

JUNE 19, 1975

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music magazine

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## EARTH, WIND & FIRE

## RALPH TOWNER



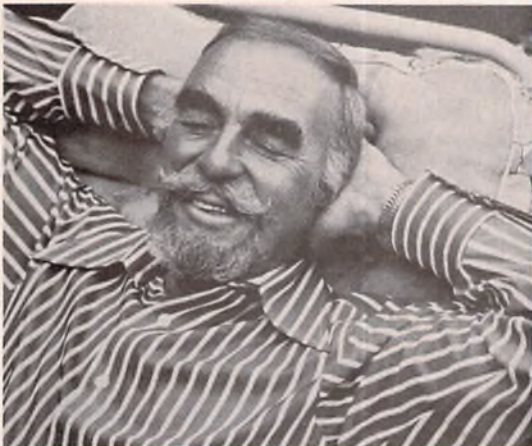
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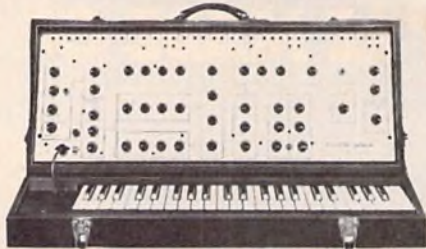
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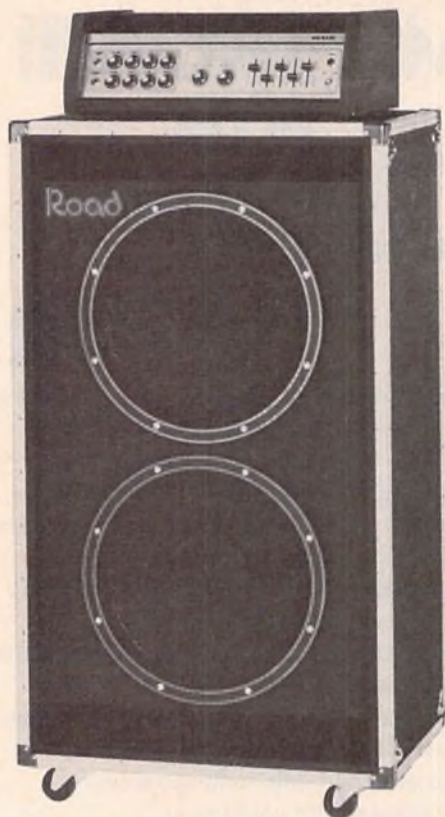
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**the first chorus**

By Charles Suber

Scarcely an issue goes by that the influence of John Coltrane is not spoken of by one or more of the interviewees. Musicians of various contemporary persuasions regard Trane as a living legacy. For example, in this issue . . .

Earth, Wind & Fire is probably the hottest soul-cum-jazz group on today's scene. Four gold LPs, national TV exposure, extravagant staging . . . and yet, John Coltrane. Maurice White, the EW&F leader, puts it this way: "One of the things that changed my life was sitting in with John Coltrane for one weekend while Elvin Jones was sick. I consider him the major spiritual force of his time and he still is a force."

Maurice White believes what he says. Like so many musicians (and civilians) that came in contact with Trane's person and music, White was touched and changed. He says, simply and believably: "We come out here (in performance) to try to render a service to Mankind, not to be stars. We are actually being used as tools by the Creator. If I'm gonna try and help people then I have to remain the same, so I'll always be old country Maurice White."

Here's how Coltrane said it: "During the year 1957 (during a five year alliance with Miles Davis), I experienced, by the grace of God, a spiritual awakening which was to lead me to a richer, fuller, more productive life. At that time, in gratitude, I humbly asked to be given the means and privilege to make others happy through music. I feel this has been granted through His Grace."

Cliff Thornton, also interviewed in this issue, was touched in several ways by the Coltrane vision. Thornton's schooling and early playing career (cornet, valve trombone) was in Philadelphia where Coltrane, Clifford Brown, and Red Garland formulated their own conception of Brotherly Love.

The black freedom movement of the '60s moved Thornton—and many, many others—to look for roots, a search that brought him to Wesleyan U. (Middletown, Conn.) as a member of the Black Music and Ethnomusicology faculty. In the same way, the early '60s moved Coltrane to study Indian and African musics looking for his own Universality. Thornton's one-world opened for him at the Pan-African Festival in Algiers in 1969.

Thornton is leaving Wesleyan to play and compose, but I hope he doesn't leave teaching. He and Trane are needed at such places as U. of Miami (see Chords & Discords).

Ralph Towner is another story, a helluva story. He is one of a new crop of contemporary musicians who perform at several levels of excellence. Towner, a guitarist good enough to win the TDWR category in last year's International Jazz Critics Poll, revels in jazz piano, respects electronic music but prefers his acoustic six and twelve string guitars, on which he experiments imitating electronic sounds. (Miles Davis does the same thing for the same reasons.)

What is obvious about Towner's music—and from his words—is that he has the presence and perception to become a master musician. Another one.

Next: down beat's 41st Anniversary Issue emphasizes new paths and new musicians. db

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**Gender Problem, Cont.**

To answer Mark Leach's questions about why most musicians are male (*db*, 5/8), one could write a book. But to put it in a few words, the answer is the same for questions such as why are there so few women painters, sculptors, or filmmakers. Being a woman musician requires discipline, independence, and aggressiveness. Unfortunately, women lack these traits more than men. Heidi Momont Minneapolis, Minn.

I believe that the number of active female musicians increases each year, and that eventually there will be a male/female balance. It is now generally accepted that one's sex has nothing to do with one's artistic ability, and those who would argue that males make better musicians have *nothing* upon which to base that argument. I think the reason why there are so few female musicians is because they are pushed into a less creative role when young. Patrick Welsh Williamsburg, Va.

**Peace And Love Roundup**

In response to Richard L. Horton's ancestral information on Beethoven (*db*, 4/24): Richard, you are one lame ignoramus. Glenn and Margot Ferris Santa Monica, Ca.

Through the years many people have made fun of my last name. I have found nearly all of them to be ignorant louts. No doubt Daniel Smith (*db*, 3/27) is no exception. L. Szabo (no relation) Vancouver, B.C.

To southerners such as ourselves, it would seem as if your editorial staff has little else with which to occupy its time other than the study of African culture and artistry (?), as the last few issues of your rag portray.

Seriously gentlemen, are you really prejudiced, or is it that you do not KNOW any better? Don't you realize that although the jazz idiom originated within the realm of cotton fields and degenerate low-class tenements, there was and is no reason to keep it there?

You simply must realize that advancement of the jazz scene came about only through the concentrated and completely dedicated efforts of true jazz artists such as Teagarden, Brubeck, Beiderbecke, Desmond, et al. It is doubtful that these gentlemen were influenced in the least by the above mentioned lifestyle.

In conclusion, let us interject that your publication is generally going down the tubes, inasmuch as your portrayal of the American jazz scene is entirely and, for all we know, wholeheartedly misinterpreted. Dave Presley & Jordan Rooney Miami, Fla.

This letter is for Andy Kirkendall and Eric Blomstrom (*db*, 5/8). I am two years old and I have been around paying dues for long enough to say that you are both wrong. The Turnip Wizard Nutley, N.J.

Why is it always black jazz musicians . . . who attack black soul artists all the time? Yet these same black artists never attack white artists, no matter how rotten they

are! Fed up!  
John M. Akili New York, N.Y.

**A Question Of Rights**

You see, I don't like jazz. I find it boring, repetitious, and a waste of time. But that isn't my problem. The problem is that I am being persecuted by friends, called bigot, Tom, prejudiced, pseudo-intellectual, and honkey-lover because of my musical preferences.

All I want to know is: don't I have the right to dislike jazz? Don't I have the right to criticize it? Do I have the right to be selective in my own musical preferences? Must I like jazz' inhuman noises? Must I enjoy musical instruments played out of tune, music played off key? Must I respect and support a music and musicians (your term, not mine) who offer me no enjoyment and whose efforts I find trite, infantile, and monotonous?

None of this is because I haven't listened to jazz, or tried to enjoy it. Years ago friends took me to see Billie Holiday, but drunken negresses never were my thing (we still got 'em in the projects and I still don't dig 'em), and once I saw Charlie Parker and still resent spending money to see a dude too spaced to stand . . . muttering curses under his breath. . . . I once saw a dude named Coltrane play 255 consecutive notes—all the same—and the crowd in the joint gave him a standing ovation.

If all these guys are geniuses . . . then the ghettos are overrun with geniuses, not roaches. Ali Bulavinan Philadelphia, Pa.

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## MONTREUX LOWDOWN



JAN PERSSON

Clifton Chenier

Lockjaw Davis

GIUSEPPE PINO

The ninth annual Montreux International Festival has been set for July 4 through 20. The festival will have a "new look" this year according to its promoters, with a brand new location and a schedule that encompasses three consecutive weekends. Whereas previous Montreux affairs have been held over a ten-day period, this year the three-weekend shindig will be supported by a full program of subsidiary events such as jam sessions, music-oriented films and TV programs, plus a full-scale Musicfair on weekdays.

The festival will be held in the new Casino complex in the Swiss city. The Casino was only recently constructed as a replacement for the civic building which was destroyed by fire at a previous festival. The breakdown of musical events reads like this: Folk, Country, Blues—July 4-6; Rock, City Blues, Gospel—July 11-13; and Jazz—July

16-20.

The Folk, Country, Blues program will highlight celebrated Breton musician Alan Stivell, as well as a variety of acoustic acts.

Headlining the rhythm & blues segment will be Etta James (who will be making her European premiere), Big Mama Thornton, Lowell Fulson, Freddie King, Clifton Chenier, and Lightnin' Hopkins. Gospel will be represented by the Mighty Clouds Of Joy, Reverend Cleophus Robinson, and Marion Williams.

Among jazz artists slated to perform are Ella Fitzgerald, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Johnny Griffin, Joe Pass, Count Basie And His Orchestra, and Oscar Peterson. A special tribute to John Coltrane will also be offered by a selection of musicians who have been influenced by the late hornman.

Various additions are expected to round out the curriculum.

## Wiz Racks Up Trophies

The Broadway musical production of *The Wonderful Wizard Of Oz*, better known as *The Wiz*, recently won seven Tony Awards. (The Tony is the most prestigious theatrical accolade, being tantamount to Hollywood's Oscar.) The Tonys were presented on May 19 at the Winter Garden Theatre.

Among those honored for their role in making the all-black musical an astonishing success were Geoffrey Holder, director and costume designer; George Faison, choreographer; Ted Ross, best supporting actor; and Dee Dee Bridgewater, best supporting actress.

## VERVE REVIVES

Verve Records is being revitalized, thanks to a batch of new artist signings and an attentive program of reissue packages.

The label intends to sign artists who have crossover possibilities, with special emphasis on jazz/rock/electronic fusion. Dave Axelrod was the first artist signed by the company, with Cannonball Adderley active in recording the Axelrod disc.

If the company is successful with its new artists, it will dig into its considerable catalog for valuable jazz material. Verve a&R vice-president Jimmy Bowen says the label will promote heavily on FM radio.

## PORI JAZZFEST SET

The 10th annual Pori International Jazz Festival will be held from July 10-13 in Helsinki, Finland. More than 150 musicians will take part in the festivities which will consist of 25 concerts.

The Pori fest puts special emphasis on European jazz, with groups from nine continental countries slated to perform. They include the Tone Janse Quintet from Yugoslavia; the David Horler Quintet from England; the Bernard Labat Quartet from France; the Bjorn Johansen Quartet from Norway; the Ferdinand Povel Quartet from Hol-

land; the Bent Jedig Quintet from Denmark; the Staffan Abeleen Quintet from Sweden; the Bob Porter Quartet from Belgium; and the Finnish Jazz Workshop.

In addition to numerous Finnish jazz musicians such as Jukka Tolonen, Heikki Sarmanto, and Hasse Walli, many international names are set to appear. Some of the few already signed are the Dizzy Gillespie Quartet, Oregon, the Norman Connors Sextet, the Roland Kirk Quartet, Supersax, and Bukka White. Exhibitions, lectures, and films will round out the activities.

## potpourri

Novelist/visionary **William Burroughs** (*Naked Lunch*, *The Soft Machine*) recently collaborated with pianist **Paul Bley** for an evening of expressive vibes at New York University.

**Label Merry-Go-Round:** Both **Marion Brown** and **Dewey Redman** have exited **Impulse**, feeding the rumors that **ABC** is phasing out the specialist jazz line . . . Guitarist **Sonny Sharrock** has parted with **Atlantic** . . . Saxophonist **Dave Sanborn** (formerly of the Butterfield Blues Band) has waxed his debut disc for **Warner Brothers**, with **Dave Matthews** arranging . . . Guitarist **Joe Beck** has completed his first for **CTI** and is now fronting a regular group . . . Poetess/vocalist **Patti Smith** has joined up with the **Arista** forces.

**Stevie Wonder** was recently honored by Washington, D.C. on that city's Human Kindness Day. Wonder was signaled out on the basis of his "humanitarian efforts and artistic brilliance."

A New York State Supreme Court judge recently enjoined **Arista Records** from releasing

product by guitarist **Larry Coryell** pending final settlement of a dispute between Coryell and **Vanguard Records**. Vanguard contends that Coryell is still under contract to them.

**Motown** recently celebrated "CTI Month" by presenting a special concert showcasing many of the label's artists in Los Angeles. The concert, called "CTI Spring Jazz," was held in the Ahmanson Theater and featured stars such as **Chet Baker**, **George Benson**, **Hubert Laws**, and **Grover Washington, Jr.**

**Reverend John Garcia Gensel**, minister to the jazz community of New York City, recently received the 1975 Achievement Award from the Susquehanna University Alumni Association.

Musician/composer **William Grant Still** was also honored recently with a dinner and program of his works, as presented by the Friends Of Music, a support group for the University of Southern California School Of Music. Dr. Still recently celebrated his 80th birthday.

db contributing writer **Robert**

**Palmer** performed as an instrumental soloist in the world premiere of a new work by **Wilfrid H. Mellers** recently during the opening concert of Bowdoin College's Tenth Anniversary Contemporary Music Festival. Mellers, an internationally known composer and author of *Music In A New Found Land* and *Twilight Of The Gods* (studies of American music and the music of the Beatles), titled the composition *The Key Of The Kingdom*. Mellers played piano and Palmer performed on Tibetan, Indian, and Bolivian flutes.

**Billy Cobham** has added a new horn section to his unit. Fresh additions include **Walt Fowler**, trumpet; **Larry Schneider**, sax; and **Tom Malone**, trombone. The remainder of the band remains the same with **John Scofield** on guitar; **Milcho Leviev**, keyboards; **Alex Blake**, bass; and Cobham on drums.

Pop vocalist **Helen Reddy** (renowned for her *I Am Woman* ditty) was recently the would-be victim of an unsuccessful extortion attempt and death threat. The 17-year-old perpetrator of

the crime was arrested in a Newark, N.J. Western Union office where he was awaiting money which he had been told would be wired to him. May Ms. Reddy stay invincible.

Musician / comedian **Mickey Katz** was recently honored by fellow musicians and members of Musician's Local 47 in Encino, Cal. Katz began his 50-year career by playing the classics, later serving with the Cleveland Symphony and touring with Paul Whiteman. He is remembered for his famous clarinet solo on the Whiteman band's version of Gershwin's *Rhapsody In Blue*.

Katz achieved his greatest notoriety as an integral member of Spike Jones' madcap combo, where his Yiddish parodies and satires of popular songs endeared him to thousands.

Class reunion: **Captain Don Van Vliet**, **Beefheart** and **Frank Zappa** have reunited after an estrangement of some five years. The Cap has joined Zappa's ever-mutating entourage as featured vocalist and harp blower and has reportedly re-embraced his Dadaist past. db

down NEWS beat

# New Releases

Fantasy Records has released the first album recorded by the Duke Ellington Orchestra since the death of the Duke, with Mercer Ellington taking on leadership of the unit. The new disc includes versions of *Black And Tan*, *Jeep's Blues*, and *Harlem Airshaft*, all featuring solos by Cootie Williams. Mercer also completed work on three other albums recently. *The Afro-Eurasian Suite* is an Ellington piece that has never before been recorded. The other LPs are a collection of Ellington standards highlighting the solo work of Paul Gonsalves and a small band affair featuring Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney, and Gonsalves. The trio of discs will be released in the latter part of the year.

Other recent goodies from the Fantasy / Prestige / Milestone people include *In The Pocket*, Stanley Turrentine's second effort for Fantasy; *Vibes of Truth*, by the Washington, D.C. based Three Pieces; *Dust Yourself Off*, the first outing by a group called Pleasure; *Atlantis*, a double set from McCoy Tyner, recorded live at Keystone Korner late last summer; *Colors*, the first effort from Brazilian trombonist Raul de Souza; *Intuition*, a duet with pianist Bill Evans and bassist Eddie Gomez; *Children Of Lima*, an extravaganza by Woody Herman and the gang; *Tangerine*, by Dexter Gordon and featuring Thad Jones, Stanley Clarke, and Louis Hayes; and *Goodbye*, the final recording session by

the late Gene Ammons. Chicago-based Delmark Records has signed vocalist Edith Wilson. The 69-year-old legend will record with a group of traditional jazz veterans led by pianist Little Brother Montgomery. Edith first recorded way back in 1921, when she became the first black woman to wax for Columbia Records.

Recent offerings from Atlantic include *Diamond Head*, the first solo outing by Roxy Music guitarist Phil Manzanera; *Ain't Life Grand*, a new screacher by Black Oak Arkansas; *USA*, the final album by King Crimson; and a debut recording by a group called Diamond Reo.

Dave Liebman's *Open Sky* has issued *Spirit In The Sky*, its second album on PM Records. Lee Konitz has completed his first for Groove Merchant. Dave Brubeck has exited from Atlantic but the company has one more album which should be issued late this year.

Newcomers from Capitol include *The Best Years Of Our Lives*, by Steve Harley and Cockney Rebel; *Spartacus*, the new bombast from Triumvirat; *Welcome To Riddle Bridge*, by Brewer & Shipley; and a walk down *Desolation Boulevard*, arm-in-arm with British pop stars Sweet.

JIM MARSHALL



Purveyor Of Forbidden X-tasy Bloomfield

The success of the X-rated *Nazis*, guitarist Mike Bloomfield movie seems to show no sign of abating. The latest trend for the porno products is to spice up the activities by means of specially commissioned film scores.

Multi-award winning jazz musician/composer Don Elliott recently penned the score for the upcoming screen version of *The Happy Hooker*, the X-rated film's efforts will be geared toward underlining the film's basic themes. Recording possibilities have yet to be completed.

## Duke Saluted

As proclaimed by Mayor Abraham Beame of New York City, and delivered by Deputy Mayor Paul Gibson, Jr., a 24-hour "Duke Ellington Day" was recently celebrated. Beginning at midnight April 28-9 and continuing through midnight April 29-30, the music of "America's greatest composer" was performed at the main sanctuary at St. Peter's Church, 64th Street and Park Avenue.

A proclamation was presented to Duke's sister Ruth, as plans were announced for a Duke Ellington Center at the new St. Peter's now being constructed at Lexington Avenue and 54th Street.

The Reverend John Garcia Gensel organized the birthday tribute (April 29 marked Ellington's 76th) and opened the official day by stating that "God is our Father and Duke Ellington our patriarch." Bob Sparks played the first piano chords, as drummer Jual Curtis and bassist Duke Clemons offered supporting rhythm.

Other musicians who offered their services included former Ellingtonians Sonny Greer, Russell Procope, Francis Williams, Matthew Gee, and Toney Watkins, whose voice was the first heard during the celebration. Bobby Short, Howard McGhee, Harold Ousley, Dorothy Donegan, Paul Quinichette, Joe Newman, and Randy Weston (who prepared a special tribute) all performed. Included in Weston's segment were Jon Faddis, Billy Harper, Candido, Cecil Payne, Rudy Collins, Bill Wood and soulful oudist Ahmed Abdul Malik.

It was Newman who summed up the affair by stating flatly, "We like, in our own way, to give something back to the Duke."  
—a.j. smith

## FINAL BAR

**Marty Marsala**, jazz trumpeter and band leader, died recently in Veterans Research Hospital in Chicago. He was 66.

Born in Chicago, Marsala began his career as a drummer but switched to trumpet in the early 1930s. He played at New York's Hickory House in the late '30s as a member of his brother Joseph's band. As a member of the Army in World War II, Marsala was wounded and partially disabled. He played with the Eddie Condon band following the war, moving to San Francisco in the late '50s to join up with Earl "Fatha" Hines and organize his own band. He returned to Chicago in 1962 to play in a dixieland band at the Jazz Limited.

He is survived by his brother, a sister, and his daughter.

**William B. Hawkins**, one of the first black disc jockeys to be hired by radio stations in northern Ohio, died March 6 in Cleveland. He was 65.

Known as "Walkin' and Talkin' Bill Hawkins," he was famous for his talent-finding abilities, particularly in regard to hunting out fine jazz musicians. He is survived by his wife.

## Smithsonian Sets New Season



Teddy Wilson

The Smithsonian Institution has revealed the plans for its 1975-76 Jazz Heritage Series. The lineup looks like this:

- Oct. 12—Tap Dancers with and instrumental group (probably including Howard McGhee)
- Nov. 9—The Count's Men, a group featuring such former Basie sidemen as Earle Warren, Doc Cheatham, Jo Jones, and Buddy Tate
- Dec. 7—Teddy Wilson, Mary Lou Williams, and John Lewis in a solo piano performance
- Jan. 11—The Heath Brothers
- Feb. 8—The Music of Bix Beiderbecke, as rendered by members of the New York Jazz Repertory Company, Bob Wilber, director
- March 14—Sam Rivers

The Smithsonian also books touring concert clinics by Claude Hopkins and the Kenny Davern Trio; The Count's Men; Randy Weston; and the Mary Lou Williams Trio, among others. All interested parties should contact Martin Williams at the Smithsonian.

By the beginning of next year, the Institution has plans to begin issuing twofers of classic jazz recordings. First up for release are a Louis Armstrong/Earl Hines package dating from 1928 and a batch of King Oliver and his Creole Jazz Band material presenting the King with a cross section of vocalists and musicians.

Jazz News

JOSEPH L. JOHNSON



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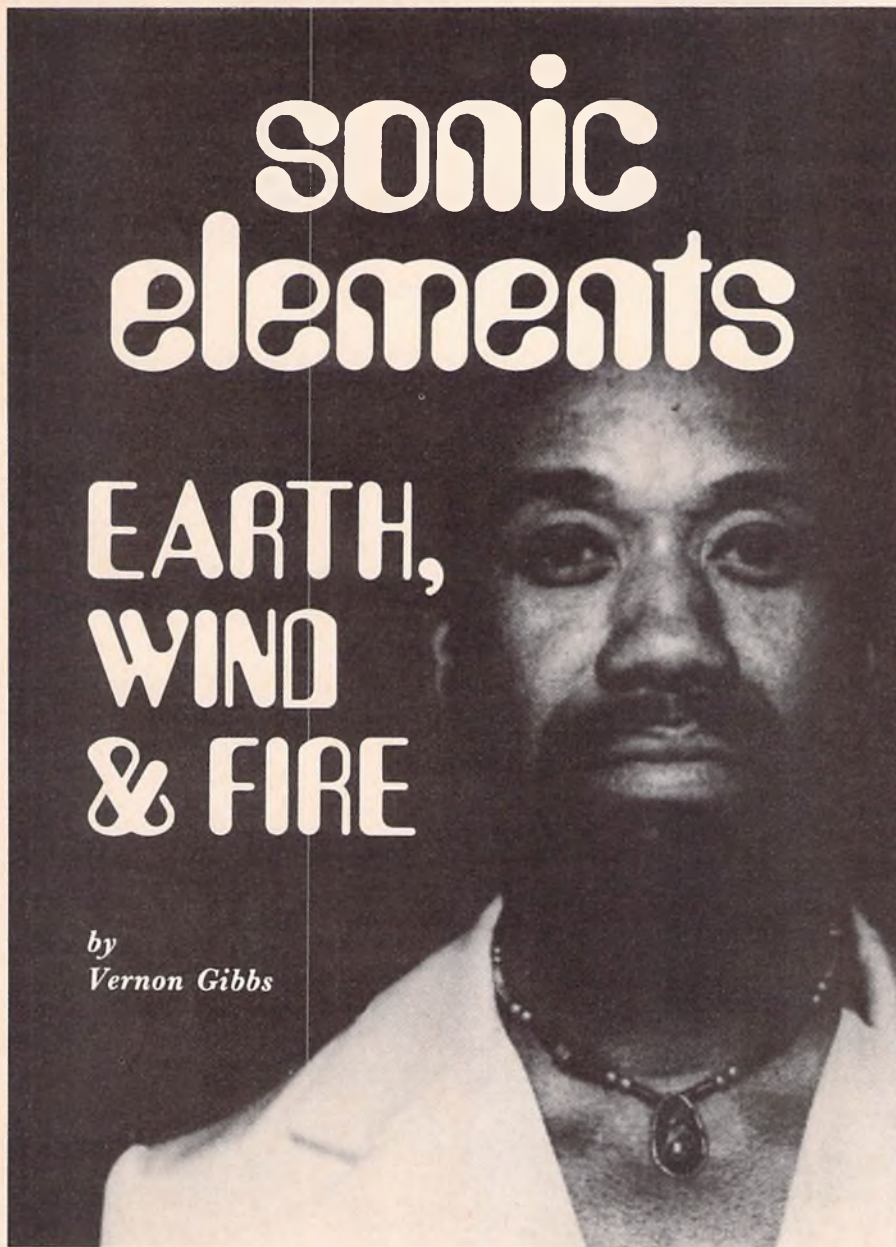
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# sonic elements

## EARTH, WIND & FIRE

by  
Vernon Gibbs



NORMAN SEEFF

**"We've never been in a race with any of the other bands in terms of trying to outdo them or anything. But for one thing, we've been giving the people something that they need and in doing that I think the people have put us on a certain level."**

Philadelphia is a violent town. In the hotel where Earth, Wind and Fire are staying, an enraged woman (who has been given a passkey by the hotel management) attacks a Columbia Records representative as she sleeps in her hotel room. A gasoline truck blows up on the freeway not far from the hotel; a man is found shot nearby. Outside the Spectrum where Earth, Wind and Fire are holding court with Ramsey Lewis, tickets to the "sold out" concert are snatched from the hands of the holders by sprightly thieves who disappear into the jeering crowds. Philadelphia is a violent town.

Inside the Spectrum, Ramsey Lewis is playing for his vindication to an enthusiastic and

sometimes appreciative audience, most of which is just old enough to faintly remember that Lewis had some level of ironic "legitimacy" as a hitmaker before Maurice White, who leads Earth, Wind and Fire and played drums for Lewis for three years, presented him with the gift of *Sun Goddess* and a gold album. In the world of hits, Lewis is often best remembered for *The In Crowd* and *Hang On Sloopy*; in the world of jazz he is often despised because of it.

But whatever one might consider their "limitations," Lewis and his colleagues at the lower end of the jazz "artistic" totem pole—Les McCann, the Crusaders, Eddie Harris, etc.—have always sold well, even before jazz was considered a salable commodity. They can be given credit for inspiring the first wave of funk bands that appeared while Sly Stone was at his peak. Sly was the main catalyst, but many forms of jazz were important in establishing the consciousness of these young street musicians, among them the Ohio Players, Mandrill, War, and this particular evening's headliners, Earth, Wind and Fire. Kool and The Gang, for instance, are very

vocal about the inspirational nature of John Coltrane and see him as the epitome of jazz perfection, but in their earliest records lie many of the funk clichés that have now descended into pedantry. Earth, Wind and Fire's Maurice White says that his own musical adventure was completely altered by one weekend of sitting in with Coltrane as a replacement for the ailing Elvin Jones. He insists that it gave him the vision for his present group. Even if White had *not* played with Lewis, the connection between the two styles is clear, since many of the soloists in the young bands are attempting to grope their way toward a level of technical accomplishment comparable to that of Lewis, Harris, etc. But of all the funk bands, only Earth, Wind and Fire have successfully completed the attempt.

Predecessor or not, Ramsey Lewis seems lost in the cavernous Spectrum. His sound and style, while well-suited to the smoky, noise-filled nightclubs of recent residence, do not quite hold up in concert halls and stadiums. The sound is full, but it lacks the flair of physical volume that much of his audience is used to, having been reared on James Brown and The Buddy Miles Express. It is not until Lewis does Buddy Miles' *Them Changes* that a roar of recognition sweeps through the crowd, which is waiting to hear *Sun Goddess*. From that moment, the audience is his. During the drum solo, the darkness is full of the rhythm of kinetic motion. Long, luminous green bulbs that have been hawked outside the concert as part of the paraphernalia of cool, keep time with the drummer. For the rest of the concert, Lewis keeps attention on his throne by having his sideman parade a variety of crowd-pleasing percussion antics, while he presides over a staid delivery of "hip" standards like *Betcha By Golly Wow* and Stevie Wonder's *Living For The City*. Lewis sometimes gets annoying when he attempts to supplement a fundamental rhythmic sense with bits of transcendental noise which are usually out of context—but what he does, he does well: he can strip a melody to the bare essentials and, most importantly, he is adept at hanging on to the edge of a rhythm, milking it for whatever it's worth. The audience demand for more was satisfied by the information that Ramsey plans to return with Earth, Wind and Fire for *Sun Goddess*.

Earth, Wind and Fire is introduced by a dark-hooded fellow who implores the already excited throng to, "Stand. Stand on your feet and greet the elements of the universe." Flashpots billow smoke and flames into the air as Earth, Wind and Fire throb into the rhythmic persistence of *Power*. The audience begins to party itself into a frenzy.

The rest of the concert is mostly an exercise in manipulation and subordination because the audience is a captive one, totally at the mercy of the stage. Recognizing the rapt nature of their acclaim, particularly since they are now at the height of their success, Earth, Wind and Fire provide a visual and aural spectacle that mocks the "theatrical" aspect that rock has developed for the current "show biz" craze, without ever giving in to any of rock's archaic musical conventions. The music is loud, but it isn't deafening, and the group chooses well from its best-known material. They really seem to know which songs mean the most to their audience, even among the songs that were *not* hits.

Working with an augmented horn section, the group doesn't just play their hits, they interpret them with new arrangements, lending scope to the original versions while keeping the elements that made them popular. The energy is nonstop and even though the group, in their enthusiasm, sometimes falters on harmonies (it ain't easy to harmonize eight voices while playing at full volume and jumping around the stage), the crush of excitement negates the errors. The group smooths itself out through *Africano*, *Yearn And Learn*, *Happy Feeling*, a song based on the *Love Supreme* melody which sounds like a jam session more than anything else, *Evil*, *Kalimba Song* and the ecstatic *Reasons*, with Ramsey Lewis joining them on electric piano for *Sun Goddess*.

The final cut is certainly an important concert event, since the collaboration is in itself a sign of healthy musical times. When Lewis performed it himself a few weeks before in New York, the song was noticeably flaccid, lacking in every important element that made it successful. Lewis at that time had grinned his way through a version that left the audience visibly disappointed.

Surrounded by Earth, Wind and Fire in Philadelphia, Lewis had but to parade his chops, while the synthesizers, the horn section and the patented vocals soared all around him. Lewis acknowledged his vulnerability with that motion, acknowledging that *Sun Goddess* was not his triumph but Maurice White's.

**I**t ain't easy being significant. Of all the black bands that came into prominence at the beginning of the '70s, only Earth, Wind and Fire have evidenced a steady growth. Mandrill has experienced decline, fed partly by lack of leadership and an inability to keep a consistent unit. Kool and The Gang have experienced a confusion arising from sudden national acceptance following years of laying waste to the chitlin' circuit. The Ohio Players have achieved wealth and become lost in the glory of materialism. War has undergone the same thing, their future growth inhibited by their musical limitations.

Earth, Wind and Fire's sound has always been the most deliberately commercial of all these bands, even though their lyrical content has always expressed a desire to communicate outside of the sphere r&b normally relegates it to. On their first album, released in 1971, most of the elements that are responsible for the group's current sound were already evident, among them the smooth ensemble vocals that tended to focus on the group rather than the individual vocalist, the adventurous sense of rhythm, and that personal approach to melody which verged on the expansive.

The principals of the band were percussionist Maurice White and brother bassist Verdine, the only two members left from the original group. Pianists Wade Flemons and Donald Whitehead and Maurice wrote most of the material on the first two albums, most of which was more deliberately message-oriented than subsequent material that appeared after Maurice broke up the group and signed with Columbia, organizing a brand new, younger set of musicians.

Doing the soundtrack for *Sweet Sweetback* (Melvin Van Peebles wrote the music) was an obvious mind-blitz for the still-developing



NORMAN SEEFF

group. For their second Warner Brothers album, *The Need Of Love*, they opened with a searing mind-hop called *Energy*. The cut showed the effects of the abstractions Van Peebles had introduced them to and which Maurice later admitted he thought were ahead of their time. In terms of the Coltrane influence that White has mentioned in the past, *Energy* is the most revealing because it is pure jazz, with the presence of keyboardist Doug Carn constantly felt. The track represents Earth, Wind and Fire at its most atypical, since it lies outside the commercial direction they had earlier established and bears little resemblance to most of their work since that time. Indeed, it is a point in time that the group could conceivably go back to, now that their fans are widening their perspectives. Included on that second album is a well-thought-out arrangement of Donny Hathaway's *Everything Is Everything* and *I Think About Loving You*, which was a big favorite on the FM stations. (Warner Brothers recently re-released the first two LPs as a double record set repackaged under the name *Another Time* and it is a collection no one interested in the group can afford to be without.)

If there had ever been any doubt that Earth, Wind and Fire was a vehicle for the concepts of Maurice White, the dramatic change of personnel which occurred between *The Need Of Love* and *Last Days And Time* (their first Columbia album) clarified the matter. In spite of a growing acclaim, the original version of Earth, Wind and Fire had not been commercially successful; most of the musicians were older than White (who is now 29), and were victims of discouraging experiences in the music business. The limited success of the group was yet another discouragement; and White felt that with a younger group of musicians, the creative incentive would be better.

Around vocalist and percussionist Phillip Bailey, one of the better singers in pop, White fashioned a more energetic sound. The ensemble approach was still important, but now it actually featured White as well as Bailey. Larry Dunn added his expertise on the new generation of electric keyboards. When guitarists Al McKay and Johnny Graham, plus saxophonist/flutist Andrew Woolfolk joined for the second Columbia album, *Head To The Sky*, the creative unit was finally stabilized.

It is easy to dismiss the Columbia albums as commercially slick ventures. It is true that the production concentrated on creating a more pop-oriented sound than had been evident on the earlier albums, but that seems to be a result of maturation and discovery. *Power*, the tune that made the first album, has its antecedents in *Energy*, the group having learned how to smooth out the rhythms for mass consumption. The songs began to fall into three categories; the uptempo "message" tunes like *Remember The Children* or *Time Is On Your Side*; the smoking instrumentals such as *Power Zanzibar*, and *Africano*; and the love message ballads. Certainly songs like *Mom* or the more recent *Reasons*, which explores two different types of love, the maternal and the carnal, express a depth of understanding revealing a certain purity of intent.

The fact that Earth, Wind and Fire can now look back on four gold albums, *Last Days And Time*, *Head To The Sky*, *Open Our Eyes*, and *That's The Way Of The World*, while

maintaining their "spiritual" stance is indicative of the fact that they speak to their audiences, with music that is instructive, uplifting, and that deals directly with the "spiritual" issues confronting today's youth. Earth, Wind and Fire are respected and adored by their fans because they are a relief from the cynicism and mindlessness of most of today's popular music.

**A** conversation with group leader Maurice White offered further insights:

**db:** Do you recognize the fact that your group has taken over the position of leadership from other bands that started out four or five years ago, such as War, The Ohio Players, etc.?

**White:** We've never been in a race with any of the other bands in terms of trying to outdo them or anything. But for one thing, we've been giving the people something that they need and in doing that I think the people have put us on a certain level. It really is rewarding in that sense; but the actuality of it is that we never really were trying to outdo anybody. In the beginning a lot of people were comparing all the bands and saying that we were the same. But we are different because we all have different messages. Our thing is a thing for the people in relationship to the Creator; other groups have other things they want to say.

**db:** A few years ago, Sly was getting the kind of greeting you now receive when you hit the stage. Two years ago it was War. They all seem to have been affected detrimentally by their success. So far, it doesn't seem to have affected you personally.

**White:** I think it's only because our goals are different. We came out here to try to render a service to Mankind, not to be stars. We are actually being used as tools by the Creator. If I'm gonna try and help people then I have to remain the same, so I'll always be old country Maurice White.

**db:** Do you have a guru yet or have you started to chant?

**White:** No, I'm not into any of them. I have adopted a little from each religion that I thought applied to me, but I can't adopt any single religion because there are some good things about all of them and I try to adopt those for myself. I know a lot of people are chanting and it's probably good for them, but I don't feel I have to do that to get what I want. I meditate and it's a good thing for me, but I'm not the kind of person to imitate what a lot of other people are doing. The other guys in the group are all the same and we have a love for each other that is important in helping us create. We really dig each other.

**db:** Are you satisfied with everything you have done so far?

**White:** Yes, I think we're communicating our message to the people and also the people are allowing us to play what we want. It's a beautiful marriage.

**db:** Do you think you've reached a new stage of your development, since your latest album is actually the soundtrack to a movie, and you just cut that album with Ramsey Lewis?

**White:** It's a new beginning for us, because each time we do a new record it's a new beginning. There is always something learned from the last one. As a producer, doing those tracks with Ramsey Lewis has really been good for me, because it really did something

for my confidence. I produced the latest album with the group and that has done very well also.

**db:** Did you do those tracks with Ramsey because you felt any obligation to him?

**White:** I sure didn't. I did it because I felt he could handle the song. I felt the song was for him. It's an old song that I've had lying around for about three years. When he was getting ready to go into the studio, I decided to give it to him.

**db:** *Sun Goddess* sounds to me like something that should have followed *Zanzibar* from the *Head To The Sky* album. Both songs leave plenty of room for improvisation and a lot of people thought that *Zanzibar* was an indication of the direction you were going to take on future albums.

**White:** *Zanzibar* was something I wanted to do at the time. That changes all the time, whenever we try to take a new route. For instance, we were gonna do a suite based on the legend of *The Tower Of Babel*, but we decided to hold the idea. So the album turned out to be *Open Our Eyes*. We might use the idea for an opera that would be part of our stage show. We would still do our regular show, but we would do maybe three or four nights in a theatre and open up with the opera. I'm trying to bring an awareness of all the arts to our audience.

**db:** The guys in the group play a lot more jazz type solos on stage than they do on your albums. Are you planning a live album?

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### EARTH, WIND, AND FIRE DISCOGRAPHY

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ANOTHER TIME—Warner Bros. (repackaging of *Earth, Wind and Fire and The Need Of Love*)  
LAST DAYS AND TIME—Columbia KC-31702  
HEAD TO THE SKY—Columbia KC-32194  
OPEN OUR EYES—Columbia KC-32712  
THAT'S THE WAY OF THE WORLD—  
Columbia PC-33280

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**White:** Our next album is gonna be live. Some of it has been recorded already. They'll really get a chance to show how well they can blow because all the guys in the group are into jazz. I think the collaboration with Ramsey was inevitable because of this and we've been talking to Herbie Hancock and Charles Lloyd about doing things with them.

**db:** You must really like jazz to have left a comfortable and well-paying job in the Motown and Chess Studios to play on the road with Ramsey.

**White:** Jazz, to me, represents the ultimate in creativity. I can't sit up in the studios every day reading charts and be creative. I made a lot of money doing sessions; but I wanted to grow and that's why I started the group in the first place. One of the things that changed my life was sitting in with John Coltrane for one weekend while Elvin Jones was sick. He was very encouraging to me and he was very inspirational in terms of giving me this positive will to keep doing what I was doing. I never forget enlightening words because enlightening words don't come too often. When you get them you should utilize them. He was responsible for encouraging the concept I had in mind. I consider him the major spiritual force of his time and he still is a force.

**db:** I notice you quoted from *A Love Supreme* both on the last album and in concert tonight.

**White:** Yeah, sometimes you throw in bits of things you're familiar with without even realizing it.

**db:** Are you familiar with Sly Stone's production of *Life And Death In G And A* under the name Abaco Dream? The single *Mighty Mighty* from your last album sounds a lot like it.

**White:** I never heard that tune, but Sly was a great influence on me, just like Miles. My group has taken that and moved beyond it, but I like Sly's sound; I like the energy and I like the vocal things he has happening. If you hear it in our music it's definitely there. Another thing I think is that Sly's being from the church and my group's being from the sanctified church is why we might have similarities in our vocal sound. Both Phillip and I come from the church. Since we are the strongest vocalists, we influence the rest of the group. I think Sly opened up a whole new avenue for a lot of people. He showed that a hand could make it. He was an innovator in his time.

**db:** Why did you say *was*?

**White:** I'm not trying to say he ain't happening no more, but he was influential.

**db:** Now that you've found your own formula, do you still pay attention to what other people are doing?

**White:** Oh yeah, I'm hip to just about everything that's going on. I can listen to The Ohio Players and hear things they took from us. I regard that as a compliment. But all the guys in the group have similar tastes and we share things. We listen to a lot of Santana and a lot of Miles.

**db:** You manage to convey your message without sounding preachy, whereas a group like Kool and The Gang—who are also into messages—always sounds as if they're delivering a sermon.

**White:** It's not something we deliberately try to avoid. It's just a gift of the Creator.

**db:** Is it more fun to "communicate" to 20,000 people than it is to 200?

**White:** You must be remembering the first time we came to New York. Sure, it's better to play to 20,000. But as long as you have love, it's always fun.

**db:** Does finally getting a Top 10 single make you feel complete?

**White:** It's been a very rewarding record for us because we feel that we're communicating with the people. It makes us feel good that people are accepting our message on every level.

**db:** Did the fact you were doing a movie soundtrack for *That's The Way Of The World* make that much difference? The album doesn't sound like a movie soundtrack.

**White:** I did that deliberately because I didn't want a record that sounded like a soundtrack. It had to fit into our concept. I really worked with that album. We acted in the movie also—all the cats in the band. We play a rising young band, and the movie takes you behind the scenes of the music business. Looking at yourself on screen can really be a trip because the way you come off isn't the way you think you come off. I suddenly realized that it was the same way in everyday life, you don't really appear to others the way you think you appear. I was shocked when I saw myself on screen. It was cool but I thought I was a lot hipper! We've had a lot of offers for other movies. There is a possibility that we might be doing *The River Niger*; but right now we're just talking about it. We're getting into movies just gradually, not that we really want to get into it. But if it's an opportunity to bring something to the people creatively, then we'll do it. **db**



# RALPH TOWNER

## a Chorus of Inner Voices

by Charles Mitchell



RALPH B. QUINKE

The sound is elemental, formed of metal and wood—a guitar sound, not the white-hot electronic synapse-screams one is accustomed to within the realm of contemporary improvised music. A 12-string guitar sound, it doesn't have much to do with Leadbelly or Leo Kottke: equal virtuosity is present in full force, but this sound is radically new. The playing is jagged, deliberately voiced, with rushing lines linking together harshly plucked, semi-chordal string groupings. Yet there is a coherent, stable rhythmic sense implied.

Ralph Towner's playing on the opening section of Wayne Shorter's *The Moors* (from Weather Report's *I Sing The Body Electric*), cast him briefly into the spotlight on one of the most important fusion music sessions. Aware listeners were set on edge for further development of the acoustic direction implied by Towner's captivating acoustic 12-string textures. The cults had been forewarned, as usual, by Ralph's work with the Paul Winter Consort, represented on disc by *Road*, one of those albums that turns up in quite a few record collections where you'd least expect it. After the Weather Report album, there was another from Winter's Consort in late '72; and shortly after that, the nucleus of the Winter band broke off, calling itself Oregon and releasing the first of three collections of finely-crafted acoustic music.

16 □ down beat

Towner's work with the group and on other projects had reached such a significant point by spring of 1974 that he was voted TDWR guitarist in last year's *db* Critics Poll.

Along with his three partners in Oregon, as well as Keith Jarrett, Jan Garbarek, and McCoy Tyner, Ralph Towner is one of the main reasons why we're again looking at acoustic possibilities in the area of contemporary improvised music. This is not so much a reaction to the recent electric onslaughts inspired by Corea, McLaughlin, etc.; it's more of an unfolding of further opportunities, ways of being in sound. Return to Forever and Mahavishnu both include acoustic segments in their concerts. But though Ralph Towner has had occasion to play electric keyboards, he is committed to acoustic music in performance. It has to do with training, the processes through which his musical identity was formed.

"My commitment to acoustic music is not really a big romantic thing. I just was never interested in electric guitar. I didn't like the way it sounded; I never played with a pick, for example, because I just was never drawn to the sound of the electric guitar. I wasn't on the jazz scene until I got a classically-oriented technique on the guitar. It's a matter of training, just the way it worked out for me. I've committed a lot of years to studying acoustic instruments, and I express myself

very well on them. I do find them more sympathetic than electric instruments, but I find electric instruments fascinating too. I'm influenced a lot by them. I experiment a lot with imitating electronic sounds on acoustic instruments, for instance. There are also unique tunings that come about through electric instruments that I try to pick up, especially on the 12-string—12-tone tunings. You have to keep your ears open for electric music."

Though Towner's playing on classical and 12-string guitars, as well as piano, has matured to a great extent since the Weather Report recording, the style of that 12-string sound on *The Moors* was markedly unique starting with note one, as was Towner's music on *Road*. Part of the reason for the unusual texture is the technique Towner brings to his double-stringed axe. "The most noticeable thing is the 12-string. I haven't heard a classically trained player play a 12-string because it butchers your fingernails, which serve as your several picks. I developed a special way of plucking it that I use as well on the classical guitar. More sounds get drawn out with a much smaller stroke. I push the string down and let it roll up from my finger, more than I sweep it. It means that I'm not *brushing* the string as much as I'm really *pushing* it. It results in a lot of volume, plus my *finger* hits the strings

before the finger-nail does. The reason my finger hits first is that if you hit the vibrating string with something hard, you'll get what amounts to pick noise or (in this case) nail noise. With my technique, the sound produced by the vibrating string isn't shrouded as much in the sound made by its contact with the nail. It's a cleaner sound."

There are other elements that individualize Towner's playing. Aside from the physicality of sound production, there is Ralph's way of hearing the instrument in his musical mind: "In addition to my classically styled technique, the music that I'm playing is very keyboard-oriented. I treat the guitar quite often like a piano trio: if I'm playing alone, it's almost a one-man band approach. There'll be the melodist, the inner voices, and the bass voice. I seldom run these voices through really simultaneously, although that's the illusion. Each part of the music gets my attention as it's going by, which it does at quite a rapid rate. The illusion is created by setting up a focus of attention in the music. For example, if I play something melodically, I'll try to hang it over. If I start an inside voice beneath the melody, I'll hold the melody; I won't stop it and then start the inside voice. The melody gets hung over, and then I go to the next part. The attention of the listener or a player flows more easily; it's not shifted abruptly to what comes next.

"Also, I think of my playing approach as three-dimensional. It has levels of importance. I'll bring out or accent a note, and gradually work it back to a lesser volume level. I'm always concerned with the level of voicing, whether it's primary, secondary, or tertiary. It's a matter of controlling these things as far as the attention of the listener goes, as well as the importance of each voicing in the music. These tend to be very small discriminations, but they have important results."

The selection *Images Unseen* from Ralph's solo LP, *Diary*, offers the best opportunity to delineate Towner's voices and how he manipulates them. The piece is a textural improvisation on 12-string guitar, with gong accompaniment for further coloristic effect. Towner moves through the guitar's upper, lower, and middle registers freely, with furtive, dissonant, and abrupt power. Pure tones, lines and colors emerge, rippling and melting into one another by means of diversified accents. Prominent in this piece also is a device frequently employed by Towner, the use of implied, or "hidden" notes. Here, the jumps between the voices that Towner described above are executed so swiftly that the transitional chords or lines are merely implied—that is, voiced at minute volume or not at all. This technique is evident in the 12-string playing, but is especially prevalent in Ralph's classical guitar music, where the inherently quieter volume level allows the hidden notes to smooth the flow of the playing. For Towner, it all has to do with controlling the myriad voices to be found in his instruments.

"To take the example of the six-string guitar, your melody is on the first string, and the middle of your chord—the thirds, sevenths, and ninths—is occupying the next three strings, and you're probably playing the bass notes on the fifth and sixth. I don't necessarily have to play everything at once. I might do a figure on the bass, go up and play the melody for just a second—this is either an improvised line or a written melody—and

leave that hang in the air, then move down again and play a lower voice or one of the inside (middle) voices, playing them a bit more quietly, so the attack doesn't drown out the focus of attention as if it were a primary voice. Then I'll return as quickly as I can to the initial melodic voice and pick it up where I left it hanging. But it's a matter of overlap, really; you don't just go through one-two-three steps.

"All good players seem to me to do that, whether they're aware of it or not. I mentioned this to Gary Burton, as a matter of fact—we play quite similarly, especially in solo situations—and even though it appears to me that he does the very same thing, he doesn't think that way. He considers the total instrument and the motion all over it. But also, the vibes are very visually oriented and the guitar isn't in the same way. The guitar can be more easily abstracted in its totality. It's very complicated, really; but it's the classical technique that allows me to make discriminations in volume, tone, and accent for individual notes and groups of notes within the total chord."

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## SELECTED TOWNER DISCOGRAPHY

### Featured

TRIOS/SOLOS (with Glen Moore)—

German ECM 1025 ST

DIARY—German ECM 1032 ST

### with Oregon

WINTER LIGHT—Vanguard VSD-79350

DISTANT HILLS—Vanguard VSD-79341

MUSIC OF ANOTHER PRESENT ERA—

Vanguard VSD-79326

### with the Winter Consort

ICARUS—Epic KE 31643

ROAD—A&M SP 4279

### with Larry Coryell

THE RESTFUL MIND—Vanguard VSD-79353

### with Cilve Stevens

ATMOSPHERES—Capitol ST-11263

VOYAGE TO URANUS—Capitol ST-11320

### with Weather Report

I SING THE BODY ELECTRIC—

Columbia KC 31352

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The usual canard about a "classical" approach to improvised music prattles on about a loss of spontaneity, a dry, sterile attitude. Towner's debunk: "To me, there's nothing to be uptight where a 'jazz' player's concerned about being classically trained or influenced. On the contrary, it's a technique, in a way, of being able to make really fine discriminations and articulation in playing." It represents Ralph's approach to the instrument, rather than a style, or a specific, limited way to sound.

Since Ralph's guitar playing is keyboard oriented, it would be natural to assume that his musical start came on the ivories. It's only partially true. "My mother was a piano teacher," he explains, "so there was always a piano in the house. I was imitating classical things when I was three years old, I guess. I just found out about that last summer, and it made me feel like I was a little bit precocious, at least, since I started the guitar when I was 23. I wasn't drawn to jazz and forms of improvisational music until I was 20—very late. I studied cornet and trumpet until I was 17. That gave me my reading

background."

Towner's musical development was thus two-pronged; he studied classical music on guitar and began to get into improvisational music—jazz—on the piano. "The Scott La Faro-Bill Evans combination really hooked me into jazz, and I'm influenced quite a bit by bass players in my approach to the guitar, as well as by pianists. So I guess the trio concept has really been applied to my guitar style. I started strictly as a classical guitar player, however, without any real notion of improvising, at the same time I was playing jazz piano. I was, at one time, involved with imitating Bill to a T on piano. That had a rather devastating effect on my personality until I realized I was a lot more violent than Bill; then I was able to develop from that."

Ralph's keyboard debt to Evans is acknowledged on his first LP for German ECM, a collaboration with Oregon bassist Glen Moore called *Trios/Solos*. Side two opens with a Towner reading of Evans' *Re: Person I Knew* (Bill's anagrammed tribute to producer Orrin Keepnews). It's a faithfully executed commentary on the Evans impressionistic style, but doesn't show much of Ralph as an original keyboard artist. Subsequent recordings on *Diary* and with Oregon show Towner to be less concerned with swinging *per se* than Evans, and more inclined to establish a subtler sense of rhythmic flow. But Ralph shares the Evans penchant for introspection, refraining, however, from the moodiness that causes Bill's frequent idiosyncratic touches.

"I was drawn to the guitar, strictly as a student composer—from the classical end. I now practice classical music strictly because it gives me a guideline that I tend to be lax in following if I just play what I want to play, because I'll play what I can do. If it's a classical piece, it's going to be something I wouldn't ordinarily do with my fingers or musically. It's a vehicle that I can learn from, to control voices, and so forth.

"The result of all this technical talk," Ralph returned to the original subject of the conversation, "is hopefully to put more emotion in your playing. It's not something to be afraid of; 'technique' is a maligned word. It really gives me a greater vocabulary to be more emotional in my playing."

During our Blindfold Test (March 13, '75) Ralph made a passing remark about "putting the instrument before the playing," and I wondered if this was what he meant in stressing the technical qualities in service of the emotional input. "When you're playing your music, it's too late then for you to think about your technique. You're just playing music. You can't say to yourself, 'Now I'm going to play this lovely short note here.' It's too late. Because if you think that way, it pulls you away, divides your attention. That internal dialogue has to stop when you really start to perform. In this sense, playing is really a form of meditation: the internal dialogue ceases. Any interruption of self-consciousness derails the piece, especially on guitar, because the margin of error is so great on the classical guitar. If you don't have the note pinned down just right, it'll slip and sound stupid. You can't think about technique then. It should be an instinctive drawing from your developed knowledge and resources, without being interrupted by other people or yourself. You can draw energy, for example, from a crowd, but you don't take

conscious notice of them or what you're doing. Now, Oregon's music is frequently referred to as spiritual, and it's spiritual insofar as any music is, in this sense that we've just been talking about."

Ralph picked up the 12-string guitar almost by accident, after he decided to play improvisationally on guitar, and as the direct result of meeting and playing with Paul Winter. "Before I met Paul, working in New York, I was a jazz pianist, really; it was easy to hear my roots there. And as an improvising musician on the classical guitar, I was really into kind of a more stretched-out Baden-Powell thing, with a more complicated harmonic base. Really Brazilian in my approach, though. So I was a Brazilian-style guitarist and a jazz pianist, working mainly as a pianist because of the volume and acoustical problems of working with classical guitar and trap drums. I like trap drums, but unless you're in a recording studio, playing a classical guitar with them is impossible.

"Getting back to Paul, when I first met him, he had a 12-string and wanted me to try to play it. My first reaction was, 'My God, I'll break my fingernails off!' It was like playing a cheese grater, awful. But it was a wonderful guitar. An interesting thing about the Winter Consort was that they were avoiding any style I was capable of playing in: but it was quite an eclectic mixture that they were into. I really wanted to try and write some music for their format—trying perhaps to weld it into something more unified. Not making it a synthesis group, playing all kinds of music from all over the world with all kinds of instruments, but using those instruments to make a music."

A stylistic direction was what was needed, and Towner's music, heard on *Road* and the later *Icarus*, provided it to a considerable extent, leading the Winter Consort from its previous classico-Renaissance pretensions into a more thoroughly integrated modern chamber music. "I wanted to do something that really sounded good with all of the instruments, that wasn't this, that, or another thing. After I played awhile with the group, I got to know everyone's voices." The *Road* and *Icarus* albums are both models of enlightened early fusion music from the then rarely heard acoustic point of view, with only the best work of the British group Pentangle matching the craft of its blend. Eventually, however, it was musical differences of opinion and direction that led Towner, bassist Glen Moore (who appeared on *Road* but was replaced by Herb Bushler on *Icarus*), reed player Paul McCandless, and multi-instrumentalist Colin Walcott to defect and create Oregon, whose music has its seeds in these two LPs by the Winter Consort.

In any case, it was Paul Winter who led Ralph to the 12-string and said, "Play." Ralph credits his involvement with the instrument to leading him out of "jazz" as a strict concept, and into other areas. Even today, Ralph's relationship with the instrument is somewhat unusual. "Actually, I don't practice the 12-string all that much, and the harmonic things I get into are actually simpler than the ones I use on the classical guitar. Some effects that the 12-string creates are just great, but the more standard things that you'd try on a six-string just don't come off as well at all. The same voicings that

sound well on the classical won't sound the same on the 12, so I don't make any attempt to play the same way on the two instruments. The 12-string has to be adapted to on its own. The new tunings I've tried didn't even come about until recently."

Asked to elaborate further on his uses for each guitar, Towner replied, "I haven't really figured out a way to express that in words yet. I find it's easier to play the classical guitar; it's a more flexible instrument. I can play more complicated lines on it. The interplay among the voices is really more pianistic than on the 12-string. I can accent more unusual notes on the 12-string, however. I can also create walls of things, really complex patterns in which the accents are always different. Every instant I'm trying to bring something else. I like to do a lot of poly-rhythmic things on the 12-string, just through accents. It's funkier too. I can bend strings. If I try that on a classical guitar, it sounds a little silly to me—sometimes I can do it." (An example of where classical guitar string bending is successful is on Towner's duet *The Rough Places Plain* with sitarist Colin Walcott, on the first Oregon album for Vanguard. Here, Ralph mimics the notebending technique of the Indian instrument to great effect.)

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**"When you're by yourself, you can do complete about-faces if you want. There's complete control over your power. The sad thing, I find, is that when you're finished playing your concert, there's nobody to discuss it with; you're all alone."**

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Further exemplification of Towner's style on each guitar can be gleaned from his recordings. The influence of Indian music in Towner's 12-string work is very strong, especially the rhythmic element, in the Winter Consort's two discs. *General Pudson's Entrance*, a Towner composition from *Road*, demonstrates Ralph's predilection for breaking up tempos into polyrhythms. The guitar's rushed, agitated rhythmic strumming is set against more evenly flowing lines. *Icarus'* 12-string/tabla duet with Walcott called *Juniper Bear* illustrates the point even further. Here, the interplay between strings and percussion is truly stunning, as Towner applies his 12-string techniques more directly to an Indian format. It's similar to his playing on *The Moors*, only in a more rhythmically defined (albeit broadly) space. The jagged chording is still linked by dazzling multi-note runs and hidden notes, with more bent strings and ringing plucked notes adding more accent tension.

Another good introduction to Towner's 12-string voices can be found on the title tune from Oregon's *Distant Hills* album. In his short solo, Ralph again explores the full ranges of voices and accents, this time in a more melodic, less purely textural piece than the solo album's *Unseen Images*. He provides the best example of Towner's 12-string breadth in a compressed space. On *Entry In A Diary* (from the ECM *Diary* LP), Towner's accents for the 12-string are given full play: because he tends to play quieter passages on the double-stringer more slowly and deliberately than on the classical, the diversification of ways to emphasize notes is especially ap-

parent.

On selections like *Dark Spirit* (from the *Distant Hills* album), *Ode To A Fillmore Dressing Room* (from *Winter's Icarus*), and in several other places on Oregon's new album *Winter Light*, one can hear that Ralph's classical guitar work is more evenly flowing, dynamically and linearly. The touch is lighter and notes are perhaps struck more precisely than on the 12-string. The six-string chording employed by Towner creates more of a blanket-like, coloristic base, rather than serving as rhythmic punctuation. All in all, the approach is more traditional in surface style, but Towner's unique musical mind and way of hearing guitar music stamps the style with his own strong identity.

Our conversation turned to problems of amplification in acoustic music. Being heard correctly, especially in a live situation when one has to compete with traps and possibly reeds, is perhaps the most severe technical problem an acoustic guitarist has to face. "I did a recent album for ECM (unreleased at press time) with Jan Garbarek and Jon Christensen, and we did a rock-and-roll type number where I tried a pickup on the 12-string. It just didn't come off. You see, what's happening is that all the overtones are happening about a foot or two out from the guitar. They

have to happen in space rather than through the wood. A pickup and contact mike are just picking up the initial vibrations, eliminating most of the exciting qualities of the 12-string."

Those overtones are a key fixture in much of Towner's music on both guitars and piano. On his piece *Aurora* from Oregon's *Distant Hills*, for example, Towner overdubs piano and guitar, employing sustained chordal overtones to form a drone base. It's a totally acoustic effect, one which can't be duplicated on electric instruments. Towner thus can't endorse making the halfway step of amplification that the pickup provides between acoustic and solid-body electricity. "Not yet. At least not until they invent some kind of a built-in microphone—they may have already, I don't know. I really haven't tried to find an acceptable method of picking up on acoustic that much. In one Oslo club with Garbarek and Christensen, I had to use a pickup because the sound system was bad and I couldn't be heard over the drum. I stuck on a Barcus Berry, plugged into an amp, and promptly drowned everyone out. It's like some kind of a zealot; I find that the worst offenders of drowning out other musicians are converted acoustic musicians. I played electric piano in jamming situations last year with Jan Hammer, and got off on playing just as loud as I could."

Ralph's electric piano playing is heard on two LPs by British reedman Clive Stevens. His tone on the electric keyboard leans to a high distortion level, but his style follows a pattern set by the acoustic work, as rapid single-note lines give way to blocks of

# Clifford Thornton

## FLOWERS IN THE GARDENS OF HARLEM

by Robert Palmer



BISCEGLIA

Middletown, Connecticut doesn't look like a musical town. It's close enough to the industrial belt around New York City to have a factory ambience, the roads always seem to be torn up, and the Dunkin' Donuts and Wesleyan University look like the only places that could possibly be popping. The University is. Clifford Thornton, Marion Brown, Ed Blackwell, and a number of African, Indian, and Indonesian musicians were there this spring. During the past few years, other visiting artists and instructors have included Jimmy Garrison and Sam Rivers.

Thornton, a cornetist, valve trombonist, and composer who has recorded five albums as a leader and numerous others with Archie Shepp, Sun Ra, and Sunny Murray, lives in a white clapboard house at the end of an unmarked driveway. He's a tall, lean 39-year-old with a pointed beard that looks vaguely Abyssinian set upon a strikingly open face. He lives simply, with a record player, tapes, a small bookshelf of essentials, basic furniture, an ancient but well-oiled baritone horn, and cats. He's been at Wesleyan since 1969; and now he's leaving.

Late in 1974, he recorded an LP with the Jazz Composer's Orchestra which combines traditional African and contemporary Afro-American musics in a unique and very exciting manner. *The Gardens Of Harlem*, soon to

be released by JCOA Records, is in fact the first "jazz" work to take African music at face value. Seven percussionists are featured playing African instruments, but rather than turn them loose on a rough rhythmic framework, as jazz composers usually do, Thornton has structured their interplay as strictly as an African master drummer would have. His studies with African musicians, principally the Ghanaian drummer Kobena Adzenyah and the Nigerian musicologist Fela Sowande, led him to conclude that this relatively tight kind of control is necessary if African poly-rhythms are to exist and function on their own terms. But Thornton has gone further. He has composed call-and-response figures for horns with the direct inspiration of field recordings from Africa, being careful to convey as much as possible of the actual choral voicings and phrasing of particular tribes.

"I wanted," he says, "to preserve idiomatic integrity, and that meant notating so as to minimize questions of interpretation. It all depended on accuracy of notation, actually, especially notation of rhythms. But these pieces are not transcriptions. Here's where I'm coming from: if we can seriously set down these rhythms, and more than that, understand the philosophical and religious bases for their existence, meanings, and functions, then we'll be further evolving out

of the tradition of African-derived cultures. We'll be evolving authentically if we can directly reflect and grow out of a continuum which is recognizable, definable, and African in origin while retaining our own contemporary ears and feel. That's where my title comes from. All the African-derived cultures of the Caribbean and South America are alive in the ethnic neighborhoods of New York City. They flower in the gardens of Harlem."

Devotees of the New Black Music of the '60s who have heard Thornton in furiously free-wheeling improvisational contexts will doubtless be surprised to hear him talk of the need for accuracy of notation, for compositional control. Yet improvisation is nowhere more rigorously controlled than in West African drumming, in which the accurate playing of rhythm parts by most of the participants is absolutely essential and only one or two master musicians will usually play variations or improvised cross-rhythms. One wonders how this fact of African life relates to the back-to-Africa aesthetic of so many "free energy" players during the '60s. Thornton's answer is characteristically outspoken.

"During the '60s," he says, "the prevailing opinion seemed to be that free playing was a return to African roots, a rejection of Western criteria. But while we were busy feeling that we were returning to the roots, it would have been better put to say that we were *looking* for those roots. In fact, we're just now learning what African music sounds like and how to perform it. It seems so much hysteria was whipped up by the events of the '60s, that our notions of what really constitutes this sense of tradition, of a lineage continuing in our culture, got somewhat out of focus. At the time, I got the feeling that because of the political implications, those thoughts were best kept to one's self."

For Thornton, as for several other musicians then associated more or less exclusively with the black avant-garde, the event which more than any other introduced them to African musical traditions was the Pan-African Festival, held in Algiers in the summer of 1969. Thornton performed there with Archie Shepp, Sunny Murray, Alan Silva, Dave Burrell, and Grachan Moncur III, all of whom jammed with folk musicians from almost every African nation informally and in various festival programs. "By 1970," Thornton remembers, "I had become conscious that we were all really wiped out by the trip. I knew I wasn't the same, and when I talked to Archie about it he told me the same thing. There had been this crush of different kinds of people there, from the blackest cats to cats who looked white, all these different languages and cultures and *still*, it sounds jive but it really was like a big, happy family. People were always asking us to come and participate in things, in parades. There was a lot of parading; Murray would join in with just a cymbal and we would all just walk through the streets playing. We played in five programs, the last of which also featured Nina Simone, Miriam Makeba, and Oscar Peterson.

"Archie is probably the best example of the effect the Festival had. His works since 1969 have largely been in the direction of re-exploring and re-firming up elements from the past in this African-American continuum we're talking about, especially his work with the big bands. Now he's chosen to do it main-

**“During the '60s, the prevailing opinion seemed to be that free playing was a return to African roots, a rejection of Western criteria. But while we were busy feeling that we were returning to the roots, it would have been better to say that we were *looking* for the roots. In fact, we're just now learning what African music is all about and how to perform it. It seems so much hysteria was whipped up by the events of the '60s, that our notions of what really constitutes this sense of tradition, of a lineage continuing in our culture, got somewhat out of focus.”**

ly in terms of a black *American* basis, while I'm more intrigued by the more ancient elements. The others—Grachan, Murray, Silva—have gone in their own ways, and the effects haven't been so obvious. But probably, in their own terms, they were affected just as strongly.” Some of the Festival's effects were immediately evident in the recordings the musicians made in Paris immediately after they left Africa, for the now defunct BYG label. Thornton's *Ketchaoua* is still centered around collective improvisation; but the title is a tribute to a mosque in Algiers which is recognized as an architectural masterpiece. There are also North African touches in some of the playing. Shepp's *Yasmina*, *A Black Woman* is an intense and deliberate workout with repeating, interlocking horn figures in West African style and powerful drumming by both Murray and Philly Joe Jones.

But it is Murray's *Homage To Africa* which captures the spirit of the African experience with the most immediacy. The work's rhythmic impetus is carefully channeled, and a lovely rising line is repeated by the horns while percussion instruments create changing colors around it. The most prominent solo voice is actually a voice, Jeanne Lee's. All three LPs, along with many other exciting but less African-inspired albums, were recorded during a two-week period in August and released during the next few months. *The Gardens Of Harlem* is directly descended from these important works, but the perspective it affords on the spirit and substance of the continuum makes it a more knowledgeable, deeper piece of music.

**T**his is as it should be; Thornton's jazz roots run deep. His grandfather and uncle played baritone saxophone and clarinet in various Philadelphia bands; and Clifford himself spent several formative years around the music of John Coltrane, Red Garland, Clifford Brown, and other players active around Philadelphia. Jimmy Golden, a pianist who played with Billy Eckstine and Sarah Vaughan at the Earl Theater there, was an uncle. In New York City, Thornton played in teenage bands with Ray Draper and Pete LaRoca.

To begin at the beginning, Clifford Thornton was born September 6, 1936, in the City of Brotherly Love. His father played clarinet in a marching band, and one of his most vivid early memories was of drum-and-bugle and brass bands parading through his neighborhood: “They had bugles from trumpet-size all the way up to brass bugles, and the rhythms were out of sight.” When he was 11, his family moved to New York. Soon he was at-

tending a South Bronx junior high school. “It was a rough area,” he says, “a bucket of blood. Gang fighting and shootings were the commonest thing in the world, day and night. But it was a real musical neighborhood too: loud speakers, candy stores, record shops. There was a lot of island music, played by Puerto Ricans and West Indians.” Then the family moved to Harlem, where Clifford “got this job delivering telegrams for Western Union and delivered my ass off so I could buy myself a trumpet. I'd been in kids' drum and bugle corps so I could play it, even if I didn't know what I was supposed to do with my fingers. That horn was a sad piece of nothing, but I kept it from the time I was 13 until the time I was in an Army band in Korea.

“I graduated from high school in '54 and went to Temple University in Philadelphia, in music education. That was a drag, because what I wanted to do was learn how to play. I was *involved* by that time, playing in the school orchestra and improvising, but Philadelphia was popping with Trane and Clifford Brown and so on and I wanted some *action*. So I went back home, and I was living uptown and woodshedding. I'd known Draper and LaRoca and other people since high school, though Ray was two years younger than me. Anyway, when I was 19 and he was 17 and a senior at the High School of Performing Arts—which I'd attended also—we had a little band together and we won a contest sponsored by Jazz Unlimited, an organization something like Jazz Interactions today. The prize was to play in Birdland, which was heavy, right? We'd been

following Jackie McLean and various other people around and now we were playing in the same place. I knew then that it was really getting serious and I approached Donald Byrd about giving me lessons. And he was beautiful. Jimmy Owens was studying with him at the same time. I saw Donald as recently as 1973; in October, 1972 we played in a Tribute to John Coltrane together, with Nathan Davis, Richard Davis, Roland Hanna, Max Roach. He was burning then, too.”

The U.S. Army claimed Clifford's services from 1958 to 1961. He played in an entertainment unit, saw Korea, Hong Kong, and Tokyo. “It was like school for me, because I got a lot of experience playing—not trying to be hip, but just playing whatever it was. It sounds really heavy to say it now, but when my time was finished somebody said, ‘Hey, you, it's time to go home.’ And I said, ‘Wait, who? Me? Oh, no I'll take another one.’ It was too mellow: Manila, Hawaii, all the jazz in Tokyo. But then I came back in 1961, through the Army terminal in Oakland, and I'd gone through there several times and was kind of fascinated with San Francisco. I just stayed for awhile.”

It was the right time to be in the Bay Area. Pharoah Sanders, Dewey Redman, Sonny Simmons, Monty Waters, Earl Cross, Smiley Winters, and numerous other musicians were there playing. The night life was probably as reminiscent of Kansas City in the '30s as any in the country. “There was Basin Street West and the Jazz Workshop, all these little coffee houses with live music, all during regular hours. Then there were six after-hours clubs—Soulville, Bop City, and so on, where you could go for music, a pigfoot, and a bottle of beer. *Then* the breakfast clubs were popping from six to ten in the morning, where you could get waffles and still session. Then you'd go home and go to sleep, get up and practice and get ready for the next night, if you could stand it.”

The music was transitional: it was looking forward to the rest of the decade but without sacrificing its grounding in bebop. “Simmons was a little older than the other people, I think, and he was *heavy*. He had a lot of respect accorded him. He more or less led the way. The music was sort of like early Eric Dolphy: boppish, riff-like heads, usually in unison or simple harmony, and they would keep even time, a pulse. But the solos would be a little more adventurous, going out beyond the bebop context. It was really interesting music, and *fierce!* Ron Carter said the sessions out there were like gladiatorial combat, and he was right.”

By 1963, the glow had gone. “It's strange,” Clifford reflects, “how a culture will change just like a snowfall. It can come down over a place in a matter of months . . . different scene. Whatever the energy was that brought people around each other has dissipated and who knows where anybody goes?” He returned to New York City in April. That fall he ran into Pharoah Sanders on the street. “It was incredible, like, ‘You! You're still alive!’ And through Pharoah I was soon working with Sun Ra, at places like the Jazz Gallery on Bleecker Street. There was music all through MacDougal Street, all over that whole area. I remember Sun Ra and Cecil Taylor back-to-back in a tiny little place called the Take Three. Anyway, from '63 through '67 I played with Sun Ra, in a group

## SELECTED THORNTON DISCOGRAPHY

### as Leader

FREEDOM AND UNITY—Third World 9636

KETCHAOUA—Byg 529 323

THE PANTHER AND THE LASH—

America 30 AM 6113

COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK—Third World

12272

THE GARDENS OF HARLEM—JCOA 1008

with **Archie Shepp**

YASMINA, A BLACK WOMAN—BYG 529304

BLACK GYPSY—America 30 AM 6099

CORAL ROCK—America 30 AM 6103

PITCHIN' CAN—America 30 AM 6106

ATTICA BLUES—Impulse AS-9222

with **Sunny Murray**

HOMAGE TO AFRICA—BYG 529303

SPIRITUAL INFINITY—Columbia (unissued)

with **Sun Ra**

OTHER PLANES OF THERE—Saturn kh-98766

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Saturn 9956

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# RECORD REVIEWS

Ratings are:

\*\*\*\*\* excellent, \*\*\*\* very good,  
\*\*\* good, \*\* fair, \* poor

## JAN GARBAREK/ KEITH JARRETT

**BELONGING**—ECM (Polydor) 1050 ST: *Spiral Dance*; *Blossom*; 'Long As You Know You're Living Yours

Personnel: Garbarek, soprano and tenor saxes; Jarrett, piano; Palle Danielsson, bass; Jon Christensen, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

This was getting ready to be a five-star album till the longest and last cut, *Solstice*, hit some saggy spots. Still, there are some beautiful things on it, and it's wonderful that four normal acoustic instruments using more or less familiar voicings and structures can create so much that's new and vital.

*Spiral* is a good introduction to the session, serious but not sober. Jarrett sets up a left hand drone and plays off right hand figures against it: the melody—surprisingly, given the drone effect—evokes the days of hard bop. Garbarek states it on overdubbed tenors, but doesn't do much in the way of a solo. Danielsson does, however: a warm bass outing with infectious locomotion and impressive subtlety but with less clear definition and articulation than is needed.

A similar astonishment surfaces on *Long As*. The setting, performed by the piano trio, is nearly pure gospel, but the melody contains some Caribbean flavoring and some fascinatingly unexpected accents, sliding between bar lines in a most unspellish manner. (Garbarek begins his solo with mid-Eastern drone sequences, just to muddy the water further.) All in all, some delightful contrasts—effective tension sans a trace of melodrama.

But *Blossom* is the best thing on the album, 12 minutes of inspired improvisation. Jarrett begins it unaccompanied, with Garbarek and the rhythm joining for the head, then some gorgeous free form dialogue occurs between piano and tenor, with Garbarek leading the way. He plays throughout the album with something like Barbieri's tone and phrasing, especially the lyrical Gato. (Compare *Belonging* to *Last Tango*, for instance.) Not disturbingly derivative, certainly, but also not a clearly individuated voice, missing the suppleness required by a master of nuance like Jarrett. Still, Garbarek is a strong player who does not fear lyricism and who doesn't hedge or mumble his mouth, and the abstract structure of his statement on *Blossom* seems strikingly rich and full. Jarrett follows, also in a lyrical mood; most of his solo is melodic drifting. But it's always original and attractive, and he ends it with a perfectly placed, half-humorous, irresolute tinkle. Danielsson concludes with another warmly melodic excursion, more fully realized than on *Spiral*.

Maybe *Windup* is better yet. The chart is wonderful: another happy gospel riff, but a 22 □ down beat

wholly unexpected melody with, again, contrasting rather than congruent rhythms. Once you acclimate yourself to the tune, it seems inevitable, seems to have been prepared for from the beginning, but the first few moments are the first drop on a roller coaster on a sunny day with your lover sitting next to you.

And Jarrett's solo sparkles. He uses a relatively consistent rhythmic figure to hop around jaggedly; again, he demonstrates that without many formal or superficial constraints, a highly disciplined and inventive musician can create a virtually palpable structure that defines itself in the process of coming into being.

There's a false ending after this marvelous solo, and then Garbarek does some unaccompanied work on soprano, demonstrating that there are other tones available on that instrument besides Bechet's and Trane's. After his statement, some group improvisation of a harsher, freer sort ensues: then a wholly new call-response riff, apparently initiated ad lib by Jarrett, and finally the reprise of the head. From beginning to end, taking into account the tune, the arrangement, the empathy among the players, the spontaneous textural alterations, and the individual solos, this is one of the best improvisational performances of recent years.

Which is why *Solstice* is a letdown. It's quite long (13:15), and much of it is a three-way conversation among piano, bass, and drums, with Garbarek commenting occasionally. The energy level simply has diminished, however, and the freshness and purposefulness of the playing elsewhere on the date is too seldom evident. Such an elating album; such a deflating conclusion.

Let us not be ungrateful, though. Despite the last cut, despite the relative mediocrity of Christensen (more than competent, but scarcely breathtaking), despite Garbarek's recurrent failure to change his status from that of fine soloist to that of major musician, the offerings here are a welcome and inimitable gift, the sort of soft but persistent and supportive zephyr that can keep your spiritual kite aloft almost indefinitely. —heineman

## THE HEAD HUNTERS

**SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST:** Arista AL 4038; *God Make Me Funky*; *Magic*; *Here And Now*; *Daffy's Dance*; *Rima*; *If You've Got, You'll Get It*.

Personnel: Bennie Maupin, saxello, bass clarinet, tenor sax, acoustic piano, vocals; Bill Summers, djembe, log drum, cow bells, sleigh bells, guiro, maracas, quica, balafon, tamborim, bongos, caxixi, shekere, congas, gankoqui & agogo, berimbau, pandeira, hindewhu, cabasa, marimbula, balinese gongs, vocals; Mike Clark, drums, vocals; Paul Jackson, electric bass, vocals; Blackbird McKnight, electric guitar, vocals. Added on track 3 and 5: Joyce Jackson, flute, alto flute; Zak Diouf, djembe; Baba Duru, bass drum, bell, percussion; Harvey Mason, percussion. Track one, The Pointer Sisters, background vocals.

★ ★ ★ ★

The Head Hunters, of course, is Herbie Hancock's group sans Herbie—at least as a participating musician. He is in the wings, however, as co-producer as well as the inspiration, I suppose, behind the band's brand of the jazz-rock-r&b synthesis, a musical mongrel that's been a major '70s vehicle for introducing superior musicians and music to the populace by dressing their art in electric funk.

This is formula music, in a sense, based on simple rhythms and is at times melodically shallow. How well it comes off depends a lot

on what's laid on the rhythmic base, i.e. the musical imagination of the group. In recent months there have been a number of albums released by fine musicians exploring—often for commercial reasons—the jazz-rock-funk genre, and many of these offerings have sounded like a collection of dreary clichés relentlessly pursuing tedium.

Head Hunters with Herbie Hancock was rarely devoid of inventiveness. Without him, the group is equally solid, with Maupin's reeds and flute becoming the central voice. The music, collectively composed by the group, stays within the boundaries of contemporary funk, yet manages to mix traditional r&b with the avant-garde and African folk feelings.

*God Make Me Funky* is typical jazz funk: Clark lays down the simple beat while Summers creates counter and complementary rhythmic patterns via his diverse assemblage of African and South American percussion instruments. McKnight, who has a fine grasp of guitar electronics, fills the space that might otherwise be handled by an electric keyboard, and Jackson, whose strong fluid bass embroiders and punctuates the underlying rhythms, comes up with an excellent vocal backed by the ubiquitous Pointer Sisters. Maupin's tenor solo begins conventionally but soon grows exploratory as the group cooks relentlessly. The cut has the dimensions of a hit.

*Magic* is an African rhythm piece with Summers featured on percussion. *Here and Now* is a fairly diverse piece full of tempo changes that is ultimately anchored by driving African percussives. Maupin launches a superb saxello solo here. *Daffy's Dance* is based on a light melody and features some agile guitar playing by McKnight, while *Rima* is a dark, brooding piece that dreamily explores tone and texture. *You'll Get It*, another track with vocals, is probably the weakest on the record, qualifying only as mediocre pop soul.

The Head Hunters have skillfully mixed a number of musical elements and feelings so that each track has a lot happening, both rhythmically and harmonically. Above all, they have avoided predictability. —nolan

## RETURN TO FOREVER featuring CHICK COREA

**NO MYSTERY**—Polydor PD 6512: *Dayride*; *Jungle Waterfall*; *Flight Of The Newborn*; *Sofistifunk*; *Excerpt From The First Movement Of Heavy Metal*; *No Mystery*; *Interplay*; *Celebration Suite, Paris I And II*.

Personnel: Corea, acoustic and electric pianos, clavinet, Yamaha organ, synthesizers, snare drum, marimba, vocals; Stanley Clarke, acoustic and electric bass, Yamaha organ, synthesizer, vocal; Lenny White, drums, percussion, congas, marimba; Al Di Meola, electric and acoustic guitars.

★ ★ ★ ½

Ever since the release of Return To Forever's *Light As A Feather* LP, the group has been drifting away from its original concept toward a broader-based, more rock-influenced, music. By "broader-based," I mean that the group's sound has incorporated elements of popular music, thus making it more popular in turn. But in making such a move, I think the band, and Corea in particular, has buried the innovations that made the first LP so magical.

*Where Have I Known You Before*, the album released just previous to this one, personified the electronic, automatic feel that RTF has

recently cultivated. Now, finally, *No Mystery* gives a hint—on side two only—that the group may move back into the spirited, more acoustic, more Latin, sound explored on *Light As A Feather*.

Sometimes a rating (never, even in the best of circumstances, more than a superficial classification) is based on a current achievement, sometimes on a past reputation, and sometimes, as in this case, on a future expectation. While parts of this LP are certainly enjoyable—*No Mystery* and *Interplay* come to mind immediately—the overall presentation is less than I have come to expect from talents like Clarke and Corea. The direction seems out of step, the general purpose seems divided, almost schizophrenic, as if two musical forces—one, electric, cold, computer-like, the other, vibrant, lyrical, flighty—were fighting for supremacy.

*No Mystery*, constructed from melodic echoes of acoustic piano, bass, and guitar, features the distinctive Corea technique of parallel octaves stating the theme. The group trades riffs with gentle ease, and the mood drifts, without a struggle, into *Interplay*. Here, there are more orchestral textures, and a hint of "grandness" that foreshadows (or, rather, follows) the electronic power of side one.

*Celebration*, a Corea composition in two parts, exposes this "grandness" even further, until it begins to suggest the recent work of Keith Emerson, of Emerson, Lake, and Palmer (see *Brain Salad Surgery*). In fact, Corea's use of organ, screaming synthesizer mutations, and heavy rock drum work, borrows from Emerson freely. *Part II* continues with the characteristic melody octaves and

another computerish repeating riff.

Side One I found to be abrasive and hard, although *Jungle Waterfall* features the clearest melody on the album. In all, RTF still remains in a formative stage. Future directions will hopefully highlight the skill and genius that the group undoubtedly possesses.

—kriss

## COUNT BASIE

**BASIE JAM**—Pablo 2310 718: *Doubling Blues; Hanging Out; Red Bank Blues; One Nighter; Freeport Blues*.

Personnel: Harry Edison, trumpet; J. J. Johnson, trombone; Eddie Davis, Zoot Sims, tenor sax; Basie, piano; Irving Ashby, guitar; Ray Brown, bass; Louie Bellson, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

Here is a smooth, swinging, highly listenable jam session. It's lean and well conceived, without an excess of horns. The tempos vary nicely and the congeniality of the participants is evident, if not overwhelming.

There are a couple of things lacking, however. The 12-bar blues form wears a bit frail as a vehicle for improvisation after the first few tracks, becoming stale by the end. A standard or two with some interesting changes would have provided the needed variety. Even an *I Got Rhythm*-based piece would have at least offered an alternative form to the 12-bar, three-stanza routine.

Also lacking is an organic ensemble unity to the playing, the feeling that everyone's in there pitching. The sparkling rhythm section gives things a good boost, but some driving ensemble figures could have helped make the difference between the admittedly above

average LP we have and a truly memorable and stimulating session.

One of the delights of the set, as on several previous Pablos, is hearing Count Basie press all the right buttons back there in the rhythm section. Benny Green makes some good points about timing in his literate notes. And that could be Basie's secret in pointing up the horn players' lines with such infallible perceptiveness.

As for the horns, J. J. and Davis come closest to really lifting this session into orbit via some old fashioned fireworks. If they don't quite make it, it's still a kick to hear 'em try. Sims wields a bagful of elegant phrases, as Edison tosses off all his usual trademarks. Sound is excellent and the affair is worth more than a casual listening.

—mcdonough

## SHAMEK FARRAH

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS**—Strata-East SES-7412: *Meteorology Toned; Watch What Happens Now; Umoja Suite; First Impressions*.

Personnel: Shamek Farrah, alto sax; Norman Persson, trumpet; Milton Suggs, bass; Kasa Nu-Barak Allah, piano (tracks 1 & 2); Sonelius Smith, piano (tracks 3 & 4); Clay Hemdon, drums (tracks 1 & 2); Ron Warwell, drums (tracks 3 & 4); Calvert "Bo" Satterwhite, conga (tracks 3 & 4); Kenny Harper, percussion (tracks 3 & 4).

★ ★ ★ ½

This music combines the influences of the Ornette/Don Cherry Quartet and the Coltrane / Tyner / Garrison / Jones Quartet. Still, it's a good debut album for Farrah. The musicians play together in a relaxed fashion and they listen closely to one another. What was once new and surprising is heard here in clean, clear form.

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*Meterologicly* opens with an Ornette-like theme played by the horns. Both pianists show the impact of Tyner, but on this number Allah also strikes the keyboard in a percussive manner reminiscent of Cecil Taylor.

Allah is featured on the ballad-flavored *Wach*, with the horns present only for the minor intoning of the opening and closing theme statements.

The first side is the more intellectual, while the extra percussion on the second side creates a funkier mood. *Umoja* has an African feeling. Both it and *First Impressions* employ a minimum of chords, using repeated riffs and restating theme phrases in the solos. Again, Smith comes out of McCoy's bag and mostly lays his right hand melodies against repeated chords in the left. On *Umoja* he ends his solo with a device I've heard from McCoy, a tinkling, chromatic sound as of overlapping birds and bells.

On *First Impressions*, the title already reminiscent of Coltrane, Person gets into an early '60s-Mileslike feeling, while Farrah plays out of the lyrical side of Coltrane.

These players need to find their own voices, but in the meantime they're playing together comfortably and learning to communicate. —steingroot

## JIMI HENDRIX

CRASH LANDING—Reprise MS 2204: *Message To Love; Somewhere Over The Rainbow; Crash Landing; Come Down Hard On Me; Peace In Mississippi; With The Power; Stone Free Again; Captain Coconut.*

★ ★ ★ ½

The first "legitimate" posthumous Hendrix LP since *Cry Of Love* is still not quite up to the standards of that album, let alone the three masterpieces Jimi released while he was alive: *Are You Experienced*, *Axis: Bold As Love*, and *Electric Ladyland*. But it's the best Hendrix in five years and well worth owning.

Truly innovative musicians in any style exhibit a comprehensive command of roots forged under a unique personality, original stylistic concept, new way of hearing, or what have you. The more innovative the player, the wider the scope of styles and influences that serves as the foundation of his playing attitude. Hendrix' absolute command of the many facets of Afro-American music—beginning with primitive blues, extending through soul, r&b, and, improvisatory jazz/energy music—made him a *total* player. Thus, he is as important to the ongoing history of American music as Charlie Parker, Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, and the other giants who concerned themselves with elaborating on the sonic vocabulary and language which began to be culled when man first beat drum, or tried to imitate birds.

Jimi Hendrix' thoroughly compelling modern blues concepts were thus the very essence of his style, rooted as they were in his knowledge-by-birthright of primitive blues harmonies and rhythms. His ability to inform these most basic, primal motifs with his experience in acid/electronic/white-noise possibilities exploded both Hendrix' music and personal image into mythic proportions. His lyrical visions fed this myth, as did his somewhat mysterious death. But it's the raw, blues-fed fundamentals of his playing that set him forever apart from such technically competent but essentially one-dimensional imitators as Robin Trower.

*Crash Landing's* selections are solidly in a rock-blues format, with only *Captain Coconut* exploring freer, more ethereal realms. Jimi's

playing is raw and rough-hewn, but finished. The rhythm section support, some recorded with the guitarist, some overdubbed well after his passing, all fits nicely, if unspectacularly. Only the addition of a vocal chorus on the title cut is cause for eyebrow-raising: the girls vacillate between smooth, offbeat contrast and total incongruity.

A full star gets marked off for time: the LP runs under a half-hour. With the "wealth" of material allegedly in producer Alan Douglas' vaults, failure to include two more tracks per side is just plain stinginess. —mitchell

## DONALD BYRD

STEPPING INTO TOMORROW—Blue Note (United Artists) 368: *Stepping Into Tomorrow; Design A Nation; We're Together; Think Twice; Makin' It; Rock And Roll Again; You Are The World; I Love The Girl.*

Personnel: Byrd, trumpet, flugelhorn, solo vocals; Gary Bartz, alto sax, clarinet; Fonce Mizell, trumpet, clarinet; Jerry Peters, piano, organ; David T. Walker, John Rowin, Rhonghea Southern (track 4 only), guitar; Larry Mizell, electric piano, synthesizer; Harvey Mason, drums; Mayuto Correa, congas; Stephanie Spruill, Roger Sainte, percussion; James Carter, whistling; Fonce Mizell, Fred Perrin, Larry Mizell, Margie Evans, Stephanie Spruill, Kay Haith, Lorraine Kennar, vocals.

See below

Lush but essentially faceless tepid quasi-funk in the style Byrd has utilized on his last several albums, under the direction of producer Larry Mizell. You know the drill: rhythmically thick, heavily orchestrated ensemble textures into which are mixed barely audible voices mouthing the all but meaningless inanities of these simplistic "songs," over which are superimposed improvised stitchery by Byrd and other jazz soloists. Most of the lyrics sound like the losing items in a poetry competition conducted among third-graders, while the music to which they're set is equally compelling.

All pronouncements of "accessibility" and "communication" to the contrary, how it must rankle Byrd to have achieved success with this slush! On this set, as if unconsciously disassociating himself from it, Byrd has receded even further into the underbrush of the music. Most of the time it sounds as though he's missing, perhaps not even in the studio. Most of the solo horn work—if we can characterize the ornamentation of such bland fare as such—is by altoist Bartz, who is much more in evidence on these performances than the trumpeter, whose participation is all but titular. But then Mizell's music permits so little in the way of individuality, who can blame Byrd?

This album has nothing to do with the Donald Byrd whose music I know. I hope he makes a lot of money from the use of his name. —welding

## HAMPTON HAWES

NORTHERN WINDOWS—Prestige P-10088: *Sierra Morena; Go Down Moses; Bach; Web; Tune Axle Grease; C & H Sugar.*

Personnel: Hawes, acoustic and electric piano; Carol Kaye, electric bass; Spider Webb, drums; George Bohanon, trombone; Allen DeRienzo, Snooky Young, trumpets; Jackie Kelso, William Green, Jay Migliori, saxes and flutes.

★ ★ ½

Bringing together Hawes, bassist Carole Kaye, and drummer Spider Webb was a fine idea as far as it went. Unfortunately, the idea didn't go far enough. Apparently, everyone got locked into some fairly routine arrangements and the result is that nothing develops. There's some pleasant, easy listening but



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little in the way of spontaneity and excitement. The disc just doesn't compare with Hawes' *Blues For Walls*, released about a year ago.

Hampton, who for all practical purposes is the only soloist here, has long been recognized as a strong, original pianist. But within the confines of this music he doesn't get into much. Kaye is perhaps the most interesting performer on the album, while Webb provides steady, funk-based accompaniment.

The tunes on the LP cover a variety of styles, from Spanish (*Morena*) and classical (*Bach*) to gospel (*Moses*), but all are based on sort of a jazz-r&b-pop formula that could have come from anybody—Hawes, Les McCann, et al. In other words, the musical personalities of the musicians rarely come through, and the record consequently suffers from its own built-in limitations. —nolan

## OLD WINE— NEW BOTTLES

### BOB JAMES

EXPLOSIONS—ESP Disk 1009: *Explosions; Untitled Mixes; Peasant Boy; An On; Wolfman*.

Personnel: James, piano; Barre Phillips, bass; Robert Pozar, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

I'm sure it's purely the result of coincidence that this disc appears—or, rather, reappears—just as James' second CTI album is released. While such practices have not been unknown in the record business, one hesitates to suggest ESP might possibly be attempting

to capitalize on James' current reputation as one of the foremost orchestrator-performers in the hugely successful CTI operation. Let alone trying to free-ride on the coattails of the latter's advertising and promotional activities on behalf of the pianist. No, it must be that ESP decided to reservice this decade-old album simply because they felt the music to be of such importance that attention should be newly focused on it and a new generation of listeners introduced to it, right?

The album received five stars when it was reviewed in these pages on its initial release 10 years ago, and I see no need to revise the rating. For it remains an invigorating, continually probing set of performances by a young iconoclastic pianist who communicates a deep and thrilling involvement with his materials and who, simply, never shucks in his development of them. But the austere, disciplined music offered in this album is poles apart from the more immediately accessible music James is currently associated with. This being the case, it does not seem unreasonable to expect that ESP might have more properly identified the age and orientation of the album's contents—a label pasted on the plastic shrink-wrap would have done this easily and inexpensively. —welding

### JIMMY SMITH

JIMMY SMITH—Blue Note BN-LA400-H2: *Midnight Special; Lover Man; Bucket; Mack The Knife; The Champ; Blue Moon; The Sermon; The Preacher; Pork Chop; Back At The Chicken Shack*.

Personnel: Smith, organ; Donald Bailey, drums; Art Blakey, drums (track 7 only); Stanley Turrentine, tenor sax (tracks 1 & 10); Kenny Burrell, guitar (tracks 1, 2 & 10); Lee Morgan, trumpet (tracks 2 & 7); Lou Donaldson, alto sax (tracks 2, 7 & 9); Tina Brooks, tenor sax (tracks 2 & 7); Quentin Warren,

guitar (tracks 3, 4 & 9); Thorne Schwartz, guitar (tracks 5 & 8); Eddie McFadden, guitar (track 6).

★ ★ ★

Jimmy Smith has been a consistent and prolific performer ever since he cut his first Blue Note LP back in 1956. Last time I counted, he had over 35 albums readily available, a small achievement in itself, for jazz LPs have a way of sinking into oblivion without much of a struggle. As a measure for comparison, the Modern Jazz Quartet currently has around 25 LPs on the active list, Duke Ellington has 32, and Freddie Hubbard boasts around 26.

Smith's staying power, if that's an appropriate term for his sizable backlist, is directly attributable to his steadiness over the years. Smith is certainly a flamboyant chap (many of his album covers attest to that), but he has never really ventured far from his original bag—the funky, blues-based material like *The Preacher* that he was playing back in the early 1950s.

This reissue album, part of a series from the old Blue Note catalog, samples the early Jimmy Smith, the young jazzman who followed the great funk master, Horace Silver. *The Sermon*, dedicated to Silver, is a fine tribute to the funk school—a basic F major blues with the loose, but gutsy feel, of Lee Morgan and Lou Donaldson.

Most of the selections highlight some part of Smith's early career: *The Preacher*, as mentioned previously, was his first successful opener to the jazz world, the tune that brought the organ into a secure jazz format for the first time; *Midnight Special* was his first major hit; *The Champ* represents the bebop tradition that Smith still relies on; and

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tunes like *Mack The Knife* and *Blue Moon* illustrate the "popular" side of Smith, the side that makes his LPs almost bridge the gap between "jazz" and "easy listening" releases.

For most Jimmy Smith fans, this album is covering old ground and will probably be a duplication. For those who might be discovering Smith for the first time, I really wouldn't suggest this LP as a place to start, in spite of the fact that this was Smith's start. His style is still a little immature here. His solos aren't as adventuresome as they became in the mid-1960s, and his dynamics are more subdued. Still, it's a valuable reissue and one worth referring to from time to time.—*kriss*

## JELLY ROLL MORTON

JELLY ROLL MORTON 1923-24—Milestone 47018.

\*\*\*\*\*

## BIX BEIDERBECKE/ MUGGSY SPANIER

BIX BEIDERBECKE AND THE CHICAGO CORNETS—Milestone 47019.

\*\*\*\*\*

## MA RAINEY

MA RAINEY—Milestone 47021.

\*\*\*\*\*

## BLIND LEMON JEFFERSON

BLIND LEMON JEFFERSON—Milestone 47022.

\*\*\*\*\*

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from 1923-29, six hours of jazz in the process of discovering and asserting its identity. The best of the Bix and Morton sets have been totally unavailable in the U.S. for years. There's no duplication of material on the Biograph Rainey or Blind Lemon LPs (there's at least one alternate take, though), but if you have all the previous Milestones by both, these twofer sets only add one new Rainey title plus an alternate take, and one new and three alternate Jeffersons.

I find the sound quality agreeable as a rule, an especially important consideration since most tracks date from pre-electric recording days. Milestone engineers reprocessed taped copies of original 78s and the old '50s Riverside reissues, all provided by producer Orrin Keepnews. The liners with each set are extensive and valuable, and on the whole these are among the biggest record bargains today.

Max Harrison's essay on Bix, etc., is a model of program note preparation, so thorough that further discussion is nearly superfluous. All the Wolverines recordings are here, including two alternate takes and two with Jimmy McPartland replacing Bix. The faults of the 21-year-old avant-gardist's mates are obvious; the most remarkable is a tuba player who single-handedly dragged the whole band's tempo at the slightest excuse. But as Harrison says, it was a creatively explosive time for Bix, crackling with excitement in the February, '24 sides, growing in detail by May (the "off" attack and a perfect slur in *Riverboat Shuffle*). In June he was capable of a truly lovely improvisation on the *Tiger Rag* changes, a total performance, incidentally, that most groups of the period would have been proud of (Bix's lead is in-

spired). *Davenport Blues* from the following January is an oddity, a conscious attempt to play Armstrong phrasing, something he supposedly never did.

On the 19 Bix tracks, the only other genuinely strong statement is a Miff Mole *I'm Glad* chorus featuring a tone and approach to melody that predict the pioneering styles of the great big band trombonists. (The liners fail to name the Sioux City Six, and their New York date is confused with the *Davenport* Richmond session.) The essentials of Bix's later, greater art are evident: "perfect" tone, time, technique and lyricism, a rare equilibrium in pacing, instinctive spontaneity, most of all a sense of wonder and joy in his absolute musicality. Perhaps no greater contrast could be found than the Oliver-Armstrong derivations of Spanier. His efforts, mutes and all, are perceptive, and point toward a dignity, drama, and passionate expression beyond Bix's apprehension. Both the exalted lyricism of Bix and the classic formations of Armstrong were soon to be realized, in works that affect jazzmen a half century later.

If Bix and his buddies were seeking genuine jazz at this time, Morton had already found and defined it—and was struggling mightily to present it. The excellent *Muddy Water Blues* and *Big Fat Ham* aside, the 12 makeshift band tracks are a mess: there's only the piano in three versions of *Mr. Jelly Lord* to turn to for comfort (especially fine in the big band version). But these were the non-working test models for the classic Victors, and the 19 piano solos are the heart of the set. Surely Morton deliberately set out to make his body of compositions available to a wide public for the first time, for as a rule his

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later piano rolls and recordings take more liberties.

At least eight of them are extraordinary pieces of music, though *Jelly Roll Blues* and *Kansas City Stomps* were best realized in the band versions. Ragtime Puritans may not appreciate the tempo and dynamics of *Grandpa's Spells*, but phooey on them. This is the most delicate version of *Shreveport Stomp*. *Frog-I-More* and *The Pearls* are among the finest of all jazz compositions, the first two strains of *King Porter* and the final choruses of *London Blues* are almost as wondrous, and even comparatively lightweight works (*Bucktown* or *Tom Cat*, say) are graced with delightful Morton touches of melody, rhythm, decoration.

If Bix found his way to jazz through a white pop music maze, and if Morton had to clear away a clutter of ragtime, "sweet" music, marches, Latin rhythms and operarias, Ma Rainey's route was the blues. Dan Morgenstern's comment that Rainey, of all classic blues singers, was closest to country roots may be true, but the difference between her

and "country" performers is clearly evident. Her 1924-25 side here includes Fletcher Henderson's group, with Louis Armstrong making like Oliver in *Countin' The Blues* and, better yet, Joe Smith and Charlie Green, especially *Chain Gang Blues*. But by 1928 and the second LP it was the nonsense of Georgia Tom and Tampa Red (who resembles nothing so much as a tiny insect near your ear). Ma remains thoroughly unaffected by the disasters around her: the timing and structure of her phrases show a wholehearted sophistication within the jazz idiom. *Sleep Talking Blues*, *Runaway Blues* and *Black Eye Blues* are triumphs of fine art over folk art, and the way her melody unfolds in *Sweet Rough Man* makes you forget that her accompaniment is as bizarre as the lyrics.

This sort of stylistic juxtaposition contains its own self-commentary, as when Ma's terrific "You hear me talkin' to you, I don't bite my tongue" is answered by nothing of the sort, or when, in the collapsible tempo *Deep Moanin'* she tells the Tub Jug Washboard Band, "Aw, shut up." Her range is smaller

than Bessie Smith's (her infrequent low notes are forced—note *Daddy Goodbye*) but their resemblances are clear: the timing of hesitations and accents, the recomposition, the emphasis on the strongest notes within their vocal ranges—Ma's *Mountain Jack* is three minutes of F natural repeated). If the air of vaudeville material is frequent, the force of Ma Rainey's personality transforms it (hear *Blues Oh Blues*), and each song is a unique, self-contained performance unlike any of the others. As implied, her range of material is vast, from the tragedy of *Boweavil* to the happy humor of *Black Bottom*. Surely nobody else in history could have sung *Jelly Bean*, and "I can sit right here and look a thousand miles away" remains among the most poignantly beautiful moments in all jazz. I won't attempt to answer the popular question, was she or Bessie Smith the superior singer? You've got to hear these records to decide.

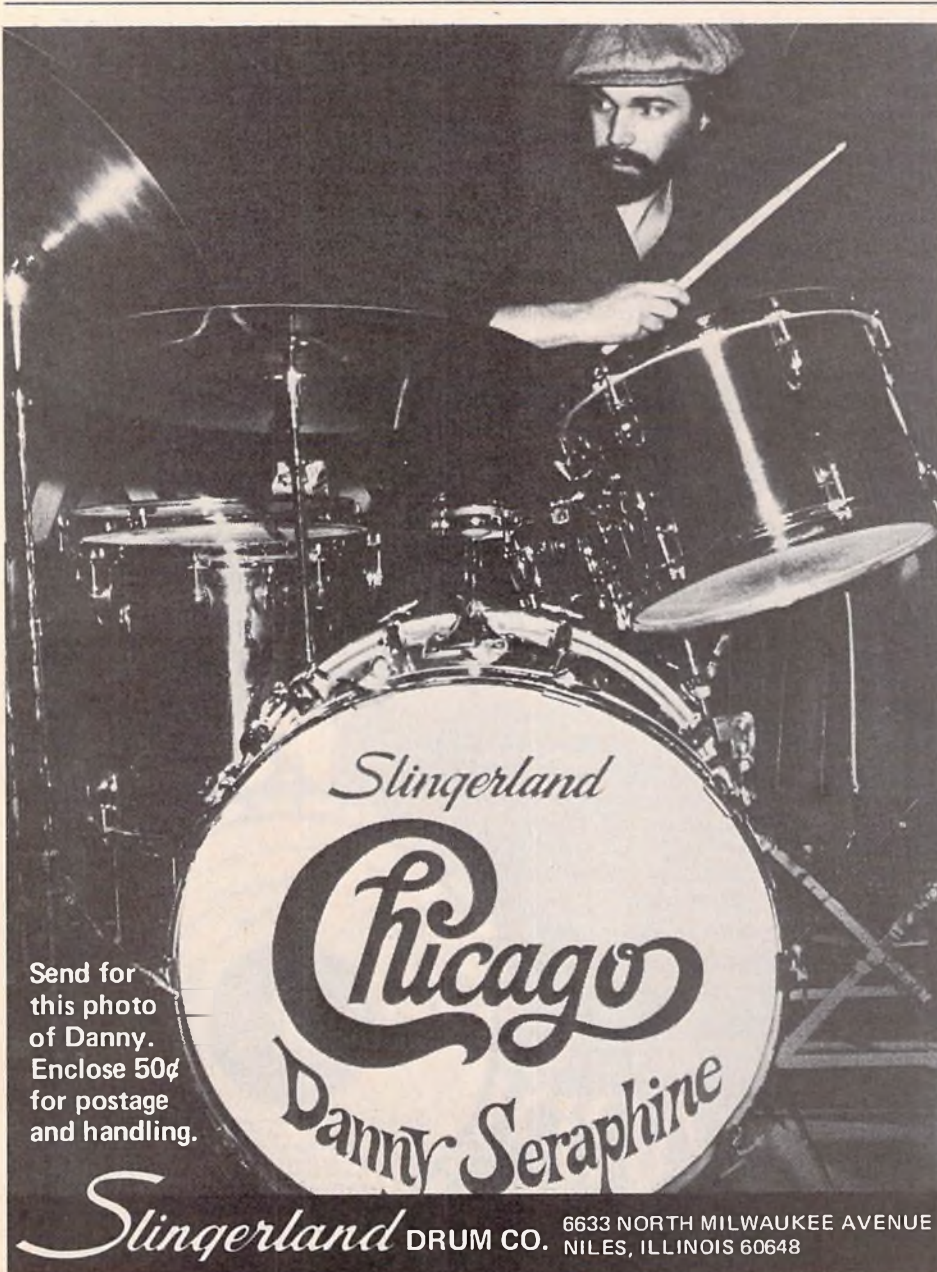
Blind Lemon has no links with the jazz of his day, and his two LPs draw from so many sources that it's impossible to derive any ideas about the origins of the blues. Especially in the earlier songs his vocals are a melange of verses from all over, sometimes floating from song to song, with no relation to one another—as in *Piney Woods Money Mama*, lines of humorous intent mingling with tragic ones in the most erratic manner. Nearly every track includes at least one line that's repeated in countless blues performances and recordings right up to tonight: how old were they when Lemon first heard them? If his guitar method recalls Mississippi, the individual figures in his fantastic lines come from everywhere. The spectrum of his material is surely broader than anyone else's, before or since: as a collector of folk material he's almost as remarkable as Leadbelly, and I certainly prefer Lemon as a singer and guitarist.

His vocal delivery is brilliantly staged: *Black Snake Moan* is an acknowledged masterpiece, but *Prison Cell Blues* is equally great, and resonates like a thunderstorm. Occasionally the voice-guitar relationship breaks down, and the time is uncertain, stop-go. More often, the two keep separate lines going, sometimes achieving an astonishing complexity without dropping or gaining tempo or even, usually, beats. He grows in asymmetry throughout these tracks, culminating in *That Growling Baby*, perhaps the peak of his art. With Lemon, the blues tradition proved sophisticated enough to accept such irregular accenting, such anticipated and delayed changes, such "mistakes" that turn out perfectly correct. The *Chock House* words, the *Match Box* guitar phrasing, the *Rising High Water* vocal, the prison blues on side three, the unbelievable guitar on the final side, these and all the rest combine in a personal, overwhelming statement. The shock waves Lemon set off have never been equalled, and prolonged exposure to this set may well cure a multitude of today's fashionable jazzmen of their arthritis. —litweiler

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\*\*\*

This is not a collection with much appeal to seasoned Ammons followers. "Greatest Hits," of course, is not necessarily synonymous with "Best Of," but since Ammons recorded for Prestige from 1950 until his untimely death last August, and his records sold consistently well, a more interesting and representative selection might've been possible.

Not to say that this LP has no merit: Ammons was very consistent, and his big, warm sound and direct, honest feeling almost always came through. It's just that, aside from *Sunset* (truly a "biggest hit"), *Angel Eyes* (one of Jug's strong ballads), *Exactly* (what a perfect tempo for relaxed swing!), and maybe *Didn't We* (he almost makes you hear the words), this is not prime Jug.

And there's the editing. Maybe it was this "single" version of *Sunset* that made the juke box coin flow, but the discarded one-minute-and-25-seconds constituted a tasty introduction and ending and enhanced the performance. *Ca'purange*, sliced down from more than nine-minutes to just 2:46, thus loses its main point: the building of rhythmic intensity. *Seed Shack* is also a truncated "single" version.

There's already one excellent Ammons twofer (*Juganthology*) on Prestige, and there'll surely be others. This one's for the racks.  
—morganstern

## WALTER BISHOP, JR.

SPEAK LOW—Muse MR5066: *Sometimes I'm Happy*; *Blues In the Closet*; *Green Dolphin Street*; *Alone Together*; *Milestones*; *Speak Low*.  
Personnel: Bishop, piano; Jimmy Garrison, bass; G. T. Hogan, drums.

\*\*\*

Walter Bishop is primarily a New York schooled pianist, whose early style is firmly rooted in the jazz urban underground of the 1950s. He recorded as a sideman for Charlie Parker and Eric Dolphy, and played at the celebrated Birdland club with Miles Davis' group during the 1951-53 period.

This is Bishop's first LP as a leader, reissued from the original Jazztime label and cut in 1961. While Bishop is a fine sideman (his work on Parker's *Swedish Schnapps* LP reveals great sensitivity), he tends to be rather low-keyed and undirected on his own. Another Bishop album which shares this fate, *Coral Keys*, was issued back in 1971 on the Black Jazz label.

Bishop's style is marked by a flowing right hand, quite funky at times, that he supports with a chordal left hand. Unfortunately, his left hand is his weakest point; many of his bright solo lines are burdened by heavy block chords, usually voiced too low for my taste.

Such is the case with *Alone Together*, a spirited ballad with Garrison playing tastefully-spaced runs. *Milestones* offers some bright moments, but Bishop takes no clear direction; his solos stop and start again and lack any overall form.

*Speak Low* is the most successful piece, and features Bishop's funky side, a style not unlike the early work of Vince Guaraldi. After a Latin ballad beginning, Bishop states the melody in full block chords, and then moves into a reeling middle section. In general, though, the disc is well-performed, but undistinguished.  
—kriss

# Blue Mitchell



DON WILLIAMS STUDIO

by leonard feather

Richard Allan (Blue) Mitchell established himself firmly on the jazz scene during a long hitch (1958-65) with the Horace Silver Quintet. Since that time, however, his achievements have not been commensurate with his still very considerable potential.

For quite a while he and some fellow-Silver alumni played together around New York, with Chick Corea in the piano spot. In 1969 Mitchell joined Ray Charles and for almost three years, through late '71, he was on the International road with that organization—a steady gig, but not one calculated to bring him individual prominence.

Settling in Los Angeles after he left Charles, Blue became an active part of the local studio-cum-jazz scene. He has worked with the Louie Bellson and Bill Holman orchestras and quite often with Bill Berry's L. A. Big Band. Most recently he has been co-leading a "bebop revisited" quintet with Richie Kamuca.

Along with these gigs, Mitchell has been quite busy recording a series of albums as a leader on Mainstream and as a sideman on a wide variety of dates. At the time of this *Blindfold* (his first), he was working in the orchestra at the Shubert Theatre with the Tony Bennett-Lena Horne show and was being given featured spots by both singers. He was given no information about the records played.

Blindfold

test

**1. HORACE SILVER.** *Mo' Joe* (from *The Cape Verdean Blues*, Blue Note). Silver, piano; Woody Shaw, trumpet; J. J. Johnson, trombone; Joe Henderson, composer, tenor sax; Bob Cranshaw, bass; Roger Humphries, drums.

First of all, I thought it was a very happy sounding recording. Those days remind me of that dynamite transition . . . I couldn't miss Art Blakey's swinging. I could be wrong. But I remember Woody Shaw, when he first hit the scene . . . Curtis Fuller, I guess; other than J. J. Johnson, he was a big influence at that time. And Joe Henderson.

I thought it was a very good sounding album. The bass player, I imagine, was Jymie Merritt. The piano player I couldn't miss; that's Horace Silver. I call Horace the father as far as my teaching, coming into the jazz world. He introduced me to a lot of new things I hadn't been used to playing. I worked with him for seven years.

I joined him right after we did an album together introducing me to the recording industry. I was commuting from Florida to New York for recordings with Riverside. At that time Horace had a trumpet player named Smitty (Louis Smith) and he had to go back home to continue his teaching. Horace called me up and asked me was I interested in coming with the band. Of course I was—a little nervous about it, but I'd always admired him, even during the time he was with Art Blakey.

I loved that composition. I'd have to give this record at least four stars.

**2. ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAZZ IN THE SIXTIES.** *John Brown's Blues* (Verve). Clark Terry, Joe Newman, trumpets; Oliver Nelson, arranger.

Out of sight! That's exactly what I was trying to say about the last recording you played, about big bands not really sounding like a big band per se. I guess it's Clark Terry's New York band; and just to make a rough guess of the second trumpet player, would be Joe Newman. I like it, I like it; good sound. Those two work very well together—if it was Joe Newman. That happy sound, I love that. It has to be at least four stars.

It was probably one of Clark's arrangements; done very well with what they had to work with . . . small-group-within-a-group type of sound.

**3. CLIFFORD BROWN.** *Land's End* (from *Trumpet Interlude*, EmArcy). Brown, trumpet; Harold Land, composer, tenor sax; Richie Powell, piano; George Morrow, bass; Max Roach, drums. (Recorded Feb. 25, 1955.)

Very nice . . . brought back a lot of memories. The only thing I don't remember about the record would be the title of the tune. But I know it was Clifford Brown-Max Roach quintet with Richie Powell.

I have to reminisce a bit about Clifford, one of the amazing things that happened to me: I'd been commuting to New York with a band in '51—Paul Williams, and from there I went with Earl Bostic. But before I joined Earl's band I was working in

Atlantic City with Tiny Grimes, the guitar player. Tadd Dameron had an orchestra in a night club there, and Clifford Brown, who I didn't know personally at the time, came in when we were having a rehearsal at the bar we were working at. He asked if he could play a little bit. So we said, of course, let's jam a bit . . . not knowing who he was.

I was a fan of Fats Navarro, and when Fats died I never thought there would be another trumpet player to get that type of sound. And from the time Clifford started playing—and he played quite a long time on his first solo—the more he played, the better he got, and I got filled up to the gills . . . I couldn't hold the tears back, I was so emotional.

I like that recording, because when Max Roach and he got the quintet together, I thought this was really something . . . another trumpet player I could sort of hold on to. That tenor player was Harold Land, another dynamite musician. The bass player I assume was George Morrow.

I can't give that less than four stars.

**4. LESTER BOWIE.** *Lonely Woman* (from *Fast Last!*, Muse). Bowie, trumpet; John Stubbs, tenor sax; Ornette Coleman, composer.

I have to give them some kind of credit for their indulgence . . . the work they put in in order to get that kind of a sound. To my surprise, it didn't annoy me at all. It was incredibly good for that type of music—I guess you'd call it avant garde. It could be a disguised Spaulding and Freddie, but I'm afraid to say.

But let's say for their indulgence, give 'em three stars. It sounded like quite a bit of involvement as far as personnel is concerned . . . there wasn't that much written down, it was more or less a lot of natural playing with each other. They had a definite format.

**5. MICHAEL LONGO.** *Magic Number* (from *9000 Shares of the Blues*, Groove Merchant). Longo, piano, composer; Randy Brecker, trumpet; Joe Farrell, tenor sax.

I think you stumped me again. I like the composition. The performance was good; sounded like they been playing together for a while. Just a rough guess at the trumpet player, Carmell Jones. The tenor player sounds vaguely familiar . . . The recording was very nice.

As far as a rating is concerned, you're playing all good sounding jazz for me . . . it's hard for me to dislike it. It swung, and it's a contemporary type of tune from the Horace Silver era. I'd say three-and-a-half stars.

**6. MILES DAVIS.** *Honky Tonk* (from *Get Up With It*, Columbia). Davis, trumpet, composer; Keith Jarrett, Herbie Hancock, keyboards; Steve Grossman, soprano sax; Michael Henderson, bass; John McLaughlin, guitar; Billy Cobham, drums; Airtio Moreira, percussion.

How long is that track? You wouldn't like a comment, would you? Richie (Kamuca) advised me under these circumstances not to say anything at all . . . there's something about it I don't like to say I didn't like . . . it didn't give anybody on the date no recognition at all. Can I say I didn't like it? You know, I've done quite a few recordings, and some of them I didn't like the way they went down . . . commercial-wise you may be striving for the commercial audience. But fortunately none of our albums came out like this one. They were at least good!

But this one I can't make no contact with at all. I don't know any of the personnel. I don't particularly like the arrangement; it doesn't sound like a composition, it just sounds like somebody blowing . . . trying to kill some time till the set's over. I hope it ain't nobody I know.

They are probably some good players, if you put 'em with the right group. In order to get to the point where they can get in the studio and make the record, they have to be at least good. But that piece didn't give them any credit. No stars. ♪



# Profile

## JULIUS HEMPHILL



Over the last two years a number of strong, inventive second generation new musicians from the Midwest, particularly Chicago and St. Louis, have migrated to New York City, settling in Brooklyn and on Manhattan's Lower Eastside, scene of the first wave of the new music revolution. Many of these musicians were associated with Chicago's AACM, or the St. Louis Black Artists Group (BAG). The largest body of talent seems to be from St. Louis. As a matter-of-fact, a Black poet from St. Louis recently said that, whenever he gets homesick now, all he has to do is hang out on East Third or First Street between First Avenue and Avenue C, and he is sure to run into some of his homeboys. He might run into Lester Bowie; Joseph Bowie, Lester's younger brother; Charles 'BoBo' Shaw, Jr.; John Stubblefield; Julius Hemphill, or Oliver Lake, among others.

The latter two, Julius Hemphill and Oliver Lake, both alto saxophonists, have recently been signed to the significantly innovative Arista/Freedom label and soon will have releases out, produced by Michael Cuscuna. Although the two young men share a common instrument, label, producer, and, to some degree, experiences, they are as radically different as night and day.

Will Smith once wrote that, "In the new jazz it has too often been a matter of where you play, not how you blow, that is the criterion—a politics of location, it seems." New York musicians have continuously gotten most of the publicity and available record and club or concert dates. Due to this politics of location, Anthony Braxton, Roscoe Mitchell, Joseph Jarman, Richard Abrams, Malachi Favors, and others, had to go to Europe and receive wide acclaim before most people in this country realized that there were some incredible musicians in Chicago, playing "honest, clear, stimulating, and imaginative" music. Now if you think this is a sad state of affairs, just think about the criminal lack of recognition, especially if you have had the opportunity to hear the music, of the St. Louis musicians, such as Julius Hemphill, who have been forced to come to New York because of lack of work, money, and exposure.

As a result of being 'underexposed,' when allowed the chance to talk about himself and his music, Julius prefers not to discuss the past or give much biographical information, since publicity is so rare and precious. Instead, he is very anxious to talk about the immediate present, and the fact that he has a new album coming out, which he hopes everyone will buy, listen to, and get something out of.

by david jackson

Of his past, all that Julius will say is, he comes from a family of ministers. He sees his music as an extension of these religious roots. "It's an act of giving," he says, "coming out of an intensely religious tradition." If Julius is a "different kind of preacher," as he claims, then his music must bespoken to as Neo-African spiritual sermons, fired with that old time Nommo, the soul force which, according to Africans, gives life its fullest meaning. His first album, *DOGON A.D.* (Mbari Records), reveals that Julius's music is some of the most significant coming out of the St. Louis/Chicago AACM school—going all through you, making, in the words of Imamu Amiri Baraka, "the circle of excitement and adventure, from earth to heaven. . . ." In his playing you hear some Charlie Parker, some Jimmy Lyons, but mostly you hear Julius Hemphill. On this brilliant LP, Julius is accompanied by Abdul K. Wadud on cello, Baikida Yaseen on trumpet, and Phillip Wilson on percussion.

Of his soon-to-be-released new album Julius says, "It's not as exotic as *DOGON A.D.*, but more down homey, closer to the blues." This isn't surprising when you stop to consider the rich blues tradition of St. Louis, e.g. Henry Townsend, Mary Johnson, James "St. Louis Jimmy" Oden, etc.; and the fact that Julius was influenced by the playing of the late Louis Jordan and Arnette Cobb, two of the baddest blues-tinged saxophonists ever.

Julius is a fun-loving cat who, when he has been in his cups, will have you falling all over the floor, laughing until you cry. But make no mistake, Julius Hemphill is nobody's clown. Quite the contrary, he's an intelligent man fully aware of the social role of the black artist. As one of the founders of the Black Artists Group in St. Louis, a collective of musicians, poets, writers, dancers, playwrights, actors, etc., he is firmly rooted in the basic philosophical conviction that, as Baraka proposed, "the most creative music, the most valid contribution in general to any people, will be an exact reflection of the socio-political, economic, and psychological status of that people at a given time." The programs presented by Hemphill and BAG helped the Black citizens of St. Louis to re-evaluate themselves, see themselves more objectively, more clearly, and place themselves in a position within society.

The recorded tribute to blues great Blind Lemon Jefferson that Julius did with poet K. Curtis Lyle (*The Collected Poem for Blind Lemon Jefferson*, Mbari), displays his own concern for, and knowledge of, the tradition to which he must adhere if he is to have a valid voice.

Since moving to New York almost two years ago, Julius, his beautiful wife, and two young sons, have been residing in Brooklyn. He has recorded with Lester Bowie (*Fast Last!*, Muse), and worked with various other musicians, fronting groups at the Frederick Douglas Creative Arts Center's black cultural extravaganza held at St. John The Divine Church last year, and more recently at the Space for Transnational Arts.

Oliver Lake is younger, shorter, and more soft spoken than Julius Hemphill. And more willing to talk about himself.

Originally from Marianna, Arkansas, Oliver moved to St. Louis with his parents when he was one-year-old. Surrounded by blues and gospel music, he became interested in music at an early

## OLIVER LAKE



age, and received his first instructions playing cymbals and bass drum in a drum & bugle corps. He first became interested in the alto saxophone in 1960, when a friend gave him a copy of a Paul Desmond album he had received from the Columbia Record Club. He liked Desmond's sound, and listened to Bird, but the first cat he tried to copy was Jackie McLean.

"Even in my playing now," Oliver states, "you can hear some of Jackie. Not so much the sound, but the feeling that he has."

Like Julius, Oliver was a member of the Black Artists Group. "BAG was an incredible organization," he says, "full of raw energy. It was a creative stimulus for all the artists involved. We were voluntary specimens in an experiment to present culture as both an exclusive creation of the people and a source of creation, as an instrument of socio-economic liberation."

Although enthusiastic about the cultural organization, and emotionally comfortable in the relaxed atmosphere of the Midwest, in 1972 Oliver found himself living in Paris, and playing with the Black Artists Group, including Joseph Bowie, trombone; Baikida E. J. Carroll, trumpet, fluegelhorn; Charles Shaw, Jr., drums; and Floyd Le Flore, trumpet. Following the lead of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, including Joseph's brother Lester, the group travelled throughout Europe playing concerts and recording in several countries.

The most readily available recording from that period is *Black Artists Group In Paris*, Arises 1973 (BAG 324 000, which is distributed by New Music Distribution Services). There are some similarities between this group and the AEC, i.e. the use of numerous "little instruments" (log drums, cowbells, and other miscellaneous instruments) allowing the group to project an incredible range of colors, textures and rhythms. Oliver has said that he thinks in terms of color when he plays. This is displayed on the album as he involves his alto saxophone and flute in tonal color exploration, sometimes wildly intense, sometimes very soft and gentle like his personality.

In addition to playing and recording with BAG, Oliver also played with trumpeter Ambrose Jackson's big band, with Chicagoan trumpeter Leo Smith, and has listened to a lot of Arabic and Moroccan music in little cafes in his neighborhood.

Of his European experience Oliver says, "Europe was hip, man. I played a lot, met some interesting people, and just generally had a good experience."

Oliver has been in New York City since Sep-

tember 1974, because, in his own words, "it's the focal point, everything happens out of New York, the businessmen have it set up that way." He also came because he's a serious student of black music and wanted to meet and listen to as many musicians as possible. According to Oliver, he has gotten a lot of inspiration from the whole scene.

When not playing with or listening to many of the musicians living down on the Lower Eastside, Oliver spends his time reading a lot on esoteric religions, and meditating. Although he sees music as beautiful and almost continuous communion with spiritual hosts, he doesn't necessarily use

his music as a guideline for building spiritual or cultural consciousness.

"I don't expect people to respond any one particular way to my music," Oliver says, "they get out of it what they want to. I just hope they get something out of it."

In addition to having recorded his own album, *Heavy Spirits* (Arista/Freedom), Oliver Lake has recorded with Anthony Braxton (*Fall*, 1974, Arista), and plans to do a series of concerts throughout the Spring, including a few dates with Lester Bowie. He has also been experimenting with the synthesizer and other electronic instru-

ments a la Karlheinz Stockhausen.

Julius Hemphill and Oliver Lake are just two of many musicians from St. Louis, Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit, Cleveland, Nashville, Atlanta and other locations, who are playing some mindblowing music that's mostly being heard by the walls or a small group of devotees of the new music who try to stay on top of the situation. Hopefully their new releases on Arista/Freedom will help them reach a wider audience and maybe, just maybe, get some of the money many pop musicians seem to just take for granted.

db

# caught

## THE MUSIC OF GEORGE RUSSELL

New York Jazz Repertory Company, Carnegie Hall, NYC

**Personnel:** Russell, composer, conductor; Carl Atkins, assistant conductor, baritone saxophone, alto saxophone, bass clarinet, cue cards; Stanton Davis, Jimmy Owens, Victor Paz, Charles Sullivan, Howard Johnson (flugelhorn), trumpets; Jimmy Giuffre, Sam Rivers, John Stubblefield, reeds; Wayne Andre, Jack Jeffers, Eddie Bart, trombones; John Clark, french horn; Jeffers, Johnson, tubas; Patti Bown, organ; Sam Brown, guitar; Stanley Cowell, piano; Alan Pasqua, electric piano; Cameron Brown, bass; Herb Bushler, bass guitar; Tony Williams, Anton Fig, drums; Warren Smith, percussion.

This concert was given over to two lengthy pieces of Russell's. The first part of the evening, *Living Time*, was an extension of an idea originally recorded with Bill Evans and an



Russell . . . body English

orchestra. There were two conductors for this one, each handling a different chore. Russell literally used body English as well as arm motions to direct the NYJRC, while Carl Atkins used flash cards with stage and lead sheet directions. The piece was in "events" rather than sections, or lettered place markers on the music itself.

The faint ringing of bells gave the impression that we were observing an occult occurrence; the opening built to total percussion, then added two trumpets, trombone and clarinet, before the rhythm section struck the first tempo of the piece—very hard rock. The ensuing extended vamp did not pale or bore, however the colors on top remained constantly whirling in and out of the banal beat.

The first solo spot was taken by Rivers, who was drowned out by the forging lower



JAN PERSSON

Rivers . . . drowned out

register instrumentation and its demanding chordal patterns, so famous in all Russell's works. All I could make out was some screeching sounds of a frightened bluejay in heat. Knowing Sam, I'm sure there was more. But those underpinnings would not die—magnificent full-bodied chords that made one's chest pound.

A stark change in texture threw us into a jungle. The mood became dark, austere, slow, and deliberate. Ms. Bown's bright, soulful organ brought us to a gospel-ish clearing; but the distinct 4/4 of jazz pervaded, then faded as jungle textures returned again. The two elements alternated for short periods—Bown, Cowell, reeds, Davis—and incessant percussion tied both together. Another Russell trademark kept us close to the idiom in which he composes: a vaudevillian Dixieland ending, played by the trumpets as an echo lead-in to an extended Latino bit, and a back beat segment.

Arco bassing was then played off against electric in a tandem solo that was again overshadowed by the ensemble. Another tenor solo, this time by Stubblefield, was likewise inaudible. Davis had the major solo chores on trumpet; and in the following Cowell-introduced event, the trumpeter was backed by some unusual unison stop-rhythming.

To show what Russell can do—and he varies and mixes his metaphors—Cowell opened the final portion à la Debussy, flowing elegantly, while interjections of Victor Young and Alec Wilder were heard in the chords of his left hand. Then into near cacophony and out of it again with those big chords heard at the outset. Then closing, and closing, never really ending the piece, just fading out as the French horn burped away.

I was an apprentice engineer once; and the mere hint of system noise or microphone feedback sends me sprawling to check the connections. *Electronic Sonata for Souls Loved By Nature* utilized those noises throughout its

length as its base. I was uncomfortable for the whole overlong piece, wanting to grab a mike head and replace it, or turn down the treble and bass levels to decrease the hum, or reverse some plugs and rid the system of the polarity that we could hear. It sounded like it was invented by an engineer whose girl was stolen by a synthesizer programmer. Where *Living Times* made complete sense, *Sonata* made complete noise.

After the group returned from a walk around the hall, each with a different tribal percussion instrument, they launched into a Latin number, the brass and reeds sounding very much like Machito in 1958. But the piano's tenths and eighths, et. al., gave us another impression. I even heard strains from *Rosie* as the Latin "song" returned. The final event in *Sonata* was big, rocking, and mercifully free of audible electronic noises; but it was all too much for one evening's absorption.

—arnold jay smith

## RUBY BRAFF/GEORGE BARNES QUARTET

Ronnie Scott's Club, London, England

**Personnel:** Braff, cornet; Barnes, guitar; Wayne Wright, guitar; Michael Moore, bass.

At precisely 12:31, the lemony shadow of Lester Young floated through Ronnie Scott's famous London Jazz Emporium, and the atmosphere was electric. The master magicians responsible for this delicious conjuring trick were Ruby Braff and George Barnes; the vehicle, that old Kansas City Five masterpiece, *Them There Eyes*.

It was by no means a conscious evocation. The unworldly presence emerged in subtle ways—through the band's lightness of touch, the floating quality of its unisons and interplay, the dancing solos of Braff and Barnes.

This beautiful quartet, soon to celebrate its second birthday, is really providing jazz with a much-needed melodic shot in the arm. It is a marvelously drilled little band, yet loose and relaxed—a difficult balance to achieve.

Both soloists have a way with a song of turning it on its back and tickling its belly, making the melody—and the customers—chuckle with contentment.

Braff, who works out all the quartet's programs, concentrates on "pretty melodies." A small man with a lived-in face, he sits largely immobile during a set, the one patent leather shoe undulating politely with the beat betraying his deep involvement with each standard the group caresses into life. In solo, the fat melodic phrases seem to roll off his tongue like mellow wine.

Barnes, after years cloaked by the anonymity of the NBC Studio Orchestra, is celebrat-



Braff and Barnes . . . a melodic shot in the arm

ing his freedom with relaxed abandon. He has the evergreen talent of always seeming to be trying something out, but without straining for effect. At times, his playing is reminiscent of another master melodist, Jim Hall. At others, he riffs with all the drive of that fountainhead of modern guitar styles, Charlie Christian. Mostly, though, he plays George Barnes—a mobile, melodic style, with a fondness for triplets laid against the beat, and a penchant for teasing the listener by slowly bending an apparently “wrong” note into melodic shape, as on their languid *Over The Rainbow*.

The rapport between the two men is so good that their individual solo lines coagulate with brief, but closely-voiced, unisons without interrupting the melodic flow. Hearing them is like eavesdropping on two old friends having an articulate conversation. When they go into one of their chase choruses, it is like a single stream of thought.

This night must surely have been something special, by virtue of a particularly enervating third set, when their program was partly abandoned and they just sat back and blew.

The first two sets were fine enough, even if the 21 numbers crammed into the total playing time of 80 minutes meant over-brevity. They began with a brisk *Undecided*, and followed it with a thoughtful *Pennies From Heaven*, notable for Braff's lovely belly rolls in the lower register and balanced by flares and swells and pretty baroque sketches. *I'm Old Fashioned* was pretty but brief: they didn't hit a groove until the final number of the first set, *Rockin' In Rhythm*.

It was the second set that freed the ghosts, starting with their ethereal *Them There Eyes* and continuing through, among others, a cheekily-voiced *Jeepers Creepers*, which featured Braff's best solo of the set. Their *Over The Rainbow* found Braff indulging in a call-and-response with himself in stating the theme, while the final *It Don't Mean A Thing* featured a sparkling chase chorus between Braff and Barnes that lifted the entire audience.

At this stage the club was pretty full. But by the time they stole onto the stand for the final set, only about a third of the customers remained. It was as though Barnes and Braff sensed these were the really interested parties because they proceeded to put on their best show of the evening. For one thing, they gave each number more air, playing only eight tunes and dispensing with announcements.

The ghosts materialized again with an ambling *I Want A Little Girl*, sandwiched between a brisk *Top Hat* and a bustling *The World Is Waiting For The Sunrise*. Every bar on these and others—*Blue Room*, *Take The "A" Train*, *There's A Small Hotel*, *But Not For Me*—seemed perfectly shaped and quite beguiling. Their music strutted and soared, flounced and flickered, shimmered and thrilled. They invested the most trivial song with dignity and elegance (*I'm Putting All My Eggs In One Basket*).

They were perfectly—and facelessly—backed by Wayne Wright's light, accurate comping, which often created delightful interplay with Barnes' lead voice, and by Mi-

continued on page 36

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## CAUGHT

continued from page 34

chael Moore's firm and sure bass lines.

Playing opposite the Braff/Barnes band was a "soul group" who displayed all the finesse of a navy and whose name, frankly, escapes me. —*chris sheridan*

## BOB MOVER AND FRIENDS

Stryker's, New York City

**Personnel:** Bob Mover, alto saxophone; Jimmy Garrison, bass; Jimmy Madison, drums; Mark Gray, piano; Jay Clayton, vocal

New York is a tough town under any circumstances. But the Apple is unusually hard on young and unknown musical talent. After a brief fling, most aspiring newcomers are cast back to the hinterland or down the road of commercial compromise. It is therefore heartening to encounter a young musician like Bob Mover who has the guts and integrity to sustain his artistic drive, energy and idealism.

Mover, at the age of 22, is a veteran of a wide variety of gigs, including stints with Chet Baker and Charles Mingus. Although there have been dry periods when no work was available, he has now put together an excellent quartet featuring Jimmy Garrison on bass, Jimmy Madison on drums and Mark Gray on electric piano.

Mover's alto sound oscillates between two zones—one is ethereal and distant, the other is warm, full-bodied, and earthy. While

focusing on long diatonic and chromatic trajectories, his melodic constructions also include wide intervallic skips, arpeggiated figures, trills and repetitions. His sense of time embodies a playfulness in which the lines and figures tease the pulse by being slightly ahead or behind. Cascades of cleanly executed hemidemisemiquavers attest to his technical accomplishments. Capping these assets are Mover's dramatic and logical sensibilities; his music makes sense to heart and mind.

The well-balanced set that concluded the evening's musical activities at Stryker's highlighted the breadth of Mover and his group. First was an energetic reading of Bronislaw Kaper's *Invitation*, (the theme from Gottfried Reinhardt's 1952 MGM film with Dorothy McGuire). After a lyrical statement of the melody, Mover generated a masterful solo, juxtaposing long, Konitzesque lines; rapid, multi-note bursts; and pointillistic clusters of variable density. Mover's solo was followed by that of guest fluegelhornist Tom Harrel, a member of Horace Silver's current organization. Harrel possesses a beautiful, round, mellow sound; a full technical vocabulary; and a remarkable sense of melodic and harmonic structure. Another guest, Warren Chaisson, who is known primarily for his accomplishment on vibes, handled the keyboard chores with verve and taste. Jimmy Garrison's bass provided the same kind of solid support which made his contributions to John Coltrane's quartet so invaluable. On drums was Jimmy Madison, whose dynamic and sensitive time-keeping has been an important part of the groups of Joe Farrell, Chet Baker and Lee Konitz.

On the standard *There is No Greater Love*, a low-key opening dialogue between Mover and Chaisson evolved into a swinging and comfortable groove featuring outstanding solos by Mover, Chaisson, Harrel, Garrison and the trading of eights with the driving and inventive percussion work of Jimmy Madison. Mover then brought vocalist Jay Clayton to the stand for Monk's "Round Midnight." Ms. Clayton demonstrated faultless intonation, clean articulation, a beautiful tone and ability to locate and project the dramatic essence of both music and lyrics.

A Mover original entitled *Saudade Do Brooklyn* commenced with a unison statement by alto, voice and fluegelhorn. After exciting solos by all hands, a dialogue was established between Clayton and Mover gradually expanding to include the other musicians. This convivial, carnivalesque atmosphere then gave way to a unison restatement of the line by Mover, Clayton and Harrel. A witty series of contrapuntal arabesques by Mover danced above repetitions of the tune's last phrase.

Mover handled the chores of leadership quite well. I was impressed, for instance, by his sincere and articulate introductions, his balanced selection of tunes, and the rapport in evidence between himself and his colleagues. His emergence as a composer is also an impressive development. And, of course, there is his playing. His current work, along with that from the Mingus and Baker stints, all confirm him as an outstanding musical talent. Hopefully, the Apple will soon provide the exposure necessary for steady work. Bob Mover is without question a "talent deserving wider recognition." —*chuck berg*

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## HOW TO handle the Country Club crowd

by Dr. William L. Fowler

**A**fter the bubble of the 1940s travelling big band had burst, many big time jazz players headed for their home towns. They settled into day-people vocations, raised families, and gazed wistfully at their axes now gathering dust in the corner. In a few years, other players, finishing overseas tours courtesy of WW II, paralleled that settling-down process, thus adding to the number of wistful gazers. But most kept up their union dues—just in case. And when a call to sub at the club would come, each likely thought, "Well, why not! I know all the standards. And the kids could use new shoes."

By the late '40s, a plentiful supply of former big-timers was available, musicians who knew a lot of tunes, understood dance tempos, and recognized that complex rhythms confuse feet. And therefore, both managers and patrons could impose upon their weekend dance combos those behavioral patterns—the social and musical no-nos and yes-yeses—which have long since distinguished the country club gig.

The no-nos seem self-evident; they include behavior which interferes with the efficient workings of service personnel or which irritates patrons, i.e. hanging out in the kitchen; loitering in the traffic lanes reserved for waitresses and busboys (a couple of violations there could mean a one-way ticket from the manager—ever see a loaded tray crash to the floor?); starting late either on the first set or after the intermissions; looking unkempt; getting plastered on the job; playing so loud that social chit-chat and business talk at the tables become impossible; refusing to play requests the band doesn't like; arguing with patrons; playing with one or more backs to the audience; talking over what to play next while the dancers just stand there on the floor (let the leader earn his extra pay); or just plain looking sour (the smile is the universal uniform for country clubbers!).

Although strict observance of the no-nos cannot by itself insure keeping a gig, gross disregard of them will almost guarantee dismissal. But the yes-yeses, those musical and social devices which can endear a band to its audience, have been neither fully delineated nor fully explored. Aside from the musts common to all dance gigs, like supplying a variety of tempos and rhythms, playing favorite standards as well as current hits, and smiling, smiling, smiling, the patron-pleasing field remains wide open and fertile. Any group can cultivate its own specialties.

Up in Sun Valley, that daddy of American international ski resorts, Harl Smith, for example, tied down the plush Duchin Room for as long as he might wish by supplying, through his eminently danceable group, not only a total choice of worldwide dance styles and a total repertoire of American standards, but also a personal trademark: the total recall of any number of requests he'd garner during intermissions. Harl never wrote down any requests, he'd simply glance at a numbered list of fifteen or so titles a guest had prepared. Then during the next set, that guest would indicate the number of the tune he wanted to hear next. And sure enough, he heard it next! No one ever heard Harl call a tune, yet his band never missed a request. No one ever saw Harl give a signal, yet throughout those long medleys for which Harl was known, every band member changed tempo, meter, and rhythmic style at exactly the same time and in exactly the same way. Then, to taper off for intermission, Harl would send the band's self-contained Detroit-type jazz trio right out there amidst those dancers to burn off any excess terpsichorean energies they might carry into the break.

Oh, yes, Harl handled the continuous Sun Valley flow of heiresses, business magnates, ski champs, screen stars, political bigwigs, and foreign dignitaries with uncommon finesse. And when closing time for the Duchin Room came and VIP's would insist on continuing their dancing, Harl would avoid unpleasantness by another of his patented tricks: he would agree to keep playing a medley just as long as anyone there could identify the tune. Now who could quarrel with an offer like that? All those upper crust brains should be able to keep the band going all night! Then the game would start. First, a couple of well-known tunes, then a fairly obscure title, like *Little Orphan Annie*. And then Harl would shut down the Duchin Room with something like *The Gaby Glide* (1909) or some unpronounceable Ukranian or Latvian love song.

Although commercialism remains a bad, bad word among jazzers, and many young players regard its restrictions as a fate worse than deaf, there are those who might want to cultivate such a little green hedge against inflation-recessions, like right now. For them, here are some more Big Secrets from the Country Club Handbook:

For people who can't dance, there's a tempo, about 75-85 beats per minute, just about the speed of a leisurely stroll, which will allow them to walk around the floor in time to the music. At this tempo, a clear beat in boom-chuck rhythm will load up the dance floor in a hurry. If beats two and four get little accents, the people just walking might make little knee-bends on those afterbeats. Then they'll think they're really dancing. And because nobody seems to get tired at this tempo, it's a good speed for a medley, like *There Are Smiles*, *When You're Smiling*, *When My Baby Smiles At Me*, *When Buddha Smiles*, *Let A Smile Be Your Umbrella*, and so on, one chorus each. But both very fast and very slow tempos shouldn't go on that long. They are relatively tiring. To dancers, a distinct beat at the right tempo is most important.

But not to singers, like that would-be Metropolitan baritone who wants the band to back him. He'll probably settle for *Old Man River* or *Road To Mandalay*, yet he'll want his own key, which could be anything from five sharps to six flats. And sometimes he'll change that key in mid-chorus. A band just has to try staying with him. . . .

The problem of handling most requests is automatically solved by having a stack of fake books on the band stand and knowing how to sight-read notation and chord symbols. And the first chorus of a request should be the melody itself; that's what is being requested.

Happy Birthdays and Anniversary Waltzes shouldn't have to be requested. The waitresses welcome a signal arrangement whereby these celebration anthems can start just as the candle-lit cake comes through the kitchen door. And finally, if all other attempts at audience rapport have failed, there's *Hello Dolly* and *Alley Cat*. Just mind the afterbeats on either of these chunkers and Presto—instant audience approval!

Scattering some surefire commercial chestnuts like the following throughout a gig can help a band turn a casual engagement at the country club into a honeymoon contract:

**STYLES**

1. American Waltz
2. Viennese Waltz
3. Polka
4. Dixieland
5. Soft Shoe
6. Business Man's Bounce
7. Argentine Tango
8. Cha Cha
9. Rhumba
10. Beguine
11. Samba

**SUREFIRE TUNES**

- Smile Awhile  
All Alone  
Blue Danube  
Tales from the Vienna Woods  
Beer Barrel Polka  
Pennsylvania Polka  
When the Saints Go Marching In  
Basin Street Blues  
Me and My Shadow  
Bye Bye Blues  
Mr. Sandman  
Makin' Whoopee  
La Cumparsita  
Never on Sunday  
Tea for Two  
The Carioca  
Miami Beach Rhumba  
Begin the Beguine  
Brazil

**TEMPO**

- Medium slow  
Medium fast  
Fast  
Medium fast  
Slow  
Medium  
Slow  
Medium  
Medium fast  
Medium  
Fast

**RHYTHMIC PATTERN**

And there are two more public relations cappers:

1. Manager's favorite—Ask the Maitre d' . . .
2. Goodnight medley—Choose from *That's All*; *Good Night, Sweetheart*; *I'll See You in my Dreams*; *Nighty Night*; and *Dream*. Start slow, end fast.



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chords. But the effect isn't as unique as on his guitars or even on the acoustic piano: the electric work closely resembles George Duke and Herbie Hancock. *Atmospheres*, the first date with Stevens, is a fine LP, but Ralph is too often lost amidst the high electric mix of two guitars, Billy Cobham's traps, and amplified saxes. A wider coloristic range is shown in Towner's appearances on the second Stevens album, *Voyage To Uranus*.

Towner's increasingly prolific recording for ECM and the recently-released solo album brought up the question of semi-legendary label chief Manfred Eicher and his

fondness for putting musicians in challenging situations, most notably the solo concert and LP. "Not many musicians," begins Ralph. "can make a total concert on one instrument. I have to change instruments: I wouldn't think of doing an entire concert on the 12-string. But it's not as frightening as you'd think. You have complete control over the intensity. You're not dealing with other musicians—when you play with others, you see, you're still playing just one piece of music. If the intensity drops, in a lot of situations you won't have a strong enough voice to bring it up again. I don't mean volume, necessarily. If the group loses the thread, and you hear people shuffle, for instance, you know you've lost it. In the group situation there may not be a whole lot you can do to bring it back again. When you're by yourself, you can do

complete about-faces if you want. There's complete control over your power. The sad thing, I find, is that when you're finished playing your concert, there's nobody to discuss it with; you're all alone. I find it to be an exciting effort, but after a while I get lonely doing it. I can't say it's as thrilling playing a solo concert that's good as playing a group concert that's good, providing you play well and get the same results in the group situation. But the main difference, really, is in the kind of control that you have."

The *Diary* solo LP was finished quickly. "We did every piece immediately; there was no laying down of one track and coming back the next day to overdub. The album took only two days to finish—one session of about four or five hours, another hour the next day, and then the mix. I discovered a really good technique for overdubbing, though. I didn't want a situation where one instrument was accompanying another. I wanted to have more of an improvised interplay between instruments. The music had to flow without one instrument stuck in a backup position. "I would start a piece on one instrument, play it so far in a primary role, and then stop within the piece. Then I'd go back, pick up another instrument, playing it in the secondary role underneath the first instrumental voice. But then I'd go beyond the point where the first track stopped, bringing the secondary voice to a primary role. The flip-flop process gave me the opportunity to change roles on a single tune. The effect is that you lose a lot of the accompaniment-lead effect." It sounds, in fact, as if Towner is playing in a mirror much of the time, so sensitively is each voice reflected in the other.

"Psychologically," continued Ralph. "I also tried not to match the opposite track. I didn't play *with* it in the sense of watching it or thinking about it, any more than I would really think about another musician playing along. It was a feeling, and I played with the feeling. I also seldom made plans about how long I was going to play, fixing bar lengths and so forth. A couple of the pieces had no bar lines. I trusted my feelings. When I felt like a section was coming to an end—going from a free section into a written section, for example—I would just *trust* after about four minutes, let's say, that 'we' were heading in the right direction. It was pretty uncanny, though. I don't even know if I could do it twice." Considering that the LP was recorded two years ago, Towner is still very pleased with it, and says he doesn't think of it as an "old" album at all.

Of course, a stock interviewer's question when talking to an ECM artist these days is, "How does Manfred Eicher do it?" "He's something else. I'll tell you that. He always reacts differently. Whenever I think I can predict what Manfred's going to do, he'll do something else. He'll always fool me. He's very subtle and quiet, really dedicated to the music. It's the most unusual thing I've ever seen in a person who deals with a record company. On solo albums, he'll make a lot of quiet suggestions about feelings and things, but he'll stay very busy with technical things that I don't really understand—things with the board, mike placement, engineering. He's so experienced and has such a natural gift for sensing what to do as far as production goes. But he seldom gives orders on solo LPs—he never told me to do this or that.

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and Christensen, he was much more aggressive. I intended to play much more piano on it, for example; he said that was ridiculous, that what I do that is so unusual is play the 12-string. He didn't want a regular piano-bass-sax-drums quartet, even if I did play wonderful piano. He was right. I ended up playing the 12-string differently than I've ever played it, and I made some important steps that kept me from getting bored with it. I do have periods where I don't play it. I leave it in its case and seldom practice it. But I don't intend to give it up, of course."

While touching again on this subject of his relationship with his 12-string guitar, Ralph mentioned in passing that the guitar is an instrument more environmentally sensitive than others. I asked him to elaborate. "Acoustic guitar is always different, and that can be very frustrating. Some days, everything will be there—bass, treble, middle voices. Other days, something will be missing. On my guitar, it'll be most often the bass, but every instrument's different. Mine likes damp weather. You have to adjust your playing technique to the state of the instrument every day, because you can't change its physical condition, short of taking the best possible care of it that you can.

"As far as nail noise is concerned, one thing about having a large tone is that you can place the mike further away, and that's important. People with very small tones, who play with their fingers, or picks for that matter, will get a lot of string noise. On the left hand, there are ways of minimizing that squeak that you'll always have on wound strings—fingering techniques, for example, and other steps to avoid it as much as you can. If you have a good enough acoustic sound, though, you can place the mike a bit further away."

Ralph's increasing solo stature as an artist in no way detracts from his commitments to Oregon. The entire group is attaining slow but steadily increasing recognition in music clubs across the country, and finds regular work all over. In their first appearance last fall at Chicago's Quiet Knight, for example, the club barely broke even on the ensemble's five-night stint. Last January, through word of mouth and FM airplay, the club was sold out for most of the shows. "The steady thing is Oregon," states Ralph, "the solo thing is planned six to seven months in advance, or that's the way I like to do it, at least. That becomes a vacation for everyone else. But it's a changing concern: we're getting more work with the group. I like to play solo concerts, but my main interest is in this unusual group."

The *Winter Light* LP, Oregon's newest, reveals new textures, deeper voicings, subtle maturation within the same format established from the early days in the Winter Consort. "We have an aural identity now," explains Towner, "but everyone's improving as players. We're discovering new things as individuals, and each new discovery by one player affects the whole group. When I was talking earlier about one person not being able to adjust the intensity of a group—well, this group is so sensitive that one player can voice a new effect and it'll change the whole course of the music. That happens with everyone. We keep finding new combinations of instruments that are most intriguing. We're getting more confident as we're gaining more acceptance."

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with Pharoah, and on gigs of my own. I'd switched from trumpet to cornet by that time and I added valve trombone." The Clifford Thornton-Pharoah Sanders group did not record; but Imamu Amiri Baraka (then LeRoi Jones) and Don Heckman spoke highly of it in print. Thornton is heard on two of Sun Ra's Saturn albums, *Art Forms Of Dimensions Tomorrow* and *Other Planes Of There*.

The music was exciting; but jobs that paid more than a few dollars a night were too few. In 1964-65, Clifford took a break to study in Germany. In 1966 he entered Juilliard. In 1969, he began teaching at Wesleyan. "Sun Ra came here to Middletown to play," he explains, "for a World Music Weekend. Donald

Byrd, Andrew Hill with Sam Rivers, Robin Kenyatta—a lot of people were playing here, along with Indian musicians and American Indian musicians and some others. The Indians took us to dinner and we heard their music and it wiped me out. When it was time to go somebody told me I didn't have to go, so I stayed for the weekend. I met a student here who was teaching a course in the History of Jazz and it came out over that weekend that he was graduating and they were going to hire somebody else to do his job.

"So I started by coming up here once a week on a Trailways bus, and I began to see the potential. My course was very successful, more on a social level than anything else because it was just like music appreciation. But in the fall of 1969, after the Pan-African festival—which I went to on a grant—I came

back as a Visiting Artist. Immediately I became fascinated by the African cats who were here, though they weren't really all that curious about jazz. They like Caribbean music, Afro-Cuban music, James Brown, and I just went along with that: I was interested in whatever they were interested in. And, of course, being faculty I could take courses; so I took West African drumming, advanced seminars in ethnomusicology. Then in 1971-72 there was a big change. Ken McIntyre, who had been here for awhile, left. At the same time there was a kind of student uprising, and one of the things the black students demanded was more black music. So Bill Cole and I were here, and between the two of us we got enough money from the school and the National Endowment of the Arts to get the right kind of program together. People advised me not to bring in other cats, not to attempt to really teach the music as thoroughly as I knew it should be taught. But I saw this as something that could be something for real. Since I was in the right place at the right time, I was able to do something about it."

Clifford talks about the program he put together at Wesleyan during the early '70s as if it had been an accident of history. But someone at the school probably knew when they authorized expansion into Afro-American music that he was the man to establish a strong, performance-oriented staff. Wesleyan's Department of Ethnomusicology has long prided itself on teaching students how to play non-western musics as well as analyze them. And Clifford "thought we should provide basic instrumental teaching on all the jazz instruments: piano, bass, drums, saxophone, and brass. First lessons, then history and theory. So we brought in Jimmy Garrison, Edward Blackwell, and Fred Simmons as the rhythm section, coming up one day a week. Sam Rivers was full time, and, of course, I taught brass."

Thornton was ideal in the role of brass instructor because, unlike many other brass players, he makes several doubles and is more or less equally proficient on cornet, valve trombone, and baritone horn. "One pretty well-known trumpet player still doesn't understand how I do it," he says. "He couldn't imagine me going from a trombone mouthpiece to a little trumpet cup, but I've been doing it so long I don't get wierded out by it. Brass players haven't traditionally conceived of playing different ranges of instruments like reed players; but all these instruments are in the same family. To me, the hardest thing is hearing different-pitched instruments when you switch. I marvel at reed players who go from baritone saxophone to soprano. It's heavy, the horns all feel different. They sound different. But I like them all."

The full-scale jazz program "was beautiful for two years. We had some beautiful students, people who were interested in the music and could play it. But funding became a problem." Gradually, the program was cut back and now Thornton himself is leaving, presumably for greener pastures although he hasn't revealed his plans as yet. He says, "One thing I really believe about teaching music—if you can't teach somebody how to play, if you can't help somebody get involved in actual participation in music-making, I don't care on what level, then you're just not teaching them about music. This is what I believe, and I'm going to believe that until I croak." db

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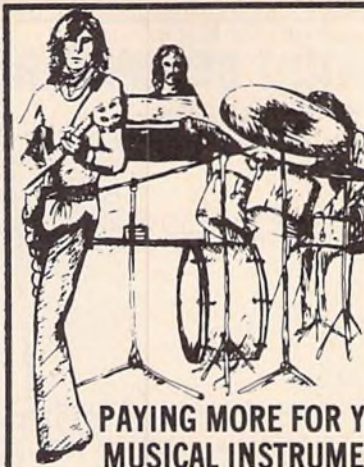
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**CITY  
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New York**

As we anticipate the Newport Jazz Festival/New York for 1975, so do the clubowners and concert producers. Jack Kleinsinger's *Highlights In Jazz* is presenting **Frank Foster's** twenty piece orchestra called **The Loud Minority** for a premiere at NYU's Loeb Student Center on June 16. **Chet Baker** brings an all-star group onto the same bill . . . Chet is at Stryker's every Monday and Tuesday and has been known to sit-in on other groups, such as the recent appearance of **Don Elliot** on melophone. **Chuck Wayne** and **Joe Puma** are in every Sunday. **Eddie Hazell** comes in for the last two weeks in June . . . Musicians gather to hear their colleagues, as was witnessed by the appearance of the **Great Jazz Trio**. Spanning three generations, **Hank Jones**, **Ron Carter**, and **Tony Williams** played before SRO patronage at the Village Vanguard. **Joe Farrell** comes in June 3; **Milt Jackson** June 10; **Pharoah Sanders** June 17 . . . **Chicago** and the **Beach Boys** head for Madison Square Garden June 12, 13, 14 and an added June 15 performance . . . Talk about notices! **Cecil Taylor** himself never realized he had such a following. His recent two weeks at the Five Spot drew raves and an engagement for June 17 at least through Newport time . . . The **Cookery** marks the return of **Helen Humes** for June . . . **Red Norvo** holds down that month at Michael's Pub . . . The **Bette Midler/Lionel Hampton** revue at the Minskoff has been extended through June 21 . . . Jazz Vespers at St. Peter's 64th St. and Park Ave., has **Wilfredo Velez Octet** June 8; **Andrea Brachfeld Quartet** has the pulpit June 15 . . . The **Billie Holiday Theatre** at the Restoration Complex, Fulton Street, Brooklyn, is bringing back **Amateur Hour** on June 19. Call 636-1100 (area code 212) for details . . . June 11, Wednesday, will bring concerts afloat aboard the 212 foot steamer **Duchess** cruising the Hudson River. She sails at 7:30 PM with **Woody Herman** and **Herd** along with Russia's only jazz group, **Prince Igor's Czar**, on said date . . . **Buddy's Place** follows **McRae, Torme**, et al, with **Lou Rawls** through June 7; **Thad Jones** and **Mel Lewis** bring on their jazz orchestra June 9 for two weeks with **David Brenner**. Watch for the reincarnation of the **Dizzy Gillespie** big band for Newport a la Mr. Rich . . . **Lynyrd Skynyrd** and **Wet Willie** are at the Academy of Music Theatre June 6 . . . The **Collective Black Artists** continue their excellent series at Town Hall June 6 at midnight . . . The **Creative Music Studio** will hold **Intensive Studies** June 9 thru June 22. There will be concerts, rehearsals, discussions, group workshops in rhythm and sound, vocal and instrumental. Guiding artists will include **Karl Berger**, **Anthony Braxton**, **Dave Holland**, **Ing Rid**, **Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre**, **Garrett List**, **Stu Martin**, **Sam Rivers**, and will be held at CMS' Woodstock compound for eleven days and at **Rivers' Studio Rivbea** for three days and nights. For further info call 914-679-9245 . . . **Westchester's Premier Theatre**, Tarrytown, NY, continues with **Johnny Mathis** thru June 8; **Engelbert Humperdinck** hits June 9 thru June 14 . . . **Jonah Jones** is at the **Statler Hilton** in Buffalo at



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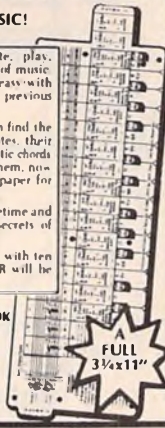
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the Downtown room . . . **Nick Brignola** and **Petrus** are at the Abbey, Albany, June 8 . . . The Westbury Music Fair on Long Island swings with **Ella**, the **Count** and **O.P.** thru June 8 (write the New York Correspondent for full identification!); the **Fifth Dimension** starts June 9 thru June 15 . . . Jazz catches on in Port Washington, L.I. The Cow Bay Cafe brings in good local talent weekends. Watch for more . . . **Sonny's Place**, Seaford, keeps chuggin' along with **Sal Nistico** June 6 & 7; **Jackie Paris** June 13 & 14 . . . Jazz Vespers at Memorial West, Newark, has **John Mowad Quartet** June 8 . . . **Gulliver's**, West Patterson, brings in **Walter Norris**, **George Mraz**, and **Mel Lewis** June 6 & 7; **Bill Watrous Quartet** with **Derek Smith** June 13 & 14 . . . Marshmallows, Woodbridge, closes their big band season with **Maynard Ferguson** June 8 . . . **Fleetwood Mac** and **Golden Earring** are at the Capitol Theatre, Passaic, June 7 . . . **Pink Floyd** shows up at Roosevelt Stadium, Jersey City, June 14 . . . **Boomer's** has **Joe Beck's** new Quintet June 4; with **Robin Kenyatta** in on June 11; **Joe Newman** June 18 . . . The New York Jazz Repertory Company will present an as yet untitled concert at Carnegie Hall June 14 . . . For mistakes that need correcting call JAZZLINE: 212-421-3592.

## CHICAGO

Sliding easily into summer with a light schedule at this press date . . . Contrary to our previous announcements last issue, **Joe Segal** now will not move into the London House right away, remaining at the Jazz Medium's present Rush and Delaware location until further notice. **Yusef Lateef's** group holds forth for a couple of weeks beginning June 4; and after that, plans are not yet firm. **Joe** expects to bring in **Gerry Mulligan-Art Farmer**, **Freddie Hubbard**, **Horace Silver**, and possibly **Joe Henderson** over the summer months, and the rest of June should be set by the time you read this, so give the club a call . . . The **Rolling Stones** hit the Chicago Stadium for the first time in a couple of years July 22-23 . . . June 6 sees **John Prine** and his new band at the Opera House . . . The June line-up for the Wise Fools Pub on Lincoln Avenue reads: **Mighty Joe Young**, June 4-7 and 11-14; **All of Us** (Latin jazz with **Manfredo Fest**, **Alejo Poveda**, and **Debbie Sabusawa**), June 18-21; **Redwood Landing**, June 25-28. The **Eddie Boy Band** appears Sundays in June, with **Dave Remington's** big band Mondays and his **Tailgate Ramblers** Dixieland Tuesdays . . . If you're inclined to scrape the sky, check the **Sybaris Room** at the top (96th floor) of the John Hancock Center, where a group featuring **Rich Fudoll** on reeds, bassist **Mitch Heness**, **Lon Gregory** on piano, and **Freddie Silver**, drums, holds down the fort Tuesdays through Saturdays from seven to one . . . **Rat-so's** on Lincoln Avenue featured a one-nighter with **Paul Bley** and **Orbit** on a mid-week date in May; it's hoped the keyboardist will return for a longer stint in the summer months.

## SOUTHWEST

**PHOENIX:** Mesa Community College's Summer Jazz Workshop goes June 8-12, with a concert on the final day. Big bands and combos will be led by **Don Rader**, **Ladd McIntosh**, **Bruce Fowler**, **Lanny Morgan**, and **Joe Pass**, **Pete Magadini**, and **Supersax** will also

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## Los Angeles

June has got to be Jazz Month in Los Angeles . . . Howard Rumsey says Concerts at the Grove should be open midmonth, with opening night artists to be announced next issue. Concerts By the Sea has a first for double bills. June 3-8 features **McCoy Tyner** and **Hank Crawford**, playing two sets each, back to back; **Monk Montgomery** comes in June 9; "Bad" **George Benson** is due June 10-15, and **Sonny Rollins** makes a rare West Coast appearance June 17-19 . . . And if you think things are cooking in Redondo, check out Hermosa Beach. Rudy has the Lighthouse packed with L.A. favorites; June 5-8 features the **L.A. Four**, with **Laurindo Almeida**, **Bud Shank**, **Ray Brown**, and **Shelly Manne**; June 10-15 is when **Rahsaan Roland Kirk** holds forth; **Art Blakey** and group June 17-22 . . . Out in the San Fernando Valley, The Times continues its Talent Showcase on Monday nights; **Bill Henderson** and the **Joyce Collins Trio** come in June 6-7; **Jimmy Rowles** June 8, with **Warne Marsh Trio** returning June 10 and 11; **Harry "Sweets" Edison** on June 13 & 14, and **Victor Feldman Trio** on June 15; June 17-19 features **Roland Haynes** . . . The Baked Potato brings **Lee Ritenour** and group back on Tuesday nights; **Don Randi & The Baked Potato Band** plays Wednesdays thru Saturdays, and **Harry "Sweets" Edison** continues on Sunday nights . . . Donte's has a few surprises scheduled, but nothing to announce till next issue . . . Free jazz is still featured at Arco Plaza on Saturday afternoons, and Jazz at the Pilgrimage continues at 2 pm every Sunday . . . Out on Crenshaw at The Total Experience, **Harold Melvin** and the **Bluenotes** play June 11-15 . . . and more news next issue about the first San Diego Jazz Festival.

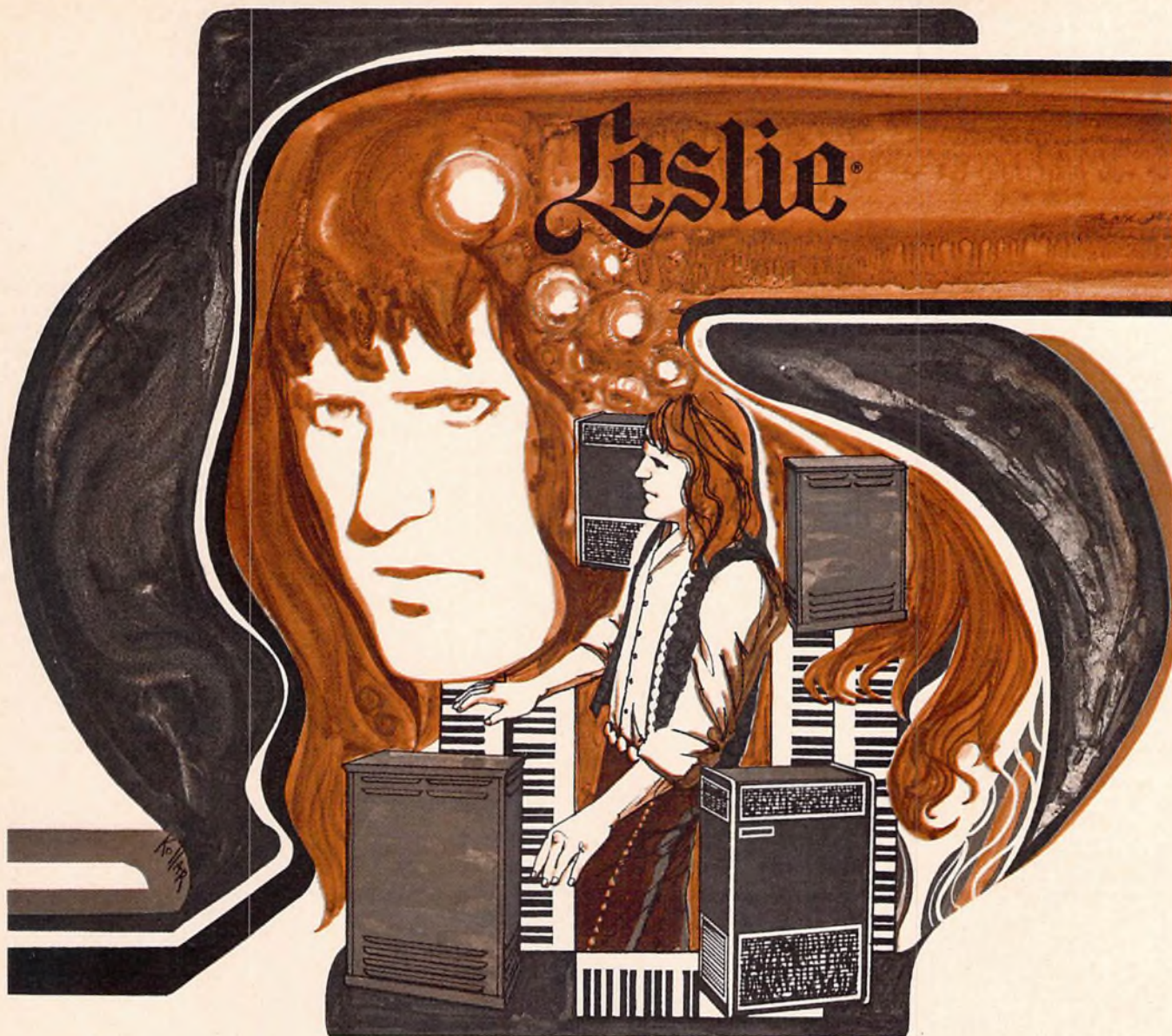
## San Francisco

The Greek Theater was the site of the Berkeley Jazz Festival on May 23-25. Performers included **Eddie Harris**, **Taj Mahal**, **Gil Scott-Heron**, **Cannonball Adderley**, **Grover Washington, Jr.**, **Stanley Turrentine**, **Freddie Hubbard**, **Joe Bataan**, **Les McCann** and **Donald Byrd** and **The Blackbyrds** . . . A welcome addition to the Bay Area blues scene is blues pianist **Floyd Dixon** who moved to S.F. from L.A. last fall and has played recently at the Washington Square Bar and Grill and Minnie's Can-Do . . . **Tom Mazzolini** of the S.F. Neighborhood Arts Program recently produced a series of Sunday afternoon blues sessions at Minnie's Can-Do Club that included bluesmen **L.C. "Good Rockin'" Robinson**, **Schoolboy Cleve**, **Little Willie Littlefield**, **Johnny Fuller**, **J.C. Burris**, **Charlie Musselwhite**, **Boogie Jake**, **Luther Tucker**, **The Louisiana Playboys**, **Floyd Dixon**, **Hi-Tide Harris**, **Freddie Roulette**, **Dave Alexander**

and **The Gary Smith Band** . . . Blues pianist **Dave Alexander** has moved his home base to Slat's on Fillmore Street where he can be found every Tuesday night. Pianist **Mark Naftalin** can be heard there every Wednesday night . . . **Gary Smith**, a South Bay blues harp virtuoso who has gigged with many local and visiting bluesmen and led several of his own groups, is fronting a new band whose emphasis is on a jazz-funk fusion. Included in the new **Gary Smith Band** are Smith on harmonica and vocals, **Ken Baker**, reeds; **Steve Gomes**, bass; **Mike Mangello**, guitar; **John Moon**, drums; and **Kincaid Miller**, keyboards . . . Through an open and diversified booking policy, The Great American Music Hall has become one of the best listening rooms in the West. Some of the best in traditional and mainstream jazz, be-bop, new music, blues, folk and rock have been heard there and the G.A.M.H. always has one of the most varied schedules in town. Two highlights of May were the first S.F. performance by **Oregon** and a live **Dizzy Gillespie** recording and video-taping session that featured Gillespie protege **Jon Faddis** on trumpet. Scheduled for June are blues guitarist and scholar **Stefan Grossman**, who will appear June 6 and conduct an afternoon blues guitar workshop June 7; an evening of solo piano with **Hampton Hawes**, June 7; **Bill Evans**, June 13-14; and **Sonny Rollins**, June 20-21. Look for **Carmen McRae**, **The New York Jazz Quartet**, and **Mose Allison** at the G.A.M.H. in July . . . **Billy Cobham**, **Weather Report** and **The Mahavishnu Orchestra** were presented in concert by Bill Graham in May. In conjunction with George Wein, Bill Graham presents the Fourth Annual Bay Area Jazz Festival on June 13-14 at the Oakland Coliseum. Performers include the **Ohio Players**, **Harold Melvin** and **The Blue Notes**, **B. B. King**, **Freddie Hubbard**, and **Bobbi Humphrey** on June 13; and **Aretha Franklin**, **The Isley Brothers**, **Ramsey Lewis**, **Smokey Robinson**, **McCoy Tyner** and **Papa John Creach** on June 14. Dial TELETIX for ticket information . . . **Oscar Brown, Jr.** has replaced **Jon Hendricks** in the highly successful on-going production of *Hendricks' Evolution of The Blues*. Hendricks will be staging the show in L.A. and London within the next few months . . . **Linda Hopkins** stars as **Bessie Smith** in the production of *Me and Bessie*, which makes a special S.F. run June 3-15 at the Marine's Memorial Theatre.

## London

Ronnie Scott's brings in **Elvin Jones** for two weeks until June 14, and is hoping to follow up with the first British club appearance of singer **Etta James** . . . The Jazz Centre Society has plans (unconfirmed at presstime) to present American pianist **Dick Wellstood** at the Seven Dials, Covent Garden, on June 19 . . . Their other bookings for June include, at the same venue, **John Warren's** 13-piece band (June 5); the **Don Rendell Quintet** and **John Powell Quartet** (12); and, at the Architectural Association in Bedford Square, **Joy** (6) and **Harry Beckett's** new band (13) . . . **Terry Lightfoot** and his **Jazzmen** are set for June 16 at the Red Lion, Hatfield, one of the trad venues featuring different bands each week, like the **Salisbury** in Barnet and the **Cambridge** in Camberley, both of which have sessions Sundays . . . Jazz has been brought back to the Six Bells, Chelsea, associated with the music since the late 20s, by the **West London Line-Up**, who play every Tuesday.



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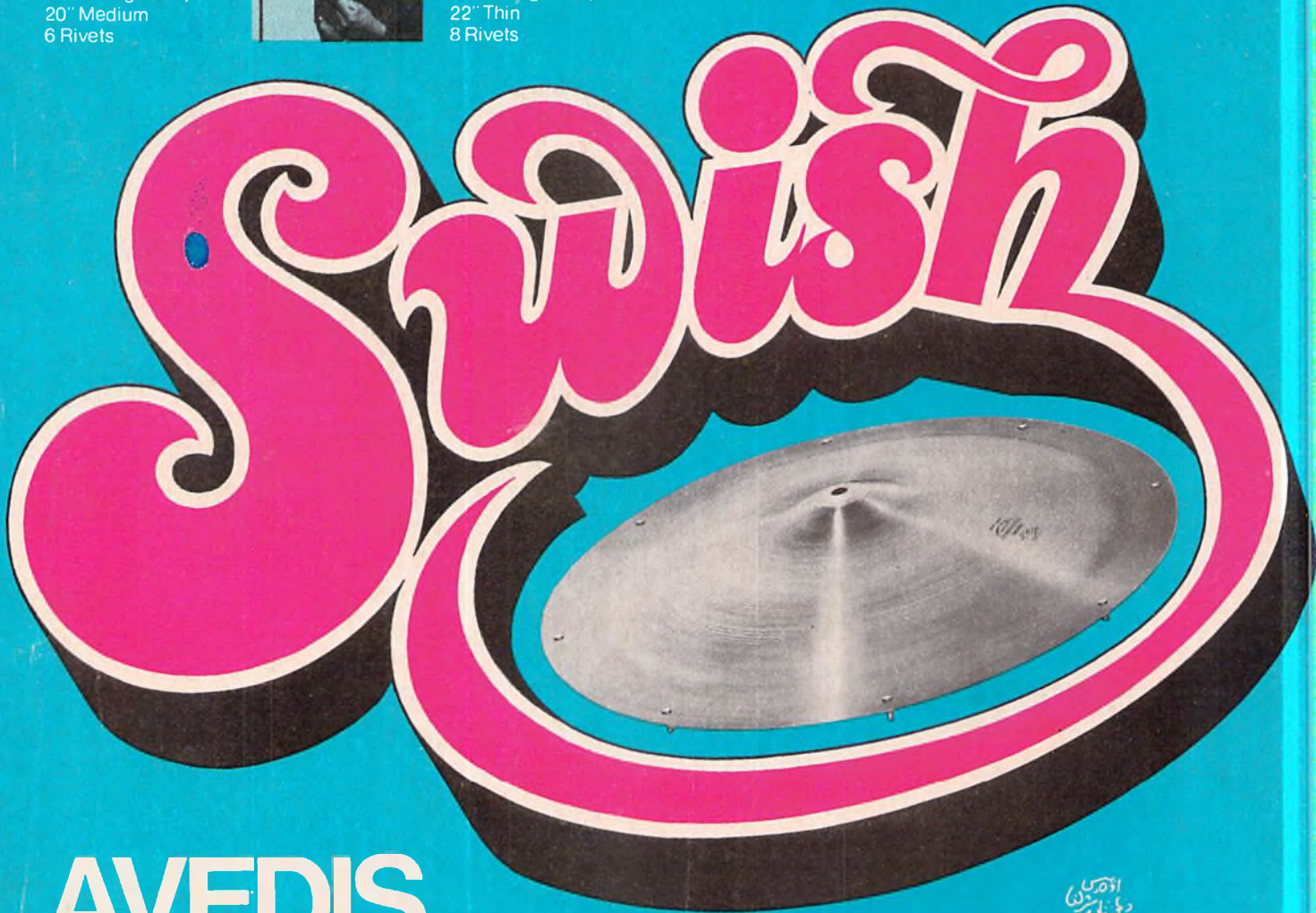
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