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# down beat®

THE CONTEMPORARY MUSIC MAGAZINE

## SPYROGYRA

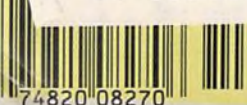
*Movin',  
Groovin' &  
Doing It!*

**KOOL  
JAZZ  
FESTIVAL**  
*Double Attack*

**CHET BAKER**  
*Silent Honesty—  
And His Understated  
Trumpet Style*



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DORDRECHT NETHERLANDS  
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**14 SPYRO GYRA**  
"Relaxin' At 30,000 Volts": The high-energy sextet recognizes crossover as an economic fact, not an artistic definition, as they aim for the international market, promoting themselves where the record companies leave off. They work hard to get their audience to loosen up, but truly believe in keeping the crowd riveted; still the band has fun on stage, and relaxation is the key to the success of their music. All were at ease during this interview by Peter Rothbart.

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Miles Davis: Kind of Kool



Chet Baker

ANDREW SWAIN/DANVERS CAMERA

TOM COPI

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Jack Maher

**ASSOCIATE EDITORS**  
Charles Doherty  
Art Lange

**EDUCATION EDITOR**  
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**DESIGN AND ART DIRECTION**  
Bill Linehan

**PRODUCTION MANAGER**  
Gloria Baldwin

**CIRCULATION DIRECTOR**  
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Charles Suber

**COMPTROLLER**  
Gary Edwards

**RECORD REVIEWERS:** Jon Balleras, Owen Cordle, Francis Davis, Sam Freedman, Richard Friedman, Lee Jeske, Art Lange, Frankie Nemko-Graham, Bradley Parker-Sparrow, Joel Rothstein, Bill Shoemaker, Jack Sohmer, Cliff Tinder.

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Larry Birnbaum, Steve Bloom, Bob Blumenthal, Tom Copi, Collis Davis, Leonard Feather, Peter Keepnews, John McDonough, Herb Nolan, Veryl Oakland, Darryl Pitt, Tim Schneckothe, Zan Stewart, Pete Weidling, Herb Wong.

**CORRESPONDENTS:** Baltimore, Fred Douglass; Boston, Fred Bouchard; Buffalo, John H. Hunt; Cleveland, C. A. Colombi; Chicago, Jim DeJong; Denver, Bob Cafalotti; Detroit, David Wild; Kansas City, Carol Comer; Las Vegas, Brian Sanders; Miami/Ft. Lauderdale, Jack Sohmer; Milwaukee, Joya Caryl; Montreal, Ron Sweetman; New Orleans, Frank Nicotera; Philadelphia, Russell Woessner; Pittsburgh, David J. Fabilli; St. Louis, Gregory J. Marshall; San Francisco, John Howard; Southwest, Bob Henschen; Toronto, Mark Miller; Washington, DC, W. A. Brower; Argentina, Alisha Krynski; Brazil, Marilyn Balamici; Central Europe, Eric T. Vogel; Denmark, Birger Jorgenson; Gambia, Oko Dralme; Germany, Joachim-Ernst Berendt; Great Britain, Brian Priestley; Italy, Ruggero Stassi; Japan, Sholchi Yui; Netherlands, Jaap Ludeke; Norway, Randi Hultin; Poland, Charles Gans; Senegal, Francis Senghor; Sweden, Lars Lystedt.

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## EDITORIAL

ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:  
**EXECUTIVE OFFICE:** 222 W. Adams St., Chicago, IL 60606.  
(312)346-7811  
**East Coast:** Lee Jeske  
(212)286-9208  
**West Coast:** A. James Liska  
(213)704-7336

## ADVERTISING SALES OFFICES:

**East:** Dennis S. Page, Larry Smuckler  
Jeffrey/Richard Associates, Inc. 310 E.  
44th St., Suite 7170, New York, NY 10017  
(212)490-7950

**Midwest:** Charles Suber, Jack Maher  
222 W. Adams St., Chicago, IL 60606  
(312)346-7811

**West:** Frank Garlock, 458 W. Douglas  
Ave., El Cajon, CA 92020  
(714)440-1289

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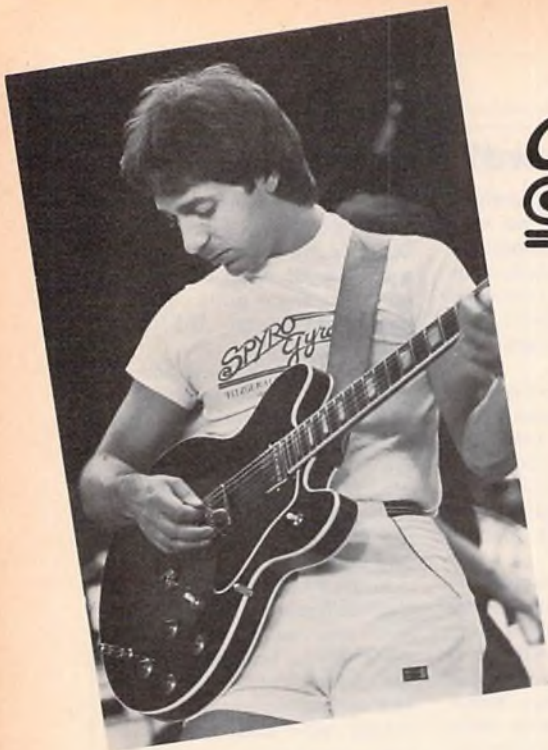
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# SPYRO Gyra

BY PETER ROTHBART



**I**n many ways, the people who make up Spyro Gyra typify the music they play. Their music is an eclectic cross-section of current trends. Latin rhythms, extended forms, and an emphasis on ensemble playing are all combined by a group of musicians who studied in schools, in clubs, and in the recording studios.

Spyro Gyra began to take form in Buffalo, New York in 1975. The band's personnel roster never really solidified until after their first album began moving up the charts. Their business savvy increased with the size of their audiences.

Jay Beckenstein's saxophone lines reflect his personality—clear, concise, and extremely articulate. As the acknowledged founder, leader, and co-producer of the band, Beckenstein seemed best equipped to voice the thoughts of the internationally popular sextet.

Drummer Eli Konikoff and percussionist Gerardo Velez combine with guitarist Chet Catallo and bassist David Wolford to back Beckenstein's soaring sax. Tom Schuman completes the ensemble behind a battery of keyboards. Jeremy Wall remains inextricably involved with the ensemble as a writer and co-producer.

## RELAXIN' AT 30,000 VOLTS

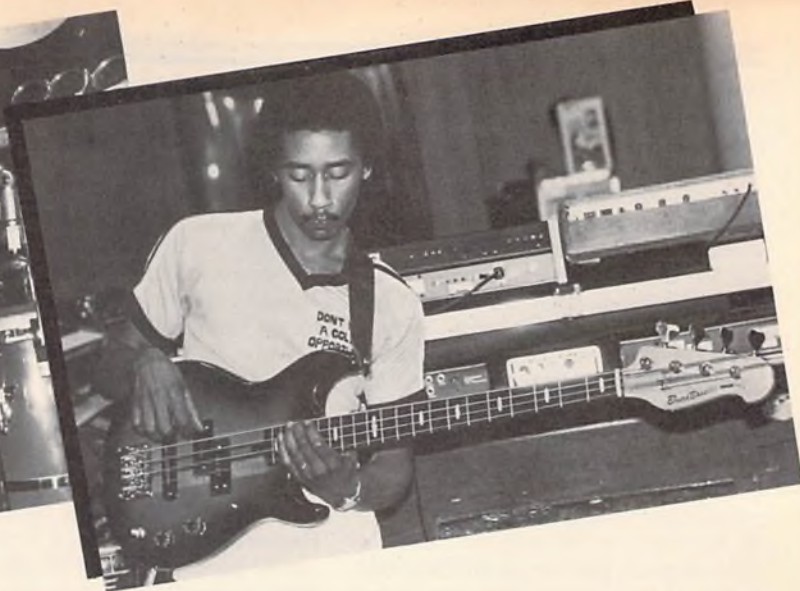
**Peter Rothbart:** In many ways, Spyro Gyra was a musician's dream come true. How did you get started?

**Jay Beckenstein:** Spyro Gyra started as a loose concept by myself and Jeremy Wall, which we developed in high school. We separated and went to different colleges. I went to Buffalo in New York. When Jeremy finished school, the musical community in Buffalo was a little hotter so he came up to Buffalo. The two of us, along with

a couple of friends, held loose jams on Tuesdays when we weren't working in regular money-making dance bands. The band picked up where we left off in high school. We were doing our own material. At about that time, Tom and Eli got involved, although they were in and out of the band. We were in the bars for about a year and becoming very popular locally.

**P. R.:** When did you make the jump from being a bar band?

**J. B.:** Spyro Gyra was never a bar band in the sense of playing Top 40 music and having people dance to it. That wasn't the point. We were playing in bands like that already. On a night off we'd do this Spyro Gyra thing, without trying to make money—just trying to do something original and play our own material, because we weren't doing that in other bands. Perhaps the crossover came when we decided that we weren't going to play in those other



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bands at all. We decided to do Spyro Gyra full-time. We gave up all our other work and were playing seven nights a week in seven different bars in Buffalo. But always working for the door at a pretty low level.

**P. R.:** Doesn't sound very promising.  
**J. B.:** No, but we were playing 100 percent international material. The clubs were usually real small places that wouldn't ordinarily have live music. We'd set up in the corner.

**Eli Konikoff:** I had a small setup: snare, hi-hat, bass drum, and cymbal.

**J. B.:** That band started out playing half originals and half other people's material. Everything from instrumental versions of Stevie Wonder tunes to . . .

**E. K.:** Watermelon Man . . .

**J. B.:** . . . to imitations of Weather Report tunes. But before we even started to record, we were playing 100 percent originals. Richard Calandra

then entered the picture. Richard was a musician who had been involved in a pretty serious auto accident. He was a drummer struggling to get his body back in shape after the accident. He started feeling like he wanted to stay in music, but maybe being a drummer wasn't the way. So he got involved in production. He started having dreams about being a producer and running a studio.

Richie got a hold of me and we started a production company on our meager funds because we got a very good studio deal outside of Buffalo. The deal was so good that we were able to produce many acts. Spyro Gyra was just one of the many things we were doing. As a matter of fact, it was the one we considered to be the least commercial. Another year went by and Spyro Gyra slowly accumulated a full album's worth of material. We started

shopping around with it, but everything got turned down—Spyro Gyra, our other projects, the whole shot. Nobody was buying what we had. With our last money and with what we thought was the end of the band, we put out *Spyro Gyra* on our own label, *Crosseyed Bear*, and promoted it locally.

**E. K.:** *Shaker Song* was the single off that record.

**J. B.:** At that stage, we started selling a lot more records locally than we thought. Thousands of them. We couldn't even get them pressed in time because Elvis had just died, and the pressing plants couldn't get us records fast enough. We were distributing through a local company which was owned by Lenny Silver. Lenny saw the possibilities in the records and signed us to a recording contract. Through Lenny that record sold almost 200,000



copies.

At that point this current band was put together. We could offer a decent wage and a decent lifestyle. I brought back people who had come in contact with the band and were something special in the past. When I got the chance to look around and have any drummer I wanted in the band, it was Eli I called. The same with Tommy. Chet, Gerardo, and David have come in since that time. Lenny sold our record to Infinity Records. The next record was *Morning Dance* and it went gold and the band was really launched.

**P. R.:** What was your reaction when you started selling all those records?

**E. K.:** It's like hanging on. That carousel's going and you're holding tight.

**J. B.:** At least for the first year, it was one continual upward motion. Between putting out the first album and *Morning Dance* going gold, it was an incredibly fast surge. Everything was put together during that period of time. The live band really became a concert quality band. The production crew really got its techniques together.

**Tom Schuman:** In two years we went from a bar band working for \$25 a night to being an internationally known concert touring group.

**E. K.:** With lights, production, and staging.

**J. B.:** And then since that time it has not let up at all. But at least for the past one-and-a-half to two years it's been together. We have our touring ensemble. We have our trucks and our lights. We know what we're doing in the studio. We know who the good writers are.

**E. K.:** We're bringing in good accounts in a lot of countries. Where the record companies leave off, you have to make it up in promotion touring and promoting yourself. Otherwise you won't continue to sell albums at the rate and amount that we're used to.

**P. R.:** How much control did you retain when your contracts were sold?

**J. B.:** Well of course when it was sold to Amherst, it went from my record label to another, so I had full control inasmuch as if I didn't want the deal, we didn't have to take it. But in selling to Amherst, we opened up the possibility that Amherst could treat us the way baseball players are treated. We could get traded to Minnesota at anytime. Fortunately we were traded to the Yankees.

Infinity Records turned out to be an incredible record label for us. They took us seriously, spent good money on us, and pushed that record to the hilt. Unfortunately, Infinity went bankrupt, probably for the reasons I just mentioned. Infinity was part of MCA, and

MCA had the right to pick up that deal.

**P. R.:** Are you pleased with the way MCA is handling you?

**J. B.:** Relatively.

**P. R.:** You're extremely popular overseas as well. Any ideas why?

**J. B.:** I think we've got a lot going for us because there's no language barrier. There's no lyrics. The music has borrowed from a lot of international forms already. In many places, particularly South America, there's a lot for the people to relate to.

**P. R.:** Was that a conscious decision to use latin rhythms?

**J. B.:** No. Everybody in the band has their own writing styles. Gerardo has a Hispanic background so he naturally would have heard a lot of latin music. I lived in New York City so I heard a lot, too. In our writings, you find that latin flavor. Other writers in the band have other backgrounds and flavors in their writing.

**E. K.:** I was influenced primarily by black r&b artists. James Brown and Harvey Mason, although I was raised on the traditional big band drummers like Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa, and Cozy Cole. The style I feel strongest in now is r&b and funk.

#### SPYRO GYRA DISCOGRAPHY

SPYRO GYRA—Amherst AHM 1014  
MORNING DANCE—Infinity 9004  
CATCHING THE SUN—MCA 5108  
CARNAVAL—MCA 5149  
FREETIME—MCA 5238

**Chet Catalo:** I played mostly r&b and Top 40 situations—some rock and blues. I got into jazz later on.

**J. B.:** Tom's the real cat.

**T. S.:** I'm coming from a family of jazz musicians so I grew up with jazz. I've always played jazz. I've been into all types from free jazz to bebop to the contemporary electrical jazz—if that's what you want to call it. So I'm the mainstream jazz influence.

**David Wolford:** I guess my main influences are r&b and jazz and rock. I've played a lot of different music from country to new wave to r&b. I studied jazz in college for three years, at Hartt and at William Patterson with Thad Jones. Most of my training has been jazz training.

**Gerardo Velez:** My influences have been Eddie Palmieri, Jimi Hendrix, and James Brown—lots of funk, hard rock, and jazz.

**P. R.:** You mentioned the writing aspect of the band. How do you go about putting a piece together?

**T. S.:** I get a melodic idea and I sit and play it on the piano. I try to put chords to it. Then I ask if this sounds good,

does it sound like something unique? I add a bass line and some rhythm to it and see how it sounds in context with a real nice rhythm section. Then I get a couple of other ideas and put them together. One turns out to be the bridge, another the lead section into the solos. It just depends on how you arrange it all together. I have four or five ideas and I try to link them together in some way to create one paragraph or story.

**P. R.:** How do you present it to the band?

**T. S.:** I try to get it together fully by myself. I write out the charts, come into the band and hand them all out and say let's give this a try.

**J. B.:** That's the most professional answer because Tom's the most professional about that kind of stuff.

**E. K.:** Individually, it's different for each artist. On the compositions Tommy and I co-author, I come to him with rhythm ideas. I haven't really had a lot of melodic training in my background. He comes across with chord changes and bridges to help some of my ideas. I might hear a whole front section to a tune rhythmically, and then he'll add chord changes.

**J. B.:** When it comes to a rehearsal state, everybody has charts for their tunes. If they're not able to write a chart, somebody will help them write it out. I usually prepare a tape of myself playing my tune on piano. Tommy has gone much further than that and had tapes of multi-track synthesizers to bring to the band. Jeremy usually plays the piece right there at rehearsal on the piano to get the idea across.

**T. S.:** Then there's the group composition when in a rehearsal David and Eli will get a really nice groove happening, like a bass line that is unique . . .

**C. C.:** Or at a soundcheck . . .

**T. S.:** . . . Then Chet will start playing a guitar line in a certain key with chord changes, and I'll pick up on that. Jay will come in and play a melody.

**J. B.:** We'll get close by accident, and then we'll actually decide that this will be a group tune.

**P. R.:** What are some of these group tunes?

**J. B.:** Cockatoo. *Sea Biscuit* is the new one.

**P. R.:** When do you throw tunes or ideas out?

**Jeremy Wall:** That happens when we choose tunes to record.

**J. B.:** Before we record, we'll hold rehearsals where all the writers in the band bring material in. Because we're limited to seven to nine tunes per album and you're talking about five composers, it's rare that we don't have at least 10 tunes being rehearsed. Sometimes a lot more. At that stage,

simply because other tunes are better, certain tunes go by the wayside.

**P. R.:** Do you still perform those pieces in concert?

**J. B.:** No. A concert is only 10 tunes, and we have five records now, so we have plenty of material to choose from. You also tend to do material that's on records to help promote the records. If you were to do material that's new, you're going to end up doing it for a long time anyway, because then the record will come out, and you'll play it to promote the record.

**G. V.:** Those are the tunes people want to hear, too.

**J. B.:** Each time we put out a new record, we rotate the show. We get rid of four of the oldest tunes and add four from the new album. Every eight months we change and bring in a new set of tunes. Basically, it's so our lights can have a coherent presentation, so that the concert can be presented in a way that the audience will always maintain interest. On any given tour we play basically the same form. The tunes themselves end up coming off differently. There's a lot of open space that's not necessarily defined.

**P. R.:** You mean open solo sections?

**J. B.:** There are solos that are open-ended. Occasionally somebody will take a really long solo. There are three soloists plus. I think everybody in the band is aware of saying what they have to say in their solo and not being verbose about it.

**D. W.:** It's not easy to keep 4,000 people's interest for an hour-and-a-half.

**J. B.:** Yeah, we truly believe in having our audiences riveted.

**E. K.:** The whole concert situation has changed. You now have to utilize every aspect of the live situation which includes lights, and heavy-duty sound reinforcement. You have to utilize the whole presentation of the show. You have to use the visual, the sound, and the actual artists themselves in combination. For an instrumental group to come across successfully, it has to be done that way.

**G. V.:** You've got to be moving, grooving, and doing it.

**J. B.:** But none of these things we're talking about take away from the music. They all supplement it.

**G. V.:** To give it a different dimension.

**J. B.:** In fact, I like to think we get away with playing music that is as artistic as our music is because we supplement it with a strong presentation and a strong visual show.

**P. R.:** A good many other bands negate the visual aspect of their show. They seem very determined and dour, but you go out and have fun.

**E. K.:** That's the key element to relax-

ing your audience. If you look strained and uptight, they're not going to loosen up. As it is, you have to work to get them to loosen up.

**J. B.:** To make good music, you've got to be relaxed. The best musicians are the relaxed musicians. Our energy's honest energy. Nobody's doing steps or smiling when they're not having a good time. The music has a lot of intensity and good spirit to it. We just go right along with the music. When the music's jumping, our bodies should be jumping.

It's surprising how very little of what Spyro Gyra is either on record or stage was carefully planned out. It wasn't. It all just came together. Because of that, it's natural. Because of that, we've all done it for years, and it's still fun.

### SPYRO GYRA'S EQUIPMENT

Jay Beckenstein—Selmer Mark VI soprano sax with Selmer C\* mouthpiece, 3½ Rico Royal reed; Selmer Mark VI alto sax with Meyer small chamber mouthpiece, 3½ Rico Royal reed; Selmer Balanced Action tenor sax with Otto Link 6 mouthpiece, 3½ Rico Royal reed. For studio recording, he uses Yamaha alto sax for a softer, rounder sound.

Eli Konikoff—Sonor drum set in America, Yamaha overseas; A. Zildjian cymbals.

Gerardo Velez—All Latin Percussion instruments.

David Wolford—Yamaha BB 2000 bass.  
Chet Catallo—Gibson guitars, models L5, 335, ES 347.

Tom Schuman—Fender Rhodes 88, Hohner Clavinet D6, Multimoog, Minimoog, Polymoog, Oberheim 4, Moog Opus 3 String Machine, Moog Liberation, and Yamaha CP70.

**P. R.:** Some people have accused you of being too showy.

**J. B.:** Somebody once came up to me and asked, "Don't you think all that dancing around the stage detracts from the music and isn't really jazz?" I used this analogy I heard in high school English once. Shakespeare is considered high art. He had high philosophy for the people in the front, and love affairs for the middle class, and he had ghosts and sword fights for the groundlings. I think that in our music, there's something for everybody who comes to that concert, whether they want high visual excitement or whether they're listening for sensitive, artistic music. I think it's all there.

**E. K.:** Well said!

**J. B.:** I've done a lot of these interviews.

**P. R.:** At various times, you've been called jazz, pop, fusion, or all of these labels. If you walked into the record store and said here's my record, what category would you want them to put your records?

**G. V.:** Jazz, rock, funk, blues, salsa.

**E. K.:** It's everything—international.

**J. B.:** That's why we cross over well.

**P. R.:** Do you consider yourselves a crossover band?

**J. B.:** It just so happened that way, I guess. Crossover is an economic fact, not an artistic definition.

**T. S.:** You can't really call it just one thing because there's so many styles involved.

**P. R.:** One of the things that seems clear is that you know the business end of music as well as the musical end.

**J. B.:** Why is everybody looking at me? I think that right from the start we went to good people. We had good lawyers and good accountants. We've kept our eyes open and learned the workings of the record industry from the inside. I like to think I know what's going on.

**E. K.:** I like to think we got the best.

**J. B.:** My business partner, Richard [Calandra], also has a very good sense of business. He's really more than a partner, though. He's our producer along with Jeremy and myself. I think that our business instincts have proven correct.

**P. R.:** Everyone from the front office down seems to clear things with you first, Jay. Do the rest of you see him as the band's motivating force?

**E. K.:** He's the leader of the band. The main directions and decisions are made by Jay.

**J. B.:** Spyro Gyra has a number of entities within it: one is the live band; one is the production staff that makes the records; one is the writing crew, the people that write the songs; and one is the business. In any one of those categories, I'm not necessarily the premier person, although perhaps in the business I am. But in all those individual categories, there are people in the band that might be stronger than me. But I'm the one person who's involved in all those categories. I sort of bridge all of them.

**J. W.:** This guy is amazing because he runs a business, he leads a band on the road, he writes music, he produces records, and manages to keep up with all that.

**P. R.:** What about your future plans? You've played the Kool Festival, toured overseas, had gold records. What next?

**J. B.:** The concert audiences are getting larger and larger. This year for the first time, we're topping 4,000, where we're the sole headliner. I hope that continues. I hope to get to play to larger audiences and get into better and better situations. We're all looking forward to doing a live album soon.

**G. V.:** Visiting parts of the world where we haven't been.

**J. B.:** Richie and I are currently building a studio near New York City. I know

*continued on page 63*

KOOL  
JAZZ  
FESTIVAL  
June 26 - July 5  
NEW YORK

TWO  
BITES  
FROM  
THE  
APPLE

BY LEE JESKE

BY ART LANGE

**T**he first Kool Jazz Festival (or the 10th Newport—New York Jazz Festival or the 28th Newport Festival) lumbered through NYC and environs, presenting a 10-day smorgasbord of jazz talent young and old. Although weighted heavily toward the middle of the jazz spectrum, the breadth of the festival can be felt by just a small sampling of the trumpet players involved: Wild Bill Davison, Jimmy McPartland, Roy Eldridge (who only sang, but more on that later), Doc Cheatham, "Sweets" Edison, Dizzy Gillespie, Howard McGhee, Donald Byrd, Freddie Hubbard, Ted Curson, Terumasa Hino, Hannibal, Wynton Marsalis, and, of course, Miles Dewey Davis Jr. to name but a few.

The 1981 version of the festival was charged by the anticipation of Miles Davis' first New York concert appearance in over five years. Miles, somehow, colored the entire week's proceedings: word of his opening weekend shows in Boston managed to filter down early, his CBS album began arriving shortly thereafter, and Columbia decided to throw

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**S**ome critics claim jazz festivals are nothing but public relations events masquerading as a musical gala; others find worth in the revitalizing sense of community such a gathering affords—where writers, players, and fans alike rub elbows and interact in homage to the music which joins them. There was a sense of both views in evidence at this year's Kool (nee Newport) Jazz Festival/New York, though, as always, it was the music which remains in the mind long after the last bit of hype is pitched and the last drink is lifted.

The music began, appropriately enough (geographically, if not seasonally) with *Autumn In New York* opening Cedar Walton's competent solo piano concert at Carnegie Recital Hall. Working together a patchwork of themes by Ellington, Bud Powell, and a few of his own pieces into a series of short medleys, he expanded the basic song form by suspending and substituting chords, rushing the beat, hiding it, creeping up on it—all with a pleasing variance of touch, some mild dissonances, and a few Tatumesque out-of-tempo flurries.

*continued on page 21*

## LEE JESKE: KOOL

him a shindig at the posh disco, Xenon, around mid-week. By the time closing night and Miles' two sold-out performances at Avery Fisher Hall rolled around, excitement and expectation were at a fever pitch. It was a disappointing letdown . . . but let's start at the beginning.

The opening day of the Kool Festival was a heady one. Mayor Ed Koch asked the invited guests on the lawn of Gracie Mansion, his official residence, "How'm I doin'?", as he nibbled the quickly disappearing corned beef and pickles. Mercer Ellington led a high school band sponsored by a hamburger chain (you know the one), George Wein grinned, and the guests lasted as long as did the cold drinks.

Musically, the opener was Cedar Walton's one-hour aperitif at Carnegie Recital Hall, during which the hard-bopper showed his deep roots in the earth of Art Tatum and Bud Powell. Two hours later, Cedar would be in more familiar surroundings as he joined 15 other Art Blakey progeny for a gala salute to the longtime skipper of the Jazz Messengers. Blakey, resplendent in white tie and tails, clocked in with a remarkable display of strength—keeping the pots on for the entire two-and-a-half-hour performance. After an opening set by the current Messengers, alumni Walter Davis, Johnny Griffin, Victor Sproles, Bill Hardman, and Jackie McLean strolled on and launched into *Along Came Betty*; a little wet on the ensemble, but, oh so hard and bopping on the solos. Jackie McLean reared back and dealt as the man on the tubs kept a boot in everybody's butt. The third set presented Jymie Merritt, Billy Harper, Donald Byrd, and Walton, to start, before being augmented by Curtis Fuller and Freddie Hubbard. Hubbard swaggered on like Henry VIII after dinner and, in the course of one solo, blew everybody to little bits. At the absolute peak of his immense harmonic and tonal powers, Hubbard played a crystal-clear solo replete with some well-placed blasts of fire. When Freddie Hubbard is there to play, watch out! The evening ended with a nine-horn jam on *Night In Tunisia*, highlighted by a sizzling McLean solo. Hard bop heaven! and what was to prove to be the most exciting concert of the entire festival came roaring down to tumultuous applause.

After the Blakey fete it was down to the Public Theatre for a concert not included in the Kool program—Ornette Coleman and Prime Time for their first New York appearance in three years. Two drums, two electric basses, two guitars, and a long, tight, textural set that featured the leader slashing through the backdrop with his machete-like alto work. Harmolodic heaven!

**D**ay two got off to a different start altogether. Yank Lawson and Bob Haggart brought their dixieland bunch (including the irresistible Johnny Mince) aboard the Staten Island Ferry for a toe-tapping, beer-guzzling cruise through New York Harbor. Joanne Brackeen provided the solo piano recital, which was too heavy-handed and dense for these ears, before a gaggle of Windy City blowers assembled at Carnegie Hall for a four-hour salute to Chicago. Cy Touff, Franz Jackson, Joe Johnson, Norm Murphy, Truck Parham, Marty Grosz, and Barrett Deems got things going in toddlin' style with a short set of swing-era ditties. The White Sox and Cubs may have been idle, but Touff and Jackson were swinging for the fences. Concert producer Harriet Choice then made a fatal choice and sent Roscoe Mitchell and Hugh Ragin out to demonstrate the AACM approach. The low-pitched, non-varying moan that was to be the basis of their 12-minute piece was, at first, met with restlessness from the audience, who were obviously primed for the upcoming Austin High set. The unease soon turned to catcalls and boos, and the two men gallantly finished amid pure hostility. Host Joe Williams told the house to "not criticize what you can't understand," but there was a chill in the house that wouldn't melt for hours. There had to be a better spot on the program than following



World Saxophone Quartet with Max Roach.



Women in Jazz: Lucille Dixon and Mary Osborne.



Junior Cook at free concert in Lincoln Center.



Backstage at "Portrait Of Art Tatum" Concert: Jaki Byard, Jaki Byard, Dick Lewis, Dick Hyman, Billy Taylor, Adam Makowicz, Dick Wellstood and Slam Stewart.

the swingers.

Set two was a loose-limbed bebop jam, featuring Chris Anderson, Wilbur Campbell, Victor Sproles, Lee Konitz, and Ira Sullivan, which never got off the ground. Art Hodes was next—starting *St. Louis Blues* at a fly-swatting tempo, then building it to a hip-shaking boogie climax. He was joined by Mama Yancey, in excellent voice at age 85, for a couple of her signature blues. The second half of the show featured a set



## ART LANGE: KOOL

Opening night's main event, for me, took place in the world's largest Gothic structure—the Cathedral of St. John The Divine. In this awe-inspiring vision of concrete and marble, Max Roach and his all-percussion ensemble M'Boom met the World Saxophone Quartet to benefit the Leake & Watts Children's Home. The first set found Max collaborating with the four saxists (Oliver Lake, Julius Hemphill, David Murray, Hamiett Bluiett), playing intricate unison lines, booting Hemphill into a funky r&b strut, splashing butterfly textures of cymbal work behind a pastel marvel of three flutes and bass clarinet, and propelling the dark, bittersweet harmonies behind Murray's beautifully bluesy tenor testimonial. M'Boom's own set evoked haunting sonic images—a Caribbean waterfall of gently undulating rhythms (led by steel drum and two marimbas); the mechanized, synchronized public heartbeat echoing throughout Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*; lush vegetation of Gamelan harmonies and timbres; and a volcanic duel of timbales (Ray Mantilla) and traps (Max) trade-offs. Throughout, M'Boom's musical strands clung together on a spider's web spun of steel wool—resilient, delicate, mesmerizing, and dangerously seductive. Both groups joined for a grand finale, the high point of which was Murray's snorting study in elemental power—fully in keeping with the immensity of his surroundings.

Saturday's solo piano recital brought us Joanne Brackeen's strong, insistent two-fisted attack. Her novel, tough voicings of chromatic chords especially enlivened two pieces: one alternating Rachmaninoffian dour bass chords with a Coreastyled light latin lilt; the other a knotty left hand ostinato upon which she carved out syncopated phrases and clawed chords, piling up succeeding lines of cumulative tension. Her wide-brimmed hat, though hiding her face, couldn't obscure her talent or her technique.

Sunday at Town Hall, Air ran through a typical set buoyed by drummer Steve McCall's exquisite shading and sensitive temperament. Meanwhile, Henry Threadgill reminded one of the quality a number of Midwestern altoists (Hemphill, Lake, Anthony Braxton, Roscoe Mitchell) share—a liquid languidness at rhapsodic tempi, and a yearning cry that suggests the Southwestern tenors without their aggressiveness. After intermission, violinist Leroy Jenkins' new Mixed Quintet (Marty Erlich on bass clarinet, Byard Lancaster on flute, J. D. Parran's clarinet, and John Clark's french horn) performed music of a thoroughly ensemble sensibility, with contrasting episodes of changing character and mood which borrowed marvelously from familiar tonal and structural echoes. Clark's horn, for example, offered tones reminiscent of both a dirty, muted Tricky Sam Nanton and a bold, clarion Cootie Williams, while Parran's clarinet bent notes and glissed some wickedly blue phrases ala Albert Nicholas.

For me, the most consistently entertaining evenings were Monday and Thursday nights at Town Hall, where film collector and historian David Chertok took the audience on heartwarming and amusing trips through the past—with their oohs and ahhs (and applause following solos) punctuating the soundtracks. The first night's films featured small groups, and highlights included a circa '59 Miles Davis (with Coltrane and three trombones) blowing a very mellow *So What*, one reel of recently deceased giants (Bill Evans with a tender, breathtaking unaccompanied *I Loves You Porgy*, plus Mary Lou Williams, Russell Procope, Cat Anderson, and Jimmy Forrest with Count Basie), the only known film footage of Bird (dignified, with Diz, doing *Hot House* after receiving the '51 db Poll Award from Leonard Feather), and four emotionally uplifting Armstrongs (including the historic *St. Louis Blues* with New York Philharmonic members conducted by a young Leonard Bernstein, and with 83-year-

*continued on page 23*



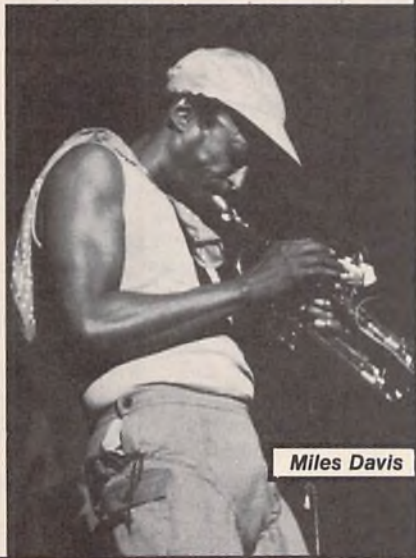
Max Roach



"Sweets" Edison and Snooky Young from Basie Alumni band.



Lionel Hampton



Miles Davis

**PHOTO CREDITS**—clockwise from upper left: 1, 2, 5, 7 by Collis Davis/Shaida; 3, 6, 8 by Mitchell Seidel; 4 by Milan Simich.

for Capt. Walter Dyatt—DuSable High School's teacher extraordinaire—with John Young, Paul Serrano, and Von Freeman rarely working up steam. This was a set of bar music, not suited to the stuffy confines of old Carnegie. Then

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## LEE JESKE: KOOL

it was time for the long-awaited set led by Jimmy McPartland and Wild Bill Davison. You know what they played and, naturally, you know it sounded good. The long, windy evening ended with Joe Williams, joined by Bobby Lewis and Eddie Johnson, closing with (what else?) *Goin' To Chicago*. A lot of sore buttocks felt like they had made the trip on the train.

Duets was the name of the Sunday evening affair. Marty Grosz and Wayne Wright led off with a few of their two-guitar things before Red Rodney and Ira Sullivan blared in with *Red Arrow*. There is a magical, musical relationship between these two which was especially evident without rhythm. Their set was imaginative and swinging, and Ira decided to dedicate a number to the Kool Cigarette people: *You Leave Me Breathless*. Herbie Hancock and Ron Carter were next, playing meandering, refined piano-bar music that failed to take hold. Major Holley and Slam Stewart did take hold for a set of humorous hum-along bass works. Their two styles are quite different, and their set was a short delight. Lee Konitz' icy intelligence then met Zoot Sims' magnetic swing for a riveting, well-rehearsed set on sopranos; Carol Sloane and Norman Simmons strolled through some piano/voice numbers, and the evening closed with the *piece de resistance*—John Lewis and Milt Jackson playing *Django* and *Bags' Groove* as if they never parted company. They never should have.

Our Monday date began with Ram Ramirez letting his hair down while striding and strutting through a dazzling solo piano set. Then it was over to Carnegie for another marathon: *Musicians For Each Other*. The idea is this: let everybody play a big benefit and then put the money into a petty cash fund from which struggling musicians can borrow. If I were to describe every set, I'd extend somewhere into the middle of the record review section. Suffice it to say that I left in the middle of the 11th set, and some of the high points were provided by Kenny Burrell, Gerry Mulligan, Clark Terry, Zoot Sims, and Ted Curson (soloing in front of the full Machito Orchestra). The evening ended at Roseland Ballroom where Panama Francis and Mercer Ellington swung the old dance palace to its foundation.

On Tuesday, Albert Dailey, the strong, two-fisted pianist, played a lavish, but tasteful, solo set that featured some rumbling and tumbling single-note runs. That evening offered a *Portrait Of Roy Eldridge* at Town Hall which was well-constructed and heartfelt. This was no slapdash hail to the chief—Budd Johnson transcribed some of Roy's older things for a big band, and five trumpeters were there to pay their tributes: Dizzy Gillespie, Ernie Royal, Jimmy Maxwell, Johnny Lettman, and Jon Faddis. Things swung like the dickens from the word go, and there was a bounty of classic filmed performances of Little Jazz to boot. Jimmy Maxwell's reading of Roy's *Rocking Chair* solo was the early showstopper, before Dizzy Gillespie sashayed out in fine form. The last set featured the man of the hour on vocals—Roy, looking trim and hale, had suffered a heart attack eight months before, and his doctors were keeping him away from the horn. The evening was capped by an unannounced Ella Fitzgerald, who shared scat choruses with Roy, traded eights with Dizzy, and brought the audience to its feet.

Wednesday evening found the jazz coterie in an altogether different venue. CBS rented Xenon, disco music and all, laid out bowls of black caviar, and invited a number of guests to a party for Miles Davis. Would the guest of honor show up? He did, traveled in a circle of flash bulbs and adoration for half-an-hour, drank, chatted, and left. Anticipation swelled for Sunday evening.

The festival offered a *Portrait Of Art Tatum* at Town Hall that night which didn't approach the previous evening's salute. Eight pianists—Jaki Byard, John Lewis, Ellis Larkins, Barry Harris, Adam Makowicz, Dick Wellstood, and hosts

Billy Taylor and Dick Hyman—attempted, but nobody reached the intensity of the two film clips of the piano genius himself. The late show, at Carnegie, featured Ella, up to the same old same old. Backed by Jimmy Rowles, Ella did what she's been doing forever, but the highs and lows seem to be leaving her voice. The sold-out hall, however, was enchanted.

Thursday offered an unusual opportunity to compare two virtuoso pianists who were Tatum-bred. Dorothy Donegan played the Recital Hall and Oscar Peterson tickled the Bosendorfer in the main room. Donegan has the greatest set of swing piano chops in existence. She can stride in triple-time, play thunderous boogie passages, and bang out lush, 10-finger chords—seemingly all at once. She will throw a wailing gospel passage in for kicks and will rile the audience to a fever-pitch by ending a song six times. The one thing she lacks, however, is taste, and at its worst, her one-hour set became as glitzy as her green-lamé outfit. Oscar has taste, but his solo recitals are either boringly familiar or remarkably consistent, depending upon your point of view. He sits and whips up little arpeggiated tornados and all is good, but, personally, I'm more tired than dazzled. You may have to go to a good butcher to find better chops than Peterson's or Donegan's, but they're bound to be more tasty.

**F**riday night presented a keyboardist with a more refined sense of swing—Ross Tompkins. Tompkins, a rare visitor east (he's the pianist in the Tonight Show band), succumbed to the stuffiness of Carnegie Recital Hall and took a little while breaking out of his stiff, classical bag. But when he did, it was with a finely-honed, genial approach. The main event of the evening was something that looked quite appealing on paper: Bill Cosby presenting a funk band of his own choosing—B. B. King, Jimmy Smith, Arnett Cobb, Nat Adderley, and Mickey Roker. The aim was to achieve a rib-joint intimacy in the hallowed halls of Carnegie, but, despite moments, it didn't work. Cosby served as producer and emcee, but he kept the comedy to an unfortunate minimum. Basically, he just left the quintet to flounder for two hours. B. B. King flashed brilliantly whenever he belted out a vocal or whipped off one of his patented guitar solos. Cobb and Adderley battled for their ground, but it was Jimmy Smith who bullishly came charging in on his organ for cheap, audience-wowing effects. After awhile the whole thing evaporated like the dew on a beer bottle.

The weekend offered the most festival-like fare of the fest, with two all-day concerts at the State University at Purchase (about 30 minutes from the city) and Saratoga (much, much further). I hopped up to Purchase in the teeming rain and took in a small sampling—Richie Cole, Zoot Sims, Lee Konitz, and others. The location was a spanking new arts complex with one main hall and four smaller rooms under one roof which afforded the opportunity to wander from dixieland to bebop and beyond in the short course of one afternoon. The highlight of the sets I caught was the appearance of Michel Petrucciani, a crippled 18-year-old pianist from the south of France. Michel sat in with the Konitz Nonet for one number—*Cherokee*, no less—and astounded one and all with his inventiveness and pianistic capability. Remember the name.

From Purchase I slogged back in the rain in time to catch the last half of *Women Blow Their Own Horns*, a show dedicated to female instrumentalists, but with Dizzy Gillespie and Clark Terry added to draw a wider audience. One would be correct to point the finger at the producers and say, "Why put all the women in one lump, why not sprinkle them throughout the festival?" The set I caught was a jam session featuring Marian McPartland, Jean Fineberg, Barbara Merjan, Lucille Dixon, Mary Osborne, and Mssrs. Gillespie and Terry. Fineberg, a young tenor and flute player, displayed a big, fat, dry tenor sound with an attractive growl, and Gillespie and Terry were typically excellent, but it was

the legendary Mary Osborne who was of the most interest. An electric guitar contemporary of Charlie Christian, Osborne is almost never heard outside of Southern California. Her style is confident and relaxed, spicing fleet, behind-the-beat single note runs with some well-placed chords. Her workout on *Sophisticated Lady* (the song in town, since the show opened) was rich and sensitive.

Then, as if this wasn't enough, it was on to Avery Fisher Hall for Weather Report. They have whittled fusion to a science. Wayne Shorter bore down and blew a blue streak on tenor which was reminiscent of his Blue Note days, and Peter Erskine provided some ripe accompaniment on drums. As for Zawinul and Jaco Pastorius, you either like them or you don't and, for the most part, I don't. But Shorter was so on the mark and so biting that the Weather Report was mostly, to these ears, bright and sunny.

**A**nd then came Sunday. For my part, there was to be no Purchase, no Saratoga, no free outdoor events. Just Miles Davis at 10:30 in Avery Fisher Hall. The result was, basically, depressing. Miles wandered on stage in baseball cap and khaki jacket, and the

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## ART LANGE: KOOL

old W. C. Handy, blind, but beaming like a beacon, in the audience). Thursday's big band night consisted primarily of slices from commercial films of the '30s and '40s—meaning much pop material, in addition to allowing us to catch a glimpse of some of the bands' audiences and get a sense of the flavor of the times. Though the set-ups and scenery were occasionally corny—Charlie Barnet's band in a phony forest with Charlie emerging from a teepee riffing Cherokee, Claude Hopkins' band in a barber shop, Bob Crosby's full band plus on-lookers all tucked comfortably into a single railroad car—no "Mickey Mouse" bands were to be seen; though in addition to the obvious heroes—Duke, Basie, Kenton, Woody Herman, a high steppin' and jivin' Lunceford band, Glenn Miller, the Dorseys (with Buddy Rich all teeth and elbows), and Artie Shaw with a full head of black hair—Chertok gave us rare views of Freddie Slack, Larry Clinton, and Ina Ray Hutton & Her Melodears among others.

Tuesday at Avery Fisher Hall, Chick Corea debuted a new quartet with seemingly unlimited potential but, unfortunately, lukewarm results at this early stage of development. Neither drummer Roy Haynes (who added provocative colors and witty punctuation) nor bassist Gary Peacock (who ran a lean, punching contrapuntal commentary throughout) brought any support to the group, so the four equal, individual voices tended to meander horizontally. Chick's compositions took a surprising stance somewhere between Circle's complex interaction and Return To Forever's heavy riffs, closest perhaps to Corea's Tones For Joan's Bones period in the early '60s. Only the boppish Bud Powell and a sizzling *So In Love* brought the otherwise strangely reticent saxophone of Joe Henderson to life, kicked by Haynes' thunder. The Red Norvo/Tal Farlow/Steve Novasel trio opened the evening with a genteel set of Dresden china-like proportions. A fleet *Cheek To Cheek* was characteristic of the teasing tastes of two-part counterpoint Red's vibes and Tal's guitar kept tossing off. It took Norvo's solo outing on Bix Beiderbecke's impressionistic *Candelights* to test the vibist's powers most fully, as he created melodic turns of a surprisingly Tristanoid nature.

**F**riday evening it was back to Town Hall for a night sponsored by CBS Records (they taped the first three sets for album release). A conga barrage by Daniel Ponce introduced the remarkable Paquito D'Rivera, whose alto and soprano surveyed two originals and a feverish *Green Dolphin Street* with Gato-like wails supported by a bubbling cauldron of a rhythm section—Ponce, Russell Blake's bass, Ignacio Berroa's drums,

and pianist Jorge Dalto (whose own solos danced on hot coals). So electrically charged was this group, they couldn't have attempted a ballad—any withholding of energy and they'd have screwed themselves right into the ground. Their passion and enthusiasm made the ensuing set by Arthur Blythe's quintet seem all the more flat and unengaging. Outside of a Krazy Kat version of *Strike Up The Band*, with jerky, out-of-synch rhythms in chase sequence tempo and voltaic squeals and bellows from Abdul Wadud's cello, the music floundered within Blythe's mile-wide vibrato and tepid pulse. The altoist redeemed himself, however, in the three-alto conclave which followed; his entry in the ballad medley was a warm-blooded, full-bodied *Lush Life*, while Phil Woods carved a slice of supple pie with his *How Deep Is The Ocean*, and Paquito ran a torturous, heart-rendering *Lover Man*. The uptempo Bird tunes offered an intriguing contrast of styles between the participants—Paquito pushing the beat recklessly, squeezing notes like toothpaste out of a tube, Woods majestically on target at all times, and Blythe lagging a hair behind the beat and transcribing Woods' Bird-call intervals inside-out. The three were excellently accompanied by the piano of John Hicks, Art Davis' bass, and Steve McCall's delicious drums.

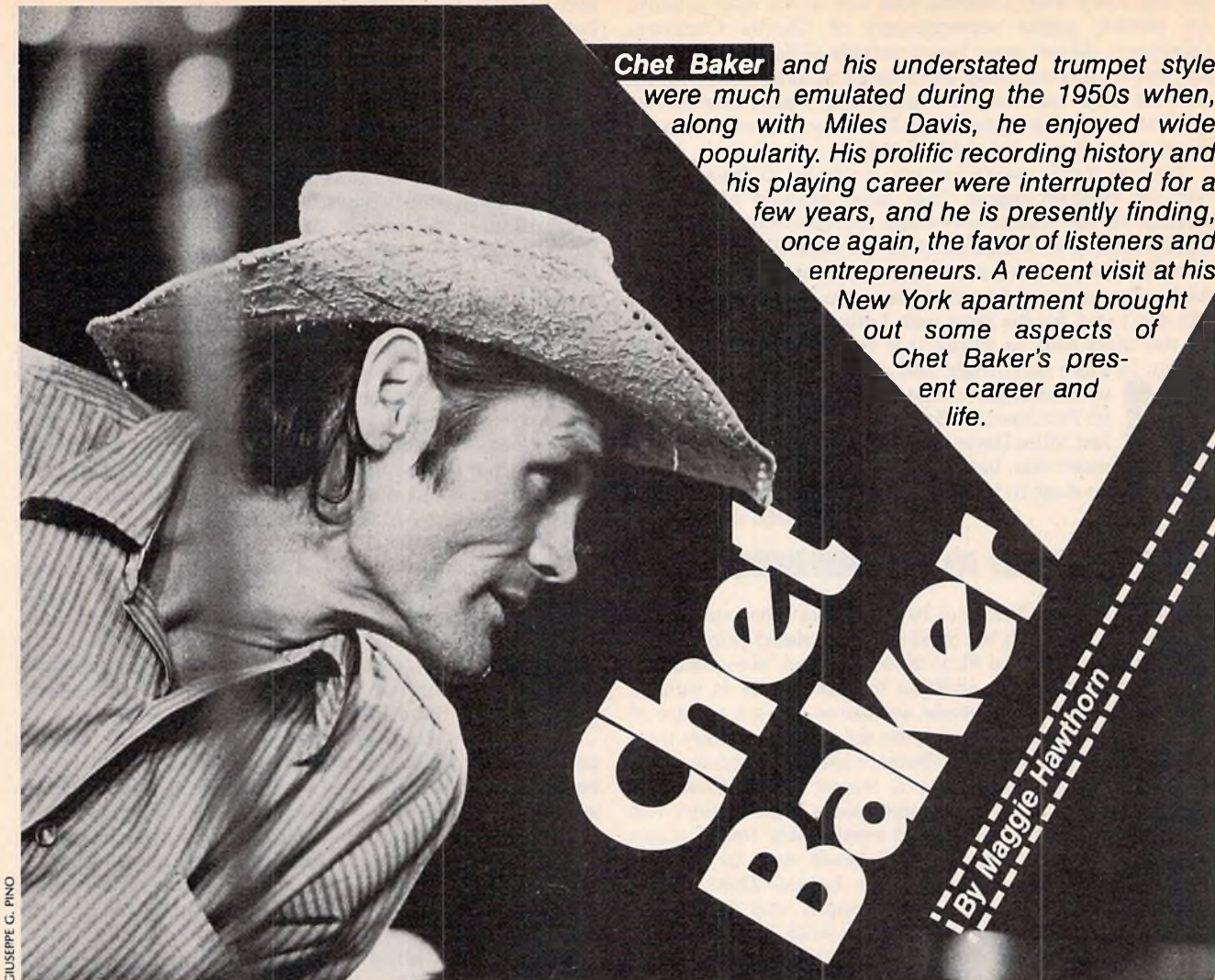
Whatever cobwebs survived that sassy set were blown away by Gil Evans' big band, who played four ever-too-short numbers, beginning with a galloping mastodon motif, succeeded by a greasy blues, a ballad that traced gnome steps, and an arrangement of Parker's *Cheryl* with a stomp at its bottom seguing into a barbeque-sauce-and-molasses riff interrupted by Hendrix-like guitar interludes. Whew!

Evans' galvanized performance would have been a powerhouse conclusion to the 10 days of festivities, but regardless of how exhausted we were, we still had Miles to go before we slept. So it was back to Avery Fisher on Sunday to witness the return of a living legend. Unfortunately, living legends must battle an unbeatable foe—their own mythic prowess—and while Miles personally apparently survived unscathed, the total musical experience was a bitter disappointment.

Instrumentally, Miles has emerged from a time-warp; his playing was stronger than one anticipated—the same squirted, elliptical utterances which sounded so magical in the late '60s and early '70s with his Shorter/Hancock/Carter/Williams and Bitches Brew groups. Unfortunately, these are the '80s, and though Miles obviously doesn't want to look back and replay what he played yesterday, his current band (a quartet of funk-rock musicians who, outside of veteran drummer Al Foster, failed to sustain any extended solo or ensemble interest, culminating in guitarist Mike Stern's indulgent, exasperating forays) played neither good rock nor good jazz.

The music—Bitches Brew-type modal melodies over simple one- and two-chord vamps—cried out for the rich textures of the Brew bands. But this concert was more theater than music: the more appreciative members of the audience giving ovations at Miles' every move, Miles slapping fives with bandmates, his walking the stage, working it, worrying it to death, hunched over, notes aimed at the floor, braying like an elephant. Sorry, Miles, but it's too easy to go out there and strut and vamp and jive this way—if you want to hear some *really* new music, you should have shown up at Soundscape (which hosted a week of performances after the Kool Fest shows ended) where Billy Bang and Ronald Shannon Jackson did it in fresh and exciting fashion, or at the Public Theatre, where Ornette (after a three-year New York hiatus of his own) burned, brought to dizzying heights by the intricate jousting of his electric band.

Like Miles Davis, the Kool Festival can't afford to rest on past laurels. Each year, each concert is a new challenge. Despite the over-extended length and misguided breadth of much of this year's edition, the festival nevertheless triumphed, even if its returning hero didn't. db



GIUSEPPE G. PINO

**Chet Baker** and his understated trumpet style were much emulated during the 1950s when, along with Miles Davis, he enjoyed wide popularity. His prolific recording history and his playing career were interrupted for a few years, and he is presently finding, once again, the favor of listeners and entrepreneurs. A recent visit at his New York apartment brought out some aspects of Chet Baker's present career and life.

# Chet Baker

By Maggie Hawthorn

**C**het Baker's face is his own biography—it marks where he came from and where he's been, and probably where he's going. It is an Oklahoma Dust Bowl face, that of a man who was once a classically handsome boy with dark hair, a trace of the pompadour that was fashionable when he was a teenager, whose genes and punishing life have brought him the sunken cheeks and weathered features of a survivor.

Baker comes by his Walker Evans/Great Depression image honestly; he was born in Oklahoma in 1929 and spent his early childhood there. At 13, in California, he began playing trumpet in school, and by 16 he had left formal education forever to join the Army. A photo from that period shows an appealing, unfinished face, the cheeks still full and the gaze solemn and relatively untroubled. The innocence of the loner didn't last long.

Baker discovered jazz in the Army and, although he re-enlisted once to keep on playing, he finally went AWOL and was ultimately discharged in 1951. The military mind felt, not without some provocation, that he was not an ideal soldier. It wasn't long after that Baker began a brief association with Charlie Parker's West Coast band and, at 22, found his phenomenal popularity. In 1952 he burst on the recording scene with the first of literally dozens of albums, his quietly lyrical trumpet style combining a reminiscence of his contemporary, Miles Davis, with his own almost passively romantic mode.

With Gerry Mulligan (and the late Bob Whitlock on bass and drummer Chico Hamilton) he was the focus of an enormously successful piano-less quartet which brought

popular and critical attention to what had been designated as "West Coast jazz"—cool, emotionally detached—considered intellectually complicated by some and lacking in a basic vitality by others—but nonetheless distinctive. Said British writer John Chilton, the Mulligan quartet "pleased those fans who wanted to feel part of experimental music without any aural hardships." Baker recorded with a host of other West Coasters—among them Bud Shank, Russ Freeman, Art Pepper—and these, along with the Mulligan recordings, have been reissued continually ever since. The **down beat** Critics Poll elected Baker the New Star of 1953. He won the **db** Readers Poll in '55 and '56 and seemingly won every other poll, both here and abroad, at one time or another from 1953-58.

But drugs had found him early and the toll was great. His career became entangled and he was less and less able to cope. In the mid-'50s he discovered that life was relatively easier in Europe, and he began to spend a good deal of time there. Often in trouble, he did jail time on both sides of the Atlantic.

For several years Baker was less than conspicuous on the American jazz scene. It was a time which coincidentally paralleled the bleak period for jazz in the United States, when the wave of rock & roll madness nearly obliterated the sustenance of jazz musicians. Baker did make occasional trips to America but, still strung out, he suffered a daunting beating in San Francisco in 1967. He told one interviewer, "I got jumped by five cats who wanted my dope money . . . they worked me over pretty bad." The severest consequence was that Baker lost his front teeth, a tragic circumstance for a

horn player. He couldn't play . . . and he didn't, for a few years. At last, after a particularly dismal period, he joined a methadone maintenance program, got a dental bridge, and began re-learning the trumpet.

Now, at 51, he has learned to accommodate the false teeth if not to feel at ease with them. He takes his most recent success with stoicism, but he does feel that he is playing "better than ever." During May he fronted a three-horn band on a long European tour. The music was light and moved with constantly shifting interior lines in openwork patterns, reminiscent of the early Mulligan quartet and tentet flavors, yet not the same. The arrangements were by Bob Mover, who played alto and soprano sax with the group, most of whom are expatriates. In addition to Baker, the band also included Jon Eardley (another Mulligan alumnus) on flugelhorn. The rhythm section was built around the piano of Dennis Luxion, a former Illinois pianist now residing in Belgium, and bassist Rocky Knauer, who now lives in Germany.

Never demonstrative, either personally or musically, Baker prefers to speak as quietly as he plays, a half-smile often lighting his seriousness, eyes wide and earnest behind the glasses he often wears these days. He lights a cigarette: "I didn't start on these things until I was 27 . . . after a few other things." And he claims that it is this habit he retains after putting aside some of the more destructive ones.

"I'm off methadone now, too," he says. "You just can't feel anything when you're that way, and it's not worth it. I was a methadone patient until 1977, but then I stopped."

He responds slowly, considering his answers and pausing before each one, even then measuring out the words reluctantly. Never at ease with interviewers, it takes a while before he decides that it is safe to relax, that the answers don't have to be explained, and that the questions won't be "dumb." Even so, Baker doesn't like to dwell on the past, either musical or social, although he will occasionally bring out an anecdote to illustrate the sadness or the futility of his earlier enterprises.

Although the 1950s were a period of intense musical activity for him, he would understandably rather talk about his current American band. Interrupting his European tour in May to play a week in New York at Fat Tuesday's, he used that quartet to approximate the sound on his acclaimed Artists House LP, *Once Upon A Summertime* (AH 9411), recorded in 1977 but only recently issued. While the album featured the sax of the late Greg Herbert, it also carried a drummer (Mel Lewis), a textural characteristic Baker does not usually choose.

At Fat Tuesday's the drummer was Ben Riley and, as on the album, the bassist was the formidable Ron Carter. A pianist, Phil Markowitz, completed the New York group although the young keyboard man was no match for either Harold Danko, who played on the recording, or for Hal Galper, who sat in one evening and galvanized the proceedings. The absent saxophone was, at one point, filled in by a visiting Bud Shank, who underscored Baker's gift for playing off another horn. Suddenly, Baker's playing added another, more vital, dimension as he twined around, over, through, and against Shank's liquid alto—weaving patterns of spontaneity in a characteristic, airy web and briefly sounding less

isolated, warmer.

Baker is a minimalist; he has built a career on it, refining and polishing his chosen tiny patch of territory, never straying far from its well-defined limits. Although it has been said that he sounds more forceful in recent years, the difference is perhaps marked only by the subjective reaction of player and listener. His attack has been praised as "more gripping" and others have noted his "mature development," but he remains the curator of a fragile tone instantly identifiable as the hallmark of that once ubiquitous West Coast sound. He reaches for the softness, choosing it deliberately, as if to turn deliberately away from the rough and tumble vigor of other aspects of the idiom. It is his alley and he chooses to stay within it rather than venture into more swiftly moving traffic. His preoccupation with raising minimalism to poetic heights is virtually Japanese, a concern with leaving silences and heightening a few chosen notes and phrases, picking his way with delicate gingeriness like a cat on wet grass.

Baker looks for lightness and open support in his rhythm sections, usually preferring to work without drums. "It's the difference in volume of the things" he says, "without those cymbals ringing all the time, you know. The whole atmo-

sphere of the thing without drums is much softer. And everything is much clearer. You can hear everything and follow it very easily. Drums cover up stuff." He exhibits a similarly restrained view of the piano, "if they play too much." Baker wants "somebody who doesn't over-play, who plays the right chords at the right time and not too busy; someone who leaves space."

Baker no longer plays flugelhorn, as he has occasionally in the past, preferring to concentrate on trumpet. "I don't want to carry a lot of things around with me. One horn is enough when you're running for trains and connections. I want to travel as light as possible. This horn has a large bore and, if the

sound system is good, it can get a mellow sound like a flugel." He enhances and fosters that muffled, mellow tone by jamming his horn up tightly to the microphone, swallowing it with the bell. He rarely uses a mute, preferring to work the electronic and physical characteristics of his tone into a muted timbre. "Mutes muffle the low notes," he explains as he jams in a borrowed mute to illustrate.

He sings the same way, right on top of the mike, forcing intimacy in an extension of his trumpet style. Still enormously popular, his voice is a part of every set; he programs one or two songs each segment, to sustained applause. The result of this technique, vocal or instrumental, is a sound both distant and concentrated. Although Leonard Feather once characterized Baker as "appealing to feminine audiences," the effect is rather deliberately non-personal, a withdrawn and vibratoless refinement of tone that rejects the juicy drive of swing and of much bop and post-bop jazz.

Has Baker ever had a favorite horn? He expresses no preference, saying he likes the one he is using "as well as anything." Was it made for him? "No, no; it's a large-bore Conn Constellation. I got it in Belgium. I had been playing a Yamaha and it got taken out of my car in Rome, so I bought this and I've had it four or five years." And his dream horn, what would that be like? "One that I didn't have to blow in,



**Chet Baker in his poll winning days.**

CHARLES STEWART

that I could just press the valves and the music would come out," he says.

His dental problems still bother him. "I'll never get used to it," he says, hand characteristically hovering near his mouth. "I played for 25 years with a big hole here in front anyway, because I had only one front tooth. But after I got the bridge . . . I guess they can drill a hole in your jawbone and screw those things right in," referring to the implant process which was so successful with trumpeter Red Rodney, "but I'd have to take a lot of time off, and I don't have that much time left anyway, to go through that."

Although Baker and his companion Ruth Young maintain an apartment on New York's West Side, he is rarely in residence. The main room, dominated by an ornate marble and wood fireplace (non-functional), is crammed with furniture, records, a small grand piano, and a constantly flickering television. "I've lived in New York for the last five years, but I've only been home about seven or eight months during that whole time," he offers. Baker and Young both say they prefer life in Europe.

"There's more work there and I think it's a lot better conditions, too, for working. For instance, you seldom run into a bad piano or one that's out of tune. And they usually have pretty good sound systems. You see much more curiosity and enthusiasm and whatever you want to call it concerning this music."

Although Baker's European life seems nomadic, he shrugs. "I stay in Belgium with a saxophone player that I've known for 30 years, in Liege. Or I stay in Cologne with Jon Eardley; he's lived there 12 years and works there in the radio orchestra. Or I have friends in Paris, or Munich. And I go back to Italy all the time."

In Italy he is popular on television, radio, and films as well as in concert. (He has also spent a good deal of time in jail there, but it doesn't seem to figure much in his affection for the country.) One film he recalls was *The Cool Trumpet*, which he describes as "a kind of abstract, strange thing about a dream, kind of a fantasy, maybe 20 minutes long, just me." Another, which he does not identify, was "some movie about a bunch of young people riding around Rome and singing and playing." Did he have lines? "I may have. Mostly I just rolled around on a Vespa and was kind of drowsy and would wake up every once in a while and sing a tune."

He sees himself as being "always on

the road." Baker accepts that as his way of life, as inevitable. "There's no way out of that, not if you want to work on a continuing basis, not if you want to play all the time. I can't sell enough records, my public is not big enough, to allow me to think about living off royalties or anything like that. Besides, I never have made any money off royalties. The only money I make is from personal appearances. It's what I do in front of the public. I guess I could sit someplace and turn down jobs unless they paid \$5,000 a week, but I wouldn't work very often. And I like to play. I work for a lot less than some people, but I play a lot more."

Some writers have commented on Baker's stronger qualities along the way. Ira Gitler said of him, in 1964, that "he still has that emotion in his work, those lyric qualities, and his self-expression has never been more assertive." Does Baker think his music has continued to change? "Well, yeah, my conception on line is kind of . . . the use of intervals and construction of lines has changed quite a bit. That's the difference. More complicated in a sense, but simpler in a sense, too . . ."

**A**lthough Baker has had several recordings released recently, he has no contract with any company. He records, he says, for whoever asks him and, although the choice of musicians and repertoire is usually his, there are exceptions. Including his numerous European albums, many of them unavailable here, he believes that, "I must have made a hundred albums in the last 25 years. Of course, they're not all in print." He is pleased with the success of the Artists House album and with the three he did for Nils Wintner's Steeple-



VERTI CARLI/AND

Chase label in Europe. *The Touch Of Your Lips*, which unites him with guitarist Doug Raney and the great bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, got rave reviews in down beat and elsewhere, and a second live trio set, *Daybreak*, was issued last summer, as was a quartet date with Duke Jordan. "It's nice, all Duke Jordan compositions," Baker says. "I also did another album on Sandra, which is [vibist] Wolfgang Lackerschmid's own label, that hasn't been released yet, with Tony Williams, Buster Williams, Larry Coryell, Lackerschmid, and me."

Some pop efforts, such as the ill-advised *Blood, Chet And Tears* of the 1970s, were simply money-makers, he allows. "They asked me, so I did it," he says simply. "But I have to say, it sounded better in the studio, when we made it."

Afterward, they overdubbed a lot of stuff on it." More recently, he was featured on a Ron Carter album for Milestone, *Patrao*, released last summer. Reissues surface constantly. He cites CBS and Pacific Jazz/World Pacific. His discography is a thicket of companies, from an Italian label called International Joker ("and it was," he comments) through the dozens of familiar logos of the bop era (several which came out on Prestige were sold to them without his knowledge by a former manager). The major names are there: Capitol, RCA, Verve, Riverside, A&M, CTI. So are the others: Cobra, All Life, Bingow, Sabam, Scepter.

**R**ecently, Baker has been working with agent Linda Goldstein, who said that she found it easy to book Baker for a tour of the Pacific Northwest and Canada, an area where he has not played for nearly 30 years. As planned, the trip included pianist Lou Levy, bassist Monty Budwig, and a drummer. Goldstein also plans a 10-city South American swing for Baker in November.

His Northwest plans unlocked a rare reminiscence. "My first big tour, about 1953, was when I played with Charlie Parker. It was a big jazz package, with Ella Fitzgerald, Dave Brubeck, Parker, and some big band, I forget who, maybe Woody. We all travelled on the same bus. When we went across the border into Canada, Bird wouldn't get off the bus. He just sat and glowered. Finally we persuaded him, and he stomped into the border office and slapped a cigarette paper on the counter, rolled a smoke and said, 'Now, what is this all about?' They finally let us through, but I haven't been back there since."

Does he ever have border trouble now? He lights a cigarette.

rette, bringing the match to its target with only slight difficulty. "The Belgian line is the worst," he says. "They still have me on a computer list for something from 18 years ago. But usually there's no trouble."

Another reason Baker prefers to work in Europe, he says, is that he doesn't have to deal with the musicians' union. "It has nothing really to do with musicians any more, it's just collecting money. I don't have any difficulties with the union myself. I just try to have as little as possible to do with them on any level. In Europe there isn't anything like that. You just make your own arrangements." He has, he says, no contract as a rule for European dates, simply a verbal agreement unless he is

working through an agent. And does he ever get stiffed? Never, he says. Baker feels that money problems are more apt to arise in American clubs "when people pay a lot of money for an attraction that can't make any money for them" and then want to back out. "I think it happens because some people have agents selling to them who are very good salesmen, and they buy attractions that can't possibly fill a club every night." Are they wiser about that in Europe? "They are very careful. In order to get any kind of decent money, you have to have a fairly strong name."

### CHET BAKER SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>as a leader</b>                                | COOL BURNIN'—Prestige PR-7512            |
| THE TOUCH OF YOUR LIPS—<br>SteepleChase SCS-1122  | IN NEW YORK—Riverside<br>RS-1119         |
| DAYBREAK—SteepleChase<br>SCS-1142                 | <b>with Gerry Mulligan</b>               |
| ONCE UPON A SUMMERTIME—<br>Artists House AH-9411  | MULLIGAN/BAKER—Prestige<br>24016         |
| NIGHT BIRD—Circle RK 25680/22                     | REVELATION—Blue Note BN-LA<br>532 H-2    |
| TUNE UP—Circle RK 25680/23                        | CARNEGIE HALL CONCERT VOL.<br>1—CTI 6054 |
| SHE WAS TOO GOOD TO ME—<br>CTI 6050               | CARNEGIE HALL CONCERT VOL.<br>2—CTI 6055 |
| YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN—<br>A&M Horizon SP-726    | FREEWAY—Blue Note LT-1101                |
| SINGS AND PLAYS BILLIE HOLI-<br>DAY—Trip TLP-5569 | <b>with Ron Carter</b>                   |
| COMIN' ON—Prestige PR-7496                        | PATRAO—Milestone M-9099                  |

Baker says he makes more money in Europe than in the United States but that living costs are also about double there. "There's not much left over at the end, by the time I pay salaries and transportation. Sometimes you'll work for four days and then have three days off, but you have to cover all the expenses for the time off, too."

Urged to reminisce, he tells a few funny but libelous tales of the road in days past. Later, another musician who swears he was present, relates an incident from a 1957 Italian tour in which the group met with Romano Mussolini, a respected pianist who carries the burden of being the son of the late World War II Axis dictator.

Ultimately disgraced, the father was publicly hanged. "Gee, man," said Baker upon introduction to the son, "I'm sorry about your old man."

Baker continues to prefer Europe, although his popularity is on

continued on page 63

VERVIL OAKLAND



# RECORD REVIEWS

★★★★★ EXCELLENT  
★★★★ VERY GOOD  
★★★ GOOD  
★★ FAIR  
★ POOR

## JOE BECK/RED MITCHELL

**EMPATHY**—Gryphon G-2 911: GROOVE YARD; POLKA DOTS AND MOONBEAMS; LIKE SOMEONE IN LOVE; SOFT WINDS; SOMEDAY MY PRINCE WILL COME; THE THINGS WE DID LAST SUMMER; WHISPER NOT; EMILY; JUANABARA; DARN THAT DREAM; AUTUMN LEAVES; 'ROUND MIDNIGHT.

**Personnel:** Beck, guitar; Mitchell, bass.

★★★★★

## JOE PASS

**LIVE AT DONTES**—Pablo 2620-114:

WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO MY SONG; YOU STEPPED OUT OF A DREAM; A TIME FOR LOVE; DONTES' INFERNO; YOU ARE THE SUNSHINE OF MY LIFE; SECRET LOVE; SWEET GEORGIA BROWN; STOMPIN' AT THE SAVOY; DARN THAT DREAM; MILESTONES; LULLABY OF THE LEAVES; WHAT ARE YOU DOING THE REST OF YOUR LIFE; BLUES FOR PAM.

**Personnel:** Pass, guitar; Jim Hughart, bass; Frank Severino, drums.

★★★★★

For fans of modern jazz guitar there's cause for rejoicing in the simultaneous appearance of these two 2-LP sets of "live" recordings by a pair of the idiom's finer performers. Pass is of course widely known for the marvelous solo (and small group) recordings he's been making since signing with Norman Granz' Pablo label. The present set makes available performances recorded at Donte's in 1974 when the guitarist's trio was inaugurating the club's successful "guitar night" showcase. Beck, on the other hand, is less honored than he should be, given his admirable command of the instrument and his formidable skills as an improviser in the same post-bop idiom that Pass pursues. He's not always been shown to best advantage in past recordings, but this recent Gryphon album, on which he is skillfully seconded by bassist Red Mitchell, does much to set the record straight. It's far and away the guitarist's best and most consistently realized set of performances in a straight-ahead jazz direction.

I much prefer it to the Pass set, fine though that is. For one thing, the interaction of Beck's guitar and Mitchell's bass has produced a far more transparent and esthetically pleasing sound than that of Pass' guitar, Jim Hughart's electric bass, and Frank Severino's drums. The over-reverberant sound of the bass on the latter tends to muddy the ensemble texture a bit too much, more than occasionally obscuring what the guitarist is doing. Then there's the matter of musical interaction achieved by the two groups. Possibly spurred by the "limitations" of the duet format, Beck and Mitchell have



RIC HEITZMAN

produced performances as imaginative, resourceful, varied, and full-sounding as they were capable of doing, given the ad hoc nature of the situation, Mitchell having sat in one evening when Beck was playing at Bradley's, leading to their playing the job as a duo. They work hand-in-glove.

"It was the most natural duet I've ever played," Beck is quoted in the notes as having said. "We never sat down and rehearsed a song, an intro, an ending, or any musical thing. Everything on the record is as close to spontaneity as possible. No format was discussed and there is essentially no solo." This being the case, the extraordinary rapport between the two is even more remarkable for having developed so quickly. The performances simply flow, and the exchange of ideas between the two men is as constant as it is gripping. Mitchell is the paradigmatic bassist, supporting, commenting on, implementing, and encouraging the guitarist's inventions, and Beck responds in kind. Most of us have known for years how good Mitchell is—this set reconfirms his taste, authority, and all-around excellence, and reminds us anew that Europe's gain is our loss—but the real revelation is Beck. The occasional flashes of brilliance he evidenced from time to time in earlier recordings is finally and fully realized in the striking, sustained power of these performances.

Beck negotiates the program of ballads, jazz standards, and one excellent original, *Juanabara*, with fluency and imagination in abundance, never at a loss for telling, tasty commentary, and his technique more than equal to the demands his quick, resourceful

mind makes of it. He never once gives the impression of faltering or coasting but always projects the lucidity, controlled power, and easy confidence of the master instrumentalist this set so well confirms he is. The program's greatest virtue is its consistency: every selection is characterized by thoughtful, inventive, marvelously empathetic creativity and unerring musicianship. There's not a dull moment in the almost 90 minutes of performance, making this one of the most satisfying album sets currently on the market. Unreservedly recommended.

Pass is, of course, no slouch either, and over the four sides of his set he treats us to some stunning playing. As an ensemble, however, the trio falls short of achieving rapport of the type that charges the Beck/Mitchell collaboration with such intensity. Despite their having been a regularly working group, Pass, Hughart, and Severino achieved a more prosaic type of interaction. Mind, this is not a criticism of the group's abilities—to demand the exceptional would, after all, be unfair—so much as it is simply an observation of the greater modesty of its collective ambitions. If the bassist and drummer had risen to the soaring levels of Pass' playing, the results would have been spectacular. As it is, they're merely excellent.

The guitarist plays marvelously, close to and often at peak ability, never holding back or letting facility carry the day but always digging in, stretching, challenging himself to extract as much from his materials as he can. More often than not he succeeds, with the result that there's plenty of fiery, inventive,



surprise-filled, and occasionally astonishing guitar playing all through the recital. The set would be worth acquiring if only for the breathtakingly exciting version of *Secret Love*, which finds Pass framing his gripping statement of the theme and much of his variations antiphonally, in effect dueting with himself. *Milestones* is treated similarly.

For programmatic variety there are a number of solo performances interspersed among the trio efforts—*A Time For Love*, *Darn That Dream*, for example—but so completely and effortlessly does the guitarist dominate the proceedings that, ultimately, there's little real

difference between solo and trio performances. One barely notices the absence of bass and drums on the solo pieces, a situation which suggests both the fullness of Pass' conception and the power of his improvisatory skills and the non-essential nature of the supporting work by the bass and drums. It's nice, and occasionally helpful to have the additional instrumentation there but, in truth, it doesn't really matter all that much to the success of the music. Pass carries the load. Apparently the producers felt so too, for the sound mix pushes the guitar way to the foreground and relegates

bass and drums to extremely minor positions—hardly what you'd expect of a well-integrated, mutually complementary three-way interaction. While trying to adhere to the policy of reviewing a recording for what it is rather than what it isn't, it's my feeling that a fourth voice—a chord-feeding instrument like piano or second guitar—would have tied this trio's loose ends together perfectly. It cries out for something like this. Pass is in surpassing fine form, however, and that's more than enough. —pete welding

**BETWEEN**

**CONTEMPLATION**—Aural Explorer AE 5007: *CONTEMPLATION; WATCH THE TREES; CIRCLE; IVORY AND STEEL; ORPHIKON; STATE OF SOUND.*

**Personnel:** Peter Michael Hamel, keyboards, zither, vocals; Robert Eliscu, oboe; Roberto Detree, guitar; Tom van der Geld, vibraphone; Jeffrey Biddeau, congas; Sankha Chatterjee, tabla; Ilona Pederson, english horn; Peter Friedrich Muller, tanpura; Gary Todd, contrabass.

★ ★ ★ ★

**PETER MICHAEL HAMEL**

**NADA**—Celestial Harmonies CEL 001: *NADA; SILENCE; SLOW MOTION; BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP.*

**Personnel:** Hamel, piano, prepared piano, synthesizers, electric organ; Ulrich Kraus, synthesizer; Anatol Arkus, drone.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

**EBERHARD SCHOENER**

**BALI AGUNG**—Celestial Harmonies CEL 002: *TJANDRA; RAWANA; NADI; SURIYA; RAMAYANA; KETJAK; AGUNG RAKA-DALANG; GONG-GEDE.*

**Personnel:** Schoener, synthesizer, mellotron; Pete York, percussion; Siegfried Schwab, guitar; the Gamelan Orchestra of Saba and Pinda of Agung Raka.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

**MICHAEL WILLIAM GILBERT**

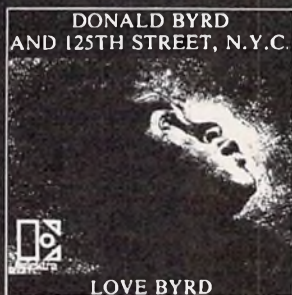
**THE CALL**—Gibex 002: *ADELE'S DANCE/STREAMS/NIGHTSONG; THE CALL; EARTHRITE; TRACES; THERE SHALL COME SOFT RAINS.*

**Personnel:** Gilbert, synthesizer, mbira, percussion, wood flute, voice, prepared piano, tape constructions; Tim Moran, flute, alto flute, alto, soprano saxophone; Royal Hartigan, drums; Bob Rosser, electric guitar; Charlie Miller, congas; Salvatore Macchia, bass; David Moss, percussion, whistles, voice.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

Long before Brian Eno coined the term "Fourth World Music" to depict the merger of Western music and technologies with non-Western music traditions, the fact of this merger was extant. The history of jazz can be viewed as a result of European

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instruments and traditions combined with those of Africa. John Coltrane, John Handy, and Don Cherry are among those who have expanded that world to include India and various Asian countries, as have Jade Warrior, Santana, and Popol Vuh who have explored the use of exotic, non-Western modes in a rock context.

Since Coltrane's pioneering efforts, this type of music has often been associated with Eastern mysticism, heightened consciousness, and meditation. German keyboardist, composer, and writer Peter Michael Hamel has been at it longer than most. His group, Between, has been plying an East/West synthesis that can be found on several imported recordings since 1971, of which *Contemplation* is the first to be issued domestically. His international group contains musicians from Argentina, Trinidad, India, and the U.S., and their sound is often reminiscent of the group Oregon in its pan-cultural mixture. In fact, the title cut could have been lifted directly from the Oregon songbook. Jeffrey Biddeau's congas act like tablas as Hamel spins a series of cycles on piano over which oboist Robert Eliscu (who also plays with Popol Vuh) plays the melodic lead with a Coltrane-inspired lyricism. *State Of Sound* takes up the second side, moving through an opening meditation chant into a cyclical bass pattern set up by Hamel's organ. Eliscu, Hamel, and Biddeau alternate harmonic improvisations over this basic structure. The oboe brings an odd quality that evokes the stateliness of medieval music and the serpentine twists of an Indian shenai simultaneously. Hamel's improvisations are in the tradition of Terry Riley, with repeated short melodic patterns that slowly evolve, but without Riley's various delay techniques.

The Terry Riley influence is more pervasive on the solo recordings, such as *Nada*, an album that is more in keeping with Hamel's ideas of music as a way towards meditation. *Beyond The Wall Of Sleep* uses a synthesizer drone to take the place of an Indian tanpura, and establishes a contemplative mood into which Hamel introduces gently turning themes on synthesizer and organ (including a quote from *Contemplation*) that build in layers and intensity like the inward spiral of a Mandala. The effect is one of a long and peaceful journey. A typical piece on *Nada* is *Silence*, in which Hamel used a prepared piano that brings to mind the gangsa (a bronze-keyed instrument with bamboo resonators, struck with mallets like a xylophone) used in Javanese gamelan orchestras. Its elegance suggests the spirit of Java and Bali without being directly imitative, much as Steve Reich's music suggests the percussion tones and cycles of these countries' music.

Eberhard Schoener is also involved with the exotic sounds of Bali. Though he has recorded some rock-oriented albums, including one with members of The Police, Schoener's reputation is based on atmospheric albums like his excellent *Trance-Formation*. On *Bali Agung*, Schoener applies his electronics to the music of Bali. The liner notes suggest, but never actually state, that the Balinese musicians and Schoener

collaborate together. It sounds, however, as if Schoener has simply interpolated Balinese field recordings into his own work. Nevertheless, *Bali Agung* is an entrancing record. Schoener often merges low droning synthesizer tones with the bass gangsas, sounding like marimbas, while his mellotron plays gentle, misty flute lines. In Nadi, the cultures move in and out of each other with slow, delicate gangsas segueing into mellotron choirs and the classical guitar of Siegfried Schwab, which is in turn replaced by Schoener's gangsa-like synthesizer playing reverberating percussive tones

and breezy electronics, while a solo chanter faintly drones a section of the *Ramayana Monkey Chant* beneath the mix. Though Schoener uses the better known syncopated choir chanting of this Balinese dance of exorcism on *Ketjak* (the Balinese name for *Monkey Chant*), it is only a backdrop for descending sequencer patterns, an ostinato bass line, and some energized drumming from Peter York. In all, the Balinese music is used as a mood setter and reference point for Schoener's airy electronics.

It is relative newcomer Michael William Gilbert who comes closest to offering a

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world music on his second self-produced record. Unlike his electronically-dominated debut, *Moving Pictures*, *The Call* uses the synthesizer sparingly. Adele's *Dance* is part of the three-movement suite that opens the album. A bright, rhythmic percussion base underlies a lyrically childlike flute melody by Tim Moran. This moves into the mysterious and mystical *Streams* and a flute duet between Gilbert and Moran that seems to caress the inside of your brain and finally metamorphoses into *Nightsong*, which weaves more dynamically sensual rhythms around Moran's undulating flute. Rhythmic dynamism and a vague mysticism continue to dominate the first side—from the shrouded chimes and flutes of the title piece to the flawed fusion of *Earthrite*, whose percussion and synthesizer mix is driving but lacks convincing solos. Side two explores the outer reaches of sound tapestry. *There Shall Come Soft Rains* has the alternately ebullient and subliminal voice and percussion of David Moss improvising with a prepared tape collage. Moss has imploded the percussion vocabulary in an inner landscape that employs instruments ranging from wood blocks to "Bertoia sonic sculptures" (steel rods of various size which produce shimmering glissandi when rubbed). Though Gilbert's world music esthetic is wide-ranging, he has trouble holding so much diversity together on one album.

—john diliberto

**JACK DEJOHNETTE**

**TIN CAN ALLEY**—ECM-1-1189: *TIN CAN ALLEY*; *PASTEL RHAPSODY*; *RIFF RAFF*; *THE GRI GRI MAN*; *I KNOW*.

**Personnel:** DeJohnette, drums, congas, timpani, piano, organ; Chico Freeman, flute, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; John Purcell, flute, alto, baritone saxophone; Peter Warren, cello, bass.

★ ★ ★ ★

Jack DeJohnette prefers that his music be called multi-directional (see Lee Jeske's interview in *db*, March '81). This album and its predecessor *Special Edition*, which won *down beat's* 1980 Readers Poll Record of the Year, present strong cases for that claim. So does DeJohnette's extra-sensory leadership.

*Tin Can Alley* suggests a tonal history of jazz—from the earthy, layered, African rhythmic build-up of DeJohnette's solo feature *The Gri Gri Man* to the Ducal sonorities of the drummer's *Pastel Rhapsody*. Warren's *Riff Raff* completes the circle with a primal collective ad-lib. The leader's title track is boppish and angular. *I Know* dances to a backbeat while the multi-tracked horns riff and composer DeJohnette soul-shouts.

The horns are particularly forceful, pliant, and varied on the ballad *Pastel Rhapsody*. Plaintive, heavy-toned flutes and bowed bass introduce the tune. After DeJohnette's

piano solo (surprisingly delicate in its treble tones and Bill Evans voicings), alto and tenor saxophones enter with a chromatically rising melody. Purcell solos in an updated Hodges bag, displaying a lovely timbre, controlled vibrato, and a singing falsetto range. Freeman's solo follows a piano/bass dialog and is light, rhapsodic, and full of broad scoops and sweeping tonal dips.

The Ellington overtones extend to other performances. On *I Know*, *Riff Raff*, and the title cut, Purcell's baritone saxophone functions as a cornerstone in the manner of Harry Carney's majestic horn in Duke's sax section. Against this robust tradition Purcell interjects free-form voices—fractured notes, wails, swoons, bleats, rasps, and whispered-to-screamed speech patterns. Freeman's bass clarinet erupts with similar vocal effects (plus falsetto yelps and stalking bottom notes) on *Riff Raff*. On the title track his tenor registers calmer comments, but on *I Know* it becomes a gritty, outside, rhythm & blues reveler.

Although the up-front horns and DeJohnette's compositions are the foci of this set, Warren's bass (cello on his *Riff Raff*) and the leader's drums are the power plant. The drummer is especially adept at establishing a basic rhythmic feeling (backbeat, bebop, swing) and then breaking it up, dancing around it, and restructuring it—all without upsetting the original impetus or balance. He extends the music. Warren, meanwhile,

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**RECORD  
REVIEWS**

is a true team player.

DeJohnette on this record scores again with some of the most coherent, timbrally compelling multi-directional music around. Rich combinations abound among these four exceptional players. —owen cordle

**SARAH VAUGHAN**

**I LOVE BRAZIL!**—Pablo Today 2312 101:  
*IF YOU WENT AWAY; TRISTE; ROSES AND  
ROSES; VERACRUZ; I LIVE TO LOVE YOU;  
THE FACE I LOVE; COURAGE; THE DAY IT  
RAINED; A LITTLE TEAR; CANTADOR.*

**Personnel:** Vaughan, vocals; Edson Fred-  
erico, piano; Danilo Caymmi, vocals,  
flute; Milton Nascimento, vocals, acoustic  
guitar; Tom Jobim, Jose Roberto Bertrami,  
electric piano; Sergio Barroso, Claudio  
Bertrami, Novelli, acoustic, electric bass;  
Helio Delmiro, Nelson Angelo, guitar;  
Chico Batera, Ariovaldo, percussion;  
Mauricio Einhorn, harmonica; Paulo  
Jobim, flute; Wilson das Neves, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**COPACABANA**—Pablo Today 2312 125:  
*COPACABANA; THE SMILING HOUR (ABRE  
ALAS); TO SAY GOODBYE (PRA DIZER  
ADEUS); DREAMER (VIVO SONHANDO);  
GENTLE RAIN; TETE; DINDI; DOUBLE  
RAINBOW (CHOVENDO NA ROSEIRA);  
BONITA.*

**Personnel:** Vaughan, vocals; Helio Del-  
miro, guitars; unnamed others.

★ ★ ★ ½

**THE DIVINE SARAH**—Musicraft MVS  
504: *IF YOU COULD SEE ME NOW; I CAN  
MAKE YOU LOVE ME IF YOU'LL LET ME;  
YOU'RE NOT THE KIND; MY KINDA LOVE;  
I'VE GOT A CRUSH ON YOU; I'M THROUGH  
WITH LOVE; EVERYTHING I HAVE IS  
YOURS; BODY AND SOUL; I COVER THE  
WATERFRONT; I DON'T STAND A GHOST  
OF A CHANCE WITH YOU; TENDERLY;  
DON'T BLAME ME; THE LORD'S PRAYER;  
MOTHERLESS CHILD.*

**Personnel:** (cuts 1-4): Freddie Webster,  
trumpet; Leroy Harris, alto saxophone;  
Cecil Payne, baritone saxophone; Bud  
Powell, piano; Ted Sturgis, bass; Kenny  
Clarke, drums; (5-8): George Treadwell,  
trumpet; Al Gibson, clarinet, alto saxo-  
phone; George Nicholas, tenor saxo-  
phone; Eddie De Verteuil, baritone, alto  
saxophone; Jimmy Jones, piano; Jimmy  
Smith, guitar; Al McKibbin, bass; William  
Barker, drums; (9-12): Treadwell, Emmett  
Perry, Roger Jones, Hal Mitchell, Dick  
Harris, trumpet; Ed Burke, Dick Harris,  
Donald Coles, Rupert Cole, trombone;  
Scoville Brown, Budd Johnson, Lowell  
Hastings, Eddie De Verteuil, saxophones;  
Jones, piano; McKibbin, bass; J. C. Heard,  
drums; (13, 14): Ted Dale's Orchestra.

★ ★ ★ ½

It may be unfair to consider these three records at the same moment since, if nothing else, recording techniques have vastly improved in the 33-year span among the recordings, and the Brazilian albums are exceptionally well-produced. Yet there are elements in the early Musicraft dates that

point the direction in which Sarah Vaughan was to move, elements of stylistic diversity that predict a capability to move easily and successfully out of the jazz and pop modes.

The *Divine Sarah* is a collection of reissued dates from 1946-47, made three years after she debuted with Earl Hines and his Orchestra. Some numbers suffer from routine arrangements and undistinctive vocals, and not all of the best cuts from Vaughan's early years are here—you'll have to look elsewhere for the classic 1945 recording of *Lover Man* with Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker, for example. Yet within the standard three-minute context of the day come some of the early signs of a unique vocalist: anticipating a dramatic chord change in *You're Not The Kind*, riding above the melody and bending notes in *Body And Soul*, introducing *Ghost Of A Chance* in a wordless manner mindful of Kay Davis' floating soprano.

The most adventurous work here, though, is on two non-jazz compositions, *The Lord's Prayer* and *Motherless Child*. Vaughan adds some gravel to her heavy vibrato, moving toward Mahalia Jackson on the former, while a young Judy Garland-like innocence makes the latter a fragile treasure.

Those final two recordings on *The Divine Sarah* foretell the stylistic range that makes *I Love Brazil* so successful. It has often been said that Vaughan is one of the most capable jazz singers to work in other genres; here she easily adapts to a South American setting dominated by strings and percussion, recorded in Rio De Janeiro with all local musicians. Every note has a renewed sense of urgency as Vaughan discovers new timbres to mesh with the unusual instrumentation. Spanish romanticism and sassiness mix in this collection of love songs taken primarily in ballad or bossa nova tempos.

A few of the musicians here may be identifiable to American audiences, particularly Milton Nascimento, who contributes two compositions and sings wordless background on *Veracruz* and shares vocal verses on *Courage*. (The two singers trade verses in English/Spanish, a nice touch repeated with vocalist Danilo Caymmi on *Roses And Roses*.) Credit should go to Edson Frederico, who has created careful arrangements that keep many of the subtle guitar lines from being lost in the oftentimes lush mix.

Frederico also wrote the disappointing arrangements for *Copacabana*, recorded two years later than *I Love Brazil*, with a smaller ensemble. If the earlier album captures the fire of the native Brazil, *Copacabana* speaks only of the seaside resorts—warm and comfortable, yes, but with little of the glow of the land.

The vocal choruses on two cuts and the percussion on several others rarely achieves more than a perfunctory level. *Copacabana* is best at its simplest and warmest, when it features just Sarah with guitarist Helio Delmiro, as on *Gentle Rain* (with a whispery violin), *Dindi*, and *Tete*. One of three guitarists on the earlier album, Delmiro figures prominently on every work in

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## RECORD REVIEWS

Copacabana. On electric guitar Delmiro has a fondness for round, sustained notes that meld with Vaughan's voice. On acoustic guitar, he slips deftly through scales, playing a more impish foil to the vocal. Dindi especially is a tour de force, an Antonio Carlos Jobim composition with Delmiro strolling on acoustic in the right channel and electric in the left channel and Sarah's vocal pulling the guitar lines together. I never thought a version of Dindi could touch the recording by Carmen McRae; now one does.

But with the consistent recording output of Sarah Vaughan, one expects more than occasional moments on an album. Copacabana offers only moments; it's fortunate to have the missing Musicraft dates available again—some have been out of print, others have been available on Everest Records (FS-250)—but for sassy state-of-the-art, *I Love Brazil* is it. —r. bruce dold

### PHIL WOODS/ GENE QUILL/ SAHIB SHIHAB/HAL STEIN

FOUR ALTOS—Prestige MPP-2508: *PEDAL EYES*; *KOKOCHEE*; *NO MORE NIGHTS*; *KINDA KANONIC*; *DON'T BLAME ME*; *STAGGERS*.

**Personnel:** Woods, Quill, Shihab, Stein, alto saxophone; Mal Waldron, piano; Tommy Potter, bass; Louis Hayes, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

### PHIL WOODS/ GENE QUILL

PHIL TALKS WITH QUILL—Columbia PC 36806: *DOXIE*; *A NIGHT IN TUNISIA*; *HYMN FOR KIM*; *DEAR OLD STOCKHOLM*; *SCRAPPLE FROM THE APPLE*; *DOXIE*.

**Personnel:** Woods, Quill, alto saxophone; Bob Corwin, piano; Sonny Dallas, bass; Nick Stabulas, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

### RICHIE COLE/ PHIL WOODS

SIDE BY SIDE—Muse MR 5237: *SAVE YOUR LOVE FOR ME*; *NAUGAHYDE REALITY*; *SCRAPPLE FROM THE APPLE*;

*DONNA LEE*; *POLKA DOTS AND MOONBEAMS*; *EDDIE'S MOOD/SIDE BY SIDE*.

**Personnel:** Cole, alto saxophone, voice (cut 2); Woods, alto saxophone; Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, tenor saxophone (1); John Hicks, piano; Walter Booker, bass; Jimmy Cobb, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

What these three records have in common, aside from their the-more-altos-the-merrier philosophy, is Phil Woods. The two reissues are a reminder that of all the altoists to emerge from Charlie Parker's shadow in the late '50s, with the exception of Jackie McLean, Woods was by far the most substantial. The new release offers evidence, in the playing of Richie Cole, that Woods has been casting long, dark shadows of his own.

Woods' virtuosic playing can, paradoxically, sound complacent, a tendency which was even more pronounced when he was younger. Familiarity with his later work is all that distinguishes his solos on the Prestige session from the solos of lesser lights like Quill, Shihab, and Stein. Each of the Four Altos plays well enough, but each sounds so much like the others—sounds, that is, so much but not quite like Charlie Parker, even to the deftly interpolated nursery rhymes—that you need a scorecard to tell them apart (and the sleeve of this no-frills budget-priced LP doesn't give you one). Ironically, the Parker influence is even more noticeable on the set's standard ballad, where the players are presumably speaking from their hearts, than on the Cherokee like Charlie Parker, where they are more single-mindedly chasing the Bird. There's plenty of good music here—needling piano solos and accompaniments by Waldron, surprisingly detailed arrangements (probably by Waldron and/or Teddy Charles) on which the altoists blend well as a section, and a remarkable consistency in the alto solos—but the ear wants greater contrast.

*Phil Talks With Quill*, of the same vintage, retains more of its bouquet. Again, lack of contrast hurts—why nothing slower than the medium tempo *Stockholm*, and why did neither man bring along his clarinet? But Woods and Quill are given more of the stretch-out room young players seem to need here, and they strike a good balance between competition and cooperation. This was a working band brought into the studio exactly at the point at which night after night on the bandstand had tightened its loose head arrangements just enough. The best track is the one Woods original, *Hymn To Kim*, which features a haunting solo by its composer and lightly swinging work by the obscure Powell- and Wallington-styled pianist Bob Corwin, though Quill sounds more comfortable on *Scrapple and Tunisia*, where the going is more breathless. There's a strident Hotspur quality to Quill's solos that sometimes proves his downfall—he often seems to be giving the chords a fast shuffle in a desperate attempt to come up aces—but this same quality is what enabled him to egg Woods on to some of the latter's best work of the period.

Richie Cole has much the same effect on Woods. On *Talks With Quill*, Woods' solos are, for the most part, bright and extremely busy. His solos on the live date with Cole are no less urgent, but they are more concentrated, more finely shaded. His phrases move with more slither and zip. If he were a fastball pitcher, batters would return to the dugout mumbling about his location as well as his speed. A comparison of the version of *Scrapple* he does with Cole to the one he did with Quill shows that he now makes fuller use of the tune's melody and its rhythmic contour than he did 25 years ago. With the exception of Woods' contributions and a cameo appearance by Lockjaw Davis, there really is little to get excited about here, however. The members of the rhythm section, fine players all, relate better to each other than to the horns, and pianist Hicks' statements lack his usual polish. Cole, a

former student of Woods', is a rather mechanical, one-dimensional improviser who is likable only on *Save Your Love*, where he scrunches up his shoulders for a solo that is a kind of loving parody of the buxom Davis tenor solo it follows. *Polka Dots*, his ballad spotlight, is little more than a recitation of licks borrowed from Parker, Woods, and Benny Carter, played without their elan, and *Naugahyde* is a smart-ass joke at the expense of the avant garde.

There are nonetheless stirring exchanges between Woods and Cole on *Scrapple* and *Donna Lee*. What lifts this record above mediocrity, though, and justifies a better than average rating are its intangibles—the enthusiasm and respect Cole and Woods demonstrate for each other, for their Boulder, Colorado concert audience, and for the essence of jazz itself. —francis davis

## BOB MOSES

**FAMILY**—Sutra Records 1003: *AUTUMN LIEBS*; *HEAVEN*; *CHRISTMAS 1978*; *PORTSMOUTH FIGURATIONS*; *DEVOTION*.

**Personnel:** Moses, drums; Dave Liebman, tenor saxophone; Terumasa Hino, cornet, percussion; Steve Kuhn, piano; Steve Swallow, bass.

★ ★ ★ ★

Some musicians who are excellent accompanists falter when they step out as leaders.

They lack the artistic drive to impart a sense of direction to the music. Others—Tommy Flanagan comes to mind—shine even more brightly. Fortunately, Bob Moses falls into this latter category.

*Family* is a tight, well-constructed album of straightahead but very contemporary jazz. Moses wrote three of the five tunes, selected players who were old musical friends, and arranged the music to showcase their talents as well as his own. There is a warm, comfortable atmosphere on the album—a feeling of mutual enjoyment and support (hence the title).

Dave Liebman seems to benefit most from this atmosphere. For this session, he passed up his trademark soprano sax and concentrated on the tenor. Although he can still tear off phrases in a hard-edged Trane style—he does so on Steve Swallow's *Portsmouth Figurations*—he also shows a breadth on this album not often heard. His solo on Moses' *Christmas 1978* is as relaxed and fat as an old dog by the fire. On *Autumn Liebs* (a clever recomposition of *Autumn Leaves*) he alternates clipped, quizzical phrases with muscular runs. And his ensemble work on Duke Ellington's *Heaven* is lush and smoky, with a tone that owes more to Ben Webster than Trane.

Terumasa Hino, while not quite as strong a voice as Liebman, is also in fine form. His cornet playing evokes Miles Davis—long lines of fuzzy-edged notes, broken by rests in

unusual places, and sharp punctuations. But he clearly has some ideas all his own, which he demonstrates on *Devotion*, the modal vamp tune that closes the album. Hino opens with a plaintive rubato interpretation of Moses' haunting theme, and uncorks some surprising tonal effects, including unusual half-valve work. His playing throughout is strong and original.

Steve Kuhn and Steve Swallow are fine complements to Moses' light, fluid drumming. Kuhn's comping is persistent without being intrusive, and his solos show excellent range and the ability to respond to different material within his style—for example, he breaks up his long phrases on *Heaven* with sharp, percussive interjections that are definitely Dukish. Swallow is impeccably solid and consistent, as he continues his quiet demonstration of what an effective instrument the electric bass can be in jazz. (Why doesn't he get a solo?)

Moses, as leader, exerts his influence quietly but firmly from beneath—coloring, filling, bridging solos, underscoring phrases. This is done with a deftness that belies its difficulty. Moses' approach is a long way from the drummer-as-leader juggernaut style typified by Buddy Rich. It is far more musical, too. Moses' long solo on *Portsmouth Figurations*, which is dedicated to Roy Haynes, is crisp and incisive, with the variety and dynamic control that come from experience—and the taste that is a gift.

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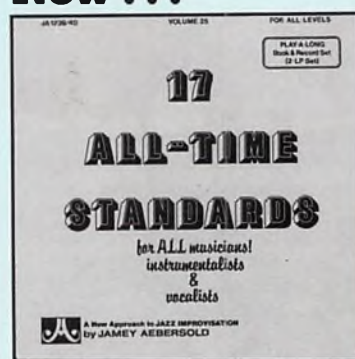
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## RECORD REVIEWS

Although Moses may not lead us into the promised land with this album—there is nothing startling or innovative about the material—he reminds us that the drums are a musical instrument. And he reminds us that when the players feel warm and comfortable with each other, that feeling is communicated.

—jim roberts

## NICK BRIGNOLA

**L.A. BOUND**—Sea Breeze SB-2003:  
*QUICKSILVER; SMADA; GROOVIN' ON URANUS; IN A MELLOWTONE; SPRING IS HERE; BLUE BOSSA.*

**Personnel:** Brignola, baritone, soprano saxophone; Bill Watrous, trombone; John Heard, bass; Dwight Dickerson, piano; Dick Berk, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

The announcement each spring of the Grammy Awards gives a collective case of the willies to the jazz community—not for the suspense of the competition, but rather at the inanity of the commercially weighted nominations. Thus, the “Grammy Nominee” sticker on *L.A. Bound* seemed a rather strange sort of endorsement. What a pleasure to find that the Grammy people got one right for a change.

It is a spontaneous, swinging, joyous blowing session that needs no apologies. One can criticize only its title, because the contents therein—a bit of *Silver*, a touch of *Strayhorn*, a lot of blues—aims for New York or Chicago rather than the laid-back roller-rink of the lotus-eaters.

*Quicksilver* makes for a startling start, an *in medias res* jam. The rhythm section jumps in like a garage door dropping, and Watrous and Brignola feed lines to each other so viscerally one must fight to follow them amid the turbulence. If the opening cut isn't the essence of the album, then *Groovin' On Uranus*—a randy blues reminiscent of Johnny Griffin's *The Jams Are Coming*—surely is. The rhythm section, with bassist John Heard especially prominent in its fabric and feel, carves a groove sure enough to support with equal strength three entirely personal solos: the coarse, carousing Brignola, his defter running-mate Watrous, and a smooth pianist, Dwight Dickerson.

Democratic as the record is, Brignola's leadership goes unquestioned. He contributes the strongest solos on the album and defines its overall aggressiveness. Considered with his recent work on the BeeHive label, *L.A. Bound* argues for Brignola's entry into the two-man club that Gerry Mulligan and Pepper Adams have made of the baritone sax. He always has displayed their firepower, but his recent work proves him as facile as macho. He possesses extraordinary fluidity on the big horn, sounding at times like a tenor or alto man incognito. *Spring Is Here*, his duet with Dickerson, recalls the luscious 1975 pairing of Dave Brubeck and Paul Desmond; while Brignola softens his tone for the ballad, his reserved and resonant manner disdains the breathy and frilly as completely as his pushiest blues blowing.

*L.A. Bound* still may lack the expansive scope or the urgent risk-taking that charac-

terize any year's vanguard of jazz releases. But the Grammys, having found Brignola, should at least ask him for some references before awarding the 1982 prizes.

—sam freedman

## HELIOCENTRIC

**HELIOCENTRIC**—Discovery Records DS 806: *AFFERENT CONNECTION; LEAF; ARROW; TRADITIONAL SONG FOR A LOVED ONE; GOLJATH; CLOUD MOUNTAIN; "Y"??; TOWN OF DOG; PIETKO KLAPEJKO.*

**Personnel:** Norm Scutti, drums; Al von Seggern, reeds; Jeff Pressing, keyboards; John Leftwich, bass.

★ ★ ½

## SOLAR PLEXUS

**SOLAR PLEXUS**—Inner City IC 1067:

*VOA, QUETZAL; NEVADAN MADAM; STUTZ BEARCAT; RUBAIYAT; XANGO-BAHIANA; SEASCAPE; THE DARWIN DILEMMA; THE EARTH LAUGHS IN FLOWERS.*

**Personnel:** Randy Masters, cornet, flugelhorn, piccolo trumpet, Bb trumpet, percussion; Denny Berthiaume, acoustic piano, electric piano, clavinet, celeste, synthesizers; Russ Tincher, drums, percussion; Glenn Richardson, C flute, alto flute, piccolo, tenor, soprano saxophone; Mickey McPhillips, bass; Lin McPhillips, vocals, percussion; Victor Meshkovsky, Kenneth Nash, percussion.

★ ★ ½

## LARRY VUCKOVICH

**BLUE BALKAN**—Inner City IC 1096:

*BELGRADE BLUES; LOVING LINDA; LARRY'S DANCE; AFTER HOURS; BLUE BALKAN; MAPLE FOREST; CHANGES; IN YOUR OWN SWEET WAY; MEDITERRANEAN NIGHTS.*

**Personnel:** Larry Vuckovich, piano; Bobby Hutcherson, vibes (cuts 2,9), marimba (1,3,5); Erik Golub, violin, viola (6,9); Paul Breslin, John Heard (7,9), bass; Eddie Moore, Eddie Marshall (7), drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

Three albums here offer a varied palette of compositional colors and textures, world-wide in influence. 1979 debut albums from California-based bands *Heliocentric* and *Solar Plexus* experiment with latin rhythms, odd time signatures, and to different degrees, today's “pop” jazz sound. San Francisco pianist Larry Vuckovich combines a stylistically wide-ranging collection of tunes with a fascinating group of players, in exploring his Eastern European roots.

Keyboardist Pressing is the author of most of *Heliocentric's* music. On the album's liner notes, each of his songs is dutifully taken apart and explained by drummer Scutti and hornman von Seggern. Tunes are described in such colorless and uninspired terms as “Ballad intro in 3/4 to latin rock in 4/4,” or “Slow funk intro in 7/4 to medium rock in 4/4.” And unfortunately it would be difficult to draw much more emotion from the music on side one than the guys did on the liner

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notes. Heliocentric is a quartet with a roomy, rehearsed, and agreeable enough live sound—non-offensive and saccharine.

Things pick up a bit on *Goliath* as the odd-metered funk breaks into a spirited rock groove behind Scutti's polyrhythmic drum cadences. *Town Of Dog*, a spontaneous band composition about two mischievous cats, provides some interesting moments, and comic relief. But in light of the seriousness with which the group approaches jazz, it also sounds awkward, out of place. Handclapping in 7/8 time punctuates a spry arrangement of "a Macedonian folk song" that closes the album with some fine ensemble playing. Actually the guys accompany themselves very well at times, but their solo trading grows thin and sounds too calculated.

Solar Plexus presents a wider mix of material, with weightier arrangements and heavier instrumentation, but that doesn't keep a lot of it from sounding academic. Basically a brainchild of music professors Randy Masters and Denny Berthiaume, the band uses rhythms from at least three continents. But Solar Plexus' first album suffers from a tameness and lack of direction.

*Voa Quetzal* is a squeaky-clean melody with a Brazilian batucada percussion break that drags badly, followed by a synthesizer break ala Weather Report that sounds out of tune. *The Darwin Dilemma* features another oddly dissonant bit of synthesizer work from Berthiaume, who on all other keyboards is quite efficient. Vocalist Lin McPhillips adds a pleasant dimension to the band when singing lines with the horns or filling the background with tasty yelps. If you liked the TV theme from *Star Trek*, you'll dig her. But her scat solos sound so much like her acknowledged influence, Ursula Dudziak, that it's distracting.

*Stutz Bearcat* is a well-played and original sounding piece, bringing ragtime up to date with funk and odd meters. Saxman Glenn Richardson and bassist Mickey McPhillips solo confidently over the 9/8 Turkish rhythm of *Rubaiyat*. Trumpeter Masters' solo on *Xango-Bahiana* is part Cuban, part Mariachi, with a heavy dose of bebop. Drummer Russ Tincher and percussionists Nash and Meshkovsky provide some spark on the tune, mixing rhythms with a similar disconcert for cultural bounds.

Drawing from his ethnic background as well as his blues roots, pianist Larry Vuckovich makes a warm and rich statement with *Blue Balkan*. Yugoslavian-born Vuckovich has worked with luminaries like Jon Hendricks, Gerry Mulligan, Dave Holland, and Dexter Gordon, and this showcase of his dynamic and thoughtful playing explains his popularity among peers.

On *Belgrade Blues* Eddie Moore's cymbal cushions and tom-tom jabs propel a far-reaching Hutcherson marimba solo, and Eric Golub's gypsy-like violin flight. After rhythmic hints from Vuckovich, Moore shifts to a double-time feeling near the end of Golub's solo, and the pianist follows right behind him with tasty comping. Vuckovich always listens well, and reacts quickly in his accompaniment. *Larry's Dance* is an otherworldly piece with timely dynamic lifts and falls. Vuckovich, Golub, and Hutcherson sustain the folk music feeling with their 7/8 improvisations. Golub (who appears on Solar Plexus' 1980 release *Earth Songs*) adds

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## RECORD REVIEWS

to the drama of his slowly unraveling solo with tremelo effects, before Hutcherson's melodically graceful marimba offering.

The merging of bebop and Balkan is finely crafted on the title tune, with a dancing ensemble melody in between single chord improvisations. Vuckovich's solo intro to the tune is a gem, as the pianist rises light-fingered to the top keys, maintaining sensitive Tynesque rumblings in his left hand. His later solo is full of Balkan modality.

Paul Breslin and John Heard provide the record's colorful and sympathetic bass playing. On *Changes*, Heard and drummer Eddie Marshall swing and dash, while Vuckovich maintains an intense feeling with hands full of bright blue keys.

Blue Balkan is as challenging as it is tonally interesting, and Larry Vuckovich proves to be a very talented and focused session leader. That focus is what seems missing from the two aforementioned albums.

—robin tolleson

## SAMMY PRICE

**SWEET SUBSTITUTE**—Sackville 3024: *IT DON'T MEAN A THING (IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT SWING)*; *A HUNDRED YEARS FROM TODAY*; *TORONTO AT MIDNIGHT*; *AM I BLUE*; *AUNT HAGAR'S BLUES*; *DON'T BLAME ME*; *SWEET SUBSTITUTE*; *MY LONESOME HEART*; *SNOWY MORNING BLUES*; *MEDLEY: MEMORIES OF YOU/AS TIME GOES BY/MISTY*; *STORMY WEATHER*; *MCCLEAR PLACE BOOGIE*.

**Personnel:** Price, piano.

★ ★ ★ ★

## JAY McSHANN

**TUXEDO JUNCTION**—Sackville 3025: *TUXEDO JUNCTION*; *ONE SIDED LOVE*; *ROBBINS NEST*; *FROGGY BOTTOM*; *GEE BABY AIN'T I GOOD TO YOU*; *DO NOTHING TILL YOU HEAR FROM ME*; *BARRELHOUSE BOLERO*.

**Personnel:** McShann, piano; Don Thompson, bass.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

## COUNT BASIE

**KANSAS CITY 5**—Pablo 2312-126: *FIVE AT FIVE*; *ONE O'CLOCK JUMP*; *(WE AIN'T GOT) NO SPECIAL THING*; *MEMORIES OF YOU*; *FROG'S BLUES*; *RABBIT*; *PERDIDO*; *TIMEKEEPER*; *MEAN TO ME*; *BLUES FOR JOE TURNER*.

**Personnel:** Basie, piano; Milt Jackson, vibes; Joe Pass, guitar; John Heard, bass; Louie Bellson, drums.

★ ★ ★

The style of jazz piano most commonly referred to as "stride" knew its greatest period of creativity and influence during the '20s and '30s, and particularly in those urban centers largely populated by blacks. Initially a northeastern offshoot of classic ragtime, the stride style emphasized to an ever far greater degree than its midwestern antecedent not only the burgeoning rhythms

of sophisticated orchestral jazz but also a heavy dose of rural blues. Thus, even the earliest solo recordings of James P. Johnson and Fats Waller reflect a modernity of rhythmic and harmonic conception rarely evident in the more austere and formalized rag playing of their idiomatic seniors. Stride, which benefited from its predecessor by insisting upon the equal importance of left- and right-hand patterns, also went that much further to incorporate the improvisatory and timbral techniques of jazz and blues as well, thereby rendering to its vocabulary an even greater suitability to contemporary orchestral settings. Indeed, with a proper stride player at one's disposal, it was not only possible, but sometimes even desirable, to forego the use of a string bass entirely. By the same token, though drummers may frequently be said to add a certain decorative balance to the physical layout of a bandstand, their musical contributions may be similarly dispensed with... that is, only if one is dealing with a genuine master of the stride technique.

Here we have three of the best, albeit not most widely recognized living exemplars of this tradition. Over the years all three have carved out, to varying extents, niches of respect for themselves in the hierarchy of jazz piano, but, even to this day, few of their many worldwide admirers would tend to think of them primarily as striders. Price, for many a decade, has pursued a respectable but rarely revealing course as a purveyor of boogie and blues. McShann, for an equally long period of time, has done the same; but added to even that most restrictive stereotype, he has also sustained the burden of sharing his deserved prestige as a bandleader with that of one of his ex-sidemen, a promising young saxophone player named Charlie Parker. Basie, as should by now be well known to all, has comforted himself for almost 50 years with such strong rhythmic underpinnings that even his mere suggestions of reserve strength were found sufficient to advance his cause. But the sad truth is that, for all of their recognized accomplishments, not one of these three has yet been acclaimed for the most formidable of his gifts: the execution of proper stride.

Price's solo album, *Sweet Substitute*, was a long time a coming, but it should nevertheless go far to dispel whatever lingering doubts some may still harbor as to the pianist's musical flexibility. Though no fleet-fingered whiz in the sense of a Waller or a Tatum, Price nonetheless manages to imbue each of his varied selections with an authority difficult to dispute. Starting with a full-bodied *It Don't Mean A Thing* and proceeding through a hearty collation of ballads, blues, and stompers, Price constantly reaffirms the importance of left-hand independence and swinging time. There is not a moment's letdown on this record, and that includes even the medley of oft-heard ballads.

McShann, though never in doubt of his own command of rhythmic independence, graciously agreed to record his set with young Canadian bassist Don Thompson, a musician he had played with only once



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before, and that in 1972 for the highly regarded *Man From Muskogee* album. Similarly, on this session there is a beautiful balance between piano and bass that pertains throughout, and Thompson, no stranger to Sackville recordings, acquits himself admirably on all of his unaccompanied solos. As on the *Price LP*, there are no up tempos here either, but only those that would appeal most directly to tapping toes and snapping thighs.

It should come as no surprise to followers of the Pablo label that Norman Granz has long made clear his intentions to record Count Basie in combo settings as far removed from his current big band as possible. Though this production plan might not augur well for the future of "The Machine," it certainly does raise the hopes of Basie's most long-serving fans the world over. There have already been a number of such jam combo recordings issued on this label, and the present one should have been of the same caliber as the others. But, essentially, the problem boils down to this: does the inclusion of such supreme bebop melodists as Milt Jackson and, to a lesser extent, Joe Pass, necessarily guarantee a definitive performance from Count Basie? In this case, unfortunately, it does not, and because of that the album as a whole suffers. Quite simply, though everybody plays predictably well throughout, there is nowhere in evidence an igniting spark that would prompt Basie to do what we all know he can still do. While no one would reasonably expect the ex-Waller disciple to revive his earlier virtuosic style of stride in such company as the present one, neither do we feel that his ongoing talents are being directed as persuasively as they should. —jack sohmer

## PAT METHENY/LYLE MAYS

### AS FALLS WICHITA, SO FALLS

WICHITA FALLS—ECM-1-1190:

*As Falls Wichita, So Falls Wichita Falls; Ozark; September Fifteenth; It's For You; Estupenda Graca.*

**Personnel:** Mays, piano, synthesizer, organ, autoharp; Metheny, electric, acoustic six-, 12-string guitar, bass; Nana Vasconcelos, berimbau, percussion, drums, vocals.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

You'd never suspect that some burg in the middle of the Great Plains could inspire such exotic music. The title cut to this album is a strong, multi-tiered piece in an eclectic style somewhere between Jon Anderson, Weather Report, Mike Oldfield, and Eberhard Weber. Pat Metheny and Lyle Mays may have been influenced by these musicians somewhere along the line, but they're pushing ahead with new combinations of musics, and bringing a youthful vitality to jazz tangents in the process.

The sidelong *As Falls Wichita, So Falls Wichita Falls* is a fascinating progression of moods: images of a stark plain capable of tornados, sudden afternoon storms, or a Saturday evening at that inevitable watery picnic spot just outside of town where Wichita Fallians must routinely go to communicate with nature and perform their Midwestern rituals. The war-like crowd noises that introduce the title cut could be imagined to be rural teens in their mating season, more extroverted the farther they get

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from pie-touting aunts and uncles. There's Eno and Faulkner in this music . . . a captivating atmospheric novella of sounds.

Side two has four shorter compositions, some coming closer (Ozark) to the kind of Metheny that has heretofore made him a chart-topper. September Fifteenth, though, is a thought-provoking lament dedicated to the late Bill Evans, with beautiful acoustic guitar introspection atop synthesized strings, and then some Peruvian flute-like calls from Mays. It's For You is another startlingly contagious upbeat melody utilizing an Urubamba-type keyboard line.

Metheny's first albums were certainly dismissed as commercially cute by members of jazzdom's progressive party. But it's tough to deny Metheny's gift for melody; the bright and rainy compositions that have been so listenable may seem less than all-out improvisatory, but many young listeners are getting lost in their imagery nonetheless, and the degree of arranging is a lot less severe than most other "chart jazz." Whether in conscious reaction to the song mold he has built, or just as a natural outgrowth of a developing creativity, the last two Metheny albums break that mold. In this case, both Metheny and Mays seem completely compatico with one of the most earthy of modern percussionists, Nana Vasconcelos. Together they capture glimpses of our everyday world in a way that, at this point, is quite unique. —bob henschen

## DANNIE RICHMOND

### DANNIE RICHMOND QUINTET—

Gatemouth 1009: *CUMBIA AND JAZZ FUSION; FEEL NO EVIL; APRIL DENISE; SEVEN WORDS.*

**Personnel:** Richmond, drums; Jack Walrath, trumpet, flugelhorn; Bob Neloms, piano; Ricky Ford, tenor, soprano saxophone; Cameron Brown, bass.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

## MINGUS DYNASTY

### LIVE AT MONTREUX—Atlantic SD

16031: *HAITIAN FIGHT SONG; CONSIDER ME, OH LORD; FABLES OF FAUBUS; YSABEL'S TABLE DANCE; BETTER GET HIT IN YOUR SOUL.*

**Personnel:** Joe Farrell, tenor saxophone; Randy Brecker, trumpet; Jimmy Knepper, trombone; Sir Roland Hanna, piano; Aladar Pege, Mike Richmond, bass; Billy Hart, drums.

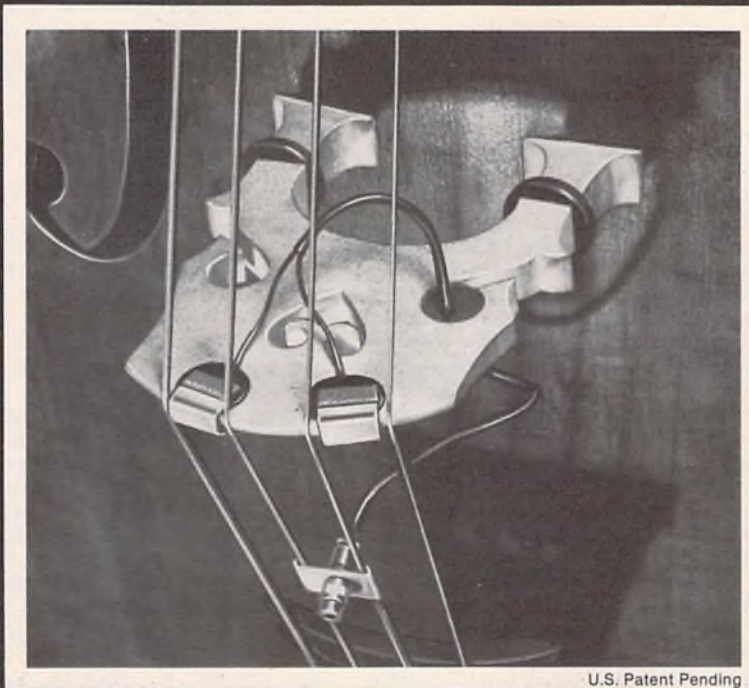
★ ★ ★ ½

The job of recreating the music of Mingus, with all the majesty and emotional character the master himself could command, has to be one of the most precarious tasks in all of jazz. Phrasing the music just as Mingus intended or keeping up with the constant shifts in tempo and meter is simple enough compared to the challenge of investing the music with the kind of burning inspiration Mingus literally squeezed from his bands. Since his death just a few years ago, the various attempts at resurrecting his music have illustrated just how difficult the task is.

Joni Mitchell's tribute, *Mingus*, offered compelling enough Mitchellisms, but where was Mingus? With the wrong band entirely, Mitchell didn't even come close to capturing what Mingus was about. While the posthumously assembled first version of

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Mingus Dynasty certainly came closer to the mark, again the notes were right but the feeling wasn't, and unfortunately the best editions of the band, especially those with George Adams in them, were never recorded.

It comes as no surprise that it would ultimately take Mingus' right-hand man to take up the torch where others stumbled. Projecting an insight that only Mingus' closest musical associate could possess, Richmond captures more of the Mingus gift and genius than all the Dynasties (even those he was a part of) or Mitchells put together, and in addition offers an entire side of rich material composed by band members. Reviving the last working band Mingus personally put together and placing Cameron Brown in the bass spot—one of the few bassists who wouldn't pale in the awesome light of Mingus' own bass playing—Richmond starts off on the right foot. Adding his own strengths as a band leader, Richmond's record is cut solidly in the Mingus groove.

Featuring a pared-down orchestration of *Cumbia And Jazz Fusion* (recorded by Mingus on the classic album of the same name), the quintet captures more than its share of the exotic spice Mingus wrote into the piece. The ensemble work simply sparkles with vitality. You can almost feel the presence of Mingus crouched in the background hurling encouragement and threats—as he probably did while putting

this music together for his last tour. With his crystal-sharp tenor conception, Ford delivers solos that Mingus would have been pleased with—which says a lot. Wisely avoiding an attempt to top the first side with more Mingus, Walrath and Richmond show just how well they can fuse what they learned about composing at Mingus University with their own burgeoning styles, and Neloms rolls up a funky hard-bop number for the band to take on.

If Richmond's quintet is where the real Mingus legacy now resides, where does that leave the Dynasty's latest effort? Of course, the obvious demise of any group that calls itself the Mingus Dynasty lies in the ineluctable comparison it invites with Mr. Mingus the original. Although this live recording (digital, no less) is a step up from the Dynasty's first record—with nice playing from everyone and inspired solos from Farrell and Brecker—it shrinks from the gleaming truth of the Mingus originals.

For bringing us the gospel-rich *Consider Me, Oh Lord* (an obscure Mingus tune) and the stunning, almost sentimental beauty *Sketch Two* (written in the last year of Mingus' life), we should be grateful. But do we really need more versions of tunes like *Better Get Hit In Your Soul* or *Ysabel's Table Dance* which Mingus performed often and definitively? Do we need an "in the pocket" arrangement of *Fables Of Faubus* that's taken much too fast to reflect the swaggering

defiance Mingus intended? Red herrings if I ever smelt them. While *Live At Montreux* is clearly a respectable recording, anyone buying it before first procuring a long list of Mingus' classic albums (like the recently released *Mingus At Antibes*) should be ashamed.

—cliff tinder

**JOHN CLARK**

**FACES**—ECM 1-1176: *THE ABBA KINGDOM; LAMENT; SILVER RAIN, III; FACES IN THE FIRE; FACES IN THE SKY; YOU DID IT, YOU DID IT!*

**Personnel:** Clark, french horn; David Friedman, vibraharp, marimba; David Darling, cello; Jon Christensen, drums.

★ ★ ★

When's the last time you heard somebody really wail on french horn? John Graas was hung on writing and never cut loose, ditto Gunther Schuller; Willie Ruff recorded soporific ballads and Bob Northern a dry new thing; sessioners like Jim Buffington and Sharon Freeman never seem to pull any solo spots. Where are the wailers on this noble ax? Young John Clark out of New England Conservatory is one (younger Tom Varner's another) and he can really blow that thing, having mastered the horn's inherent difficult fingering/tonguing combinations and overcome its penchant for clams. He has shown both mettle and focus with Gil Evans,



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Carla Bley, and in several Boston bands. He's recorded some throaty, robust gems with Bley (*Music Mecanique*) and on his own (*Song Of Light*). Here's Clark again, but what's wrong? No wailing. Majestic Wagnerian architecture on side one, but nary a lick to hang your walking shoes on. Nice pacing and remarkable textures on side two (marimba/arco cello/horn/brushes), but such restrained blowing from all but Friedman gives little to sink your chops into.

Clark sounds quite inhibited throughout, even on his bouncy calypso *Raid* seeming gruff and distant. Friedman, that ubiquitous malletteer, by contrast sounds close and comfortable here with Christensen's throbbing toms, smooth and sage on the spacy *Lament*, and providing the only spark on the epic *Kingdom*.

Multiple composer credits on the last three tracks lead one to believe they are spontaneous improvisations, yet the spontaneity seems crabbed and pinched from Clark's horn, and aloof and keening from Darling's coloratura cello (though they blend effectively for color elsewhere). Some lovely grooves are struck occasionally (*Fire* lopes fortuitously with its mallet vamp, churning traps, and the cello's whale song), but most of the energy emanates from the percussionists, and too few bright moments involve the capable young leader. Though ECM producer Manfred Eicher often effectively tempers overheated imaginations with his Nordic cool—notably with Sam Rivers, AEC, Enrico Rava—that same chill finger can also cast an icy pall over a session or, indeed, deep-freeze the joys of cooking.

—fred bouchard

## DON RADER

**ANEMONE**—Jet Danger J5310: *ASHIYA*; *LIVE*; *ANEMONE*; *PRINTEMPS*; *JASPER*; *HAIL COLOMBIAN*; *CHARISMA*; *DOIN' RITE*.

**Personnel:** Rader, flugelhorn; Ron Eschete, guitar; Kevin Brandon, bass; John Perett, drums.

★ ★ ★


*Anemone* is the third release by Jet Danger, a musicians' co-op label formed in Anaheim, California in 1977, and was recorded live at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco. With the exception of the drums not having quite the clarity and presence one might desire, the recording quality is good.

To many jazz aficionados Don Rader is best known for his work in the big bands of Woody Herman, Maynard Ferguson, Count Basie, and Les Brown. However, since around 1968 Rader has been a mainstay of the jazz education movement, doing clinics and concerts nationwide and running a music publishing business. Perhaps it is Rader's relationship with the highly structured educational environment that prevents this music from really letting loose; instead, it is restricted by the structural confines of the arrangements, much like a big band situation. There is no question of the competence of the performers, only the substance of the music itself. All of the tunes were composed and arranged by Rader.

*Live* is probably the best and most substantial tune on the album. It begins with a trumpet and guitar duet (the most frequent textural combination here) and evolves to a double-time samba section which recurs ala disco later on. It features well-developed solos by Eschete and Rader and culminates in a quite exciting guitar/trumpet simultaneous improvisation. Perett's drumming is varied and colorful here as it is throughout the album. *Ashiya* is a beautiful tune somewhat evocative of the Miles Davis/Gil Evans collaboration on *Sketches Of Spain*. Rader's vibratoless tone and Eschete's harp-

like arpeggios maintain this feeling, while Perett's bell tree adds to the intended Japanese ambience. *Hail Colombian* is a samba which features quite comfortable solos from Rader and Eschete and is possibly Eschete's best effort. The two straight-ahead swing tunes *Jasper* and *Doin' Rite*, along with the jazz waltz *Printemps*, seem to be the least satisfying selections—perhaps because the most jaded rhythmic and structural devices require the most ingenious of presentations, and here the performers are content to say what has been said thousands of times before.

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## RECORD REVIEWS

Anemone offers a variety of well-rehearsed selections, performed with the utmost of professionalism, providing a pleasant though not ecstatic experience.

—danny l. read

## OLD WINE NEW bottles

Long-time db readers will recall the above heading, which has lain dormant for a few years now, but which has been resurrected to help clarify and bring further attention to the wealth of reissued material which record companies (fortunately for us) continue to offer in frustratingly varied degrees. This column will appear irregularly, under various bylines.

Elsewhere in this issue, trumpeter Chet Baker is reticent to talk about his past successes; nevertheless, many listeners still believe that the Gerry Mulligan/Chet Baker pianoless quartets of the early '50s were the high point of that controversial off-shoot known as West Coast jazz. Freeway (Blue Note LT-1101) inaugurates what promises to be a complete, chronological release of all the World Pacific titles (including some previously unissued performances) by the group. The 10 numbers here chronicle their formative days—from a June 10, 1952 performance of *Get Happy* cut in recording engineer Philip Turetsky's Laurel Canyon living room, to five pieces taped after the band (with Bob Whitlock on bass and Chico Hamilton's drums) had woodshedded for four months at an L.A. club, The Haig—and reveal Mulligan's strengths as a small group arranger. The variety of colors and textures obtained from such a seemingly skeletal combination of instruments is remarkable even to jaded contemporary ears. The delicate dynamics and effortlessness of phrasing and tone exemplifies the epitome of "cool"—without the bloodless quality ascribed to the group by its detractors (though they come closest to a cloying glibness on *Aren't You Glad You're You*). The only real complaint with this set is that at under 30 minutes, the playing time is a bit thin.

By 1954, Baker had left the group for financial reasons, and the quartet which played the Salle Pleyel, Paris concert on June 1 of that year consisted of Mulligan's baritone, trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, bassist Red Mitchell, and drummer Frank Isola. Gerry Mulligan (Inner City 7017) presents 10 numbers from that concert, seven of which have never appeared on LP in the

U.S. Three tunes—*Lullaby Of The Leaves*, *Soft Shoes*, and *Walkin' Shoes*—are held over from the earlier quartet's repertoire, but are here stretched out with longer, occasionally obtrusive (in the case of drummer Isola's unwarranted flamboyancies) solos, faster tempos, and gutsier playing, especially the change from Baker's light, lyrical sound to that of Brookmeyer's more muscular tone, resulting in a tougher give-and-take, but losing the wistfully attractive fragile resiliency of the earlier ensemble.

Unlike the Blue Note Mulligan/Baker project, Inner City's ongoing *Django Reinhardt* series is not arranged chronologically, but rather thematically. The first volume—awarded five stars in db last month—consisted of 1936-37 recordings by the full Quintet of the Hot Club of France, while a future installment will cover "compositions" presumably by the guitarist and cohort Stephane Grappelli. Meanwhile, Volume 2 (Inner City 1101) offers *Solos/Duets/Trios* from a wide range of '37, '39, and '43 dates. This album is an entertaining and enlightening look at Django's extended powers of improvisation, self-sustained for the most part. Besides Grappelli (on *Alabama Bound*, where the guitarist's accompanying heat scorches the tame violin solo), two other violinists appear: bandleader Michel Warlop is syrupy serving *Tea For Two* and hot for a *Christmas Swing*, and Eddie South is suave on *I Can't Believe* and *Eddie's Blues*. However, it is on the five unaccompanied guitar fantasies—three *Improvisations*, *Parfum*, and *Echoes Of Spain*—where Reinhardt's gypsy roots come to the fore, and he exploits his astonishing technique most fully, including a dramatic sense of rubato and a number of flamenco licks.

Two-and-a-half albums of prime *Muggsy Spanier* have been reissued by three different labels recently, all originally recorded within a two-year period with much overlapping personnel but surprisingly, no duplication of titles. Side one of *Dixieland Jazz In The '40s* (Folkways FJ 2853) is a May 27, '46 NYC session of six Bixie-ish numbers. Though typically heavy on ensemble statements, there is strong work by Spanier's clarion cornet, the two-fisted romping of pianist Cliff Jackson, and sly trombonist Vic Dickenson. The real star, however, is the incomparable clarinet of Pee Wee Russell—especially his *Dust Bowl*-husky lead on *Muskogee Blues* and a sunny, swaying *I'd Climb The Highest Mountain* (far from the somber ballad reading he gave this Beiderbecke-connected song in the '60s). Side two is unfortunately wasted on a nondescript group with swing leanings and novelty vocals led by pianist Frank Signorelli.

Recorded two years earlier (April 15 and 22, 1944), *Nick's—New York, April, 1944* (Commodore XFL 15777) features four of the same performers (Muggs, Pee Wee, bassist Bob Casey, and drummer Joe Grauso) and adds Eddie Condon's usual inaudible guitar and inspiration, pianist Dick Cary, and trombonist Miff Mole. There is a boost in energy and enthusiasm in evidence here, probably at Condon's instigation. Though called the Ragtimers, the group handles some decidedly un-raggy material, such as

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Lady Be Good and September In The Rain, along with familiar items as King Oliver's Snag It (with frantic, emotive outcries from Pee Wee in ensemble), a stamping Weary Blues, and a loose, elongated Sugar.

Storyville SLP 4020, meanwhile, collects 14 titles taken from March 1 and 2, 1945 dates, with rotating personnel, issued originally by the Manhattan label variously under the Nick's, Spanier, and Pee Wee banners. Solo space is more democratically distributed here; Spanier's crisp, apple-tart open horn is heard to good advantage, as is Lou McGarity's rigorous trombone, Ernie Caceres' bari, and of course, saving grace Pee Wee. The ensembles stick closest to the dixie format here, with three tunes from the ODJB's Nick LaRocca (including the traditional barnyard routine on Livery Stable Blues), other New Orleans standards (Musk-rat Ramble, Jelly Roll, Tin Roof Blues), plus a satiric original, Feather Brain Blues. Guess which critic gets the needle in this one?

Similarly, two-and-a-half LPs of pianist supreme Willie "The Lion" Smith have been reissued by Commodore, Contemporary, and Inner City. To take them chronologically, The Original 14 Plus Two (Commodore XFL 15775) collects the solo sides The Lion cut on January 10, 1939 for Milt Gabler's label, concentrating heavily on Smith originals—Morning Air, Echoes Of Spring, and the knotty Finger Buster among them. Smith's compositions contain remarkably ornate filigree and intriguing modulations, calling to mind his boast of being able to play Chopin faster than any man alive. His everpresent exuberance and carefully balanced power and delicacy are well in evidence. Two encores from November, 1938 add Joe Bushkin and Jess Stacy (plus an all but inaudible George Wettling on drums), and on Three Keyboards The Lion moves over to celeste ala Meade Lux Lewis.

Inner City 7015 dates from a decade later—1949—and Willie brings an easier-going lilt to this Echoes Of Spring. His spontaneity and beefy tone is heard to greater advantage on Portrait Of The Duke here than on the Commodore release—his running commentary labels his playing correctly: "Vivacious!" There are also homages to keyboard compatriot James P. Johnson—Carolina Shout and Charleston—and four quartet numbers with a too-briefly heard Buck Clayton. The trumpeter shines through Stormy Weather, however.

Finally, one-half of Contemporary S-10035 is given over to six Smith solos from 1958. Repeats of Morning Air, Concentrating, and Rippling Water reveal no deterioration of the pianist's powers of invention over the nearly two decades, and his performance of Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea is astonishingly parallel to the earlier attempt; the rubato phrasing and arrangements are mirror images, beginning rhapsodic and seguing into stride. In fact, Smith's florid yet rhythmically staggered attack (mostly chordal) must have inspired Monk's treatment of the tune in the '60s. (Side one of the Contemporary is more than a bonus—it's a Godsend. The legendary Luckyey Roberts is heard in one of his handful of recordings, also from 1958. The six originals feature raggier, usually brisker playing than The Lion's, with an amazing independence of hands on Spanish Fandango, and some roller coaster glides on Nothin'.)

—art lange

# 19★ NEW★ 81 RELEASES

## COLUMBIA

Miles Davis, returns with funk-in-groove after five-year hiatus, **THE MAN WITH THE HORN**. Paquito D'Rivera, former Irakere altoist burns with Cuban spices, **BLOWIN'**.

## BLUE NOTE

Bob Brookmeyer/Bill Evans, two pianos in tandem, backed by Percy Heath and Connie Kay, **AS TIME GOES BY**. Joe Pass, unreleased '64 session with quartet (Mike Wofford, Jim Hughart, Colin Bailey), **JOY SPRING**. Donald Byrd, first-time look at a '67 session w/ Sonny Red, Pepper Adams, and Chick Corea, **THE CREEPER**. Jean-Luc Ponty, premier release of a '69 date w/ George Duke, **LIVE AT DONTE'S**. Stanley Turrentine, combo of '68 and '69 gigs contrasting keyboards of Jimmy Smith and McCoy Tyner, **AIN'T NO WAY**. Gerry Mulligan, previously released World Pacific '51 and '52 sides with Chet Baker, **FREEWAY**.

## RCA

Tommy Dorsey, 1937-38 big band Bluebird sides plus a couple from the Clambake Seven, **THE COMPLETE VOLUME VI**. Charlie Barnet, 1939 sides also from Bluebird, inc. his hit Cherokee, **THE COMPLETE VOLUME II**.

## PAUSA

Didier Lockwood, diddling fiery fiddle fusion, sextet includes Jan Hammer's synthesizer, **LIVE AT MONTREUX**. Stu Goldberg, digital solo piano outing with homages to Bach and Bird, **VARIATIONS**. Billy Taylor, '69 trio from Jazz Alive! host, **SLEEPING BEE**. Clarke/Boland Big Band, '67 version w/ Europeans and expatriates inc. Griff and Lockjaw, **SAX NO END**. Stephane Grappelli, effortless elegance with Diz Disley's trio from '75, **VIOLINSPIRATION**.

## DISCOVERY/TREND

Chico Hamilton, drummer's mellow '58 group includes Eric Dolphy, **GONGS EAST!** Clare Fischer, plus the latinate Salsa Picante, flows gently on **MACHACA**. Shelly Manne, with two pianos of Alan Broadbent and Bill Mays, plus Chuck Dom- anico's bass, **IN CONCERT AT CARMELO'S**.

## CHIAROSCURO

Ted Curson, trumpeter leads hot octet in six originals, **SNAKE JOHNSON**. Mickey Bass, aptly named bassist leads septet w/ Chico Freeman, John Hicks, Ray Mantilla in tow, **SENTIMENTAL MOOD**. Dexter Gordon, four lengthy quartet raps caught live probably from the mid-'60s, **JIVE FERNANDO**. Bobby Timmons, the late pianist with the recently deceased altoist Sonny Red, **LIVE AT THE CONNECTICUT JAZZ PARTY**.

## STEEPLECHASE

Teddy Edwards, warm and wooly tenor sax, w/ Kenny Drew, Billy Hart, **OUT OF THIS WORLD**. Eddie Harris, returns to mainstream tenor blowing in '81, **STEPS UP**.

Archie Shepp/Niels-Henning Orsted Pedersen, sax/bass duets in bebop repertoire from '80, **LOOKING AT BIRD**. Duke Jordan, pianist in six standards, backed by Dave Friesen and Philly Joe, from '78's **THE GREAT SESSION**. Tete Montoliu, piano trio from '80 offers volume one of **CATALONIAN NIGHTS**.

## INNER CITY

Manhattan Rhythm Kings, vocal trio does '30s swing and novelty numbers, **MANHATTAN RHYTHM KINGS**. Abbey Lincoln, (Aminata Moseka) sings Ellington, Wonder, and her own songs, w/ Archie Shepp's obbligatos, **GOLDEN LADY**. Master Cylinder, electric fusion from Ft. Worth, **ELSEWHERE**. John Kaizan Neptune, combines fusion and traditional Japanese instruments, **SHOGUN**. Ann Burton, vocalist from Holland visits U.S. and finds a NEW YORK STATE OF MIND. Prince Lasha, reedman joins Herbie Hancock in a '65 session from Enja Records catalog, **INSIDE STORY**. Django Reinhardt, second volume of the gypsy guitarist's 1937 and '43 recordings, **SOLOS/DUETS/TRIOS**.

## WARNER BROTHERS

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*continued on page 54*



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**Al Cohn**, tenorist in an '81 quartet w/ Lou Levy, Monty Budwig & Jake Hanna, *NONPAREIL*. **Tal Farlow**, new trio date w/ Tommy Flanagan's piano, *CHROMATIC PALLETTE*. **Warren Vache**, cunning cornet and flugel on seven standards and pianist Hank Jones' title tune, *IRIDESCENCE*. **Eiji Kitamura**, clarinetist plays fast & loose on swing changes, w/ Vache, Fraser MacPherson, and the Concord house rhythm section, *SWING EJI*.

## ARISTA

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**Ned Rothenberg**, solo saxophone and flute recital influenced by Eskimo music, from Lumina Records, *TRIALS OF THE ARGO*. **Dary John Mizelle**, music for percussion ensemble, also from Lumina, *SOUNDSCAPE/POLYTEMPUS II*. **Michael Lytle/George Cartwright**, various reeds in free settings, w/ guest percussionist David Moss, on Corn Pride Records, *MELTABLE SNAPS IT*. **Hugh Hopper/Alan Gowen**, ex-Soft Machine bassist and recently deceased keyboarder in lyrical duets, from Europa Records, *TWO RAINBOWS DAILY*. **The Muffins**, jangly-rhythmed Zappalike jazz, from Random Radar Records, 185.

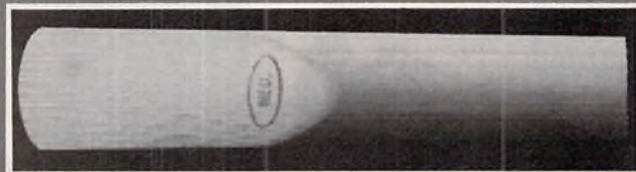
**Billy Bang**, violinist duetting w/ trombone, and in bass/percussion trio, from Bellows Records, *CHANGING SEASONS*. **Bill Cole**, plays Indian, Ghanian, and Chinese flutes in improvisation w/ Sam Rivers and Warren Smith, from Music From Dartmouth, *THE FIRST CYCLE*. **Various Artists**, guitarist Derek Bailey, saxophonist Evan

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# Blindfold Test: SHEILA JORDAN

BY FRANCIS DAVIS

AN UNDERGROUND LEGEND since she recorded an unconventional, emotionally shattering version of *You Are My Sunshine* with George Russell in 1963, Sheila Jordan has at last begun to surface in 1981.

Many of the singer's longtime admirers are get-

ting their first opportunity to see and hear her in person as she tours the U.S. and Europe as the "horn" in the Steve Kuhn Quartet. Joining them in the audience have been the newer fans who discovered her on *Playground*, the band's first ECM release.

Jordan's other recent activities have included a series of voice and bass duet concerts with Harvie

Swartz, and an important role on *Home*, an album of Robert Creeley poems set to music by bassist Steve Swallow, also on ECM.

"I'm not going to give stars because I don't feel like a critic," Jordan cautioned before beginning her first Blindfold Test, "I'm just going to relate, being in jazz, the feeling that I get from other singers and instrumentalists."



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

**1. CHARLIE PARKER. THIS IS ALWAYS (from CHARLIE PARKER ON DIAL VOLUME 2, Spotlite). Parker, alto saxophone; Erroll Garner, piano; Earl Coleman, vocal.**

It could be anyone. It could be Johnny Hartman. (Laughter as alto solo begins.) That was wonderful! I think I know who that was. I think it was Earl Coleman and, of course, Bird, and it was Erroll Garner on piano. I thought Earl had a wonderful feeling, and, of course, to have Bird play on the same date with you—to me, that alone would be inspiring. It must have been a great thrill. One thing I noticed was the way Bird sort of took a back seat. I mean, he wasn't showboating over Earl's vocal, he really did his part of accompanying the singer, and I thought that was very admirable. But that would be Bird, wouldn't it?

He was very helpful to me as a young person because he never thought he was that great that he wouldn't let us kids sit in with him when he came to town. He was great that way, he always let me sit in with him, but never on record or anything, except maybe homemade tapes that were made many years ago.

**2. EDDIE JEFFERSON. ORNITHOLOGY (from STILL ON THIS PLANET, Muse). Jefferson, vocal; Richie Cole, alto saxophone.**

That's Eddie Jefferson singing Bird's line to *How High The Moon*—*Ornithology*, or, I don't know, I always get those two mixed up, *Ornithology* or *Anthropology*. I just know usually what the tune is. I like this very much. It reminds me of the days when I used to sing with Skeeter Speight, who was—is, I should say—a very unusual scat singer who used to write so many wonderful words to Bird lines. This goes back to the '40s, so this is very reminiscent.

They were really close, weren't they? I remember they used to work at the Tin Palace just at the beginning, you know, when Eddie started coming up again and getting some of the recognition he so richly deserved, and I used to admire that very much, that closeness between him and Richie. It was reminiscent to me of what I almost had, could have had, with Roswell Rudd when I was doing voice and trombone things with him. I loved to watch them—to see the love and respect they had for one another.

**3. BILLIE HOLIDAY. DON'T EXPLAIN (from THE BILLIE HOLIDAY STORY, MCA). Holiday, vocal with string accompaniment; Holiday, Arthur Herzog, composers.**

I just, you know, have nothing to say about this as far as rating it in any way. I don't think there's any words to describe what this is. Billie Holiday, naturally, singing her own composition *Don't Explain*. One thing I would say is that Billie's sound is so strong you forget who's playing behind her, except of course Teddy Wilson or Prez when they played . . . but I mean even with strings, her sound is so strong, even if the strings are syrupy and mushy, you're not even aware of what's going on. All you're aware of is this wonderfully human voice with all this emotion and love in it, and pain—the whole thing, it's just right there. I mean she could sing with anybody—she could sing alone, she could sing with the guy on the street corner, she could sing with anybody and make it jazz. She is jazz, she still is, she's the jazz singer to me.

I recorded this song only out of due respect to Billie. It's important that things that she's written be heard, that people don't forget, especially young people coming up. She's jazz.

**4. SARAH VAUGHAN. IF YOU COULD SEE ME NOW (from THE DIVINE SARAH, Musicraft). Vaughan, vocal.**

I know who this is, this is Sarah Vaughan. When I first heard this record, it was a 78, and I just marvelled at this woman. I had a different feeling for Billie, but Sarah . . . it was just that what she was doing with her voice was so unusual, and I said, well, I'm not going to listen to her too closely; I'm just going to enjoy her, because I would never hope to sing that great, firstly, and then secondly, you could very easily try to get ideas from her, and I didn't want to do that. Actually, when I recorded *If You Could See Me Now*, I hesitated because of the beautiful recording Sarah did, but I heard Bill Evans play it at the Hickory House, and I liked the changes so well that he wrote them down on a napkin for me. It was just I felt a whole different approach to the song. Of course, as I say, I never really listen to singers to cop what they're doing, only to enjoy them and feel what they're feeling. I have the utmost

respect for singers. I know how hard it is.

**5. JUDY NIEMACK. YOU GO TO MY HEAD (from BY HEART, SeaBreeze). Niemack, vocal; Simon Wettenhall, trumpet.**

She sounds very young, and I think she's got a lot of promise. She sounds like she's had classical training—very good control. I've no idea who it is. I heard a young woman at a session recently that sounded very similar to her, and her name was Judy Niemack.

I didn't think it was necessary to scat on that ballad. I didn't like the choice of syllables at all: they were very dooby-dooby kind of sounding. On a ballad, maybe just a more lilting kind of thing, or humming, or a softer kind of approach. If you're singing words, you're careful about the lyrics, so you should be careful about the syllables that you choose when you scat, and really know the changes. I don't think you have to scat sing to prove anything. If the feeling's strong and you do it and it's uniquely your own, it's great. But I don't think it's necessary to scat every number or scat at all unless you really feel it and, as I said, unless it's really unique. Scat singing doesn't necessarily make you a jazz singer. But I think she's got a fine voice, nice intonation, and she's probably quite young.

**6. ROBERT CREELEY. THE FINGER (from THE SPOKEN ARTS TREASURY OF 100 MODERN AMERICAN POETS, VOLUME XVI, Spoken Arts). Creeley, reading his own verse.**

He's like a singer. My feeling when he began reciting was that it would be Robert Creeley, but it puzzled me because I didn't know he had recorded anything. Then what finally gave me the clue was "She was young/She was old," but even before that, the first feeling I got was oh, my God, who is this man? They say singers sometimes sound like poets. I immediately thought this man sounds like a singer, he sings his poetry, the emotion—he's lived this, he has lived this poem. And I immediately remembered somebody saying (she affects a gruff male voice) "Have you ever heard Creeley recite?" and I said no. I wasn't that familiar with his poetry before Swallow's album. It's just absolutely . . . I can't describe it. I feel like crying. I'm terribly moved. db

# Profile:

## Joe McPhee

BY PAUL DAVISON

**"I**'ve always kept a low profile, intentionally. I think the music is going to get wherever it's going to go anyway, so I don't have to go around running, screaming, and hyping it. Everybody in America is always looking for the next new hip thing on the scene: Who's gonna be the new Bird? Who's gonna replace Coltrane? Well, I'm not new."

For many music listeners, Joe McPhee is only one among many mysterious names in the catalog of hat Hut Records, that adventuresome Swiss new music label. Over the past 15 years, McPhee has recorded prolifically and performed with popular and critical success abroad, but his work remains largely unheard in the United States. This state of affairs is all the more striking because McPhee's European touring has been limited to annual vacations from a full-time factory job in Poughkeepsie, a drab river town in upstate New York. McPhee's profile seems destined to grow, however; in February he left factory work to become hat Hut's vice-president in charge of promotion and marketing. At 41, Joe is looking forward to both the opportunity and the responsibility of making his music, and the music of like-minded performers, more widely available to Americans.

McPhee himself first became aware of the new music scene when he read about Ornette Coleman in the early '60s. "Some of the early criticism didn't make much sense to me, though I hadn't yet heard the music. Then, at the wedding of two friends, *Una Muy Bonita* was played as the wedding march. I thought 'Wow! What are they talking about? Who can't hear this?' It sounded perfectly normal to me, not far out, difficult, or unapproachable. This was in 1962, and I went out and bought every record I could find by Ornette and Eric Dolphy. I used to go down to New York often to hear as much music as I could, and one night, as I was driving home and listening to the radio, I heard *Chasin' The Trane*. I had to stop the car—I had never heard anything like that, that intense and that powerful. I bought the record the next day. That was my introduction to the kind of thing I'm doing now most directly."



There was music in McPhee's background. His father, who came from the Bahamas, played trumpet in various marching bands and favored the recordings of Jonah Jones and Louis Armstrong, and Joe himself excelled as a trumpet player throughout his school band years. But he grew tired of "playing marches and making a giant 'P' on the football field for Poughkeepsie High School," so by the time McPhee got interested in the new jazz he had put away his horn and gone off to college with his mind set on a career in electronics.

Uncle Sam changed all that. McPhee was drafted in 1963 and, because the Army couldn't guarantee him admission to an electronics course, he applied to the music school at Ft. Dix. Joe counts this decision among the most important of his life. "The Army was a school. For one thing, it was good discipline, being forced to play every day. But more important, it put me in contact with people who had a direction in life, and they had a great influence on me. I really was interested in electronics, I had no intention of getting involved in music, but these people excited me, got certain juices stirring, made the music something to investigate." Like many other GI's stationed in Europe, McPhee took advantage of an active club scene; on one memorable leave, Joe and some friends visited Amsterdam and wound up

sitting in with Don Byas.

After the Army McPhee came back to Poughkeepsie and settled into his routine of working in a ball-bearing factory by day and playing his music nights and weekends. "On Sundays in the mid-'60s there were jam sessions in bars all up and down Main Street, so I played in bebop groups. I played trumpet exclusively until 1967 when my company went on strike; then I took my last hundred dollars and bought an old Martin tenor because I thought saxophonists were the real innovators at that time. I was deeply into Ornette, Coltrane, Dolphy, and Ayler, and my trumpet playing had become closely related to those saxophonists. So I took my tenor down to those bars where my friends had let me play trumpet, but they said 'No way. It's a threat. We've got our jobs here, we can't have that goin' on. First learn to play it.'"

In 1965 Joe met artist and music enthusiast Craig Johnson, and the two became friends. Eventually, Johnson suggested they try and produce a recording. "I thought he was completely mad," Joe says, "but one day we went to a nearby monastery, and between lunch and dinner we recorded *Underground Railroad* [Craig Johnson Records-1]. I used some of those same musicians who had told me I couldn't play tenor." Through a CJR advertisement in *Coda* magazine, a Swiss record collector named Werner Uehlinger learned about McPhee's recordings. "He recognized my name from my recording with Clifford Thornton [*Freedom And Unity*, Third World Records]. Then he came here on a business trip, we met, and he discovered we had some tapes. He thought they should be released, and that led to *Black Magic Man* [HH-A]. There was no plan to form a record label then. Werner just followed up on an idea, and hat Hut was born. He got involved."

McPhee considers himself "a music maker, not a music player"; though he is generally thought of as a reed player, he has used a variety of instruments to realize his music. "I make the switch easily, but I think of each instrument in its own context. They're totally different and I play them differently." The hat Hut recordings reflect McPhee's extensive palette. Among the solo recordings, for example, *Tenor* reveals a broad and bluesy mastery of that horn, while *Graphics* features McPhee's tenor, soprano, trumpet, pocket cornet, and "little instruments" in a far more diffuse and aleatory music. Although he has often performed and recorded as a solo artist "out of economic necessity," McPhee prefers the interaction of group playing, and he is particularly excited about his upcoming large

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group recording. Scheduled for autumn release on Uehlinger's new hat Art label, the record includes a particularly riveting performance of Ornette's *Lonely Woman*.

His prodigious hat Hut output notwithstanding, McPhee doesn't consider recording particularly important. "It's like taking photographs. Once it's done, I move on to something else. I don't listen to my own recordings that often." Joe is critical of today's emphasis on recorded music: "I see people walking around with headphones and big boxes, dancing in the street as if they were making the music. They really could make music, but that machine can't do it, and these kids have forgotten how. It's like believing hamburger comes from the supermarket. It comes from a cow, and you have to kill that cow to get it. People ought to keep in mind where the music comes from."

Joe is ambivalent about his success in Europe, and the temptation to expatriate: "I gave it a brief, passing glance, but this is where I live, and this is where I would like to play. The friends I play with in Europe have real difficulty getting jobs, while I can go over as an exotic American and play. American musicians over there act really strange. We're given an opportunity, and they take it as though it's a right. It's bizarre—musicians ought to be kind to one another."

Hopefully, McPhee will have more opportunities to bring this music to American audiences, now that he is free from the constraints of a 9-to-5 job. At this writing, he is looking forward to participating in San Francisco's *New Music America* festival as a composer/performer. Joe is optimistic about his future: "I'm very happy to be working with an independent record company, because that's where I believe the creativity is. There have been lots of people—like Craig Johnson, like Werner Uehlinger—who have really gone out on a limb with somebody like me. I thought they were completely crazy—why would they do it? But they did, and that's the backbone of our music. The independents recorded Charlie Parker. People who loved the music went out and did something about it. That mustn't be forgotten. So we won't sell a million records, who cares? A very few people were able to alter my life in a wonderful way, give me a dream of an opportunity, so I'm very happy to be involved in hat Hut. It's a tremendous responsibility, it's a lot of work—at the factory I never had to take work home with me. But it's also a tremendous opportunity to give something back to the music, to support other players of the music, to support the music itself, and that's very important."



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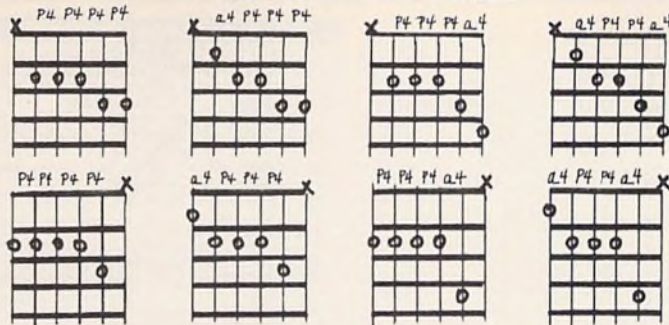
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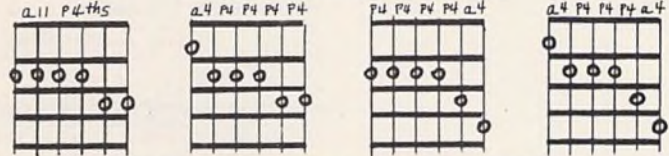
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## SPYRO GYRA cont. from page 17

all the composers in the band are looking forward to having a lot of time to try some creative and artistic things that we haven't had the time to do. I think we might be involved in doing a movie score eventually.

**P. R.:** Anything firm yet?

**J. B.:** We've been offered things and have turned them down—both because there wasn't time and also we'd like to wait until we have our own studio, so we can do it right. We won't take just any movie for the money. We'll pick the right one. Just as if we ever deal with vocals, it will be the right vocal, not just for the sake of doing vocals.

**P. R.:** What films were offered to you?  
**J. B.:** The Lily Tomlin movie, *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* was one we were given to read. It wasn't necessarily offered to us. Our record company MCA is Universal Pictures, so there's a connection there that can be used. I think sometimes our record company dangles things in front of us like that.

**P. R.:** Do you see yourselves eventually leaving the band?

**E. K.:** Eventually. I'm sure we all have projects, solo albums in mind. I like to think that we'll leave to do those projects, yet stay involved in Spyro Gyra.

**J. B.:** There are two factors. One is that Rich and I are building that studio. Two, I look around, and in my own record company a group like the Crusaders are on the same label putting out their own albums. Everybody's getting their albums yet the Crusaders continue. I would love to get individuals in this band record albums and recording deals on their own so that they can go after solo careers. Perhaps after the studio is built and our contract comes up. It would be better if it was all in coordination with Spyro Gyra, of course.

db

## BAKER cont. from page 27

the rise in America, saying he is "more at home" there. "I just feel freer there, that's all." Musically? Personally? He doesn't say, but goes into a comparison of traveling by train ("Eurailpass is a good deal") or by auto. "I like a car better. You don't have to deal with all those strange people in train stations, or take a taxi to the hotel or the club. You can play your cassette player, and it's comfortable and you just throw your stuff in the car. You have your privacy and you don't have to deal with anybody."

And that probably says more about Chet Baker than anything else.

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## KOOL FEST cont. from page 23

band (Bill Evans, reeds; Mike Stern, guitar; Marcus Miller, bass; Al Foster, drums; Nino Cinelu, percussion) went into a funky ballad tempo. Miles began pacing the stage, twittering into his muted trumpet (equipped with a wireless contact mike). Just one note and you knew Miles was back—that sound is as welcome and familiar as the first breezes of autumn. Miles' tone was stunning, his chops were in excellent shape, and he quickly let us know it, removing the mute and wailing, with the trumpet bell not four inches off the stage floor. For the remainder of the 80-minute set, things would brighten like daybreak whenever Miles did play the trumpet, but if he played it for more than 10 minutes, I'd be very surprised.

The brunt of the solo duty was given over to the band, and everybody seemed to be in a different place. Over the faceless funk charts, Mike Stern thrashed at his electric guitar with no jazz feeling at all—this was heavy metal rock, pure and simple. Nino Cinelu played long, dull conga solos that were lacking the spark and fire of some of the best latin percussionists—there is better conga to be heard in many of the city's parks, but Nino didn't seem to be meshing with the rhythm—perhaps he's better than he seemed. Bill Evans gamely tried to play some tasty outside saxophone but, for the most part, was buried under the thud-thud of the bass and guitar. Only Al Foster seemed in tune with the leader, and whenever Miles did bear down and solo (as he did on the standard *My Man's Gone Now*), Foster was with him step-for-step.

Altogether, a very disappointing performance which was only 80 minutes long (no opening act), had a ticket high of \$25, and for which, according to the *New York Times*, Miles was receiving (for two shows) \$90,000. The Man With The Horn is back—playing driving, aggressive trumpet—but the men with the guitar, bass, and percussion were just not up to stylistic snuff. The audience didn't seem to mind, though, applauding every move of Miles—every smile and gesture—and giving him a large, standing ovation at the end.

An empty-cup ending to a pretty solid jazz festival. The high points were fewer than in the past, but so were the lows. Tickets were too expensive, there wasn't enough of the avant garde, and there was little adventurous programming of any sort. But George Wein does have his best handle yet on the way to deliver an urban festival, and that only means many, many more good years of *Kool Jazz*, or whatever the hell else they decide to call it. **db**