunities in L.A. to go pop, but it didn't hold me emotionally.

"This is the most exciting time of my life. I'm home again. You can't make snowmen in California."  
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## players

What do you do when planning a CD of music by Duke Ellington and can't cut the short list of tunes down?

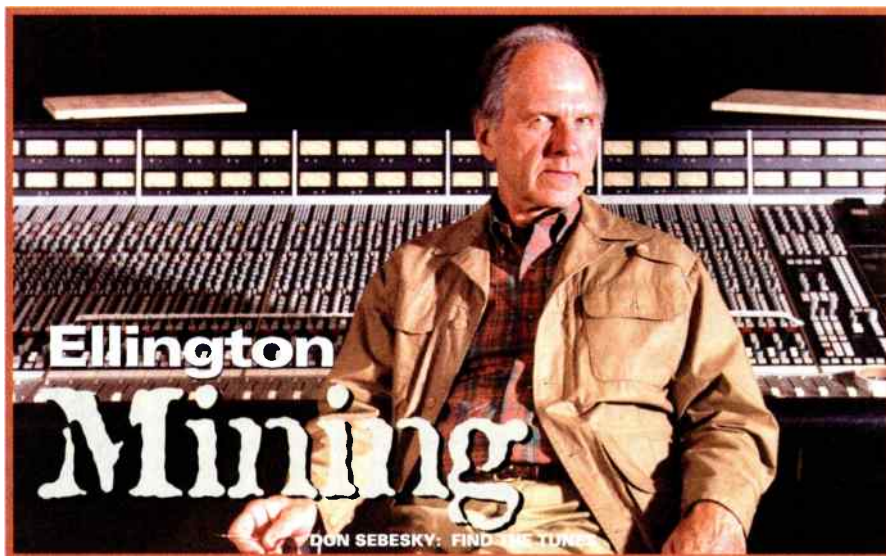
Two options. One, you could switch to the music of Herman Hupfeld, a strategy that would cap your short list to "Let's Put Out the Lights And Go To Bed," "When Yuba Plays The Rhumba On The Tuba" and "As Time Goes By."

Or two, you could stick with Ellington and do what he did on last year's Grammy-winning *Joyful Noise: A Tribute To Duke Ellington* (RCA Victor)—create an ingenious semi-original collage of Ellingtonian kibbles and bits and call it the "Joyful Noise Suite."

ing 'Ko-Ko' essentially as a transcription. It's the one piece of music that sums up Ellington to me. Trying to redesign a masterpiece just didn't make sense."

While the original "Ko-Ko" chart remains intact under Sebesky's hand, the phrasings and particularly the work of Bob Brookmeyer, who delivers his most down-to-earth work in years, freshen and open up the piece.

With the exception of "Ko-Ko," Sebesky ended up drawing principally from the body of Ellington's work as a songwriter, where the material comes with a license to interpret and is not cast in the matrix of some specific orchestral identity. The



The result is a maddening but fun trivia test of melody and riffs that invites the listener to spot glimpses of (and hopefully identify) "Jack The Bear," "Sophisticated Lady," "Rockin' In Rhythm," "The Hawk Talks"—and, well, why spoil the fun.

"If you can uncover every Ellington gem that I've hidden in there," Sebesky says, "you're pretty good. A lot of those little motifs are famous, but out of context they acquire a kind of independent standing that makes you hear them differently.

"I really agonized over what to include in the CD, and that suite became a way of touching on some of the things I couldn't treat more fully. I wanted to do 'Cottontail,' for instance, but when you get into it, you find with that and many other pieces the arrangement was the message. Any changes start to sound worse. That was why I ended up includ-

result is a mix of the familiar ("Creole Love Call," "Caravan") and arcane ("Take The Coltrane" from the 1962 Impulse! date with John Coltrane).

"Take 'The Coltrane' is one that I had not known about," he says, "until I heard a record of Carl Fontana playing it. It sounds so Monkish."

To the point that some of his choices might be just a bit too familiar ("Mood Indigo" and "Satin Doll"), Sebesky explains that he selected them, as Ellington did, with the wishes and voices of his players in mind, not necessarily the popular marketplace. "I had Ron Carter for only one day," he says, "and felt that 'Satin Doll' would be a good vehicle for his individual voice. We could have done shorter versions of more pieces, I suppose, but quantity wasn't my purpose."

—John McDonough

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World Radio History

As Koko Taylor sits down for an interview, she takes her shoes off and props them up on a chair. Taylor is plenty relaxed, but then again, she has every right to feel comfortable in her own place, as last November, Taylor opened Koko Taylor's Celebrity, a new blues club located in Chicago's revived South Loop. The blues singer hopes that Celebrity, which seats more than 100, will give patrons a feeling similar to the small South Side clubs that Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf used to play.

"That it is a down-home feeling, where people feel welcome and can enjoy themselves," Taylor says. The narrow entrance has a photo of Taylor to greet you. The fat alley club has large photos of Waters, Bo Diddley and a young Koko on one side, and smaller shots of Willie Dixon, Albert Collins, Junior Wells and Luther Allison on the other.

"That's my guardian angel right there," she laughs, pointing at the picture of Muddy and singing a portion of "Long Distance Call." "That old goat was one of my favorites."

The stage at Celebrity could easily fit Big James & the Chicago Playboys, even if Son Seals joined in. Chicago staples like Big James, Willie Kent and Dave Weld have made Koko's photos and

awards shake. The hallway leading to the restrooms has a barrage of photos of Taylor with everyone from Buddy Guy and Jimmy Page to Walter Payton and Bill and Hillary Clinton. Glass cases hold her numerous awards.

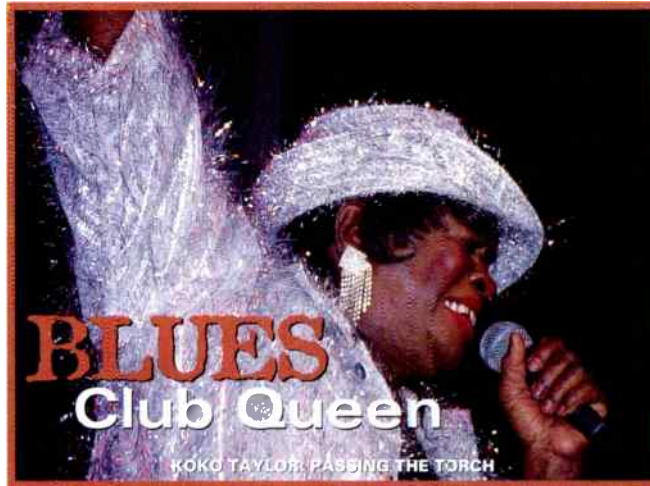
In addition to the new club, Taylor has a new album to keep her career in high gear. Alligator Records recently released *Royal Blue*, Taylor's first album since 1993's *Force Of Nature*.

*Royal Blue* has the same Koko spark and sass as on previous albums, including the Taylor-penned autobiographical "Old Woman." "I can't say that it's different, because every album I've ever done, every lyric that comes out of my mouth, is straight from the heart," she says.

Guests on *Royal Blue* include Keb' Mo', Shemekia Copeland, Johnnie Johnson, B.B. King and Kenny Wayne Shepherd. Taylor's pleased to have younger players like Keb' Mo', Copeland and Shepherd on the

album. "I'm honored to be a role model for the younger players. I may be older, but I don't forget the lyrics of those songs," she says. "I feel good about the youngsters playing today. I promote them all the way, because we need a new generation to carry the torch. Old goats like me won't be around forever."

—Matthew Socoy

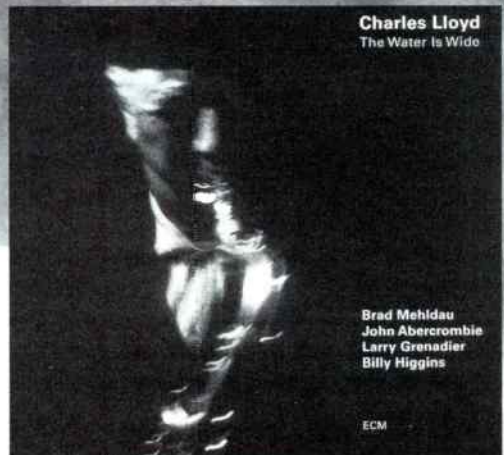


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Manhattan School of Music Jazz Orchestra at the North Sea Jazz Festival, The Netherlands (photo: Richard Elder Adams)

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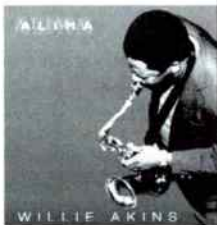


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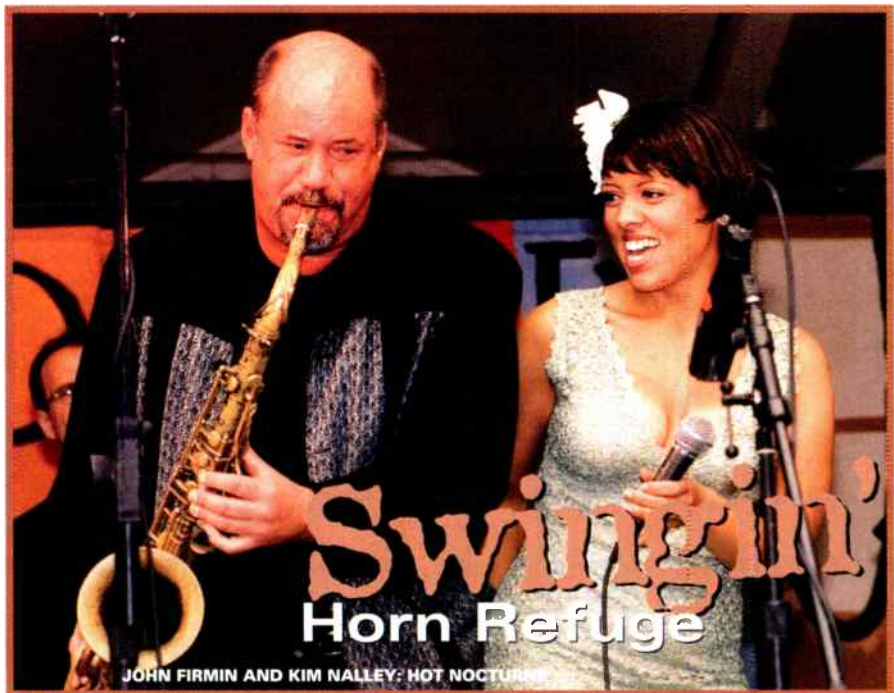
Distributed by City Hall Records

Long before the Gap discovered Louis Prima and swing music became a fashion statement, the

was exploring the nexus of jazz and r&b. Founded in the late '80s by Marin County-based tenor saxophonist John Firmin, the nine-piece little big band packs a potent, blues-drenched wallop. Over the years it's developed from a swaggering instrumental ensemble into a group boasting some

on Rounder Records' Bullseye Blues and Jazz label, the group has taken on a new voice and injected a dose of cool West Coast r&b into its sound. Replacing Boykin, sultry voiced 28-year-old singer Kim Nalley brings an irresistibly sexy sense of swing to classics such as the album's title track, and Nellie Lutcher's 1948 hit "Fine Brown Frame."

"The focus of the band has always been this gray area where jazz and r&b come



of the most exciting, up-and-coming singers in the Bay Area. Tired of working in groups dominated by electric guitar, Firmin founded the Nocturne band as a refuge for horn players.

"I started the Nocturne band because I wanted a vehicle for myself," says Firmin, who was raised in Anchorage, Alaska. "I always liked that period in the late '40s when the swing thing was dying and r&b was coming on. But none of the bandleaders around here seemed to want to invest the time or energy to do that."

In the early '90s, the Nocturne band became the Bay Area's hottest back-up group, playing for blues and r&b legends, including LaVern Baker, Johnny Copeland, Tommy Ridgley and Johnny Adams. On albums such as *Wailin' Daddy* and *Shake 'Em Up*, the group perfected a sizzling jump style, powered by blues and jazz singer Brenda Boykin.

With the release of *Million Dollar Secret*, the Nocturne Band's fourth album

together," Firmin says. "When you get a new vocalist you go with their strengths. Kim's more into the older style of singing. She knows how to ease into a song."

Besides her rhythmic dexterity and beautiful sound, the most impressive thing about Nalley is the way she inhabits material defined by other singers. A self-described Dinah Washington devotee, Nalley has also listened closely to Helen Humes, Billie Holiday and Ivie Anderson. Sexy and assured on a deliciously slow "If I Could Be With You," Nalley displays her impeccable sense of swing on the Ellington/Strayhorn gem "I'm Checkin' Out Go'om Bye."

"Kim had a lot of input on this record," Firmin says. "'Million Dollar Secret' was her idea. And 'Harlem Nocturne,' that was something we were just doing for fun in the studio, and she talked me into putting it on the album. She said, 'My generation hasn't heard it.' I forget that for people in their 20s, this is all new to them."

—Andrew Gilbert



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World Radio History

## Full Improvisation AT THE BOTTLE



COR FUHLER: MANIPULATIONS

The Empty Bottle Festival of Jazz And Improvised Music in Chicago was a virtual clinic in the avant-garde. With internationally known artists like Uri Caine, John Butcher, Peter Kowald and Gunter "Baby" Sommer playing alongside local legends including Ken Vandermark, Fred Anderson, Ernst Long and Fred Longberg-Holm, this summit in May served as a classic juxtaposition of styles as well as province.

At Saturday night's gig (May 13), French reedist Andre Jaume opened the show with "A Tribute To Jimmy Giuffre," a solo tour-de-force commemorating the music of his friend and mentor. Playing clarinet, bass clarinet and tenor saxophone, Jaume's homage was filled with angular single-line runs that resolved themselves with swinging authority.

An improvisational duet between Amsterdam's Cor Fuhler and Chicagoan Jim O'Rourke was the most unusual performance of the evening. Looking like mad geniuses sitting behind an arsenal of keyboards and effects boxes, the two engaged in a dynamic discourse of electronic and

organic sounds. Fuhler played prepared piano and his "Keyolin" (a composite keyboard, hurdy-gurdy and violin) with physical exuberance while O'Rourke remained impassively inventive at his laptop computer. With O'Rourke providing an Eastern wail over electronic beats and Fuhler manipulating the strings of his piano with a variety of implements, the duo provided an expansive range of tonal colors.

In the tradition of the Empty Bottle festival, the show featured a "surprise set," this time a solo performance by Chicago pianist Jim Baker. Baker's unassuming stage presence was offset by his astounding chops. His lyrical playing flowed one minute, was rhythmic and abrupt the next.

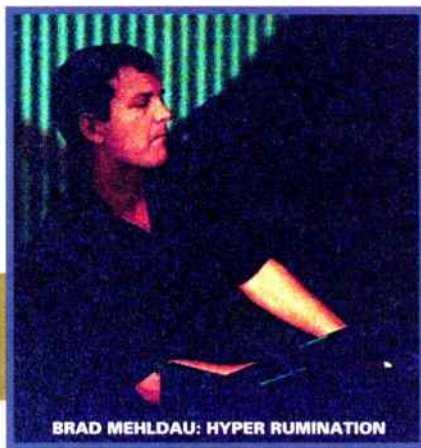
Rob Mazurek's Chicago Underground Quartet brought together the disparate elements of jazz-fusion with grace and skill. Featuring the cornetist along with guitarist Jeff Parker, drummer Chad Taylor and bassist Noel Kupersmith, the quartet closed out a marvelous evening of music with remarkable authority. —Mitch Myers

The seats for Diana Krall's show at Kalamazoo's historic State Theater had been sold out for months. Last time she was in town the setting was the much more modest Civic Theater. And both shows, two years apart, were for the same occasion—the Irving S. Gilmore International Keyboard Festival.

### Krall Woos, Mehldau Brews

At the other end of the spectrum, the mysterious Brad Mehldau blew into town for one show and was gone, playing Kalamazoo's Rose Street Market.

Held every two years across Southwest Michigan in April and May, the Irving S. Gilmore International Keyboard Festival "nine-day celebration of keyboard music" gathered the gamut, from classical stalwarts like Andre Watts and Ursula Oppens to pop and jazz favorites Michael



BRAD MEHLDAU: HYPER RUMINATION

Feinstein, Danilo Perez and Tania Maria.

But it was Krall who lit a fire, engaging the crowd musically and otherwise. Her set included a ravishing, understated "I Love Being Here With You." Her swinging, pensive endings to songs such as "I've Got You Under My Skin," "Let's Fall In Love" and "Devil May Care" seduced listeners. She sang her band along one

moment, trailed behind the next in the tradition of Ahmad Jamal or Erroll Garner.

Krall's concert was almost campy compared to Mehldau's. His show, Mehldau put on with bandmates bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jorge Rossy, was almost like a musical slap in the face to audiences waiting to be entertained, if not enthralled. The trio's musical shorthand was like a blast of the brisk, giving melody a rest as the three pursued improvisation with a subdued vengeance. This was hyper rumination, intense despite all the pianissimo, slow tempos and modulations. The tunes—challenged listeners to stay with the music as it revealed itself, unfolding melodies, stumbling at times, even getting hung up with little or no forward momentum. Overall, there was swinging, incredible group communication and an almost subterranean brand of lyricism—a refreshing balance to an otherwise fairly conservative festival. —John Ephland

# Brazilian JAZZ REFRESHMENT

In a time when so many music festivals puppeteer chart-friendly pop bands as jazz artists to attract bigger crowds, the lineup of the first Chivas Jazz Festival proved more than refreshing. From June 1-3, jazz aficionados from across Brazil converged upon São Paulo's Palace for three consecutive sold-out shows, featuring a mix of up-and-coming jazz artists paired alongside jazz masters.

The festivities started with a bang, as



GERI ALLEN: EVOKING THE CHILD WITHIN

Regina Carter pushed the full range of her violin with a Latin heavy, up-tempo performance. On Kenny Barron's "New York Attitude," from her most recent album, *Rhythms Of The Heart*, the deep, heady sound of her violin contrasted to the buoyancy of the next number, the Cuban-derived "Mojito." Fueled by the skin-tight rhythms of Maria Casales on bongos and Darryl Hall on bass, Carter quickly won over the unsuspecting crowd with a Brazilian favorite, "Tico-Tico Nu Fumba."

Saxophonist David Murray led a sultry, nostalgic second set with his power quartet (drummer Andrew Cyrille, bassist Ray Drummond and pianist David Burrell). The intrinsic interplay on the honestly conceived "Dave Blue" made the group's sophistication more than obvious.

The second night of the fest featured pianist Geri Allen with singer Andy Bey and percussionist Mino Cinelu. Allen's inventive compositions flattered Bey's rich, commanding voice, and the trio appealed to the child within with a version of "Itsy Bitsy Spider."

Day three proved the highlight of the three-night run, with Mal Waldron and Steve Lacy in duo, as well as shows by innovative young artists Charlie Hunter and Stefon Harris. The eminently confident eight-string guitarist Hunter achieved stylistic renditions of unlikely jazz tunes, such as on the funky "New Go Go," where his guitar sounded much like a Hammond B-3.

Waldron and Lacy courted the audience's soul with a timeless hour of

seductive duos. Waldron's careful placement of notes danced with the upper register of Lacy's soprano saxophone on "What It Is."

Harris demonstrated amazing control over the vibraphone and the madeira while sprinting back and forth between them on "Black Action Figure." And to add to the excitement of his performance, Harris invited Hunter back on stage to perform "Of Things To Come."

—Katherine Jarvis

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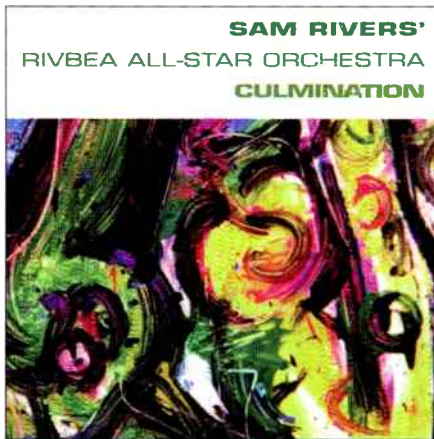
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**S**am Rivers established himself as a major composer in the '60s on five challenging, stylistically diverse Blue Note records. Rivers was instrumental in founding the so-called "loft scene" in New York, opening Studio Rivbea for performances in 1970, and in this era he worked extensively with trios, including the great one with Dave Holland and Barry Altschul. But in '91, Rivers left NYC for sunny Orlando, where he founded another trio with local folks Doug Matthews on electric bass (and bass clarinet) and Anthony Cole on drums (and piano and tenor sax).

I had a chance to hear that trio a couple of years ago, and though I was impressed at the depth of interaction years working together had facilitated, I didn't find Matthews and Cole to be working anywhere near the level of their leader. It's a sign of remarkable loyalty that Rivers chose to keep his Floridian comrades for the ambitious all-star project that produced *Inspiration*—released last year, also on RCA—and the companion/follow-up *Culmination*. But the weaknesses of the rhythm section are also the project's only real shortcoming. A huge, 15-strong horn section like this needs a powerful engine to keep it running, and while Cole and Matthews are professional, they're not exceptional. Too bad, since the rest of the cast is.

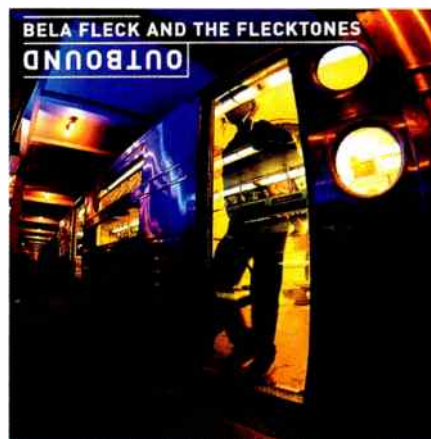
Rivers has visited funky terrain before—listen to his killing 1976 Impulse! record *Sizzle* (if you can find a copy). The funk is overt on "Bubbles" and "Riffin'," both written in the '70s; here short solos spill out over repeater grooves, all with sufficient angularity, nifty backdrop arrangement and rhythmic complexity to keep the ostinati from growing stale. The title track is big, meaty and full of forward brass, partially breaking into a lovely altered Latin beat. Here, too, and on the whole disc,

the solos are terse and to the point. That's reasonable with such an arsenal of players—fantastic to hear Ray Anderson, Baikida Carroll, Hamiet Bluiett, Ralph Alessi, Chico Freeman, Joseph Bowie and of course the leader himself, all swapping snappily articulated ideas. (With such an array and approach, it would have made sense to include running orders of soloists.)

There's a strong M-Base presence on *Culmination*—saxists Greg Osby, Gary Thomas and Steve Coleman—and it makes perfect sense that Coleman produced the session, with its electric bass and shifting time signatures; Coleman is right at home zig-zagging solos over the quasi-funk beds, particularly on "Neptune," with its kaleidoscopically mutating riff backdrops. The group visits a more conventional big-band sound on "Ripples," a shimmering ballad that's still got rich Rivers harmonizations and unusual layers to the arrangement. Despite the annoying sound of electric bass in such a songful context, it's another strong composition in this fascinating, but flawed outing. —John Corbett

**Culmination:** Spectrum, Bubbles, Revelation; *Culmination*, Ripples, Neptune, Riffin'. (59:36)

**Personnel:** Sam Rivers, soprano and tenor saxophones, flute, Steve Coleman, Greg Osby, alto saxophones; Chico Freeman, Gary Thomas, tenor saxophones, Hamiet Bluiett, baritone saxophone, Ravi Best, Ralph Alessi, James Zollar, Baikida Carroll, trumpets, Ray Anderson, Joseph Bowie, Art Baron, trombones, Joseph Daley, baritone horn, Bob Stewart, tuba; Doug Matthews, electric bass, Anthony Cole drums



**Béla Fleck & The Flecktones**  
*Outbound*  
Columbia 12925  
★★★

**A**mbition has waylaid its fair share of bandleaders, and eclecticism has proven a path to several things shallow. So experiments gone awry aren't news to listeners follow-

ing intrepid musicians. After building a rep as an envelope-pusher in the realm of progressive acoustica, string virtuoso Béla Fleck has set out to align his far-flung interests with his working band, the Flecktones. But rather than definitive statements, the foursome has usually come up with albums just as confused as cohesive. Both amusing and frustrating, his debut disc for Columbia doesn't particularly break this streak. Reaching for the brass ring, *Outbound* is heaved from the horse.

The disc's sizable guest list isn't the sole problem. I can imagine scenarios where guitarist Adrian Belew, keybster John Medeski, folk thrush Shawn Colvin, Yes-yelper Jon Anderson and acoustic bassist Edgar Meyer could coexist—even if you mixed in tabla players, steel drummers and Tuvan throat singers, as Fleck does here. The invitee that derails the program is bad writing. No one ever said string virtuosos were hip composers, and as the tunes flit from branch to branch, they never achieve depth.

Main problem: Riff tunes are no substitute for melodies. When Basie and the guys rocked "One O'Clock Jump," its inherent simplicity enabled the soloists to nurture cool complexities. But the Flecktones—saxophonist Jeff Coffin, bassist Victor Wooten and electronic percussionist Future Man—often begin with overcrowded themes that give the extrapolations a manic feel. Add to that the notion that many of these tunes sound mechanical, and you've got music that is pretty much bloodless.

"Earth Jam" is a good example. It spills out of the liltily benign "Hall Of Mirrors" with rocking on its mind, but almost instantly it's caught up in its own machinations. Like "Hall," it's a riff-based piece where guitar, sax and bass all gallop in unison through the head before cruising into jam band clichés. Wooten's thumb slapping renders funk's profundities into cheese. "I'm getting paid by the note," he jokes with his fingers flashing. Hope so. Long green would be the only reason to squander such talent on sophomoric wankery.

When the Flecktones try to wax gentle, their moves are maudlin. "Something She Said" might work during a Telluride sunset, but an N.A.C. genericism ultimately swamps Coffin's alto tone, and in cahoots with Colvin's wordless cooing, a sweet little tune becomes way too sweet. Wooten and Future Man overplay throughout. And deliberate or not, "Zona Mona" is a cop from *Wichita Falls*-era Pat Metheny: Mood and pastels trump tuneship.

It's only the kinda/sorta tango of "Lover's Leap" that feels comfortable with itself. Here, for once on the program, is a nod to nuance. Coffin's clarinet floats nicely with Andy Narell's pans, and Rita Sahai's voice drifts along with both. After all the clutter, it's a balm.

Clutter is a key word in describing the problem with *Outbound*. Fusion earned its bad

name because it chose mechanical tempos over comparatively swinging cadences—in other words, it borrowed from rock, not rock 'n' roll. Therein lies the problem with the title cut and "Scratch & Sniff." Both are extraordinarily busy. Both go nowhere.

Fleck has coordinated his music. Segues have all been concocted for one tune to spill into the next, and for the most part it works. And the leader's notions of amalgamation—the Ireland to India vibe of "Shuba Yatra" for instance—are to be commended. But until his pen carries the same weight as his picking, he and his associates may be responsible for some of the most chops-heavy muzak ever. —Jim Macnie

**Outbound:** Intro, Hoedown; A Moment So Close; Zona Mona; Hall Of Mirrors; Earth Jam; Something She Said, Ovombo Summit, Aimum; Prelude; Lover's Leap; Outbound; Scratch & Sniff, Shuba Yatra, That Old Thing, Reprise. (60:03)

**Personnel:** Bela Fleck, banjo, Victor Wooten, bass, Jeff Coffin, sax; Future Man, drums; Jon Anderson, vocals (3, 9); Shawn Colvin, vocals (3, 5, 9); Paul McCandless, sax (1) penny whistle (2) bassoon (15), John Medeski, organ (5, 8, 9); Andy Narell, steel pan (10, 11, 12, 13, 14); Adrian Belew, guitar (5, 9, 7), Rita Sahai, vocals (11, 16), Edgar Meyer, bass (15)



**Benny Green**  
*Naturally*  
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★★★★

Telarc could hardly have picked a better time to launch its first Benny Green CD. With Russell Malone on hand, it gets the added lift of Malone's own CD, *Look Who's Here*, which is being mightily promoted by Verve. It's a synergism in which each artist helps sell the other that is every publicist's dream.

Green knows how to court the casual fellow traveler in jazz, who is the bridge between the core cognoscenti and the general market. He does it with a forthright mastery of mainstream modern piano craft that neither panders nor reaches, except perhaps into a formidable knowledge of the ancestry that preceded him. The performance here weaves it all together in a set that is seamless like a wonderbra, and with no padding.

While no easy or familiar stylistic imprint shows clearly through (although I thought of Horace Silver on Green's gospel-laced "Captain

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# the hotbox

CDs	CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	John Ephland
<b>Sam Rivers' Rivbea All-Star Orchestra</b> <i>Culmination</i>		★★★1/2	★★★	★★1/2	★★★★
<b>Béla Fleck &amp; The Flecktones</b> <i>Outbound</i>		★★1/2	★	★★1/2	★★
<b>Benny Green</b> <i>Naturally</i>		★★★★	★★★★1/2	★★★	★★★
<b>Georg Graewe/Marcio Mattos/ Michael Vatcher</b> <i>Impressions Of Monk</i>		★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★1/2

## critics' comments

### Sam Rivers' Rivbea All-Star Orchestra, *Culmination*

Rivers' forte as a composer is voicing disjunctive notes, tones and chords. As the big band shakes its collective butt around, its primitive rhythmic agenda is bolstered by terrifically crazed charts. But I'm thinking that even diehards won't give this five full listens: That primitive rhythmic agenda certainly inhibits the flow. —Jim Macnie

A solid and interesting big band mix of expected and unexpected. Crisp brass and sax ensembles punctuate and support a long line of unidentified soloists. Rivers' compositions/arrangements are more than enough to hold it all together, even the occasional atonal splashes, which seem rendered more with a sense of self-deprecating satire than serious intent. —John McDonough

Rivers' high-voltage aggregate has become a musical haven for some of New York's finest. The lineup alone is remarkable. More remarkable is Rivers' talents as an organizer and arranger, driving his extended troupe through dense, layered charts that bellow with the ferocity of a hip Maynard Ferguson Big Bop Nouveau band hoedown. —John Ephland

### Béla Fleck & The Flecktones, *Outbound*

With shifting sound and instrumentation Fleck and his banjo are a moving target in this potpourri. There are any number of catchy figures among the 15 cuts, which float somewhere between pop and something else. But the parts are too varied to make a whole. —John McDonough

Oh no, now my ELP flashbacks are going to start again! Gone are the days of the adventurous newgrass banjoist, lost in a mish-mash too cute and clever for his own good, tinged with worldbeat's smug self-righteousness. —John Corbett

Taking a surprisingly low-profile back seat to all assembled, Fleck's fine banjo playing is buried amidst the quasi-Mahavishnu, cutesy vocal charts. Everyone is more than adept at playing. It's just that with all the activity, there's very little life that comes across. —John Ephland

### Benny Green, *Naturally*

A tasteful, bluesy program, with some typically slick but still hard-boiled turns from the pianist, unusual tune choices, and deceptively relaxed, soulful trio interaction. —John Corbett

While earlier recordings have hinted to some degree, it's clear this Nat Cole-inspired format with guitar and bass must be Benny Green's favorite. The performances are all enjoyable and well-executed, but there is an overall sameness to the proceedings, offering no real surprises with everything sounding a little too pat. —John Ephland

There's a lot to be said for romping: It's a ball when virtuosos get in there and kick around riffs. This threesome does exactly that on a date that reminds how lighthearted the mainstream can be. At moments it's too fey—I'll blame Green's writing rather than his playing, which remains pretty damn compelling, especially in groovesville. —Jim Macnie

### Georg Graewe/Marcio Mattos/Michael Vatcher, *Impressions Of Monk*

Rare to hear Graewe play anyone else's music; then again, the trio really makes their own thing out of Monk, playing his tunes allusively and aphoristically rather than according to orthodox rules of coverage. I find Vatcher transfixing here, Graewe is efflorescent (listen to his take on jazz harmony), and the overall concept blows most Monk projects out of the Hudson. —John Corbett

Outcats have the most fun with Monk, and why is obvious: With just a tiny click of the kaleidoscope, the great one's logic lends itself to abstraction. Graewe and associates run with that notion, deconstructing themes, reconstructing thematic implications, and generally burrowing into the architecture of fantasy. —Jim Macnie

Graewe's impressions are permissive to the point of abstraction. Consider "Evidence," for instance, where any evidence of "Evidence" is evidently inadmissible. Yet, it is both accessible, engaging and even gratifying. —John McDonough

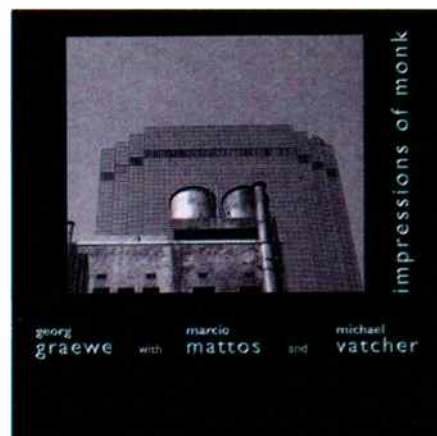
Hook"), no particularly bold Green signature looms either. But this is not new news. Green has been turning out very agile, masterly CDs for a dozen years, though he still tends to blend into the increasingly crowded field of mainstream virtuosos. This CD has a nice glow about it, a mixture of originals and a few semi-standards, all clustered in the medium tempo range. Nothing here is going to sweep anybody off their feet, though "Naturally" probably outswings everything else around.

Green begins and ends with solo performances. "Love You Madly" is percussive and constructed of big block chordal masonry. "Lester Left Town" comes to life in Green's hard-boppish right hand playing against a stridish left full of kerplunking tenths. A third solo piece, "Learnin' The Blues," is bluesy without being a blues.

One of the pleasures of the six trio tunes is hearing Malone toss in a bit of pluck and brio on "Captain Hook" and hearing him squeeze his pitches on "Grooveyard." Green and Malone have an agreeable if subtle rapport that occasionally rises above comping in the accompaniments each provides the other. Listen to Green's response around bar 12 of Malone's solo on "Beg Your Parlan." They may not be making statements of great weight, but it's nice to know they're listening to each other while we listen to them. —John McDonough

**Naturally:** Love You Madly; Naturally; Pittsburgh Brethren; Captain Hook; Grooveyard; Learnin' The Blues; Russell's; Beg Your Parlan, Lester Left Town. (52:36)

**Personnel:** Benny Green, piano; Russell Malone, guitar; Christian McBride, bass.



### Georg Graewe/ Marcio Mattos/ Michael Vatcher

*Impressions Of Monk*

Nuscope 1006

★★★★1/2

German pianist Georg Graewe's *Impressions Of Monk* is a lovely affair, brimming with all manner of prancing, dancing and romancing. Off-kilter, yes, and swinging, too. The main strength to this recording comes from the unexpected ways that Graewe—playing solo or with his trio—embraces Monk's music passionately, casually



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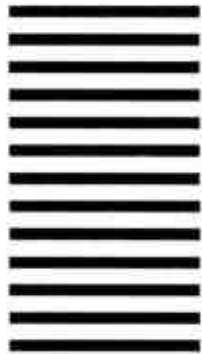
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# DEPT!

and in a variety of styles. Another way to say it, *Impressions Of Monk* demonstrates the leader's ripened grasp of the material, in and outside the mainstream.

At times, there's that push-and-pull that seemed so evident with late-'50s Cecil Taylor (e.g., Taylor's rendering of Monk's "Bemsha Swing"). Here, the move toward "fragmentation" can become a move toward groove, like when the trio, featuring Brazilian bassist Marcio Mattos and American drummer Michael Vatcher, plays every angle imaginable, obscuring or accidentally bumping up against "I Mean You" before falling in together behind some infectious swing.

Tributes to Thelonious Monk, one of those darlings in jazz who appeals to both left and right, seem to have fallen into three categories. There's the Sphere approach, where former Monk sidemen and other mainstreamers approximate his tradition with a form of weathered bebop. Then there's the relatively more abstract tribute that celebrates his genius and access to the unknown; try Anthony Braxton's *Six Monk's Compositions*. Finally, there are the crossovers, like wild & wooly roots rockers NRBQ or the various pop/rock artists assembled for Hal Willner's *That's The Way I Feel Now*, convincing indicators of how Monk's music can translate outside jazz and improvised music circles.

Generally speaking, *Impressions Of Monk* falls into the second category, and yet, is quite special. Apart from the group's heightened sense of interplay, it's the band's approach to Monk that stands out. As Graewe says in the liner notes: "It must be made clear that the trio-improvs were the starting point that allowed us to approach Monk's music, and not the reverse!" Indeed, this album is the second half of a recording session that's already produced the freely improvised *Subsymbolism*, the trio's first release on Nuscope.

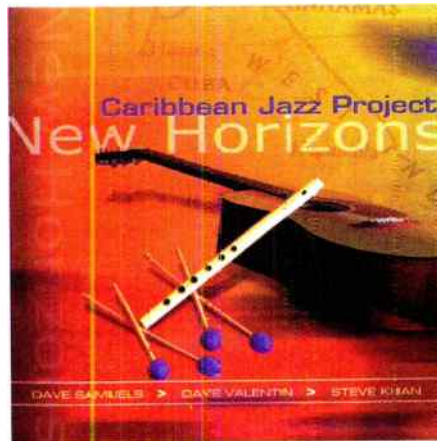
One of the many treats here is the cat-and-mouse quality that emerges from the songs inside the playing, as the trio unravels or develops inside or outside the parameters of Monk's music, the material perhaps serving as signpost more than instruction. Graewe's style, thinner than Monk's yet scampier, can be serene as well. His solo versions of "Brilliant Corners" (both takes) and "Introspection," as well as the trio's rendering of "Light Blue," are, by turns, dreamy, atmospheric and peaceful, with Monk's melodies fairly obscured. On the other hand, there's "Off Minor," one of the album's more straightforward cuts, and one that, with a little imagination, might recall an approach by Keith Jarrett or Kenny Barron.

Like Ellington, Monk's music has been done to death. Once in a blue moon we get a fresh take that helps us revisit a lovely musical giant. In the meantime, we also get better acquainted with three great contemporaries hard at play.

—John Ephland

**Impressions Of Monk:** Brilliant Corners, I Mean You, Crepuscule With Nellie, Trinkle Tinkle, Light Blue, Off Minor, Bye-Ya, Introspection, Coming On The Hudson, Evidence, Work, Ugly Beauty, Brilliant Corners. (70 11)

**Personnel:** Georg Graewe, piano, Marcio Mattos, acoustic bass; Michael Vatcher, drums and zither.



## Caribbean Jazz Project

*New Horizons*  
Concord Picante 4878

★ ★ ★

Vibraphonist and marimba player Dave Samuels has redesigned the Caribbean Jazz Project, and the newfangled edition's first recording is a pleasantly appealing affair. Underappreciated fusion guitarist Steve Khan and Nuyorican flutist Dave Valentin have replaced steel drummer Andy Narell and clarinetist/saxophonist Paquito D'Rivera, and the rhythm section has been revamped as a piano-less unit also absent of a drum kit, with bassist John Benitez joined by conguero Richie Flores and Venezuelan-born timbales specialist Robert Viler. The reborn band is simultaneously lighter and more energetic, serving up a pan-Caribbean rum punch—spiked with South American and Central American ingredients—that's likely to appeal to a broader base of listeners than the jazzier original incarnation of the band.

That's not to say *New Horizons* isn't characterized by smart arrangements and fertile improvisations. Check out the tumbling marimba figure that sets up a peppy version of Dizzy Gillespie's "A Night In Tunisia," opening up into an earthy percussion battle, and the glowing, intricately designed melody of Khan's "Charanga Si, Si," augmented with Spanish call-and-response vocals and the composer's typically adventurous six-string exploration. The guitarist's creep-crawling, moody "Safe And Sound," the set's sole blues tune, is another highlight, as is his opening, percolating "Descarga Canelón," which comes off as a sort of theme song for the group, showcasing the lilting rhythms, mellow, lustrous tonality and spirited soloing that define the collective.

"Ivory Coast," the first of four tunes contributed by the mallet man, is an impressionistic musical portrait of the African locale, complete with the sounds of jungle animals, and Samuels similarly evokes tropical locales on "Rain Forest" and the shimmering "Over The Horizon." He pays tribute to his late father on "Arthur's Dance," a bright, catchy piece that thrives on gently undulating danzon rhythms, nodding to Cal Tjader. The Caribbean Jazz Project, in fact, might be thought of as an updated twist on the bop-meets-Latin outfits led by Tjader and George Shearing four decades ago. It's a distinc-

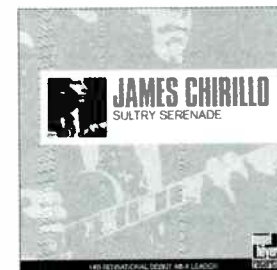
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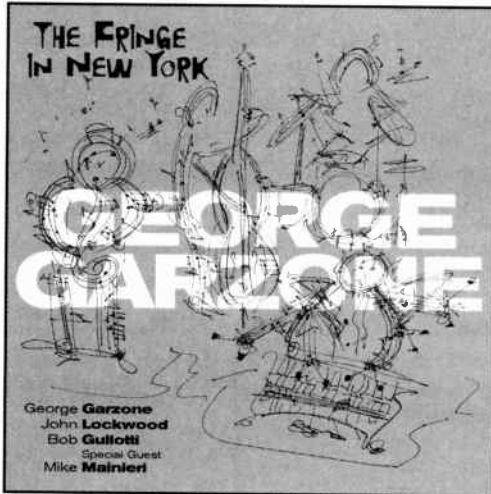
»Marty reminds me of some of the classic big band singers like Rosemary Clooney and Anita O'Day.« *Ron Della Chiesa*  
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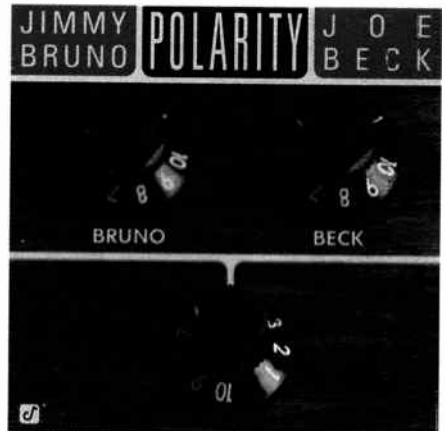
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tive, welcome variation on a familiar approach.  
—Philip Booth

**New Horizons:** Descarga Canelón; Ivory Coast; Rain Forest; Charanga Si, Si; A Night In Tunisia; Moon And Sand; Over The Horizon; Arthur's Dance (Danzón Para Arturo); Safe And Sound (Sano Y Salvo); Rompiendo El Hielo En 2000. (62:32)

**Personnel:** Dave Samuels, vibes and marimba; Dave Valentin, flutes and whistles; Steve Khan, guitar and guiro; John Benitez, electric and baby bass; Richie Flores, congas, bongo and percussion; Robert Vilera, timbal kit, chekere and percussion; Caridad Canelon, background vocals.



### Jimmy Bruno/Joe Beck

Polarity

Co cord 4888

★★★½

**P**olarity is, in many ways, a guitar dream date, yet it eventually becomes a bit too much of a good thing—plectrist wizardry that is dragged down by a certain sameness.

Philadelphia-based Jimmy Bruno's seven-string axe is in the spotlight on all but one track, with New Yorker Joe Beck's alto guitar providing the rhythmic and textural backgrounds. Only on "Tenderly" does Beck step forward for a solo outing.

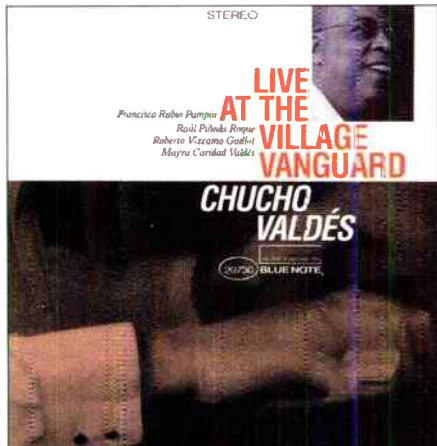
The album starts very nicely, indeed, with a couple of standards showing plenty of Bruno's flash and taste, then hits its peak on his original, the title track. Things drag somewhat on "I've Grown Accustomed To Her Face" and "Eleanor Rigby," then get back on track with "Estaté," "Summertime"—Beck's solo vehicle—and his original "Carioca Blue." It's virtually impossible to mess up "Emily," of course, and the Beck-Bruno version is well conceived. "I Don't Stand A Ghost Of A Chance With You" slumps a bit before the guitarists romp through "Cherokee" and finish on a solid note with "Poem For #15."

The liner notes indicate that Beck and Bruno had not played together before a mid-1999 tribute concert in Pittsburgh for Johnny Smith, although Beck got a 1973 recording date with Buddy Rich that probably should have gone to Bruno, then 19 and a member of Rich's touring band. As a result, Bruno quit Rich's band and says that he held a certain amount of resentment against Beck for some years. They clearly are getting along famously now. —Will Smith

**Polarity:** How Long Has This Been Going On; Lazy Afternoon; Polarity; I've Grown Accustomed To Her Face; Eleanor Rigby; Estaté; Summertime; Tenderly;

Carioca Blue; Emily; I Don't Stand A Ghost Of A Chance With You; Cherokee; Poem For #15. :59:21)

**Personnel:** Jimmy Bruno, seven-string guitar; Joe Beck, alto guitar.



**Chucho Valdés**

*Live At The Village Vanguard*

Blue Note 7243

★★★★★

**B**uilding on his 1991 Blue Note release, *Solo Piano*, which featured two tracks with this rhythmic accompaniment, Chucho Valdés delivers a blistering set of Cuban jazz from New York's famed night spot. Valdés seems particularly inspired in this quartet set-

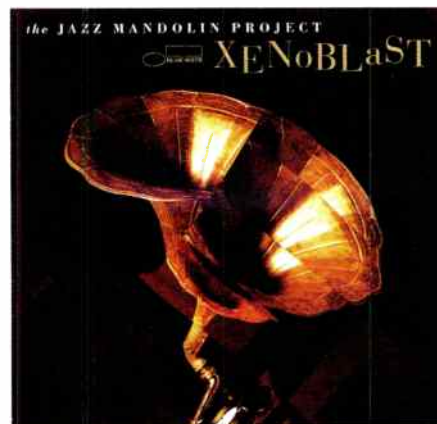
ting, driven by the bata drum rhythms of Roberto Vizcaino Guillot. The group explores all types of jazz and traditional Cuban rhythms and harmonic textures, with an astounding level of musical sophistication.

The power and depth of Valdés' playing has never been more stunning. He throws off a series of amazing flourishes on the gentle "Punto Cubano," combining the chops of Oscar Peterson and the fire of Eddie Palmieri. He turns "My Funny Valentine" into a stirring bossa nova, and knocks the tour de force "To Bud Powell" completely upside down, with drummer Raul Piñeda Roque in very hot pursuit. Valdés is a percussionist too, slamming the piano with his fists on "Como Traigo La Yuca." "Ponle La Clave" features the scary-good percussion section, with Guillot a non-stop rhythm machine on conga and bata drums. Roque is one of the new generation of trapsters who knows no musical boundaries, with influences from Walfredo De Los Reyes to Steve Gadd to Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez, and has a level of musical awareness that gets just plain silly. There's plenty of flash here, but a dazzling amount of substance as well.

—Robin Tolleson

**Live At The Village Vanguard:** Anabis; Son XXI (Para Pia); Punto Cubano; My Funny Valentine; To Bud Powell; Drume Negrita; Como Traigo La Yuca; Ponle La Clave; Encore—Lorraine's Habanera. (63:29)

**Personnel:** Chucho Valdés, piano; Francisco Rubio Pampin, acoustic bass; Raul Piñeda Roque, trap drums; Roberto Vizcaino Guillot, congas, bata drums; Mayra Caridad Valdés, vocals (6).



**Jazz Mandolin Project**

*Xenoblast*

Blue Note 25251

★★★★

**I**t's tempting to ponder the motivations behind the Jazz Mandolin Project's continuing association with superstar jam band Phish. After all, there could be worse routes to career advancement than the adulation of the neo-Dead horde, typically more liberal in their openness to new sounds than other young listeners, and not coincidentally rabidly loyal to their most favored artists. Phish drummer Jon Fishman was on board for the JMP's 1998's engaging live disc, *Tour De Flux*, on Accurate, the success of which helped seal their deal with Blue Note. And

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by fred bouchard jazz

There are singers who shake the walls and demand spotlights, and those who nudge and insinuate by candlelight. These six women have neither big names (yet) nor especially attention-commanding voices, but they do proffer intimate daring and delights.

**Carol Akerson:** *Duke Is The 1* (Baily Boy 0429; 67:51) ★★★★★ With verve and elegance this Boston soprano offers a superb Ellington tribute album. Akerson has it all—diction, warmth, humor and genuine personality—and gives it up in 18 “less equals more” takes, paced and pared to perfection, often just with Jon Wheatley’s trim guitar and John Lockwood’s ubiquitous bass. Her excellent taste shows in shortlisting neglected repertoire (“I Like The Sunrise,” “Paris Blues”), writing fine lyrics for “Johnny Come Lately” and a new piece inspired by “Morning Glory.”

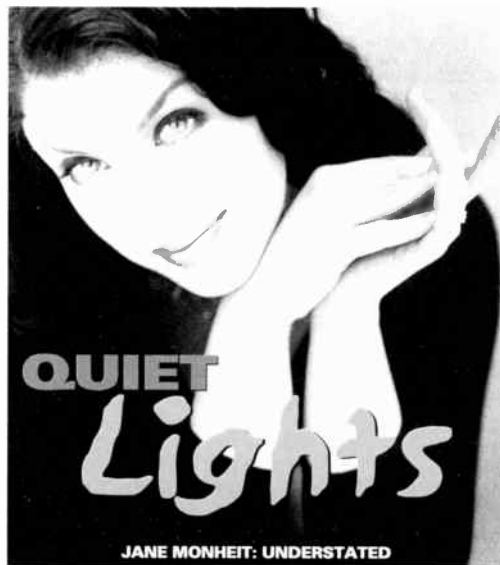
**Jane Monheit:** *Never Never Land* (N-Coded Music NC-4207; 46:21) ★★★½ By far the youngest singer here at 22, Monheit offers a nicely understated debut that bodes well for an ingenue. Her voice is airy, sweet and soft, a little nasal at the high end; yet she can set it on edge, and she’s learned good diction and phrasing. She takes each standard straight from the top with little embellishment; her ending “Detour Ahead” on a flatted 5th is noted as a big deal. Light overdubbing on “Dindi” is a nice touch. She’s intimidated not a whit by the all-star lineup.

**Tierney Sutton:** *Unsung Heroes* (Telarc 83477; 57:25) ★★★½ Sutton’s modest voice insinuates itself into a tune and captures it imaginatively. Her knack for working up clever charts sweeps us through 50 years of solid jazz hits: sly “Recorda Me,” sumptuous “The Peacocks” (wistful alto flute by Gary Foster), lively “Bernie’s Tune” (trumpeter Buddy Childers sits in with savvy), slinky “Speak No Evil,” and “Con Alma,” happily blended with Bach’s “Air” a cappella. Sutton shows a silk ear for texture, a snappy turn of phrase, and no fear over trading fours.

**Mary Pearson:** *You And I* (Arkadia Jazz 71325 53:54) ★★½ Pearson’s rich, cul-

tured voice shines on these intimate tête-à-têtes, nearly all slow duos, with an array of players that includes pianists Lynne Arriale, Fred Hersch and David Lahm. The set is snail-paced but tense and immediate: Her in-your-ear style moves from haunting hymnody on “You and I” to duets with drummer Steve Davis. Pearson keeps her pop/cabaret power pipes under wraps, but the influences seep into her often camp readings and stage-y elocution.

**Claudia Acuña:** *Wind From The South* (Verve 314 543 521; 56:26) ★★★ Chilean singer Acuña’s smoky voice has embers



embedded, and she takes some sharp turns in her melody lines. None too comfortable on the standards (except a lightning “Prelude To A Kiss”), Acuña does better with crossover stuff (“Pure Imagination”) and sounds luminous and inspired on her native material (“Viento Del Sur” and “Gracias A La Vida”).

**Meredith d’Ambrosio:** *Out Of Nowhere* (Sunnyside 1085D; 65:17) ★★★ Blessed with an exquisitely shaded contralto, droll humors, perpetual youth and an amazingly rich repertoire, d’Ambrosio has carved her niche caressing smart originals (“I Will Follow Spring”), rare Tin Pan Alley gems (“Easy Come Easy Go”) and reworked bebop. She brings oodles more experience, yet no less innocence and vulnerability, than Monheit to “My Foolish Heart.” She affords each tune a refreshing rethink: humor surfaces on “On The Bumpy Road To Love” and “Stopping The Clock” with brisk turnarounds and wise support from pianist Lee Musicker. **DB**

Phish six-stringer Trey Anastasio sits in on "Hang Ten," the giddy surf-influenced jam that closes out *Xenoblást*, the JMP's third disc.

Hear JMP leader Jamie Masefield's imaginative, genre-busting approach to playing mandolin, though, for a few minutes, and the Phish connection, even aside from the shared Vermont roots and a bent for spontaneity, makes perfect sense: What creative, improvisation-minded musician wouldn't want to spend time at play in the fields of these ambitious, unclassifiable compositions? Masefield, virtuoso bassist Chris Dahlgren and drummer Ari Hoenig may constitute the world's most creative and most unusual power trio.

Acoustic-electric funk is at the heart of the disc's most urgent tunes, including the effects-spiked title track, the second half of "Double Agent" and portions of "Igor," named for its references to Stravinsky. Celtic folk informs the bouncy melody at the start of "The Milliken Way," which takes its sweet time building to a majestic climax, and "Spiders" amounts to a playful group conversation.

The trio shifts down to quiet balladry on the pensive "Jovan," and the always resourceful Hoenig undergirds "Dromedary" with a series of martial figures, later changing things up with an infectious backbeat. The three go unplugged on "Shaker Hill," portions of which call to mind Pat Metheny, circa the mid '80s. It's just about the only moment on the disc that doesn't come off sounding utterly original.

—Philip Booth

**Xenoblást:** Xenoblást; Double Agent, The Milliken Way, Spiders, Jovan; Dromedary, Shaker Hill, Igor Hang Ten (56:22)

**Personnel:** Jamie Masefield, mandolin, mandola, Chris Dahlgren, acoustic and electric bass, Ari Hoenig, drums (Jumbæk, Trey Anastasio, guitar (9)



King Crimson

★★★★

After 31 years, various personnel changes and an impressive discography, King Crimson resurfaces once again with their eagerly anticipated follow-up to the 1995 release, *Thrak*. Through it all, guitarist Robert Fripp represents the axis of a band that has out-

lasted most of its contemporaries. Now a quartet, with bassist/stick performer Tony Levin and drummer Bill Bruford noticeably absent, this group continues to perform with imperious authority and a heavyweight demeanor.

With the opener, "ProzaKc Blues," the band renders a disfigured futuristic blues-boogie, augmented by guitarist Adrian Belew's electronically altered vocals and sinuous lead soloing. Here, Belew's impish libretto conveys a hazy, strung-out affair with the anti-depressant drug prozac as touch bassist Trey Gunn and drummer Pat Mastelotto hammer out the extensive frameworks and bone-crushing rhythms via their combined multidimensional attack. The band melds stately themes with sizzling crunch chords and complex rhythmic structures on "FraKctured," a reworking of its '70s classic "Fracture," while "Larks Tongue In Aspic" gets yet another supercharged facelift with "Larks Tongue In Aspic-Part IV."

"Heaven And Earth," a so-called bonus track performed by ProjeKct X, Crimson's "alter ego," is all about breezy effects, punchy rhythms and Fripp's otherworldly licks as this exhilarating cosmic joyride reaches its finale.

—Glenn R. Astarita

**The ConstruKction Of Light:** ProzaKc Blues; The ConstruKction Of Light; Into The Frying Pan; FraKctured, The World's My Oyster Soup Kitchen Floor Wax Museum, Lark's Tongue In Aspic-Part IV, Coda I Have A Dream, (ProjeKct X) Heaven And Earth. (58:18)

**Personnel:** Adrian Belew, guitar, vocals; Robert Fripp, guitar, Trey Gunn, bass touch guitar, Pat Mastelotto, drumming

CARLINE RAY  
NOVELLA NELSON  
N. MATHIS' AAJ  
RICKY ALFONSO  
BLANCA ALLEN  
PAULA ATHERTON  
ANN BELMONT  
WARREN BYRD  
JEAN DAVIS  
MARY DIPAOLO  
MELANIE DYER  
SONYA GAYLES  
MICHELLE GREENE  
DELLA GRIFFIN  
BETTY HILLMON  
ROZANNE LEVINE  
VIRGINIA MAYHEW  
BILL LOWE  
MARK SACCOMAN  
CECILIA SMITH  
MIRIAM SULLIVAN  
LYNN TRACEY  
KERSTEN STEVENS  
DEBORAH WEISZ  
MARK WHITECAGE

EMME KEMP  
JUDY LEWIS (Invited)  
DOTTI ANITA TAYLOR  
ANDREA WOLPER  
SAUNDRA FOSTER  
LISA BROWN  
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**Pinetop Perkins: *Back On Top* (Telarc 83489; 54:05) ★★★★★** Since Perkins didn't make his recording debut as a leader until he was 75, it's easy to forgive him for his present prolific output, especially if more of it is like *Back On Top*. The music is mostly acoustic with a laidback, but swinging, groove that allows Perkins room to work on the keyboard, as well as take his time to personalize the vocals. The simple but sincere opening track, Earl Hooker's "Anna Lee" with Corey Harris on steel guitar, is one of the best things Perkins has done yet.

**Koko Taylor: *Royal Blue* (Alligator 4873; 53:08) ★★★★★½** Taylor's first studio album in seven years is a major production number, complete with guest stars and contemporary material. B.B. King joins in on "Blues Hotel," Keb' Mo' adds acoustic guitar and harmonica on "The Man Next Door" and Kenny Wayne Shepherd enlivens a rendition of rocker Melissa Etheridge's "Bring Me Some Water." The interaction of King and Koko is classic stuff, but the most successful guest stint is probably pianist Johnnie Johnson's as he contributes

to-drenched, is used in the service of a gospel-tinged sound somewhere between surreal soul and voodoo blues, as this set of mostly originals enjoyably illustrates. The undeniable highlight is the instrumental remake of Kenny Burrell's "Chitlins Con Carne," although the cover of Joe Liggins' "I Ain't Drunk" which follows isn't far behind.



## Throwin' It Down

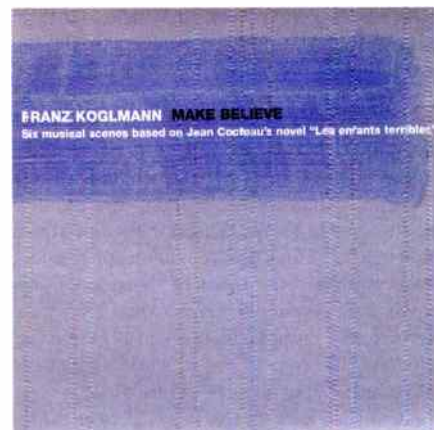
sassy r&b flavoring to three tunes, including the Ray Charles/Percy Mayfield gem "But On The Other Hand."

**Taj Mahal: *Shouting In Key* (Hannibal 1452/1; 55:33) ★★★★★** This live set catches Mahal, backed by his Texas group the Phantom Blues Band, in the spotlight and he shines brightly, reprising and reconfiguring favorites with polished professionalism. It offers an overview of the singer's omnivorous musical appetite, opening with a rousing rendition of Bill Doggett's classic "Honky Tonk" r&b instrumental hit and closing with "Sentidos Dulce" from Taj's international songbook. In between are more traditional folk blues like "Corrina" and "Leaving Trunk," as well as a sublime "Mail Box Blues." Throughout it all Taj remains the jazziest of blues singers, twisting and turning phrases in all directions to alter a song's course without ever losing its destination.

**Robert Ward: *New Role Soul* (Delmark 741; 60:38) ★★★★★½** Ward's trademark tone on guitar, richly evocative and vibra-

**Melvin Taylor: *Bang That Bell* (Evidence 26107-2; 48:38) ★★★** Taylor creatively incorporates pronounced stylistic elements from far beyond the blues world in his explosive guitar solos. Sometimes the approach works wonders and other times you just wonder why he plays that way. Most of it works here; two tracks in particular work very well indeed. Eric Gale adds his guitar to the title track and to a ferociously energetic rendition of Tony Joe White's off-the-wall "Even Trolls Love Rock & Roll."

**Terry Evans: *Walk That Walk* (Telarc 83486; 46:36) ★★★★★½** Evans is actually more of a soulful singer/songwriter in the mode of Bobby Womack than a straight-ahead bluesman but that doesn't make his music any less authentic or enjoyable. The backup singer turned frontman once again has the high-profile assistance of former employer Ry Cooder. Heard on every track, Cooder leads a fine and funky band, but it's the sideshow to Evans' singing. His virtuoso voice easily overcomes occasional weakness in his material to communicate heartfelt emotions. **DB**



### Franz Koglmann

*Make Believe*

Between The Lines 001

★★★★

*An Affair With Strauss*

Between The Lines 006

★★★★

**F**ranz Koglmann's music sounds so distinctive because it is shaped by the polar attractions of West Coast jazz and European classical music. The Austrian trumpeter now serves as artistic director for the new Between The Lines label. His first recordings in six years continue in the vein established by his hatART CDs. Both projects are thematic, drummer-less sessions built around a core unit of the composer's Monoblue Quartet. In combination, they suggest a lighter approach from Koglmann.

With *Make Believe*, Koglmann's quintet depicts "musical scenes" from Jean Cocteau's 1957 novel, *Les Enfants Terribles*, itself inspired by music from Jerome Kern's *Showboat*. Quirky, atmospheric tracks like Kern's "Make Believe" evoke fantasy and dream logic. Longtime collaborator Tony Coe presents an ideal foil for Koglmann's trumpet and flugelhorn. On tenor sax and clarinet, Coe plays with warmth and color, offsetting Koglmann's dry reserve. The composer properly calls this session "open music for closed spaces," as the musicians interact and solo in a spacious environment.

Peter Herbert's bass and Brad Shepik's guitar barely ground the wistful melodies of "Blut (Lullaby)" and "Eye, Ear, Nose." Shepik also acts a trickster, conjuring up odd guitar sounds with an emphasis on effects. His squalls and smears gleefully subvert the brooding "Lotrecht In Die Tiefe."

This music was meant to be heard in conjunction with Cocteau's novel, and sounds somewhat disjointed without that context. As always, Koglmann uses classic jazz sources (such as Paul Whiteman with Bix Beiderbecke) for color and inspiration. *Make Believe* departs from the austerity and rigor that sometimes restrain the composer's melodies.

*An Affair With Strauss* was commissioned for the centenary of the death of another Viennese composer, Johann Strauss. The improbable pairing of Koglmann with the king of waltzes yields some of the trumpeter's lightest, but most entertaining compositions. Waltzes operate as a low-



level, perhaps subliminal influence, except for Koglmann's clever, playful arrangement of Richard Rodgers' "Lover." This deadpan version emulates the style of Strauss, featuring Coe's piping clarinet stating a waltz theme in opposition to Koglmann's long tones. One would sooner expect such frivolity from Willem Breuker or Carla Bley. "A Metropolitan Affair" and "Out Of Strauss" project an atmosphere of elegant yearning, featuring breathy, robust tenor sax solos from Coe. The reed player also contributes the gentle, waltz-like "Dear Little Pipistrelle" as well as a tongue-in-cheek vocal on "Good Night Vienna." —*Jon Andrews*

**Make Believe:** Make Believe; Lotrecht In Die Tiefe, L'Écrevisse; Interlude; Rue Montmartre, Eye, Ear, Nose; Der Vogel; Blut (Lullaby). (46:11)

**Personnel:** Franz Koglmann, trumpet, flugelhorn; Tony Coe, clarinet, bass clarinet, tenor saxophone; Tom Varner, French horn; Brad Shepik, guitar; Peter Herbert, bass.

**An Affair With Strauss:** A Metropolitan Affair, Next To Nothing—A Non Affair; An Atypical Affair, Sauve Qui Peut (Vienne); Dear Little Pipistrelle, Lover, Out Of Strauss; Good Night Vienna. (46:03)

**Personnel:** Franz Koglmann, trumpet, flugelhorn; Tony Coe, clarinet, tenor saxophone, vocals; Burkhard Stangl, guitar; Peter Herbert, bass

horn with the finesse of a seasoned artist. On *Still Waters*, his pure round sound conveys yearning sentiment, and occasionally, like on "Kind Folk," his thoughtful journeys are charged with a sudden bolt of lightning. And Brian Dickinson, on piano, conveys genuine passion in his solos, like in the opening track, "The Forks." But as an accompanist, he doesn't give Wheeler much to work with. His gentle ebb and flow is attractive at first, but it has a new-agey predictability to it, and as one song blends into the next, one gets a nagging sense of déjà vu. Well-crafted but one-dimensional, *Still Waters* sounds pleasant but doesn't run especially deep.

On *Expressions*, pianist Richie Beirach plays a role more engaged than that of accompanist. If anything, he's calling the shots. On "Nefertiti," for example, he throws so many ideas between the nooks and crannies of Henrik Frisk's sax phrases that it comes across more as a collaboration than as a simple sax solo over piano chords. On another Wayne Shorter song, "Paraphernalia," Beirach steps up with an electrifying solo of his own.

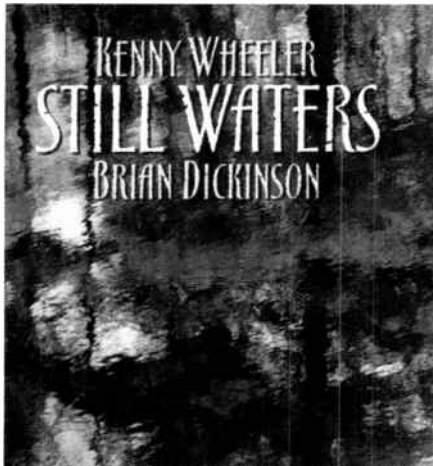
The disc shares the quiet aura of *Still Waters*, but this duet delivers more drama with varied arrangements, intelligent interaction and a plastic use of time. Besides the Shorter covers and a few originals, they tackle a Gary Peacock composition ("Moor") and end, blessedly, with two rarely covered John Coltrane compositions, "Transition" and "Expression." Frisk doesn't blow with Coltrane's incendiary fury, but the influence is plain all the same, especially in the way he takes a theme and runs with its many harmonic and rhythmic permutations. His subdued take on "Expression" casts a new light on the composition, reminding us that despite the inaccessibility of Coltrane's later work, he could still pen a magnificent melody. —*John Janowiak*

**Still Waters:** The Forks; Still Waters; Kind Folk; Remembrance (for M.P.); Winter Suite; Spring Sprung In, Phrase One, Springs Eternal; Gentle Piece. (55:40)

**Personnel:** Kenny Wheeler, flugelhorn; Brian Dickinson, piano.

**Expressions:** Nefertiti; Rectilinear; Circle, Chain, Mirror; Paraphernalia; The Invention of Solitude; Moor; Transition; Expression. (52:56)

**Personnel:** Henrik Frisk, saxophones; Richie Beirach, piano



Kenny Wheeler/  
Brian Dickinson

S W

★★½

Henrik Frisk/  
Richie Beirach Duo

E T

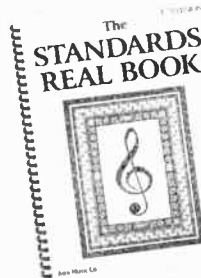
★★★½

There's an inherent appeal to a piano-horn duet. Free from clutter, the format tends to frame solos in a clear light before a tranquil backdrop, allowing instrumentalists to express themselves with a degree of subtlety that might be lost in the hullabaloo of a larger ensemble. There are drawbacks, too. The duet lends itself to self-indulgent noodling, and without sufficient variation, it can result in a feeling of wishy-washy uniformity.

Kenny Wheeler, always the careful sculptor of pristine tones, continues to play his flugel-

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**Darrell Grant**  
*Smokin' Java*  
Lair Hill 001

★★★★

In 1997, pianist/composer Darrell Grant moved from New York to Oregon to accept a professorship at Portland State University. *Smokin' Java*, his fourth recording as a leader, is an ambitious work of multimedia. It offers a 24-page liner booklet with a short story written by Grant. The story portrays a day in the life of Langston—like Grant, a pianist and transplanted New Yorker—who ambles around Portland's Old Town soaking up local color, rain and espresso. The booklet is illustrated with Darcy Dziedzic's evocative color photos of Portland people and places.

Internal evidence suggests that the words and pictures were imposed on the music after the fact. *Smokin' Java* was recorded, not in Portland, but at the Little Theater in Rochester, N.Y., in 1996, before Grant moved west. Some of the songs in the program (like Gordon Jenkins' "Goodbye" and Joe Locke's "Slander") require some stretching to tie them into the story line.

Yet it works. Grant's rendering of one man's love affair with a city has genuine warmth and charm, and you willingly suspend disbelief to take in *Smokin' Java* as a unified whole. The music wins you over first. Grant's piano personality is percussive yet lyrical, expansive yet quick-witted, and he sweeps you up in his self-perpetuating momentum. His quintet features Locke on vibes and Donald Harrison on alto saxophone. The piano-vibes-alto ensemble sound is trebly and dense, but drummer Brian Blade whips air into the mix and keeps everything crisp.

Locke is a rich, compelling voice throughout, tumbling and wheeling headlong through the fast pieces like "If I Should Lose You." On ballads like "Goodbye," Locke patiently probes for feeling and crystallizes mood, interweaving with Grant in a tapestry of poignance.

Harrison, on the other hand, while he always plays hard, relies too much on stock devices. On "Little Jimmy Fiddler" (about a patriarchal Portland-area bassist, perhaps Leroy Vinnegar), his repetitive figures dissipate tension. On "Slander" (allegedly about a Portland politician), his resolutions are predictable, his trills unattractive.

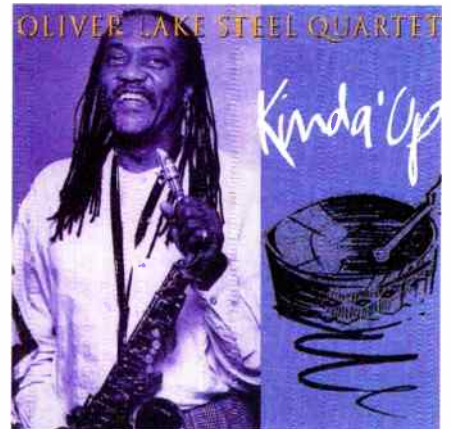
But Harrison is fine in the ensembles, and besides, this album is not about individual

moments. Its music and words and pictures create a single revelation about the act of opening oneself to community. That Grant even tries it says much about his nerve. That he succeeds makes *Smokin' Java* a uniquely complete jazz experience.

—Thomas Conrad

**Smokin' Java:** Little Jimmy Fiddler, If I Should Lose You; You Must Believe In Spring, Spring Skylight, Goodbye, Quiet Times, Slander; *Smokin' Java* (63:26)

**Personnel:** Darrell Grant, piano; Joe Locke, vibraphone; Donald Harrison, alto saxophone; Bob Stata, acoustic bass; Brian Blade, drums.



**Oliver Lake Steel Quartet**  
*Kinda' Up*  
Justin Time 136

★★★

Oliver Lake's affinity for Caribbean dance music, well-documented in his '80s group Jump Up, continues in this fun but flawed experiment with the excellent steel pan improviser Lyndon Achee. Though Lake and Achee fashion some fetching blends and catchy melodies, the quartet's bare-bones instrumentation—sax, pans, bass and drums—cries out for something in the middle (guitar? keyboard? a cello pan?). The result is a tinny-sounding album, with Reginald Washington's electric bass turned up too high in the mix, perhaps to compensate.

At its best, the band creates a variety of intriguingly woven, four-way, interlocking patterns—with the pan and bass alternately filling melodic, harmonic and rhythmic roles. The title tune lays a samba beat over one of those peaceful, two-chord modal vamps Pharoah Sanders is famous for; a second line-ish backbeat infects a funk treatment of Sonny Simmons' "Land Of The Freaks"; Lake's "Cloth," inspired by the patched-togetherness of one of his wife's quilts, is a snare-driven march, with the pan playing an interesting cross-rhythm. Mingus' "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" is delivered with an attractive, 12/8 triplet feel, "Le Sport Suite" drives along in 7/4.

Though Lake has some intonation problems on soprano, his gold-lacquered tone, sudden shifts of register and the "just-thought-of-it" spontaneity of his ideas are at the usual brilliant level. His interlude on "Cloth," with only drummer Pheeroan AkLaff behind him, is spectacular. Achee solos with aggressive speed and grace, particularly on "Lonnie's Lament." Washington's

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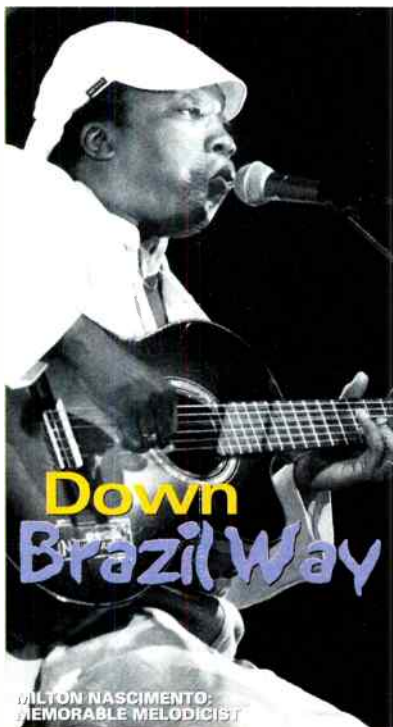
**B**razilian music and mainstream jazz. The two converged with mighty force in the 1950s, and both have never been the same since. This delightful mish-mash of instrumentals and (mostly) vocals, spanning the years 1962–1976, indicates there was a new confidence among Brazilian artists as they composed and played their music, sometimes alongside jazz musicians but usually with each other.

**Tamba 4: *We And The Sea* (A&M/Verve 543 483; 33:50) ★★★★★** This Brazilian group gives us the most varied and unexpected set. The vocal tunes border on standard South of the Border pop fare, but then they turn around and create extended instrumentals that combine the zest of Latin, a true flair for composition and novel arrangements, and that sound of surprise that only jazz can bring. Recorded in 1967, these four Brazilian musicians brought a new vitality to a genre that risked being typecast.

**Luis Bonfá: *Plays And Sings Bossa Nova* (Verve 543 378; 35:47) ★★★** Guitarist Bonfá—perhaps best known for his “Manha De Carnaval”—is a quiet, less dramatic composer/player/vocalist than a number of his more famous Brazilian peers. This ‘62 date features multi-instrumentalist Oscar Castro-Neves in a trio setting for half, and Lalo Schifrin’s orchestrations for the other half. Bonfá’s bossa nova is subtle, the playing offering few fireworks. Eleven of the 13 tracks are his, including the peppy “Samba De Duas Notas (Two Note Samba),” reminiscent of Jobim.

**Edu Lobo: *Sergio Mendes Presents Lobo* (A&M/Verve 543 486; 33:04)**

★★★½ It’s 1970, and the second Brazilian wave is hitting. Tropicalia vocalist/guitarist conductor Edu Lobo paves the way for Milton Nascimento with his infectious, perky, wordless vocals and imaginative songwriting. Keyboardist Hermeto Pascoal is on board, along with guitarist Castro-Neves and percussionist Airtó. The fun, with Lobo singing in English as well as Portuguese, includes a novel take on the Beatles’ “Hey Jude.”



**Sergio Mendes & Brasil '66: *Look Around* (A&M/Verve 543 515; 30:35) ★★★½** All the rage among ‘60s jet-setters, this band featured Mendes’ airtight vocal and instrumental arrangements, this time with a heavily stacked Marilyn/Alan Bergman program and

such pop fare as the Beatles’ “With A Little Help From My Friends.” *Look Around* brings Broadway, a highly accomplished studio jazz aesthetic and an almost suffocating sense of perfection to 10 numbers recorded in 1967. A precursor to smooth jazz, but with an edge. A skimpy half-hour in length.

**Milton Nascimento: *Milton* (A&M/Verve 543 485; 43:21) ★★★★★½** Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock fall under Brazilian vocalist/guitarist Nascimento’s spell as he plays the enchanter, aided by Latin cohorts Airtó, keyboardist Hugo Fattoruso and guitarist Toninho Horta. His memorable melodies breathe innocence and have become a currency all their own over the years. With wordless vocals and songs sung in Portuguese or English—the ecstasy of “Cravo E Canela,” the pop anthem “Nothing Will Be As It Was,” the haunting “Chamada”—Nascimento’s baritone, vibrato and falsetto included, is a marvel to behold, sensuous yet simple, polished yet very close to his folk roots.

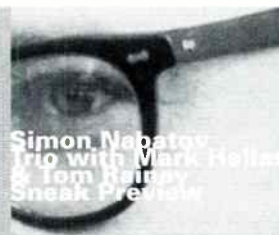
**Antonio Carlos Jobim: *Tide* (A&M/Verve 543 500; 57:17) ★★★½** *Tide* indicates an artist straddling the fence between a maker of cocktail lounge kitsch and profound composer of American song. Recorded in 1970 with an extended ensemble of Latin and jazz musicians, keyboardist/guitarist Jobim, with arranger Eumir Deodato, walks the fine line in this all-instrumental program between the played-to-death “Girl From Ipanema” (a nice reorchestration) and various takes of the bossa nova workout “Tema Jazz,” showcasing the artistry of flutist Hermeto Pascoal, and reed players Joe Farrell and Jerry Dodgion. **DB**



I think of myself as a jazz player, and my music as a natural extension of the jazz tradition. What I’m doing is completely free improvisation (“composing in real time”) with nothing predetermined. I’ve had a lot of experience playing many different kinds of music and several different instruments, and since I tend not to waste anything, it all shows up somewhere in the music I’m playing now. *Richard Grossman*



Constellations is a new set of songs written and arranged for the trio. It was recorded in mid tour, and so has a different, perhaps more live, character... Many thanks go to Brad and Jim for their dedication and commitment to the music. *Dave Douglas*



Nabatov is not only a pianist, as the pieces on this CD show. Thus, one is tempted to speak about crossing the borders between genres. But one must also ask, which borders are these, because Simon Nabatov has grown up with several different musical forms; he experienced classical music and jazz at the same time, and has come to love both.

The spirits of Art Tatum, Earl Hines, Nat Cole, Errol Garner, Teddy Wilson and Bud Powell run through the stylings of the top-shelf piano men featured on recent offerings from the Fantasy Records treasure chest.

**Hank Jones: *Ain't Misbehavin'* (Galaxy OJCCD-1027; 37:39) ★★½** An imaginative tribute to Fats Waller from 1978, Jones plays with crisp flair and keen wit; on unsurpassable trio versions of "Lounging At The Waldorf," "The Joint Is Jumpin'" and "Squeeze Me," bassist Richard Davis walks the walk and solos with invention, while trapsetter Roy Haynes is spotted on with impeccable snap-crackle dynamics. Too bad the whole thing wasn't a trio; Bill Holman's three clever sextet charts become entropic when Jones isn't front-of-stage.

**Jaki Byard: *On The Spot* (Prestige OJCCD-1031; 39:48) ★★★** Though sporadic, this brisk 1967 date captures the essence of the late Jaki Byard, for whom the word "eclectic" could have been invented. He traverses the timeline, interpreting stride Jelly Roll Morton and late modern with comprehensive, pan-stylistic sensibility. A gigging alto saxophonist in the '40s, Byard blows his horn on "Second Balcony Jump," sounding like a cross between post-graduate Bird and Ornette Coleman, followed by cogent Jimmy Owens, who joins the mix on four tunes. Unfortunately, Paul Chambers and Billy Higgins never sound in sync, creating a disjunctive ambiance.

**Red Garland Trio: *It's A Blue World* (Prestige OJCCD-1028; 39:19) ★★½** Featuring bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Arthur Taylor, the trio recorded this superb recital on the same day they functioned as John Coltrane's rhythm section for his Prestige masterpiece *Soultrane*. In keeping with the title, the tempos stay primarily at the slow-groove to medium-swing zone that was Garland's meat on a program of five songbook selections. The pianist feels the flow, while Chambers plays unbelievably;

any of his horn-like solos, which emerge organically from the trio dialogue, could be models for aspiring bassmen.

**Junior Mance Trio: *Happy Time* (Jazzland OJCCD-1029; 43:17) ★★★★★** An early prototype of the program that Junior Mance has turned into a signature over the past 40 years: Jazz standards that



reference stride, big bands and bop; the occasional ballad; and primarily swinging originals with a church-blues tinge. The formula worked in 1962, as it does now; populist but never dumbing-down, Chicago-born Mance wields his considerable technique, harmonic prowess and blues sensibility to the service of the song.

**Tommy Flanagan Trio: *Overseas* (Prestige OJCCD-1033; 53:50) ★★½** An ebullient, nicely paced 1957 session—recorded by Sweden's Metronome Records when Flanagan, Wilbur Little and Elvin Jones, then J.J. Johnson's rhythm section, were passing through on tour—that has appeared in several incarnations. Bandstand familiarity undoubtedly is responsible for the open feel and intuitive interplay that mark the proceedings.

**Barry Harris: *Magnificent!* (Prestige OJCCD-1026; 39:16) ★★★★★** An energetic late-1969 date featuring Harris with Ron Carter and Leroy Williams, his drummer-of-choice ever since. A surging "Bean And The Boys," dedicated to Coleman Hawkins, kicks things off; the trio explores Bird ("Ah-Leu-Cha," "Dexterity"), an iconic jukebox ballad ("These Foolish Things") and several catchy Harris originals. **DB**

no slouch, either, dancing over the strings like Jamaladeen Tacuma on "Brooke Rap," playing some lovely chordal backup on "Pork Pie" and nicely popping the funk on "Socket." But as an ensemble player, he sounds virtually oblivious to the band on "Yes You Broke" and "Le Sport Suite," neither supporting nor blending.

The album has a happy ending, one of Oliver's delicious raps ("What if you floated, just by flapping your arms? What if you were happy every day?"), leaving a nice aftertaste of the clipped, angular melodies and crisp rhythms that have gone before. But overall, this pan needs to be cured a little longer on the stove.

—Paul de Barros

**Kinda' Up:** Kinda' Up; Land Of The Freaks; Cloth; Yes, You Broke: Le Sport Suite; Goodbye Pork Pie Hat; Socket; Lonnie's Lament; Brooke Rap. (57:35)

**Personnel:** Oliver Lake, alto and soprano saxophones; Pheeroan AkLaff, drums; Lyndon Achee, steel drums; Reginald Washington, electric bass.

## John Tchicai

*John Tchicai's Infinitesimal Flash*

Buzz 76010

★★★



## David S. Ware

*Surrendered*

Columbia 63816

★★★½

The biggest carp against the free jazz revival of the '90s was that those listeners old enough to appreciate the historical context thought they had heard it all before. "Yeah, Charles Gayle can blow," they'd say, "but I saw Shepp and Trane together." The aural onslaught unleashed by Gayle or David S. Ware could be bracing, but where do you go from overdrive? Sometimes you need to take those tenors off the autobahn, and hit some curving mountain roads.

At 64, John Tchicai has red-lined his sax a few times, most effectively in tandem with Shepp in the New York Contemporary Five. These days, he prefers to cruise at a more leisurely pace, snaking through compositions with breathy precision. Francis Wong provides an effective shadow, matching Tchicai move for move on both tenor and flute.

Wong contributes four pieces, including his

interpretation of the traditional "Autumn Moon," which juxtaposes Adam Lane's walking bass line against the song's Asian scale. But the block programming of Wong's similar-sounding compositions weighs down the front half of this recording, and the tension-building devices he relies on leaves one longing for a release that never comes.

Tchicai's "The Boat Is Ready" and "Decide For Yourself" are more effective duet vehicles. Mat Marucci dominates the latter with a hard-driving rhythm, punctuated by Lane's stabbing ostinato pattern and repeated sax phrases.

"Kippiology" by Tchicai's old partner, Johnny Dyani, is rougher terrain, and the tenors chase each other raucously over and around Marucci's roiling drums. The set takes a sharp left turn with three pieces that use narration as an added lyrical or percussive device. Tchicai's Danish verse on "Og Her Ligger Vi Saal"—alternately spoken, chanted and sung—mirrors his saxophone attack, but the Chinese samples on "Space Without Time" and the electronically processed tone poem on the title piece are diversions rather than complements.

Listeners who only discovered Ware when he formed his powerful quartet might've been excused for thinking that he had only one speed. On *Surrendered* he covers a wider range of tempo and emotion than on any previous quartet recording, and bandmates Matthew Shipp and William Parker respond by showing why they're one of the best contemporary piano/bass combinations around. They're not bad post-modern mimics, either.

Their take on Charles Lloyd's "Sweet Georgia Bright" makes ideal Blindfold Test material, with Shipp and Parker masquerading as neo-boppers, while their accompaniment on Beaver Harris' "African Drums" is a sonic ringer for Tyner and Garrison. Shipp and Parker are also masters of minimalism—witness the ringing dark chords and ostinato underpinning of the title song or the chiming motif of "Glorified Calypso."

As for Ware, he moves through *Surrendered* like a defensive tackle who's just been handed the ball and asked to play halfback. Like Jackie Gleason, he moves well for a big man. He slides through "Sweet Georgia Brown" effortlessly, and you can hear the joy he takes in shaping his big, brawny sound on "Peace Celestial." Occasionally, his rough slabs of sound create jarring contrasts, as in the pretty melody of "Glorified Calypso," but Ware is generally deft enough to use his tonal texture for good effect. "Theme Of Ages" moves the quartet closer to familiar ground, with Ware applying his scorching tone to a simple eight-note devotional theme.

—James Hale

**John Tchicai's *Infinisimal Flash*:** Kippiology; Autumn Moon; Alishan; Melvin Truss; Persistence; The Boat Is Ready; Decide For Yourself; Space Without Time; Og Her Ligger Vi Saal; T's Groove; *Infinisimal Flash*. (68:22)

**Personnel:** John Tchicai, tenor and soprano saxophones, flute, voice; Francis Wong, tenor saxophone, flute; Adam Lane, bass; Mat Marucci, drums, percussion.

***Surrendered*:** Peace Celestial; Sweet Georgia Bright; Theme Of Ages; *Surrendered*; *Glorified Calypso*; African Drums. (52:30)

**Personnel:** David S. Ware, tenor saxophone, Matthew Shipp, piano; William Parker, bass; Guillermo E. Brown, drums.



Monty Alexander  
*Monty Meets Sly And Robbie*  
Telarc Jazz 83494

★ ★ ★

Monty Alexander hooks up with drummer Sly Dunbar and bassist Robbie Shakespeare, the best-known and most prolific rhythm section from the pianist's native Jamaica, and the results are friendly and accessible, if occasionally a little frustrating. The combination of the leader's heavy chops and the riddim-intensive tremor groove of the celebrated studio duo promises something of a bold cross-cultural exploration, maybe an edgier version of the creative collision of jazz and reggae heard on last year's *Stir It Up*. That doesn't happen.

Instead, we get a decidedly lighter concoction, a sure source for dance-club remixes if less than a perfect fit with mainstream jazz audiences. It's not quite as edgy as it might have been, and a tad too smooth, thanks in part to rather routine horn arrangements and the synthetic feel of much of the music. Still, one has to admire—and move to—the interlocking layers of syncopated rhythms that define this disc from the get-go, with a funky, chunky take on Herbie Hancock's classic "Chameleon." It's a tricky symphony of acoustic, electric and electronic riffs, clicks and squiggles, with Alexander's sophisticated improvisation straddling the infectious rhythms. The stripped-down vibe of dub reggae is at the heart of "Monty's Groove," and its composer slips into slinky blues for "(Do The) Kool Step."

Alexander's originals and Hancock's '70s funk favorite are mixed with r&b and soul-jazz tunes from the late '50s and '60s: "Soulful Strut," Ramsey Lewis' "The In Crowd" and the Stylistics' "People Make The World Go 'Round" are revisited with versions that are laid back to the extreme, verging dangerously close to easy listening. Lee Morgan's "Sidewinder," with Shakespeare's rubbery line sitting precisely in Dunbar's pocket, fares better.

—Philip Booth

***Monty Meets Sly And Robbie*:** Chameleon; Monty's Groove; Soulful Strut; The In Crowd; Sidewinder; People Make The World Go 'Round; (Do The) Kool Step; Moanin'; Mercy Mercy Mercy; Hot Milk. (51:24)

**Personnel:** Monty Alexander, piano, melodica; Sly Dunbar, drums, programming; Robbie Shakespeare, bass; Handel Tucker, additional keyboards; Desmond Jones, drum fills; Jay Davison, saxophone; Steve Jankowski, trumpet.

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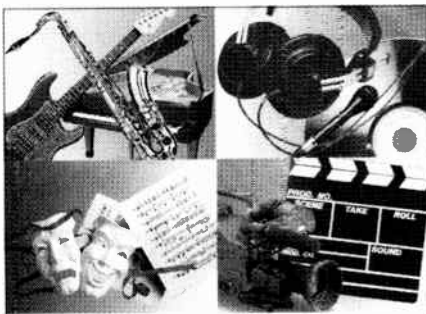


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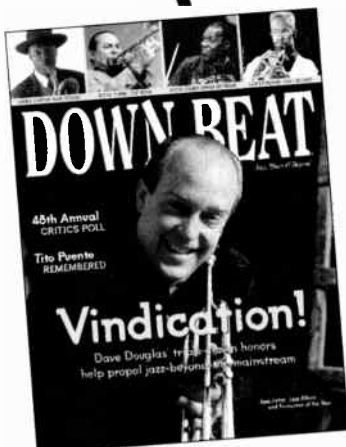
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With his composition "Giant Steps," saxophonist John Coltrane set a classic example for the use of multitonic changes, giving soloists and writers a feast of ideas for developing interesting chord progressions to use for improvisations and compositions. Yet the song is only a starting point for how composers may develop and explore the possibilities of multitonic changes.

One key to the full understanding of mul-

(E $\flat$ -G $\flat$ -A-C) to form the progression at the song's bridge—E $\flat$  maj7 (b5)-D $\flat$ 7-G $\flat$  maj7-E7-Amaj7-G7-Cmaj7. A dominant V7 chord precedes each chord taken from the diminished 7th tetrad's note

Multitonic changes using note groups of limited transposition are also extremely useful for reharmonizing standards where static chord progressions occur. The eight-bar bridge in "Stella By Starlight," for exam-

## Note Groups of Limited Transposition: A Key To Unlocking Multitonic Change Possibilities

titonic changes is the knowledge of grouped notes of limited transposition. In "Giant Steps," Coltrane based the song's chord progressions on the notes of descending and ascending E $\flat$  (E $\flat$ -G-B) and B (B-D $\sharp$ /E $\flat$ -G) augmented triads. Augmented triads are symmetrical groups of notes that divide an octave into three equal parts (three major third intervals). Consequently, there are only four augmented triads—D $\sharp$ /E $\flat$ , E, F and F $\sharp$ /G $\flat$  (or G, G $\sharp$ /A $\flat$ , A and A $\sharp$ /B $\flat$ ; or B, C, C $\sharp$ /D $\flat$  and D)—because augmented triads repeat themselves every major third interval. So an augmented triad is a symmetrical group of three notes that is limited to transposition—in other words it may be transposed only four times before it starts repeating itself.

Taking this one step further, consider four-note symmetrical groups of limited transposition. A diminished tetrad (1, b3, b5, 6) is limited to three possibilities of transposition. There are only two other four-note groupings that are symmetrical groups of limited transposition—1 $\flat$ 2 $\flat$ 5-5 (1 $\flat$ 4 $\flat$ 5-7 in inversion) and 1-2 $\flat$ 5 $\flat$ 6 (1-3 $\flat$ 5 $\flat$ 7 in inversion). Both of these groups are limited to six possibilities of transposition.

Using these note groups of limited transposition, one may develop multitonic changes for compositions in much the same way that Coltrane used the augmented triads for "Giant Steps."

Consider Joe Lovano's "Sleepy Giant" from his CD *Village Rhythm* (Soul Note). He uses the notes of an E $\flat$  diminished tetrad



ple, consists of four chords—G $\sharp$ , Cm, A $\flat$ 7 and B $\flat$  maj7—with each chord being played for two measures. In a reharmonization of the bridge, the first four bars of the bridge are based on a descending 1 $\flat$ 2 $\flat$ 5-5 note group in Cm, yielding a chord progression that moves from Gmaj-D $\flat$ 7-G $\flat$  maj7-A $\flat$ 7-D $\flat$  maj7-G7-Cm7. The second four bars of the bridge are composed of a descending 1-3 $\flat$ 5 $\flat$ 7 note group (inverted 1-2 $\flat$ 5 $\flat$ 6) in B $\flat$ , yielding a chord progression that moves from A $\flat$  maj7-B7-Emaj7-A7-Dmaj7-F7-B $\flat$  maj7.

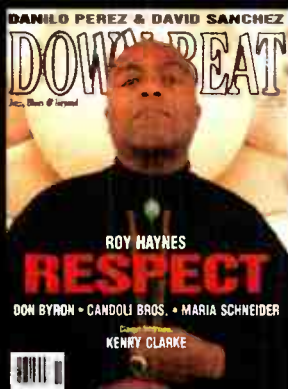
Guitarist **Masaya Yamaguchi** received an M.A. in Jazz Performance from the City College of New York. He is the author of *The Complete Thesaurus Of Musical Scales* (Charles Colin Publications). E-mail him at coltrane\_10025@yahoo.com.

by masaya yamaguchi

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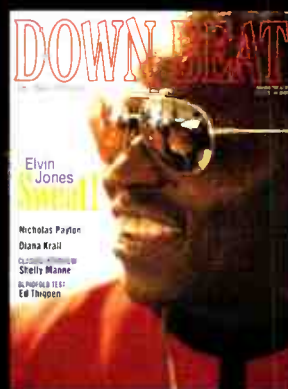
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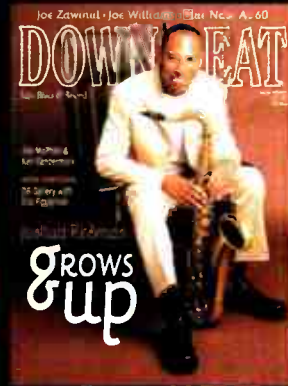
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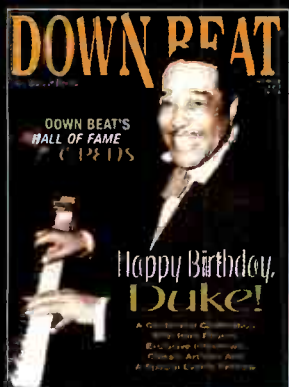
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## SUPERSCOPE CD PLAYERS & SOUND SYSTEMS: DEFINITIVE PRACTICE & LEARNING TOOLS

The most helpful gear for practicing or transcribing music to emerge in recent years is Superscope's new line of CD players and sound systems. Available as the PSD230 and PSD220 portable CD players and PAC770 and PAC750 sound systems, Superscope's units are capable of increasing or decreasing the tempo of a song on CD without affecting the pitch, and changing the key without affecting the tempo. Add to that the ability to loop a segment of music infinitely for repeated listening and practicing, and you have what could be considered the definitive practice tool.

That's only the beginning. I tested the "big daddy" of the line, the PAC770, and found its features to be incredibly helpful for taping solos over the changes from a playalong CD and listening back to what I played, thanks to the unit's built-in cassette player and mixer.

Based on the same kind of concept behind Superscope's cassette tape players, which can slow a tape down to one octave below original pitch but leave the sound a bit murky, the CD players and sound systems (via digital technology) can reduce a CD's tempo down to half speed, without changing the pitch at all and leaving the sound extremely clear and easy to hear. Need to learn every note in Coltrane's "Giant Steps" solo, with the proper phrasing? No problem. Just pop the CD in, press play, press the tempo down button to the tempo where you want it and start learning. (For those who are masochists, crank the tempo up to double time.) Need to learn "Giant Steps" in every key? Press the key buttons up or down without changing the tempo.

The looping feature makes it great for

working on smaller parts of a song or solo, whether a two-bar phrase or an A section, by continually repeating a loop that is programmed by selecting a start and end point with the touch of a button. This helps if there's a particularly knotty lick that one might be trying to transcribe or learn. You can keep the lick repeating over and over without having to take your hands from the

may reduce the vocal track on a CD and sing along with the CD by plugging a mic into one of the four inputs, while recording the performance to cassette.

With the ability to slow down tempos without changing keys, the PAC770 is also the perfect tool for transcribing from CD. And the digital sound won't have you straining to hear the notes.



SUPERSCOPE PAC770

instrument to forward or review the CD.

The PAC770 has the added benefit of a built-in cassette player/recorder as well as a mixer. I plugged my guitar into one of the unit's four mic/line inputs and put in a playalong CD with a rhythm section playing standards on it. I then recorded myself to cassette playing along with the CD at a decreased tempo and listened back. I could hear all the good licks I played while wincing at the clams. It really gave me the chance to hear immediately how my playing sounded with a rhythm section. It makes a great unit for improv class teachers who may not have access to a good rhythm section for their students to play with and hear themselves. The PAC770 also incorporates a built-in power amplifier with hookups for different types of speakers, making it easy to use in a live situation, such as a student recital where a rhythm section may not be available.

The Superscope units aren't just for instrumentalists either. With the PAC770, vocalists

The PAC770 is a rather large unit, and being the most feature-laden, it is higher-priced than the PSD230 and PSD220, so it is probably more suitable for classroom usage. (The PAC750 is the same thing as the PAC770 without the power amp.) The PSD230 and PSD220 are portable models and are probably more affordable for students or individual players. However, they don't include an onboard cassette player recorder or onboard mixer. The PSD230 does feature one mic/line input, key transposition control, vocal reduction, fine tune adjustment and a mix accompaniment control, in addition to the CD tempo control and looping (both of which are also available on the PSD220).

Without a doubt, Superscope's new CD players and sound systems are the perfect tool for transcribing, learning and playing along with music on CDs.

—Dave Zaworski



## WEBER WG-57, WG-150 PIANOS: TIME-TESTED DESIGN

Don't be fooled by its modern-sounding name: Weber's WG-57 contemporary grand piano incorporates time-tested design elements with good old-fashioned playability.



The first thing you'll notice when you play the 5'7" WG-57 is its highly defined, well-timed attack. It responds cleanly and consistently through all registers, providing an even and stable feel. The WG-57's action is on the heavy side; the instrument responds best when played with authority.

The WG-57 has a dark, mellow tone that resonates deepest in the instrument's low end. Despite the strong attack, tones never twang or scatter, but ring out in a gently muted, mature-sounding manner.

Players who prefer a brighter piano might find the high end of the Korean-made WG-57 a little small-sounding. They should check out the 5' Weber WG-150, a more affordable baby grand manufactured in China. The keys and hammers of the WG-150 respond just as nicely as the WG-57, but the mid and high ends produce significantly more treble and brilliance. Because of its smaller size, though, the low end begs for more fullness and better pitch clarity. During a play-test, the WG-150 sounded best in blues, shuffles, ragtime and honky-tonk styles.

Overall, the sound and prices of the Weber WG-57 and WG-150 differ greatly. But serious piano-shoppers should consider either instrument for the keyboard response alone. They "play."

—Ed Enright

## JUPITER OFFERS SILVER 893SG BARI SAX

Jupiter Band Instruments has added the model 893SG baritone saxophone to its series of artist level silver saxes, which also includes the 869SG alto and 889SG tenor models. The silver-plated horns all feature solid sterling silver necks and super-responsive key mech-



anisms for improved sound and playability. The 893SG baritone sax includes low A, front F and high F#. Other features are adjustable bell keys, gold-lacquered keys, metal tone boosters, fully articulated spatula keys and an engraved bell.

—Ed Enright

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## RAINSONG WS1000: IN A GRAPHITE GROOVE

Although graphite is a non-traditional, alternative material for making acoustic guitars, the Hawaii-based guitar maker RainSong has always used it to craft the bodies, necks, fretboards and bridges of its guitars. In fact, it's the only company that makes all-graphite acoustic guitars. According to RainSong, graphite's strength not only eliminates the need for internal bracing in the guitar, which can limit a guitar's acoustic volume, but also makes a guitar impervious to climatic changes. Graphite's stability also keeps a guitar neck from warping and bowing—necks on RainSong guitars have no truss rod.

There's no doubt that RainSong is committed to the perfection of its graphite guitars. During the past year, the company pared down the number of models it offered from 18 to one, and concentrated on making the neck of its one model as playable as possible, even scrapping several designs before finding the proper one. The final result of all this tweaking is the WS1000 guitar, a beautiful-looking, well-crafted, acoustic guitar with a clear, loud tone and a brilliant, versatile sound both as an acoustic and when amplified.

The first thing I noticed about the WS1000 was its acoustic volume and tonal clarity. It is quite loud, with good projection that can fill a room with ease. It has the ability to make a dead-sounding room come alive. Playing acoustically without amplification, the WS1000 offers a clear tone that is well-balanced through the trebles, mids and lows. The high end is bright without being overbearing, mid response is clean and cutting without being brittle, and the bass response is clear with just enough boom and warmth without being muddy. The guitar is very clear in the low end due to graphite's tonal characteristics, which tend to decrease murky overtone buildup. Each string rings clear and it's easy to discern the notes of a strummed chord. There are absolutely no "pitch collisions" at all. The graphite neck (one

of the big adjustments from previous models) feels great to play and is very sturdy without feeling heavy, a common past criticism of guitars with graphite necks. That's not the case with the neck of the WS1000; it's light and easy to maneuver on. The action is fast and low, while the intonation over the entire neck is great. I found the WS1000 to react extremely well to fingerstyle playing; it has an immediate string response that is extremely focused while popping out for a nice percussive strike.

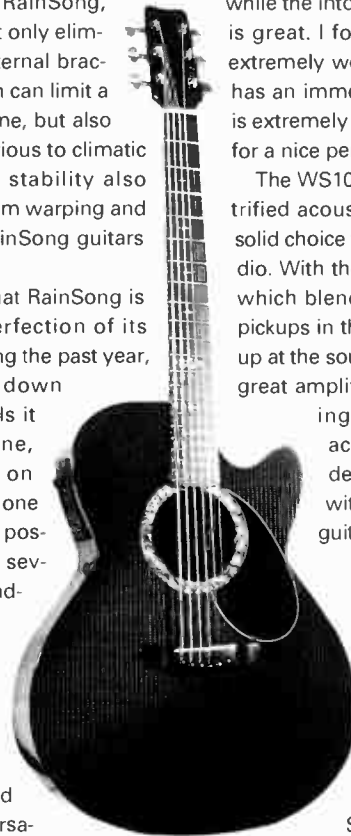
The WS1000 really shines as an electrified acoustic guitar and would be a solid choice for direct recording in a studio. With the built-in Fishman blender, which blends the output of the piezo pickups in the bridge and the mic pickup at the soundhole, you can get lots of great amplified acoustic sounds ranging from jangly Byrds-like accompaniment to a really deep, resonant jazz tone, all with an extreme clarity via the guitar's graphite build.

The striking appearance of the WS1000 is quite unlike any other acoustic guitar. The color is a charcoal black/gray combination with natural graphite weaves that are different on the front, back and sides.

Sharks are inlaid on the neck in abalone and abalone inlay also surrounds the soundhole—a striking appearance.

Because graphite is virtually maintenance-free, players won't have to worry about the neck warping or the guitar responding unfavorably to differing room temperatures. This in itself makes the guitar an excellent one for use touring or traveling.

Because the WS1000 is made from graphite, acoustic guitar traditionalists who prefer their guitars to be made from wood may turn up their noses at it. But they'll be missing the point. Regardless of the material used to build it, RainSong's WS1000 is an easily playable instrument with its own individual sound that is tonally clear, loud and sharp. And with RainSong's quest for perfection, there's no doubt that the WS1000 represents a model for acoustic guitar-building success in the 21st century. —Dave Zaworski





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## LUDWIG ROCKER PRO DRUMSET: ALL-PURPOSE POWER

In order to remain a major player in a drum industry that has seen dramatic changes, Ludwig has made extensive changes in its manufacturing, product development and marketing strategies over the past five years. The company has redesigned its shells and hardware, added new products, dropped some old ones and restructured its pricing. One of the additions is the Rocker Pro drumset line. This drumset is designed to be a mid-priced kit of semi-pro to professional quality, and it succeeds quite nicely.

I reviewed a five-piece Rocker Pro with a 16" x 20" bass drum, 8" x 10" and 8" x 12" rack toms, a 14" x 14" floor tom and a 5" x 14" eight-lug snare drum. The line is available with a variety of different size drums, from 8" x 8" rack toms to 16" x 18" floor toms. Ludwig has two standard Rocker Pro kits—the Power kit and the Jazz kit—both with appropriately sized drums. The toms came with clear, heavy-gauged Ludwig WeatherMaster drum heads on the top and bottom. The snare had a coated, medium WeatherMaster on the batter side, and a clear, thin WeatherMaster on the snare side.

The Rocker Pro's 7mm, seven-ply shells are made of a combination of birch and poplar wood. The lugs are another new

Ludwig design, the low-mass "mini-lug." Modeled after the characteristic Ludwig lugs with the floating swivel nut, the mini-lugs are smaller, lighter and have a rubber insulation gasket between the lug and the shell. The



rack toms are mounted with another recent Ludwig addition—the Elite double tom holder, an L-arm on a ball swivel system that allows for easy, flexible tom positioning.

Generally speaking, the drums had full, round tones. I've never been a big fan of clear batter heads, so I tried a few different coated and semi-translucent heads on the toms and got warmer sounds and a greater

dynamic sensitivity from the drums. The toms had a moderate tuning range and projected nicely as long as you didn't tune them too high or too low. The sound of the bass drum was my favorite of the kit. It had a powerful but not overwhelming low end and a wide tuning range. It came with an internal muffling strip of felt, and I added a small piece of fabric against the head to get the perfect amount of sustain.

The snare drum is a great all-purpose, middle-of-the-road snare. It has a full-bodied sound with pleasing wooden characteristics. The 20-strand wire strainer provides plenty of sensitivity for this size drum. The snare throw was the classic Ludwig style strainer (the P85 Supra-Phonic), which provides a fair amount of tension flexibility and quiet action. The drum also had a wide tuning range: I could tune it from low and wet to sharp and crisp without sacrificing the projection and sensitivity.

In a drum market with more choices and price levels than ever before, it's good to know that venerable Ludwig is actively competing, evidenced by new innovations and quality drums at mid-range prices such as the Rocker Pros. —Doug Brush

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A day before the Roosevelt High School Jazz Band flew from Seattle to New York this past May for the Essentially Ellington competition at Lincoln Center, the concentration in the band room was as thick as a block chord in a Red Garland solo. Standing on the room's top, horseshoe-shaped tier, trumpeter Meghan Miller grinned with pleasure as the brass section nailed a fanfare they'd interpolated into "I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)." Then she shot her pal Sara Gazarek a smile of encouragement, as Sara launched into the vocal.

"We noticed at last year's competition that the schools that did well reinvented the material," said Roosevelt band director Scott Brown. "This year, we cut and pasted parts from different recordings."

Across town, over at rival Garfield High School, Clarence Acox's bunch was putting some finishing touches on the dynamics of "Perdido."

"We've got almost all the same people we had last year," said Acox, hopefully. "We'll see."

Garfield and Roosevelt were two out of 15 schools to make the national finals of Essentially Ellington this year. Urban rivals, both schools jockey every year for the top slot at the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival, in Moscow, Idaho, both have played at the North Sea and Montreux jazz festivals, and both have performed at the International Association of Jazz Educators conference.

Garfield and Roosevelt made the final cut at Essentially Ellington last year, too. But when the dust settled at Avery Fisher Hall in 1999, neither school had placed in the top three. (Garfield netted an honorable mention.) To add fuel to the local fire, two other Seattle area schools also made the Ellington finals this year: Mountlake Terrace and Shorewood. Everyone was determined to grab a brass ring this time around.

No other region in the country has produced so many finalists, a development that has spurred the director of Jazz at Lincoln Center Rob Gibson to inquire, "Is there something in the water out there?"

No, it's not the water. The success of

high school jazz in Seattle is a reflection of an integrated infrastructure that begins with strong school programs, dedicated students, great teachers and a junior high "feeder" system. Other important factors include a network of state and regional competitions; local jazz pros who teach (such as Don Lanphere); jazz non-profits, such as Earshot Jazz and the Bud Shank

were James Moody, Joe Lovano, Bill Dobbins, Buster Cooper and Jazz at Lincoln Center Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis. To help bands prepare, schools received a free clinic, often with members of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra.

"The clinic was a life-changing experience for some of these kids" said Darin Faul, band director at Mountlake



## Four Seattle School Bands Vie For *Essentially Ellington Honors*

Jazz Workshop; dedicated parent booster clubs; and local college programs that offer a goal for high school musicians as well as a training ground for high school jazz instructors.

Essentially Ellington is tailor-made for these kids. A program of Jazz At Lincoln Center, the contest opened to bands in the New York area in 1996, then expanded to all 50 states in 1999. The program offers six free Ellington scores to high schools, who then send in audition tapes of three tunes. This year, scores went out to 1,890 schools; 176 submitted tapes. The competition tunes were "Anitra's Dance," "I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)," "The Mooche," "The Peanut Vendor," "Perdido" and "The Star-Crossed Lovers."

On May 15-16, the top 15 bands competed live in New York. The judges

Terrace, where drummer Justin DiCioccio worked with the students. "I've had parents come up to me and say 'You know, before that, my kid would just sit there and play. Now he's feeling it.'"

Feeling was high at SeaTac Airport May 16, too, as Roosevelt parents and family, a few holding helium balloons, gathered expectantly at the gate. The plane was several hours late. As the first tired faces began to appear, a roar of applause, cheers and whistles went up. No, the hometown boys and girls hadn't won first prize, but they'd placed third, winning a \$4,000 cash prize, and it felt really good, all around. For the second year in a row, Garfield got an honorable mention, as well. First prize went to Hall High School, from West Hartford, Conn.; second to New World High School of the Arts in Miami. **DB**

by paul de barros

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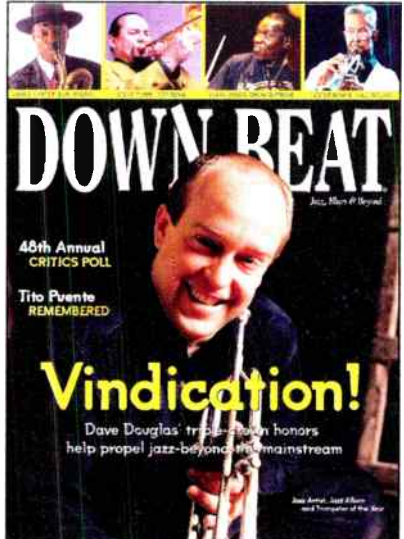
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# blindfold test

**Ralph Peterson** emerged in the mid 1980s as the drummer with the high-visibility young lion ensemble OTB and the Harrison–Blanchard Quintet. As a leader, Peterson recently released *Back To Stay* (Sirocco)—his ninth recording—with his decade-old Fo'tet, a quartet with a soprano sax–vibraphone front line. He's also professor of drums at Rutgers University. This is his first Blindfold Test.

## Roy Haynes

Snarles of Se'ega (from *Praise Dreyfus*, 1999) Haynes drums

[Immediately] That's Haynes. He speaks a certain language—a very distinct kind of dribble in the left hand, and the way he works around the tom-toms with his right hand. I could literally see him when I heard that. He gets a wide-open bass drum sound, and the way Roy freed up the hi-hat is amazing—releasing the confines of the 2-and-4 and creating such a dance with his ride cymbal, and then playing accents and having his hi-hat be a part of the coloring mechanism as opposed to the timekeeping mechanism. I've got to play later; I can get some ideas! 5 stars.

## Andrew Cyrille

A Tribute to Buell (from *Good To Go*, Soul Note, 1997) Cyrille drums; James Newton sings

This hand drum thing is throwing me. It's a beautiful sound on the pattern he's got going—not necessarily a sound I would have, but it's working. All I can tell you with any safety, though, is that those are uncoated drum heads, clear, without a black dot. 5 stars. I have always been able to identify Cyrille through his cymbal sound, which is very clear, and its absence is what threw me.

## Jerry Gonzalez

Little Boogie Woogie (from *Rumba Para Monk*, Sunjazz, 1988) Gonzalez organ; trumpet: Steve Berrios; drums: Andy Cyrille; bass: Joe Ford; alto saxophone: Carter Jefferson; tenor saxophone

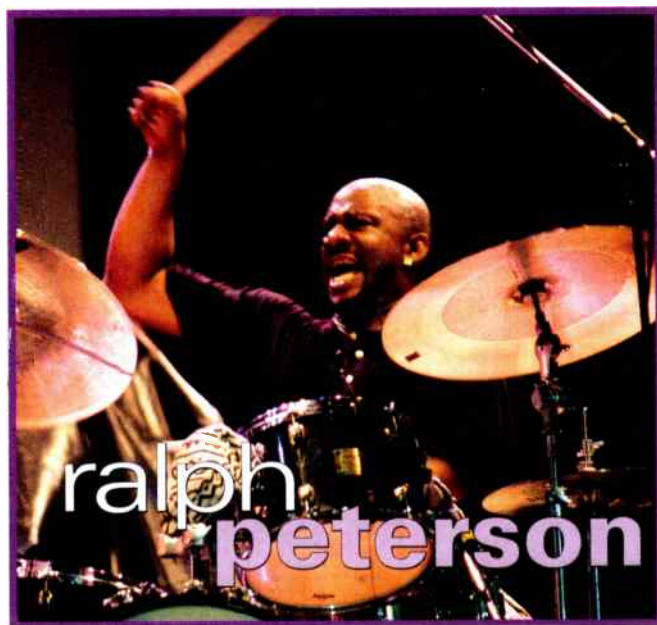
It's obvious. That's Jerry Gonzalez, *Rumba Para Monk*. Berrios. I always wanted to play with this band. I'm trying to develop my bilingualism. I had a lot of intuitive and instinctive ideas about how it should go, but working with Pernell Saturnino during my little stint with David Sanchez, I got a lot of clarity. Jerry's a good trumpet player. He inspires me. The way Jerry forwards the Afro-Cuban tradition and merges it with elements of American music, he deserves 5 stars.

## Jeff "Tain" Watts

The Hipale (from *Cruiser Tain*, Columbia, 1999) Watts drums; Wynton Marsalis (trumpet); Barford Marsa (soprano saxophone); Kirkland (piano)

Tain. He extracted the bass line from one of my favorite r&b bands. Remember the Ohio Players? This is "Skin Tight" in seven! One thing I appreciated most is the way this record opened Wynton back up, playing on the edge of some shit again. I'm interested in Afro-Cuban styles outside the realm of four, and

I'm into anybody who is willing to explore and take some risks in that area—Tain plays shit that I'm still experimenting with in terms of time and structure. 5 stars. The music needs drummers to be bandleaders; every real shift in the music's evolution has come as a result of innovation in the drum chair.



## Gonzalo Rubalcaba

Circle IV (from *A Long Blue Note*, 1998) Rubalcaba, piano and voice; arranger: Aldo Marchi; trumpet: Fúfne Carrera; bass: J. J. Binford III

It certainly goes a lot of places rhythmically. It's well-executed; they're playing a lot of really hard shit. But it seems almost fragmented—which may be exactly the point. I'm completely clueless. [After] I'd give it 2½. Gonzalo represents the beginning of a disturbing trend of people getting record dates and being put on the front lines as leaders when they haven't spent any time in the trenches playing with a wide variety of musicians to prove that they can play with anybody else besides themselves or play anybody's music but theirs. It's an experience thing.

[Before knowing it was Gonzalo, you would have said the same thing?]

In terms of its fragmentation, yes. A lot of the musicians of Latino heritage have a thing about how American jazz musicians don't spend enough time investigating what they do. I'd say to an extent they're right. However, the 4/4 concept of swing in American jazz music is not being addressed in reciprocation. **DB**

For more of the Blindfold Test, go to [Downbeat.com](http://Downbeat.com).

The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to discuss and identify the music and musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a 5-star system. No information is given to the artist prior to the test.

by ted panken

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