

down beat®

THE CONTEMPORARY MUSIC MAGAZINE

ORNETTE COLEMAN

An Interview

BLUES GUITARISTS

Fenton Robinson

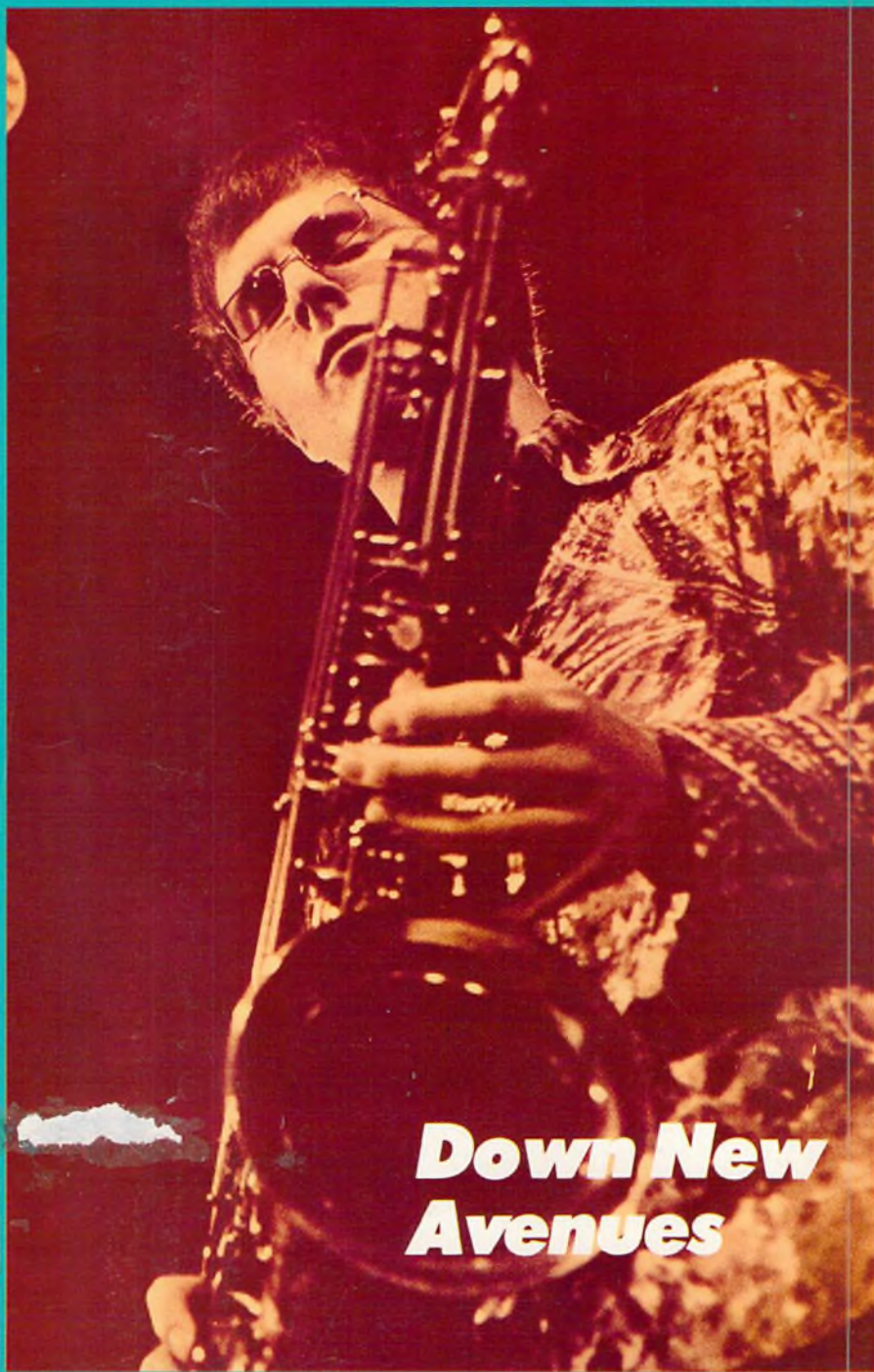
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Jimmy Johnson

STEELY DAN
Regenerative
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ORNETTE

Harmolodic master explores the perils of self-expression

In January, 1981 Ornette Coleman was signed by producer/director/writer Josef Bogdanovich to score a feature film, *Boxoffice*, which stars Eddie Constantine, Edie Adams, Monica Lewis, Carol Cortne, Robin Clarke, and Aldo Ray.

According to Coleman, *Boxoffice* is basically "a very human story [of] a young woman who's expressing a desire to be an individual, and at the same time there's the inner plight about the truly human conditions of caste and quality of living . . . you have these two plights going on, and that is one of the things that really got me involved, because I like multiple expressions. I have this theory that I write my music in those kind of images. So when I saw this, I stopped everything and started working on Josef's film."

Bogdanovich (no relation to Peter) said Ornette's contribution was writing "an underscore that deals with the dialogue and with the concept of climaxes" pushing them "into the light" and adding punch to the plotline.

"The music in the film is used as actual dialogue, more than just background for the track," said Coleman. "There is music already there representing the performances of what you see. That music is really the dialogue for what you see, but it's not the sound of how you relate to the dialogue. The sound that relates to the dialogue is the sound that I am writing."



JAMES HAMILTON

COLEMAN ■

Coleman spent most of January and February in Los Angeles scoring the picture, prior to leaving for New York, where he recorded the soundtrack with a specially-assembled symphony orchestra and jazz ensemble. The following conversation took place when Coleman met with Leonard Feather shortly before completing work on the score.

LF: I'd like to go all the way back to the time you first went East, and there was all that controversy; even a lot of very respected musicians—people that you and I both respect—had very negative things to say. In retrospect, can you see any validity or justification for that kind of reaction? Was it just that your music was too inaccessible by the standards of those days?

OC: I often say that when I left Texas (I was about 22, 23), I hadn't had the experience of sitting down with another black person and having an open conversation. I had that experience when I first came to California. So I wasn't in any frame of mind to think these things were negative; I thought they were all experiences that I was having. I always tell everyone I have no enemies.

LF: I don't think any of the criticism was personal, it wasn't putting you down as a musician. It was just a negative emotional reaction, wasn't it?

OC: I had worse problems in the South, but they were more racial than artistic. To answer your question, I'm still the same way, I'm just having an experience with those that are in the field that I am, and I'm just trying to be successful in what I'm trying to achieve, and I know everyone else is. Therefore, you have these experiences. We all want the same thing—success—and I don't want to say anything negative about anyone in order to project myself. That doesn't make any sense.

LF: When you say success, that could mean either of two things: it could mean artistic success or it could mean commercial success—or a combination. Which do you mean? Can't you be successful without making a lot of

money? Just being successful to yourself?

OC: Oh yes, both those concepts exist and basically they exist in the form of time and results. But the success I'm really concerned about is the human success that will allow the person to adjust to either one of these categories and will get him the results he's looking for. If a person is only looking for financial results, then he does the thing that will do that. But how do you find out what these results are if you don't have the experience with that same audience? What I mean is the people that buy your records, go in to hear you . . . if they buy somebody else's records more and are buying yours less, they're still supporting that same person.

I basically think they're one and the same. You take a person that's born tomorrow, 20 years from today that person will discover something that you've done—that I've done—and if he's going to be turned on, that's going to be his thing for the moment. That's always going to exist; there's always someone you're going to mean more to than someone else. And the person you want to mean more to is the one you think has the most artistic relationship to you.

That's why I realize that these things we're talking about are the subject of ideas, and those ideas are carried out through the relationship of who is working with you. In my case, I haven't had any support to justify my artistic or financial status. But musically I haven't tried to discriminate in that support. But I think they're the same.

LF: You mean artistic and financial success are the same?

OC: Yes; it's like love. If you found a girl that you liked and you see something in someone else that you think is more attractive, you're not going to leave her and go to the other person. You're going to stay with the person you feel is for you. Maybe there should be something created that's even higher than artistic or financial success. I mean some other way of describing what that means to another human being. Is there another way you can go beyond financial and artistic success?

LF: Yes, inward gratification, wouldn't you say? Knowing that what you've done is what you've intended.

OC: When I was in Morocco, in 1972, the musicians had such a powerful sound that they could cure and heal sicknesses. On the Rif Mountain, there aren't any facilities, but those same musicians, if they were to go get a manager and agent and go on the road, they would just turn the world upside down. The point I'm trying to make is that in this particular culture—the American culture—the problem of being successful is based upon who likes what you do and how much the person cares about what you're doing.

That's the norm that we live by, and to me that norm becomes stagnant only when the particular job you're trying to do makes you feel inferior or left out. A case in point would be Thelonious Monk—the most living, creative pianist I know in the area of the music I like called “bebop.” But you don't hear his records on the air. So what I'm saying is that this isn't because he hasn't had financial success and public success (he's appeared on the cover of *Time*). Therefore when you say are they the same, they are the same, [the question is:] what group are you working with to achieve the particular quality that you're trying to find?

Usually jazz musicians are the last ones to find financial support because jazz has always been such a masculine expression, that you usually haven't had one man go in and try to make another man wealthy from it. In my case, I've yet to find the lawyer that wants me to have what his expertise could get me. And I can understand that, because that's the way business is. If you have something you already know, and all you need is something else to project it, and someone else has that, there's always this conflict between making these things exist.

LF: In this country it seems that you have to deal with a certain ingrained anti-intellectualism on the part of the public.

OC: Yes, that's true; the thing in America that I've experienced is that you find more young people being able to do adult things. I had a friend, a little

kid, who was an illustrator and he told me he was very disappointed because he couldn't ever become as famous as this other illustrator while he was alive. I said, "Why?" and he said, "Because he's alive." The kid was only about seven and he was worried about not being as successful as he could be because the person was already in the place he wanted to be.

LF: There's only room for one . . .

OC: That's the point; in America you can know exactly who you would like to pattern yourself after and what you'd like to do, but the moment you find something you can do that outdates that—or even to make it better, so to speak—it's no longer the same idea any more, it's a different thing. And every person that challenges the heart of modern expression is going to come up with that problem. I guess it must be a healthy problem. It could be even more healthy, if a solution could be made where every person could express his consciousness to its fullest without outdating the particular information he's gotten to do that—or to enhance it. The world would be 10 times more productive.

Education will do it, but education hasn't done it. In my case, when I was in Texas as a little kid I never heard a symphony orchestra. The only time I heard jazz was when some musicians got stranded, and I went down and heard them playing—in the case of Lester Young and other guys. But when I first started playing music it was to support my family.

In a society where all the things that you're capable of achieving, or are interested in, if that information is cut off from you, you find it somewhere else—like many persons always remind me of the fact that I'm a self-taught musician, and they're always saying, oh, you might be better off because of this and that. But basically I'm not better off; it's just that it's taken me a longer time to get the approval of those who already knew these things that I had to teach myself.

LF: It's no real advantage to be self-taught?

OC: Not at all. It's harder, because the people who have gone and constructed their thoughts in the manner it should be done, had the first preference of the privileges, so to speak. I'm self-taught only due to the fact that I stayed in Texas and discrimination was still a big issue there. I wanted to play music because I found a way of doing it. In fact, I found I could play music very easily, so I decided, oh, I'll do this.

LF: Don't you think, looking back, that if you had gone to New York instead of California in the 1950s, you might have been ahead?

OC: I went to New York in 1945 when I was 15; I had an auntie there who was

married to Doc Cheatham. I had just gotten a horn, and I saw Dizzy Gillespie's band at the Apollo. But that was zoot suit time, I was still a teenager, and those guys were beyond my time, so I got nostalgic for Texas and went back.

LF: You mean to tell me you couldn't relate to bebop?

OC: No, no, I couldn't . . . by then I was playing dance music and I'd already heard some good guys down in Texas—when I heard bebop, it just sounded like natural dance music. So I said, "These guys sound really nice, but Red [Connors] and those guys I like better."

When I got back to Texas, I was playing alto and for some reason I couldn't get a job—on alto you had to play in Lawrence Welk-type bands. But with tenor you played in rhythm & blues bands. So I got me a tenor and started playing in rhythm & blues bands. Then I heard a jam session one night, and I wanted to play with them so bad. But all the tunes I knew were just rhythm tunes. I was so disappointed I said to myself, "I've got to learn some of these other songs." So then I started learning bebop. My favorite composers were—and still are—Thelonious Monk, Charlie Parker, and Bud Powell. I learned all their songs and thought—still think—it's a great music.

LF: What led you from Texas to California?

OC: I finished high school and, as I said, I was playing with dance bands. One night I was playing and there was a big fight—some woman cut up a man—and I got so disturbed, I said, "I don't want to play this kind of music any more . . . I want to play bebop." I wanted to come to New York, but I didn't know anybody there—my auntie had left. Well, Red Connors had gotten an offer to go to California with the Pee Wee Crayton rhythm & blues band, and he needed an alto. So I said, "Yes, I'll play the alto."

When I got to California, all the guys in the band got drafted, the band broke up and I was stranded—10 years I was stranded here, in Los Angeles.

I went and met Charlie Parker on 8th St. and Normandie Ave., he was playing at a place called Tiffany's. I listened to him and, oh man, it was just so obvious what he was doing, and I understood it so well . . . and not only that, I was playing exactly the way I'm playing now, only better. I call it better because I was a vegetarian, I wasn't on any drugs—I was just pure music. And I had this idea that if someone liked music, they would offer you a chance to be heard.

So, I went to hear Charlie Parker with Chet Baker and Russ Freeman . . . and people were standing in line. The thing

about it that was disappointing was that he was only playing standards; he wasn't playing any of the songs I had learned, probably because it was a pickup band. Anyway, they put me out of the club because I was sitting there and couldn't afford to buy any drinks. So Charlie Parker came out and started talking to me. He said "Somebody told me you're a saxophone player," and I said, "Yeah . . . I like those songs you write." And he was treating me just like any person would treat a fan.

I was there with a bass player, and someone was going to bring a horn—I didn't have a horn then—and let me sit in with him, but I never got a chance. I went to where he was staying that night, and he said he was busy with some business. But the thing about it was I didn't want to have him hear how I played, I wanted him to hear what I was trying to play, because I figured he would understand. That's why I wanted to play for him, not just to show him I was another saxophone player that could play like him.

So I didn't get to play for him, but I was so enthusiastic about meeting a musician of his caliber and talking with him . . . the same way that John Coltrane and I used to get together when he was studying with me. But the point I want to make is that all those heroes—like for instance Bud Powell, I met him, and also with Monk—they were no longer the caliber of musicianship when I met them in person. For instance, when I met Bud, he was eating spaghetti with a spoon, his mind had just deteriorated . . . and Monk wasn't playing.

What I'm saying is that maybe that sound aura will come back—not that it really left—but maybe that unison will catch on again, and we'll start feeling that same thing about musicians. This role that I've had where people have said that I'm different, strange, is maybe only because of the fact that if more people were trying to express themselves as sincere in what they're trying to do, it would be like that, because it was like that during bebop.

LF: Yes, there was the same kind of opposition in the 1940s as you had in the 1960s. The reason I brought up California is that in the 1950s it was almost as segregated as Texas. Whereas if you'd gone to New York, you wouldn't have had to deal with it.

OC: That's exactly what I'm saying. What would happen to me in the '50s, is I'd go out to the San Fernando Valley and sit in with, say, Gerry Mulligan. I was staying in Watts then, and I'd have to hitchhike home. And every time the cops would stop me, make me assemble my horn and play it to prove it was mine. Only because I'd be coming out of territory where they wouldn't expect a black person to be. That's the only



TOM COPI

wound I have about California.

They'd have sessions at six o'clock in the morning in L.A. and I'd get up and go to them. I finally stopped doing that because they'd never let me play. So I said to myself, "I think I'll just study, try and find out why I'm being rejected. My instincts tell me I'm doing something right, and everyone else is saying it's not fitting with them, I want to see what it is." So I started analyzing the way I was playing. You know, in my first record I just based it on straight bebop, the changes. After that I thought that would show a person how to do

that. But even that didn't do it; musicians would still say "Oh, no, the guy plays weird."

I tried to get a record date in New York with Pacific Records, but the prejudice . . . the thing I didn't understand, that took me a long time to understand about racialism and poverty was that I thought all poverty was racialism. It was only after I came out of Texas that I realized racialism and poverty are two different worlds. Since I was already a minority, and coming from a poverty-stricken environment, when I saw a black person being

treated without any of these problems, I assumed he didn't have them. So when I wanted to respond to him as just another warm person, I realized that he couldn't be as warm to me because he thought something was going to be threatened if he showed some kindness or was interested in something I was trying to do.

I went to Eric Dolphy's house once, and he treated me very foreign, like he didn't really have time to put up with me, but because we were musicians, he would. Later on, all that changed; after I got to New York City, he became a very warm and close friend of mine.

But I'm saying that in California, the black musicians—one popular alto player was Frank Morgan, and there was George Newman, and Eric, lots of guys that were very accepted in the L.A. music scene—were all being very negative to me because I didn't have any knowledge of how you're supposed to act in a large city like this. I just assumed that because you played music, it didn't offer you any other privileges.

LF: As far as you can generalize, were the white musicians any more receptive to you than the black musicians out here?

OC: Well, the white musicians were into bebop, so I could play with them. It was only when I would, say, try to play a song I wrote myself, then I'd have the same problem with everybody. Finally, I just stopped doing that, I just played bebop. Los Angeles itself was off limits; I had to go into the San Fernando Valley just to have that experience. I hear it's a little better now. [everyone laughs]

LF: Red Mitchell played an important part, didn't he?

OC: Red was the first to let me sit in one night, at the Haig. He had James Clay with him. Red told Les Koenig of Contemporary Records about me, and Les called me for a record date. I made that record in 1958, and I'm still paying for it—at least that's what Contemporary says. No artist royalties.

My own feelings are that I didn't know how to get the best of whatever I was trying to do at the time. For so many years in Los Angeles, I would always be in a situation where I was helpless. I couldn't defend myself because for so long I didn't know anyone; I didn't have that group help. Those experiences are what I remember of my 10 years in Los Angeles—I got a wonderful son out of it, that's the best thing that happened to me—but you're right, if I'd have gone to New York I could have saved five or 10 years of my life.

LF: Did you make any friends out here at all?

OC: Not until about 1958, I met Red Mitchell . . . but I'd been here since

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blues in TRANSITION

BY LARRY BIRNBAUM

To casual listeners, as well as many aficionados and even scholars, the blues has assumed an almost mystical aura. Timeless and eternal, the blues is thought to spring from some ancient reservoir of "pure" Afro-American culture. Diverted from this supposedly unpolluted source, it has been debased by unscrupulous promoters and popularizers, so that the "real" bluesman is scarcely able to make his music heard.

Like most stereotypes, this superficial conception contains elements of truth, but in reality the blues is neither as pure nor as venerable as some of its proponents would like to believe. Frequently regarded as an ancestor of jazz, the blues is actually the younger of the two, having emerged around the turn of the century from an earlier tradition of reels, work songs, Child ballads, and other folk forms. As the guitar supplanted the banjo and fiddle, the strict 12-bar pattern gradually came to dominate the secular music of the rural black South, but never to the complete exclusion of more conventional material.

Throughout its history, the blues has co-existed and interacted with jazz, country & western, and popular musics. Even deep-dyed Delta bluesmen like Robert Johnson and his fellow Son House protege Muddy Waters performed ballads and jump-songs. Big band jazz sounds rubbed off on B.B. King and his Memphis contemporaries, just as rock & roll and rhythm & blues helped shape the evolution of the modern electric style.

Chicago has been a blues center since the 1920s, an urban crucible where raw talent from various parts of the South has been blended and refined into a cohesive synthesis. During the postwar blues boom, newly arriving migrants like Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf conquered the national r&b charts with their novel amplified

approach. Since that time, urban blacks have largely disavowed their country roots while whites have discovered what they realize are the roots of British rock. Bluesmen today find themselves performing and recording for an increasingly white, college-educated audience even as they attempt to reach out again toward their former outlet, commercial black radio.

The modern bluesman cuts an ironic figure as he tries to reconcile his personal aspirations with the contradictory demands and expectations of his disparate listeners. Fortunately, those few dedicated professionals who manage to withstand the grinding years of blues apprenticeship tend to be among the most skillful and inventive of contemporary popular musicians. Masters of the blues by virtue of heritage and experience, they continue to adapt to changing times, walking an ever-shifting path between tradition and transition.

Fenton Robinson, Lonnie Brooks, and Jimmy Johnson are three outstanding and, in many ways, typical representatives of the current blues generation. All three sing and play guitar, and although they are often categorized as "young bluesmen," none is less than 45 years old. All were born in the deep South and began to lead bands in the Chicago area in the early '60s, learning the virtue of versatility at a time when whites had yet to discover urban blues and blacks were already becoming sated. All started playing at white clubs and colleges in the '70s, moving on to overseas tours and internationally distributed albums on independent Chicago labels. Each declares that his goal is to reach out to the widest possible audience, yet each maintains a singular, though mutually related, approach to singing, playing, and composing that reflects his own background and stylistic preference.

Robinson, the youngest of the three, is perhaps the best known, mainly by virtue of a pair of critically lauded mid-'70s LPs on the pioneering Alligator label. From a Mississippi plantation to the Beale Street scene of Memphis, and on to Little Rock and Chicago, his career has been more consistently blues-oriented

than either Johnson's or Brooks'. On the bandstand today, however, Fenton displays his mellow liquid vocals and fleet legato guitar lines in a context that ranges through Memphis soul tunes, latin vamps, and "downtown" blues reminiscent of Jimmy Rushing or Joe Williams. Although his live sets include bar room anthems like Sweet

Home Chicago and Everyday I Have The Blues, Fenton has a strong bent for jazz and seems most at home in an intimate vein, caressing a slow blues or crooning a soulful ballad.

"I try to mix it up," he says of his playing. "I've studied chord progressions and I like to play off the different tone qualities of the chords. I've been

playing guitar for a long time, and I've always looked for different sounds, different techniques. I like minor blues: you can play a lot of things with it and it has a lot of flavor, but we also do tunes with Major sevenths, 11ths, and augmented chords. We just mix it up. We don't do 12-bars all the time.

"I've always had my own style of singing," he adds. "In Memphis I was listening to Eddie 'Cleanhead' Vinson; I always loved to hear him sing in that high range, the same range that B.B. King sings in now. Cleanhead was the oldest guy around, but all the guys started singing that high—Bobby Bland, Jr. Parker. Then later I listened to guys like Big Joe Turner; he was a great blues singer and I liked his style, him and Jimmy Rushing. I also like Sammy Davis, Frank Sinatra—I listen to a lot of people.

"I was influenced by the jazz sound all the way from T-Bone Walker on. There was a place on Beale Street called Mitchell's Hotel, and they always played jazz there—Duke, Basie, everything. A cat by the name of Hosea Sapps had the big band there, eight or nine pieces, and all the guys would come and sit in—M. T. Murphy, Robert Jr. Lockwood, Memphis Slim, the whole gang. Then when I came to Chicago I worked with a jazz musician named Prince James. We used to do a tune by Frank Sinatra, *Summer Winds*. At one point, in the late '50s and early '60s, nobody accepted blues, so you had to play James Brown, Wilson Pickett, all the soul stuff. I went through that vein, and jazz, and then the blues again, so I've played it all. Right now I'm not going in any special direction, I'm just trying to cover the whole thing."

Born on a cotton and corn farm in Leflore County, Mississippi, young Fenton sang in the Original Baptist Church and made his first primitive guitar (or "diddley bow") by nailing a strand of broom wire to the side of his house. Except for such sporadic broadcasts as Sonny Boy Williamson's King Biscuit Hour, Southern radio was dominated by white country music, but Fenton remembers "hearing Lightnin' Hopkins on the jukebox at an early age, 10 or 11, and then T-Bone Walker and Pee Wee Crayton. T-Bone was the one I really admired—he had the jazz influence."

When he was 16 his family moved to Memphis, where he was tutored on a real guitar by an older country bluesman named Sammy Hampton. Fenton started to perform on Beale Street as an amateur singer at the Palace Theater, where he met his musical partner and travelling companion Charles McGowan. In Memphis, Robinson recorded *Tennessee Woman* with McGowan for Leslie Harris' Meteor

label. The song was a regional hit that kept him on the road until he settled for a year in St. Louis to work with Billy Gayles and Ike Turner. Returning to Little Rock, he re-recorded *Tennessee Woman* more successfully still for Duke records in Houston. The flip side was a gorgeous torchy blues, *As The Years Go Passing By*, that Peppermint Harris had written for him, and which has since been covered by Albert King, Eric Burdon, and Elvin Bishop, among others.

His subsequent sides for Duke did less well, and in 1961, Fenton left Little Rock for good. "I got tired of the South and I wanted to travel around a little bit, so I came to Chicago and started my own three-piece band at Theresa's. Then I worked around with Jr. Wells, Otis Rush, Sonny Boy Williamson." He was leading his own group again by 1967, when he recorded *Somebody Loan Me A Dime* on Pallos, which sold over 150,000 copies before a historic

letter-writing campaign by his fans, Fenton began appearing at festivals and colleges, and on the strength of a second acclaimed Alligator LP, *I Hear Some Blues Downstairs*, he performed at New York's Bottom Line and toured Holland and Sweden.

Robinson is a formally trained guitarist who took music lessons in Little Rock before resuming his studies in Chicago with blues mentor Reginald Boyd. A convert to Islam, he is a vegetarian who neither drinks nor smokes. "I've been on the health kick since '69 or before," he says. "I never was what you'd call a real alley cat; I always stayed on the cool side. Islam was a cleaner life for me, and that's what I needed to keep me away from that real bad stuff. With so many musicians, you're drinking, you're smoking, you're using dope, a lot of women, no good food, no rest—you'll die soon, real soon. Everybody's got to go, but I don't want to go that way."



LOIS LUBREY

FENTON ROBINSON

mid-winter blizzard brought Chicago record sales to a sudden standstill. The subsequent interest provoked by the popularity of the Allman Brothers version of *Somebody* prompted Robinson to record a similarly titled album for Alligator in 1974, garnering rave reviews. But before he could capitalize on his press clippings, a prior auto accident returned to haunt him, and he was imprisoned on a hit-and-run charge for nine months. Freed after a

Although at present without a recording contract, Fenton sees expanding horizons ahead. "There's been a growth in the blues," he says. "You can see it spreading out. But when I go into the studio, they tell me, 'You don't really have to stretch out, just play plain blues,' and as a musician, that's not what I'm looking for. In the clubs I can communicate with the audience real well; they expect a certain sound from me and I give it to them. They like

that smooth, floating sound and they listen to it all night. I use a lot of different voicings, and that's what makes the difference. I want to reach out to all the people; I'm looking for a sound that everybody enjoys."

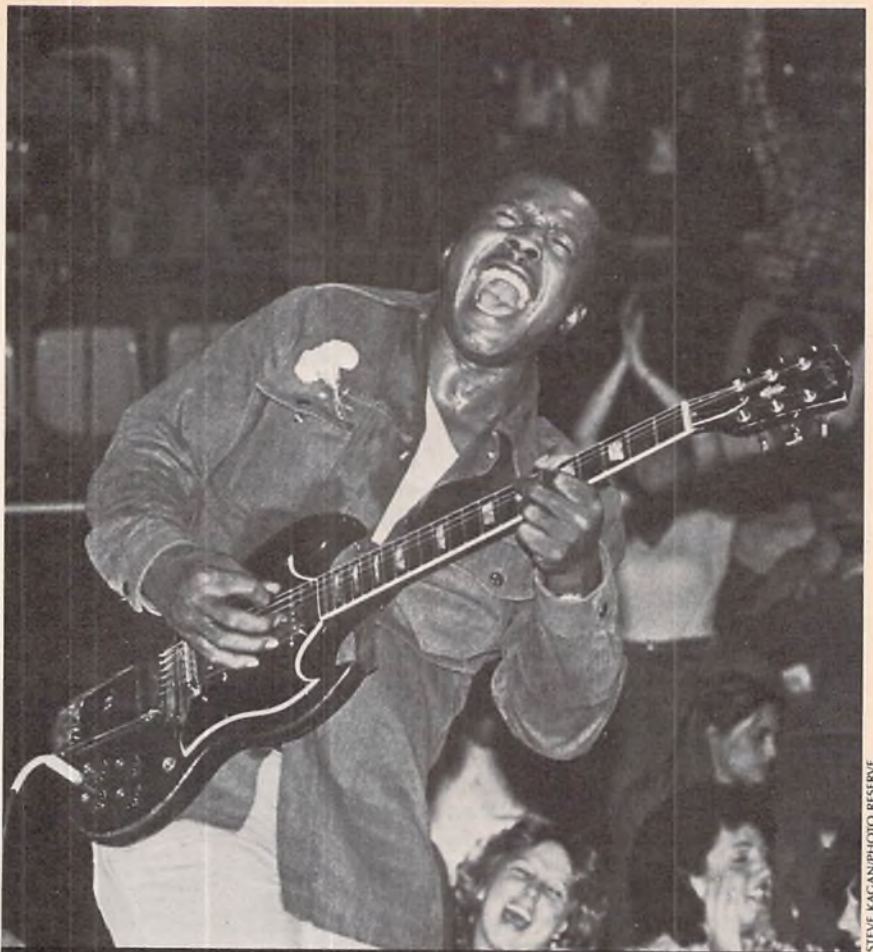
Fenton denies that blacks have lost interest in the blues. "Blacks are interested in music, period. Black musicians go into jazz, they go into soul, and they go into blues, because they still like the blues. But black musicians have a hard time, they have to struggle for survival. If it's going hard and they can't make enough to pay the rent, they get tired and quit. That's why so many blues musicians give up, and then they say they don't like the blues. But they'd like the blues if they could get paid."

Like Fenton Robinson, Lonnie Brooks heard the blues as a child and recorded popular Southern 45s before establishing himself in Chicago. His music, however, has a distinct flavor of its own, reflecting Lonnie's background playing zydeco and rock & roll in his native Louisiana. Once in Chicago, he became a part-time bluesman and self-professed "human jukebox" who led a show-lounge review that included soul singers and even a shake dancer.

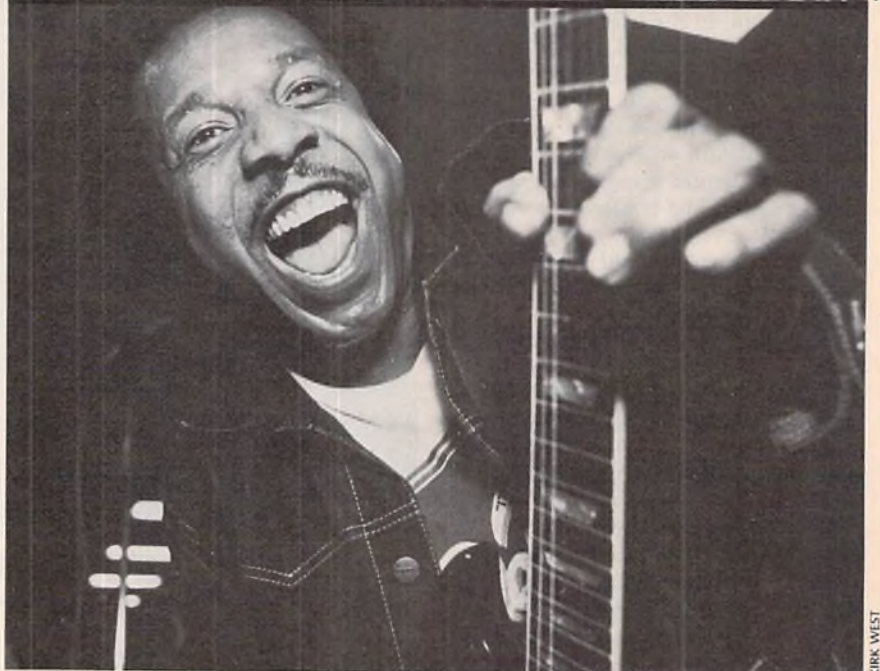
In the mid-'70s, Brooks joined the procession of players out of ghetto taverns and into the trendy pubs of Chicago's northside. After his appearance on Alligator's Grammy-nominated *Living Chicago Blues* anthology, Brooks revealed his swamp-rock roots and long dormant gift for songwriting on his first full album for the label, *Bayou Lightning*. The recently released follow-up LP, *Turn On The Night*, is even less traditional, with a strong contemporary r&b feeling.

"I wanted to play something a little bit different from the straight blues," says Lonnie. "I felt that I didn't want people crying in their beer, but to have a happy blues feeling. I didn't want to go deep down—I can, and I love it—but I was trying to reach people who could appreciate it if it had a rock beat, and enough blues in it to get the blues lovers too. When I record, I always put something deep on it, but I come up a little bit, kind of dance a little more."

Lee Baker Jr. was born in Dubuison, Louisiana, and raised in nearby Garland. He recorded under the name of Guitar Jr. until he found another bluesman by that monicker in Chicago and changed his name to Lonnie Brooks. His grandfather played the banjo but, says Lonnie, "I didn't buy my first guitar until I was 22, because my mother didn't like music in the house." He heard Muddy Waters, Lightnin' Hopkins, and John Lee Hooker on the radio as a child, then moved to Port Arthur, Texas, at the age of 18. "I met a guy in Beaumont, Texas, called Long



STEVE KAGAN/PHOTO RESERVE



KIRK WEST

----- **LONNIE BROOKS**

John. I was underage, but I would slip into the club and watch him play. I used to buy him wine just to get close to him."

Lonnie soon found a way of gaining access to the touring shows of more celebrated bluesmen. "Down in Texas it's real hot, and they had these great

big fans about five feet across. When the place got real crowded, we'd take a broomstick and stop the fan, then we'd cut a hole in the screen and five or six of us kids would slip through. That's how I got to see B.B. King and Gatmouth Brown.

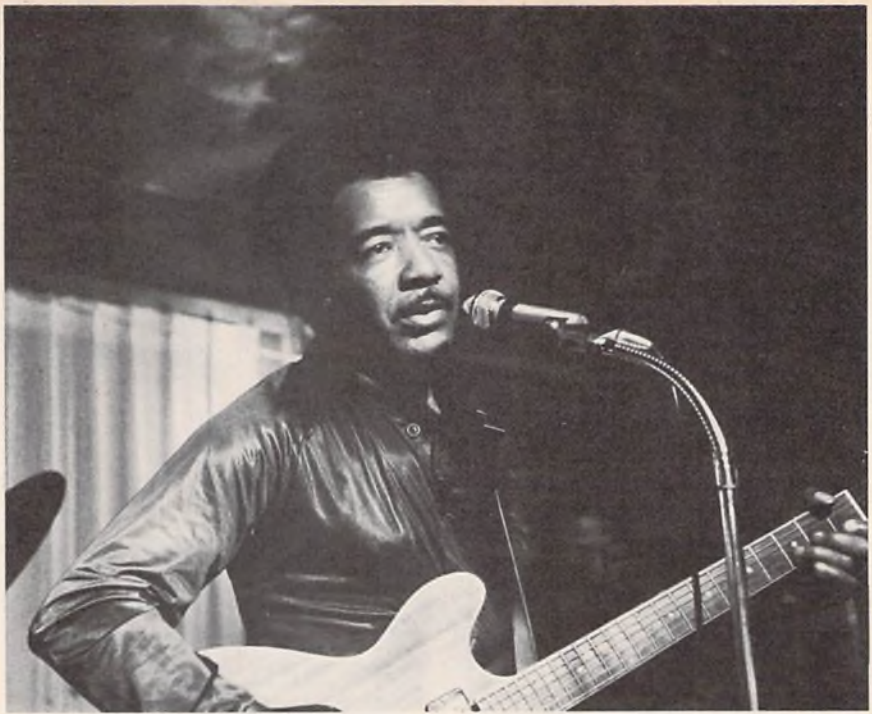
"When I got my guitar in '55, it was

easier to play rock & roll, so I went off in that direction. At first I was trying to copy Fats Domino, then Little Richard came along and I picked up a few things from him. I was playing almost in a Chuck Berry vein, but really more like Freddy Fender, because that was the style of guitar I was playing, almost a country-rock style."

Brooks got his first job with the king of black cajun music, accordionist Clifton Chenier. "I used to practice out on the front porch every evening when I got home from work. I had never played with anybody, and one day Clifton Chenier happened to be sitting outside in his car. I thought he was waiting for somebody, but he got out and asked me who I was playing with. I said nobody, so he asked me if I wanted to play with him. So I went out with Clifton Chenier for about six months, until he got a contract with the Specialty label in California. I didn't want to leave my job, so I got a guy called Lonesome Sundown to sing and play bass with me until he got a contract with Excello records, and I started singing and writing tunes.

"By around '56 I had a record out on the street. It was a country-rock song called *Family Rules*, and they're still playing it down there now. *Family Rules* came to me in a dream; one night I dreamed I was in a boxing ring and I was singing that tune. My wife thought I was crazy, because I was singing it in my sleep, but I got up and wrote it on a shirt cardboard. The next week I went to Houston to see Don Robey of Duke records, but he turned me down and I gave up on it. Then we played at a club and a disc jockey stopped in and asked us over to the radio station, so we went over there and I sang all the tunes I knew. There was time for one more song, so I started singing the tune I wrote, and in about 20 minutes he got five phone calls requesting that song again.

"I went to Eddie Shuler of Goldband records and he recorded it. He pressed up copies and gave me half, and when they played it on the radio the people started coming up to the bandstand to buy it. In three nights I sold 500 records, and then Eddie released it all over Texas and Louisiana and it just took off. I cut four or five records for Goldband, and I toured Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia. In 1959 I met Sam Cooke in Atlanta, and he said that his brother in Chicago needed a guitar player, so I came to Chicago with Sam and stayed at his mother's house for a couple of months. I went out on the road with his brother L. C., then Sam got me a job doing sessions at Chess records. I left and started working at the studio of Onerful records, but my style was country-rock and they wanted the blues."



STEVE TOMASHIEFSKY

JIMMY JOHNSON

Brooks recorded singles for U.S.A. and Pallos, then went on the road again with Jimmy Reed. Eddie Shuler tracked him down in Dallas and set up an LP session for Mercury back in Chicago, which was followed by a more successful album on Chess. Lonnie continued to work in various Chicago venues for the next 15 years playing whatever was called for—blues, rock, or jazz.

"In '69 I cut an album for Wayne Schuler, Eddie's son, on Capital records. They were fixing to send me to Europe to do an LP with some English group, and I spent all my money because I thought I had it made, but then Wayne quit and the record was cut out of the catalog. So I started working on the West Side at a place called the Avenue Lounge. Bruce Iglauer [of Alligator] would come in to see me there, but every time he came in I would be playing soul music—I didn't play any blues until around one o'clock, after everybody got to drinking. Then from there I moved over to Pepper's and stayed a pretty good while." Brooks went on a European tour in '75 where the response to his blues was so favorable that he decided to change his direction and play more of it.

Recently, Brooks has played studio dates with Lou Rawls and made a television appearance on *Hee Haw* with Roy Clark. Lonnie feels the blues is becoming commercially viable, and he hopes he "can get somewhere with it before it gets too crowded. That's what happened with rock & roll. If the blues gets overcrowded and they do it

to death, it'll cool down. But white people are what's supporting the blues now. Black people don't really listen to you unless you've got a hit. Until they see you on television and read about you a lot, they won't come out to see you. But I'm glad somebody likes it, because I love it and I'm trying to stick in there and fight as hard as I can."

Jimmy Johnson, the brother of soul singer Syl Johnson, has recently come into his own as a bluesman after a long career in gospel music and r&b. After touring with gospel groups as a teenager, he settled in Chicago in 1950, working as a welder until 1959, when he began to sit in with Magic Sam and Freddie King. Through most of the '60s he led his own r&b band in the city and travelled as a sideman with better-known artists until the r&b market dried up and he resorted, for a time, to driving a cab.

Like Lonnie Brooks, Johnson turned to the blues for a livelihood, apprenticing himself to Jimmy Dawkins in the mid-'70s. He won notice when he recorded in Japan with Otis Rush, then toured Europe, and returned to Chicago to record a pair of albums for the French MCM label. Already a fixture on Chicago's Lincoln Avenue blues strip, he gained national prominence for his striking contribution to the *Living Chicago Blues* series. Delmark records issued Johnson's *Whacks*, his first domestic solo LP; the 45 release from that album, *Ashes In My Ashtray*, won the 1980 W. C. Handy Award as blues single of the year. "That's my biggest tune," he avers. "That's my style

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STEEELY DAN

REGENERATIVE ROCK

BY TIM SCHNECKLOTH

Not long ago, I heard a radio station play an old Little Richard tune back-to-back with a cut from Steely Dan's latest album, *Gauche*. The disc jockey probably didn't do it intentionally to make any kind of point—at three o'clock in the morning, who cares anyway?—but the juxtaposition was startling. Both tunes would be classified as rock & roll, but the distance between them seemed immense, even greater than the quarter-century that separated them chronologically.

Little Richard's vocal was an exercise in primitive abandon, the work of a man going out of control—or at least trying to sound that way. The band was loose and jumping, complete with wonderfully sloppy sax riffs and Richard's frenetic piano pounding. The Steely Dan track, on the other hand, was the quintessence of cool. Everything was neat, logical, and emotionally detached, creating an illusion of pop music perfection.

The real, essential difference between the two recordings, though, seemed to lie in the performers' perception of themselves and their art. Little Richard, of course, wasn't thinking in terms of creating art at all. He was simply doing his job—charging the moment with sound, activity, and emotion. The fact that the moment was being preserved on tape probably wasn't at the forefront of Richard's mind; the main thing was the performance itself and how good it felt to let it all loose, let the spirit move in its own way.

Steely Dan's recordings, however, are perceived as art by many, many listeners. Since Steely Dan has not been a "group" per se since 1974 and no attempt is made to recreate their recordings in live performance, the record is the ultimate thing. Making records is what Walter Becker and Donald Fagen (a.k.a. Steely Dan) do: the record is the final, finished art work. Everything else is a preliminary sketch.

Becker and Fagen are genuine children of the experimental '60s, musicians who view the recording studio as an instrument unto itself. Cutting a track becomes not so much an act of performance as an act of construction: bits and pieces of music are performed, recorded, and fit together. Some are rejected, some are modified, others are accentuated or downplayed in the mix. Solos are adjusted to fit preconceived compositional ideas, rhythm textures are tinkered with until they satisfy the creators.

Since Steely Dan came onto the scene in 1972 with a fairly conventional rock band format, Becker and Fagen have worked more and more in this meticulous, studio-oriented manner, and the results have stirred some controversy. The recordings display a more sophisticated harmonic sense



than most rock records but, at the same time, they have always had great popular appeal. As usual, such popularity offends some critics who prefer pop music that doesn't sound so contrived, so carefully worked-on. They find it hard to reconcile the melodic beauty and inventiveness of Steely Dan music with what they perceive as its slick, mechanical, soulless qualities.

Ultimately, though, critics have to face the fact that Steely Dan's commercial popularity isn't just a fluke or a fad. Becker and Fagen's music has had a very real, very strong emotional impact on many listeners over the past nine years, bringing them a large, established audience that buys their records automatically. Becker and Fagen's detached, enigmatic lyrics, combined with the coolness and expertise of their music, have, according to some critics, come closer to evoking the experiences of their generation in the '70s than any other artist's work. The Steely Dan albums, taken as a complete oeuvre, sum up many of the feelings of those who passed through their young adulthood during the last 10 years or so: there's the realization that "the greening of



music artists of the past two decades.

THUMBNAIL BIO: Becker and Fagen meet as students at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. Begin writing songs together, working in groups, including stint accompanying Jay and the Americans. Meet Gary Katz, independent record producer. Katz hired by ABC Records, asks head of company to bring Becker and Fagen to LA as staff writers. Becker and Fagen start band, largely composed of East Coast expatriates—Denny Dias, guitar; Jeff Baxter, guitar; Jim Hodder, drums; David Palmer, vocals; Walter Becker, bass; Donald Fagen, keyboards. Debut album *Can't Buy A Thrill* is substantial popular success. After two more hit albums, group disbands; Becker and Fagen tired of touring. Steely Dan becomes "collective musical persona of Walter Becker and Donald Fagen."

For anybody who spent his adolescence playing rock and roll in a garage, the above reads like the ultimate American dream. It doesn't, however, reflect Becker and Fagen's own feelings about pop music and its creation.

"Everything has already been done, partly because there wasn't that much to do in the first place," Fagen told *Down Beat* a few years ago. "I think we're rabid examples of the deterioration, but we're examples and commentators at the same time."

"It's interesting how rock & roll seems to be able to revive itself periodically. There's some strange regenerative quality in all that simplicity. You can get away with playing the same thing over and over again and audiences don't mind. In fact, they seem to prefer it."

Fagen's point can be taken a step further. Listening to Steely Dan albums, one is struck by the "regenerative quality" of not just rock & roll, but of other American popular song forms as well. Unlike much rock & roll material, Steely Dan tunes give the sense of being actually composed around popular song structures that are far older than rock music or, for that matter, the blues.

The group's first album, *Can't Buy A Thrill*, provides a good example. At the time of its release, the term

America" was a lie; the pain of lost innocence and lost faith; the anguish of nostalgia, feeling out of one's time, left behind by circumstances; the sense that evil and folly are as hardy as cockroaches and will continue to flourish on every level of American life.

If it seems mush-headed for these critics to attribute these grandiose meanings to Steely Dan recordings—after all, it's only pop music—it's wise to remember that a few short years ago pop music was taken seriously as a social force to an extent that seems incredible now. And suddenly, those critics don't seem to be going out on much of a limb when they maintain that Becker and Fagen's albums are every bit as powerful and inventive as the work of any other pop

COUNTING DOWN TO ECSTASY IN '73: (from left) Jim Hodder, Walter Becker, Denny Dias, Jeff Baxter, Donald Fagen.



"progressive rock" (then in vogue) often meant extended instrumental jamming or experimental music that tended to disregard such popular song conventions as choruses, bridges, hooks, etc. On the evidence of *Can't Buy*, however, it was obvious that Becker and Fagen were consciously wrestling with popular song forms and their difficulties; they weren't playing tennis without the net, to paraphrase Robert Frost. The fact that the album was their least successful one (in an artistic sense anyway) just goes to show how difficult it is to learn the craft of American popular songwriting. Many of the album's cuts have a certain stiffness; the chord changes don't move with the smoothness and naturalness—the sense of being right—of the best pop songs. At least something was being attempted, though. Tunes like *Kings*, *Fire In The Hole*, *Change Of The Guard*, and others really did seem "composed"—with complex changes, harmonies, and structures that led some critics to apply the term "jazzy," a handle that has stuck over the years. To some 1972 listeners, however, "jazzy" equated with words like "cornball," "slick," and "commercial." And these notions have persisted throughout Steely Dan's career.

By the time their second album, *Countdown To Ecstasy*, arrived, the stiffness was definitely on its way out. The ballady tunes like *Razor Boy* and *Pearl Of The Quarter* were hard to fault as pop songs—they were melodious, fascinating, and catchy. The instrumentation had more definition and variety, including an intriguing arrangement for sax ensemble (*My Old School*), mallet instruments offset by Jeff Baxter's pedal steel guitar (*Razor Boy*), electric guitars complemented by synthesizers.

The album's lead cut, *Bodhisattva*, solidified two aspects of Steely Dan music that would become hallmarks. One was their modification of basic blues forms (done here and on other tunes by adding a hook or

extension on the dominant chord of the progression) to create a new, fresh pop song—there's that "regenerative quality" again. The other aspect was simply terrific rock guitar playing, in this case by Baxter and Denny Dias (who later worked in a group with the late Hampton Hawes). Their work on *Countdown* set new standards for proficient and pungent guitar playing in a pop context.

With 1974's *Pretzel Logic* and 1975's *Katy Lied*, all these characteristics became still more prominent. The studio seemed to be used with more skill and confidence; the sound became richer and better defined; tunes were fully orchestrated with horns (*Night By Night*, *Throw Back The Little Ones*) and strings (*Through With Buzz*). The overall effect was somehow more dramatic than before; there was a craftsmanlike use of dynamics, surprises, tunes building toward climaxes.

Pretzel also included nods in the direction of some of Becker and Fagen's jazz heroes. There was the bass intro on *Rikki Don't Lose That Number* (borrowed from Horace Silver's *Song For My Father*), an homage to Bird (*Parker's Band*), and an uncanny, note-for-note transcription of Ellington's *East St. Louis Toodle-oo* that substituted a wah-wah guitar for Bubber Miley's trumpet, a pedal steel guitar for "Tricky Sam" Nanton's trombone, piano for Rudy Jackson's clarinet, and a sax/guitar duet for the horn ensemble. It all worked, though, and kept Ellington's sense of dark humor intact.

On the next two albums, *The Royal Scam* (1976) and *Aja* (1977), Becker and Fagen really seemed to come into their own as arrangers. In the past, rock & roll bands had traditionally worked up head arrangements in the studio or rehearsal; they were often collaborative efforts based on improvised ideas and limited by the technical ability of the



players. With *The Royal Scam* and *Aja*, however, Becker and Fagen were, as usual, dealing with the most highly skilled studio musicians available, and the records had a sense of things being attempted and risked, the feeling that anything was possible arrangement-wise using only the tools at hand.

Green Earrings, for instance, had an instrumental break that resembled nothing so much as a mini-big band arrangement played

with rock & roll instrumentation. There was a lot of depth to the music; solos were actually complemented by the backing, not just accompanied. The painstaking use of various guitar sound modifiers and different synthesizer sounds gave an illusory sense of size and complexity to the studio group which, on this cut anyway, featured a fairly basic, limited rock band instrumentation.

The title track on *Aja* pulled off the same trick. Again, there was nothing particularly unusual about the combination of instruments here, but—as a result of the tune's structural symmetry, powerful soloists (notably Wayne Shorter and Steve Gadd), and carefully crafted charts—Becker and Fagen were again able to maximize the emotional effect of the "rock band."

Because of the long wait between *Aja* and the next album, expectations for *Gaucho* were pretty high. Some people were disappointed—after all, it was just another Steely Dan album, just as well-written and nicely honed as the others. It seemed as though Becker and Fagen's fans were somehow spoiled by the duo's output, as if they expected a shift up to a new level of pop music quality each time out, something that may not even be possible within the limits the pair have staked out for themselves.

What are these limits? Well, it's not likely that Becker and Fagen will go off on a tangent like pop musicians have been known to. They won't go off to India to learn the sitar, move down to Austin to start a country-rock band, or begin working as a mellow folk duo in Marin County. For better or worse, they have forged a style, a musical personality and world-view that is as distinct and individual as any in contemporary music. Whether or not this style will continue to evolve and spawn exciting new pop music remains to be seen. Whatever, it ought to be fun finding out. **db**

STEELY DAN DISCOGRAPHY

GAUCHO—MCA 6102 (1980)	(1975)
STEELY DAN'S GREATEST HITS—2-MCA AK-1107 (1979)	PRETZEL LOGIC—MCA AB-808 (1974)
AJA—MCA AA-1004 (1977)	COUNTDOWN TO ECSTASY—MCA AB-779 (1973)
THE ROYAL SCAM—MCA AB-931 (1976)	CAN'T BUY A THRILL—MCA AB-758 (1972)
KATY LIED—MCA AB-846	

TOM

BY A. JAMES LISKA

SCOTT

Decrying his "fusion" label, the multi-faceted West Coaster practices survival via diversity—studio scoring and playing, pop road work, and perhaps even a return to his bebop roots.

The files under Tom Scott's name are several and thick. Each is filled to overflowing with reviews, feature stories, record company biographies, and press releases from the past few years of Scott's extraordinary career—a career marked with prodigious beginnings, facilitated by virtuosic versatility, enhanced by a meteoric rise to prominence, and sustained with astonishing endurance.

He has transcended easy categorization with his marked success as an instrumentalist, composer, arranger, and producer in a variety of musical venues. Catapulted to national prominence as the leader of the now-defunct L.A. Express, Scott has maintained high visibility on the pop and jazz musical fronts, and become one of Hollywood's top composers for film and television.

The multi-faceted Tom Scott, who, at age 33, has proven handily that the catholic values of hard work and determination pay handsomely, has an on-going career that is most accurately described as diverse and disparate. "Hey," says Scott, invoking the stylized voice of one of his Blues Brothers buddies, "I've always loved variety." He pauses and waxes deadpan: "It's the



GIUSEPPE G. PINO

spice of life."

While variety might indeed give spice to life, versatility is not always considered virtuous, especially in a business encumbered to some degree by a jack-of-all-trades/master-of-none mentality that has some wondering

why, if he's so good at one thing, he even bothers with all the others. One reason has to do with survival in a business more volatile than most:

"In a way, I have to float with the business," Scott says. "There was, for example, a great deal of slowdown in

the record business a year-and-a-half ago. A lot of guys who were depending on record dates were getting their work cut down a great deal. To make a living in this town, I think you have to be versatile. Its your best bet."

Scott considers himself to be "very fortunate" that he has such great facility in the areas of composing and arranging. When work does slow down in the studios and the need, even for multi-instrumentalists like Scott, diminishes proportionately, he can pick up the slack by scoring and arranging. But even that has its drawbacks in terms of professional identity.

"It's always been amazing to me how people get typecast in different circles," Scott says, adding that he understands the continuing phenomenon and is guilty of it himself. "But I've always been a little slippery that way because I keep pursuing different interests," a sinister grin crosses his face. "In the motion picture industry I am now a composer; in fact, I'm in a position where I'm not doing any more episodic television—which is the weekly underscoring. I just do pilots and themes, or main titles, for television, and complete motion pictures. To some people though . . ." he says, laughing, his sentence trailing off into a momentary silence. "Well, I'll go on a record date somewhere, just as a player or to do a horn arrangement, and somebody will say to me, 'By the way, do you write for strings?' I'm well known in several circles," Scott says, shaking his head, "but the circles don't intersect."

In 1970, at age 21 and with three solo albums under his belt, Scott's soprano saxophone abilities were first recognized, and he won that year's **down beat** Critics Poll in the Talent Deserving Wider Recognition category. Wider recognition was afforded the young player, and in subsequent years he consistently placed well in various categories. In 1977 he placed in four categories of the Readers Poll, winning favor for his skills on the soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones, as well as the Lyricon. But in recent years Scott's standing has diminished to the point where, in the 1980 Readers Poll, his name was only included in the Miscellaneous Instrument category.

"As a sax player, I guess I'm considered just a pop guy," Scott says, adding that his inclusion as a Lyricon player is, perhaps, the only jazz association left in the minds of **down beat** readers. While his appearances with Carole King, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, Barbra Streisand, Boz Scaggs, Steely Dan, and a host of other pop artists might account for his being considered "just a pop guy" in some circles, he is most generally thought of as a fusion player, a label earned

"accidentally" from his association with the L.A. Express and perpetuated purposefully by his continued efforts with his New York Connection cohorts.

"The L.A. Express certainly seemed to be the turning point in my life," Scott says. "I started out as a bebop player, and the L.A. Express sort of took me in that fusion direction."

Scott lights a cigarette and settles back deeply into the over-stuffed couch. With a look of utter amazement on his face, he says that "to this day, Tom Scott and the L.A. Express still gets votes in the Playboy Poll, even though I left the band in 1975." Scott claims that the success of that band, launched from a small Studio City, California club called the Baked Potato, was "totally unintentional."

In the early '70s, while an active and much-in-demand session player, Scott used his nights off to pursue jazz. Working regularly with pianists Roger Kellaway, Victor Feldman, and Dave Grusin, he was a semi-regular in the Los Angeles jazz clubs. When he got the steady booking at the Baked Potato, he took pianist Mike Wofford, bassist Chuck Domanico, and drummer John Guerin in with him. "That was kind of my regular band that we built that Tuesday night spot with," Scott recalls. "Then we had a couple of replacements." Joe Sample took over the piano chair, Max Bennett replaced Domanico on bass, and fusion, a little-used term in 1973, began squeezing bebop out.

"Max Bennett—who I really have to credit with turning the band around from bebop to what is now commonly referred to as fusion, though we didn't know it at the time—brought in a couple of tunes that were kind of rock-oriented," Scott says. "It was amazing to see what happened. First of all, they were all real simple little tunes that were fun to play and fun to kind of get a jazz-flavored groove happening on. We used them the way you'd use any jazz tune: as a beginning and an end, kind of a vehicle for a great deal of improvisation.

"They were so much fun and they really seemed to excite the audience," Scott recalls. "Pretty soon the place started to get packed—literally. Then it was suggested we add a guitar so we got Larry Carlton, who was then an up-and-coming young studio cat. After a few months you couldn't get into the joint. They were lined up outside for blocks and I said to the guys, 'Hey, we must have a band here, I guess.'"

Actually, there was little guessing involved. Though the evolution of the L.A. Express was, in Scott's words, "as simple and unplanned as that," the group was anxious to record. Unfortunately, Scott, with one album on A&M Records, had been dropped by the label and had no place to go with



his band. "I called Hank Cicalo, an engineer at A&M and a good friend of mine," says Scott. "Hank was working a lot for Lou Adler at Ode Records, which was part of the A&M family. It was the Tiffany of record labels, what with their having Carole King, Mary Clayton, David T. Walker, and Cheech & Chong. Hank talked Lou into recording the L.A. Express on weekends, in his spare time. At about that same time Joni Mitchell—who had heard my only A&M record on which I did her song, Woodstock, and had asked me to play on *For The Roses*—approached me about having the L.A. Express play on her next album, *Court And Spark*, which we did. By the beginning of 1974 we had finished Joni's album and the L.A. Express album and she said to us, 'Let's go on a tour.'"

Which they did. The tour, intended to be three months in duration, lasted nearly 10 months and Tom Scott, having fronted the band during its first act set and its Joni Mitchell-accompanying role, emerged as an entity, albeit mistakenly synonymous with the L.A. Express.

"Lou Adler had just signed me as an artist," Scott says. "He didn't sign the L.A. Express. We all wanted him to sign the band, but Lou very, very curtly said that he wasn't interested. He then told me privately that he didn't feel I should tie myself with the band and that I should stay loose.

"Well, basically what happened was that the L.A. Express left me. They turned around and signed a deal with

Caribou Records as the L.A. Express and that was pretty much the end of it, as I was contractually obligated to A&M's Ode. What was great about it was that I had to ask myself who else I would like to record with and, naturally, the answer came in the form of some of my favorite New York heavy-weights."

Scott made two more records for Ode, in both cases using a core band of Richard Tee and Bob James on keyboards, Hugh McCracken and Eric Gale on guitars, Gary King on bass, Steve Gadd on drums, and Ralph MacDonald on percussion. The first of the series, continued on Columbia Records after the first two for Ode, was *New York Connection*.

"It was the greatest," says Scott, quickly adding that it is "still one of my favorite albums. The rhythm playing on that and the rhythm dialogue is absolutely definitive," he says, his enthusiasm bringing him to the edge of his seat. "So tasteful, so musical the way all those guys play. Each of us is playing totally independent parts and having it work so incredibly, cohesively well that I thought I had died and gone to heaven."

While heavenly feelings for Scott might accompany his current playing, those feelings are restricted, for the most part, to the studio. Touring, once a staple of his professional life, is a thing of the past. It has been more than a year since he has toured, and he has mixed feelings about it.

"I tell you," he begins, "the road is tough, real tough. A lot of the touring I did was predicated on the idea that it would help sell albums, and without an album to work with, I'm not real anxious about just running out on the road. The soon-to-be-released album, *Apple Juice*, is a live album with the New York all-stars and I doubt if I could afford to take that group on the road. Besides, how do you promote a live album if you don't have those people on the road with you?"

Scott says that he loves live playing and is thinking of ways to incorporate that love with his future plans. But he finds the road expensive ("I'm better off moneywise staying home and composing and making record dates") and tiresome ("As the years go by, I find that it gets tougher and tougher; maybe I'm getting spoiled by the good life"), so it seems an unlikely venue of his expression. What does seem likely for Scott is a return to his bebop roots in local jazz clubs.

"I think it's time to mix it up a little, shuffle and deal," he says, adding that it is "definitely time to mutate again. As it turns out, I was at the vanguard of the fusion movement. It was an accident though. I was a serious Coltrane/Cannonball/Charlie Parker/Miles Davis

TOM SCOTT'S EQUIPMENT

Tom Scott's saxophones include Yamaha Silver alto and soprano, Solmer Mark VI tenor and baritone, and a King Saxello. For tenor, he uses Fibrecane medium reeds in all settings; on his soprano and alto, Scott prefers Rico Royal mediums. He also plays a Wind Synthesizer-Driver and an "out-of-date" Moog Model 12 synthesizer.

student and all this fusion stuff was just a little departure that lasted 10 years or so. There was nothing to it—nothing serious, that is. As silly as it sounds, there is some truth to this lack of seriousness . . . now is now and maybe it's time to do something a little different."

Scott sees the present music scene as being languid and in need of new direction and life. "I feel that fusion music is not pointing in any specific direction. There was a time when merely the combination of rock and jazz was in and of itself interesting, yet that premise has been overdone. Now it's a question of where you turn for new avenues, and I'm at a bit of a loss to know where the new sounds are going to come from."

Scott thinks that the parameters of fusion have been stretched about as far as they can be, with little room left for melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic expansion. He sees the situation as being similar to the limitations bebop imposed on some players that turned to

fusion in the '70s.

"The great players that emerged in the '70s are great bebop players," Scott contends, "but what set them apart in that period was the fact that they were exploring the music on different instruments. Of course, rhythms played a vital role in fusion, but what does that leave? Harmonically and melodically, jazz was stretched to include the most sophisticated tonal and harmonic areas. That only leaves atonality, which the avant garde is dealing with today in the same manner it did 15 years ago. At least I can't hear a great deal of difference."

Scott's experiences playing with Ravi Shankar and Don Ellis' band showed him that stepping too far away from Western musical traditions, while occasionally interesting and fun, does not hold the answer for the future. "Western listeners have trouble listening to that," he says. "People have trouble tuning in to drone tonal centers and polyrhythms, so we're left with timbre, and that's the era we're into now."

"I'm pulled in two directions right now. One direction is to do a project which is entirely synthesized; the other is to go back to real serious nightclub playing, which is where I think it all comes from anyway."

The looser, more relaxed atmosphere of the nightclub is where Scott thinks more musical experimentation can be tried. The result is enhanced creative and innovative expression that isn't so easily attained in the large halls and arenas on the national concert circuit—of which Scott is a long-time veteran—where the concerns are more in terms of the show presentation.

Scott's L.A. Express, he reminds, began in a nightclub, and it was in that setting that the group was freed to try new things. The ground broken by the group—unencumbered originally by elaborate lighting and sound systems or stipulations relative to either performance time or material—Scott thinks was due primarily to the experimental atmosphere afforded by the nightclub setting.

In terms of his own instrumental growth and his desire to find new directions, he is leaning heavily toward a nightclub gig. But then, there is always film composing. "Oh, yeah," he says, "I'd like to compose music for great films, as well as music for my own pleasure. Of course, I'm doing what I really want to do. All of my musical activities are fun and therapeutic and enlightening and fascinating. To me, music is such a wonderful haven. My dad, Nathan Scott, who happens to be a great film composer, said to me a long time ago, 'If people want to pay me to do this, it's fine. God forbid I should have to find a regular job.'" db

TOM SCOTT SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

BEST OF—Columbia JC 36352
STREET BEAT—Columbia JC 36137
INTIMATE STRANGERS—Columbia JC 35557
BLOW IT OUT—Ode PE 34966
NEW YORK CONNECTION—Ode PE 34959
TOM CAT—Ode PE 34956 (with L.A. Express)
TOM SCOTT & THE L.A. EXPRESS—Ode PE 34952

GREAT SCOTT—A&M 4330

with Barbra Streisand

BUTTERFLY—Columbia PC 33005
A STAR IS BORN—Columbia JS 34403

with Billy Cobham

ALIVEMUTHERFORYA—Columbia JC 35349

with Victor Feldman

YOUR SMILE—Choice 1005

with the Grateful Dead

TERRAPIN STATION—Arista 7001

with George Harrison

33 & 1/3—Dark Horse 3005

with Quincy Jones

I HEARD THAT!—A&M 3705

with Paul McCartney

AT THE SPEED OF SOUND—Capitol SMAS 11419

with Joni Mitchell

FOR THE ROSES—Asylum 5057
COURT AND SPARK—Asylum 1001
MILES OF AISLES—Asylum AB-202

with Boz Scaggs

SILK DEGREES—Columbia JC 33920

with Steely Dan

AJA—MCA AA-1004

RECORD REVIEWS

***** EXCELLENT ** FAIR
 ***** VERY GOOD * POOR
 *** GOOD

ARCHIE SHEPP/ HORACE PARLAN

TROUBLE IN MIND—SteepleChase SCS-1139: *BACKWATER BLUES*; *TROUBLE IN MIND*; *NOBODY KNOWS YOU WHEN YOU'RE DOWN AND OUT*; *CARELESS LOVE BLUES*; *HOW LONG BLUES*; *GOIN' DOWN SLOW*; *COURTHOUSE BLUES*; *SEE SEE RIDER*; *MAKE ME A PALLET ON THE FLOOR*; *ST. JAMES INFIRMARY*.

Personnel: Shepp, tenor; soprano saxophone; Parlan, piano.

★★★★★

MAX ROACH/ ARCHIE SHEPP

THE LONG MARCH—hat Hut thirteen (2R13): *THE LONG MARCH*; *U-JAA-MA*; *TRIPTICH*; *SOUTH AFRICA GODDAM*; *J.C. MOSE IS*; *SOPHISTICATED LADY*; *IT'S TIME*.

Personnel: Roach, drums; Shepp, tenor saxophone.

★★★★★

For an art form with an awesomely elastic sense of musical time, jazz often has clung to a far more rigid and ambivalent view of its historical span. Hardly a musician exists, as critic Nat Hentoff has written, who would not hail Duke Ellington or Louis Armstrong as "the greatest," but in practice many modernists harvest their past with slash-and-burn agriculture; the occasional contempt runs forward in time as well. Just as Armstrong once derided bebop as "Chinese music" and Roy Eldridge declared Ornette Coleman a faker, Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones) in *Black Music* branded Art Blakey and Horace Silver as reactionaries, the better to laud John Coltrane.

But during the 1970s and into the 1980s, jazz has become the Mark Twain who left home an angry young man and returned 20 years later to discover how much wiser his father had grown. The best new music—Art Ensemble of Chicago, Air, Arthur Blythe, World Saxophone Quartet—succeeds in large part by its time-warp leaps from Storyville to Soho. It is this sense of historical wholeness, in addition to the obvious link of Archie Shepp's presence, which ties together *Trouble In Mind* and *The Long March*. The former album furthers Shepp's exploration of jazz' Afro-Christian (his term) headwaters; the latter re-establishes Roach as the Coleman Hawkins of his day: a man who remains contemporary not by imitating each passing New Thing but by applying the enduring, inventive strength of his own voice to new settings.

Trouble In Mind is the second such beautiful, historically minded collaboration between Shepp and pianist Horace Parlan. On 1980's *Goin' Home*, they celebrated jazz'



MARY JONES

roots in spirituals; this time their subject is the blues—in essence a fleshier, secular sort of hymn. Jazz' debt to the blues begins with the musicology of blue notes and the 12-bar form, but, as Shepp and Parlan show, less tangible bonds of emotion seal the continuum between genres. For this purpose, they have done well to select older, sometimes obscure blues that lay closer to field holler than urbanized electric guitar.

Nearly every song opens with a simple piano figure, repeated like a dirge or some sad round, followed by Shepp's entrance with an almost human moan, the synopation of "black English" spoken through his horn. Shepp takes both tenor and the piping soprano saxophone into the basement of their range. On *Goin' Down Slow*, he stretches one soft note until only the sound of his breath running dry through the horn remains; narcotically slow on *See See Rider*, his every note seems to spill out of the bell and on to the floor like syrup. This performance, beyond its historical statement, assures that for all his reputation as a stormy improviser, Shepp has mastered all nuances of restraint and subtlety as well.

Parlan, whose residence in Europe undercuts deserved acclaim at home, provides considered yet earthy support. He has learned much from Count Basie's stark, economical approach to blues without apeing the entire style. He sketches skeletal chords at a whiskeyed pace, proceeding gingerly from note to note: his runs are walks. But Parlan laces this direct reading with flatted twists, and his spaciousness invites Shepp into call-and-answers so natural and constant that one hardly realizes two voices are sharing the lamentations.

Max Roach finds his challenge and renewal at the opposite end of jazz' chronology. Already enshrined as one of bebop's revolutionaries, he has refused to stand still in time, instead immersing himself in the avant garde through the M'Boom percussion ensemble and several startling duets. *The Long March* finds its antecedent in earlier pairings with Anthony Braxton. While their hat Hut album, *One In Two/Two In One*, anticipates some of the *The Long March*'s surprises, the latter continues to evidence the continual evolution that pushed Roach past Elvin Jones as premier drummer in the down beat International Critics Poll.

Roach's approach, however, is by no means trendy; he merely carries the best of "old" stylings to the Nth degree. He constructs the entire 26-minute title selection around a series of drum rolls so fast and focused as to evoke in sound blurred vision. Not simply showcases for his virtuosity, a typical Roach solo builds like a deliberate, spontaneous argument, both felt and reasoned. On *U-Jaa-Ma*, he beats separate pulses on the hi-hat, toms, and bass drum, without raising any voice's dynamic level; his rhythms, it seems, could percolate endlessly.

South Africa Goddam shows Roach to be as strong a conceptualist as musician. This is a work which harkens back to Roach's controversial *Freedom Now Suite*, and successfully integrates three separate elements: an ominously regular heartbeat, light tom-tom work as if passing messages from village to village, and a rumbling turbulence of violence ready to burst forth. The selection also culls Shepp's best work on the entire album—long, curving notes dipping to

breathily lows and rising to chromatic peaks.

Elsewhere, however, Shepp amounts to window-dressing. Part of the subordination is due to Roach's herculean performance, but some results from solos which are only adequate at a time when excellence is called for. With the exception of his extrapolation of *Sophisticated Lady*—which quotes the song only for seconds at its end—Shepp hugs close to signature phrases, unengaging by themselves. Perhaps that is the price a saxophonist pays when a percussionist does the composing.

The *Long March* offers two titans in a rare encounter; it possesses one tour de force in *South Africa Goddam*, and servings of brilliance across four sides. *Trouble In Mind*, perhaps the humbler of the two releases, imparts the stronger, more enduring statement, but one hardly should feel obligated to choose. Taken together, *The Long March* and *Trouble In Mind* make virtual bookends within which to store and treasure the emotional and historical range that is jazz.

—sam freedman

GROVER WASHINGTON JR.

WINELIGHT—Elektra 6E-305: *WINELIGHT*; *LET IT FLOW (FOR "DR. J.")*; *IN THE NAME OF LOVE*; *TAKE ME THERE*; *JUST THE TWO OF US*; *MAKE ME A MEMORY (SAD SAMBA)*.

Personnel: Washington, soprano, alto, tenor saxophone; Ralph MacDonald, congas, percussion, Syndrums; Steve Gadd, drums; Marcus Miller, bass; Eric Gale, guitar; Paul Griffin, Richard Tee, Raymond Chew, keyboards; Bill Eaton, Ed Walsh, synthesizer; Robert Greenidge, steel drums; Bill Withers, vocal (cut 5); Hilda Harris, Yvonne Lewis, Ullanda McCullough, background vocals.

★ ★ ★ ½

Winelight combines total commerciality with unflinching good taste. Washington has hit on a sure-fire soft funk success formula, and en route to the bank he blows some very pleasant stuff. Grover will inevitably be panned for playing it safe here, but as Arnett Cobb says "The average layman doesn't know one note from another. If he can't feel it and pat his foot and nod his head, then you're not getting anywhere." (*db*, April '81, p. 27.) Washington extends the soul-jazz sax tradition of Cobb, Gene Ammons, Stanley Turrentine, and others. Within that middle-of-the-road entertainment context—always responsive to popular trends—he does indeed get down.

That said, nothing here is nearly as memorable as *Mister Magic*, Washington's contribution to the public domain of funk. Essentially *Winelight* is top-of-the-line mood music, soothing, relaxing, and eminently danceable. Distinguished from one another by tempo, each tune starts delicately, builds gradually, wails, recedes, wails again, and fades. Gadd and Marcus keep a fresh, spontaneous pocket, while Gale, Tee, Griffin, and the rest chord with intelligent variety. The unobtrusive strings are subtly effective throughout, and Washington himself plays with exquisite tone, range, and dexterity, firing or caressing with equal aplomb and grooving always. In urgent

What more can you say about John Klemmer, an artist and innovative musician who, during the course of more than 20 albums, has significantly changed the direction of saxophone playing in the last decade, developed an instantly recognizable sound, attracted millions of new listeners to the popular jazz idiom, and won virtually every major award for his technique and creative ability as a musician and composer?



Nothing. Just HUSH and listen to the new album! It speaks for itself. *Hush*, the new John Klemmer album, was written, arranged, produced and designed by John Klemmer.



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moments he recalls the r&b "honkers." Though the tunes do blur together as a whole—apart from Bill Withers's steel drum-accompanied vocal on the classy pop-soul hit *Just The Two Of Us*—there's never any trite, mechanical playing. While *Wineflight* may bore those who demand ambitious innovation, it's a fully realized project which completely achieves its goals. Many artists do sell out and lose credibility in the process, but quality sets like this show that mass appeal and tackiness don't always go hand in hand.

—ben sandmel

RUBY BRAFF

ADORATION OF THE MELODY—

Bethlehem BCP 6043: *WHEN YOU'RE SMILIN'*; *EASY LIVING*; *PULLIN' THRU*; *YOU'RE A LUCKY GUY*; *YOU'RE A SWEETHEART*; *STRUTTIN' WITH SOME BARBECUE*; *FLOWERS FOR A LADY*; *I'LL BE AROUND*; *IT'S EASY TO BLAME THE WEATHER*; *MEAN TO ME*; *ELLIE*.

Personnel: Braff, trumpet; Bob Wilber, Al Klink, Boomie Richman, Sol Schlinger, saxophones; Mundell Lowe, Art Ryerson, guitar; Ellis Larkins, piano; Walter Page, bass; Bob Donaldson, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

WITH THE ED BICKERT TRIO—

Sackville 3022: *TRUE LOVE*; *I'VE GOT A FEELIN' I'M FALLIN'*; *THIS YEAR'S KISSES*; *THE WORLD IS WAITING FOR THE SUNRISE*; *THE VERY THOUGHT OF YOU*; *AFTER AWHILE*; *WHAT IS THERE TO SAY*; *MY FUNNY VALENTINE*; *THE SONG IS ENDED*; *WHEN I FALL IN LOVE*.

Personnel: Braff, trumpet; Bickert, guitar; Don Thompson, bass; Terry Clarke, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Ruby Braff has been one of the brightest young players on the scene for a long, long time, which after nearly 30 years makes him just about the oldest young player in jazz today. It would be evidence of great insight on my part to be able to report on subtle changes of style that mark these two records made 20-odd years apart. But the remarkable thing in evidence is not change but consistency.

Back in the mid-'50s when *Adoration Of The Melody* was made, Braff had a unique sound of great distinction and character. It was thick and fat, and Braff could fine tune its vibrato with a master's touch. He could taper his notes, hold them on perfect pitch, then drift into a warm, broad vibrato that swung with as much grace and relaxation as his best phrases. In those days he was called a traditionalist, although it was a misleading label—the rhythmic subtlety of his playing was as fluent and elegant as any modernist of his generation. On the Bethlehem LP there is a toasty lyricism to his horn as it sings against the soft pulses of an excellent reed and rhythm section. The best blends are on *Lucky Guy*, *Easy Living*, *I'll Be AROUND*, *It's Easy* and above all *When You're Smilin'*, which contains an exquisite ensemble orchestration of Lester Young's classic "triple" solo of 1937. Through it all Braff

indulges only the songs, never himself. Four quartet sides evidently from another session fill out the LP, but add nothing to the trumpet-reed concept. The sound is muddy as well.

Everything that was so good about Braff in the '50s is still just as good on the 1979 collaboration with the Ed Bickert trio, except that without the orchestra there's much more of it. The opening a capella theme statement on *True Love* has an intimate vocal quality about it that compels instant empathy. Moreover, his choice of material is superb, and occasionally off-beat. Few players have seen the jazz potential in Cole Porter's *True Love*. Braff does, and his vision is clear and deep. *After Awhile* is a pretty, late '20s tune by Benny Goodman and Bud Freeman that is effectively revived here. Bickert's electric guitar fills the role of piano nicely, providing both comp chords behind Braff and some gentle solo work—not however the strong rhythm guitar sound Braff has favored in the past. Nor is there the tight rapport and structural underpinning that existed between Braff and George Barnes (and Mike Moore and Wayne Wright) on the classic early Concord LPs of the '70s. But there is an attractive, relaxed, and open flow to the music. Braff is a great artist, and has come up with a fine record.

—john mcdonough

JAMES "BLOOD" ULMER

ARE YOU GLAD TO BE IN AMERICA?—

Rough Trade Records Rough 16: *LAYOUT*; *PRESSURE*; *INTERVIEW*; *JAZZ IS THE TEACHER* (*FUNK IS THE PREACHER*); *SEE-THROUGH*; *TIME OUT*; *T.V. BLUES*; *LIGHT EYED*; *REVELATION MARCH*; *ARE YOU GLAD TO BE IN AMERICA?*

Personnel: Ulmer, guitar, vocals; Amin Ali, electric bass; Ronald Shannon Jackson, G. Calvin Weston, drums; David Murray, tenor saxophone; Oliver Lake, alto saxophone; Olu Dara, trumpet; William Patterson, rhythm guitar (cut 4).

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

MUSIC REVELATION ENSEMBLE

NO WAVE—Moers Music 01072: *TIME TABLE*; *BIG TREE*; *BABY TALK*; *SOUND CHECK*.

Personnel: James "Blood" Ulmer, guitar, vocal; David Murray, tenor saxophone; Amin Ali, electric bass; Ronald Shannon Jackson, drums, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ★

It was thoughtful of James "Blood" Ulmer to title his recent *Music Revelation Ensemble's* release *No Wave*. Now we media people don't have to grope for a term to describe it. And just think, for a while *Blood* tricked us into thinking it was "new wave," and his records were selling next to EPs by Devo or even the Plasmatics.

Technically speaking, much of what Ulmer and company does is called *har-molodics*, a term Ornette Coleman coined for the empathetic free-for-all in which each

player (drummer, bassists included) is turned loose to create his own version of the melody. In Ulmer's case, the result is a funky and upbeat cacophony.

Ulmer has played on sessions with people like Coleman, Larry Young, Joe Henderson, and Arthur Blythe, but is currently concentrating on his own performing band. These two import albums present Ulmer in hand-picked company. *Are You Glad To Be In America?* finds the guitarist with three horns and two drummers, along with electric bass. *Blood* sings a couple of tunes, and the band is capable of full ensemble sounds not unlike the earliest and bluesiest recordings from the group Chicago (listen to the bridge of *Jazz Is The Teacher*), or as *db* writer (Oct. '80, pg. 64) Clifford Jay Safane quipped, "the Bar-Kays gone berserk."

Songs like *Layout*, a frenetic disco groove, and the triplet swing tune *Pressure*, seem to make mockery of conventional melody. The band is rehearsed, as the darting *Interview* or *Revelation March* shows, but there is a looseness and unpretentiousness, even on the parts where they do seem to be playing together. The vocal tune *Jazz Is The Teacher* (*Funk Is The Preacher*) states a theory that is heard in practice by the thumping and slapping bass of Amin Ali, and the generally funky drums of Ronald Shannon Jackson. But these guys are not to be confused with Earth, Wind & Fire, and though Ulmer's guitar looks a lot like George Benson's, the similarity stops there.

The untamed energy that his band puts out is what ultimately makes the music work. *Time Out* is a wall of sound that hard rockers would be hard-pressed to top. Even a slow shuffle like *TV Blues* is dynamic, built around Ulmer's thumb-picked comp chords, walking, tripping, stumbling from one end of the song to the other. Ali proves equally adept at establishing a playful mood with his bass patterns.

No Wave's first 10 minutes, titled *Time Table*, pays little attention to strict tempo. There is a "head" which is played more or less in time, and Ronald Shannon Jackson's fiery drum bursts seem to make rhythmic sense, but the overall approach is quite free. David Murray's sax work doesn't do anything to bring the session "inside," but his playing is not without shape. Murray seems to be just the player Ulmer would want to play the written but largely indistinguishable melodies, as well as improvise similar ones of his own. *Big Tree* casts a foreboding atmosphere with Murray and Ulmer droning the blue melody. Ulmer's guitar intro is a good example of his sensitive and unencumbered style. The aptly named *Baby Talk* sounds at times like a cartoon soundtrack that sat in the sun too long. The song's ending—where the same melody line is played at different speeds by Ulmer, Murray, and Ali—surprisingly ends up in all-out unison. It's an off-beat touch, very Ornette.

On *No Wave* Ulmer has shed one drummer and a couple of the horns he used on *Are You Glad To Be In America?*, and the quartet responds with intimate yet impassioned playing. Further, Ulmer's compositions on *No Wave* are less arranged, leaving

even more room for harmolodics. "It's mine, not yours. It's my music," Ulmer shouts near the end of *Sound Check*, and I have to agree. It's not that he ever tries to play anything that his audience couldn't reach or relate to. It's just that he doesn't play his instrument like other guitarists (sure, there is a four-bar phrase on *Sound Check* that sounds like Hendrix, but . . .). As much as melody, Ulmer creates textural playgrounds for his like-minded musicians to romp in. And romp they do. —robin tolleson

KENNY DREW

RUBY MY DEAR—SteepleChase SCS
1129: *BASSMENT; RUBY MY DEAR; GENTLE RAIN; ENDING; SUNSPOTS.*
Personnel: Drew, piano; David Friesen, bass; Clifford Jarvis, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

HOME IS WHERE THE SOUL IS—
Xanadu 166: *WORK SONG; PRELUDE TO A KISS; WEST OF EDEN; IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU; ONLY YOU; THREE AND FOUR BLUES; ENDING.*
Personnel: Drew, piano; Leroy Vinnegar, bass; Frank Butler, drums.

★ ★ ★

These recent releases by Drew—who worked with Prez, Bird, Trane, and dozens of other prominent names during the past three decades—represent slightly different sides of this inventive artist. *Soul* is what the title suggests—a funky, but still restrained, blowing date in New York with strong support from Vinnegar and Butler. *Ruby* is a more varied, deeply felt set, with the outstanding solo work of Friesen and Jarvis intertwined with Drew's playing on this European disc.

Drew's own *Ending* appears on both LPs, and the Copenhagen version is more delicate and sensitive than the sturdy, funk-tinged

New York City version of a year later. There's a warm, smooth flow to his SteepleChase solo although the Xanadu version at one point hints at a rich, probing classical fullness—a masterful approach that also is contained in the dense, swirling lines that open *Happen To You*—before the mood of the Van Heusen and Burke song abruptly shifts to that of a racing wailer. Friesen too does more on the Danish version—an arco introduction of the melody, pulsing notes beneath Drew's statement of the melody, his own chordal line as the pianist solos, and a resonant solo that is every bit as sensitive as Drew's own playing.

Drew includes other originals of his own on both albums—the funky, boppish *Bassment* (with a wailing, bluesy Friesen solo) on the August 1977 SteepleChase date and, on the Xanadu date of a year later, a medium bluesy *Only You* and a fast blues, *Three And Four*.

Rounding out *Soul* is an original by Austin Wells (the bright, lightly swinging latinish *West Of Eden*), a pleasant, softly swinging performance of Ellington's *Prelude*, and a version of Nat Adderley's *Work Song* that, like *Happen To You*, is noteworthy for its opening: trills, dissonant lines, and bass blues chords contrast with delicate upper register sprinklings of notes that break up the intro before things settle into the pounding main theme, with a crashing bass chord resonating until it's quickly cut off so it can be pounded again. Drew then runs off with a bright freedom, not to return to that hard-edged mood of the tune until the end.

Drew features another Austin Wells original on the Danish date, *Sunspots*, which opens with rich and dense solo piano work that ebbs and flows as it shifts from thick sounds to bright warm single-note lines, finally turning to a light swing that gets

harder and more driving as Drew smoothly dances along. There is as much warm soothing sun as *Gentle Rain* in this version of the Bonfa tune, as the sun occasionally peeps out to dry one while romping on some lush hillside. Finally, *Ruby My Dear* becomes a mellow, flowing ballad without any of Monk's quirky lines and rhythms; its ending floats off with a pairing of ethereal upper register lines that come to a halt over the cushion of a sustained bass chord that further displays Drew's pedal mastery.

Drew has been living in Europe since 1961 and, since 1964, in Copenhagen where he has backed a variety of visiting jazzmen at the Montmartre, including Dexter Gordon and Johnny Griffin. It's an experience that has led to a deepening of his knowledge, technique, approach, and ideas—as the Danish date, when compared with earlier recordings, shows so well. —jerry demuth

NATIVE SON

SAVANNAH HOT-LINE—MCA Records
MCA-5157: *ANIMAL MARKET; SEXY LADY; SAVANNAH HOT-LINE; IN SEARCH OF BEAUTY; AFRICAN FANTASY; FAREWELL, MY LOVE.*

Personnel: Takehiro Honda, electric piano, clavinet, organ, synthesizer, cowbell, kayamba; Kohsuke Mine, soprano, tenor saxophone; Motonobu Ohde, electric guitar; Tamio Kawabata, electric bass; Hiroshi Murakami, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

HIROSHIMA

ODORI—Arista Records AL 9541:
WARRIORS; SHINTO; ALL I WANT; FORTUNE TELLER; CHUISIN' I-TOWN; ODORI; ECHOES; WINDS OF CHANGE (HENKA NO NAGARE).

Personnel: Jess Acuna, vocals, congas, percussion; Peter Hata, guitar; Dan Kuramoto, saxophones, flute, Japanese flutes, vocals, percussion; June Okida Kuramoto, koto, bass koto, shamisen; Teri Kusumoto, vocals, percussion; Richard Mathews, keyboards, synthesizers; Dane Matsumura, bass; Johnny Mori, taiko (Japanese drum), percussion; Danny Yamamoto, drums.

★ ★

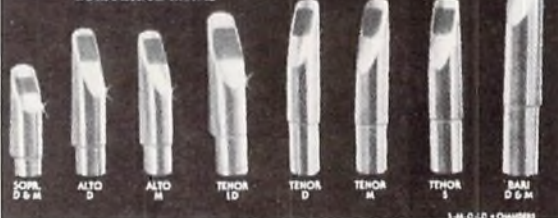
Native Son is a popular fusion band from Japan, while *Hiroshima* is a Los Angeles-based fusion group composed primarily of Japanese/American musicians. Thus it seems that a discussion of their music and its cultural sources is inevitable, although the two groups differ radically in their musical styles.

In essence, *Native Son* plays a brand of straight-ahead fusion combined with a potent dose of funk provided by Hiroshi Murakami's solid drumming, Kohsuke Mine's soulful saxophone work, Motonobu Ohde's guitar, and Tamio Kawabata's bass. At moments, one might hear echoes of *Weather Report*, Chuck Mangione-influenced melodic riffs, or Mahavishnu Orchestra-type

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dramatic crescendos (without the latter's somewhat portentous spirituality), although the group has created its own distinctive sound.

Animal Market, a Kohsuke Mine composition, is one of the highlights of the album. It is a fast, energetic funk piece with a rich overlay of harmonic textures interwoven by the saxophone, guitar, bass, wah-wah clavinet, and a nice rhythmic shift that flows into Takehiro Honda's piano solo. *In Search Of Beauty* is an uptempo composition carried by Mine's strong sax line and which utilizes a few fascinating rhythmic variations, ably supported by Murakami's strong percussive pulse. *Sexy Lady*, an upbeat, joyful tune features Mine's wailing tenor and Honda's piano work, while the title cut, *Savannah Hot-Line*, is a lively Brazilian samba in which Mine's lyric soprano sound is admirably displayed.

Throughout the album, Native Son sets out to produce a gritty brand of fusion with few pretensions, and they accomplish this modest but not insubstantial goal with tasteful arrangements, solid musicianship, much high energy and, at times, rich rhythms and textures. Their music is refreshingly free of more grandiose spiritual claims and yet intriguing enough to rise above the duller reaches of so much superficially mellow but lackluster fusion.

Odori is the second album by Hiroshima, an Asian/American band. It suffers from the undigested incorporation of widely disparate musical influences—such as traditional Japanese instruments like the koto, shamisen, and taiko drums, the sound of latin percussion and, above all, the simple repetitive beat of disco. Certainly, jazz has blended expressively and well with traditional Asian, African, and Latin American music in the past: witness McCoy Tyner, for example, who has even written a composition based on a five-tone Japanese scale (*Song Of Happiness*).

Hiroshima's use of the koto or shamisen, however, is gimmicky at best. The group does not explore the full range of possibilities inherent in utilizing these exotic instruments in a jazz setting. They are heard rarely, either to introduce the various pieces or else as background percussion. In addition, the rather delicate sound of the shamisen seems at odds with the disco-inflected bass beat throughout the album. In short, the particular sound of the Japanese instruments is not sufficiently integrated within the overall musical textures, and this clash creates rather jarring moods. As a whole, the album has a smoothly commercial pop sound, lacking both the soulfulness of funk and the impassioned improvisational freedom of jazz.

Odori is the most successful composition. Dan Kuramoto's flute, June Okida Kuramoto's koto, various percussion, and a synthesized drone sustain the generally gentle, reflective mood which is the strength of the piece. *Echoes* opens with the shamisen's delicate tones, but then shifts abruptly into a disco beat. Teri Kusumoto's breathy vocal, and the refrain, "echoes thru the night." *Winds Of Change* (*Henka No Nagare*) is a mildly atmospheric composi-

tion which is punctuated by the title refrain chanted in Japanese, soft noodling on soprano sax, and the shamisen's harp-like sound. *Warriors* opens beautifully with a duet between the Japanese flute and shamisen, but then slides into an undistinguished vocal and fast exchanges between the taiko drums and congas.

At times, *Odori* tantalizes with possibilities, but the album is sadly lacking in energy, passion, risk, and invention. If this second album disappoints, that disappointment is heightened by the fact that so few Asian/American musicians are being recorded or heard by the general public. Hiroshima is a pioneering band at least in that respect and one hopes that they will find the vision, courage, and strength that pioneers need to truly inspire people with their music in future albums.

—richard oyama

DEXTER GORDON

GOTHAM CITY—Columbia JC 36853: *Hi-Fly*; *A NIGHTINGALE SANG IN BERKELEY SQUARE*; *BLUES WALK (LOOSE WALK)*; *GOTHAM CITY*.

Personnel: Gordon, tenor saxophone; Cedar Walton, piano; Percy Heath, bass; Art Blakey, drums; George Benson, guitar (cuts 1, 4); Woody Shaw, trumpet (3).

★ ★ ★ ★

The Blues. It runs under and through the whole history of jazz like a great river. When bebop transformed jazz, it carried the blues with it, both as a form—the basic 12-bar with its many permutations and extensions—and an emotional language. Blues feeling is not restricted to any form: a 32-bar ballad can be as blue as any 12-bar shuffle. Ultimately, what makes a tune blue is the feeling put into it by the players.

That's what makes *Gotham City* a blues album—a very elegant, sophisticated one, as befits Dexter Gordon—but one saturated with blues feeling. The title track is a simple, straight-ahead 12-bar in B-flat: the quintessential blowing tune, the common ground. For master players, this is both the easiest form and the hardest. If they really want to make something of it, they must duck the rote riffs and come up with something fresh. On this cut, the soloists—Dexter, George Benson, Cedar Walton, and Percy Heath—all show that they have the emotional chops to carry it off. Drawing inspiration from each other, and from Art Blakey's kinetic drumming, they take the ordinary blues form and make it extraordinary.

George Benson's playing on *Hi-Fly* and *Gotham City* adds a great deal to the sophisticated feeling of the music. From the piquant bent note that opens the album to his masterfully constructed solo on *Gotham City*—which builds from sparse Monkish riffs to chopped sliding chords—Benson exhibits the smooth blues/bebop playing that he has refined from Charlie Christian's inspiration. For those of us who had nearly forgotten that he could play like this, sans goopy strings and other disco/pop annoyances, his work here is a firm reminder.

Woody Shaw is another welcome guest, adding a strong voice on Clifford Brown's *Blues Walk (Loose Walk)*. He blends beautifully with Dexter on the head, balancing the saxophonist's long, flowing lines with his quirky, jagged solo. The tune itself is a classic bop riff over modified blues changes.

On *A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square*, Dexter reaffirms his position as one of the great ballad players of our time. After a sensitive rubato reading of the melody, he builds a solo of graceful, extended lines that is perfectly underscored by Cedar Walton's comping. Walton then constructs some long

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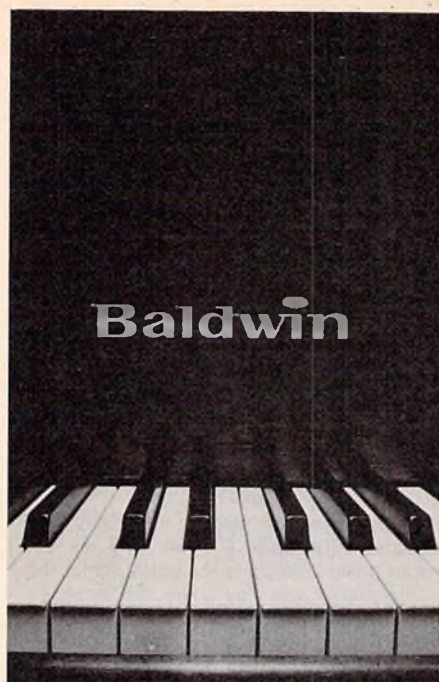
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lines of his own before giving the tune back to Dexter. Like *Ruby My Dear* (on last year's *Great Encounters*) and *Polka Dots And Moonbeams* (on Philly Joe Jones' *Philly Mignon*), his ballad interpretation is both bittersweet and muscular, an example of sheer force creatively channeled through a horn. Dexter's sensuous strength is well complemented here by Blakey's pyrotechnics and the solid, imperturbable approach of Percy Heath.

The album's simple, gimmick-free concept suggests the old production formula that served Prestige and Blue Note so well in the late '50s and early '60s. Although the playing lacks some of the locked-in intensity that Dexter got from his working group on *Manhattan Symphonie* (the finest of his Columbia releases) there is an admirable exchange of ideas among these veteran players. There is nothing stale or desultory here; there is, in fact, a clear air of excitement.

One quibble has to be the brevity of the album: only four cuts, totaling less than 35 minutes, seems a little meager at today's prices—especially when one long cut is a blues jam, albeit a very good one. That aside, this is a very fine record, a solid example of the timeless beauty of straightahead traditional jazz.

—jim roberts

JAN GARBAREK/ KJELL JOHNSON

AFTENLAND—ECM-1-1169: *AFTENLAND*; *SYN*; *LINGE*; *BUE*; *ENIGMA*; *KILDEN*; *SPILL*; *ISKIRKEN*; *TEGN*.

Personnel: Garbarek, tenor, soprano saxophone, wood flute; Johnson, pipe organ.

★ ★ ★

L. D. LEVY/ JOHN KRUEGER

THE EAGLE AND THE KING—Corvo 8002; *DON'T QUIBBLE*, *SYBIL*; *ANGEL*; *HAUNT*; *SO LOW*, *RUNE*; *DAISY*; *SKULL*; *BLODENWEDD*.

Personnel: Levy, bass clarinet, alto saxophone, flute, cello, electric piano; Krueger, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

As may be inferred from the personnel listings, the intent here is to sample an increasingly fashionable, and in some cases viable genre in contemporary music: instrumental duets.

Regarding the two cases at hand, however, the duo aspect in itself is where similarity begins and ends. The Garbarek/Johnson team is another ambitious and admirable attempt at evenly merging two distinct and seemingly counteracting timbres (pipe organ and saxophone) into musical cohesion. Levy and Krueger favor a more conventional instrumental palette; the percussionist serves an accompanying role behind Levy's no less than brilliant showcase of multi-instrumental versatility.

Despite the alluring color combination, *Aftenland* comes off with only moderate

success, the principle drawback being redundant textural frameworks. In the main, this disc comprises a series of strictly atonal and predominantly homophonic sketches, with relaxed tempos prevailing.

The title track is most representative. It subtly initiates an ascending sequential motive droned by the organist's right hand and (later) bass pedals in a loosely imitative fashion. Garbarek's soprano creeps in with a chromatically descending countermotive, which direction he later reverses. Harbored in between is Johnson's left hand, marking a series of chillingly dissonant and sustained tonal clusters that gradually rise in pitch throughout the seven-minute piece, governing the harmonic direction of the other voices—haunting.

As the zenith of pipe organ literature was unquestionably composed in the Baroque era, the instrument has a natural and strong implication toward tonality, and to a lesser extent, polyphony. *Aftenland* displays little of either, which is perhaps why several of the sketches that feature a successive layering of the organ's perpetuating chordal dissonances, under Garbarek's shimmering and occasionally vaporous sax lines, will create an unidiomatic and somewhat abrasive effect to some ears.

Nevertheless, at times Johnson adeptly exploits an engaging variance of sonorities within his instrument's massive timbral domain. *Iskirken* is an enchanting interplay between wood flute and a fertile assortment of organ colors in the middle and upper registers. The two dart short and amusingly lyrical phrases at each other, Johnson keenly shifting stops after each exchange.

It's embarrassing not to have the least bit of biographical information to offer for such a presumably young, yet obviously gifted talent as L. D. Levy. *The Eagle And The King* is virtually a one-man show, yet simultaneously highlights a refreshing and quite tangible sundry of swingful nuance.

In *Don't Quibble*, *Sybil*, Krueger spins out an uptempo and straightahead trap rhythm that underpins Levy's stunning flight of multi-reed inventions. A brief and percussively quirky motive is overtracked periodically, allowing a shift in between choruses from alto to flute to bass clarinet respectively. Levy's near-immaculate technique enables him to blazen up and down each horn at the swiftest velocity, yet with a spirited and relentlessly swinging lyrical perception as well. It is this essential coupling that renders his playing so impressive here and throughout the set.

The ambidextrousness aside, one would suspect the bass clarinet is Levy's chosen tool: *So Low* is one such superlative example. L. D. laments a soberly reflective and recurring blues phrase that is the lyrical footing for a towering solo excursion on the horn. The reedman's vibrato is never self-indulgent, and his sharply attuned sense of melodicism prevails through the delicate, as well as the rapid-fire, passages; the composition is an ear gripper.

Though there are few weaknesses throughout this LP, it seems that a larger ensemble setting would more poignantly compliment Mr. Levy's remarkable reed

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skills. Nevertheless, it is clear that a jazzman of the highest order could well be in the making.
—stephen mamula

MANU DIBANGO

GONE CLEAR—Island MLPS 9539: *FULL UP; GORO CITY; DOCTOR BIRD; REGGAE MAKOSSA; FROZEN SOUL; TEK TIME.*
Personnel: Dibango, saxophones, marimba, vibes, Fender piano, vocals; Robbie Shakespeare, bass; Clyde Bullard, bass; Val Douglas, bass (cut 2); Geoffrey Chung, guitar, keyboards, bass (2); Sly Dunbar, drums; Mikey "Boo" Richards, conga, percussion, drums (2); "Sticky" Thompson, conga, percussion; "Crusher" Bennett, conga, percussion; Mikey "Mao" Chung, guitar; Willie Lindo, guitar (2); Wayne Armond, guitar (6); Peter Ashbourne, keyboards; Clive "Azul" Hunt, keyboards; Robbie Lyn, keyboards; Ansel Collins, keyboards; Gwen Guthrie, Ullanda McCullough, Brenda White, Yvonne Lewis, Frank Floyd, Jocelyn Brown, vocals; Mike Brecker, Lou Marini, saxophones; Barry Rogers, Ed Byrne, trombones; Randy Brecker, Jon Faddis, Mike Lawrence, trumpets.

★ ★ ★ ★

JOHN KLEMMER

MAGNIFICENT MADNESS—Elektra 6E-284: *MAGNIFICENT MADNESS; HEART (SUMMER SONG); DON'T TAKE YOUR LOVE AWAY; I CAN'T HELP IT; WE COULDN'T START OVER; DEJA VU; LIFESONG; ADVENTURES IN PARADISE.*
Personnel: Klemmer, tenor saxophone, Echoplex, phaser, vocalise (cut 2); Danny O'Keefe, vocals (5,7); Bili Thedford, vocals (1); John Tropea, guitar; Dean Parks, guitar (5,7); Chris Pinnick, solo guitar (8); Victor Feldman, piano (5,7); Don Grusin, piano; Dennis Belfield, bass (5,7); Abe Laboriel, bass; John Guerin, drums (5,7); Harvey Mason, drums; Lenny Castro, percussion; Ronnie Foster, synthesizer; Milt Holland, kalimba (2); Larry Williams, Jerry Hey, Kim Hutchcroft, Bill Reichenbach, Larry Hall, horns; Phyllis St. James, Stephanie Spruill, Alphanette Silas, background vocals (1).

★ ★ ½

DAVID LIEBMAN

WHAT IT IS—Columbia JC 36581: *PAOLI'S VISION; MISS YOU; WHAT IT IS; A DANCE FOR YOUR THOUGHTS; CHIT-CHAT; YOU ONLY SEE YOU.*
Personnel: Liebman, soprano, tenor saxophones, Prophet 5 synthesizer (cut 5); John Scofield, guitar; Kenny Kirkland, electric, acoustic piano; Marcus Miller, electric bass; Steve Gadd, drums; Don Alias, conga, cabassa; Mike Mainieri, Prophet 5 synthesizer (1).

★ ★ ★ ★

ERNIE WATTS

LOOK IN YOUR HEART—Elektra 6E-285: *JUST HOLDIN' ON; DANCE MUSIC; LOOK IN YOUR HEART; MAKIN' MUSIC; LET'S SAIL AWAY; BEYOND THE COSMIC VOID SUITE (Part 1: STARSHIP OUTNESS; Part 2: LOVE IN TRANSIT; Part 3: MARCHING TO CRETONIA).*
Personnel: Watts, soprano, alto, tenor, baritone saxophone, saxophone synthesizer, piccolo, flute, alto flute, bass flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, oboe, english horn, percussion, vocals; Peter Robinson, keyboards, synthesizers, rubber piano, synthesizer bass (2); Dan Dean, bass; Alex Acuña, drums, percussion; Ron Cook, guitar; Paulinho da Costa, conga drums; the McCrarys, Shelby Flint, vocals.

★ ★

The common bond among saxophonists Manu Dibango, John Klemmer, Dave Liebman, and Ernie Watts appears to be sincerity, that hard-to-pin-down feature which does or does not inform a performer's music. After having followed the careers of these four musicians, I'm convinced that each thinks he is presenting honest, loving music at all times, whether the setting is, say, bebop or rock-jazz. At a time when we're unceasingly bombarded by our culture's blather, artifice, and guise, it's tough to determine a musician's commitment to his art, his depth of emotional involvement with a recording project. I do know that these gentlemen are to be trusted, even though I disagree with how two of them, Klemmer and Watts, choose to present their message.

Dibango plays a self-made synthesis of African, jazz, muzak, r&b, and rock. He calls this fusion "makossa music," and it has changed very little since the 1973 American hit *Makossa* brought it to my attention. On *Gone Clear*, producer Geoffrey Chung garnishes the West African saxist's trademark polyrhythmic dance groove with dramatic horns and voices, scratchy guitar, funky keyboards and Syndrums, and an almost subliminal shift in bass patterns. Voilà—we have reggae makossa, mainstream pop to the reggae-mad kids of Senegal and neighboring countries. And, importantly, Chung's alterations don't sound the least bit stagey.

There is much to enjoy here. Dibango's saxes and xylophones weave in and out of the up-front mix, a Third World democracy where all the instruments are equal. His dj-style talking (his "dub" is in an African tongue) sounds seductively rhapsodic on *Reggae Makossa* and *Doctor Bird*. These U Roy/Barry White verbalisms are incisive and when joined to the almighty beat ("riddim") nearly apocalyptic. (Robbie Shakespeare and Sly Dunbar, Kingston's masters of riddim, are very much part of the wondrous groove.) *Gone Clear's* most breathtaking moment, midway through *Tek Time*, happens when Dibango yells something and is immediately replied by a grand sweep of voices, horns, and strings. It's strong constructive magic, maybe not as potent as that of Augustus Pablo, Black Uruhu, or Fela, but

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Klemmer's *Magnificent Madness* reminds me of a movie: one where the lead man gives a winning performance while saddled with a banal script and an indifferent supporting cast. Klemmer's a sensitive player, giving his tenor sax a lovely singing quality, but everything around him here seems so artificial, so glossy, so unlike his horn. And as co-producer, he shares the blame.

The title track is a joy when John's in the spotlight; he's a good melodizer and improviser, working the lush melody around as if he were trying to express his love for someone in half-a-dozen languages. Would that there were the slightest hint of ardor from vocalist Bili Thedford and the five studio musicians, the former on the wrong side of cutesy and the latter oh so bloodless. The electric piano filigrees, for example, are an unintentional travesty of Klemmer's convincing playing.

The other numbers are of the same Adult Contemporary ilk: tepid pop or pop-jazz. From Danny O'Keefe's bland singing to the low flame funk of the Isaac Hayes songs, it's treacly sentimental, only Klemmer escaping the stranglehold with a warm, unaffected obbligato. Still, he's trapped.

There's a "live" feel to the performances on *What It Is*, as if Liebman hit on a melody (a bass line, certain changes), sketched out some guidelines, entered the studio, set up, and nodded to the engineers. The six numbers, though, have form, and there's not an ounce of self-indulgent fat anywhere (the electric piano on *Dance* is as close as it gets to noodling). What a delight it is to come across a jazz-rock album with sounds that are: neither polite nor sloppy.

Liebman is at the improvisatory rudder, guiding his energetic and empathetic companions. He's initially hesitant on *Paoli's Vision*, using space effectively, like Miles, before uncorking a wealth of ideas—it's a striking musical representation of Soleri's city Arcosanti in the desert plan, from the germinative stage to partial realization. Liebman's soprano sax is the Mick Jagger surrogate on the Stones' *Miss You*, going places Mick's voice has not; bassist Marcus Miller and drummer Steve Gadd supply the r&b punch, and the end result is a powerful romp. *Chit-Chat*, an homage to Chick Corea, also has exciting soprano work, especially the long, convoluted lines which manage to reach their destinations. Only the title number has a snide, frivolous fusion tinge, which the unostentatious music of the other five Liebman compositions steadfastly avoids. And I believe him when he says, in his promotional biography, that his life is tied to "playing truthful music."

Look In Your Heart's back cover has a personal note from Ernie Watts. The multi-instrumentalist writes that the music contained within was "created with love and spirit" and is to take us "to a simpler place where you can look in your heart. . . ." Unfortunately, this statement seems naive, maybe a tad presumptuous, because the music here is so florid, so caught up in being fun. *Just Holdin' On*, one of the dance songs, is merely a disco rhythm track with inane lyrics ("Ain't got no money/It sure ain't

funny"), and *Cosmic Void* is the perfect sci-fi movie simulacrum. Silly music isn't profound, and this record mimics Watts' sincerity. —frank-john hadley

IKE QUEBEC

CONGO LAMENT—Blue Note Classic LT-1089: *B.G.'s GROOVE TWO; CONGO LAMENT; QUE'S PILLS; SEE SEE RIDER; I.Q. SHUFFLE.*

Personnel: Quebec, Stanley Turrentine, tenor saxophone; Bennie Green, trombone; Sonny Clark, piano; Milt Hinton, bass; Art Blakey, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

WITH A SONG IN MY HEART—Blue Note Classic LT-1052: *HOW LONG HAS THIS BEEN GOING ON?; WITH A SONG IN MY HEART; IMAGINATION; WHAT IS THERE TO SAY?; THERE IS NO GREATER LOVE; ALL OF ME; INTERMEZZO; BUT NOT FOR ME; ALL THE WAY.*

Personnel: Quebec, tenor saxophone; Earl Vandyke, organ; Willie Jones, guitar; Sam Jones, bass; Wilbert Hogan, drums (cuts 1-5).

★ ★ ★

DEXTER GORDON

LANDSLIDE—Blue Note Classic LT-1051: *LANDSLIDE; LOVE LOCKED OUT; YOU SAID IT; SERENADE IN BLUE; BLUE GARDENIA; SIX BITS JONES; SECOND BALCONY JUMP.*

Personnel: Gordon, tenor saxophone; Tommy Turrentine, trumpet (cuts 2-4); Dave Burns, trumpet (5-7); Kenny Drew, piano (1); Sir Charles Thompson, piano (2-4); Sonny Clark, piano (5-7); Paul Chambers, bass (1); Al Lucas, bass (2-4); Ron Carter, bass (5-7); Philly Joe Jones, drums (1, 5-7); Willie Bobo, drums (2-4).

★ ★ ★

Though the same generation produced the two, there is nevertheless a wide gulf between Dexter Gordon and Ike Quebec. The former, a long-respected pacesetter in the architecture of modern jazz tenor, was, at the time of these recordings, just embarking on what would ultimately be considered a miraculous return to full-time jazz activity. In the early and mid-'40s, Gordon had been one of the first and most convincing of Lester Young's disciples. He had not only assimilated Young's sound and rhythmic persuasions—albeit while still a sideman in the Louis Armstrong and Fletcher Henderson bands—but he had also gone on to absorb the even newer trends advanced by Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. By way of contrast, Ike Quebec was an archetypal traditionalist. Attaining some renown as the featured soloist in Cab Calloway's wartime band, Quebec further solidified his growing reputation by cutting a series of magnificent 78s under his own name, as well as several more under the leadership of others. However, circumstances worked against his rise to prominence; despite the inner circle acceptance of his work, he was never able to achieve the widespread recognition, much

less the financial rewards, that so many other tenormen of his time came to command. Accordingly, any work of his that has survived deserves the attention of all who proclaim an interest in the art of swing tenor.

Quebec was a Hawkins and Webster man. Though he too came up in the mid-'40s—a time fraught with simplistic house-rockers—he never succumbed to the appeal for bravura so much in evidence around him. His sound was huge and deep and bursting with animal expressiveness, but he resisted the tug toward easy excitement with a gentleness born of his own self-effacing temperament. There is no mistaking Quebec's sincerity and sensuality, nor his musicianship either, for these qualities are easily perceived in his playing. But perhaps due to an inner conservatism, he was never able to author a library of memorable aphorisms comparable to that penned by his idol, Webster.

Emboldened by the presence of such straightforward jazzmen as Turrentine, Green, Clark, Hinton, and Blakey, Quebec was unquestionably at his hottest on the previously unreleased *Congo Lament* session. Pianist Clark and the other hornmen are generously accorded solo space throughout, but despite their various virtues, it is Quebec who scores the highest each time. This is also true of the tenor-and-rhythm album, *With A Song In My Heart*, but the accompaniment here is nowhere near as equal. Quebec was a soulful ballad player and he brings much to these familiar tunes, but the rhythm section simply fails to provide him with the inspiration so readily apparent elsewhere.

Gordon's entry is also notable for the contributions of his sidemen, most specifically, Drew, Clark, Chambers, and Carter. Unfortunately, though, the trumpeters fare less well, and the over-modulated clattering of the cymbals will undoubtedly prove a distraction to many. That should not be a deterrent, however, for Gordon's work alone is ample compensation for these minor flaws. Playing in that lean, brittle manner so long a fabric of his art, he quite literally rises above it all. Still, this particular item is felt to be of interest only to Gordon completists, for the catalogs continue to expand with other, far more unified examples better suited to the needs of virginal collectors.

—jack sohmer

DAVID FRIESEN

PATHS BEYOND TRACING—

SteepleChase SCS 1138: *SONG IN THE NIGHT; AS THE DAY BEGINS; WIND IN THE WILDERNESS; SYMPHONIES; TENDER HEARTED; SHAPES AND COLORS/BLUES; BLUES/HEART FELT; SWORD OF THE PROPHETS; CHOIR.*

Personnel: Friesen, acoustic bass, bamboo flute.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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RECORD REVIEWS

ALBERT MANGELSDORFF

TENSION!—L + R LR 41.001: *CLUB TROIS; BLUES DU DOMICILE; SET 'EM UP; VARIÉ; TENSION; BALLADE FÜR JESSICA ROSE.*

Personnel: Mangelsdorff, trombone; Günter Kronberg, alto saxophone; Heinz Sauer, tenor saxophone; Günter Lenz, bass; Ralph Hübner, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

TROMBONELINESS—Sackville 2011: *DO YOUR OWN THING; TROMBONELINESS; CREOLE LOVE CALL; BONN; QUESTIONS TO COME; MARK SUETTERLYN'S BOOGIE; FÜR PETER; BRIEF INVENTIONS.*

Personnel: Mangelsdorff, trombone.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

TRILOGUE: LIVE AT THE BERLIN JAZZ DAYS—Pausa 7055: *TRILOGUE; ZONES MORES; FOREIGN FUN; ACCIDENTAL MEETING; ANT STEPS ON AN ELEPHANT'S TOE.*

Personnel: Mangelsdorff, trombone; Jaco Pastorius, electric bass; Alphonse Mouzon, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

HAMBURGER IDYLLE—Pausa 7091: *WART G'SCHWIND; ONCE WE'RE HERE; A JAZZ TUNE I HOPE; KOMMENTAR ZU "HAMBURGER IDYLLE"; LAPWING; GOMA; STREET OF LONELINESS; THREE CAHND MOLLY.*

Personnel: Mangelsdorff, trombone; Wolfgang Dauner, piano; Eddie Gomez, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

Practitioners of jazz trombone have had few enough active masters to look to in the past two decades, let alone those in Europe and enamored of the avant garde. Albert Mangelsdorff is a rare bird in that he is thrice such a minority member. The lean, tall Frankfurter, 53 this September, owns as distinctive a voice on his instrument as Vic Dickenson or Bob Brookmeyer, due as much to chosen style as to nature. For Mangelsdorff has over the years developed trombone multiphonics to its highest level. Other trombonists—Eje Thelin, George Lewis, Phil Wilson—use multiphonics for color, but Mangelsdorff has gradually incorporated them as an integral element, and plays them with such fluency and ease that you soon take three-note chords for granted.

He may lay down a low tone, hum the fifth, and thus create the 10th as a harmonic; or play the fifth, sing the 10th, and have the root buzz as the 15th; or work out innumerable chordal variants that nobody else can play. This unique ability is particularly impressive when applied to classics like *Mood Indigo* (remembered live from his 1978 US tour for the Goethe Institute) and *Creole Love Call*, rendered with almost cup-muted jauntiness on the Sackville solo set. These four imports (the latter two MPS licensed to Pausa) show Albert Mangelsdorff to be, first and foremost, a superb musician and a distinctive composer, and only secondly a technical master.

Tension! is a sturdy, provocative session by five Germans who in 1963 achieved

first-rate music. *Paths Beyond Tracing* is not only a contemporary five-star accomplishment, but in the annals of improvisational bass literature, it also stands as a classic gem of concept, substance, and execution.

Paths is a welcome addition to the numerous contexts in which Friesen has previously recorded (variously with guitarist John Stowell, bassist Glen Moore, and the Japanese saxophonist Kazutoki "Kappo" Umezumi), or in which he has performed (with Stan Getz, Ted Curson, Woody Shaw, Sam Rivers, Joe Henderson, and others). Rather than referring back to these already familiar styles and contexts, here Friesen extends himself forward, creating music purely of-the-moment: hence, "paths beyond tracing."

In *Paths*, Friesen has daringly distilled his music down to its essence: an unaccompanied soloist, improvising stream-of-consciousness music which transcends traditional forms, conventional harmonic progressions, rhythmic clichés, and melodic banalities. Each of the nine cuts utilizes a slightly different approach, illuminating a different facet of his overall mood of tranquility.

In *Song In The Night*, for example, he plays a bamboo flute above a bass drone (no overdubbing on this LP). He introduces further melodic themes by tapping his bow on the strings. He then develops his themes, plucking the strings, never repeating himself. As *The Day Begins*, a meditative improvisation, makes extensive use of harmonics. *Wind In The Wilderness*, slightly more than a minute long, is done in rapid pizzicato style; *Symphonies*, over five minutes long, utilizes space and bowed melodies to create an unbroken, natural flow of music. In *Tender Hearted*, Friesen plays hummable melodies, making ample use of double and triple stops. In *Shapes And Colors/Blues*, he plays a rapidly repeated high note, underpinning it with sustained bass note punctuations. The longest track on the LP (almost six-and-a-half minutes) is *Blues/Heart Felt*, an understated but thrilling display of technical virtuosity, speed, energy, and humor, which only distantly alludes to time-worn blues intervals. Tapping his fingers on the body of his French Guinot bass (circa 1795) in the brief *Sword Of The Prophets*, Friesen intersperses his percussive effects with hammered-on melodies and double stops. The classically oriented *Choir* is topped off by harmonic bell tones, which indeed suggest a choir.

By avoiding standard compositional and commercial devices such as circular harmonic progressions, catchy "hooks," and foot-tapping rhythms, Friesen presents us with the deepest feelings and thoughts of his own inner space. He creates atmospheres and musical stories rather than reproducible object-songs. He takes us on a journey of spiritual and sensory consciousness in which his music virtually erases the barriers between art and nature. Because he relies on instinct and developed spiritual intensity, rather than on flashy novelties, Friesen has succeeded in creating a work that is at once nourishing and entertaining, easily accessible to the general listener, and essential for the aspiring professional bassist.

—lee undervood

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unprecedented self-consciousness and tremendous creative zest on their American tour. Reviewed as an import originally on German CBS (later partially reissued on Pacific Jazz 10095) the album deservedly copped a rave from Don DeMichael (db, 2/13/64). Mangelsdorff's compositions, and Sauer's *Trois*, stand up as varied, multi-textured vehicles for individualistic, often brilliant improvisations, which owe little to specific American influences. Without piano, they get a strong foundation from Lenz' big bass and smooth part writing to flesh out ensembles (check Varié's moody parts versus bright unisons). *Tension*, shifting tempos Mingus-like over 11 minutes, features pungent solos (in- and out-of-tempo) from both saxes, as well as relaxed, totally commanding solos from the leader. Though his soft-attack linear style here is in full flower, demonstrating singularly thoughtful architecture, there is as yet no evidence of his fruitful multiphonic experiments.

Tromboneliness comes on like a swarm of boppish bees: buzz, flying, aerobatics, focus, sting—but underlying all is as strong a sense of form and organization as in a hive, and as much care and workmanship as in honeycomb. Forty-four minutes of raw 'bone—with Creole plunger the only mule I discern—may sound insufferable, but Mangelsdorff blows miracles: he swings, sighs, structures, and sustains with little *sturm und drang* and plenty *gemütlichkeit*. Here

Mangelsdorff utilizes his chordal capabilities nearly half the time, for haunting motifs (*Peter*), basslines (*Boogie*, under his sped-up flugely overdub), whole pieces (*Questions*), call-and-response to single lines (*Creole*), and for dazzlingly quick display (title track). He also dreams up some very intricate solo lines, as on *Bonn* (a la Brookmeyer), *Peter* in *sotto voce* waltz meter, and *Thing* with duos for chord and line. Mangelsdorff's timing is as varied and on-the-spot as a stand-up comic's, as is his ability to shift voice and expression. He yodels, yawps, bles, warbles, moans—growls from time to time—even imitates *Echoplex* on *Brief*. But melody and form always come first. A landmark album for solo trombone.

Trilogue came about through chance enthusiastic overhearing between Mouzon and Mangelsdorff at Berlin 1975; producer J. Berend arranged for Pastorius to round out the trio for the following fest. The two Weather Reporters, past and present, make uncomfortably sluggish bandmates for the mercurial yet majestic Mangelsdorff. They have ironically little to do with the somber chorale of the title track, sounding sloppy in ensemble and vapid in commentary. Matters improve slightly as the trombonist elsewhere attacks linear bebop, but the walking accompaniment he would seem to require is clubfooted in this mixed company. Each solos adequately, but as a threesome they sound unfocused and roughshod. For the most part, Mangelsdorff picks up the ball

and runs eight-to-the-bar, and Mouzon hangs in with ticking triplets, echoes of the trombone's motifs, and energetic bashing. However, Pastorius—seemingly light years removed from straightahead jams and ill-served by blurred miking and overamplification—is reduced to bemused noodling. The trombonist and drummer sound better in duo. The notes say they rehearsed four days. Lord knows on what, for Mangelsdorff's charts sound elementary enough. It boils down to this: the youngbloods cannot keep up with the old pro at his own game.

A more simpatico rhythm combination is achieved on *Hamburger Idylle* by Eddie Gomez and Elvin Jones. They give cushion without pushin'; their full, distinctive sounds blend well and underscore the fat, woolly horn. Pianist Dauner serves as a spare player who can carve creations parallel to Mangelsdorff's multiphonics (as on their brilliant duo *Once*), and whose lines breathe and have elegant contours, as on the stop-start opener (literally translated as "wait quickly"). The album breaks up four eight-minute blowing tunes with three abbreviated duos and *Street*, a broad, movie-like theme stated by echoey 'bone and toms, with warm solos for only piano and bass. The depth of the association (Mangelsdorff and Jones go back to the latter's '57 European tour with J. J. Johnson) and their attuned vernacular is most evident in *Molly*, a staccato blues that gets wholesome turns from all hands.

—fred bouchard

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ART MATTHEWS

IT'S EASY TO REMEMBER—Matra MA 1001; *Samba Ebony*; *5/4 Thing*; *Love Dreams*; *I'll Remember April*; *It's Easy To Remember*.

Personnel: Matthews, piano; Archie Shepp, Bill Pierce, tenor saxophone; Dizzy Reece, trumpet; Charles Fambrough, bass; Alan Dawson, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

There are certain times when a sideman will so dominate an album in his supportive role that the leader and the rest of the cast of characters will only seem to be his accomplices. Art Matthew's album is basically a straightahead foray into hard bop-land, but Alan Dawson's vibrant, scintillating drum work is so vital, so vigorous and spirited, that it lifts the whole session above the vast sea of the ordinary.

Whether playing in a latin mode as in *Ebony Samba*, with brushes as in *Love Dreams*, or in 5/4 tempo as in *5/4 Thing*, Dawson stokes the fires with strength and wisdom. His solo spots are few, but they are superfluous, so vibrant is his accompanying. Alan Dawson has very few peers on the jazz trap set, a fact that has been somewhat obscured by his insistence on remaining in Boston, despite numerous urgings to relocate in New York or go on the road.

The rest of the rhythm section is up to

Dawson's challenge. Fambrough is a big-toned romper on the bass, and the leader comps with confident power. Matthews piano style is dense and lush—perhaps a mite too lush. He goes in for thick chords and excessive trilling which, at times, is quite eloquent, particularly in a short tear-ass solo on George Coleman's *5/4 Thing*. Other times, however, the grandiose approach obscures the intent.

The three soloists—Pierce, Reece, and Shepp—are given ample space here and, not surprisingly, it is Shepp who makes the most of it. Archie Shepp has become a master of improvisation—his tenor approach is soulful and gutsy, with a deep-blue tinge. His use of harmonics is spare and wise, as is his use of space and quotes. On *I'll Remember April* he seems to wrench his solo from the belly of the horn, building slowly and gracefully. The other tenor player, Bill Pierce, has a softer, more flowing style. He displays a thoughtful improvisatory mind and a nice, unhurried approach. He doesn't try to compete with the elder Shepp, but comfortably works out his own niche. Only Dizzy Reece is heard here to less than best advantage. His tone is somewhat wet and his solos seem to have trouble resolving themselves. He is choppy and loose, expressive but not always articulate.

All in all, a solid blowing session and a short course in small-band drumming. Like Faneuil Hall, Fenway Park, and the Freedom Trail, Alan Dawson is a Boston institution

that seems to get better and better as the years progress. Art Matthews was correct in using him for this date, even if he took the spotlight away from the leader in the process. (Matra Records are available by mail from P.O. Box 635; N. Amherst, MA 01059.)

—lee jeske

DAVID MURRAY

MING—Black Saint BSR 0045; *The Fast Life*; *The Hill*; *Ming*; *Jasvan*; *Dewey's Circle*.

Personnel: Murray, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Henry Threadgill, alto saxophone; Olu Dara, trumpet; Butch Morris, cornet; George Lewis, trombone; Anthony Davis, piano; Wilbur Morris, bass; Steve McCall, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

At 25 David Murray has already received nearly a career's worth of glowing notices. While some of these raves are firmly based, many are questionably ecstatic, as Murray's prolific recorded output to date—comprised mainly of small group blowing dates and solo recitals—ranges from the ruminations of a near-master to the portentous gropings of a young prodigy. Murray is at his best when his protean technique is prodded beyond an emulative mode by lean material and taxing company. These conditions figure more prominently on this octet outing

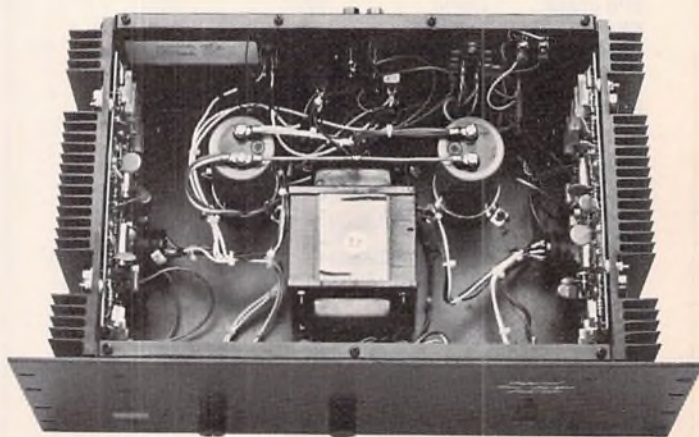
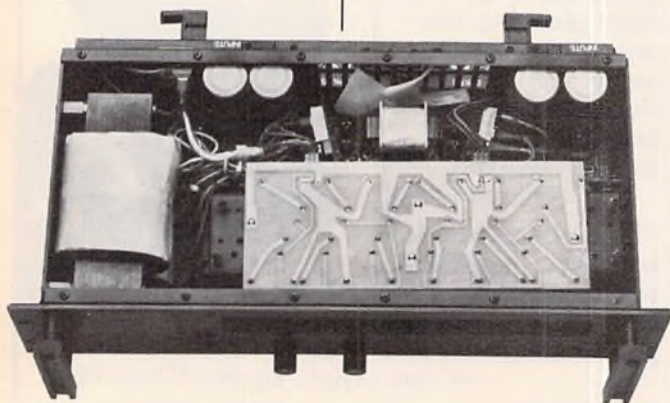
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than on any recording that has been issued under Murray's leadership. Murray rises so impressively to the occasion as a triple-threat composer, arranger, and soloist that his budding legend is given new credibility. Confirming Murray's importance as a post-Ayler traditionalist, *Ming* may very well prove to be his first indispensable recording.

Murray galvanizes this sterling unit with a diverse program culled, in large measure, from previously recorded material. Earlier versions of *Dewey's Circle* and *The Fast Life* are not fully fleshed in comparison to the rich, close-order arrangements given here. Spliced in the rapid fire of *Dewey's Circle* is a hip-shaking strut that prompts neo-New Orleans polyphony, highlighted by Dara's heralding of Armstrong. Formerly a launching pad of boppish flash, *The Fast Life* gains heft from a tight weave of brass and reeds, barrelling unaccompanied four-bar exchanges from the horns, and pummelling solos from Murray, Butch Morris, Davis, and McCall. Murray's orchestration of *The Hill* forwards an emotional duality more clearly than in the solo or quartet versions currently available. The shadowy pathos of the opening section allows a muted Butch Morris to prowling about the melodic structure while Murray's evocative bass clarinet mingles with Wilber Morris' arco bass mournings. As building tension triggers a collective improvisation, Threadgill steps to the foreground, feverishly cutting through the

ground swell, until the octet re-gears to a charted climax and simmers.

In the past, Murray has relied too heavily upon stylistic role models to pronounce his traditionalism. With the title piece and *Jasvan*, Murray taps the torchy essence of the ballad and the sleek syncopations of the waltz without a trace of overt influence. Here, Murray's youth is his best asset, as he is cogent, unjaded, and jocular. His tenor slipknots a few whisps of melody in the title piece to create a romantic atmosphere that is emphatic but not overbearing. This is Lewis' feature and he proves to be as soulful as any keeper of the flame, as his undulating passages invariably burst the seams with long, singing tones. Compressing several lines into taut voicings full of bristling swing, *Jasvan* displays his considerable arranging talents as well as reminding us of the immense talent he has pooled for this recording. In the two choruses offered to everyone except McCall, the intensity varies from Murray's tough tenor and Threadgill's wails to Dara's muted lyricism and Davis' sparkling single-note lines.

Whether *Ming* caps his career or is lost within his crowded discography, Murray's ascendancy as a principle voice of his generation seems assured. What remains to be seen is whether the conceptual clarity and the inspired voice Murray forwards on *Ming* is a giant step ahead or a grand aside.

—bill shoemaker

JOHN HARBISON GEORGE ROCHBERG

QUINTET (Harbison); SLOW FIRES OF AUTUMN (Rochberg)—CRI SD 436.

Personnel: Carol Wincenc, flute; Nancy Allen, harp; Aulos Wind Quintet: Judith Mendenhall, flute; Rudolph Vbrsky, oboe; David Singer, clarinet; Alexander Heller, bassoon; Robert Rouch, horn.

★ ★ ★ ★

Both of the works on this album were commissioned by 1978 Naumburg Award winning performers. The Aulos Wind Quintet received the chamber music award, and Carol Wincenc took the soloist's award. Hence the composers were constrained to write for particular performers and for a certain number of instruments.

George Rochberg rose to the challenge by incorporating the mood of Japanese music into his ethereal and often beautiful duet for flute and harp. John Harbison, on the other hand, took a path strewn with more pitfalls and fell into a few of them.

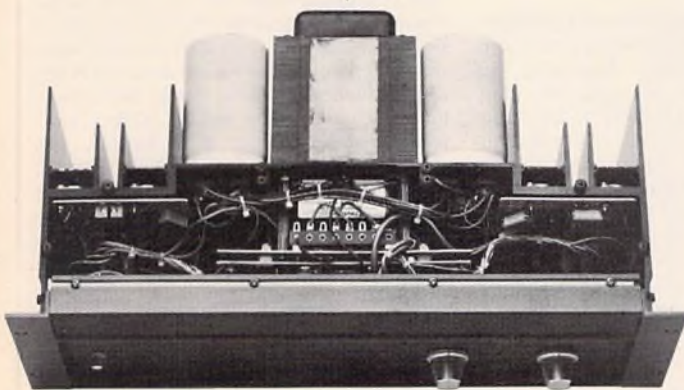
Emphasizing a dry, neutral sound in a polytonal idiom, Harbison's *Wind Quintet* recalls Stravinsky's neo-classicism, but lacks his striking motifs and deft treatment of instrumental color. Although the work has some poignant moments, its fundamental dissonance seems to blur Harbison's lyricism.

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The Aulos Wind Quintet is an accomplished new music ensemble that has premiered a number of contemporary works. Its members are precision team players, as well as excellent soloists. Although there are no extended solos here, horn player Robert Rouch sticks out as an individual in several spots, and oboist Rudolph Vrbsky plays with an exceptionally sweet tone.

In his seeking a modern way to use tonality, Rochberg came upon the music of the Orient. In *Slow Fires Of Autumn*, he has struck a genuine balance between a stylized Western approximation of Japanese music and the coloristic techniques of a piece like George Crumb's *Voice Of The Whale*. This is far more interesting than the reformulations of Nipponese melodies popularized by Jean-Pierre Rampal and James Galway, yet it is just as accessible to the average music-lover.

On this recording, Nancy Allen creates a sound on her harp that is analogous to that of the koto. Likewise, playing in the flute's low register as the harpist performs an old Japanese folk tune, Wincenc suggests the breathy, mournful sound of the shakuhachi, the Nipponese equivalent of her instrument. Together, these fine musicians complement each other like anisette and espresso.

—joel rothstein

access. One needed to spend years studying centuries-old music, and the early founders of jazz had neither the time nor privileged access. The violin also had trouble competing with the volume of jazz' chosen front-line instruments: saxophones and horns. It just wasn't the kind of instrument that those exuberantly brash New Orleans bandwagon groups were likely to choose for their streetcorner battles of sound. If someone wanted to play non-classical music on the violin, they had to settle for polite parlor music.

The violin's early inroads were made in old-timey string band music and minstrel shows. There it was given the less elegant name of fiddle. But as the most pliant Western instrument, it wasn't long before it was brought into the jazz world—but it came screaming. The first jazz violinists, such as Stuff Smith and Joe Venuti, had to find a style that would compete with the volume of horns in the time before electric amplification. One of the few survivors of these earliest tribulations was **Claude Williams**. Coming from the string band tradition, Williams was referred to as a fiddler, but he was one of the creators of the jazz violin vocabulary. Though he played in big bands like Andy Kirk's *Clouds of Joy*, and those of Alfonso Trent, and Count Basie (1936-37), this 1977 recording finds him within the more intimate atmosphere of a piano trio. Here you can hear Williams' hard-edged attack with every note and phrase clearly enunciated, biting like a full horn section in swing.

Williams stomps through blues-based standards and originals with Jay McShann's rollicking piano accompaniment and a solid, earthy rhythm team of Gene Ramey on bass and Gus Johnson on drums. McShann's muscular piano underscores Williams' gritty sound on pieces like *C Jam Blues* and *Sweet Georgia Brown*. But Williams swings so solidly he can even overcome the manacled pianistics of Andre Persiany, who sits in for three tunes. Though Williams started his playing in the Roaring '20s, he hasn't lost any of his vibrancy or long-overlooked originality.

One who hasn't been overlooked is **Stephane Grappelli**, still regarded as one of the progenitors of jazz violin. Beginning the European connection of violinists who brought their weighty classical traditions to bear on the music, Grappelli's sophistication has been his hallmark. His Hot Jazz groups with guitarist Django Reinhardt are legendary. From the beginning Grappelli chose not to compete directly with horns and favored small group settings. This outing of duets with pianist Martial Solal is a crystalized look at the Grappelli sound in which his classical background is expressed with grace and wit. *Happy Reunion* is scholarly in a playful way. They take a well-examined tune like *God Bless The Child* and elongate it until it breaks into several episodes. Solal is a dry and unromantic pianist whose appraisal is cool, but perceptive. Grappelli, meanwhile, is responsible for a whole style of playing, yet he never resorts to its cliches. His playing is pointed and wry and says more with subtle intonation than with

furious flurries of notes. On *Nuages* his sophisticated lines cut through Solal's energetic rambles. Bud Powell's *Parisian Throughfare* hustles in and out of revolving doors in solos that tumble after one another in mixtures of urbane elegance and ram-bunctiousness. But there is also a tendency towards dryness. The fragmented motifs of *Grandeur Et Cadence* are stilted, while *Stumbling Swings* erratically and to no good end.

Until the late '60s and early '70s there weren't many jazz violinists saying things on the violin that Grappelli didn't tell them. Fellow Frenchman **Jean-Luc Ponty** was the first to break the mold. In so doing, he created a violin explosion that helped bring the instrument from respected novelty to an accepted standard. Ponty took his classical training, applied it to musical stylings influenced by John Coltrane, and then electrified it. His early interest in a jazz/rock synthesis was evident in the 1970 King Kong recording with Frank Zappa, and came into full bloom under the inspiration of the Mahavishnu Orchestra (originally with violinist Jerry Goodman), with whom Ponty eventually played. Since his mid-'70s album, *Upon The Wings Of Music*, Ponty has been identified by propulsive rhythms mirroring rotating drum figures that seem to gallop through space, and harmonically rich textures pitting lush guitars against synthesized strings to envelope gorgeous melodies. His compositions have been drawn with the grandeur of classical music while maintaining the simplicity of the most pristine folk music. *Civilized Evil* is of a piece with the several albums since *Upon The Wings*; it seems Ponty has shown little development outside of a growing dependence upon set compositions with a corresponding decline in improvisation. His solos ring with a riveting aura derived from a mastery of electronic enhancement, and what he now lacks in spontaneity, he replaces with a soulful cerebrality—for example, *Once Upon A Blue Planet* is fragile yet exquisitely carved.

The free-wheeling fire that's missing in Ponty's current music can be found in his designated heir, another Frenchman named **Didier Lockwood**. Only 25 years old, Lockwood grew up on the fusion music of Ponty and McLaughlin along with the whole European progressive music scene. Lockwood's earlier album, *New Worlds*, was recorded in a more mainstream acoustic setting, but Surya reflects his background in electrified groups like Magma, Zao, Clearlight, and Pierre Moerlen's Gong. For pure rip-your-guts-out techno-flash, Surya is one of the most exciting fusion albums of recent vintage. Lockwood's improvisations, unlike Ponty's airy sculptures, are lightning-like banzai runs of constructed tension. Lockwood uses all the compositional techniques of Ponty and McLaughlin: high energy drumming from Jean-My Troung locked in synch with Sylvain Marc's deep, modulating bass lines, sudden changes of time and dynamics, and the Indian gat form of solo trade-offs. Lockwood adds intense soloing that bursts out from the momentum of the music itself—an instrumental virtuosity in-

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The violin has been one of the most reluctant of Western instruments to give up its classical traditions. It has grudgingly yielded to pop music as an orchestral sweetener but has been especially recalcitrant about its role in the hands of jazz soloists. The reasons are partially cultural and partially due to the nature of the instrument. Formerly, the violin was considered to be a refined instrument to which only the privileged classes of the day had

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formed by energetic passions. Matching Lockwood's ferocity on pieces like *Agharta* are his brother Francis on piano, and Luc Plouton, one of the few unclinked single-line synthesizer players around. Only two brief funk tunes by Marc, replete with "get down and party" vocals mar this effort.

Zbigniew Seifert is another European who is often mentioned in the same breath as Ponty. But until the U.S. release of *Man Of The Light*, there was no reason to view him as any more than a minor light. His previous albums were derivative efforts seeking simultaneous directions in fusion, funk, and classical forms. However, like Ponty and Lockwood, Seifert has strong roots in the music of John Coltrane, and it is from the modal music of Trane's classic quartet that Seifert draws his finest inspiration. On *Man Of The Light* Seifert has surrounded himself with kindred spirits in bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Billy Hart. Both have played in the post-Coltrane groups of tenorist Pharoah Sanders, and they bring the throbbing circular rhythms that marked the best Coltrane from this era. Rounding out the group is the German Joachim Kuhn, a pianist who has absorbed the work of McCoy Tyner and pours it out in thundering left-hand orchestral chords and brilliant liquid runs in the right hand. Seifert is so strongly plugged into the Coltrane spirit that his compositions would fit unobtrusively into Tyner's songbook. His violin playing has the same ecstatic energy and cries that Coltrane brought from his saxophone, along with a singing lyricism that intertwines with his rhythm section rather than blows across it. In addition to the quartet pieces are two tone poem duets that illustrate Seifert's love of chamber music. *Stillness* has Seifert multi-tracking his violin for a shimmering curtain across McBee's bass. *Love In The Garden* adds keyboardist Jasper van't Hof, whose sombre drones accompany a mournful Seifert dirge. *Man Of The Light* is the most telling testimony to Seifert's spirit. It would have been nice if Pausa had updated Joachim-Ernst Berendt's liner notes to take Seifert's death into account.

American violinist Billy Bang displays many of the same influences as the post-Ponty generation of violinists, but brings to them the black expression of American jazz. You can hear it in the hard, gritty tone, drawn from the darkness of the blues rather than the airy classicism of Grappelli, Ponty, and Lockwood. Though his work with the New York String Trio reflects more of a contemporary classicism than any jazz traditions, *Sweet Space* finds him in the fray alongside a front line of three horns in a concert recording. This is a loose group in which Bang's compositions attractively serve as jumping-off points for extensive solos. *A Pebble Is A Small Rock* is pushed along at a loping pace by drummer Steve McCall, who churns slightly ahead of Wilbur Morris' ostinato bass line. The composition merely punctuates the solos that begin with Bang's warm rhapsodizing, which is quickly forgotten when tenor saxophonist Frank Lowe unleashes a swirling array of overblown squealing. It seems Bangs is hindered by the same problems of

volume faced by Claude Williams half-a-century before. He takes little solo space and yields most of it to Lowe and alto saxophonist Luther Thomas. Bang's reluctance to compete with the horns head-on leaves little room for interaction in the front lines, so *Sweet Space* goes on with one solo after another, leaving the tasks of momentum and direction to the rhythm section. While the playing is satisfying enough, there is a feeling that so much more could have been done.

There's no such feeling with Noel

Pointer's *Calling*. One would never know from this poor effort that Pointer has had to his credit a couple of fine albums that wedded finely-crafted melodies with r&b rhythms and some hot violin playing. With *Calling* Pointer has decided to share his love of God with us, using bloated fanfares and massive orchestral arrangements surrounding misty-eyed platitudes. It comes off like any number of religious and special interest groups trying to peddle their message to a "contemporary" audience. Pointer had his pulse on that audience but seems to have

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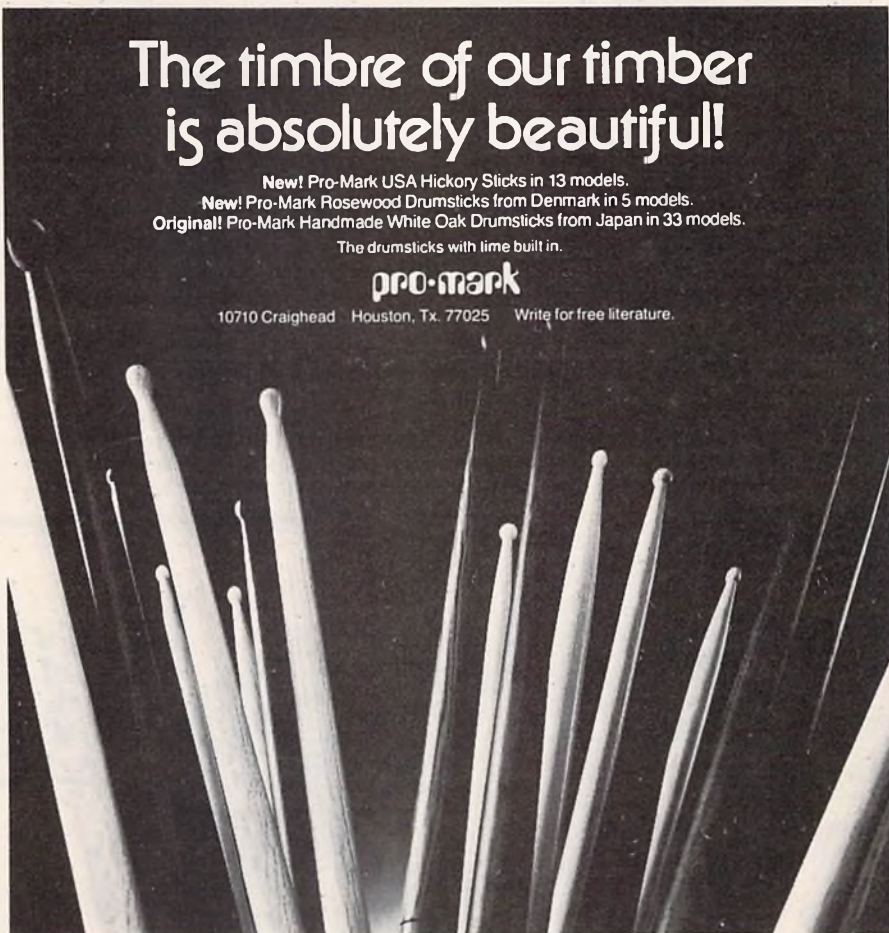
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lost it along with his desire to play violin. The most violin you get here is what you see on the album cover—plus one hard-funk instrumental that is driven more by his bass synthesizer than his Vocorder-laden violin.

Hawley Adams Currens has her bow dipping in two directions. On one end is a classical training that is reflected in an overly academic approach, emphasizing a technique that overshadows the largely improvisational nature of this music. This conflict between technique and free expression never resolves itself, so that even volatile pieces like *Kinetic Dance* evince a detached and over-intellectualized approach. In her attempts to expand her sonic vocabulary, she gives up her basic intonation at times. Accompanying her on "... *Many Years Of Love To You* ..." is the late drummer J. P. Richards, whose style seems derived from the abstractly polyrhythmic work of Sunny Murray. He creates a polyphonic mind field on *Jig*, Curren's most uninhibited excursion. *Integration* is an atmospheric piece in which Curren finds some comfortable ground playing wistfully amidst Richards' subliminal drumming. The album closer, *Resolution*, adds Robert Havens in an ethereal environment of interwoven flute, violin, and Richards' time stepping vibraphone. It's in these introspective settings that Currens seems most at ease.

Like Currens, Malcolm Goldstein also comes from avant garde classical sen-

sibilities. His album of *Soundings* is meant to be an exposition of his feelings and thoughts through improvisation. The solo violin is close-miked so that every nuance and dynamic is captured as Goldstein literally wrenches sound out of his instrument. He plays series after series of textures, drones, and rapid fire dissonances with no continuity or relationship between the sounds. Like Currens, he spends so much time finding unusual sounds that he fails to place them in a convincing context. The two side-long *Soundings* are indistinguishable from each other in content or form and lack the coherency that someone like Leroy Jenkins has brought to similar projects.

On the surface, the final album under consideration has little in common with the preceding nine albums, except for the fact that Walter Steding also plays violin. He comes from the fringes of New York's new wave rock scene and has been giving one-man performances for several years now. Like the other violinists here, Steding is searching for a new vocabulary on a tradition-laden instrument. Coming from a rock direction, Steding modifies his instrument's sound from a jerry-rigged unit worn in a box hung around his waist. The effects he gets range from simple distortion to electronic scribbles, sequences, and some sort of echoplexing. While Goldstein tries to expand the limits of his instrument, Steding has turned it into a totally different axe. Employing a

sparse rhythm section (bass and drums) on most of the tracks, Steding approaches urban alienation and paranoia from two directions. On side one he's a psychic commando with no exit. Zombie dance music is propelled by his eerie violin-triggered electronics while his thin voice intones lyrics to *Woke Up Mixed Up* and *Subterranean Escape*. Big Mama Thornton's *Hound Dog* is scrambled in transmission between guest Robert Fripp's guitar splinters and Steding's chainsaw violin. Side two is more introspective as Steding shows that the only way out may be in. Wailing violin lines course through a metal-on-metal dream-scape. It's hard to tell how much of this is performed in real time or done with overdubs, but the distinction doesn't seem to matter much.

It's a long way from Claude Williams to Walter Steding, but somehow one can picture the small, smoky, subterranean club setting for both musicians to be not so dissimilar in their respective times. The weighty classical tradition has been ignored by some (like Williams and Steding), exploited by others (like the whole European school), and been a block to the likes of Goldstein and Currens, who are extremely self-conscious in trying to find new ways of playing the instrument. However they choose to deal with its past, the state of the violinist in contemporary music is solid and varied and growing.

—john diliberto



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Blindfold Test: TED CURSON

BY LEE JESKE

TED CURSON, THE FIERY and perennially underrated trumpeter, first came to prominence 20 years ago alongside Eric Dolphy in what many feel was one of Charles Mingus' best bands. His work on the classic *Mingus Presents Mingus* and the recently released *Mingus At Antibes* is strong

and subtle.

In the two decades hence, Curson has divided his time between the States and Europe. The '60s found him co-leading a quartet with Kenny Barron before he settled in Europe, becoming a major attraction in Finland, where he has headlined the Pori Jazz Festival since its inception in 1966.

Since resettling in the United States, Curson has

led various aggregations, many featuring baritone saxophonist Nick Brignola. He has toured with the Mingus Dynasty and does frequent trumpet clinics. His album *Tears For Dolphy* is one of the best jazz albums of the 1970s.

Curson, who says, "I love trumpet players," was given no information about the records on this Blindfold Test.



1. KENNY DORHAM. *SMILE* (from *MATADOR*, United Artists). Dorham, trumpet.

Well, that's the uncrowned king. He was almost like my uncle, K.D. That's a guy who should have been big. That's something I don't understand: somebody once told me that Prestige/Riverside put an equal amount of money up for Miles and Kenny, but Kenny didn't make it up to the amount of money they put out. This seems crazy to me, because the guy's very tasty.

As a matter of fact, once he did a Blindfold Test on me and he gave me 100 stars for sounding like him. I'll give him 100 stars back.

2. ROY ELDRIDGE. *OH SHUT UP* (from *I REMEMBER HARLEM*, Inner City). Eldridge, trumpet, composer; Don Byas, tenor saxophone.

That's got to be Roy Eldridge. It sort of eluded me at first because he was playing some kind of half-out thing that I didn't connect with him. I thought it was going to be some younger cat. This man opened the door for so many people. And if I was playing that style, I'd probably play like that, because I like to play the high notes like that.

That was a swinging thing, but I didn't recognize the saxophone player at all; it didn't sound like Coleman Hawkins. For the trumpet playing I'd give it about four stars—for Roy himself—I mean, out of Roy came Dizzy. What can you say, man, he's just a dynamic trumpet player.

3. ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO. *CHARLIE M* (from *FULL FORCE*, ECM). Lester Bowie, trumpet, composer.

It's got to be the Chicago Art Ensemble or, at least, Lester Bowie on trumpet. I'm not that crazy about the mixing of the two things—the hip and the free jazz. I don't know which way they're trying to go, what their point is. If it was all free, it would be different, or all inside. But the mixture . . . I have to give them two stars. I think they're trying to get some Duke Ellington sound.

LJ: It's for Mingus, Charlie M.

TC: For Mingus? Yeah, I could hear it that way. Because Mingus was trying to do a lot of things Ellington did. He never would admit that.

4. WALTER BENTON. *AZIL* (from *OUT OF THIS WORLD*, Jazzland). Freddie Hubbard, trumpet; Benton, alto saxophone, composer. Recorded 1960.

I heard a couple of Kenny Dorham licks in there, but that sounded like Freddie. He played very good. Sounds good, whoever it is. There's a lot of guys into that now—Freddie's got a lot of clones. That might be a Freddie Hubbard clone. Even in the ensemble he was very clean. The solos were well-knit, put together, and thought-out. It sounded like Ira Sullivan's sound, but I'll stay with Freddie. I'd say about three-and-a-half stars. Three-and-a-half is good, right?

5. FREDDIE HUBBARD. *RUSTIC CELEBRATION* (from *SKAGLY*, Columbia). Hubbard, trumpet; Billy Childs, keyboard, composer. Recorded 1979.

You're not going to play me two Freddie Hubbards in a row, are you? It sounds like Freddie again, in a different context.

I like the arrangement very much. I think it was well played, and I like the concept. It sounds to me like a cat who didn't really want to do that kind of a date, though. It seems that the trumpet player really wants to stretch, and in this context, for a thing like this, you shouldn't play that many notes. You should just go for a groove and try to funk it up. That tells me right away that he doesn't really want to do this, he's having a problem with himself. He's got the technique, but he's doing this for whatever reason—for business or to sell records, or 'cause his record company told him to do it, or his wife.

For the arrangement I'd give it three-and-a-half stars, for the trumpet player I'd give it another half. Make it four stars.

6. OLD AND NEW DREAMS. *NEXT TO THE QUIET STREAM* (from *OLD AND NEW DREAMS*, Black Saint). Don Cherry, pocket trumpet, composer; Dewey Redman, tenor.

That's an Ornette Coleman-type arrangement, and if it's not Don Cherry I'll eat that tape recorder. Don Cherry reminds me of one of those bugs you get around your ear. Either you like him or you don't like him. I'd give him five stars and I'll tell you why; he managed to establish himself in such a way

that everybody, if they play that way, they're copying him. I don't know how he got to that point. And that's five stars as far as I'm concerned—getting people to identify you.

A lot of those tunes are the same—it's more fun to play them than to listen to them. I'll give them five stars, though, because I have a free-jazz soul.

7. JACK WALRATH. *KING DUKE* (from *DEMONS IN PURSUIT*, Gatemouth). Walrath, trumpet, composer; John Scofield, guitar; Jim McNeely, piano; Ray Drummond, bass; Dannie Richmond, drums.

You're deep now. I don't know the composition, but it's like a Mingus-type composition. So it's got to be one of the people who used to play with Mingus. That really sounds like Mingus' writing, man, or somebody who was inspired by Mingus. It sounds like this guy, Walrath, but I have no idea who it really is.

The piano player was excellent, and the guitar player sounded like an exceptional player. All those cats sounded like they did a lot of studying, they didn't sound like what you'd call natural musicians who just picked up the instrument. That's about two-and-a-half stars.

8. BENNY CARTER. *I'M COMING VIRGINIA* (from *JAZZ GIANT*, Contemporary). Carter, trumpet; Ben Webster, tenor saxophone.

Nobody plays like that anymore. When a guy plays with a vibrato I know it's Clark Terry, but not this wide. Harry James? Ruby Braff? No, I would say that's Warren Vache and Scott Hamilton.

That wide vibrato on the trumpet is an old style type thing, like out of Harry James. I like that kind of groove, it's a hard groove to play. The trumpet player had good chops, but he didn't really play anything very high. You don't hear many young guys play that way; in fact you hear no young guys play that way, except maybe one or two, like Warren Vache. I don't think that's bad—building on some of the great things the older cats have done. For that type of music, I'd say three stars.

LJ: That was Benny Carter.

TC: I never heard him play trumpet. Now you'll never get me on that again. **db**

Profile:



HARRY ZEITLIN

NELS & ALEX CLINE

BY LEE UNDERWOOD

Of the twin Cline brothers—Alex and Nels—percussionist Alex first came to prominence in 1976 when he played with saxophonist Oliver Lake, then recorded *Duo Infinity* (Aten 0010) with another avant garde saxophonist, Jamil Shabaka. "That recording opened me up fully to improvisational music, although my interests continue to be wide and varied." Alex went on to record Vinny Golia's *Spirits In Fellowship* (Nine Winds 0101), *Openhearted* (Nine Winds 0102), and . . . *In The Right Order* . . . (Nine Winds 1013), as well as saxophonist Tim Berne's *The Five-Year Plan* (Empire EPC 24K), *7X* (Empire EPC 36K), and Walter Thompson's *Stardate* (Dane 002).

Acoustic/electric guitarist Nels also performed on Golia's *Openhearted* and Berne's *7X*, as well as on saxophonist Thompson's *Stardate*, but is most excited about the 1981 release of his own album *Elegies* (Nine Winds 0105), a superb duo LP with Cline's acoustic six- and 12-string guitars, and Eric von Essen on acoustic bass, with extended compositions by both members.

In 1979, the two-year-old duo of Nels and von Essen expanded into a quartet adding brother Alex on percussion and Jeff Gauthier on violin. Since its forma-

tion, the quartet has successfully appeared at the Century City Playhouse, Beyond Baroque, the Storie-Crawford Dance Studio, and most recently at Rudy Onderwyzer's famous Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach, "the world's oldest jazz club and waterfront dive." Featuring original compositions by Nels and Eric, the duo and the quartet contexts are model settings for all involved.

"We play tonal music," said Nels, "but also free associate tonality the way Keith Jarrett and Charlie Haden did on, say, their Prayer duet, which for years was, to me, the only musical antecedent for the music Eric and I were doing. Our improvisations parallel Jarrett's solo piano improvisations, with Keith's tendency to get into hypnotic chordal patterns, pedal points, and simple melodic structures. His is perhaps the only music that sounds anything like ours." A graduate of UCLA Music School, von Essen plays bass, tablas, guitar, and Bill Evans-influenced piano. Stylistically, Ralph Towner is probably the composer closest to Eric, who has natural melodic ability and well-trained musicality. "In the quartet now, we are attempting to blend three acoustic instruments [guitar, violin, bass] with Alex's percussion set. Even though Alex plays lightly, we nevertheless structure the music in order to let him drown us out at times," said Nels.

Indeed, given the subdued, subtle, hypnotic quality of much of the quartet's music, it is hard to imagine a drummer who would be capable of driving and coloring the music to the

degree Alex does without burying it all under a mountain of cymbals and skins. But Alex does it.

"If I can hear everything," said the bearded 25-year-old percussionist, "I know when my playing will be too much or just right. In this quartet, the dynamic situation must be approached with great delicacy. It's been quite a discipline for me.

"For the quartet, I use a smaller version of my larger set-up. The larger set-up, which takes two-and-a-half hours to assemble, includes six gongs, lots of bells, tubes, cake pans, bowls, license plates, glockenspiels, ice bells, some metal disks called ogororos, Chinese and Tibetan cymbals and bells, wrenches, trash can lids, Chinese tomtoms, Roto-toms, a 16-inch bass drum, a snare drum, a flat ride cymbal, and three swish cymbals. Most of the drums are old Camcos, and most of the cymbals are A. Zildjians.

"I use regular drum sticks, soft wool mallets, harder felt mallets, some still-harder mallets, some giockenspiel hard rubber mallets, bouncy rubber mallets, brushes, flexible nylon sticks, chopsticks, knitting needles, and wood-block beaters with rubber tips."

Both Nels and Alex embrace a wide range of musical tastes. "I still listen to straight jazz," said Nels, "but not with the same exclusive fervor I once did. I can't stand musical snobbishness. I like jazz, and I also like social energy, protest music, spiritual music, and incredibly emotional music. I like free music, such as Vinny Golia's trio, which plays with such intensity that some people are outraged while others are hypnotized. I like Chilean folk music. I like the Clash. I like Charlie Haden, with whom I played at McCabe's along with Bobby Bradford. I like Keith Jarrett, Otis Rush, Albert King, Bob Marley."

Said Alex: "I have a broad orientation toward playing percussion, especially in the last couple of years. One minute I'll play with Vinny Golia's trio, the next I'll play bebop with saxophonist Frank Morgan, the next with Nels and Eric's more classically-oriented quartet. Then I'll play with Tim Berne and a string quartet, or work extensively with dancer/choreographer Margaret Schuette, composing the music and performing it live with her. I've also played standards with the Horace Tapscott trio.

"Then there's my solo playing, the first album of which I'm recording on Nine Winds, a two-record set entitled *Not Alone*. I have a lot to say and a large repertoire of music that covers a variety of feelings, moments, impressions."

Born in Los Angeles on January 4, 1956, the twins today are quick to give

full credit to their parents for supporting and encouraging them. "We were very lucky that way," they said. "Most parents discourage their children if they want to drop out of school and become musicians. But our parents, both teachers, understood it when we left college to become professional composers and performers, and for that we are especially grateful."

By 1966-67 both brothers were listening to rock music—the Byrds, the Stones, Jimi Hendrix, the Mothers of Invention, Captain Beefheart, and blues artists.

"I thought the electric guitar had a cool sound, plus guys who played electric guitars were always cool cats," said Nels. "I thought, well, I'm just a skinny guy, so I'll be a cool cat, too. My dad bought me a Melody guitar for \$20, which he later found out wasn't even a good deal."

Today Nels plays a variety of guitars with equal virtuosity, taste, energy, and passion, including a 1952 Martin 0017 six-string, a Yairi hand-made Japanese classical, a Taylor 12-string (made in San Diego), a 1971 electric Gibson ES 335, a 3/4-size electric Rickenbacker 12-string, a 1941 Gibson Hawaiian steel, and a 1978 Fender Stratocaster. "Although I used to play both acoustic and electric in concert with Vinny Golia, I no longer play both at the same time. I play either acoustic concerts or electric concerts."

In the early '70s, "when everything disintegrated in rock," the brothers Cline turned to jazz, especially Miles Davis, Eric Dolphy, John McLaughlin, and John Coltrane.

"I was into John Coltrane," said Nels, "but nobody played guitar like that. I felt very lost, and I floundered for about four years. McLaughlin was an influence, as was Jan Akkerman. Later, Terje

Rypdal came in, with *What Comes After*. He had the moodiness, the dark tonality, and he wasn't playing strictly tonal music.

Alex's initial interest in jazz stemmed primarily from Tony Williams. "Tony's music, from the time he was 17 up through his *Ego* album with John McLaughlin, had the freeness of jazz with the sound of rock, and his drumming at a consistent genius level boggled my mind. Through Tony, I got turned on to Miles Davis—*Bitches Brew*, *Silent Way*, *Live-Evil*. From there, we got into Chick Corea, Weather Report, Herbie Hancock, all of whom were playing very interesting electric music. That was the direction I got interested in.

"My big turnaround, however, was listening to Woody 'Sonship' Theus in 1973. The visionary aspect of his playing is great, as is his pure intensity, his hyper-technique, and his rhythmic invention, coming heavily out of Elvin Jones and Tony Williams, but redefined in a unique way. To this day, Sonship and British percussionist Frank Perry are the two most profound influences on me.

"Although I took lessons, most of my playing came out of inspiration, then trying to figure out how to play what I heard, with extended periods of sounding like a complete spastic. Then I heard Kenneth Nash and Frank Perry, both of whom used a lot of bells, table blocks, and hand drums in such a magical, musical way. I saw such things could be truly effective, and I started seriously collecting things whenever I could," said Alex.

For the entire group, their recent Lighthouse gig marked the end of the past, the beginning of the future, perhaps the first step towards national recognition and appreciation. db

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HARRY ZEITLIN

Bill Lewis

BY RUSSELL WOESSNER

"Some people are involved in jazz just to make money. I know that making money is important because you have to survive, but cultivating the art and keeping it alive is more important to me than making money." Bill Lewis, whose words these are, has not made a lot of money from jazz. But as a teacher, composer, vibraphonist, and music director of the Long March Jazz Academy, he may be as important as anyone else in keeping the art of jazz alive in Philadelphia.

Born July 10, 1927, Lewis grew up in a middle-class family in racially-mixed South Philadelphia. He says, "A lot of musicians come out of South Philly, so I've been around music, even when I wasn't into it. Some of the fine musicians at that time, especially in South Philly, were the Heath Brothers, Bobby Timmons, and Sam Reed, a fine alto player. There was a very fine drummer by the name of Ronald Tucker who played with Sonny Stitt for quite a while. There were people like Mickey Roker from South Philly. He was east of Broad Street, I'm west of Broad.

"Jazz was a way of life in my part of town. In any section of Philadelphia, especially any black section, that would be the way of life. I'd always wanted to get involved with music myself, but I started late. I was always a collector of jazz. I had one of the real fine jazz collections with my two younger brothers. It was a thing with the fellows that we hung out with on the weekends to sit and listen. I had all the Charlie Parker and Gillespie things, all the old Blue Notes, Savoy's, the Dials, all of those. When I was coming up, we would go to the Earle Theatre every Monday. We saw all the good bebop groups, all the good jazz groups. It was a joke that no one went to school on Mondays. The truant officers would come down to the Earle and take attendance. This was a way of life."

After completing his military service during the Korean War years, Lewis enrolled in the Granoff School of Music at the age of 27 under the G.I. Bill. He remembers telling his teachers at the school—which was more oriented to classical music than to jazz—"I wouldn't know a note if it knocked me down." At Granoff, he came under the tutelage of Adolph Sandole and percussion instructor Nelson Ward. By the time he graduated, four years later, he knew enough notes to be invited to teach there—which he continued to do for 15 years. Even today, Lewis is a

member of the Board at Granoff.

At about the same time, Bill Lewis began a career as a peripheral computer operator with the federal government. He purposely did not try to make jazz his livelihood because of his responsibilities to his family. "Whether I played a gig or not, I ate and my family ate. I deliberately wanted it that way because I didn't want to make that sacrifice."

On the other hand, Lewis knew that by the time his children were grown, he could take his early retirement option and devote even more of his time to jazz. In 1976, he retired from the government and assumed the position of Music Director of the Long March Jazz Academy, a not-for-profit facility whose staff of jazz musicians has included saxophonist Byard Lancaster, trumpeters Youseff Yancy and Billy Carr, and percussionist Keno Speller. Originally crammed into a storefront at 4th and South Streets, the Long March recently moved into much larger quarters at 601 South Broad Street in Philadelphia. In the new building, which seats 500 people, Lewis and the other instructors hold their classes and occasionally present concerts by both Philadelphia-based and nationally-known artists. (Recently, the man whom Lewis acknowledges to have been his inspiration, Lionel Hampton, brought his orchestra to the Long March.)

The concerts are only part of Lewis' activities; jazz education is equally important. Lewis says, "I don't know if I get a bigger kick out of playing music or teaching it. I like them both. I know I would rather play concerts than play in bars. I would rather play for children, I think, than anybody else. They're the hippest audience in the world. Children are really hip because they are not hung up with clichés and titles and names. Especially little children, they're not worried about the fact that it's a jazz group and not a rock group. If you're playing right and they can dance, then they'll dance. I watch them sometimes when we play on the street. Even the little kids in their coach, they tap their foot, they really feel the rhythm. They don't worry about the fact that that's a jazz group, so that's no good. That doesn't bother them. It's the adults that have the problem. They don't even give themselves the chance to say 'Hey, let me listen to this music and see if it's really good.' It's not important to know who the person is who's playing. How good does it sound to you, that's the name of the game, rather than dealing with labels. Jazz is an authentic art form. It's as American as it can be—it's like apple pie. I think children should be exposed to it at a very young age."

This emphasis on the primacy of sound, not labels, has always been a part of Lewis' musical concept. He remembers being frustrated by the "rules" of bebop. "The one thing that I found that I didn't like about bebop was that it's a patterned music. I mean that if you listen to enough of it, you can almost hum a guy's solo before he plays it, because that's the way it was designed. There are certain things you did on certain chords and you dared not do anything else or you broke a rule. So I would go to a club and find that I could almost hum a guy's lick before he played it. So it kind of lost interest for me. I said, 'Wow, there's got to be more to it than this.' I refused to accept it. If it's an art form, it's got to grow. Not that the caliber of the musicians wasn't superb, but I just didn't hear any different ideas happening.

"When Ornette Coleman first came to Philly to the Showboat, I can remember being there with a lot of really talented musicians, and they were all sort of mystified. These guys were seasoned and I was just an apprentice, so I didn't want to voice my opinion. But the one thing that I said to



ROBERTA COREN

myself, what fascinated me, was that I couldn't hum his solos—I didn't know what he was going to do next—and this kept me on the edge of my seat. This was what I wanted. This was what it should be about. This is what keeps it interesting.

"Musicians used to say that Eric Dolphy didn't play on the changes right, and I couldn't understand that. I felt that if it sounded right, then it should be right. What they were saying was that he didn't follow the norm. Not that he couldn't, because he could play bebop very well, but he just didn't follow the norm; this is what he heard."

In his own music Lewis is also unconcerned with following norms. He may play anything from swing or bebop-styled tunes to modally-based or completely atonal original compositions. A local radio station, the community-supported WXPB-FM, has managed to preserve the widest variety of Lewis' work. Beginning when Michael Cuscuna was on its staff, WXPB has recorded Bill Lewis in concerts ranging from solo vibraphones to a 30-piece orchestra. One such recording, an impressionistic duet with marimbist Khan Jamal called *The River*, is available on Philly Jazz Records (P.O. Box 8167, Philadelphia, PA 19101). The album received a four-star review in *Down Beat* (June '80). In a *Coda* review, a comparison was made between the interplay of the two musicians and that "of other successful duo combinations: Braxton/Holland, Dolphy/Davis, Ellington/Blanton, etc." It was said that "together, Lewis and Jamal create an irresistible sound: colorful, though never gaudy; flowing, though never aggressive."

Despite this praise, recording remains a low priority for Lewis—more important is the growth of jazz as an art form. Regarding this preference for experimental or new music, Lewis says, "When things are new, people are quick not to accept them—because people sort of fall into a rut and they just don't want to bother to go through changes—but they have to learn that it's part of life. You change everyday. The art form must change. The art form should represent the times that you're living in, as opposed to representing times gone by."

Perhaps most important are Lewis' efforts to gain wider acceptance of jazz by the public. He sees his mission as "trying to get people to realize the value and importance of jazz to people, to this country, to everything." In Philadelphia, the value and importance of Bill Lewis as educator, composer, and performer is spiritually, if not financially, incalculable. He is one of the city's richest musical assets. **db**

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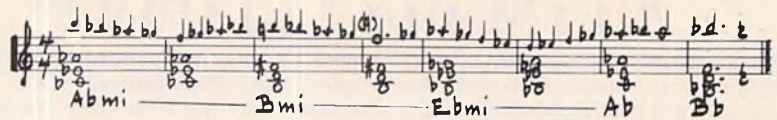
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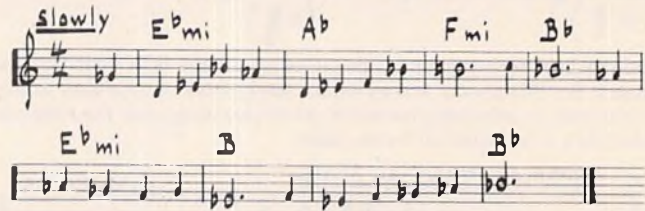
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If melodies merely ran along scales, choosing a chord progression would be a matter of lining up chords which would fit scale segments and still would sound interesting in succession:

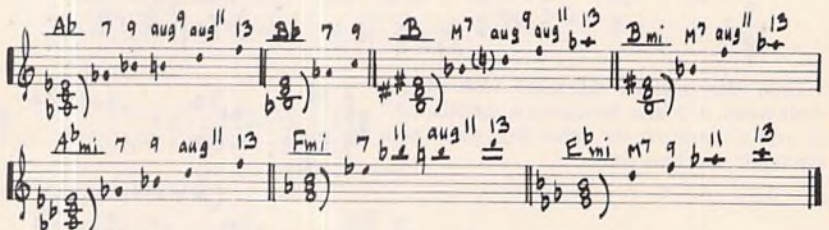


But melodies leap as well as move scalewise, thus forming irregular segments which also must be tested against chords to avoid offensive notes. Here is a melody using all eight notes of the demonstration scale harmonized by five of the inherent triads:



Two points in favor of using triads to accompany exotic scales remain:

- 1). Successions of unrelated triads impose few, if any, restrictions on root progressions and voice-leading.
- 2). In a melody, the non-offensive active notes automatically supply 7ths, 9ths, 11ths, or 13ths to whatever triad might be accompanying them, thereby enriching the total harmonic effect, while relieving the need for chord extensions as part of the accompaniment.



Additional information on unrelated-triad harmony will be found in *How To Accentuate The Triad*, down beat, May, 1980. **db**

COLEMAN

continued from page 19

1950. I knew hardly any white guys. Sometimes when the vice squad would stop me, they'd say "If you're having trouble, go out and get in the studios . . ." but at that time there were hardly any black guys in the studios. I didn't have any idea I'd be up against those things, but I hadn't been to a non-racial state before . . . plus when I went to a jam session and some musicians from the East would let me sit in, they would all give me such a negative feeling. I remember once in Eric's house, with Clifford Brown and I, they were trying to play *Donna Lee*, at rehearsal. I knew it before I came to California. I was just sitting there listening, and I said "Oh, I know it," so they said "Play it." I picked my horn

up and played it and Clifford came over to me and said "Oh, man . . ." Now I had gone there to hear them, I was admiring someone who was doing something I wanted to do. Then he asked me to sit in and play. But the thing about it is as soon as I started playing the way that I just naturally heard, which wasn't using the changes any more, they just assumed that was the concept I had gotten out of bebop, which wasn't true; I had just grown to become like that. After staying in California so long and studying, I outgrew that acceptance to just play bebop.

One night they let me sit in at the California Club. Max Roach and Clifford's group—at least the rhythm

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section—walked off the stand. They just stopped, but I kept playing. I thought it was very strange because I could have kept along with them.

LF: Did you ever come to a meeting of the minds with them?

OC: No, but I've had experiences with musicians in New York who've come to my house; for instance, David Izenzon came with his bass—first time I met him—and said "I'm going to play with you." The next day he called me up and asked me to form a band. But many musicians have called me up and wanted to have some musical relationship with me. So I felt then like I know those musicians are feeling a bond with me, and instead of rejecting them, I took them in.

A couple of months ago I got in a cab and told the driver my name; he put on a cassette of him playing the clarinet. I told him "I can't listen to that now, but here's my phone number, call me." Seven o'clock, the guy called and played me *Foggy Day* for an hour over the phone, and told me how he could outdate Benny Goodman. It was unbelievable, and he was sincere. He said "I can't get no one to listen to me." I listened to every note and told him "It sounds good." So that's how I felt around Clifford and those guys, like, here are some men I admire, maybe they'll let me join them, or assist me.

LF: So you were in the same position as the cab driver, except you didn't reject him.

OC: I think that's just the way the music world is: people like what you do and they want to participate in it.

LF: Are you going to be trying to do some more night club work?

OC: I'm going to try and put a tour

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together with this band, Prime Time. I also was producing a record with Cecil Taylor, with Prime Time, I was working on it before I left New York. Also I'm working on a large symphony called *The Oldest Language* for 125 people. I'm going to try to put a band together with two members out of each state. I can't afford to do it now, but when I can, I'm going to do it.

LF: *The Oldest Language* being music?

OC: Yes.

LF: Do you have time to do any teaching any more?

OC: I haven't in the last two years, but I'm getting re-established in New York and I'm going to start teaching four or five students. That's something I like to do—and it's something that should be done—because lots of people ask me about harmolodic; they think that I'm just making it up. It's not easy to understand. One reason is there's not a lot of information . . . James Ulmer has a record out, with one of his charts in it that he studied with me, but you have to understand how he's using his chart.
LF: What do you see yourself doing or having accomplished 10 years from now?

OC: I think I will be able to create the harmolodic orchestra, and out of that I hope many individuals will be able to find their own expression. What I would like to do is participate in that which brings the individual to his own self-expression—whether that's 10 years from now, or tomorrow. As long as I can participate in helping the individual to find his true expression, that is the human and social relationship that I devote my talents to. Whether they outdate what I'm doing, or whether they cause me to work harder, that's just the way it is. **db**

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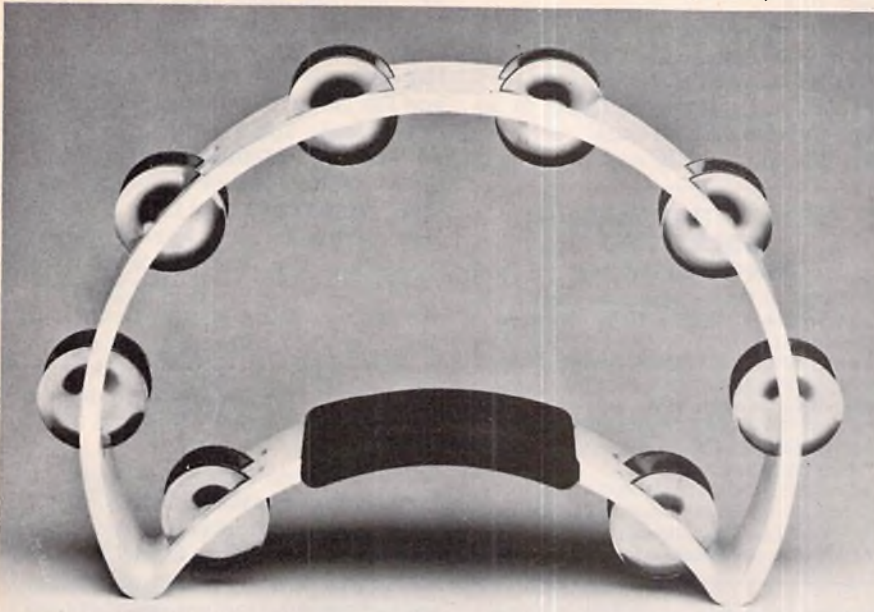
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on that tune, because I wrote and arranged it, and it's what I feel. It's a minor blues—that's my best feeling—and I tried to give it an identity. It's not just another 12-bar blues."

The *Twelve Bar Blues* happens to be the title of another witty Johnson composition. "I've got the 12-bar blues," goes the lyric. "I've been to 10 or 12 bars tonight." The final stanza—"I've got the interviews, the flashbulbs are all I see; cover of *Living Blues* is where I hope to be"—proved to be prophetic, and Jimmy was the subject of an exhaustive feature in that magazine.

Jimmy often strays from the blues, tackling c&w tunes and even the challenging jazz tempo of Paul Desmond's *Take Five*. "I'm pretty well free to play what I want to on most gigs," he says, "but I can't play a certain thing all night. The 12-bar pattern is beautiful, but if you just keep repeating it, it gets monotonous. But I think blues is what I do best, because I really feel 'em."

With a father who played guitar and harmonica and an uncle who played fiddle, Jimmy was drawn to music early in life. Born in 1928 in Holly Springs, Mississippi, Jimmy Thompson (he changed his name to Johnson after brother Syl was mistakenly re-christened on a recording contract) heard B.B. King, Muddy Waters, Lightnin' Hopkins, John Lee Hooker, and Sonny Boy Williamson in Mississippi roadhouses where even children were welcome. He sang gospel from the age of 10, joining the United Five in Memphis and the Golden Jubilaires in Chicago before buying his first guitar from bluesman Billy Boy Arnold. For Jimmy, the transition from gospel to blues was not difficult. "It's basically the same. If you're singing gospel, you're singing about God, and if you're singing the blues, you're singing about your woman or your troubles.

"I've never had an idol," he says, "never modelled myself after anybody," although he greatly admired his friend and next-door neighbor Magic Sam. While working with Harmonica Slim Willis, he studied guitar with Reggie Boyd and organized his own soul group in the early '60s. Later in the decade he dissolved his band and accompanied stars like Otis Clay, Denise LaSalle, Tyrone Davis, and his brother Syl.

Johnson attributes the demise of local r&b to the take-over of black nightspots by pre-disco "record spinners" with their sophisticated stereo systems. "At one time," says Jimmy, "I made a whole lot of money playing r&b, and some big-time blues cats had to get day jobs, because when rock &

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roll came in, there was no audience for the blues. Then some of the white boys started playing blues and let the people hear it, so the blues came around again. Now there's an audience for the blues, but there's no audience for r&b at all. I see some white bands playing r&b now, stuff like Otis Clay, O. V. Wright, and Tyrone Davis. To the people, that's new music—they never heard it before.

"Any type of music that gets popular all of a sudden will go back down, but jazz and blues don't jump big and they never die. The blues has to get a little more modern, otherwise it'll make a turn for the worse. I try to play my own ideas—an idea that I've never heard anybody play. People will listen to anything if it's got something to offer, if you make it stand out. You can play a tune with the right melody and everything, but there's something else you've got to have. I can't pinpoint it, but I know when I've found it. I keep messin' with the melody until I can make it jump—otherwise it would just be like peckin' on a wall."

The blues remains very much alive, but the blues of the 1980s mirrors its time as faithfully as the blues of the '30s or the '50s. Although older bluesmen still perform in the idioms of the past, there will never be another Howlin' Wolf, much less a Blind Lemon Jefferson. Even European devotees who demand all-black bands and immutable 12-bar structures will eventually discover what Chicago audiences already know: the blues, like jazz, is not a holy liturgy set in stone, but an organic and ever-changing art form that can be distorted as readily by naive notions of authenticity as by more blatant forms of commercial pressure. **db**

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