

APRIL 7, 1977

60c

the contemporary
music magazine

downbeat

SONNY ROLLINS

OTIS RUSH

BLACK- BYRDS

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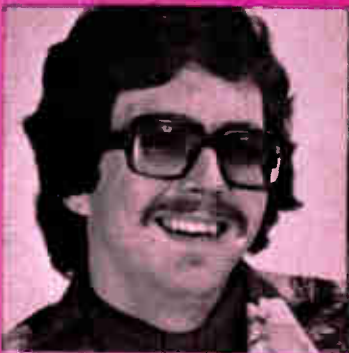


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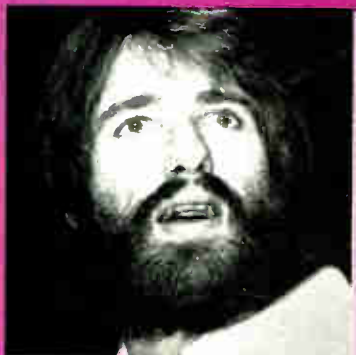


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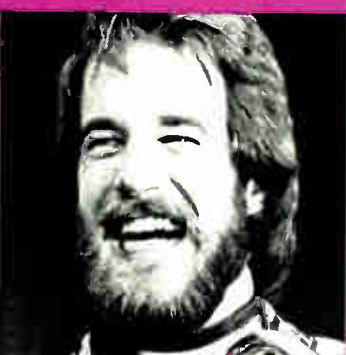
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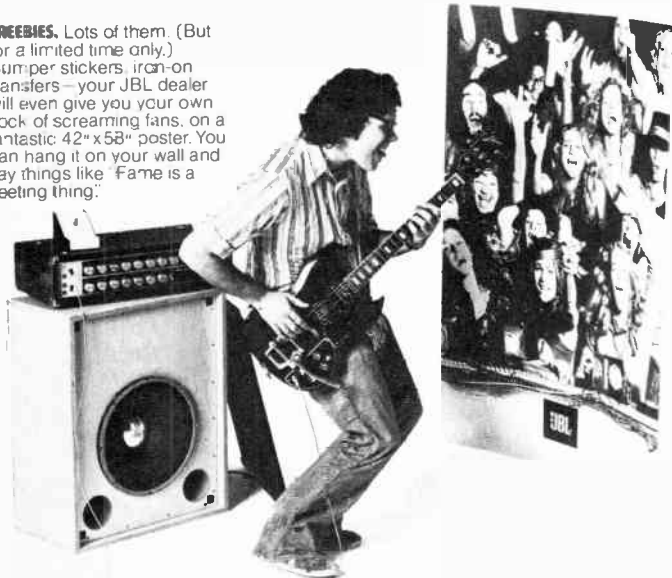
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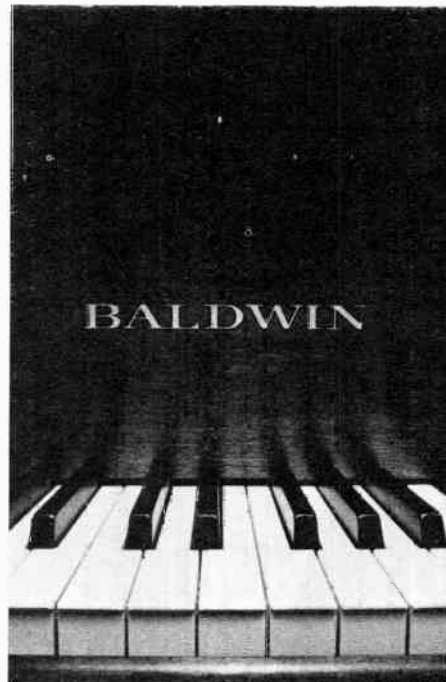
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Marlena Shaw. How sweet she is.

Marlena's debut Columbia album is called "Sweet Beginnings," but she's hardly starting from scratch: Her musical career includes world-wide performance credits (including four years with Count Basie and band), six successful albums, top-ten single status in England, Record World's Most Promising Female Jazz Artist award, and a reputation as one of the most unusual song stylists around.

With all this to back her up, Marlena's now taking the next big step—bringing her unique and beautiful talent to a whole new audience, with "Sweet Beginnings."

And beginnings are meant to be shared.

**"Sweet Beginnings:"
The start of something big
for Marlena Shaw. Her first
album on Columbia Records
and Tapes.**



the first chorus

By Charles Suber

"Roots," a word usually associated with jazz and blues, has gone pop. Suddenly, it seems, it's popular for all God's chillun to speak of roots and freedom and such. Implicit in this freedom talk is a plea for the right of self-definition: the right to label (or libel) one's self and one's music according to one's own criteria. In this issue, several musicians discuss their criteria, roots, soul, money and the like.

For an example, take the Blackbyrds. These student/apprentice musicians are learning how to successfully exploit themselves and their jazz roots for money. Money, they believe, will give them the freedom to do more productive work, such as publishing books and charts and other teaching aids for their younger brothers.

Under the benevolent direction of their mentor, Donald Byrd, the Blackbyrds' exploitative talents have, in the last four years, "generated more than ten million dollars." Dr. Byrd makes no apology for such affluence. He has seen "too many black musicians suffer too much." His soul machine is programmed for economic emancipation.

Take quite another example, Sonny Rollins. The Boss Tenor player of our generation is suspected by ever-alert jazz rooters to be headed along an heretical path labeled Black Pop. This jazz hall-of-famer is accused of selling out to Energy. And what's more, Rollins, in response to Chuck Berg's sensitive interviewing, readily admits to at least part of the charge. But like his playing, Rollins' reasoning is reasoned and immaculate.

Sonny Rollins wants to continue to grow as an active jazz musician and composer and not be relegated to a niche labeled Jazz Elder. Like Miles Davis and other genuine jazz heroes, Rollins wants to play and record with musicians who "are fresh, who have the energy, the desire. It turns out that a lot of these guys are playing electric instruments. So that's why I play with electric instruments. It happens to be what's happening right now."

Is Rollins motivated by money? Yes, to a point. He is proud to be a professional with the attendant responsibility to an audience. But he can't violate a deeper responsibility to his roots, his craft and himself. He characteristically underplays his credo: "I'm not a good enough musician to play something that I don't like. I can't do it." Money? "It's good when you can make a living doing what you like to do."

Otis Rush wishes he could make a living playing the blues, something he likes to do and does so well. Rush has paid a heavy price for his stubborn devotion to the blues, the living bridge to his African roots. He vehemently doesn't like watching the money parade pass him by. He talks about possibly adding background vocals and Stevie Wonder-like dance tempos to his repertoire. He also says, "Give me my flowers while I'm living." Otis, would you like Byrd's phone number?

The next issue starts out with a short history of Latin music, then enlarges on the motif with solo passages by Gato Barbieri, Santana, and Mongo Santamaria; y otros musicos and motivos.



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“Nobody has learned how to play the trumpet. It’s endless.”



Leblanc Duet No. 3, featuring Maynard Ferguson

We’re having a beer and bratwurst with Maynard Ferguson at Summerfest, an annual two-week music festival on the shore of Lake Michigan in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Last night, his overdrive band and double-high-C trumpet perfection set an attendance record at the Jazz Oasis here. Now, as he talks, he holds a slide/valve trumpet he recently designed, the M. F. Firebird. Tonight, he’ll hold another multitude in awe. And soon, he’ll be relaxing pool-side, at his home near Shangri-la.

Ferguson: We live ninety miles north of Los Angeles, in Ojai. It’s a beautiful valley. It’s where they shot the original Shangri-la, for “The Lost Horizon.”

Leblanc: *It must be hard traveling away from a place like that.*

Ferguson: I don’t get tired of traveling. I’ll go thirteen hard weeks, but then I’ll take a month off. Our agent would book us every day of the year, twice, if we’d let him. But I find your band and music becomes stale if you don’t take a break.

Leblanc: *Your music is anything but stale. How do you describe it?*

Ferguson: “Today.” That’s how I’d describe my band. “Today.” I’m a great believer in change. You have to have change in your music . . . because that’s where the real artist comes out, when you take a shot, as opposed to playing it safe. Nobody has learned how to play the trumpet. It’s endless.

Learning to play something only opens up the challenge to learn to play something else.

Leblanc: *Is this what gave you the idea to design new instruments, too? The three that Holton’s come out with?*

Ferguson: You have a hair of an idea, and from that grows another idea. Then you put it together. What I really admire about the Holton people is that, when I come up with an experimental horn, they realize that we’re going to experiment with it until we get a product. And that’s what happened with the Superbone. I crushed three Superbones in my bare hands before we figured out the right braces.

Leblanc: *Your Bb trumpet — the M.F. Horn — did that take trial and error?*

Ferguson: They just didn’t pull one off the line and stamp it “M.F. Horn.” It was a trial and error thing. I said let’s try it larger, let’s try a bigger bell on it. Let’s try less of a flare, more of a flare. All this takes time and energy.

Leblanc: *After all you put into it, what comes out?*

Ferguson: It’s a large-bore instrument. That bigness gives you a mellow sound. When I play in the upper register I want it to sound beautiful. Screeching high notes — squeaking out high notes — that’s a thing of the past.

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Leblanc: *Don’t quite a few players think your M.F. Horn is different from the one they buy?*

Ferguson: Right. Kids — sometimes — they’ll have an M.F. Horn and they’ll come up and want to play mine. To see if there’s anything special about my horn. I say, “Well, you take my horn and I’ll take yours, if you like.” They’re astounded by that. But, you know, they always take theirs back.

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HOLTON

Constructive Alpert

I was very disappointed in critic Russell Shaw who reviewed Gato Barbieri's *Caliente*. He said, "Believe it or not, Herb Alpert has put some constructive input here."

I'd like to know where Shaw has been. Since Alpert came out of retirement in 1974, he has put constructive input everywhere. His music is more jazz now. . . . Forget the old Tijuana Brass. This is a new Herb Alpert. I'll admit Herb's not the best trumpeter, but give credit where credit is due.
 Bill Bernard Bergstrom A.F.C., Tex.

Nobody But Phil

In the Blindfold Test with Sonny Stitt (2/10), Mr. Stitt was quoted as saying about Phil Woods' solo on *Superstition* that "I

noticed the saxophone solo, but I have no idea who it is. Anybody could play like that."

In response to this, all I have to say is that Phil Woods is without a doubt *the* alto sax player of the present time. Perhaps Mr. Stitt should check out Phil's *Floresto Canto* album, and then try saying anybody could play like that. In my book, *nobody* can play like that.
 Brent Jensen Boise, Id.

Burning For Byrd

It really burns me to read your "Guitar Sound Forum," with its accompanying selected discography of contemporary guitar styles (2/24) and find absolutely no mention of Charlie Byrd in either.

Charlie's long series of fine combo and solo albums on several labels . . . cannot be ignored, even if Underwood and Schneckloth

find the Columbia orchestral albums distasteful. (So do I; but try *Byrdland*, CS 9392, or *Travellin' Man*, CS 9235.)

Byrd's omission is doubly ironic in view of the emphasis on acoustic guitar in the article. Charlie has been doing it all along, and with the tremendous increase of interest in classical guitar during the past decade, I'll bet you'll be hearing a lot more Byrd-influenced guitar in the next few years.
 Preston Woodruff Horse Shoe, N.C.

Instructional Plea

This is an open letter to anyone who claims to be a music instructor in the public schools. If you don't know what you're talking about, please don't teach.

I'm sick of being taught things that are completely wrong, and not knowing what's right until my private teacher tells me.

I am a 15-year-old alto player. For the last three years, my music teacher has been trying to tell me that tone and intonation aren't very important in a band. Many good musicians could be ruined unless we get better teachers who know what they're doing.

Brenda McMaster Vancouver, Wa.

Fantastic Jaco

Thanks much for Neil Tesser's interview with the Florida Flash, Jaco Pastorius (1/27). What a fantastic musician! And isn't it rare to hear someone speak so lovingly of his family?

An addendum to the discography: To my ear the best of all of Pastorius' playing can be heard on Joni Mitchell's latest, *Hejira*. The melody he summons on *Refuge Of The Road* is like nothing else I've ever heard.

Glenn A. Osborn Toledo, Oh.

Five To One

While reading the reviews of records in the 1/27 issue, the review of Chuck Mangione's latest endeavor struck me as being rather prejudiced against Mangione. It was obvious by the second line that Bennett does not like Mangione. I was always under the impression that a reviewer should remain as objective as possible and personal dislikes should not enter into his work.

Bennett on the other hand did make some good points about the album—it is not one of Mangione's better releases.

If sarcasm were being reviewed, I'd give Bennett five stars. As for the review of Mangione's album—Bennett gets only one star.

Bob Coleman Milwaukee, Wis.

Planetary Reply

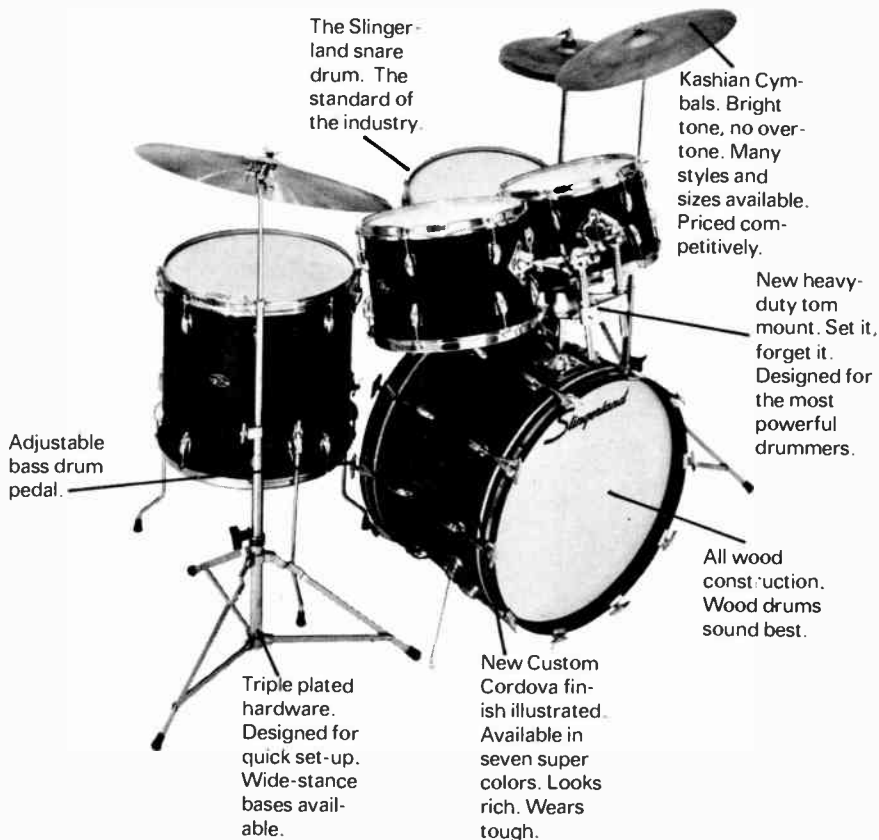
Thanks for the intelligent review (*The Planets*, 1/27). In retrospect I wish there had been more of those moments you liked, and in the next album there will be. I was a little timid about rescoring the work, that was the problem.

The next record will be jazz (or what I call jazz, not what some people will call jazz I am sure)—one side will be synthesized rescoring of one of the tunes from *Bitches Brew*.

Thanks again. I would much rather get a mixed review that showed perception and clarity than a favorable review for all the wrong reasons.

Dr. Patrick Gleeson San Francisco, Cal.

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TAYLOR MEETS NEW WORLD

JOSEPH L. JOHNSON



NEW YORK—Leon Thompson recently conducted the Symphony of the New World in a Carnegie Hall concert featuring jazz.

For the celebration of Black History Week 1977, Billy Taylor and his trio performed Billy's *Suite For Jazz Piano And Orchestra*. Taylor's piece took second chair to a new work by Noel DaCosta called *Ceremony Of Spirituals*. This world premier had Barbara Grant as vocal soloist and Sam Rivers as guest saxophonist. Joining the soloists and orchestra was the Howard University Choir. Grant and Rivers were also featured in the joining interludes; they were given complete freedom in those places.

Taylor's *Suite* was originally dedicated to Art Tatum, his mentor. But with Eubie Blake in the house, it was rededicated to the ancient pianist. The dexterity of Taylor was much in evidence as he ran from Tatum-esque runs to an easy bolero tempo. The opening *Duane*, with its beautiful melody, was reflected throughout the piece's other two movements.

The orchestra's use of a full percussion section, including claves, xylophone, triangles, chimes, and the like, proved an interesting contrast to some full-throated brass figures.

Unfortunately, there seemed to be some laxity in the performance of the Taylor piece. The composer's virtuosity nevertheless showed through in the final segment, *La Cote d'Avoire*, as he took a long a cappella contrapuntal solo.

JAMATHON RENT BLAST

NEW YORK—The continuing saga of the on-again, off-again New York Jazz Museum was . . . on-again, off-again during the month of February.

On Feb. 2, former director and co-founder Howard Fischer was locked out of the place as the board of directors found themselves up to their embouchures in mortgage debt. A "Committee to Save the Jazz Museum" was hastily formed, led by John Hammond, Ruth Ellington, critic John S. Wilson, publicist Phoebe Jacobs, and others from the worlds of music and politics.

The following weekend, with the help of radio station WRVR, Bell Sound Studios and musicians and fans, a 60-hour-long "Jamathon" was held at the Museum. This super rent party began Friday afternoon and went through early Monday morning, packed with nonstop music.

"We forestalled foreclosure," board chairperson Ann Ruckert said. "But we are not out of the woods yet."

The Museum collected \$13,000 for all their collective efforts, but they need \$54,000 more. Miles Davis promised \$500 and Johnson's Wax another \$3000. There was an anonymous donation of a \$100 bill in one of the plates that was passed hourly. RCA donated records for auction; trumpeter Danny Moore and photographer Carol Friedman donated photographs for auction.

"If we could get our sales shop into action, we could meet the rent," Ruckert said. "There's so much for sale there."

The Museum is still looking for an interim director.

Among the Jamathon stars was a group called New York's Finest. A group of swinging NYC cops, this band played in the wee hours of Saturday night/Sunday morning to an audience made up of a good sampling of NYC's Broadway beauties: pimps, pros and panhandlers. "At least it got 'em off the streets," someone quipped.

Beacon Shines Anew

NEW YORK—After a long run as an art deco movie palace, and a much briefer one as a rock, jazz and Latin music emporium, the Beacon Theatre has been refurbished to its former glory.

Impresario Kozuko Hillyer has undertaken the project of the renovation, which will include interior cleaning, recarpeting, retiling and installation of brighter lights.

"It's a shame that no one has ever seen what this beautiful theatre really looks like," Hillyer said. "The fixtures, the statuary, are just magnificent."

The former lessees, Steve

Metz and Steve Singer, had been presenting rock, jazz and Latin concerts to the dismay of the neighborhood. Their bankruptcy delayed Hillyer's takeover, but the first presentation came off Feb. 8 as rescheduled. There will be little or no rock at the Beacon, Hillyer said. "We want neighborhood support, and we will get it only if we keep the rowdy crowds to a minimum."

Hillyer went on to say that she favors classical, ballet, folk and jazz acts at the place and plans to utilize the fine acoustic qualities rather than overpower it with unnecessary amplification.

NEW BERKELEY HOT SPOT

BERKELEY—In what has been far too long a time coming, the social and cultural seedbed of Berkeley has sprouted a comfortable and openminded new jazz stage. The Mapenzi club—which offers a carpeted and ornately tiled lounge with beer, wine and cheese, as well as an equally pleasant performance space with perhaps 20 tables—opened recently with the Pyramids, an Oakland-based African jazz ensemble led by reedman Idris Ackamoor. An extra warmth and artist/audience rapport pervaded the club, augmented by friends of band and management.

Without much publicity at all, the Mapenzi has already attracted a sizable regular audience for its weekend and occasional mid-

week dates. While co-owner Art Scott told **db** that he's "investigating all the different musical areas," the club has thus far specialized in the best of the avant garde from Chicago and New York. In their first three months of operation, Scott and partner Jim McCloud have brought in Hamiet Bluiett and David Murray, Prince Lasha and Oliver Lake, among others, most of whom have performed in solo or duet capacities. At the time of this writing, Anthony Braxton, Leo Smith, Julius Hemphill and Leroy Jenkins are scheduled for solo concerts at the Mapenzi; indeed, as Scott told us, "the young, strong talents on all the instruments, who are willing to carry the whole sound themselves."

April 7 □ 9

New Releases

More classic **Savoy** recordings from **Arista** include *Opus De Bop*, **Stan Getz**; *The First Q*, **Mill and Robin Lumley**; *Love Me, Jackson*; *Encores*, **Charlie Park**; *Discoveries*, **Art Pepper**; *Fat Girl*, **Fats Navarro**; and *All Star Swing Groups*, featuring the groups of **Cozy Cole** and **Pete Johnson**.

Recent **Atlantic** adds include *Big City*, the latest from former **Return To Forever** drummer **Lenny White**; *Mr. Flute*, highlighting former **Ray Barretto** flutist **Art Webb**; *Love In C Minor*, **Cerrone**; *Uptown & Lowdown*, **Mama's Pride**; *Peter Gabriel*, a solo disc by the former **Genesis** lead vocalist; and *The Kenny Rankin Album*, **Kenny Rankin**.

St. Louis-based **Nighthawk Records** has released four notable blues discs. The Nighthawk anthologies are *Windy City Blues: The Transition (1935-1945)*; *Chicago Slickers (1948-1953)*; *Lowdown Memphis Harmonica Jam (1950-1955)*; and *Detroit Ghetto Blues (1948-1954)*.

New platters from **RSO** include *Marscape*, **Jack Lancaster**; *Yvonne Elliman*; and *Two Sides To Every Story*, **Gene Clark**.

Hot wax from **Vanguard** includes *Transition*, the first label waxing from Chicago saxophonist **Bunky Green**, and *Summit Meeting*, an all-star session featuring **Elvin Jones**, **James Moody**, **Clark Terry** and **Bunky Green**.

Muse has released *Crystal Reflections*, **Buster Williams**; *As One*, **Richard Davis**; *Invitation*, **David Schnitter**; and *My Buddy*, **Sonny Stitt**.

Concord Jazz has released a new disc by guitarist **Tal Farlow** called *A Sign Of The Times*, as well as the return of vocalist **Ernestine Anderson**, via a platter tagged *Hello Like Before*.

CTI has released *The Fox*, **Urbie Green**, and *The San Francisco Concert*, **Hubert Laws**. **db**

down
beat
NEWS

potpourri

The **Jazz Institute of Chicago** has received a grant from the Skokie (Ill.) Arts Council to stage a *History of Jazz* concert at Niles East High School on April 9.

The Jazz Institute's **Jazz Hot Line** went into 24-hour operation on March 7.

Drummer **Les DeMerle** has left the **Harry James Orchestra** after a five-year stint. Les is currently teaching in L.A. The new personnel for his **Transfusion** group includes: **Mark Hatch**, trumpet; **Bunk Gardner** and **Sam Riney**, reeds; **Hush Preston**, baritone sax and flute; **Barry Coats**, guitar; **Robby Robinson**, keyboards; **Rex Robinson**, bass; and **DeMerle** on drums.

Chuck Mangione has also shaken up his quartet. The new group includes **Chris Badala**, reeds; **Grant Geissman**, guitar; **Charles Meeks**, bass; and **James Bradley, Jr.**, drums.

Clarinetist **Barney Bigard** is back on his feet following emergency surgery for bleeding ulcers at L.A.'s Midway Hospital. The 71-year-old **Bigard** plans to go to Honolulu in May, then onward to Nice, France for **George Wein's** festival.

Speaking of Wein, **George** is bringing the **Kool Jazz Festival** to Hawaii May 2-8. Acts confirmed so far include **Woody Herman**, **Chuck Mangione**, **Clark Terry**, **Zoot Sims**, **Ellis Larkins**, **Milt Hinton**, **Benny Carter**, **Joe Williams**, **Trummy Young**, **Teddy Wilson**, **Earl Hines**, **Joe Venuti**, **Muddy Waters** and **Al Green**.

The lineup of **Alan Broadbent's** new band includes **Bill Stapleton**, trumpet and flugelhorn; **Ernie Watts**, **Dick Spencer**, **Pete Christlieb** and **Don Menza**, reeds; **Fred Atwood**, bass; **Nick Ceroli**, drums; **Jerry Steinholtz**, percussion; and **Broadbent**, piano.

The dance musical *Fat Tuesday (And All That Jazz!)* recently premiered at Nashville's War Memorial Auditorium. Featured were the **Olympia Brass Band** and **Arthur Hall's Afro-American Dance Ensemble**.

A **John Coltrane Discography** has been compiled by **Brian Davis**. The 57-page book can be obtained from Trane Disco, 180 Shaftesbury Ave., London, W.C. 2.

Louis Bellson and **Billy Cobham** will highlight a two-day workshop course in jazz-rock percussion at California State University in Northridge. College credit is available for workshop participation. The big thump occurs on June 3 and 4.

Governors State University will hold its Sixth Annual Junior College Jazz Festival on May 6 and 7. Judges for the fest will be **Ernie Wilkins**, **Freddie Waits** and **Willie Pickens**.

Flutist **Paul Horn** has changed labels, moving from **Columbia** to **Mushroom**.

A new marimba study by **Ramon E. Meyer** offers 29 pieces for the instrument, with degree of difficulty ranging from intermediate to advanced. Meyer's book is called *Multiple Mallet Studies For Marimba*.

Details about this summer's **Nice Jazz Festival** are beginning to roll in. **Cab Calloway's Harlem Spectacle** and **Count Basie's Kansas City Seven** are recent additions to the jazz lineup that includes **Barney Bigard**, **Dizzy Gillespie**, **Benny Carter**, **Jon Faddis**, **Joe Venuti**, **Ray Bryant**, **Thad Jones/Mel Lewis**, **Muddy Waters**, **Pee Wee Erwin**, **Charles Mingus**, **Dave Brubeck**, and many, many others. Dates for Nice are July 7-17.

Island Records in London has released a rare **Booker Little** album after 16 years in the closet. The trumpeter died in 1961 at the age of 23, shortly after this LP was recorded.

All you need to learn electronic music composition is a record player, two-speed tape recorder, microphone, scissors, splicing block, and a watch with a second hand. So says **Terence Dwyer** in his new electronic music course, available in book and recorded form from Oxford University Press. The volume can be understood by anyone from 12 years on up. db

Jazzmobile Expansion

NEW YORK—Jazzmobile, the touring music program of N.Y.C. and environs, has embarked on a new program. It has implemented an arts enrichment program in District 4 of the city's school system.

Located in what is commonly known as "El Barrio," the Spanish-speaking area of the upper east side of Harlem, the District seeks to make its schools attract young students.

"We want to make the kids want to go there and the parents want to send their children there," Jazzmobile Executive Director **Dave Bailey** said.

What the program entails is sending professional artists into the area "teaching" the disciplines of music, dance, poetry, visual arts and drama and endeavoring to stimulate their students. It has been found that this, in turn, gives the child a chance to open his mind to other things including the other academic courses. It also gives them a

chance to develop an interest in the arts and to further enhance their knowledge.

The monies for the project became available to Jazzmobile through the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) in 1976.

"We have expanded the program for 1977," Bailey went on. "We have included District 3, also in Manhattan. The program, as we foresee it, has more than doubled."

In another development, Jazzmobile is taking 20 musicians to Winnipeg, Canada. They will set up a series of daily workshops (starting May 23) for instruction and demonstration. Later, the 20 will be joined by an equal number of Canadians who will perform saxophonist **Jimmy Heath's Afro-American Suite Of Evolution**. The suite, performed here last year, will be broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Company, which plans a documentary film of the performance for possible worldwide distribution.

FINAL BAR

Buddy Johnson, leader of swing bands during the period of about 1945 to 1965 and composer of numerous r&b and pop hit songs, recently died in New York City. He was 61.

Buddy was born in Darlington, S.C. on Jan. 10, 1916 as Woodrow Wilson Johnson. (He was one of two noted bandleaders named after the World War One president, the other being **Woody Herman**.) Johnson learned to play the piano at an early age and headed for New York in search of a career in music. He worked as a pianist in a number of small clubs in Harlem and in 1939 went with the Cotton Club Revue on a tour of European cities that ended with the outbreak of the war. On returning to New York he worked at **Barney Gallant's**, popular Greenwich Village night club, and later organized a small combo of his own prior to being signed by Decca and eventually going forth with a big band.

Signed by Decca Records in 1944 for what was then known as that company's "race" series label, Buddy and his band, featuring **Arthur Prysock** and his sister, **Ella Johnson**, as vocalists, turned out such hit sides as *Baby, Don't You Cry, Please, Mr. Johnson, Stop Pretending, Since I Fell For You, You'll Get Them Blues, I Don't Care Who Knows, They All Say I'm The Biggest Fool, Serves Me Right, and Did You See Jackie Robinson Hit That Ball*, along with such instrumentals as *Li'l Dog, Far Cry, Dr. Jive Jives and Down Yonder*. Buddy switched to Mercury Records in 1953 and scored with numerous hit singles and five LP's for that label, including *I Don't Want Nobody (To Have My Love But You)*, the first record of his to hit high on the national pop singles charts. All were his own compositions and arrangements.

The Johnson band was a fixture at the famed Savoy Ballroom and at the Apollo Theater in New York's Harlem, the Howard in Washington, the Royal in Baltimore, the Regal in Chicago, and in ballrooms, armories, warehouses and auditoriums throughout the country. In 1952, Buddy was crowned "King of The One-Niter Circuit" in a poll conducted among the nation's black dance promoters. The Johnson band at its height numbered 17 pieces with four trumpets, four trombones, five saxes, piano, string bass, guitar and drums, with Buddy himself at the piano.

A pianist, arranger and composer, Buddy was one of the pioneers and chief delineators of big band rhythm and blues. Critic **Leonard Feather** in his *Encyclopedia Of Jazz* wrote: "Buddy Johnson's big band records, especially those with vocals featuring his sister Ella, are outstanding for their unique beat and for the melodic variety Johnson's arrangements attain within a narrow blues framework. Still almost unknown to the white public, the combination of Ella's laconic style of modern blues singing and her brother's ingenious arrangements is unique and delightful."

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SONNY ROLLINS

The Way Newk Feels

by chuck berg

As a young struggling tenor saxophonist, one of the profound moments in my studies was the discovery of Theodore Walter (Sonny) Rollins. I played and replayed *Way Out West* until the grooves gave out. What initially fascinated me was Rollins' ability to make songs like *Wagon Wheels* and *Buttons And Bows* come to life. Instead of a straightforward reading of the melody followed by choruses based primarily on the harmonic changes, Sonny would often focus on a particular melodic fragment and tease out its latent expressive layers.

His procedure was as precise as a research scientist's. The phrase would be subjected to dynamic variations ranging from *ppp* to *fff*. It would be examined at different speeds through Sonny's superimposition of fast, normal and slow motion versions over the rhythm section's steady metronomic pulse. It would also be attacked with articulations embracing everything from staccato to legato. In addition, the phrase's timbral possibilities were plumbed through the use of different registers and tone colors.

Leavening this almost laboratory approach was Sonny's ability to shift points of view. Like a film director alternating objective and subjective camera shots, Sonny would jump at ease from detached commentary to involved personal statement. Along with this was Sonny's mordant and ironic sense of humor. Like the great Dadaists Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray, Rollins had the knack of discovering and including in his work the most telling musical ready-mades in the form of quoted fragments from other tunes.

There was also the balance between structure and surprise. Regardless of how incongruous a new idea might sound, Sonny's superb musical logic eventually supplied the connective tissue tying the new episode into his overall design. Even though I have been using the past tense in describing the lessons of such Rollins seminars as *Saxophone Colossus* and *The Bridge*, it should be made clear that Sonny's inimitable lexicon is as alive as it's ever been.

Sonny was born in New York on September 7, 1929. After finishing high school in 1947, he started a decade of gigging and recording with stalwarts such as Babs Gonzales, Bud Powell, Fats Navarro, J. J. Johnson, Art Blakey, Tadd Dameron, Miles Davis, Max Roach and Clifford Brown. In 1957, Sonny set out to establish himself as a leader. His eminence has been recognized with countless awards and recognitions including election to *db's* Hall of Fame (1974) and by his sweep of



db's recent critics (8/12/76) and readers polls (12/16/76).

Sonny is a warm, thoughtful man who cares deeply about music and musicians. While aware of his accomplishments, he speaks of his career with modesty and candor. His articulate statements further reveal the analytical, questioning mind that so brilliantly emerges in his well-documented searches for new levels of musical expression. Sonny and I met for the interview at the studios of WBAI-FM. Part of that conversation was broadcast earlier this year.

Berg: I know your mother was raised in the Virgin Islands and that Caribbean music has been an important influence, especially in compositions like *St. Thomas* and *Brownskin Girl*. What were your family's musical roots?

Rollins: The Caribbean influence was one. Also, my uncle had a lot of records that we

used to play, people like Lonnie Johnson, Tommy McClennan and Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup. My sister plays and sings in church. She's a fine musician. My brother was a very good violinist. He went to the High School of Music and Art. He was supposed to go with the Pittsburgh Symphony but then decided to go into something else. I used to hear him practicing around the house all the time, you know, and that was good for my ears. So from the time I was small I heard music of all different kinds.

Berg: I understand that you had some piano lessons at nine which didn't really take.

Rollins: That's right. The family tried to get me to go because my brother and sister, who are older, went to school and took their lessons and had their teachers. But I just didn't make it. I was always sort of the black sheep of the family. I was out on the street playing ball so I never actually got into it. I began it but I didn't carry through. I'm sorry in a way that I didn't, but it was just my nature, you know.

Berg: The alto saxophone provided your first significant musical experience. How did that come about?

Rollins: That came about as a result of my family. I had a cousin who played alto. I looked up to him because he was older and was the kind of young kid who went out in the street and worked for his money. He was the sort of guy I respected, so I thought, "Gee, I'd like to play." One day when I was at his house I saw his horn. The look of the horn was so great, you know, beautifully curved, golden, and all those keys. So that was it. I said, "Gee, I want to play music on that horn." So, I found the thing that I wanted to do.

Berg: How old were you?

Rollins: I think I was probably around 11 or 12 when I began playing.

Berg: When did the transition to tenor take place?

Rollins: Well, the more I listened to music the more I began to enjoy various artists. I became enamored of Coleman Hawkins. When I heard him, there was really so much music in the way he played. To me it was a real intellectual experience listening to him. So I bugged my mother to get me a tenor. She had already bought me an alto, you know. But I had a beautiful mother who tried to give me everything that I wanted and let me do whatever I wanted to do. She loved me. Whatever I did was okay. So I got a tenor eventually. She got me a new horn. The alto wasn't a new one, so the tenor was the first new horn I had. That was it. I tried to play like Coleman.

Berg: In that period when you were trying to play like Hawkins, were there other saxophonists who influenced your style?

Rollins: I enjoyed Louis Jordan who played all the horns. Then after a while I got turned on to Lester Young and of course I loved him too. So Lester and Hawk were the guys that I really dug. But I should also say that I was just a horn fan. I dug guys like Lucky Thompson and Lockjaw Davis, who's a really fantastic musician. I'm sure that there are others that I'm forgetting but those are some of the guys that I enjoyed a great deal.

Berg: What was your first gigging experience like?

Rollins: We had a small group, kids, you know, so we played at a lot of small affairs. Of course, in those days things were exactly the way they are now in that the competitive thing between kids in school was very strong. It's

the old business of everyone trying to outplay the next guy. So I came up through that vigorous environment. You had to fight to win, and learn to take the defeats. But I had the stamina to stay, so as time went on I played more and more.

Eventually, I played with Monk. A friend of mine, a guy in our band, was playing with him and asked me to come down to Monk's rehearsal. Then Monk said, "Well, come and play with me." So, I used to rehearse at Monk's house with his band which was a very great experience.

Berg: Did Monk influence your harmonic development?

Rollins: I think so because I started going to Monk's house when I was still quite young. He had a great influence on me. And I respected him so much that I know I got some things from him.

Berg: Did you do much gigging with Monk?

Rollins: No. Actually I mainly rehearsed with Thelonious. We did some recordings, some things with Julius Watkins, a very fine french horn player. But I don't recall doing much gigging with Monk's group.

Berg: What was your experience with Art Blakey like?

Rollins: Art was a tremendous figure. To me, a giant. He still is. At that time I was looking up at this great artist. I think Art was on the first record I made under my own name. And when I began recording regularly, Art was usually there. So Art was always around at that time when I was beginning to come out and up. I get an awful lot from listening to Art. I think he's a very underappreciated musician for what he has done and for what he is doing.

Berg: Tell me about Bud Powell.

Rollins: Back then I lived up town in an area called Sugar Hill. Bud lived close by. Of course, Bud was older than me and the guys I hung out with like Jackie McLean. But anyway, Bud heard about us. We got to hang out with Bud and go to his house and play. He was such a great musician, such a fantastic musician, but also an erratic person in many areas of his personal life. He was the real prototype musician. You never knew what was going to happen, but the music was there. Of course I put Bud in my pantheon. In the late '40s, I think, I made one of my early records with Bud.

I don't know how I had the nerve to play with those guys at that time. I had the nerve, I guess, because I did it. But, I wasn't at their level. There wasn't a school, or experience, or anything that was as great as they were. Playing with Monk, Art, Bud and guys like Fats Navarro who were top notch people was fantastic. The fact that they wanted me to play with them also inspired me to keep playing, which I'm still doing today. At any rate, I would say that Bud had a tremendous influence on me.

Berg: What sort of influence?

Rollins: Musical ideas, dedication to music. As I said, he was only into music. Outside of that, his life was kind of up in the air. I'm not that dedicated. I'm not as devoted as Bud was. But I think he helped me to think in that direction. He gave me a good example of what a great musician should be. Bud was always playing and practicing. I just loved Bud. He was fantastic.

Berg: What about Tadd Dameron?

Rollins: Well, to me Tadd was more of an arranger. When I first played with Tadd it

was hard because I couldn't read that well. It was difficult for me to play the parts. As time went on, of course, I got a little better and was able to do more work with Tadd. Later, he wrote a song that I recorded with Max Roach and Clifford Brown. He said he had me in mind when he wrote it. So it was great to be able to record some of his original music.

Berg: How did you happen to get involved with Miles?

Rollins: I used to go down to a place on 118th St. in Harlem and jam. I was playing there one night and a guy said, "Sonny, I want you to come up and play the intermission at a place in the Bronx. We have a lot of top jazz stars and you can come up with your group and play the intermission for these jazz greats." I said, "Okay, great." So, this I did. Miles was one of the jazz greats that was playing there. That's when Miles heard me playing with my trio. Miles heard me and said, "Oh wow, come join my band." I'll never forget that night because I never got paid for that job. The guy ran out without paying me my money. Of course it turned out great because I had a chance to meet Miles. Right after that I joined his band.

Berg: Who was in the band at that time?

Rollins: Miles had Art Blakey playing with him. But different guys were coming and going. Harold West and Roy Haynes both played drums with us, I think. Coltrane was on some of the jobs with Miles coaching him on the side.

Berg: I was going to ask you about your relationship with Coltrane because I think anyone seriously looking at the last 25 years puts you and Coltrane at the top of the tenor list.

Rollins: That's very kind of you to put me in that category. But that's when I first met John, when I was playing with Miles. It was really great, you know, because Miles would whisper to me while John was playing, and then when I was playing he'd whisper to John, to keep a lot of excitement going.

Berg: What would he whisper?

Rollins: He would just say "Oh, listen to that. Listen to what he's playing." He would

talk about John's playing and say, "Maybe you can do that." These were things that would push a guy, but in a very positive way. So that's when I first met John. We became quite close as the years went by.

Berg: How was it playing with another tenor saxophonist? I would think there'd be some competitive tension.

Rollins: No, there wasn't, because when we met I was still in such awe of the whole scene that I was just happy to be there. I guess I had that attitude for quite awhile. Actually, getting back to Miles, Miles was the guy that brought me out of my shell in certain ways. I felt that I couldn't really play as well as certain other guys that were big at that time and Miles said "No man, you can do it. That's why I have you instead of some other guy." So he spurred me and pushed me a lot of times.

Berg: So people like Art, Bud and Miles were influential not only because of their music but because of the encouragement and push they gave you.

Rollins: Yeah. I'm fortunate that I was around those guys. Even if I never do anything else in music I have my memories to make me happy, you know, Clifford Brown and all those guys. When I think about some of the musical things that we used to get into, I realize that I've been very fortunate in this life.

Berg: After Miles you freelanced from about '51 to '56 before rejoining his band. What was the scope of your activities during that five year span?

Rollins: All through that period I had a lot of personal things that I was getting involved in, you know, the negative side of the music business. So there were parts of that time that I wasn't playing at all. I was just trying to get myself together. But I did play with Miles off and on through those years. I first played with Miles in '49 or '50 and then went back full-time in 1957. That was when John wanted to go out and start his own group. I had just left Max Roach's band and Clifford had died, so I went back to play with Miles for a short time in '57.

Berg: The Max Roach-Clifford Brown band is one of the legendary ensembles in the history of jazz. What was that experience like?

Rollins: Oh, it was great. It was marvelous. Max, of course, is a master. I've learned so much from Max. And Clifford was a fantastic person and musician, just an angel. There was nothing he would do that would make you mad. His demeanor and temperament were so straight and even. Anyway, as a person, as well as a musician, Clifford had a tremendous influence on me.

I was kind of wild when I first went in the band, in an emotional way. But Clifford was so together as a person you wouldn't have believed it. For a guy that plays that much to be so humble and beautiful, it was just amazing. So I tried to be nice after that.

Berg: Musically, did Clifford influence your style?

Rollins: Well, I hope I got something from him. I don't know if I did or not. He was really a great player. I would hear him night after night deliver such fantastic things. It's really difficult for a guy to reach those heights every night, but Clifford did it.

Clifford and I made a record with some of my songs. People said they could hear a little Clifford in me and a little of me in Clifford. But when I was with them, I was mainly trying to project the music of the Roach-Brown band. But there was a bit of crossover on that record.

SELECTED ROLLINS DISCOGRAPHY

FIRST RECORDINGS!—Prestige 7856
 JAZZ CLASSICS—Prestige 7433
 WORKTIME—Prestige 7750
 3 GIANTS—Prestige 7821
 TENOR MADNESS—Prestige 7657
 SAXOPHONE COLOSSUS—Prestige 7326
 ROLLINS PLAYS FOR BIRD—Prestige 7553
 FREEDOM SUITE PLUS—Milestone 47007
 SONNY ROLLINS' NEXT ALBUM—Milestone 9042
 HORN CULTURE—Milestone 9051
 SONNY ROLLINS—Prestige 24004
 THE CUTTING EDGE—Milestone M-9059
 NUCLEUS—Milestone M-9064
 THE WAY I FEEL—Milestone M-9074
 THE BRIDGE—RCA LSP-2527
 WHAT'S NEW?—RCA LPM-2572
 NOW'S THE TIME!—RCA LPM-2927
 SONNY ROLLINS: VOLUME ONE—Blue Note 81542
 SONNY ROLLINS: VOLUME TWO—Blue Note 81558
 A NIGHT AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD—Blue Note 81581
 NEWK'S TIME—Blue Note 84001
 WAY OUT WEST—Contemporary 7017
 CONTEMPORARY LEADERS—Contemporary 7564
 SONNY ROLLINS ON IMPULSE—Impulse A-91
 ALFIE—Impulse A-9111
 EAST BROADWAY RUNDOWN—Impulse A-9121
 RE-EVALUATION: THE IMPULSE YEARS—Impulse 9236
 THE SOUND OF SONNY—Riverside RLP 12-241
 BRASS/TRIO—Verve V6-8430
 TENOR TITAN—Verve VSPS-32
 SONNY ROLLINS—Archive of Folk Music FS-220

THE BLACKBYRDS

Horatio Alger Comes To Howard U.

by conrad silvert



PHIL BRAY

A thousand-seat, tables-cum-dancefloor San Francisco ballroom called the Palace, complete with toweringly high ceiling and excellent ventilation for sweaty dancers or chain-smokers, recently hosted the Blackbyrds. At one time this group may rightly have been known as a fledgling crossover jazz band, but today the Blackbyrds are a sophisticated urban dance band. Their sound is a melting pot of black musical styles, played with technical grace which, especially in more intimate settings, occasionally delves into the band's jazz roots.

With educator/administrator/musician Donald Byrd at the helm, the band has made a major thrust into the American marketplace since their formation four years ago; they've released five albums on Fantasy, the last two, *City Life* and *Unfinished Business*, reaching gold status. Their thrust into the public arena, despite their individual backgrounds in jazz, has shown more of an ability to move bodies than to move minds. As such, along with groups exemplified by Earth, Wind & Fire, the Blackbyrds are very much in the heart of the definition of Black Pop, '70s style.

Orville Saunders, the group's guitarist, once told a *Billboard* reporter, "We believe that certain chords make money and certain chords do not." And as serious as each Blackbyrd seems to be about his own education and musical development, it's plain that Dr. Byrd has been very successful in instilling them with a realization that personal art and the music business can be very separate entities indeed.

This interview took place the day after the band played the plush Palace gig. Deciding to interview each Blackbyrd separately, the first visit was with keyboard player Kevin Toney, who has often served as a spokesman for the group. I found him listening to a tape of Earl Hines and Fats Waller—he was working on transcriptions. Neatly arranged on the half-made hotel room bed were copies of several black music magazines, directly alongside a

row of Bach and Chopin exercise books and a transposition guide. A batch of new records Toney had picked up during a blitz of record-store promotions leaned against the wall. Titles were by Ahmad Jamal, Bob James, Mel Lewis, Clifford Jordan, Erroll Garner, Freddie Hubbard, Doug Carn, Jean Carn, Jean-Luc Ponty and Miroslav Vitous, along with Miles's *Funny Valentine* and *Sketches Of Spain* and Donald Byrd's latest Blue Note curiosity, *Caricatures*.

What with the near-frenzy of activity—Bay Area gigs, promos and interviews were to be followed by more of the same in Los Angeles, where the group was to play the Shrine Auditorium—it seemed incredible that Kevin could keep current with his studies (he's now a senior in music education at Howard).

"Our schedule's been ridiculous. We'll start off at 10 in the morning and do radio interviews till 6 o'clock, and then maybe do a magazine interview before the gig. The next day we'll hit the record stores, get back here by 7, rush to the gig . . . the gig's over by 2 in the morning, you get out of the building by 3, then get something to eat, and maybe get to bed by 4 or 5 o'clock. We might be averaging four hours sleep a night, and that's no way to study. I try to do as much as I can on the plane. I have a lot of tapes—classical things, symphonies, as well as some material I've been writing for the band."

With *Unfinished Business* not yet hitting its peak on the charts, Toney already has ten songs written for the next LP. But he's also been working toward his own solo project that he says will involve none of the other Blackbyrds. "We want to keep it very separate—it will give me, Kevin Toney, a chance to display all of his talents."

Kevin was born in Detroit (April 23, 1953) and began studying classical piano at age five. "But I've been composing since I was six. I played cello starting in the third grade, and saxophone too, but I liked piano the most. In the seventh grade my band director suggested

that I get a combo together for the spring festival. So I went to a cello player's house—his father had a lot of jazz records, he played a Horace Silver piece, and the first solo I ever learned was from part of *Song For My Father*. I could only hear the first two chords—I had the technique to play the rest but I couldn't hear the voicings.

"When I got to high school I met Billy McCoy (now with Norman Connors), and I knew about Herbie Hancock, McCoy Tyner, Chick Corea and Keith Jarrett. Then I met Herbie and we played some piano together, he was showing me all this stuff. Herbie was my initial idol, then McCoy. But it was Herbie in the '60s, before I went to Howard—Blue Note Herbie, making dates with everybody and with Miles. That was the shit. Herbie Hancock is a bad mother—, and you can quote me on that.

"But other influences have come in, like Art Tatum, Bud Powell. I particularly like Wynton Kelly, he's bad too, and Bill Evans, Monk, Cedar Walton too. I keep my ears open for new pianists—I like Patrice Rushen and Cedric Lawson—and other players, horn players, too."

In 1972, shortly after Toney moved to Washington, D.C. to study music under Donald Byrd, the Doctor hired him to play in what was then the Byrd septet: "We played funky jazz clubs like Slug's in New York. The band consisted of Byrd, myself, Barney Perry, who was the Blackbyrds' guitarist the first few records, and jazz cats like Joe Chambers, Stanley Cowell, Harold Vick, George Coleman and Billy Harper—the saxophone players rotated, but Stanley and I played together, one on electric and the other on acoustic piano. We just played straightahead jazz, which was great, because I have a jazz background more than in what I'm doing now with the Blackbyrds, which is like a rebirth in another area."

Toney claims his ears were closed when he was growing up: "I hated vocal music. Even being from Detroit and being so exposed to Motown groups, I hated r&b with a passion. If it wasn't jazz I didn't want to hear it. I never knew when I came to Howard to study with Donald Byrd that I would end up making gold records and traveling all over the country."

Many people think the Schwann catalog errs by cataloging the Blackbyrds in their jazz section. But Toney says, "I think we're setting new trends. People dance to our music but it still has a lot of jazz in it, which is why none of us have been able to label it. Our records usually end up on most of the charts—easy listening, r&b, jazz. I think we're just basically pop."

At this point the discussion turned to definitions of soul and disco music, the latter style something various *db* reviewers have accused the group of playing with mindless, money-grasping abandon. Toney says he prefers soul over disco, saying that soul has a beat, good vocals, and some improvisation. "Disco isn't going to be here that long, but I think soul music is a permanent style, just like gospel and jazz."

He adds that the Blackbyrds' early music barely resembles what they play today. "We were playing electronic avant garde pieces, just freakin' out, which was fun for what it was, but we moved on. Donald has exposed us to a hell of a lot, so many things, in music, business and life."

In 1972 Byrd steered Toney toward his first synthesizer. Now his stage set-up includes a Rhodes piano, Hohner Clavinet, ARP pro soloist, String Ensemble and Odyssey, two

Moogs and a Yamaha organ. At home he also has an ARP 2600, a Yamaha mixer and an acoustic piano.

The Blackbyrds' records have evolved considerably since their beginnings, changing from light and airy, loosely structured music to that on the current album, *Unfinished Business*, where the band's energy is channeled down strictly defined commercial corridors. The most obvious difference between the group of today and four years ago is the handling of vocals, which were once little more than an afterthought but now are central to the band's message. A comparison of *Walkin' In Rhythm* with *In Life* (from the new LP) is the difference between adding a vocal as a casual hook and making it the backbone of a song.

When Toney talked about other changes the Blackbyrds have experienced, the first subject was producers and arrangers: "Larry Mizell produced us in the beginning, but we've produced ourselves with Donald since. Wade Marcus arranged the last two albums, but we want to seek other sounds, not get locked in, because change is what we're about. One thing to expect is a new approach to vocal color, like singing through a Mu-Tron. I've been experimenting with a rhythm machine used through an echoplex and a ring modulator, then to maybe match that with a natural voice."

What about expanding the stage band beyond the current six (including Byrd)?

"Well, after everyone graduates, which hopefully will be by the end of this year, expansion will make sense because we'll be able to tour on more of a full time basis. An ideal situation would be to have a lead singer who can also play an instrument—it could be a male, but preferably a female. And we'd like another keyboard or guitar, a chordal instrument. And another horn player and maybe a percussionist."

Conjecturing on what would happen if the band became as big as Earth, Wind & Fire and whether the group members would forsake their planned teaching careers, Toney said: "No. Sure, we'd go on the road, do what we had to do, but then we'd sit back, come up with new stuff and let the demand grow. We want to be able to do a lot of things—record, arrange, produce, so that we can do academic things too. Right now I'm working on an improvisation book that deals with the linear aspect, how to develop solos off a basic idea. We're working on a whole line of academic publications—theory books, improvisation books. And we have stage band arrangements on all our recordings. So we're exploiting ourselves as much as possible, which is good because we're using our knowledge from school to write scores, to record and whatever. So we'll reach a greater market, people will hear about us—that's the only way you can do it."

Twenty-two-year-old guitarist Orville Saunders joined the group in 1975. Serious and soft-spoken Saunders grew up in Washington, D.C., where his first gig was with a band that included Joe Hall on bass. The fee was \$30 for the entire band. "I met Joe in junior high and I met Keith Killgo in high school. But of course I had no idea we'd be playing together today, going through these kind of changes."

Orville cites Wes Montgomery, Jimi Hendrix and Kenny Burrell as his main guitaristic influences, and Miles Davis and Cannonball Adderley as general influences. Before joining

the Blackbyrds (after the departure of original guitarist Barney Perry), Saunders played with Burrell at a seminar and did brief stints with Hancock and George Benson. But none of his earlier experience adequately prepared him for the lifestyle he leads today.

"Since I joined the Blackbyrds my life has changed immensely! The respect you get from people, and your health goes up and down. . . . It's beautiful though, because it gets a discipline thing going. I try to use every minute of the day because I want to do so much. Moving fast, you know? And that's just the way I like it. For instance, I recorded professionally with Groove Holmes before I joined the band but it was nothing like what we do here—it was a live recording at a defunct jazz club in New York, and I was a big rookie, nervous and scared to death."

Saunders' first guitar was a Gretsch Country Gentleman that he treasured until the day it fell from its precarious perch, piled high atop his amplifier. "At that time," he says, "my attachments were just a fuzz and wah wah. I didn't particularly care for the fuzz and still don't—if you're going to get distortion, get a natural distortion, somewhere in the vein of what I'm getting with the amplifier I have on the West Coast."

The Blackbyrds have two set-ups, one for each coast. Saunders carries all his guitars with him, however; his current array includes a Fender Stratocaster, a Birdland, L-5 Gibson, Les Paul, a 12-string acoustic and a banjo. "Each one is hooked up differently to get a different sound. Like with the Birdland you get a David T. sound, or, if I want a good fat sound like Wes or Benson gets, I'll use my L-5. The Strat's for hard rock, and what have you." Orville goes to D'Aquisto in New York for technical work.

Saunders explains that he took classical lessons and doesn't use a pick "99% of the time," preferring to use an altered form of classical fingering, though he does use a pick for certain effects in the studio. "The flesh sound" is something he wants to develop personally and see explored by other guitarists, perhaps his future students.

"If you listen to a classical guitarist, particularly flamenco, if he had the mentality he could play all the lines a bebopper could play, plus the flamenco stuff around it, blend it all to come up with a totally new style. I see it as a reservoir of riches. The flesh and bone structure is different for each person, whereas with a pick all the guitar players sound alike, they all go out and buy Fender mediums. Not that I'm closing my mind to the importance of a pick, because just like a bass player you have the pizzicato and the bow, you have to have facility with both."

Even though Donald Byrd was responsible for getting Saunders into Howard University's first guitar degree program, Orville is critical of the school's attitude. "It's a typical black school, trying to be white. Before Donald came, things were geared toward making black people into symphony players, and when you come out there aren't any gigs [*Billboard* just reported that less than one per cent

SELECTED BLACKBYRDS DISCOGRAPHY

BLACKBYRDS—Fantasy F-9444
FLYING START—Fantasy F-9472
CORNBREAD, EARL AND ME—Fantasy F-9483
CITY LIFE—Fantasy F-9490
UNFINISHED BUSINESS—Fantasy F-9518

of the symphony players in the United States are black]. So it's an absurd, obsolete trend in schooling, where they could build schools to teach contemporary music, electronic music, aside from the basic scales and traditional repertoire. It's no longer the 18th century, it's 1977."

Similarly, even though he personally wants to further explore his jazz roots, Saunders subscribes to Donald Byrd's music-as-business ethic: "We're business people and we're not going to beat our heads on the wall trying to make something happen that's not going to happen. I feel the music this band makes as much as jazz or any other music. We listen to all sorts of things, and I don't categorize myself as a rock or jazz musician. I'm a musician, period."

Saxophonist Wesley Jackson, 23, is the newest Blackbyrd, having recently replaced Stephen Johnson, who in turn was one of a string of eight reed players who have come and gone with the band. Jackson met Donald Byrd at North Carolina Central (in Durham), where Byrd has taught since leaving Howard two years ago. Jackson was a member of Byrd's "B team" at NCC, the New Central Connection. He gets along well, musically and personally, with the Blackbyrds, and his pretty face doesn't hurt with the group's post-pubescent female fans. His fellow Blackbyrds expect Jackson to be around awhile.

Wesley is a singularly unassuming fellow who speaks in a soft Georgia drawl and, when confronted with anything approaching praise, is likely to glance away with an "aw, gee" shrug. Jackson is the group's youngest member (Keith Killgo is a few weeks older), but he's the farthest along in his studies—he met Byrd in his senior year at N.C. Central, but now he's in graduate school at Howard, saying he wants to have teaching "to fall back on."

In his childhood, Jackson studied the guitar with his father, also named Wesley Jackson, who led a family band, Jack & His Jewels. Wesley, Sr. also gigged with several professional bands, including Gladys Knight & the Pips. In the fifth grade, Wesley, Jr. switched from guitar to saxophone, a Martin tenor he played with a No. 2 Rico reed (he's now graduated to a 3½). "I wasn't into one style, because I played with several different groups—my family, the high school rock and roll band, and in supper clubs with my father."

Jackson offered Stanley Turrentine, Sonny Stitt, Eddie Harris, "and all the rest of the cats" as players he's taken from. "But I listen to trumpet players, too, just everybody, because I can create more by listening to all the instruments."

Keith Killgo is a very self-assured 23—his father is Harry Killgo, a pianist who from the start exposed Keith to a full panorama of jazz. In school Keith "played in a youth symphony from the eighth to tenth grades, but never studied tympani. But I played them, along with the vibes, snare drum and marimbas, in the DC Youth Symphony and the DC Chorale. Then I had several private instructors in the upright bass, classical percussion, keyboards, and vibes and marimba."

He says his most important learning has been on his own, but that at Howard, where his is a music education major, "my compositional sensitivity, of course, has been enhanced, because of theory, counterpoint and

OTIS RUSH

The Worrisome Woes Of A Workingman

by Charles Carman



HERB NOLAN

In the summer of 1956, blues singer and guitarist Otis Rush exploded onto the scene with the single *I Can't Quit You, Baby*. The tune, Rush's first recording, reached number nine among Billboard's national "R&B Sellers in Stores," and as high as number six on their juke box charts. Recording on the Cobra label with the assistance of Willie Dixon, in the next two years Rush released a series of singles which included *All Your Love, It Takes Time* and *Double Trouble*. These tunes made their impact first through cover versions by bluesmen like Magic Sam and Little Milton, and continue to reverberate through the music world, the most recent incarnation being found in Eric Clapton's essentially unaltered version of *Double Trouble* on his *No Reason To Cry* album. But *I Can't Quit You, Baby* was the only record that Rush or Cobra ever put on the charts, and Rush's career started going down slow. He was tied up with a string of multi-year contracts, and the record companies such as Chess and Duke were apparently indifferent to Rush's career. Except for five cuts released on Vanguard's *Chicago—The Blues Today* anthology, Rush material did not appear on wax for over ten years.

This hiatus was broken with the 1969 release of his album *Mourning In The Morning* on Cotillion. The release in the last two years of three albums on rather obscure labels, and a generally favorable but less than ubiquitous critical reception provide some hope that Rush will not musically be buried alive. It is ironic that in a time of "fusion," Rush has not achieved a greater popularity, since his guitar playing incorporates jazz influences of Kenny Burrell and Jimmy Smith. Furthermore, in a musical climate where, particularly among guitarists, there is increasing emphasis on tonal identity, Rush has a distinctive sound which he has developed over the years, and which he produces with apparent ease on equipment he would replace if he only had the

money.

Watermelon Man is an excellent introduction to the diversity of Otis' guitar style. Although not on wax, many sets in live performance begin with the tune's clear, soothing chords complementing the electric piano of Alberto Gianquinto, followed by a single note solo reflecting the B.B. King school. The song is usually finished with a tremolo chording based on Jimmy Smith organ licks. A set by Otis generally includes one or two jazzy instrumental cuts in the same vein as *Watermelon Man*. Only after these does the band get down to the blues staples for which Rush is most well known.

There is a definite element of fatalism in Otis' music. In the opening cut of *Cold Day In Hell*, on Delmark, he sings "Suppose I cut you loose/I know I won't shake this curse/I'll find me another little baby/Who'll be just as bad or worse." Musically, the sense of foreboding is reinforced by the use of minor keys on many songs, and the minor keys coupled with the full-bodied, searing single note solos are a Rush trademark.

His sense of phrasing and suspense can produce exalted moments which leave the bad luck, bad women and small pay back in the other world. The guitar notes are more full-bodied than those of many guitarists playing in this idiom, and the previous note is still resonating when the next is picked. The result is an avalanche of sound which avoids the

SELECTED RUSH DISCOGRAPHY

BLUES MASTERS VOL. 2—Blue Horizon BM 4602
CHICAGO—THE BLUES TODAY!—Vanguard VSD 79217
MOURNING IN THE MORNING—Cotillion SD 9006;
Atlantic ATL 40495 U (France)
COLD DAY IN HELL—Delmark DS 638
BLUES LIVE!—Trio 3086 (Japan)
RIGHT PLACE, WRONG TIME—Bullfrog 301

choppy quality of other players. The effect is often heightened by a preceding chord in which each note is picked separately, a following tense silence, and then the avalanche of the solo which releases the tension.

This interview with Otis was arranged by Steve Tomashevsky of Delmark Records, with whom Otis is currently under contract. It was one of the sub-zero days of the Ice Age of 1977, and when Otis opened the door of his house on Chicago's far South Side, he had a mop in his hand. The previous night a water pipe had frozen, and a second had frozen and broken just prior to our arrival. Our discussion was punctuated by the comings and goings of the plumber, who was not having an easy time finding the necessary parts on a Sunday afternoon. Throughout the afternoon, symbolic counterpoint to the soft-spoken Rush was provided by the vicious barks of the Doberman in the basement.

Because Otis has played with the same band for several years and work has not been steady as of late, it seemed natural to ask how the band got by during such periods. "They're working day jobs," Otis said. "They're working day jobs, and I'm looking for one. If things keep turning out the way they're going now, I'm going to have to get two jobs, if I can find something that is worthwhile taking that is paying something. There aren't many things I can go into, either, but I've got to do something. Quite a few musicians have day jobs because music is spaced. Contracts don't come around too often, and when they do everybody has their hands out saying 'we want you, we want you' on the same dates."

When asked about the role of the musicians' union in redressing injuries or assisting musicians, Otis said, "The union ain't gonna do anything. I don't have any confidence in the union because I've been in there since I started and they never did anything for me. They never got me a job. They're supposed to help you get a job when you're out of work, but they just accept your dues and that's it. That's pretty much the way it is. They collect the dues, and you can work out of town [without a contract] and maybe a month passes by and somebody has reported you and wrote you a letter [to collect]."

Trying to strike a more positive note, the topic switched to the current Rush band, particularly keyboard man Alberto Gianquinto. A manic artist if there ever was one, Gianquinto evokes the playing of Cecil Taylor or a demented Thelonious Monk, displaying a searching, experimental style leagues ahead of most blues musicians. Body swaying, eyes rolling, hands and elbows attacking the keyboard in a frenzy, Alberto's angular sounds cascade out in thumping waves, as though he was playing with his fists. But Alberto sometimes goes too far out for Otis' own taste. "He can play the piano ['he can play'] is the ultimate compliment for Otis], but the idea is that you've got to play what you're playing instead of ad-libbing and all that stuff. If we're playing the blues, and he goes way out on keys and playing way out stuff—jazz—it doesn't fit with the blues. So if you're playing the blues you got to play the blues. If you play jazz you play jazz. You play rock, you play rock."

When questioned about the element of jazz in his own playing, Rush replied: "It depends on what tune I'm playing. If we start off on a real bluesy tune then we should remain that way. But if we start on a jazzy number then it stays that way. It blends out nice if everybody

stays together, but if one guy goes way out on a limb we have to try to get him back. Alberto can play it, but like I say, he goes wild. When he's not wild, he plays the piano. He's a good piano player."

Gianquinto, an early member of Santana, has played with B. B. King, Albert King, Son Seals and others. He has been with Otis for some time now, adding an experimental dimension to the band which is unlikely to be matched by another musician. Understandably enough, Otis does not particularly want to be surprised on stage, and Gianquinto is certainly capable of surprising.

Otis' previous unit preferences included rhythm guitar, saxophones, and trombone in addition to piano, bass and drums. Yet Otis and many other blues musicians are limited to a four piece band at most times by brute economics. The intense sound of the best modern electric blues bands is attributable to this limitation. The sounds in the mind of the musician may be made by eight pieces, yet when there are only four to work with, alternatives must be found.

"I think of horns because I really love to work with horns," Otis says. "But financially it's so bad that I just have to cut the pieces down and use the rhythm section. You also have to play harder." Extremely fast chording helps on jazz influenced tunes like Jimmy Smith's *Midnight Special*. "Yeah, that holds the background up so it sort of makes up for the horns, because that's what they would be doing. Horns would be more relaxed, easier on everybody in the band. But when it's only four of us, we've all got to play."

Otis would prefer the more relaxed situation provided by additional instrumentation. It is arguable that the very success of, for example, the

good tune."

It is obvious from this album that the addition of horns is no panacea. On the first mix the incisive vocals and guitar licks were submerged. The results of the remix are not much of an improvement. Or as Otis puts it, "Thirty pieces can sound just as bad as four." The most recent Rush release, *Right Place, Wrong Time* is generally a successful album, but it also makes apparent that lavish production is not the final solution. The album was recorded in 1971, for Capitol, and only released late last fall on the Bullfrog label. While it is more slick and professional than some of his recordings, it also is a small step removed from Otis' more powerful early singles and the rougher yet more representative *Cold Day In Hell*.

The most personal aspect of Otis' music is expressed through his lyrics. His stage persona is almost identical to the man himself. Rush is a guarded man, yet the years of exploitive contracts and the brutalizing life of an uncompromising musician striving for success have not rendered him unwilling, at least at times, to try to explain his feelings, which he acknowledges as the source of his lyrical expression.

If it is true, as Nietzsche says, that "a joke is an epigram on the death of a feeling," Otis Rush must have his feelings intact. Although not a humorless man, his wit is expressed more often through a soft ironic laugh in reference to his own life. On stage, he does not engage in the phony or strained requests to the audience to clap along or "give us a hand." His eyes are usually fixed on his fingers during a solo, or looking out past the crowd, past everything, as though he has some fear of harm.

Because Otis sings directly from his own life

problems. It just feels sort of good sometimes to get on stage. If you got a band and the band is playing well, and everybody acts like they're ready to play, then it's a nice feeling to be on stage. You get a good feeling playing the blues sometimes. You can let it out that way but it doesn't cure anything."

Otis still plays an Epiphone 355, "same as a Gibson," through a worn-out Guild amplifier. The amplifier has been in the shop on occasion, and it seems to restrict him on stage. He was renting a Yamaha for awhile and that is the one he would prefer if he could afford it. He'd like to have a new model of the same guitar. It is clear that Otis' artistic development has been hampered by his equipment, but the question of "Who's going to pay for it?" undoubtedly haunts his dreams of better gear.

Otis is not too voluble in general. But he is particularly reticent on the subject of the recording of his own songs by rock musicians. He does not criticize even the absurd excesses of the Led Zeppelin cover of *I Can't Quit You, Baby*, but nevertheless leaves the distinct impression that he favors versions which most closely follow the pattern set by the original. Also, these recordings of his early material provide him with no royalties since he doesn't own the rights to the songs. So he only gives a resigned stamp of approval. "It seems like I can't get off the ground, so it's good that somebody's doing them."

Otis' vocal technique includes the typical blues melisma and an occasional falsetto, as well as the seemingly effortless ability to blend a shout into a note. On occasion he backs off the microphone and lets his powerful voice bypass the equipment.

"It's a terrible thing that a musician has to die before he can become alive musicwise. . . . I say give me my flowers while I'm living."

Kings has mellowed down their playing, that their years of success has led to a sound which no longer grabs your soul and shakes it—a sound more palatable to the record-buying public.

Albert King, another left-handed upside-down guitarist like Otis, is one of Rush's personal favorites, although Albert has opted for a rock/soul sound on some tunes. "I've noticed that's happening to him," Otis says. "He's beginning to change just a fraction from his style, and to me that can lead to something big. Maybe it will hurt him in the long run, or maybe make him even bigger. I don't know, but I like Albert King as he is. I'd like to do more [rock and soul] tunes on stage. That's why I like the horns, because they cover that part of the rock. I have done a lot of James Brown and Wilson Pickett tunes."

This statement refers to Otis' personal experience with the same type of problem. After a ten-year absence from the recording studio, he recorded the *Cotillion* album in 1969, produced by Mike Bloomfield and Nick Gravenites. Although the album in its original version is out of print, it is available as an import on Atlantic, and as such has been remixed to bring out Otis' voice and guitar. Today, Otis refers to about half the songs on the album as "weak punches."

"*Mourning In The Morning* wasn't all bad. It was sort of feel around and feel the people. I just put some of my type of music on there, and then I tried to do some other things [songs by Bloomfield and Gravenites] and hoped it would go out and sell. I had a few compliments, but mostly bad reviews. I had more bad news than good news, put it that way. They just didn't accept it. I do get requests for *Feel So Bad* and *Gambler's Blues*, and *Reap What You Sow* was a pretty

and feelings, he achieves an authenticity of lyrical expression which is awesome and not a little frightening. A possible weakness of this is that the tunes with which he is primarily identified, and which are the foundation of his live performances, express a limited emotional range.

"I look for a good solid story. . . . Like I say, I'm sad. I'm not sad all the time. I just got problems, man, and I'm trying to work them out, and when I get on the stage I think about playing the blues. That's what I do. It doesn't solve my problems. My situation is sad right now, man, and that's why I'm playing sad music. If I ever get happy, I'll let you know. I'll change my rap on the stage and start singing happy tunes. A miracle, if that happens, I'll be glad. But right now it's sad and that's the way I play, that's the way I feel. I'm drowning, man, on dry land."

Within the range of bad luck/bad times/bad women limits, Otis has no equal. His deadpan off stage demeanor becomes deadly serious on stage and on record and his emotional turf is well complemented by the songs he chooses to record or perform. His very first words committed to wax were: "I can't quit you baby/But I got to put you down for a while/You messed up my happy home/Made me mistreat my only child." *Double Trouble* speaks of the combination punches of false love and unemployment. A sense of fatalism pervades his lyrics, typified by a line like "Today you love me pretty baby/Tomorrow you could be crying." In another song he tells his woman "The only thing you give me, baby, is a hard way to go." From another singer the line might be mirthful, but from Otis it is a matter-of-fact statement.

"My music helps me financially, and I look forward to playing. But it doesn't solve my

"Sometimes you're loud so you sort of back up and balance it to the audience. And you don't always want to just depend on the microphone. You can control your voice a different way when you are away from the microphone than when you are close to it. You have to control it another way because the microphone is carrying the sound. If you're going to be heard you have to have the microphone, but you try to keep away from it sometimes where the singing would sound strained."

As far as guitar goes, Otis has been around one since he was a child. "I've always been around a guitar because my brother had one. My uncles could play a few tunes and I used to listen to them. I had my mind on the guitar. I used to sneak and play it while he was gone and put it back on the bed just like he had left it. I kept on messing with the strings and I wanted to tune it—that's the first thing I learned to do, tune the guitar. I would be messing with it and I had to leave it just like he had it tuned, and I just got it by ear. I got a pretty good ear for sounds, and I would tune. And I never got caught at it. I never had any problem tuning a guitar, just playing it."

Otis is now considering using backup vocals, something of an innovation in such a conservative and solitary type of music. "And I'm trying to get some new tunes together. You get tired of playing the same old thing, you know, it gets boring sometimes, and the people like to dance. Like this fast tune by Stevie Wonder with the good beat. I have to try to get more tunes like that together."

Rush has made several tours overseas, where he usually plays to large auditoriums of blues fanatics, an occurrence which, except-

Why is it that you have to boost both ends of a graphic equalizer to get a flat response from your P.A.

It seems that whenever you have to set up a P.A. system, the graphic equalizer has to be used more to reinforce the tone controls than to serve as an antifeedback device.

This problem is nearly universal yet it isn't necessarily due to a poor quality sound system. Most sound systems exhibit an excessive amount of midrange due to phase-cancellation in the tone controls.

The effect of this phase-cancellation is similar to what happens when two speakers are wired out of phase; the bass and treble response drops radically in proportion to the amount of midrange in the system.

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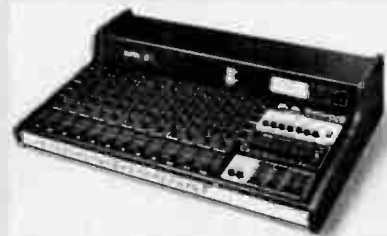
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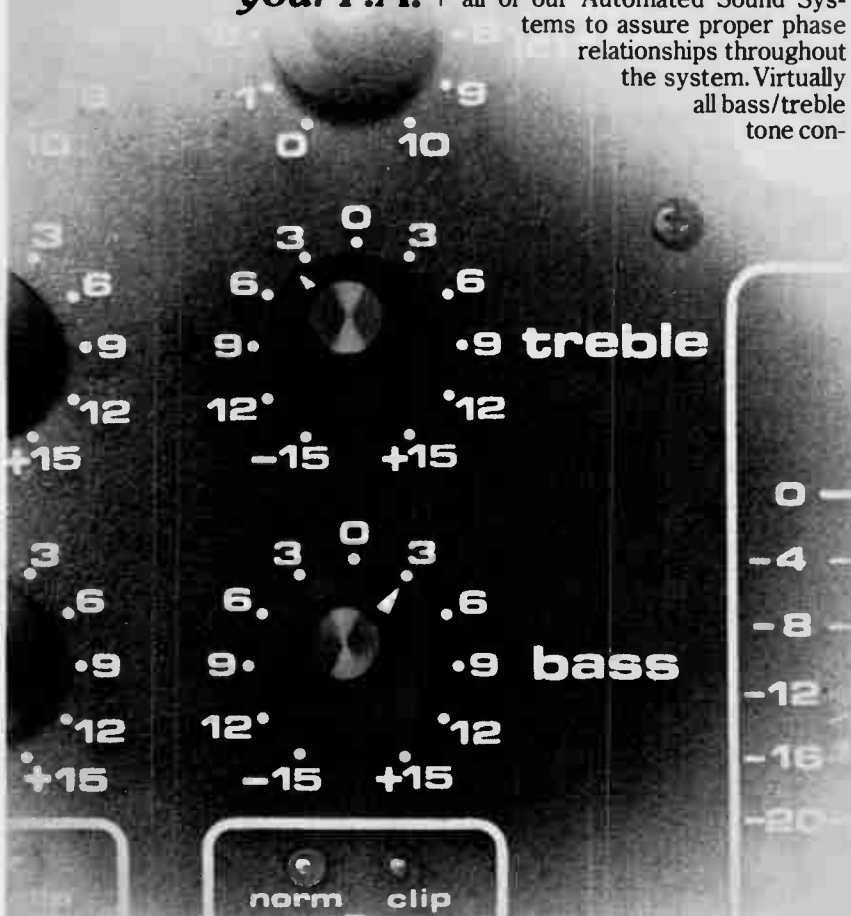
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RECORD REVIEWS

Ratings are:

★★★★ excellent, ★★★ very good,
★★ good, ★ fair, ★ poor

LONNIE LISTON SMITH

RENAISSANCE—RCA APL1-1822: *Space Lady; Mardi Gras (Carnival); Starlight And You; Mongotee; A Song Of Love; Between Here And There; Renaissance*.

Personnel: Smith, Ken Bichel, Leon Pendarvis, keyboards; Donald Smith, flute/vocals; David Hubbard, woodwinds; Gene Bertocini, acoustic guitar; Al Anderson, bass; Wilby Fletcher, drums; Lawrence Killian, Guilherme Franco, percussion.

★ ★ ★

While Lonnie Liston Smith continues to walk the fine line between creative music and commercially "communicative" pap, there is a firmer substance and form in his latest work that was missing in such previous efforts as *Visions Of A New World* (Flying Dutchman—BDL 1-1196).

The keynote for Smith's appropriately titled *Renaissance* is restraint. Instead of wall-to-wall synthetically induced cosmicness, there are new spaces in the music which provide areas for reflection by both musicians and listeners. For my taste, I would prefer even greater economy and room for the soloists. Nonetheless, Smith's work is headed in the right direction and is currently one of the more interesting fusion approaches on the scene.

Space Lady has a funky, laid back pulse which nicely undergirds a bluesy flute solo and Smith's pungent acoustic outing. *Mardi Gras* is a festive up-tempo samba with an attractive two flute line and an energetic flute/piano dialogue. *Starlight And You* finds a confident Donald Smith vocalizing above a shimmering string backdrop. *Mongotee* establishes a spacy medium-paced funk groove with phaseshifted flute lines and effectively employed electronic colorations.

While opening with a provocative tape-delayed piano intro, *Renaissance* points up some of the group's shortcomings. Donald Smith, although greatly improved, still has intonation problems as he shifts registers. The strings, which make positive contributions to tracks such as *A Day Of Love*, here, seem pasted on.

Overall, Smith's compositions, while singly rather engaging, become in the aggregate somewhat tedious due to a sameness in structure. A somewhat similar fate befalls Smith's keyboard forays—while individually tasty, they suffer from repetitiveness and a rather detached point of view.

Someday, hopefully, Lonnie Liston Smith will be able to let the cosmic echoes reverberate on into the void and concentrate on more fruitful materials and approaches. As revealed in a solo performance of Ellington's *Sophisticated Lady* at a recent Carnegie Hall concert, Smith has a lot more to give than his work with his current band has thus far shown.

—berg

GEORGE BENSON

IN FLIGHT—Warner Brothers BSK 2983: *Nature Boy; The Wind And I; The World Is A Ghetto; Gonna Love You More; Valdez In The Country; Everything Must Change*.

Personnel: Benson, lead guitar and vocals; Phil Uchurch, rhythm guitar, bass; Ronnie Foster, electric piano and mini-Moog; Jorge Dalto, Clavinet and acoustic piano; Stanley Banks, bass; Harvey Mason, drums; Ralph MacDonald, percussion.

★ ★ ★

Let's establish some basic premises at the outset. First of all, the fretboard-gliding sweet feel of Benson's early LPs no longer represents the commercial avenues he has paved for himself. Both *Breezin'* and *In Flight* are by contrast lush, string-punctuated forays into a land midway between rote Mottola-like melodic interpretations and a kind of cocktail-disco hybrid.

Math teachers call this phenomenon Least Common Denominator. It is a fitting comment on the mass market that George's most restrained musical effort would be the one to vault him into the ranks of pop superstardom. Yet while *Breezin'* did have some valid solo rides, *In Flight* seemingly finds the player sinking into the abyss of nightclub cliché. We hear very little of George's guitar; his silky voice is exposed on four of the six tracks.

So why the three stars? Benson's change of direction is not unlike Dylan's electrification at Newport; both offended the purists; both were accompanied by frowns from the elitists; yet both turned the artist into walking Fort Knoxes. More important than that, Dylan and Benson both established a fresh definition and a new idiom.

Benson's creative pathfinding may be annotated as establishment of a new breed of cocktail jazz. While not exactly a novel invention, his parallel scat singing-picking on *Nature Boy* and *Everything Must Change* is, despite its silkiness, one of the smoothest examples of joint instrumental-vocal ventures to be heard in quite some time. Indeed, Benson's singing has long been underrated; his ability to jump from polished crooning to funky doowops has just recently come into the fore.

Yes, there will be those who decry the overproduction; producer Tommy LiPuma's habitual use of Thorazine string sessions tends to devalue the album of any sharp talons. Yet prettiness is not necessarily a sin, and as a jazz primer for the Neil Diamond crowd, Benson's latest efforts serve a useful purpose. —shaw

BOB WILBER/ KENNY DAVERN

CHALUMEAU BLUE—Chiaroscuro CR 148: *Nagasaki; Chalumeau Blue; Black And Tan Fantasy; Grenadilla Stomp; Danny Boy; Everybody Loves My Baby; Linger Awhile; Slightly Under The Weather; Wake Up Chillen'; O! Miss; Devut; Some Of These Days*.

Personnel: Wilber, Davern, reeds; Marty Grosz, guitar; George Duvivier, bass; Fred Stoll, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

SOPRANO SUMMIT IN CONCERT—Concord Jazz CJ 29: *Stompy Jones; Grapes Are Ready; Doin' The New Low Down; Golden Rooster; Moxie; Brother Can You Spare A Dime; Swing That Music*.

Personnel: Wilber, Davern, reeds; Marty Grosz, guitar; Ray Brown, bass; Jake Hanna, drums.

★ ★ ★

Soprano Summit combines characteristics of grace and intensity in a unique and all too rare artform that's as old as jazz itself—collective improvisation. This term is normally tacked onto dixieland type groups of one sort or another, but the result Wilber and Davern

get is quite simply in a class by itself. It's possibly the most exciting in jazz today.

Hearing two clarinets go up against one another without a trumpet to referee or a trombone to slide from chord to chord on is a delight of the purest order (*Chalumeau, Stomp*). The same can be said for the three tracks where both stick to soprano (a surging *Nagasaki, Black And Tan* and *Days*) and the five cuts on which Wilber and Davern mix clarinet and soprano. Not all are equally successful, to be sure. *Wake Up Chillen'* sounds relatively set in its ways (although Davern rips off a smoking glissando that arches up with an emotional precision reminiscent of Artie Shaw). And Wilber's own *Grenadilla Stomp* often sounds more quaint than swinging. But these are minor reservations. More important is the superb ensemble quality produced by the two horns. There is an exceptionally well balanced sense of response throughout, and this is the heart of the group.

Furthermore, the two reeds have cushioned themselves with a remarkable rhythm section that swings with subtle aggressiveness. The real hero in this department is Marty Grosz, whose acoustic rhythm guitar gives dimension and backbone to Duvivier's bass. It's a sound that's been missing from rhythm sections for too long. Bass and guitar are opposite sides of the same coin.

Curiously enough, Grosz is both hero and villain on the Concord LP. Grosz has an amusing satiric streak in him that often brightens his live performances. But it doesn't come over on the record, and too much time is spent trying to make it. His two vocal choruses get in the way, and the on-stage banter is a waste of time.

Save for such lapses, however, this is often a boiling set. Davern's clarinet is striking on *Grapes*, and smoldering solo and ensemble playing is heard on *Stompy, Low Down, All By Myself* and *Swing That Music*. As sometimes happens with concert recordings, however, drum and bass solos occasionally are drawn out beyond their worth in the enthusiasm of the moment. There is excitement here, true. But there are also gaps. There is half an excellent album here. But half a mediocre one too.

—mcdonough

HANK CRAWFORD

HANK CRAWFORD'S BACK—Kudu 33: *Funky Pigeon; I Can't Stop Loving You; You'll Never Find Another Love Like Mine; Canadian Sunset; Midnight Over Memphis*.

Personnel: Crawford, alto sax; Richard Tee, electric piano solos; Anthony Jackson, bass (tracks 4 and 5); Gary King, bass (tracks 1-3); Steve Gadd, drums (tracks 4 and 5); Andy Newmark, drums (tracks 1, 3); Nicky Marrero, percussion; Eric Gale, guitar solos; Fred Wesley, trombone solos; Jeremy Steig, flute solos; Frank Floyd, Zachary Sanders, and Ray Simpson, background vocals.

★

The really annoying thing about this record is that Hank Crawford gets blamed for it. I don't think that Hank minds this too much, since it should also put a few royalties in his pocket, but an LP of this caliber isn't going to do much for his reputation. In all fairness, it should be Creed Taylor's name up there at the top of this review: he stands to profit most from it, and it seems to be his idea of a good time.

Taylor's view of recording jazz musicians apparently has very little to do with aesthetics, and it raises an important question with regard to this medium in *Our Times*: has the LP ceased to be a veritable record of artistic

April 7 □ 21

achievement and become a strictly commercial commodity? In the case of Creed Taylor and his trusty sidekick Greed, this appears to be the case.

Having caught Crawford's working band just two nights ago, it is hard to believe that this record was made by the same person. He played no disco on stage, but better than half of *Back* is unabashedly disco, complete with monotonous chorus and the profound boredom of danceable disco rhythms: it seems that Crawford himself gets a bit bored with the proceedings, as towards the end of *Midnight* he begins to let his tone go flat.

On the two cuts free of this insidious influence, some interest is generated, particularly on *Funky Pigeon*, which might work rather well in a less homogenously funky arrangement. *I Can't Stop Loving You* might as well be retitled "Boots Randolph meets Ray Charles," and looks suspiciously like a candidate for a single. So the album gets one star in *db*; but how will the single do on American Bandstand? —bennett

OTIS RUSH

RIGHT PLACE, WRONG TIME—Bullfrog 301: *Tore Up; Right Place, Wrong Time; Easy Go; Three Times A Fool; Rainy Night In Georgia; Natural Ball; I Wonder Why; Your Turn To Cry; Lonely Man; Take A Look Behind.*

Personnel: Rush, vocal, guitar; John Wilmeth, trumpet; Hart McNee, alto sax; Ron Stallings, tenor sax; Mark Naftalin, piano; Ira Kamin, organ; Fred Burton, rhythm guitar; Doug Kilmer, John Kahn, bass; Bob Jones, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

This is the first release of the quasi-legendary album produced by Rush and Nick Gravenites for Capitol Records in 1971 but (for whatever corporate reasons) never issued by

that label. Rush and Chicago blues writer Dick Shurman were able to persuade the firm to sell the guitarist the album at a price considerably lower than what it reportedly cost to record it—for which we must thank the Capitol executive(s) responsible—and the recording now appears as the initial release on the Bullfrog label.

Was it worth the wait? Well, it's a highly enjoyable album of solid, tasty mainstream modern blues performed with commendable dash and precision by Rush (who sounds up for the recordings) and a crack team of San Francisco's finest blues-loving sessions players. In terms of feel, the set lies midway between Otis' old Cobra sides and the 1969 Cotillion set produced by Gravenites and Mike Bloomfield. These performances are much looser, bluesier, more vigorous and personal and, as such, much more representative of Rush's natural, distinctive approach to blues than was the latter album, but are not nearly so striking, original or strong as the pace-setting Cobra singles with which the singer-guitarist established his reputation two decades ago.

Rush sings convincingly, surely and even passionately, his playing has plenty of the cutting edge, forceful invention, distinctive tonality and harmonic character that always have marked his handling of the instrument (check out the instrumentals *Easy Go* and *I Wonder Why*, as well as his bristling solos and fills on the vocals), and the selection of material is refreshingly unclined.

The horn work is crisp, imaginative and helpful, though mixed a bit further into the background than is necessary; greater presence would have given greater punch. Generally the supporting instrumental work is neat-

ly idiomatic without ever really igniting into anything beyond the proficient—that is, everyone stays right with Rush, plays the right notes, and so on, but never once does the music crackle with surprise or electricity. Competent rather than inspired or very spirited. Except for him, that is. Rush is everything you'd want of him—inspired, enthusiastic, inventive, assured, fluent and very exciting. In all, this is one of the better, more satisfying albums of contemporary blues to have been issued in some time, despite—or perhaps because of—its having been recorded six years ago. —welding

CARLOS GARNETT

COSMOS NUCLEUS—Muse MR 5104: *Saxy; Cosmos Nucleus; Wise Old Men; Mystery Of Ages; Kefra; Bed-Stuy Blues.*

Personnel: Garnett, Charles Dougherty, Al Brown, Robert Wright, Randy Gilmore, Zane Massey, Akumra Amen-Ra, Yah Ya, Carlos Chambers, saxes; Cyril Greene, Angel Fernandez, Preston Holas, Wayne Cobham, Roy Campbell, Jr., Quentin Lowther, Abdul Malik, trumpets; Cliff Anderson, Andrew Washington, James Stowe, trombones; Otis "Junior" McCleary, guitar; Kenny Kirkland, electric piano; Cecil McBee, Jr., electric bass; Buron Benbow, drums; Neil Clarke, Gene Ballard, percussion; Garnett, Cheryl P. Alexander, vocals; Garnett, Chambers, ukuleles.

★ ★ ★

Carlos Garnett's strong independent voice is based on the internalization of two musical worlds—the modern tenor heritage of Coltrane/Shepp/Sanders and the music of his native Panama. These traditions were clearly reflected in his recent date for Muse (*Let This Music Ring On*—MR 5079) in compositions entitled *Señor Trane* and *Panama Roots*. Earlier, these potent forces emerged in his work with Art Blakey, Miles Davis, Charles

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Mingus, Pharoah Sanders, Robin Kenyatta, Freddie Hubbard and Andrew Hill. And now in his latest endeavor, his first recording experience with a big band, Garnett's musical roots flourish once again.

Garnett's current project had rather serendipitous origins. One of Carlos' students who was playing with a struggling rehearsal band of aspiring young musicians convinced the tenorist to write for and coach the group. The initial get-togethers with nine pieces were held in Carlos' Brooklyn apartment. Soon the group had swollen to 25 members. Of necessity, the apartment was abandoned in favor of a more spacious outdoor practice site in Brooklyn's Prospect Park. From there, it was into the studio.

The primary musical excitement is generated by Carlos' uninhibited big band approach and the natural ebullience of youthful musicians playing their hearts out for a respected artist. It's a magic chemistry that constantly pushes the young musicians past the limitations of their technique and experience. So, in spite of some roughness, there is a compelling enthusiasm that transcends the music itself.

Of particular interest is Garnett's use of the enlarged big band canvas. *Cosmos Nucleus*, for example, neatly balances a jagged snake-like melody, Latin and swing episodes, and a thoughtful soprano solo by Carlos. *Wise Old Men* is a folksy, up-tempo frame energized by Garnett's raspy vocal and ukulele. Also impressive are the constantly bubbling rhythmic backdrops and Garnett's attractive and tuneful melodies.

A comment about some of the individual musicians is also in order. Garnett is quoted in the liner notes as saying: "Mark my words, a lot of these guys are going to be heard." Among those making fine vinyl debuts are: bassist Cecil McBee, Jr. (son of . . .), tenorist Zane Massey (Cal's son), trumpeter Wayne Cobham (Billy's brother), pianist Kenny Kirkland, drummer Byron Benbow and vocalist Cheryl P. Alexander. —berg

COUNT BASIE

BASIE JAM No. 2—Pablo 2310-786: *Mama Don't Wear No Drawers; Doggin' Around; Kansas City Line; JJJ Jump.*

Personnel: Benny Carter, alto sax; Clark Terry, fluegelhorn; Al Grey, trombone; Eddie Lockjaw Davis, tenor; Basie, piano; Joe Pass, guitar; John Heard, bass; Louis Bellson, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Count Basie is certainly among the most understanding accompanists a horn could hope to have. This LP is another typical example. Basie's way of squeezing into the tiniest solo crevice is truly unique. The two notes he drops between bars six and seven of Carter's first solo chorus on *JJJ Jump* couldn't have been more perfectly placed had he been reading from a score. His sense of timing with such punctuations is reminiscent of the way Sid Catlett used to plant rim shots and bass notes in such perfect and sensitive relationship to the momentum of a solo. Basie in a sense is a drummer.

But there is more than Basie to catch the ear here. Jaws' burley, hairy chested tenor struts and chomps, while Clark Terry prances and darts about on a cloud of peach fuzz. The precision of even his muted work on the slow blues (*Kansas City*) exhibits such control of time, tone and vibrato that one instinctively feels that nothing is left to chance or luck. And Benny Carter's manipulations of space

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and sound remain among the most sophisticated forms of contemporary jazz.

The album begins modestly. *Mama* is a moderately paced warmup with shades of *Swingin' The Blues*. Basie pokes out several choruses in his most charming hunt and peck style after which comes a string of solos that tread water for the most part.

Then things spring to life with *Doggin'*, a staple from the 1938 Basie band book. The tempo is fast, but not so fast as to overwhelm. Some driving riffs are cooked up, particularly behind Al Grey. Terry, Carter and Davis are each masters of keeping control at such speeds. Bellson also shines here.

Kansas City is a slow blues, with Basie spinning out simple strands against a whispered Ellingtonian riff up front and toward the end. He takes the honors here.

The best track is *JJJ*, a stomping blues which boasts Al Grey's best work on the record. Catch how Basie fills in between bar four and five of his first chorus! Carter swings with an almost ferocious aplomb. Terry is muted as Basie plops a coy single note at two bar intervals during his first cycle through the blues.

Joe Pass' services as a soloist are welcome throughout, but his work as a rhythm guitarist is blurry and out of focus. A good rhythm guitar should be part of the bass line, and vice versa. The two should melt into a single voice. That doesn't happen here. Maybe next time. Producer Norman Granz assures us there will be more Basie jams. —mcdonough

SEAWIND

SEAWIND—CTI 5002: *We Got A Way; You Gotta Be Willin' To Lose (Part II); He Loves You; The Devil Is A Liar; A Love Song/Seawind; Make Up Your Mind; Praise (Part I); Roadways (Parts I & II)*.


Personnel: Pauline Wilson, vocals, percussion; Bob Wilson, drums, percussion; Bud Nuanez, guitars, vocals; Ken Wild, bass, electric bass, vocals; Jerry Hey, trumpet, flugelhorn, french horn, vocals; Kim Hutchcroft, soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxes, soprano recorder, vocals; Larry Williams, piano, electric piano, synthesizers, Clavinet, alto and tenor saxes, alto flute, vocals; Paulinho da Costa, congas, percussion; Ralph MacDonald, congas, percussion; Ian Underwood, synthesizer, programming; Harvey Mason, tympani, percussion, background vocals.

This debut album comes from a group with both promise and problems. The promise is apparent on first listening: Seawind is a tight, professional sounding band. The problems come to light under somewhat closer scrutiny: for all their well rehearsed bravado, Seawind doesn't really know who or what they may be. This recital presents a number of more or less tentative possibilities, none of which seem quite ready to resolve into identity.

In addition, there is a self-conscious religious slant to the group's songs; if you were somewhat put off by the Scientological overtones of Return To Forever, the evangelical ambience of Seawind will probably have the same effect. But as Pauline Wilson wails in *We Got A Way*, "Give a listen anyway."

Way presents the band's funky side—Earth, Seawind and Fire, if you will. The sound is defiant, but the lyrics are out of synch, seeming almost apologetic: "We don't despise the compromise." Who said that funk had to be compromising? *The Devil Is A Liar* shows the band in another funky get-up, as Billy Graham Central Station, citing chapter and verse from the Funky Bible. May the Lord forgive me, the combination is a bit awkward.

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turn To Forever. Pauline Wilson does not try to imitate Flora Purim, but the same aura of spiritual innocence surrounds her voice. Hey's fluegelhorn solo is adequate but little more, as, in fact, are almost all of the solos on the album.

This chameleon character of the band reflects in their instrumentals, as well: *Seawind*, for instance, is somewhat Weather Reportish, with just a dash of early Winter Consort. *Praise*, on the whole the album's most successful cut, sounds very much like a Jarrett-Garbarek collaboration—bearing in mind, of course, that the spiritual air is for *real* in this case.

The only real embarrassment on the record is *A Love Song*, whose mawkish lyrics can't sustain the stiff, nasal vocal, and vice versa. Discounting this clinker, though, there is every reason to believe that *Seawind* can pull their act together; after all, identity crises are common enough in this day and age, and God knows their hearts are in the right place.

—bennett

SHELLY MANNE

PERK UP—Concord Jazz CJ-21: *Perk Up; I Married An Angel; Seer; Comeback; Yesterdays; Drinkin' And Drivin'; Bleep; Bird Of Paradise.*

Personnel: Manne, drums; Monty Budwig, bass; Frank Strozier, alto sax, flute; Conte Condoli, trumpet; Mike Wofford, piano.

Had this session been cut 20 years ago I might have said it was years ahead of its time—unfortunately it dates back only half that long, placing it safely behind the lines of creative battle. Nonetheless good music is timeless, so they say, and if West Coast progressive is your cup of tea I think you'll find that this outing withstands the ravages rather well.

The title track, described as a Trinidadian tune, sounds a bit dated—it reminds me of one of those "Mood Moderne" things on a Music-To-Do-Something-Or-Other-By album. The standard *I Married An Angel* is given a Milesian cast by Conte Condoli with Mike Wofford comping a la Bill Evans. Frank Strozier contributes some of the strongest material with *Seer*, a vampish number in the vein of *Maiden Voyage/Fancy Free*, and *Comeback*, a hot blowing vehicle for Strozier and Condoli. Everybody gets a taste on *Yesterdays*, followed by some note-bending ensemble work on the moody *Drinkin' And Drivin'*. It's back to bop on the Monkish *Bleep* by Wofford, which prefigures Condoli's later work with Supersax. The closer is another pretty Wofford tune, the tropically tinged *Bird Of Paradise*.

The whole session cooks along with understated good taste and solid musicianship by all—Condoli particularly stands out. My main reservation applies generally to the West Coast cool school and that is its tendency toward the bromidic. But then some people call that a relaxed feeling.

—birnbaum

ALPHONSO JOHNSON

YESTERDAY'S DREAMS—Epic PE 34364: *Love's The Way I Feel 'Bout Cha; As Little As You; Scapegoat; Show Us The Way; Balls To The Wall; Tales Of Barcelona; Flight To Humpstead Heath; One To One.*

Personnel: Johnson, bass, Chapman Electric Stick, guitar, vocals; Grover Washington, Jr., Ernie Watts, Ernie Fields, woodwinds; Chuck Findley, Gary Grant, trumpets; George Bohannon, Garnett Brown, trombones; Ray Gomez, Lee Ritenour, guitars; Patrice Rushen, Mark Jordan, David Foster, Ian Underwood, keyboards; Chester Thompson, Mike Clark, drums; Sheila Escovedo, Ruth Underwood, percus-

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sion; Jon Lucien, Phillip Bailey, Diane Reeves, vocals.

★ ★

Like too many other albums, this is an attempt to appeal to as many segments of the record-buying public as possible. As a result, it is *product*, to use the industry's unintended ironic term, which though salable is nonetheless destined to be ignored and forgotten by anyone seriously interested in music as aesthetic experience.

It is also an attempt to launch another star, a bankable property that will keep the fans coming back to the box office and record store. All of that is fine and good. Business is business. It's just that *Yesterday's Dreams* are about building bank accounts instead of music.

As for the tracks themselves, there is craftsmanship in abundance. Professional musicians, professional engineers and professional producers have combined their expertise in an elaborate studio setting using well-established common denominators to contrive a glittering product designed to appeal to unsophisticated ears. Consequently, there are predictable blends of funk, disco and cosmic consciousness. Decent background and dance music—yes; music for the heart and mind—no. —*berg*

BENNY CARTER-DIZZY GILLESPIE

CARTER, GILLESPIE, INC.—Pablo 2310-781: *Sweet And Lovely; Broadway; Courtship; Constantinople; Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen; Night In Tunisia.*

Personnel: Carter, alto sax; Gillespie, trumpet; Joe Pass, guitar; Tommy Flanagan, piano; Al McKibbon, bass; Mickey Roker, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

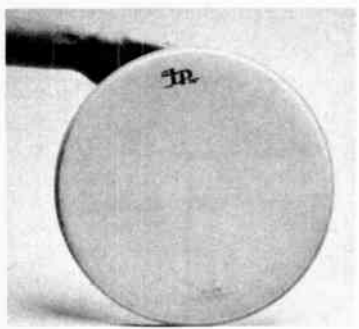
This is a very special collaboration, unusually successful and beautifully balanced in its blending of styles and material.

Courtship is a strikingly attractive melody by Carter. The trumpet-alto voicing (in thirds) seems to bring out its most sensual features. Carter's solo caresses while Gillespie's leaps and dives. Dizzy's contribution as composer (aside from *Tunisia*, which is a standard) is *Constantinople*, a less distinctive melody on its own merits, but one which forms an adequate basis for some nice blowing.

Night In Tunisia ranks with the best of Gillespie's more recent readings. Carter absorbs and interprets the bop classic with complete assurance and control, a fact that should surprise no one familiar with this most complete of musicians.

But the finest moments of the album are reserved for *Broadway*. Had this been performed before a live audience instead of in a studio it would have turned the crowd upside down with excitement. Roker's drumming is aggressive and pushes hard. Flanagan is crisp, cool and incisive. Pass swings with more authority than usual. But Gillespie soars to some of his best recorded playing in recent years—and recent years have been good ones. His articulation is particularly clear, his tone and attack at their most penetrating. Carter then rolls out his biggest and most intricate guns and nearly blows Diz right out of the water. Then Gillespie strikes back and the two are off on a totally absorbing and thrilling chase sequence, first fours and then twos. The interaction and anticipation of each of the other's next move is fascinating to hear.

This is an exceptional pairing which approaches the levels Granz achieved in the Basie-Peterson LP. —*mcdonough*



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WAXING ON . . .

In the fall of 1973 Columbia issued its *Teddy Wilson All-Stars* album and *Eddie Condon's World Of Jazz* set. Then the company sank into a deep sleep, stirring occasionally in the form of some amateurishly assembled, slap dash reissues barely worthy of the dime store budget rack. Now a little more than three years later the slumbering giant has finally awakened.

The first of its projected series on the complete Lester Young (122 sides) is, of course, a superb album. But there is little that is new, so buyers with ample stocks of Billie Holiday, Teddy Wilson and Basie Columbias should probably approach this with caution lest they simply duplicate existing material. The alternate of *Shoe Shine Boy*, Lester's first record, has been out several years on Tax and French CBS. The same with *I Found A New Baby*. But this collection has the advantage of bringing everything together in proper sequence. Included in the complete Lester will be all the sessions with Billie, and three alternates are offered here from this group. Modern jazz and certainly modern jazz singing begins with these records. There is definitive Teddy Wilson on *Never Be The Same*. And Lester, at age 27, possessed a mature and innovative view of his art. His work did not evolve away from conventional modes. It challenged them totally from the outset.

The *Jammin' With Lester LP* is made up of yet more early '50s concert and radio tapes, which have been somewhat devalued over the years by their sheer abundance. That and the muddy sound quality which reduces drummers' ride cymbal work to little more than a swishing drown. But if you're willing to put up with that, there is some striking Lester here. His exchanges with trumpeter Jesse Drakes are alert and commanding on *Tea For Two*, as is his solo work. Drakes spews notes about with less purpose than precision. Earl Swope joins Lester on side one for some pleasant playing. But the meeting is informal and no special sparks pop between the two. Young's *Lady Be Good* is especially assured. The sound makes it difficult to draw conclusions on his tone, however, which was perhaps the most crucial component of his style that was changing at this time.

Another innovator of the '30s was bassist John Kirby, who was to Jimmy Blanton as Marx was to Lenin. He never really made a revolution, but he laid the planks on which Blanton marched through to the new order. Kirby demonstrated the more subtle dimensions of his instrument in an era when everyone else was treating the box like a punching bag trying to outslap Pops Foster. Kirby substituted a resonant tonality for a metallic clonk. It had the immediate effect of putting the bass somewhat in the background. But when recording technology caught up, the modern rhythm section was mature and swinging. *Boss Of The Bass* looks at Kirby as a sideman on side one. His impact is unmistakable on Charlie Barnet's 1937 *Jubilesta*. On other sides he's most conspicuous by his softness. Up front a few hokey vocals are balanced by Teddy Wilson and other soloists. Side two covers Kirby's work in support of Mildred Bailey and Maxine Sullivan. One

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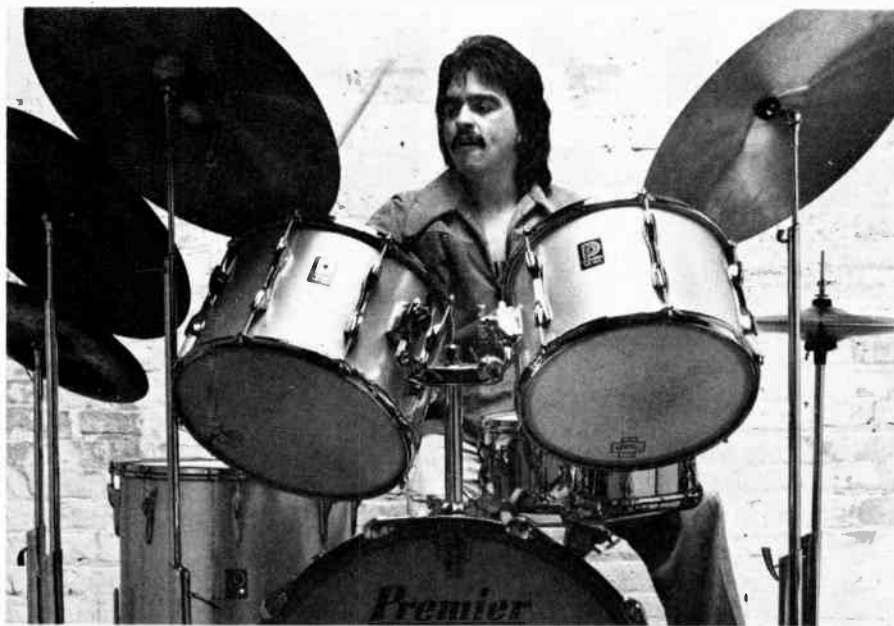
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hears a distinct sound emerging on *St. Louis* and *Blowing Bubbles*. The second LP is made up the Kirby sextet in 14 instrumentals. This was the ultimate chamber ensemble of jazz. Kirby was not the dominant voice. Charlie Shavers was. The reeds of Buster Bailey and Russ Procope were also an instantly recognizable blend. But perhaps the scoring was the real star. It was built to swing, and the men bit into it with sharp little teeth. Speed and precision made the group exceptional. *Ballads* on the other hand sounded transparent. Billy Kyle swings like a beast. *Sweet Georgia, Front And Center, Royal Garden and Andiology* are among the best. Collectors will find the many unissued tracks in this set of special interest.

There is a somewhat academic quality to the guitar anthology, particularly record one, which is largely the pre-history of mainstream jazz guitar. But the liner notes make a good case for its inclusion. The cuts are interesting. And most of all they're usually fun in a number of curious ways. Many of the names are unfamiliar and were recorded by field units in various regions of the country. The guitar surely had a broad geographical base, but until the late '30s no strong center of gravity. Highlights include Leon McAuliffe with the Bob Wills band, another "new" Charlie Christian tour de force on *Wholly Cats*, Eddie Durham and Buck Clayton on *Love Me Or Leave Me* (a hitherto undiscovered Commodore), Dick McDonough on *Honeysuckle Rose*, Kenny Burrell, Herb Ellis, George Benson and Charlie Byrd. John McLaughlin is a ringer.

Jazz Archives has conveniently offered its own guitar set, which expands on the Dick McDonough track. *Honeysuckle* is repeated along with two other solo cuts from 1934, plus 12 collaborations with Carl Kress and a studio band from 1937. The band is not a terribly interesting one, and the charts are generally dull. But there is an abundance of full-bodied, chord-based acoustic guitar.

There is relatively little of Nappy Lamare's guitar on the Bob Crosby LP, but there is a generous helping of Jess Stacy's piano. And that's what lifts this set of two 1940 airshots somewhat above the routine. He bubbles behind the vocalist on *A Vous Tout* and has *Complainin'* all to himself. He plays a straight swing style on *Boogie Woogie*, leaving the band to simulate the rolling bass effects, and steals *Where The Blue Of The Night* and *In The Mood* for himself. Irving Fazola's rich and accomplished clarinet also surfaces several times. There are eight vocal tracks out of 17.

Benny Goodman's band was on the upswing in the spring of 1940 after a period of decline in '38 and '39. Eddie Sauter was updating the book with some of the greatest big band writing ever to materialize, and Charlie Christian and Lionel Hampton were aboard as well. Here are two broadcasts from San Francisco, both of a high order. The sextet is agile and exciting on *Seven Come Eleven* and the first known *Six Appeal* to get recorded. Sauter's *Hour Of Parting* and Hampton's chart of *Board Meeting* are pretty and unusual respectively, and *Big John* still sounds reasonably fresh. Portions of a third airshot from 1942 include a limpid *Peggy Lee* and two stomping instrumentals—*After You've Gone* and *Idaho*. Sound is good.

The latest helping from Xanadu's pot of Jerry Newman goodies is one of the most star-studded yet. *Sweet, Lips & Lots Of Jazz* is understatement. Roy Eldridge, vintage 1941, dominates four of the six tracks, slugging it

out with Joe Guy. But Count Basie quietly dominates the album on his single track, a blues—what else?—with Harry Edison. It is quiet, discreet, structured with swinging solos and a neat ensemble sense. The rest of the LP is roaring passion. Kenny Clarke gets too unruly behind Page, but restrains himself more beneath the unknown tenor. As for Roy, this is not his greatest work by any means, but neither does it ever lack in spirit, command and enthusiasm. His attack and articulation is sharper and more precise than Guy's, but the latter is nevertheless a worthy and competitive opponent. Yet, they never really engage one another directly. There's a lot of volume and high notes but the effect in the end is less fruitful than one might expect. The easy melodrama of the upper register proved too tempting to both.

The Smithsonian Institute continues to expand its record activity with a set of 32 1938 Ellington sides from the Columbia vault. Duke's 14-headed instrument produced a consistent and integrated body of work by 1938. Even had the selection process in this album been completely random, few ringers would have been possible. *Swing Society*, two variations of *Black And Tan*, *I Let A Song* and most others are marvelously personal performances. But the Smithsonian is treading on familiar ground. 15 tracks duplicate material from the two box sets and the Ivy Anderson twofers.

Moreover, there seems little purpose served by including identical alternates of *Rose Of The Rio Grande* and *Blue Light*, particular after reading annotator Gunther Schuller's feeble justification. (Otherwise his notes are excellent.) There is no doubt as to the quality of the content here, save for a couple of exceptions. But it is difficult to know exactly to whom this should be recommended. It is too specialized for the casual buyer, yet too familiar to the collector. You decide.

The third volume of Columbia's Ellington series is also upon us now, and it's still clear that Duke is getting the back of Columbia's hand. The vinyl shortage must be over when a 12 inch LP needlessly contains less than 15 minutes per side. As for the music, this was a most interesting time of change. A modern rhythm section under Louie Bellson worked wonders with the band, as did such new voices as Clark Terry and Paul Gonsalves. Between 1951 and '57, there was a revival of interest in the band too, and some thought that it might even make the pop charts. That no doubt accounts for the six vocals (including Rosemary Clooney) which range from routine down to ponderous. But we get some gems here, too. The unissued *Inprovisation* has some delightful piano, and *A-Flat* offers a jaunty Johnny Hodges. A dozen other pleasant instrumentals round out the mixed bag.

The Ellington-Clooney mating was perhaps the model for a similar set in 1956 in which Columbia joined Buck Clayton, then riding high with his Jam Sessions, with Frankie Laine, at the height of his hitmaking career. Usually the result of such mixes is the loss of both audiences. My own reaction was a case in point. I never had the slightest interest in *Jazz Spectacular*. But a recent reissue by Columbia Special Products reached me through the mail, and I felt obligated to sample it. Much to my surprise, it was superb. Laine, although a bit mannered for a jazz singer, never made a finer album and Clayton is at the top of his considerable form. Budd Johnson, Ur-

bie Green, Dickie Wells, Lawrence Brown, J. J. Johnson and Kai Winding also contribute handsomely. Jo Jones, Milt Hinton and Clifton Best make a matchless rhythm team. Perhaps the brightest single feature of the whole package, however, is the book of arrangements, presumably by Clayton. They are bright, airy, and they swing easily. *Sposin'* and *Roses Of Picardy* are among the brightest.

The two Berigan LPs are not for the casual listener but the serious collector. Volume one has a rather spotty content, being made up of leftovers that didn't make it into the Jazz Archives LP *Down By The Old Mill Stream*. Nearly all have Gail Reese vocals or are incomplete. But there is an extended variation on *I Can't Get Started* and a very unusual reading of *In A Mist*. Both are impressive.

Volume two is of value mainly because of two glimpses of Berigan in the Tommy Dorsey band, first in 1937 (*Mr. Ghost*) and later in 1940 (*Marie, Dark Eyes*). The balance, about half the record, is of such deteriorated sound quality as to be of interest only to fanatics. Five short trumpet choruses accompanied by piano are of academic interest only. This is strictly for the real Berigan buff.

Finally, there is the extraordinary *Ben And The Boys* on Jazz Archives, easily the best Webster LP now on the market. Side one is Webster in the prime of his powers. On *Don't Blame Me* and *I Surrender Dear* he is intimate and breathy. *Tea For Two* is urgent and aggressive with Hot Lips Page, the other horn, snarling at his heels. *Teezol* and *Horn* is Webster at his most explosive. Page is both muted and open, the ultimate swing trumpet in the Armstrong mold. Two long tracks on side two find Webster in an ad hoc jam session with Duke Ellington, Don Byas, Stuff Smith, et al. It's a daisy chain of solos, but Byas and Webster make theirs count. A visit with a Woody Herman contingent is of less interest. A 1958 TV appearance with Benny Morton, Clayton, Billy Taylor and others is a gem of latter day swing. All in all, excellent Webster in marvelously varied contexts. The quintets on side one are classics. —mcdonough

Lester Young, *The Lester Young Story—Volume 1* (Columbia CG 33502): *****

Lester Young, *Jammin' With Lester—Volume 2* (Jazz Archives 34): ***

John Kirby, *Boss Of The Bass* (Columbia CG 33557): *****

Various artists, *50 Years Of Jazz Guitar* (Columbia CG 33566): *** 1/2

Dick McDonough, Carl Kress, *Guitar Genius* (Jazz Archives 32): ***

Bob Crosby, *On The Air* (Aircheck 17): ***

Benny Goodman, *On The Air* (Aircheck 16): *****

Various artists, *Sweets, Lips & Lots Of Jazz* (Xanadu 123): *** 1/2

Duke Ellington, *1938* (Smithsonian Collection P2-13367): ***** 1/2

Duke Ellington, *The World Of Duke Ellington* (Columbia CG 33961): *** 1/2

Buck Clayton, Frankie Laine, *Jazz Spectacular* (Columbia Special Products JCL 808): *****

Bunny Berigan, *1938-39—Volume 1* (Shoestring SS 100): ** 1/2

Bunny Berigan, *1937-40—Volume 2* (Shoestring SS 101): **

Ben Webster, *Ben And The Boys* (Jazz Archives 35): *****

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BLINDFOLD TEST



Bob Thiele & Teresa Brewer

by Leonard Feather

Bob Thiele's track record as a producer of good music extends back 38 years. He ran his own Signature label from 1939 to 1947, organized the "Jazztime U.S.A." series for Coral during the 1950s, and was responsible for building a unique catalog, including most of the John Coltrane classics, during the 1960s at Impulse.

After leaving Impulse he launched a new label, Flying Dutchman, distributed through RCA. Last year he embarked on a new phase as independent producer. He recently started another new company, Doctor Jazz Music Ltd., and another fledgling label, Frankenstein Records.

Teresa Brewer met Thiele when he recorded her as a pop singer for Coral more than 20 years ago. When their paths crossed again many years later she became Mrs. Thiele, and under his guidance, her career took on a new aspect as she recorded a collection of Bessie Smith songs (backed by the Count Basie band) and albums with the Ellington Orchestra, the World's Greatest Jazzband and others.

This was the first blindfold test for both the Thieles. They were given no information about the records played.

1. QUINCY JONES. *Manteca* (from *You've Got It Bad Girl*, A&M). Jones, arranger; Jerome Richardson, soprano sax; Cat Anderson, trumpet.

Brewer: Oh, I thought it was fantastic! Yeah. When I hear something like this and it's making me move in my chair. . . . I'm just listening to everybody, and they're all great; but I couldn't identify anybody in particular.

Thiele: Well, I don't know if I can identify anybody. It could possibly be a Quincy Jones band. The soloists . . . well, the soprano sax I think is either Tom Scott or John Klemmer; high trumpet I thought was maybe Bobby Bryant or possibly Maynard Ferguson, because who plays that high, that I can think of? The record itself was great—the thing really moved, and I especially liked the string backgrounds for the soprano sax. Is this where we give it stars, or something?

The changes in tempo, the solos . . . altogether, to me, it was like properly put together and then it did move, you know, accomplish something.

Brewer: Yeah, I'll go along with that. Anything he says; are you kidding! I'd give it a five, I really would.

Thiele: I'd give it a five. I thought it was fantastic—very exciting.

2. ESTHER PHILLIPS. *A Beautiful Friendship* (from *Capricorn Princess*, Kudu). Phillips, vocal; David Matthews, arranger.

Brewer: You know, I love Dinah Washington so much, and it sounds very much like her. . . . I remember Bob playing a record for me of some other singer and saying she sounds a lot like Dinah Washington, and it was Esther Phillips. Is that who it is? It was very nice—she sings with great feeling; what more can I say? I guess I'd rate it about a four.

Thiele: Yeah, it's Esther Phillips, and I'd give it the same rating. I liked the arrangement—it just laid there and complemented her nicely. I think she's great and I love the way she sings. At times I find she's a little affected. If Dinah Washington was singing the same song, I don't think it would be as

affected. I don't think the words, the notes, would be twisted quite as much. Dinah was a little more direct. But she's great; there's no question about it.

3. WORLD'S GREATEST JAZZ BAND. *Take The A Train* (from *The World's Greatest Jazzband Plays Duke Ellington*, World Jazz). Yank Lawson, trumpet; Billy Butterfield, trumpet; Bob Haggart, bass, arranger.

Brewer: It's The World's Greatest Jazzband, and the first trumpet that I heard was Yank Lawson, and the second one was Billy Butterfield. I know those two because I worked with them. Yank was working in nightclubs with me, and Billy did one or two weeks with me too, and I also recorded an album with them. Now, what do I get? I got three points, right? For the record itself, I'd give it three stars, because the guys are really playing, but I don't like the sound on it. It sounded like an old record.

Thiele: I think that Yank always is an exciting musician and I think I'd give five stars to Yank if he was blowing his nose. Teresa was saying while the record was on that when she was 17 she did *Music, Music, Music* and a lot of the Dixieland tunes; Yank, Butterfield and all those people were in the studio playing and she had no idea who they were. . . .

Brewer: And they didn't know me.

Thiele: But I'd give it three stars as well, overall. I think Yank, and Billy Butterfield, and I'm sure the arrangement was by Bob Haggart, I mean those guys as musicians I'd give them five. But it just makes it a little less interesting to hear them when it's a bad recording.

4. ETTA JONES. *I'm Gonna Lock My Heart And Throw Away The Key* (from *Ms. Jones To You*, Muse); Jones, vocal; Walter Davis, piano; Buster Williams, bass; Grady Tate, drums; Larry Killian, percussion.

Brewer: I don't know her name, but I know I've

heard her sing before and I think she's great. I love the style. It's my kind of singing.

Thiele: I was trying to think of so many different singers, and the ones right off the top of my head . . . I know it's none of them. I think maybe it's Etta Jones.

Brewer: James.

Thiele: Jones.

Brewer: James! There is an Etta James. It's not Joni James!

Thiele: Well, I don't know which one it is. I agree with Teresa. I like her sound.

Brewer: Yeah, I like the way she slurs her lyrics and everything. Great.

Thiele: I guess it's trite to say the record swings, but it was swingin'. The rhythm section was great, but I don't know who the players were. I thought it was terrific. I'll go with four stars.

I first heard that tune, I think . . . somehow I think of Benny Goodman or Billie Holiday.

Brewer: I bet you it's a Billie Holiday. I love the way she sings. I'm going to give her a five.

Thiele: The reason why I thought of Benny Goodman, I know that Billie made some records with Benny and somehow I put the two together; but I remember the song.

5. ANTHONY BRAXTON. *Side One, Cut Two* (from *New York, Fall 1974*, Arista). Braxton, flute.

Brewer: Oh, I wouldn't know that—at all. It was interesting. But sometimes music like that makes me think that somebody's just . . . you know . . . exercising. It's one of those rehearsals before you start playing a thing. It sounds like serious music. I don't know how to define it.

Thiele: Jazz is serious.

Brewer: Oh, I know that, but I mean it sounds more like classical. Is it classical jazz? What do you call this? It's not punk rock, I know.

Thiele: Did you give it any stars?

Brewer: I'll give it . . . oh gee, it sounds like *The Gong Show*, doesn't it. I'll give it a two.

Thiele: It's interesting. It doesn't really—I gotta be honest—knock me out. I'm really guessing. It sounds like—I haven't heard this record; I don't even know this album—but it sounds like some of the music I once heard in Europe by that group of musicians from Chicago, and I can't remember all their names at the moment—that Art Ensemble. It's an interesting piece of music. I'm not too thrilled with it, but I would give it three stars. And that's all I can really say about it.

6. RUBY BRAFF-GEORGE BARNES QUARTET. *On The Sunny Side Of The Street* (from *Live At The New School*, Chiaroscuro). Braff, trumpet; Barnes, guitar.

Brewer: The guitar I know. It's George Barnes. I like this kind of music. I liked the trumpet—I liked the feel of it. The tune, well, I won a lot of contests with that tune. I'd give it about a four.

Thiele: I'll give it a four. It was Ruby Braff and George Barnes. I heard this group in New York in a club one night. To me it's just good music; George is a great guitar player and I've always liked Ruby Braff. He always reminds me of Bunny Berigan. I just happen to like that sound. I'd say it was just nice straightahead, relaxed jazz and it's very good. I think the group broke up. George is up in San Francisco and Ruby's back in New York. But it was a nice group.

Feather: Let me ask you, what records, if I were to play them for you, would you give the most enthusiastic five star ratings?

Thiele: My five stars would go to *West End Blues* by Louis Armstrong, *Cotton Tail* by Duke Ellington, and almost any record by Coleman Hawkins.

Brewer: Well, how did you leave out Benny Goodman?

Thiele: We'll throw in a Benny Goodman record. *Mission To Moscow*. There was a 12 inch record that I liked . . . *Benny Rides Again*. Of course there are so many other great ones. I guess that old thing about the desert island and if you could take ten records . . . I think I'd include a record by Erroll Garner, and a Bessie Smith.

Profile

MIKE NOCK

by michael rozek

In 1968, keyboardist Mike Nock formed a seminal (and unfortunately short-lived) fusion band, The Fourth Way. And in close to 20 years of performing, he's had a variety of other musical slants. Now, however, when fusion and eclecticism have hit their commercial strides, he sits on a relative sideline. But Nock sees no irony in the situation. As in 1968, he's only looking "for a way to make the music I feel strongest about."

Born in New Zealand in 1940, Nock started playing at age eleven. "My father taught me piano, and after he died, I learned from books. In New Zealand there wasn't too much happening, so I always had my own band. I guess I was sort of a phenomenon by process of elimination. Then, when I was 18, I went to Australia where I had some success with a group we called the Three Out Trio. We made two albums, did a lot of festivals. . . . I patterned myself after Bobby Timmons, Oscar Peterson, and we played a lot of Horace Silver and Art Blakey tunes. We liked being a hard-driving piano trio. I guess we were very exciting at the time, but now, it all seems really funny. . . . Eventually I wanted to get deeper into music—I was listening to Ornette Coleman and Bill Evans. And I started playing a lot with Rick Laird; I knew him slightly from New Zealand, because I'd lived in a house his father had built. Rick was mostly into guitar then, but whenever he replaced the regular bass player in our group, we'd start getting really out, and people would eventually leave in droves. Rick and I thought it was great, even though it sure wasn't communicating. But I knew I could entertain people easily enough; what I really wanted to be was a better musician.

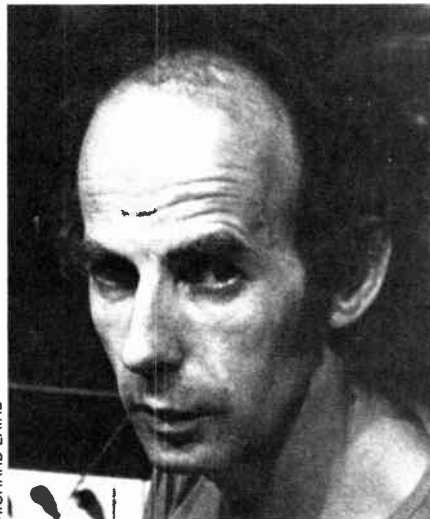
"I left Australia in 1961 with the trio, and we went to England for a while. We had a lot of bookings there, but then I got a scholarship to Berklee . . . so I came over that same year. And I was astounded. In Australia I was at the top, but in the practice rooms at Berklee I met with some severe shocks—Gary Burton, Steve Marcus, Chris Swanson, Mike Gibbs, Keith Jarrett, Fred Lipsius, so many others. I wasn't working, and I got very depressed. But then for some reason—I was as surprised as anybody—Herb Pomeroy gave me a gig with his group at the Jazz Workshop. At that time, it was a club run by musicians, no relation to the one in Boston now. Herb led a big band there two nights a week, and there was a smaller group too, with Dusko Goykovich, Alan Dawson, John Neves or Larry Richardson. Another band I was in was led by a local dentist named Gene DiStasio. He hired Sam Rivers, John, myself and Tony Williams. Gene was really a very good trombonist . . . it was a thrilling experience. We'd play Monday nights at the Workshop, mostly advanced bebop. Tony was only 16 or 17 and he played great. . . . but he would always ask, sincerely, for critiques of his playing.

"By 1962, I'd gone through one and a half semesters at Berklee. And there was so much music going on in Boston, it seemed absurd to me to be sitting in school. Fortunately, I had a lot of luck after dropping out. I got a job at Lennie's On The Turnpike, as part of the initial house rhythm section. So I worked with Coleman Hawkins, Pee Wee Russell, Benny Carter. It was like the history of jazz, six nights a week. Then in 1963, I went on the road with Yusef Lateef. He had Richard Williams, Ernie Farrow, James Black with him. Later, Johnny Coles and Reggie Workman joined. We toured in the States through 1964, and I was on a couple of LPs (1984 and *Live At Pep's*). And we were really into trying new stuff then very few others were. Like Yusef was into tone rows. We'd start out playing *Summertime* and wind up just try-

ing to express the idea of summertime. And this was in a club where everyone wanted to get down . . . so then Yusef would play a blues.

"In 1964, I got a little tired of the road. So I came to New York with a clean slate and played with a lot of bands. I had my own group, with Cecil McBee and Eddie Marshall, and we opened the Dom. Then I was the pianist with Art Blakey, in between Keith Jarrett and Chick Corea. And I worked with Stanley Turrentine, Booker Ervin. . . . I even did some gigs with Dionne Warwick, which I enjoyed."

In 1967, Nock moved to San Francisco. "And I was ready to leave New York, man," he remembers. "When John Handy hired me and I went to the Coast, I was living on the Lower East Side, dropping a lot of acid, and playing a lot of out music. It was crazy; I was playing like Cecil Taylor as if my life depended on it, which it probably did at the time. It wasn't a rewarding time musically, since I was playing out of a sense of need more than anything else.



RICHARD LAIRD

"One night in 1968, John got sick, and Mike White and I covered the gig. We'd been rehearsing anyway. Still, Mike didn't have too much confidence, but I told him I'd play the melodies with him, and then he'd discover how good he sounded. Things went okay, and a little later, Eddie Marshall moved from L.A. The three of us kept rehearsing, with different bass players, until Mike and I left John, and The Fourth Way was born. After we'd made a local name for ourselves, we finally got a gig at the Jazz Workshop. The place was packed. Except people kept coming up and asking me for *Seventh Son*. And then I realized that for some reason, they thought I was Mose Allison. Later on, we worked a concert with Charles Lloyd, and Ron McClure was with Charles. Ron and I talked, and eventually he called me about joining the band. This was just before we started negotiating with Capitol for a record contract involving a sum of money outrageous for a jazz group in those days. All the psychedelic stuff was happening in San Francisco, and Capitol was looking for something new in the city. And when David Rubinson and the people at Fillmore decided they wanted us, the bidding just escalated. When Ron came on, we were ready to sign a contract, and then we started happening.

"We never made much money, though. The Fourth Way was definitely a labor of love. And it was a unique combination of musical personalities. Like, Mike White had played spacey music with Sun Ra; I'd played spacey, but also melodically. And I really liked playing with Mike, because I could play any way I wanted to. He wasn't like a lot of horn players, who insist you play a certain way. The result was that we had a totally unique sound.

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"In 1968, we used an electric piano on our first album, which at the time was a fairly bold move. The album was pretty polite, though; it was put down a whole lot. We were just trying to make some music that I thought would be very good music. We were coming out of jazz, but we were also influenced by working the Fillmore opposite Santana. It's hard to describe what we sounded like—for what it's worth, one critic called us a jazz version of Booker T. and the M.G.s.

"By the time we made our third record for Harvest, a subsidiary of Capitol," adds Nock, "Capitol was cutting back. At one point, they fired 40 groups. As soon as *Werwolf* was released, it was yanked off the market. Then Michael White split for a contract with Impulse, which was a particular shame because the band was tailor-made for him to do his thing. . . . Now he's driving a bus. After he split, everything fell apart. If only I'd tried harder to keep it together.

"But lots of musicians in their 20s and 30s come up to me in New York now, and they say ours was the first music like that they ever heard. I'm amazed they remember—they even know the tunes. It makes me feel good. We felt special back then, too, but none of us have really been able to recapture the music since."

After *The Fourth Way* dissolved late in 1970, Nock stayed in San Francisco and took a new musical direction. After buying one of the first ARP 2600s as "a lark," he started playing at museums and planetariums, eventually creating two TV specials on electronic music for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. "I was really experimenting," he explains, "with a given way to make music, which has always been my basic stance anyway. And I've never wanted to be influenced too much by what other music was happening around me. So many musicians end up copying everything. Also, in San Francisco in the early '70s, playing bebop would have been playing for myself. And people had to hear me, otherwise what was the point of being a musician?"

During this period Nock also composed works for string quartet and orchestral ensemble, writing under various grants. And, now and then, he played some jazz club dates, "usually with Steve Swallow and Eliot Zigmund. I'd use electric piano and the 2600. But eventually I felt hampered in San Francisco. To survive in this business, you need a record contract, somebody behind you. It validates your position. In San Francisco, I'd get a band together, and we might pack a club, and it'd look like something was happening. But there were never any record people in town.

"Of course, in New York, there are people you can take tapes to. Which is partly why I moved to New York in the fall of 1975, and since then I've gone through a lot of changes. First off, New York has reawakened my interest in jazz. In California, my playing had been eluding me . . . now I'm listening to old records by Herbie Hancock and Wynton Kelly. I'm finding I want to swing again; that electronic stuff was too abstract, too random. It's funny how when you've been in music a long time you rediscover things. And something else I've reawakened is an emotional commitment in my playing, which is also directly due to living in New York, a place where you're constantly being confronted with your inadequacies.

"And I'll tell you, man, there are so many good musicians in New York now. It seems like the city's goin' through some kind of renaissance. . . . Yet, I don't hear that much originality. When I lived in New York in the '60s, Herbie Hancock was around, always searching for something new. Now, he sounds great, but he's playing things that have been well-tried. And all the younger pianists sound like him or McCoy Tyner. But, as I said, there's more musical excellence around than ever before. And perhaps the straining for excellence in the old days wasn't as good as the situation now. This society is so throwaway . . . styles come and styles go. It's a process you can view in different ways. Like for Miles, the music he played in the '60s reached its logical conclusion; but the direction that music was pointed in was only copied—not explored—by other musicians. Which is sort of a shame, because if it must be said, that music's my

favorite. Miles' band with Herbie—they had it. Which was not something they learned out of a book. . . . Oh, I'm giving you all these contradictions. Well, the truth is contradictions, I guess."

Since coming to New York, Nock has filled the piano chair with Thad Jones and Mel Lewis, gone to Germany for a tour with Jeremy Steig, done a record (for a Japanese label) with Tal Farlow, trekked to Washington, D.C.'s Showboat for a weekend gig with Howard Roberts, and worked semi-regularly with Rick Laird and John Abercrombie around Manhattan. He's also tried to resurrect *The Fourth Way*: "Eddie Marshall, Ron McClure, Alex Foster and myself went in the studio and cut a demo. The music wound up a lot stronger than the original *Fourth Way's*, but it just didn't seem to have that certain magic . . . I hope that after I mix it and hear what's really there, I'll be closer to putting out an LP that'll be dynamite. . . . Today, there are so many good records out, I feel I'm selling myself short just to put out another one."

In other words, as in 1968, Mike Nock is only looking "for a way to make the music I feel strongest about."

ONAJE ALLEN GUMBS

by arnold jay smith



SHINGO SATO

The first time I came across the name Allen Gumbs was in the process of reviewing some of the premier season of the New York Jazz Repertory Company. Onaje had the distinction of penning an arrangement for a Miles Davis tribute (see *db*, May 8, 1975). Since that time the combination of my looking for the man and the fact that he has been very visible lately led to this article.

"Onaje" means "peaceful one" and the name describes him well. Singing around the house led to choir chores and piano lessons, "to channel my energy into more productive things," he told me. "Since the choir director and piano teacher were the same person, it seemed the proper way to go.

"He took me right through high school (High School of Music and Art, New York City) and into college (State University of New York at Fredonia). It was there that I got another teacher and new courses for a Bachelor of Music degree.

"After college I came back to New York where I got my first major gig with Kenny Burrell. In 1971, we toured with Major Holley and Lenny McBrowne."

It was still draft time and the U.S. Army granted him a Conscientious Objector deferment. This led Onaje to Buffalo, which, like today, was something of a jazz town where musicians went to "cool out." The audiences there are rather responsive.

"I was able to utilize the training and technique I learned in college by just playing around. I was teaching up there as part of the Model Cities program at the Watu Center for Urban Design. I got to meet a number of musicians who passed through

Buffalo: Herbie Hancock, Ahmad Jamal, McCoy Tyner, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Freddie Hubbard, Eddie Harris. Because of the lack of activity other than concerts or club dates, you got to know them and talk to them at length. Herbie and his group were invited over to a local musician's house for dinner and we just rapped.

"That's how it happened for me. After the two years tenure with Model Cities, Norman Connors came to town with Pharoah Sanders. Norman told me about an album he wanted to do with a lot of Brazilian-type tunes, which are among my favorites."

Connors had big plans—strings, large orchestral charts—and Onaje hadn't written anything outside of college. At Fredonia he had done an entire concert on his own with chamber orchestra, band, trio, and solo piano; highly unusual at Fredonia at the time.

"I had never gone to a person and put myself on to him, telling him what I could do. But I did it to Norman. I said, 'Yeah, I can do what you want.' He listened to a tape I had of the Fredonia concert and liked it. We discussed the concept of his second album and from there I began to work on *Dark Of Light*, the title tune."

A few months later Connors called him to join his group which consisted variously of Carlos Garnett, Gary Bartz, Charles Sullivan, Reggie Workman, and Alex Blake. While Gumbs was with the group they recorded *Love From The Sun*, with the title tune again done by Onaje.

"The music was starting to stagnate for me, so I quit the group in 1974 and began with a group called Natural Essence. In fact, I had been commuting between Buffalo and New York even while I was working with Norman, to do Natural Essence's rehearsals. That might have had an effect on their bank account. I stayed with them for two years gaining a lot of writing experience."

Natural Essence was originally produced for Fantasy Records by the brothers Adderley. Later, Billy Cobham took over the job for Atlantic. The record was never released. The lack of positive movement once more caused Onaje to free lance.

"I was asked to contribute to Norman Connors' *Slew Foot* album, but I declined because of certain dealings I did not appreciate on other occasions. However, when I realized that I had a lot to do with whatever went wrong with my business, I took another approach. I discovered this through chanting."

There are a number of musicians who have taken to chanting. Nichirin Shoshu Buddhism is the philosophy, and many of those musicians have praised the results.

"It's all internal," Onaje says. "You find things out for yourself because you are constantly looking inside. I learned that what I thought was wrong with a lot of people was sometimes my fault. So when Norman's *Saturday Night Special* came along, armed with my newfound philosophy, I was determined to make it work. I contributed arrangements to four of the seven tunes on that album."

He was not stagnating anymore. LPs by Betty Carter, Charles Sullivan, Lenny White, Buster Williams, Carlos Garnett, Woody Shaw, Larry Ridley, Cecil McBee, and Nat Adderley all have Onaje Allen Gumbs as a sideman. He started on acoustic piano, but now prefers electric keys as an adjunct, "for colorations. I can work better and it adds another tonal quality when there are both an acoustic piano and an electric on the date."

His writing for Connors has helped make *You Are My Starship* a gold album. He also acted as assistant producer on the LP. One of the tunes he did on Kenny Burrell's *Up The Street*, *'Round The Corner*, *Down The Block* was arranged for the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra.

"It all wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for Leroy Kirkland. He's best known for his *Cloudburst*, and the arrangement for Ruby and the Romantics on *Our Day Will Come*. He got me started in the actual music business while I was in high school. He'd have me rehearsing the Platters one day, the Romantics the next, and he put me into that whole r&b scene. I hark back to him when I think of trying something new that might be a little tough. The first such undertaking was the Miles Davis/NYJRC con-

cert. Later I did one with the Collective Black Artists in honor of Philly Joe Jones.

"I'm really trying to get a firm foundation in all three fields: arranger, composer and pianist. By doing all the dates I can, I develop in all three areas at once. I don't want to be competent in one area more than the others; I want the whole pie. I feel that I can do that by experiencing as many things as I can.

"I do favor certain types of arranging within that category. Strings and woodwinds give me the most pleasure to work with. There's something about the color, especially the cello. I like the range it offers. It lends itself well to a solo atmosphere. I utilized it in *Love From The Sun*, *Dark Of Light* and *Betcha By Golly Wow* (from the Norman Connors album). I haven't developed my work in brass. It's not that I don't know how to deal with it, it's just that I haven't done too much.

"I don't feel that a large ensemble is necessary to get a full sound. For example, on McCoy's *Tender Moments* album he used a smaller ensemble to get the colors he wanted, making it sound almost like a 17-piece orchestra.

"Please don't typecast me by the people I cite as influences. What I play speaks for itself. I listen to all kinds of music and all types of musicians. I draw from all the energy that's out there, whether it's a pianist, horn player, singer, or whatever. Just because I am a pianist doesn't mean that I

draw only from other pianists. And that's the way I want to continue to grow. No matter what the label, I can deal with it.

"It all comes from Africa anyhow. The roots are there no matter who performs it. McCoy, Bill Evans, Joe Farrell—where they are coming from is African in origin. The foundation of today's music is coming from there and I relate to all of it."

Eclectic could be the word, since it seems to best describe a host of today's musicians. Onaje has recently completed two completely different Nat Adderley albums—one "commercial," the other "straight ahead." During that same period he recorded a solo LP for Steeplechase and wrote charts for a Phyllis Hyman album.

"I called the solo collection *It Sho' Do Feel Good That You Hear Me*, because I'm glad that it was done and the title gives the impression of some gospel feeling. I do some spontaneous compositions and my interpretations of Dizzy's *Con Alma* and Trane's *Giant Steps*. I felt particularly close to those two. Any song can become someone's vehicle. Take *This Masquerade*, written by Leon Russell. It now belongs to George Benson.

"When you get into the validity of the person playing the music, it gets personal, maybe even political. Once all that is disposed of, and the music is allowed to flow more freely, people will deal with the music alone. That's what I'm going to be about as far as expression is concerned." **db**

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OREGON

Amazingrace, Evanston, Ill.

Personnel: Ralph Towner, 12-string guitar, electric guitar, piano, french horn, trumpet, percussion; Paul McCandless, oboe, english horn, bass clarinet, wood flute; Glen Moore, bass, piano, violin; Collin Walcott, tabla, sitar, conga, clarinet, percussion.

Oregon in concert does not differ drastically from Oregon on record. The same cunning inventiveness that brands their recorded output works just as efficiently live. Perhaps it's put to an even more difficult test since concert situations continually create instantaneous challenges.

In Evanston, Oregon kept the interest of their audience for well over an hour by keeping themselves interested. As a result, the music covered a wide spectrum: from orgiastic free-for-alls to a surprisingly polite rendering of Bill Evans' *Time Remembered*.

The performance began with the group effectively executing a somewhat conventional mainstream format with instruments not generally associated with that style. Collin Walcott on tabla along with bassist Glen Moore supplied the drive on Ralph Towner's *Brujo*, with the composer weaving his full-throated 12-string chords in and out. Like a pianist, Towner alternated between contributing to the already established rhythm and adding harmonic unity, sometimes achieving both simultaneously. Paul McCandless stated the theme on english horn then took the first solo. Everyone's function remained basically the same on *Time Remembered*, though Walcott switched to conga and hi-hat and Towner to piano, thereby demonstrating Ralph's charming if limited abilities on the acoustic keyboard.

Pace, format, and mood altered noticeably on Walcott's somber *Night Glider*. Towner, back on guitar, delicately mingled with Walcott's fluent sitar against an ominous backdrop created by the tight teamwork of Moore bowing a deep drone and McCandless gently rumbling on bass clarinet. Then, taking his

cue from Dolphy, McCandless graduated into a lengthy, unaccompanied screeching solo that favored the instrument's extreme upper octaves, segueing *Night Glider* into collective improvisation.

Subdued hysteria then reigned for twenty minutes or more as individual members of the nomadic quartet occasionally wandered around stage in search of something to play in addition to their standard axes. That may sound like masturbatory sound-making, or just pure messing around, but during that crazed segment, Oregon concocted some of the best music of the evening, with complex interplay at a maximum. This part of the show often brought to mind the atonality of contemporary classical music, though occasional interjections of humor—musical and visual—kept it all from seeming too serious. Necessity proved to be quite a mother as the absence of a drum set drew rhythms from unexpected sources. Things happened quickly, and kept happening. Textures changed constantly in a relaxed, flowing fashion. At one point, Towner, with a matchbook placed under his strings for twanging effects, dueted with Walcott, who extracted more music from a tambourine than could be expected. Walcott also performed on clarinet, Towner played french horn and trumpet, and McCandless blew wooden flute. Moore doodled a bit on piano, then reached into it like he was checking the oil and plucked the strings. He played violin upside down (the fiddle, not him), with the tuning keys against his chin and the chin rest against his legs.

On these supplementary instruments, Towner, Moore, McCandless and Walcott are not quite the maniacal wizards they are on their primary ones. But they are aware of their limitations, and they seldom seem overindulgent. When they felt the improv had reached the end of the track, Towner turned a guitar solo into *Become, Seem, Appear*.

Oregon possesses a Jekyll and Hyde musical personality. When the freakouts run dry, the ensemble returns to its rich picturesque lyricism which hits the listener like a misleading calm between storms. By the time you're adjusted to it, you get caught in a downpour.

—gregory j. marshall

MARIAN McPARTLAND/ JOE MORELLO

Gulliver's,
West Paterson, N.J.

Personnel: Marian McPartland, piano; Joe Morello, drums; Mike Moore, bass.

Marian McPartland began her American pianistic career with a trio that included a young man who was destined to become one of the most superb technicians in jazz: Joe Morello. It had been two decades since these former partners teamed up for an audience, and Amos Kaine, the very hip proprietor of Gulliver's, planned a "party" to welcome the duo's reunion. It was a one-time-only performance. "We're too busy," Marian told this reporter.

Alas, it's true. Marian has her teaching, six month gigs at Bemelman's Bar in the Hotel Carlyle, and Halcyon Records, Ms. McPartland's personal baby (which may release some of the tunes played at the reunion).

The evening started early, spaced to end early. It ran to four hours with Morello playing an encore here, and Marian asking to do "one more" there. Joe was in some of his best form since the Brubeck days. (He's currently a touring pro for Ludwig, conducting clinics all over the U.S. and Canada.) On *Gone With The Wind* he switched from sticks to brushes, using the butt end of one brush as the tempo alternated from 3/4 for the theme statement to 4/4 on the improvisational parts.

Bassist Mike Moore composed *Hide And Seek With The Bombay Bicycle Club* utilizing Morello's flair with a tempo reminiscent of the Brubeck group's *Tokyo Traffic*. The tune had a modal riff, with the bass line becoming the melody.

Joe was back on brushes for *Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise* and the mood turned Marian on. She bounced to the easy line, never wavering from a strong left hand that did more than comp chords. One clef complemented the other—while the bass clef was laying down the chords, the treble was breaking them down and running with them.

Moore was on top again, this time arco, on Ellington's *Come Sunday*. The tune lends itself beautifully to his style—languid, melodic, direct. His attack is right on the notes with no sliding toward them. His open string work was remarkably consistent with his vibrato. He carried *Yesterdays* to Joe, as the tempo moved away from an easy four (Joe with sticks for a cymbal fantasy) to a medium up. Marian's colors changed from runs to block chords to tremolos. Morello, who had loosed the snare for the preceding bass solo, utilized the sound of the open snare drum with quick triplet breaks for a Latin tinged effect.

Don't Get Around Much Anymore was one of Marian's strongest outings. She just let fly, blowing emotionally. Mike took an upper register solo that sounded like a piccolo bass. Joe used stops and tricks that were not only humorous and eye-catching, but actually complementary to Marian's delicious chordal inversions. *Things Ain't What They Used To Be* finally wound things up, but not before *Stompin' At The Savoy* (with quotes from *Rockin' In Rhythm*, Chopin's *Minute Waltz* and Foster's *I Dream Of Jeannie With The Light Brown Hair*) elicited Marian's passing remark, "We're having so much fun up here we may stay all night."

—arnold jay smith

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Berg: One of the landmarks of your career was the pianoless trio. If you weren't the first, you were certainly among the first horn players to take that bold step.

Rollins: I don't know if I was first or if Gerry (Mulligan) should be credited for that. I'm not sure because I know Gerry had a group without piano at one time.

Berg: That was the quartet with Art Farmer. But your effort was even more daring because with a trio the whole melodic burden was on your shoulders. What you did with that format is, I think, one of your great accomplishments.

Rollins: Thank you. Every time I did a record like that I had an excellent bassist and drummer, people like Elvin Jones, Shelly Manne, Pete LaRoca, Ray Brown, Wilbur Ware. You must have a strong bassist and drummer to play without any chording instrument. I know, because I've tried lots of times to play without a pianist where the drummer or bassist just couldn't make it. So you need musicians who know where they're at all the time, which is a mark of a superior musician. Regardless of what else is happening, you have to know where you're at so you're not leaning on the pianist or anyone else.

Berg: Not having a chordal background allows much more harmonic freedom. Was that one of your basic motivations, the desire to have more harmonic elbow room?

Rollins: I would say so. At that time I was also having problems with pianists. I didn't like the guy I had, so he left the band. Pianists have a tendency to overplay. They've got a lot of keys in front of them so it's natural that they tend to fill up all the holes and not leave enough space for the guy playing out front. So this began to bug me. I remember Miles used to have the piano player lay out at different times.

Berg: Monk also does that. After playing the head and comping for one chorus, he'll drop out and let someone like Charlie Rouse go with just bass and drums.

Rollins: Sure. It's more free. It's a good device.

Berg: During the late '50s you were playing primarily with the trio. Then, in '59, you began your famous sabbatical. What was the motivation for that?

Rollins: Let's see. '59 sabbatical. I've had several of them during my career. '59, that was the bridge?

Berg: Right. '59-'61.

Rollins: Actually, I just wanted to get deeper into music. I wanted to study more. So I went back and I took piano again; finally got back to piano. And I studied harmony and composition. I just wanted to increase my own knowledge, you know. I also felt that I was being pushed too much. I was into too much and didn't have enough to back it up. I needed more knowledge.

Also, I was getting into a lot of bad ruts. I was destroying my health—smoking, drinking and everything else. So I decided to just cool it, to get myself together, to get to the music that I hear in my mind. Then I would come back when I felt more secure about what I was doing.

The bridge thing came about because I lived in a small pad. Practicing was hard because it would bother the people nearby. So the bridge afforded a beautiful place to play. No one else was up there.

Berg: That was the Williamsburg Bridge?

Rollins: Yeah. I was living in the Lower East Side. The bridge spans Brooklyn and the Lower East Side.

Berg: When did you practice there?

Rollins: It was at all hours. Any time that I felt like playing.

Berg: When you came out again in 1961 I assume you felt together and ready to go in a new direction. The first album after that was appropriately entitled *The Bridge*. In my mind it's one of the landmark jazz recordings. The cohesion and togetherness of you and your colleagues—Jim Hall, Bob Cranshaw, Ben Riley—is absolutely extraordinary. Your own playing goes from hard to lyrical and everything in between. It seems that the emotional range of your music expanded greatly.

Rollins: That's possible. But to tell you the truth, I hadn't really intended to come out yet. I wasn't quite ready to come back. Certain things happened that made me have to. But the bridge was a beautiful place to play. I was also exercising, jogging back and forth on the bridge. I was in excellent shape, mentally and physically, so actually it was a fine period in my life.

After a while though, people began to say, "Well, where's Sonny, where's Sonny?" "Oh, he's on the bridge." It all ended then because it became a big deal at the time. People began to write about it and talk about me playing up there every night. That ended my little reverie.

Berg: What about your other sabbaticals?

Rollins: There was one in 1968 when I went around the world, sort of looking for myself.

Berg: What did you find? What did you learn about yourself?

Rollins: I wanted to visit the East because I had become involved in Eastern philosophy. So I was very intent on going to India. I learned a lot. It was a period that I had to go through, even though in every place you go, you find yourself there. You can't escape yourself. The main thing is to get your head together so that you can function wherever you're at, at your optimum. So what I discovered was that I still had to deal with things as they existed in the States, or wherever I might be. I had hoped that I would get a lot of esoteric secrets about life, but it didn't quite work out that way. What I did find out is that you have to deal with things wherever you are.

Berg: What things in American society have been difficult for you as an individual and as a musician?

Rollins: When I did the *Freedom Suite* album I was getting a lot of work, a lot of articles written about me, and I had a few bucks in my pocket. But I still couldn't find a place to live, where I wanted to live in New York. The places I wanted were closed to me even though I had all those articles about me and I was supposed to be such a great musician. It bugged me because I had paid a lot of dues to get to that level. So I ended up writing the *Suite* about it, and in that way expressed a little bit about how I felt, you know.

As far as the political thing goes, I guess the United States is probably better than anywhere else because it is a more open type of society. There is some interaction between different people. I've lived in different parts of the world but eventually you've got to come back to the States. You have to make it in the States. I was born here. This is home. And even though I don't want to be involved as an activist all the time out there fighting, I feel that I should be able to make it here.

But politics is a funny thing. It's very difficult to get into it because politics becomes your whole life and you become involved whether you want to or not. I would prefer to just be a musician and not be involved, but of course you can't be. You're involved by the fact of your birth.

As for the *Freedom Suite* album itself, I gained a lot of respect for Orrin Keepnews because he allowed me to do it at a time when there were no albums that I know of that put the music and the conditions of the black man together. He allowed me to do it. I don't think the other labels would have given me that freedom, so I respect him.

Berg: Since we are talking about the relationship between the artist and the record company, what sort of experiences have you had? What kind of interaction takes place between yourself and the producer and the people at the record company? How much freedom do you have?

Rollins: Well, of course, it varies from company to company. However, I have always tried to maintain complete artistic control over anything that I do so that I have the final say. That's what I have now and what I've had most of the time. Of course I've always allowed other people to become involved in what I'm doing and given in to them on certain aspects of it, you know. I'm not saying that I take the record completely from end to end. Perhaps I should and perhaps one day I will, but at this point I encourage input from other people. The final thing, however, is more or less to my liking. I have the final say as to whether it will be released or not.

Berg: I understand how other musicians make contributions but I'm still curious about influences that come from the record company. One of the reasons I ask about this is that many jazz musicians have been under increasing pressure to come up with the so-called crossover hit with a blend of jazz, rock and funk. I don't find a lot of that necessarily bad, and obviously it's given a lot of musicians wider exposure and better incomes. Nonetheless, there is tension between the forces of art and commerce, between following your own star while at the same time trying to adjust to the market and to the tastes of the consumers. What are your views on this situation?

Rollins: Well, if you play on a professional level you've got to play for people. So, you know, it's a fine line. You must reach the audience but you also must, at least I must, play up to what I think I can do. I'm not a good enough musician to play something that I don't like. I can't do it. Whatever I play, most of it is me. But you have to think about whether or not it will reach audiences and whether it will sell.

The record people, of course, are after you. They're after me now, but not in a very hard way. But the implication is there to get a record that's going to do some business. But as I said, I have complete control over the ultimate product. I think that I'll always have control because that's the type of musician I am. Anything I play is going to come out Sonny in some kind of way so I really can't do a very commercial record. So in a way I'm protected from getting in there and trying to make money.

Berg: Sonny, one of the most impressive movie scores that I've come across is your music for *Alfie*. The theme for *Alfie* works perfectly for the Michael Caine character. What was working on the film like?

Rollins: I studied the book and I studied

the character and the music was composed with that in mind. The producer of the picture thought that I was an Alfie-type of person, that I had this type of free attitude. That's what he thought when he heard my music, so it seemed to him that I would be the perfect one to capture the character. It was done in England. Aside from reading the book and so on, I saw some of the rushes before the picture was actually completed. So everyone was very much involved.

Berg: So you were brought in very early on the movie. That's quite unusual because most film composers complain that they're brought in after the film has been cut and is just about ready to go out to the theaters, which leaves them only two or three weeks to get the whole thing together. The situation with *Alfie* seems quite unique.

Rollins: Yeah. I was right in at the beginning.

Berg: Let me ask you about using material that no one else would touch, tunes like *Buttons And Bows* and *Toot, Toot, Tootsie*. I've always been fascinated with the way you take a musical "untouchable" and rework it so that it emerges into something so incredibly new and unexpected.

Rollins: Thank you. I don't know. I just hear different things. I have a wide taste and I listen to all kinds of music. I've always felt that "jazz," I'll put that in quotes, is an art form which can be applied to anything. You can use opera, everything, and make it a part of jazz, and jazz a part of it. Of course, I've heard a lot of these songs. I began going to the movies when I was quite young. So I think I got a lot of Hollywood songs from that which made an impression on me. So I'll try to use a song, an idea, regardless of where I find it.

Berg: Sonny, one aspect of your style that impresses everyone is your spontaneity and its relationship to your sense of humor with its unpredictable whimsy. What happens inside the head of Sonny Rollins when he's up there on the stand playing?

Rollins: You really want to know? Actually, I don't know because while you're performing there are so many demands being made upon you. You've got the rest of the band to communicate with and relate to. The audience is there looking and expecting something. I usually try to get into a stream of consciousness thing and forget where I am and just let things happen. This is when I think I'm at my best. But this can't happen all the time so you've got to adapt certain set things that you do, which is a drag. I try to avoid that, but when you perform every night it gets to the point where you have to plan things to a certain degree. So I do. There are certain tricks, and licks, and things that you sort of rely on to get things up to a certain level. But beyond that is where the real music starts. I can just shut my eyes and let it happen by itself.

Berg: One of the marvelous experiences is watching you perform. A tune will end, but you'll continue playing by yourself. I've heard you play for 60 minutes virtually non-stop. Even when other people are soloing, you're playing background figures, long notes, or counter melodies. Then there are the times where it appears that you suddenly decide to switch gears into another tune. How much of that is planned?

Rollins: That kind of thing is usually not planned. When I segue like that, from one tune to another, it's not planned. At that point I'm playing according to the vibes in the room, what a certain tune might call for, or

whatever. So those transitions are never really planned for. The band, though, is prepared in that they're ready for me to do the unpredictable.

Berg: You have previously mentioned that you have little love for microphones. In a club you might start at the mike, but before long you're moving back and forth across the stage. What exactly are your views on microphones?

Rollins: Microphones restrict you and I hate that. I like to be able to be free to move around. Also there are certain parts of a room which sound differently, even different parts of the bandstand give different dimensions to the music. If you are in one spot all the time, you can be heard, of course, because the microphone is there, but you lose some of the natural element, the natural sound that's in the air. So I love to move around.

Today with the electric instruments it's difficult because you have to be heard. Also, I'm playing a single-line instrument, you know. Now I've got a microphone that's attached to my horn with a length of cord that lets me move around a little bit which helps a great deal. It gives me a chance to get into whatever position sounds best, which relates to the sound waves in the room. So that's why I hate to stand in one spot and play into the microphone.

Berg: The use of electric instruments represents quite a change in your music. Instead of the classic trio, you've been working with fairly large ensembles. Why the change? Why the denser backgrounds?

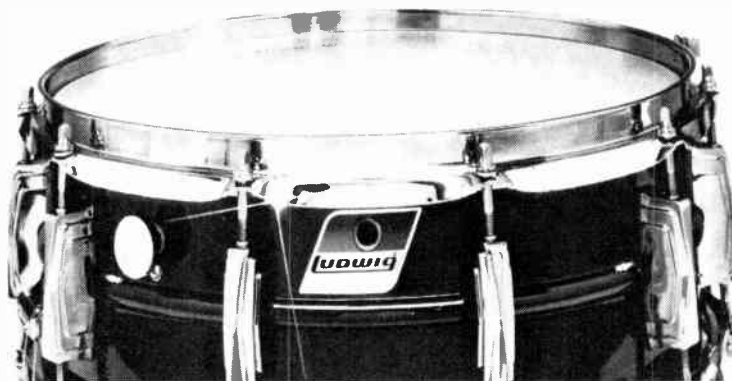
Rollins: I'm often asked why I changed to electric bass or why I have an electric guitar. The main answer is that there is a lot of energy among the people who are now playing electric instruments. A lot of the young guys are

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playing electric instruments because that's all they've heard for most of their lives. And this is a vital thing—the energy. It's not just playing with a group, because I can play with guys who play just acoustic. I've done that for a large portion of my career. But these same guys may not have the energy to play today because they're jaded.

I want guys that are fresh, that have the energy, the desire. It turns out that a lot of these guys are playing electric instruments. So that's why I play with electric instruments. It happens to be what's happening right now. It's not because I think acoustic playing is a drag because I don't. I think any kind of music has its place. But today you're more apt to find young energetic guys playing electric instruments.

Berg: Have you experimented with any of the electrical devices that are available for saxophone?

Rollins: To a certain degree. I haven't explored everything. There are some devices that are coming out now which I've been contemplating becoming involved with. I'm not against it. I do feel, though, that it still has to be the player, the guy behind the instrument. That's the main thing. If I can find something that I relate to then I would use it. I'm open to a lot of ideas, but as I said, it's still the man behind the horn. If you get to the point where it's just electric and you can't tell who's playing what, then, of course, we're into another thing.

Berg: That to me seems one of the big problems. With electric piano, for example, I find it difficult to distinguish one player from another. The players' individual acoustic styles seem to get homogenized by it. So I'm increasingly missing what you describe as the sense of the man behind the instrument. It could be a problem with the instruments themselves. Or, it could be that we're just living in a transitional period where we are attempting to absorb these new technological products into the mainstream of the music.

Rollins: I think that may be a great deal of it.

Berg: With electronics comes the consideration of volume. In improvised music it seems the greater the volume the fewer the subtleties. How do you regard the issue of volume?

Rollins: Well, I haven't gotten into a very heavy electric thing. In fact, I don't know if I will or not. But I have gotten into it to the degree that I find it threatening my actual musical feelings. You lose a lot of the subtleties. Even with a microphone you lose subtleties. But I accept that. Perhaps what you said about us learning how to use these new instruments is true. There might be a new kind of subtlety, a different thing altogether. I feel it's important for a person to get out what's inside of him, however he can do it. If it's with an electric instrument, good. An acoustic instrument, though, is more personal. But perhaps this is a time to try to blend the two. Or maybe we'll have to let go of everything and get into a completely new thing. It's hard to project.

Berg: Hopefully, the acoustic and electric approaches can coexist.

Rollins: That's what I'm trying to do. I'm trying to touch all bases and keep my ears open to whatever's happening without putting down what's been done before. It's another one of those fine lines, you know.

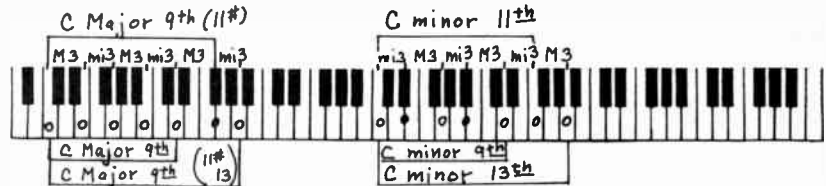
Berg: What kind of practice regimen do you do

HOW TO visualize keyboard chords Part III

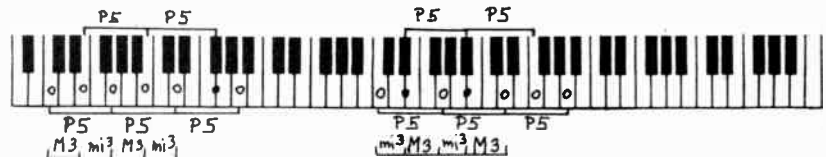
by Dr. William L. Fowler

As in Parts I and II of this article, a circle (○) indicates a white key, and a dot (●) indicates a black key in the keyboard illustrations.

For visualizing chords larger than the seventh, the method least taxing on the memory generally proves to be the best. The conjoined-third method, for example, works well only when third-types alternate, as they do in major and minor ninths, major ninths (#11), minor elevenths, major ninths (#11, 13), and minor thirteenths. In the following keyboard illustrations of these chords, the elevenths and thirteenths are bracketed as extensions of ninths.



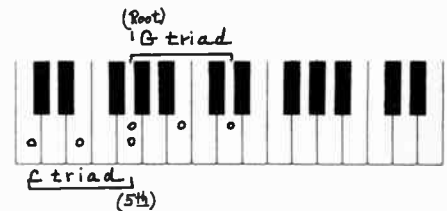
For another example, these same chords visualize easily as alternating perfect fifths whose bottom notes lie alternating thirds apart:



The other ninth, eleventh and thirteenth chord-types, though, visualize more easily by other methods.

Ninth Chords

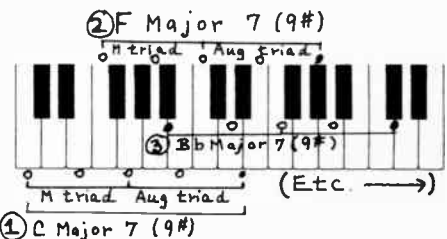
On the keyboard, ninth chords look like two conjoined triads, the top note of one (its 5th) coinciding with the bottom note (its root) of the other:



When these triads are major, minor, diminished or augmented, visualization by this method becomes most effective—only the two triad types and their relative positions need be remembered. The possible configurations of this method include:

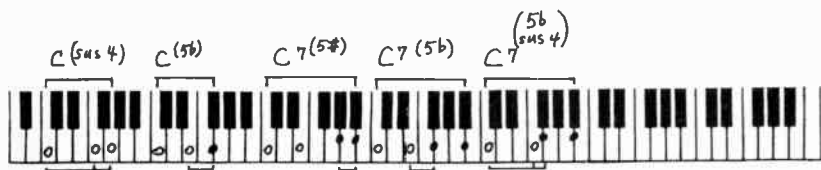
Chord:	M7 ^(9#)	M9 ^(9b)	9	7	mi9 ^(M7)	mi9 ^(9b)	mi7 ^(11#)	M7 ^(5#)	M9 ^(9b)	mi7 ^(5b)	dim7 ^(9b)	mi9 ⁽⁵⁾
Triads:	Aug M	mi dim	M	mi dim	mi dim	M	mi Aug	Aug dim	dim dim	dim	mi Aug	Aug
Notes:	D# D	D D	D D	D D	D D	D D	D# D	D D	D D	D D	D D	D (9th)
	B B	Bb B	B B	B B	B B	B B	B B	B B	B B	Bb B	Bb B	B (7th)
	G G	G G	G G	G G	G G	G G	G# G	G G	G G	Gb G	Gb G	G (5th)
	E E	E E	E E	E E	E E	E E	E E	E E	E E	E E	E E	E (3rd)
	C C	C C	C C	C C	C C	C C	C C	C C	C C	C C	C C	C (Root)

Because the root motion after a ninth chord so often moves up a perfect fourth, an efficient way to practice the above 12 chord-types consists of moving each type in turn around the cycle of fourths—C to F to Bb to Eb to Ab to Db to Gb (F#) to B to E to A to D to G to C. Moving the Major seventh (9#) type, for example, would start out like this:

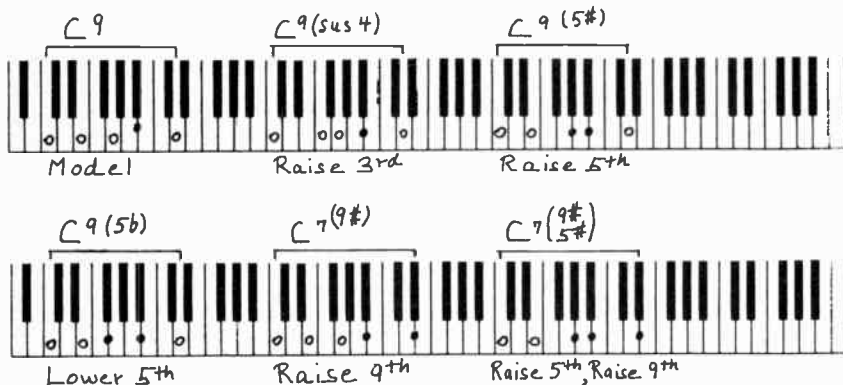


(And when the keyboard runs out, the root motion can turn around to go down by perfect fifths, equaling, in terms of root motion, going up a perfect fourth).

Sometimes the chromatic alteration of a chord note will narrow or widen the space between adjacent components so they no longer appear to be thirds:



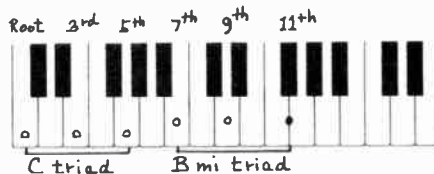
In ninth chords, suspended fourths, flatted or augmented fifths, and flatted or augmented ninths can create this situation. In such cases, the comparison method works well, if only because the chord description tells what is to be altered from a more ordinary chord-type. An efficient visualization process, therefore, would be first to visualize the ordinary chord, then to make alterations according to the chord description. Here are several examples:



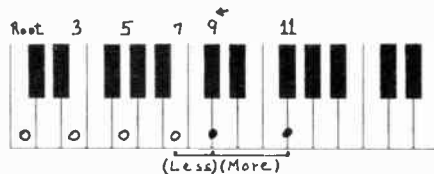
As of now, the most popular ninth chords include those types identified above as M9, mi9, 7(9b), 9, and 7(9#).

Eleventh Chords

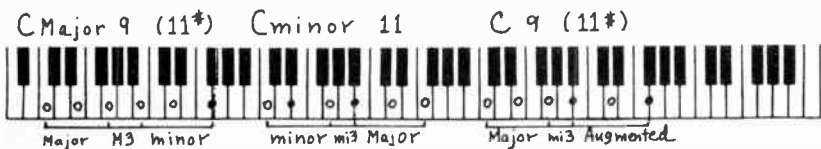
Because they consist of six notes, many eleventh chords look like two triads a third apart:



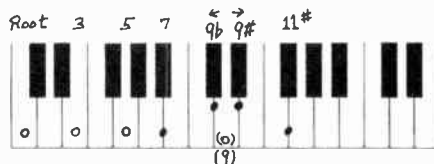
Again, though, alteration of components may widen or narrow internal spacings to more than a major third or to less than a minor third:



Few eleventh-chord types currently enjoy widespread favor. Those most likely to be encountered include Major 9 (11#), minor 11, 9 (11#), to be visualized as separated triads:

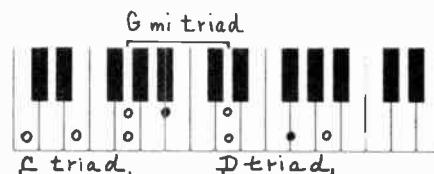


plus 9b (11#) and 9# (11#), to be visualized as altered 9 (11#) chords:



Thirteenth Chords

Because they consist of seven notes, many thirteenth chords look like three conjoined triads:



you have?

Rollins: Well the best practice for me is performing. Now I don't do a complete year-round thing. I might play for a few months and then take a couple months off. So when I'm not performing I've got to practice a certain amount to keep my chops up, to just keep them firm. But performing is the ideal form of practicing for me. It keeps you up, emotionally up. It's hard to stay in a room by yourself and get into it. So I've discovered that the best way of keeping up on your horn is to perform.

Berg: I think it's especially difficult for horn players or single-note instrumentalists to keep a disciplined practice schedule because, without other people, it's like playing in a vacuum. Pianists and guitarists are probably at somewhat of an advantage because of their instrument's ability to simultaneously play melody and harmony.

Rollins: That might be true. Of course in my case, I like to play by myself, even when I'm playing with a group. So I might exclude myself from what you said because I like to accompany myself even though I am playing a single-line instrument. But I agree with you in general. It's difficult for a guy to play a horn all alone and really get up to it. So I practice my rudiments because it keeps my lip strong and then really let go when I'm playing with the group where I can try a lot of things.

Berg: Sonny, what's your approach to composition?

Rollins: Well, it depends. There are times when I compose from the piano, other times when I compose from my head. Each of those is different, you know. I sit down and play chords and I get ideas. Other times I compose on my horn. So it's a different thing each time with me.

Berg: Does a new tune come out of playing with musical materials or does inspiration come from something extramusical like a person, a feeling, an emotion, a place you've visited?

Rollins: This whole area is very difficult for me to articulate because I think all those things are related. In terms of actually putting down a piece of music though, there are different ways to approach it. Sometimes it's chords first, another time a whole melody comes to my mind. There are also devices which I haven't gotten into, like using a set of notes which you can change around. I haven't gotten into this but I know it can be done. Usually, I hear something first. A germ of an idea comes to me and from that I develop it and try to make it into a complete idea. But there are many ways to approach it.

Berg: As for future plans, I know that you have several American and foreign tours coming up. But in regard to recording, what new things are on tap? Does the new album follow the wake of *The Cutting Edge* and *Nucleus* as far as using electric instruments and rock elements?

Rollins: In a way it is more similar to the last one, *Nucleus*. It has more electric instruments and is sort of in that fusion direction. But I'm still playing myself. I guess you'll have to hear it and judge for yourself.

Berg: Sonny, any closing comments about the future?

Rollins: Well, the future is bright and music is a wonderful thing to be involved in. I've always liked to play. It's good when you can make a living doing what you like to do. And my health has held up reasonably well, so I'm looking forward to putting some more air into my horn.

orchestration. I've learned a hell of a lot, and it's essential that I know how to write and construct every type of music possible because I don't want to be linked to just playing in a band all my life."

Killgo had some unusual opportunities for a child musician. "My first semi-professional gigs happened shortly after I began playing drums, when I was nine, ten years old. After I'd been playing six months I got to sit in with Sonny Stitt at the Bohemian Caverns, which housed practically all the jazz in Washington. My father was in a group produced by Cannonball, the JFK Quintet, and I began hanging out. . . . One time, when Miles Davis' band was in town, Miles grabbed me by the ears and asked me to sit in, and everybody said 'let him sit in.' So Miles sat me up on the stage, and Tony Williams, who was 17 at the time, gave me a stick and I started playing. For maybe a hot second, Miles didn't know it was me, and then he turned around and said, 'Oh, wow, look at this cat.' I played the rest of the set out, two tunes. Ron Carter wasn't there—it was Reggie Workman on bass, Wayne Shorter, Herbie and Tony."

Keith also sat in at various times with Stan Getz, Eddie Harris, Sonny Stitt, Sonny Rollins and McCoy Tyner. He describes the '60s, when "I came into the scene," as a time "when the whole New York thing was happening, and when Blue Note was putting out all those albums from which I learned so much. Those records were so informative, they explained the music. Of course, James Brown was happening then, too, and so was that heavy rock thing, and with my peers there wasn't a choice, everyone was dancing to r&b or hard rock or whatever. So when I came to Howard and joined Donald's band, and then we became the Blackbyrds, an all-student band, it wasn't really that much of a transition, because I had never not heard that kind of music."

As a teenager, at one time Keith had a band with both Joe Hall and Orville Saunders. "Joe and Orville and I were really crazy. We listened to Grand Funk, Hendrix, Zeppelin, along with James Brown, Gladys Knight, and Miles and Trane—and we played all this music in our band, which we called Second Stage. I was one of the youngest jazz artists in Washington at this time, I used to work at a church, St. Michael's, twice a month. Once we played at a divorce party on a glass-bottomed boat."

In 1971, Killgo played in the Joe Henderson band that also included Stanley Clarke and Woody Shaw. Then he joined the Byrd septet that soon evolved into the Blackbyrds. Today, onstage, Killgo sings many of the group's lead parts while he plays the drums. He might be the most natural showman of the five (not including Byrd, who has plenty of stagy tricks up his sleeve but prefers to dispense them to the band rather than directly to the audience). Still, he's looking forward to the day when the Blackbyrds expand, particularly if that means hiring a lead singer: "I'm not a true-to-life singer, I get hoarse. After three gigs my throat is gone. I got a teacher to learn how to breathe properly, but my throat is too sensitive, prone to weather changes. There are ways to compensate, though, like being into health foods, taking care of your body, not drinking or using drugs, all that. I don't eat much meat, I try to keep my body as cleansed as possible, keep the trash out of it. But everybody goes crazy now and then. And I

42 □ down beat

Again, chromatic alteration of components can upset triad visualization. And again, few thirteenth-chord types find current favor. Of these, the types which visualize as conjoined triads include:

<u>Chord:</u>	M ¹³ (11 [#])	M ¹³ (11 [#] / ₉ [#])	mi ¹³	mi ¹³ (MA ⁷)	mi ¹³ (11 [#])
<u>Triads:</u>	M	dim	mi	mi	M
	M	Aug	mi	M	mi
	M	M	mi	mi	M
<u>Notes:</u>	A	A	A	A	A (13 th)
	F [#]	F [#]	F	F	F [#] (11 th)
	D	D [#]	D	D	D (9 th)
	B	B	B ^b	B	B ^b (7 th)
	G	G	G	G	G (5 th)
	E	E	E ^b	E ^b	E (3 rd)
	C	C	C	C	C (Root)

And the two whose altered ninths break up triad visualization look as follows:

In each of these currently-favored eleventh and thirteenth chord-types the component mix avoids a major third combined with a natural eleventh. When the third is minor, the eleventh is natural: When the third is major, the eleventh is raised. And to further limit the choice of effective six or seven note chords, a combination of lowered fifth plus raised eleventh in the same chord looks and sounds like an octave. So do minor third plus raised ninth and raised fifth plus lowered thirteenth:

The practice procedures outlined for ninth chords work equally well for both eleventh and thirteenth chords.

Inversions and Voicings

All the keyboard illustrations thus far have shown the root at the bottom (root position) and the components in numerical sequence (close voicing). Smoothness in bass lines and variety in harmonic textures, though, require inversions and open voicings to be mixed into chord progressions.

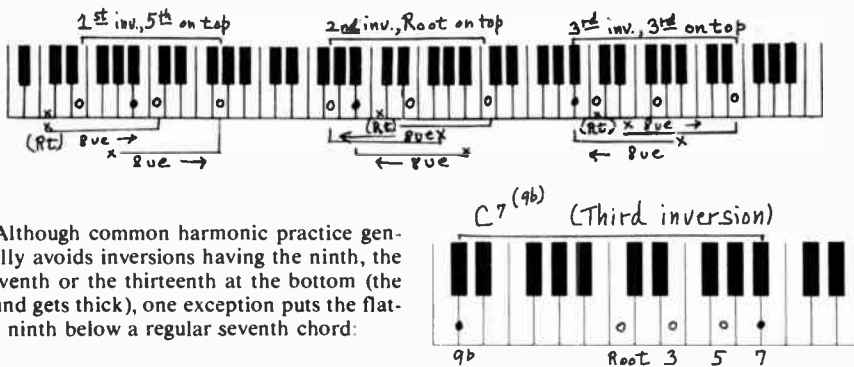
Inversions and open positions both visualize easily when the individual notes of a known root-position, close-voiced chord move up or down by octave.

Root position close voicings become inverted close voicings when the bottom note moves up:

Root position close voicings become root position open voicings when an inner note (or two) moves up:

Root position close voicings become inverted open voicings when an inner note moves down:

The visualization of prescribed top notes plus prescribed inversions combines the above octave movements:



Although common harmonic practice generally avoids inversions having the ninth, the eleventh or the thirteenth at the bottom (the sound gets thick), one exception puts the flat-ninth below a regular seventh chord:

Other exceptions depend upon individual musical taste.

do love beer."

Talking about his music, Killgo stressed the idea of change: "One groove gets old—your groove can be your rut. We consciously listen to our music very critically, very objectively. I don't want to play the cliché drum thing, like Harvey Mason and those cats. And if I sit down and write tunes for an album, I might write nine tunes in nine different keys."

One of Donald Byrd's recent amendments in the group's stage presentation was to outfit everybody in matching tuxedos; another was a suggestion to Keith that he take a drum solo while he "introduces" each piece of his drum-kit. "My cymbals," Killgo recites, "are Cindy, Sarah and Sally. The hi-hat is Hattie, snare drum is Sandy, and the tom-toms I call the Tommy Sisters—Tina, Tara, Tiny and Flo. Beulah is the bass drum." These ladies were once played by none other than Philly Joe Jones: "He sat in with us at Just Jazz last year. It was smokin'. He played one of our current disco tunes, *Change (Makes You Want To Hustle)*. People were dancing all over the club."

Bassist Joe Hall is tall, suave and collected. At 24, he is the oldest Blackbyrd and was the first to become a musical associate of Donald Byrd.

"After I transferred from Maryland U. to Howard, Donald heard me in a stage band rehearsal and hired me to do some lecture/demonstrations around town. Then he asked me to come on the road—the first gig was in Detroit, with Joe Chambers on drums, Barney Perry on guitar and Allan Barnes on saxophone—and Kevin Toney was there. We played strictly jazz from his previous (pre-*Black Byrd*) albums, so I played my acoustic bass."

Hall owns a Czech double bass as well as his two electrics, an Alembic, "similar to the one Stanley Clarke plays, except his is a short-scale neck and mine is long," and a Rickenbacker. "I like the longer scale because it keeps my hands in stretched condition for the upright. I used to play a Gibson but I found it too small, very cramped. We haven't delved into much acoustic work on our records so far, but I'd like to on the next album. That'd be a different color, some background arco stuff."

Hall began studying piano at age seven (his mother also was a pianist and graduated from Howard as a vocal major). He got his first bass at 13, an electric, and the acoustic followed at age 17. "First I had played a guitar, when I was ten, but I found my ear had an inclination for the lower strings, the lower sounds. As far as the electric bass, the reason I never went

for a Fender is that I like the sound to ring—I was always inspired by Ron Carter and I wanted to hear that upright sound, the darker sound.

"I've listened to all bass players no matter what kind of music, but especially to Mingus, Oscar Pettiford, Paul Chambers, Ron Carter..." What about recent players? "Miroslav. I was amazed when I first heard him, his clarity. He showed me a couple of things once when Weather Report was playing in DC. His father was a bass player and his uncle a bass maker—he's been playing since about four or five. Then of course there's Stanley Clarke, Scott LaFaro, Peacock, and of course Gary Karr, the classical player.

"One of my teachers at Howard, Bill Hawthorne, taught me in the Czech manner—there are Spanish, Italian, English, German and Czech styles of fingering. He said the Germans and French each use a different bow style, that the Italians are more concerned with a big, full sound even more than intonation, whereas the Czech thing is more speed, intonation, exactly the note."

No article on The Blackbyrds would be complete without some words of wisdom from Papa Donald Byrd. According to the good Dr.: "People need to realize that everybody contributes and that nobody has the last word. Like Miles said, 'The music has no direction, it's like the universe—always spinning.' Some guys are gravitatin' in and other dudes are getting spun off, but it's moving all the time and nobody comes in and puts the brakes on the shit, not Charlie Parker or anybody else..."

"What I'm trying to do now is set another pace in a different direction, and that's economical. I've seen too many black musicians suffer too much..."

"The major issue in academia today is making money. I'm dispelling all those classical myths and breaking down the barriers. Students want to get into a career that will make them money..."

"All of the Motown acts that are out there after 20 years, Betty Gordy did a number on them. That's why you got the Temps today, Four Tops, Miracles, Gladys Knight, Spinners. Gordy taught 'em everything, and I admire him for doing it. And I'm groomin' the Blackbyrds like Berry Gordy..."

"Now I can understand the problems that Louis Armstrong and a lot of traditional musicians met. They were trained as musicians, not as businessmen. But now I'm a big businessman, so I treat it like a big business..."

"Music is taught all wrong today, by a

bunch of purists—when we're dealing with a new technological age. Paper and pencil are an anachronism. I think we should use computers to teach music, hooked up to a keyboard and a video monitor..."

"The music industry has to be revolutionized. Criticism of electronic music is an old argument. The same shit happened when the saxophone came in. When I went to school you had to play the clarinet. The guitar is as old as the violin, but you can't get a degree in it. Maybe the synthesizer will be introduced into the schools in the year 2020..."

"Stravinsky was a rich mother—He was a lawyer. A year or two before he died, people asked him to donate his scores to a museum, and he said, 'Donate my ass!' Then he put the shit up for sale and got three million dollars. Said he needed money—he was 90 years old and couldn't even move! But when he died, he had a Modigliani hanging in his house, a Picasso, everybody. I loved it, I said, 'Bravo! Hell, yeah, take it all...' "

"In the last four years, Blackbyrds Productions has generated more than ten million dollars..."

"The Blackbyrds are an experiment that worked."

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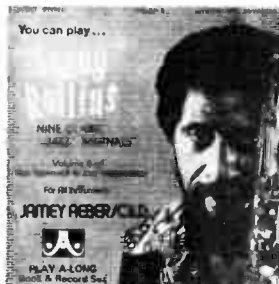
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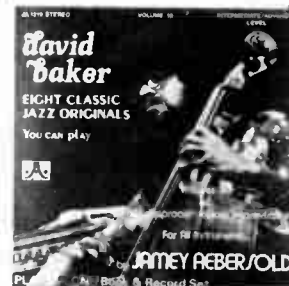


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RUSH

continued from page 18

ing occasional college appearances, rarely happens in his own country. The language barrier is a small one. "They seem to sense what you're doing anyway. They know if you're messing up or throwing off. In a way it's like here because a lot of them speak English."

As far as dearth of recognition in his own time goes, Otis says, "I never thought about that too much. I just want to do something now, forget the later. I want something to happen now."

"It's a terrible thing that a musician has to die before he can become alive musicwise. One of the artists dies and then they start building up from that. 'Hey, he's dead, let's play his records.' I say give me my flowers while I'm living. Let me see what's happening. I've had flowers when Steve and myself and the group [the Jimmy Dawkins Band] went to Japan. I never saw so many flowers before in my life. The whole airport was covered with flowers, with different artists' names, a very warm welcome. They had our baggage covered with flowers, the car we were in was full of flowers, at the gate people were standing all around me with flowers. It was strange."

Otis refuses to predict the future. "I don't know about that, man. I'm trying to make something out of what I'm doing. I'm going to keep at it for awhile and if I can't, I'll do the best I can on the next thing. I don't know what

that would be. It's hard to explain it, and it's hard to answer that question. But I'm going to keep on playing and maybe I'll come up with something that will sell. Keep trying it for awhile and if not, just like everybody else, I'll go into something else. I'm just trying to get the point across that I've got the blues." db

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NEW YORK

New School: National Jazz Ensemble, director *Chuck Israels*, guest *Tommy Flanagan* (4/2). **Surprise: John Bunch** (Mon. & Tues.); *Frank Owens* (Wed. & Thurs.); *David Daniels* (Fri. & Sat.). **Hopper's: Joe Williams** (thru 3/26). **King's Palace** (Brooklyn): Bi-weekly tribute to various artists by *Harold Ousley*. **Surf Maid: Pianists** nightly. **Folk City: Albert Dailey** and friends (Sun. 4-8 PM). **Arthur's: Mabel Godwin**, piano. **On The Air** (WNYC-FM, 93.9FM): American Popular Song with host *Alec Wilder*. *Margaret Whiting* Sings *Arthur Schwartz/Richard Whiting* (week of 3/27); Songs of *Tony Bennett* (Part II, week of 4/3/77). **Half Note: Lee Konitz/Ted Brown Quintet** (Mon. & Tues.). **Pip's Lounge** (Clifton, N.J.): *Matrix* nonet

(Mon.) **Larson's: Ellis Larkins** **Westchester Premier Theatre** (Tarrytown, N.Y.): *Ben Vereen, Marilyn McCoo & Billy Davis* (3/30-4/3). **One Station Plaza** (Bayside, Queens): *Ted Pittzecker & Brian Torff* (Tues.). **Village Vanguard: Sonny Fortune** (3/22-27). **Three Sisters** (West Paterson, N.J.): *Lee Konitz* (4/1 & 2); *Vic Renicola & Teddy Zembra w/ Renee Craig* (Sun.); *Dave Tesar Quartet* (Mon.); *Wild Fire* (Tues.); *Jazz Confirmation* (Wed.); *North Jersey Jazz Co.* (Thurs.). **Creative Music Studio** (Woodstock, N.Y.): Spring Session (opens 4/4). **Studio Wis: Warren Smith** Composer's Workshop Ensemble (Mon.). **Mannes College Of Music: Jack Reilly Trio** Workshop (4/4-7). **Livingston College** (New Brunswick, N.J.): *Tommy Flanagan Trio* (4/5). **Rutgers University** (Newark, N.J.): *Tommy Flanagan Trio* (4/6). **Bottom Line: Rolin Williamson** and *Norman Blake* (3/22). **Storyville: Jazz Interactions** presents *Hamiet Bluiett Big Band & Andrew Cyrille Quartet* (3/20); *James Spaulding Quintet* (3/17); tribute to *Dizzy Gillespie* (4/3). **Ladies Fort: Live loft jazz: Archie Shepp** (4/1); *Joe Lee Wilson* and *Bond Street* (4/2); *Monty Waters Big Band* (4/3); *Bob Reid* and the *Emergency Sound* (4/4); *Earl Cross* (4/5); *Sheila Jordan* (4/7). **Windows On The World** (World Trade Center): *John Scully Trio*. **Smucker's** (Brooklyn): *Chris Rush* and *Garland*



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