

Red Rodney/Ira Sullivan: Caught
Shepp/Ørsted Pedersen Duet Transcription

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down beat®

THE CONTEMPORARY MUSIC MAGAZINE

STEVE GADD

Drummer Most
In-Demand

WAYNE SHORTER

Stretches Out:
Composing/
New Solo Album

RAY ANDERSON

Critical Reward

TOMMY FLANAGAN

Comes Full Circle

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DOM VAN GOST
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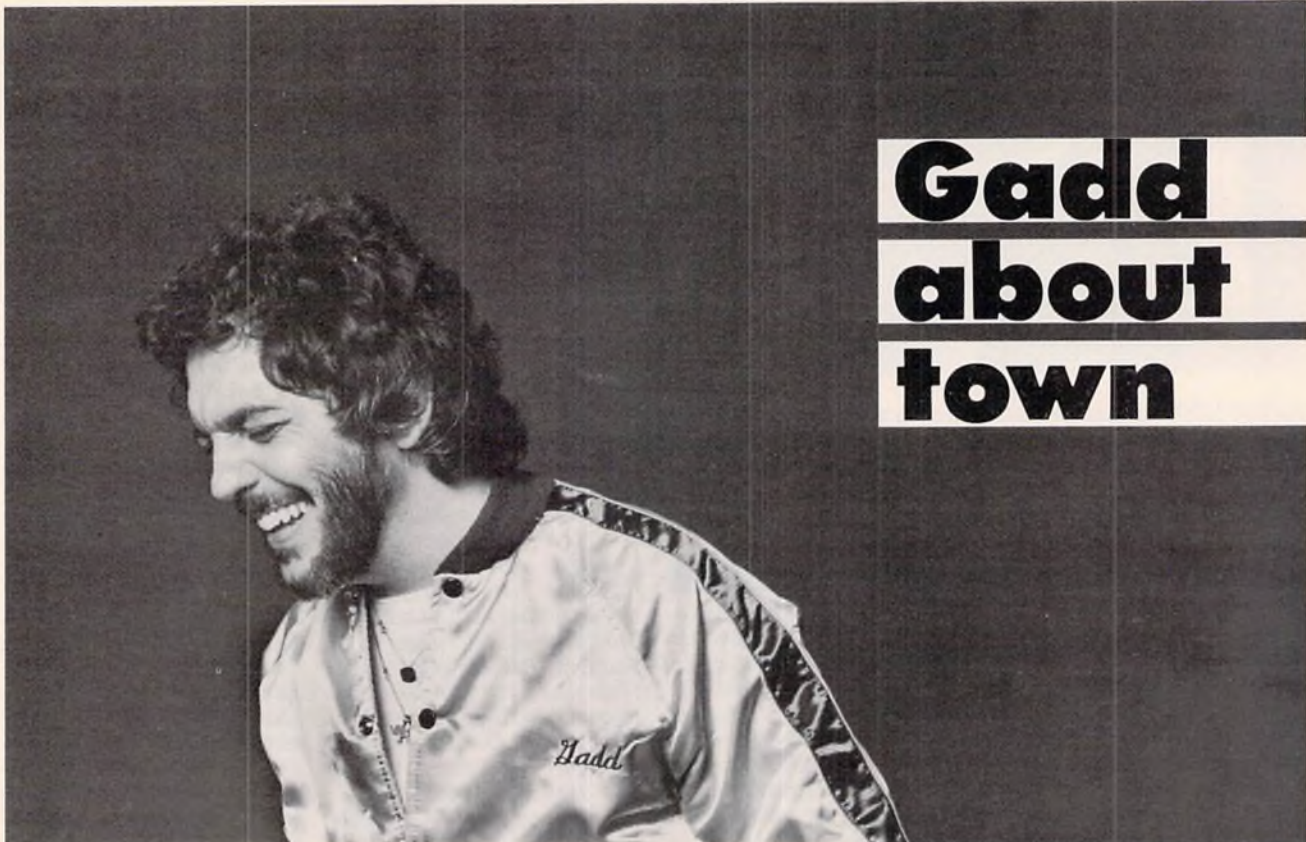
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Gadd about town

BY DARRYL PITT

Steve Gadd was strolling one night in Greenwich Village and noticed a rather unique street musician who was playing the upright bass . . . but without the instrument, merely grunting out the notes which corresponded to his imaginary fingerings.

Gadd, wondering aloud if this guy would let him sit in, nuzzled up to the bass player, imaginary drum sticks in hand, and began keeping time. "Boom-te-te-teh. Sche-boom-te-te-teh." Things were really starting to swing, and it was too bad Mike Brecker or David Sanborn weren't around to complete the trio, while passers-by appeared to wish for the police to arrive to lock up these two madmen.

But there was a wonderful justice in effect: little did their audience know that when they were climbing on top of one another's heads as part of the 500,000-plus crowd listening to Simon and Garfunkel in Central Park, they were also listening to the time of the "mad" street drummer.

But the best part of all was that, as always, Steve Gadd was having fun.

In no particular order, Gadd has recorded with Al Jarreau, Grover Washington Jr., Ringo Starr, Aretha Franklin, Chick Corea, *The Manhattan Transfer*, Stevie Wonder, Quincy Jones, Donna Summer, George Benson, the Bee Gees, Joe Cocker, Ricky Lee Jones, Tom Scott, Steely Dan, Carly Simon, Judy Collins, Al Di Meola, Barry Manilow, Paul McCartney, Bette Midler, Chet Baker, Paul Simon, Warren Bernhardt, Barbra Streisand, and Bob James. The names go on and on—a veritable listing of who's who in popular music.

And so it should be, for there is an ever growing consensus that at 37, Steve Gadd is the greatest drummer around. Even those who might disagree will admit that he is the most in-demand—and the most imitated—drummer in the world.

Buddy Rich, in the March '82 **down beat**, singled out Gadd as "one of the best [original] young drummers to come along . . . but

there are 50 clones who play like him."

Says Richie Morales, drummer for the Brecker Brothers, "All the drummers in Japan are trying to sound just like Gadd. They even sell transcriptions of his solos over there. The three top cats—Togashi, Ponja, and Yama—sound like Gadd to the max, which is a major accomplishment. He is a god in Japan. Steve God. [laughing] But the guy has amazing control, has fantastic dexterity, and is incredibly musical. He's the best."

Says Chick Corea, "Every drummer wants to play like Gadd because he plays perfect. He plays everything well. He has brought orchestral and compositional thinking to the drum kit while at the same time having a great imagination and a great ability to swing. No one has ever done this before. . . . He could very well go on to become the greatest drummer the world has ever seen. . . . One of the biggest heartbreaks in my life was when he left *Return To Forever*."

To know Gadd is to like him . . . a lot. He's kind and generous, loves to tell jokes and make puns (most of which are funny), and within the industry he is known as someone who will go out of his way for nearly anyone.

A few years ago, a young photographer, on only his second assignment, was distraught over a failed shot. Steve Gadd, a stranger to this kid, pulled him through like he was his big brother. "I'll never forget that, and I won't soon forget this conversation with Steve in his Lower West Side Manhattan loft."

Darryl Pitt: Who would you like to play with that you haven't yet?

Steve Gadd: I like Sinatra . . . (*Voice begins to acquire daydream-like quality*) . . . but I would like to play with Count Basie's band more than Sinatra. I'd really like to do that . . . I love Count Basie's band . . . I'll play with Basie's band and then have Sinatra come out and sing a couple

of tunes.

DP: Out of all the people you've played with, what situation have you enjoyed the most?

SG: I can't think of any. I've enjoyed them all. I don't compare them.

DP: Are you saying you enjoy keeping time for the Bee Gees as much as playing with Chick Corea and stretching out?

SG: They're two different things, and I think that both are on the highest levels they can be done. I would have to be an asshole to go in there thinking that I'd rather be playing some other stuff instead of getting as much enjoyment out of what I was doing at the time. I like the variety, and I don't get bored because I don't let myself get involved in musically boring situations. And this is a business. I wouldn't *let myself* get bored, even if I were inclined to, which I'm not. I always do the very best that I can.

DP: Do you have a preference between playing in front of an audience and studio dates?

SG: No. I just need a balance of both really badly.

DP: Who are some of your favorite musicians?

SG: I hate to list names because it would really bother me to think that I've left somebody out. You can't mention everyone. (Pause) Richard Tee is one of my favorite musicians. And we're talking about *musicians*, not great players. The word "musician" means something very special to me. Don Grolnick, Ralph MacDonald, Marcus Miller, Will Lee . . . Chick Corea . . . Abe Laboreal, Jay Graydon—these are great *musicians*. There is a very big difference between a great player and a musician. When you use the word "musician," it involves something much more complete. There are so many people I respect as musicians; I could even mention names that people have never heard of. (Pause) I'm really fortunate to have been able to work with some of these guys.

DP: Favorite drummers?

SG: (Long pause) I have so many. Elvin [Jones], Tony Williams, Buddy Rich, Louie Bellson, Rick Marotta—I love the way he plays. Dave Garibaldi, Richie Hayward, John Bonham. One of the best drum tracks—it kicked me in the ass—was on a Weather Report album, and it was Jaco who was playing drums; that was smokin'. Jack DeJohnette is another one; some of the shit he plays kills me. Peter Erskine. Man, there are so many guys who can play.

DP: Favorite bass players?

SG: Marcus Miller, Tony Levin, Eddie Gomez, Will Lee.

DP: You're currently the most in-demand studio musician anywhere, the choice of musicians, producers, composers, arrangers . . .

SG: That's the first I've heard of it. (Pause, then softly) Well, it really doesn't mean so much to me. That's something I don't ever think about. I just want to be able to continue to do the best that I can.

DP: I know you have fun in the studio. What sort of pranks go on?

SG: . . . Well . . . (Energetically) okay, I was working on a project, and the engineer was telling me about another drummer who was a real practical joker. What this drummer would do was take the cellophane wrapper from a packet of soup crackers, hold it near an open mic, and crinkle it up. Well, the meter peaked and it sounded like the shit was frying. *And he told me this!* Then, he said this guy would get a dog whistle—you know, one of those things that's inaudible—and when no one was looking, he'd blow into it in a mic, and all the meters would peak; no one would hear a thing, and you wouldn't know where the hell it was coming from! *And the guy is telling me this!* So when we had a break, I immediately went out and bought a case of those crackers and three dog whistles, and I passed them out, and everyone was blowing and crinkling at different times, and this engineer didn't know what the f**k was going on! He had maintenance in there pulling apart the wires and everything. (Pause) That was fun. . . . We're always joking around. . . .

I had a part in this movie, *One Trick Pony*, with Paul Simon. The production staff was used to working with a professional cast that knew what to expect, but we were a band—musicians—and we weren't used to getting calls at seven in the morning, then have to wait in a camper all day. We had a hard time dealing with it, so whenever they wanted to get us anyplace they would have to pacify us, and that's where the walkie-talkie comes in. One day a guy comes into the trailer and says, 'Okay, we're going to leave in five minutes.' I saw his walkie-talkie and asked him if I could talk on it, and he says, 'Sure, you can talk.' This guy was thinking that *he* was humoring *us*. He really

didn't think I'd press the button. But I got on the thing and yelled to Mike Houseman, the producer, 'Mike Houseman, Mike Houseman, this is Steve Gadd. Come in.' I waited but I didn't hear anything so I got on it again. 'Mike Houseman, Mike Houseman, this is Steve Gadd. I don't want to worry you or anything but we've got a little problem here. The band camper has tipped over on its side and it's on fire and there are four or five guys trapped in there. Can you get a crew over here immediately?' (Laughing) The guy whose walkie-talkie it was looks at me, then *grabs* the thing out of my hand. When we walked out, there were 15 guys with can openers and all sorts of stuff to rescue everybody! That was a weird thing to do because you *had* to laugh . . . and everyone did. (Pause) This is what they gave me as a going-away present at the wrap-up party (*holds up a toy walkie-talkie, laughing*). You know, I love to laugh. If the session is getting off to a slow start, it doesn't hurt to laugh a little bit. If something is going wrong, I might laugh at that.

DP: How did your association with producer Phil Ramone come about?

SG: It was because of Phil [who is known around the industry for his "big ears," often gives newcomers an opportunity, and had heard people talking about the new drummer—Gadd—in town] that I first worked with Paul Simon. Then I worked with him on projects for Phoebe Snow, Kenny Loggins, Diane Keaton. . . .

DP: Diane Keaton?

SG: I'm playing while she's singing the theme song in the movie *Reds*.

DP: What are some of the dates that stand out in your mind when you felt you were exceptionally hot?

SG: New Year's Eve with Stuff. There were great nights with Stuff when there were no people in the club. When Chick Corea first put Return To Forever together. Me, Chick, Stanley [Clarke]—boy, I remember when that band first went out. That band was hitting it; it was amazing. The music was great and the crowd loved it . . . it was smokin'. (Pause) But I don't think of it personally like when was I exceptionally hot. The only time I would think of it personally is if I didn't know the music. . . .

(Pause) But when I know the part and I'm doing the best I can under the circumstances, I have to be concerned about the whole. It doesn't make any sense to separate me from the band because this music is made playing with a bunch of other people. I'm trying to be part of the group—to make the group sound good—not to be something separate.

DP: Aren't there moments when you're aware that you're making more of a contribution?

SG: No, not really. You just got to give the music what it needs. Sometimes less is more.

DP: Surely you have good and bad nights?

SG: I always do the best that I can. If there's some kind of music I can't play, I won't take the gig. There would be no reason for me to be there, unless it was for the money, which is something I wouldn't do.

DP: So then do you have any favorite records where you're pleased with your playing?

SG: There are some favorite records that I happen to be on, but they're my favorites because I love the *music*.

DP: No favorite solos?

SG: No.

DP: How do you like to be miked?

SG: I really don't know anything about that. I just don't want the mics to get in the way.

DP: Legend has it that you never need a click track.

SG: (Laughing) Sometimes you have to use it. For jingles and movie dates it's very important because the music has to be timed perfectly. The next situation where click tracks are used is when the rhythm section wants to use it or if the producer prefers it, say, for when you're cutting the rhythm tracks for a commercial record. Quincy Jones or Roberta Flack might prefer to use the click track for the entire session because this will enable them more opportunities to intercut different takes.

DP: How do you approach the different styles you're demanded to play?

SG: I don't have a preconceived approach. I don't know what is going to happen at the session, so the first step is to get there and listen to the music, and then I'll respond to it.

DP: Do you ever practice?

SG: (Smiling) No, I just work. But, if I were off for a real long time, I might do some exercises on a pad.

DP: Did you practice much when you were a kid?

SG: I didn't practice a lot because I hated practicing. But there was a time when I always used to be playing. I'd be playing along with a record, a group, or with other drummers when I was with a drum corps. But when it came to working on a thing that I had to do for a lesson... I hated that shit. It took me years to learn how to read music. (Laughter)

DP: How old were you when you first started playing?

SG: Well, the first time I ever saw a drum was when I was two years old. My uncle, who was a drummer in the army, had just finished marching in a parade in Rochester [NY], our home town, and I remember being in awe of this big red drum. My parents told me that around the same time, that if the radio was on, I would grab something to keep time with. I'd just pick up a knife and tap along with the music. Then one day my uncle gave me a couple of sticks and showed me how to hold them, and the two of us would play along with John Philip Sousa marches. When I was seven, I was real eager to have lessons, and that's when some formal training began. The best part was that there was always a lot of fun associated with what I was doing. My brother and I loved to perform. At veterans hospitals and in homes for the aged, we would tap dance and put on shows. My parents were always encouraging; they were in tune where I was at when I was growing up.

DP: Didn't you play with Dizzy Gillespie when you were a little kid?

SG: Well, I sat in with him when I was 10 or 11 in a local club. There

used to be this club, the Ridgecrest Inn, which would have jam sessions on Sunday afternoons, and my father would take us down there to see groups like Stan Getz, Dizzy, Art Blakey, Gene Krupa... and these guys would let us sit in.

DP: Where did your career go from there?

SG: I became involved with a drum corps and got into rudimental drumming, but I'd still play a drum set. So during the day I'd be playing with the drum corps using gigantic sticks, and then at night I'd play a set of drums accompanying jazz bands and organ groups.

DP: When did you realize you wanted to be a drummer?

SG: Well, it just sort of happened.

DP: Did you ever want to be anything else?

SG: It's funny, but I never thought about that. I was never thinking about what I had to be.

DP: At what point did you decide to be a drummer?

SG: I suppose when I had to go to college and decided to go for music. I really didn't want to go to college, but I did want to stay out of the draft, and music was the most fun for me.

DP: While you were in college you played with Chick Corea.

SG: Yeah, it was just after the time that Chuckie Mangione and Chick were playing in Art Blakey's band. They left the band at the same time, and so Chick, Chuck, Joe Romano, Frank Polero, and myself got a job playing six nights a week in Rochester, while I was going to Eastman. So now I was still playing a set of drums in a club at night, but it was so I could make money to be able to pay for going to school where during the days I was in a wind ensemble and concert band. It was around

Hammer Lock: Jan puts the arm on Steve during Al Di Meola's recent Electric Rendezvous tour.

STEVE GADD SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

with Chick Corea

THREE QUARTETS—Warner Bros. 3552
MY SPANISH HEART—Polydor 2-9003
FRIENDS—Polydor 1-6160
THE MAD HATTER—Polydor 1-6130

with George Benson

TAKE FIVE—CTI 8014
IN CONCERT—CTI 8031
CAST YOUR FATE TO THE WIND—CTI 8030

with Steve Khan

ARROWS—Columbia 36129
TIGHTROPE—Columbia 34857

with Stuff

STUFF—Warner Bros. 2968
LIVE IN NEW YORK—Warner Bros. 3414

with Paul Simon

CONCERT IN CENTRAL PARK—Warner Bros. 3654
ONE TRICK PONY—Warner Bros. 3472

with Hubert Laws

THEN THERE WAS LIGHT—CTI 6066

with Phoebe Snow

SECOND CHILDHOOD—Columbia 33952

with Al Di Meola

ELECTRIC RENDEZVOUS—Columbia 37654
SPLENDIDO HOTEL—Columbia 36270
ELEGANT GYPSY—Columbia 34461

with Tom Scott

APPLE JUICE—Columbia 37419

with David Sanborn

VOYEUR—Warner Bros. 3546

with Manhattan Transfer

MECCA FOR MODERNS—Atlantic 16036

with Steely Dan

GAUCHO—MCA 6102
AJA—MCA 1004

with Grover Washington Jr.
COME MORNING—Elektra 5E-562
WINE LIGHT—Elektra 6E-305

with Al Jarreau

THIS TIME—Warner Bros. 3434

with the Brecker Bros.

DETENTE—Arista 4272





STEVE GADD'S EQUIPMENT

Steve Gadd uses basically the same set-up for both studio and recording gigs, with minor modifications; e.g. he uses larger tom-toms in a rock context. He uses the Yamaha Recording Custom series of drums (with Yamaha hardware): a 14 × 22 bass drum, a 5½ × 14 metal snare drum, with two tom-toms mounted on the bass, and two mounted on a stand at his right; he chooses his four toms from these

five sizes: 8 × 10, 8 × 12, 9 × 13, 10 × 14, and 12 × 15.

His all-Avedis Zildjian cymbal set-up contains: 14-inch New Beat hi-hats, an 18-inch medium thin crash (mounted on the left), a 20-inch deep ride (mounted on the right), and (mounted on the far right) a 14-inch thin crash sizzle mounted piggyback above a 22-inch medium ride.

that time that Miles had the new rhythm section with Ron Carter, Tony Williams, and Herbie Hancock. All of a sudden that music made it because Tony took it to another level. I used to listen to it and love it, but it never made real sense to me until I got this one job.

DP: How so?

SG: One afternoon Chick and I went down to the club, and Chick started playing the drums—he's a good drummer—and he was doing, very freely, the kinds of things I had heard but really didn't understand. I'm not sure why, but all of a sudden I did understand it, and that moment had a tremendous impact on me.

DP: When at Eastman, did you have to work harder on some aspects of drumming more than others?

SG: I didn't feel so comfortable playing the timpani while I was in school. I had to spend a lot of hours a day—for five years—practicing timpani, marimbas, bells, and other orchestra shit, and when I graduated I had to decide to try to do it all or just play a set of drums. Some people can do it all. For me, it was a difficult decision to let the orchestral stuff go because it was really hard for me to begin with.

DP: What happened after school?

SG: I was drafted immediately. But I anticipated this in my last year of school, so I auditioned for some service bands which would guarantee my not having to go to Vietnam. Fortunately there was an opening in the army field band, and I was accepted. I spent three years at Fort Mead, Maryland. After that I played in a concert band, then in a big band the size of Buddy Rich's. Then I think it was in '72 that Tony Levin, Mike Holmes, and myself formed a little trio. We rehearsed it in Rochester and went to New York with the idea of trying to get a record deal. Because there was very little money coming in, we would have to take other little things to keep us going. Tony, who had already been in

New York for a while, spread my name around town, and every now and then I'd get a call for a jingle or something. That's how I got started in recording. It's funny, the plan was to get a recording contract with Tony. I thought I was just doing the jingles to *survive* because I didn't have any unemployment coming in. I didn't even know the other thing [becoming an in-demand studio player] was even happening. (Pause) Eventually I saw more of a challenge in recording. Playing, then immediately listening to the playback, was very instructive. I didn't start out feeling that way though. I was always the one for saying I'd rather play live.

DP: Were those lean years?

SG: Fortunately, everything happened quickly—except that doing a lot of recording didn't happen so fast. For the first year-and-a-half I was doing something all the time, but the situations were almost always things for nothing, like rehearsal bands. I would always be carrying around my own set of drums . . . anything to establish yourself, to make friends and let people know you were around.

DP: How did the band Stuff come about?

SG: In '74 or '75 I was living in Woodstock and rehearsing there with a band for four days a week, and then I'd come into the city to work for three days, then return to Woodstock. I'd take as much work as I could in those three days, and I'd sleep in a little hotel room by myself because it would be too far to commute everyday. Anyway, I went to a club one night to hear a bunch of session players who were playing the club just to have some fun, and they sounded great. It was Gordon Edwards, Chris Parker, [Cornell] DuPree, and Charlie Brown was playing sax. Then Charlie wasn't making it anymore, and Eric Gale started doing it, and Richard Tee started doing it. Well, I approached

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WAYNE SHORTER

coming home

BY A. JAMES LISKA

HIS WORDS ARE SPOKEN WITH determined authority, tinged with his sudden bursts of energy and shaded by frequent lapses into silence. His conversational style reflects his own character and personality and is not unlike his music. Quietly introspective and decidedly diffident, Wayne Shorter is conscious of the time he takes to search for just the right word, and to compensate he keeps a steady conversational rhythm with the repetition of a single syllable.

When the word finally comes, it is circumflexed—its tone varied not so much for emphatic expression but for the sake of achievement. A smile follows and the familiar, open but unyielding expression is transformed into a friendlier look. His grin, and the accompanying brightening of his dark brown eyes, is changed only by the continuance of conversation or the distraction of the telephone's interruption. His is a world of constant discovery, each event in need of his inspection and thought, each facet, no matter how trivial or far removed from his life as an artist, demanding his attention and understanding.

"We've been out here doing music at home," he begins, his "we" including Josef Zawinul, co-founder of Weather Report. "Doing music at home brings us to the point, it pulls us more deeply into whatever it is that is needed to be done. We're taking the time to write music at home, getting whatever directions we want to get going for Weather Report.

"I've been taking some time to try and inspect the house. Finally, after four years here, I'm getting around to just inspecting things, you know?" The physical house of Shorter's becomes an allegory for deeper introspection of his work. Domestic concerns notwithstanding (Shorter infers deep spiritualism as he expresses satisfaction with having been off the road since last August), his concern is music and the absence of road pressures have facilitated concentration and evaluation of his composing role, both for Weather Report and his other projects.

"The results of what we're doing at home people will see in June, when we start playing again," Shorter says, acknowledging that a new rhythm section (Victor Randall Bailey, bass; Omar Hakim, drums; Jose Rossi, percussion) will share the stage with him and Zawinul. ("We've been known to make changes after a period of time," explained Shorter regarding the departure of bassist Jaco Pastorius, trap drummer Peter Erskine, and hand drummer Robert Thomas Jr. from Weather Report, indicating that there were no personality or financial conflicts. "It was time.") "I'm also working on a solo album that I'd like to get done by the second half [September] of the summer. At least, that's what I'm shooting at. I'm past the writing and into pre-production, putting music on cassettes at home—that's what



I call doing homework—so when we go into the studio we can just do it in seven days or so, and go right to mixing."

Shorter's plans for his new solo album and the restructuring of Weather Report have provided the composer with new compositional techniques, the employment of which have altered both direction and style. "This next album of mine will have a lot of subtle things in there. The songs, the music, will take on the role of an actor; the music will sound like certain people as they emerge in my mind. An English writer [Elgar] wrote a tone poem that was in sections, and each section was a person. My album will be something like that. There's one song in there that will be for Nat King Cole."

Though personnel for the new record project has not been set, Shorter wants to bring players to the music who will offer the best interpretation of his music. A singular lack of regimentation, unlike that which exists in Weather Report, is what Shorter is hoping for. "Sometimes a per-

son says, 'I have an interpretation,' and that's it. Period. To hear something else is something they won't go for because they think it's another interpretation. I think they won't go for it because their interpretation is one of limitation. I don't think interpretation ever stops, and I want to use people who have something to say because when they interpret it, it becomes more fully grown.

"That's what happened on *Native Dancer*, I think. The musicians had that one moment—that nova thing, that explosion. If I have the musicians do just what I want to, it just might come out as just some kind of elite studio musician kind of thing. I don't want that. When we did *Native Dancer*, a lot of people said 'Why didn't you have more music on that album?' Milton Nascimento came with his music and his musicians, and I wasn't going to impose that American beat on him. We just jelled, and Herbie came in. There was hardly any talking going on."

Shorter falls suddenly silent, then adds: "That's what I want to get going on this new album—not so much talking, just play, you know?" Almost as an afterthought, he says, "We're going to do another album, Milton and I." The proposed reunion jogs his memory and Shorter grows a bit melancholy, recalling some recent experiences and expressing some regrets.

"Sonny Rollins and I saw each other in San Francisco, and Sonny gave me a call the next day and said he thinks we should get together sometime, talk and play, maybe on a stage somewhere. I hadn't seen Sonny in a long time. I played with him some 23 years ago, right after Clifford Brown died. I was in the army and I went home on leave one day, and Sonny was playing with Kenny Dorham at a place called Sugar Hill. Sonny saw me in a corner and asked me to come and play. We played *Cherokee* at Concorde speed, and ever since then I would



Weather Report's "intermediate elderly": co-founders Josef Zawinul and Wayne Shorter.

see Sonny and I would see that little glint in his eye because he remembered that.

"Musicians should get together and talk and play once in a while. Sonny and Miles and the people who are left—I call us the intermediate elderly—have surprised people that we're still here. You know, we've been through some trials. The test, I think, is 25 years. After 25 years on the road, if you still have color in your cheeks and the whites of your eyes aren't all yellow. . . ."

His voice trails off and he is alone with his thoughts. Almost apologetically he explains: "I can't make an interview that's a little satellite torn off from the everyday process of life. That's why I've been talking about family togetherness, both with the family and with the family of friends, for these past five or six years. That's what I've been doing, to put it poetically, tending to the other parts of the garden in my life. My daughters have needed a lot of special attention. Life is like a farm and you've got to attend to the wheat and corn. Now, I'm back to tending the musical parts of my life: the cabbage patch. I'm back on the campaign trail with my writing. My resurgence as a writer is happening right now."

For many listeners such a promise carries with it all the excitement of an unexpected inheritance. Shorter's compositions have become classics, since his earliest days writing for Miles Davis' group. Though a considerable amount of writing has been accomplished since his co-founding of Weather Report, his output, like his playing role in the group, has been slowly diminishing. Barely one-fourth of Weather Report's recorded compositions have come from the pen of Shorter. The reason for that Shorter sees as change in style, medium, and method.

"With this group I found out that to say what I wanted to say starts

WAYNE SHORTER'S EQUIPMENT

On-stage, Wayne Shorter uses Selmer soprano and tenor saxophones, with Rico #3 reeds and Otto Link #10 mouthpieces on both horns.

from sitting at the piano and writing my music. I used to do that with other bands, but the form—the song—provided a kind of clarity then. Everything fit into the form. I'm writing songs now, but they've got to fit into a larger story setting and, since I'm not a pianist, it's more difficult. My fingers keep bumping into each other," he says, demonstrating his awkward technique on the table in front of him.

"But now I've acquired the equipment [the new home multi-track tape recorders] so I don't have to sit at the piano and write music. Now I'm going to actually record—put on a cassette and play the saxophone. I'll be composing with the saxophone and I'll take dictation later. Because I'm a saxophone player, I can get the continuity of expression of a new composition all in one moment.

"The other day I sat at the piano for nine hours working on one song, three of those hours on two bars, and those two bars became the song. Everything came out of context as I tried to make each finger become a person playing a part. Now, I can record with the saxophone which, I found out with all my being around the horn, comes to me in five minutes, and nothing is lost. So much is lost in nine hours. I'm a slow writer too," he says, adding that writing for synthesizers, despite his having one in his possession, has posed particular problems. That and, of course, the style which he's watched change so dramatically during his illustrious career.

"Miles used to say that I was a great short story writer," the 48-year-old Shorter says, "but now we have epics and sagas. I've been

WAYNE SHORTER SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

<p>as a leader NATIVE DANCER—Col. 33418 SUPER NOVA—Blue Note 84332 SPEAK NO EVIL—Blue Note 84194 SCHIZOPHRENIA—Blue Note 84297 ADAM'S APPLE—Blue Note 84232 THE ALL-SEEING EYE—Blue Note 84219 JUJU—Blue Note 84182 NIGHT DREAMER—Blue Note 84173 ETCETERA—Blue Note LT-1056 THE SOOTHSAYER—Blue Note LT-988 WAYNE SHORTER—GNP Cre-scendo 2075</p>	<p>with Weather Report WEATHER REPORT—Columbia PC-30661 I SING THE BODY ELECTRIC—Columbia PC-31352 SWEETNIGHTER—Columbia PC-33210 MYSTERIOUS TRAVELLER—Columbia PC-32494 TALE SPINNIN'—Columbia PC-33417 BLACK MARKET—Columbia PC-34099 HEAVY WEATHER—Columbia PC-34418 HAVANA JAM I—Columbia PC2 36053 HAVANA JAM II—Columbia PC2 36180</p>	<p>MR. GONE—Columbia PC-35358 8:30—Columbia PCZ-36030 NIGHT PASSAGE—Columbia JC-36793 WEATHER REPORT—Columbia FC-37616</p> <p>with Art Blakey BUHAINA'S DELIGHT—Blue Note 84104 CARAVAN—Riverside 6074 FREE FOR ALL—Blue Note 84170 FREEDOM RIDER—Blue Note 84156 LIVE MESSENGERS—Blue Note LA473-J2 MOSAIC—Blue Note 84090 NIGHT IN TUNISIA—Blue Note 84049 THERMO—Milestone 47008</p>	<p>with Miles Davis BITCHES BREW—Columbia GP26 ESP—Columbia PC-9150 FACETS—Columbia JP-13811 FILLES DE KILIMANJARO—Columbia PC-9750 IN A SILENT WAY—Columbia PC-9875 MILES IN THE SKY—Columbia PC-9628 MILES SMILES—Columbia PC-9401 NEFERTITI—Columbia KCS-9594 SORCERER—Columbia PC-9532 WATER BABIES—Columbia C-34396</p> <p>with Jaco Pastorius WORD OF MOUTH—Warner Bros. BSK 3535</p>
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involved in longer pieces, but what I don't like is when they've taken on the characteristics of ballet or a film soundtrack. I've got lots of stuff that hasn't been appropriate for record, stuff all over the place that nobody will ever see, but I spend time with it and study it. I used to have trouble with expression, getting to the point. There'd be a lot of beating around the bush. It was like I'd go through Washington, DC to get to San Diego when I live in Los Angeles."

Shorter sees his own compositional problems in the music of many of his contemporaries. He relates most of them to the diminished use of form and structure. "Form used to be simple, but as time went on everybody started writing like it was every man for himself. People started writing songs that sounded like nebula—escaping gaseous substances in the universe," he says, laughing at his imagery. "I'll be listening to something by somebody, and there's maybe only 15 seconds of something that really happens. Somebody may have a great introduction and it seems like something really great is going to happen with colors and lights and images. And then the song starts and it's like a big hole, like going to the well to get a drink of water and there's not even a bucket there. The song form is getting all lost. It's like rays of sunshine spreading out and it has no frame around it."

While Shorter may mourn the dissolution of the song form, he relishes the idea that categorizations have begun slipping away at an even pace. "I was asked once about fusion and I said that fusion, the word, served its best purpose by supporting the fact that there is no category. In a crowd of people, I can identify an individual, but I refuse to stereotype or recognize anything other than the identity. To correlate that to music: people are identifying without categorizing," he says.

Shorter finds categories place limits on music, both in its performance and enjoyment, and cites a wide variety of so-called classical composers who are lumped together under a single heading. "The same applies to jazz. What does jazz mean?" he asks rhetorically. "All the kinds of jazz that people can identify as jazz results in jazz meaning 'no category.' That's what I think, but then there is a difference of identification. When the category becomes stereotyped, then it's up to the people who play it to present it in the best way they can, so it breaks the shackles of stereotypes.

"You know," he cautions, "the people doing films who used to say they wanted a rock soundtrack or a jazz soundtrack are now kind of dropping the labels and just saying that they want new writers, no matter what." Films are of great interest to Shorter, and writing for them is something he'd find "refreshing." Though any offers have yet to be taken, he has played on soundtracks, and is attracted to the visual aspects of such writing.

But beyond his composition, Shorter thinks primarily of his playing. Without confirming nor denying his diminished playing capacity in Weather Report, he graciously accepts the complaint. "On record," he begins, lodging no blame, "everything is geared to the size of that record in terms of time. From now on what Weather Report is going to do is make more room for playing, both live and on record." His words are soft-spoken, but vehement. The stretching room he had with the groups of Art Blakey and Miles Davis for his tenor and soprano saxophones is missed, especially by a public responsible for bandy-

ing about rumors of *his* leaving the Weather Report fold. He laughs off such speculation. "I always hear that. I was just in Italy and people were asking me 'Is it true you're leaving and that you and Miles are going to have a band, a reunion?' There's no truth to it. Miles and I have talked a lot in the past six months, but we're not going to have a band."

The discussion prompts Shorter into recalling his earliest experiences with Miles, replete with accurate and hilarious voice impressions he says he's done since he was a child. "I had just gotten out of the army, and one night Trane came over to Newark on his night off from Miles at Birdland," he begins. "We had known each other, and Trane used to say to me 'You're playing all that funny stuff like me . . . all over the horn, funny.' Anyway, Trane came over to play with Lee Morgan, and I played, too. Trane then told me he wanted to leave Miles' group, and he told me, 'You can have the job if you want it.' He was giving me the gig for Miles!

"Anyway, he told me to call Miles, so I called and said, 'Hello. I'm Wayne Shorter and I'm from Newark, New Jersey,'" he says, imitating himself at an earlier age and laughing. "And you know Miles, he said in that voice, 'Who told you I needed a saxophone player?' And I said, 'Trane, John Coltrane.' Well, Miles says, 'If I need a saxophone player I'll get one.' Then we kind of measured each other to see who would hang up first.

"Then I went out with Art Blakey, and Miles called one time and asked Art if he could speak with me. Art was saying 'He's trying to take my saxophone player,' and I told Miles that I felt an obligation to stay with Art. I didn't want to be one of those guys who just went from one band to another band every few months. Anyway, I stayed with Art for five years.

"When I left Art, Jack Whittmore, who was working for Miles then, called and said that Miles is opening at the Hollywood Bowl and he doesn't have a tenor player. He said I should call Miles. Meanwhile, Ron [Carter], Tony [Williams] and Herbie [Hancock] would call me and talk to me and say, 'Hey, man. Why don't you come on the band. Come on, man. Come on, man.' That's Tony, right? and Herbie used to say, 'Well, I think the opportunity is wide open,' and Ron would say, 'It's alright with me, strictly alright.'

"I called Miles then, and he picked up the phone and said, 'Wayne . . . come on out.' Like he was expecting my call, you know? Like it had all been set up. I went and got a tuxedo made, and they flew me out first class. I joined and we opened at the Hollywood Bowl playing *Joshua*. And we had no rehearsal. Miles had said in the dressing room, 'Do you know my music?' and I said 'Yeah.' He said 'Oh-oh.' Then we went on for six years."

The smile doesn't leave Shorter's face and he glances up to look from the kitchen to the piano in the next room. He thinks of his instruments—even the piano which causes his fingers to bump into each other as he tries to compose—as his friends, and they seem to be beckoning to him. A song, whose melody had kept him tossing and turning all night the night before, is in manuscript form on the piano.

"I'm wanting to go in there and make a great contribution to Weather Report," he says. But he's still thinking about *Joshua* and that night at the Hollywood Bowl.

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RAY ANDERSON

BY BILL SHOEMAKER



AS MUCH AS ANY INSTRUMENT, THE PHYSICS of the trombone are at odds with the demands of jazz. In this regard, the revolution of the '60s was of special benefit to trombonists, as it coaxed the instrument's unique characteristics to the foreground rather than, as bebop did, hand the trombonist the no-win proposition of limiting his options to conform to music much more accommodating of saxophones, trumpets, and pianos. In the past two decades, innovators such as Roswell Rudd, Grachan Moncur III, Albert Manglesdorff, Paul Rutherford, and George Lewis created new techniques and renovated the tricks of the pre-bop trade to create a new forum for the trombone.

Ray Anderson has stepped into this new forum and is being heard, as confirmed by the large margin by which he was selected as the trombonist most deserving of wider recognition by **down beat's** critics in 1981. His journeyman'ship with the likes of Anthony Braxton and Barry Altschul has not only allowed him to begin the transition to a leader in his own right—his first date, *Harrisburg*

'BONING UP FOR THE FUTURE

Half Life, was awarded four stars in these pages last year—but has placed him with the likes of Lewis, pianist Anthony Davis, and others who represent the vanguard of the baby-boom generation of American improvising musicians.

At a time when a formidable working knowledge of tradition is at the heart of innovation in American music, Anderson is squarely in a tradition of trombonists reach-

ing back to Kid Ory and Jim Robinson who used the 'bone's unique expressive capabilities as points of departure in their solos rather than as conclusions long in the making. Critics have a field day listing the numerous trombonists Anderson's tradition-conscious approach bring to mind: "Tricky" Sam Nanton, "Butter" Jackson, Al Grey, Vic Dickenson, Lawrence Brown, Dicky Wells, Manglesdorff, Rudd, and Lewis have been referred to in just two recent album liner accounts of Anderson's performances. Yet though his solos are richly allusive—so much so that, at times, all the sources can not be extracted from a single listening—Anderson retains a lucid, robust voice that is his alone.

Above all, Anderson possesses a versatility that is increasingly desired by musicians of his generation but, for the most part, is elusive. Anderson, it appears, can do it all. In his five-year association with Braxton, he has been thoroughly exposed to the multi-instrumentalist/composer's creative dynamics in duo, quartet, and orchestra settings, performing Braxton's completely notated

compositions as well as his vehicles for improvisation. With his equally long and fruitful tenure with Altschul, Anderson has reinvestigated the many facets of the jazz tradition to hone, in the form of the Altschul trio (rounded out by bassist Mark Helias), one of the most personable small-group identities in jazz today. Add free-lance work that ranges from the New York latin scene to the neo-bop of tenorist Bennie Wallace, as well as the hard-nose funk of the Slicaphonics (co-led by Anderson and Helias), and you have a composite of an inclusive aesthetic.

Unsurprisingly, Anderson's versatility is the product of a wide range of musical experiences that began at an early age. Born in Chicago 30 years ago, Anderson's first contacts with music were the dixieland records of his father, a professor at the Chicago Theological Union, which immediately drew Anderson to the likes of Vic Dickenson and Trummy Young. Because of the Union's consort with the University of Chicago, Anderson attended University-operated, experimentally inclined schools with strong music programs. Not only did this activate Anderson's love of the trombone at an early age, but it also brought him together with another budding trombonist, George Lewis.

"I was eight years old when I met George. We both started playing the trombone on the same day at the beginning of fourth grade. George and I went every week to take lessons from Mr. Tirro—Frank Tirro, who's now at Yale. We went all the way through high school playing first and second trombone in the stage band, the jazz band . . . every organization the school had that used trombones. Back then George was way ahead in terms of growth. I remember him telling me what Coltrane was doing on every record of his that came out, which was definitely too advanced for me because I was just moving into bebop."

Like many adolescent trombonists, Anderson was in awe of J. J. Johnson, though his admiration did not prohibit him from listening to Jimmy Cleveland and Slide Hampton as well. Anderson's pivotal influence resulted, however, from the introduction by Dean Hay, the director of the high school jazz band, to the music of the late Frank Rosolino. "Rosolino simply blew me away. He was doing things with lip slurs and lip trills which was very different from what J. J. was doing. I loved the way Rosolino's lip technique enabled him to jump around the horn. If you listen to J. J., it's clear that he does what he does with the slide. Rosolino seemed sharper, more dramatic." Hay also introduced Anderson to Roswell Rudd's work via an Archie Shepp album, but, at the time, Anderson "didn't hear Rudd's dixieland connection at all. It just sounded out.

"I was lucky to be exposed to different ideas through Dean Hay, who gave me classical trombone lessons as well as directing the jazz band. He was into happenings and giving recitals of new music—pieces for trombone and salad bowl [*laughter*]. There's a whole spectrum of musics that I otherwise would have only found out about much later.

Dean was also the only personal contact I had with the AACM—this was before George got involved with them. I went to a lot of their concerts; I was particularly impressed with Joseph Jarman's intensity—a solo concert of his was the first concert of its kind that I ever saw and that opened a lot of conceptual doors. He came to school once when I was a kid, to a class run by someone he knew. He even played with us, which really blew us away!"

Though his Hyde Park neighborhood was "a middle-class citadel," Anderson discovered and immersed himself in Chicago blues, arriving regularly at the Maxwell St. flea markets at six in the morning to hear the bands and buy recordings. As a high school senior, Anderson briefly joined a blues band led by harp player Jeff Carp, who appeared on the Chess extravaganza led by Muddy Waters, *Fathers And Sons* (2-Chess 50033). It soon became apparent to Anderson that he wasn't "cutting the ice," and attended, on scholarship, the University of Illinois' summer jazz workshop, only to be expelled for jamming in local, off-limits clubs.

After a year of vagabonding in California and Europe with only a C soprano sax stuffed into his knapsack for encounters with itiner-

RAY ANDERSON'S EQUIPMENT

Conn 8H large bore tenor trombone with Bach 42 lightweight nickel-silver slide and modified Giardinelli 4M mouthpiece.

Bach alto trombone with Zartola mouthpiece.

Giardinelli slide trumpet with Bob Reeves mouthpiece.

Reynolds Medalist cornet with Giardinelli 7W mouthpiece.

Conn 34J recording bell tuba (circa 1951) with Miraphone C4 mouthpiece.

ant guitarists, Anderson spent a year at Macalester College in Minneapolis, where his extracurricular activities in funk bands—"playing in funk bands is an education in itself"—and a Miles-influenced fusion trio received the majority of his energies. Returning to California, Anderson bread-and-buttered in funk bands while connecting with saxophonist Keshavan Maslak, through whom he established a working relationship with former Ornette Coleman drummer Charles Moffett.

"When I met Charles I had only done a little open-ended improvisation, back in Minneapolis. He's the kind of player you can learn from just by playing with him. Until then, I hadn't been exposed to such a melodic drummer—Charles is always thinking and swinging and lighting fires. He taught me how to make modal and Ornette-type approaches swing and how to make spaces for them to sink in. For instance, Charles would tell us that in a particular place in a composition we would all be soloists but we would all contribute to one solo.

"He wasn't the only drummer I hooked up with out there either. I went down to L.A. for a month or so and stayed with Stanley Crouch, who was playing a lot of drums during that

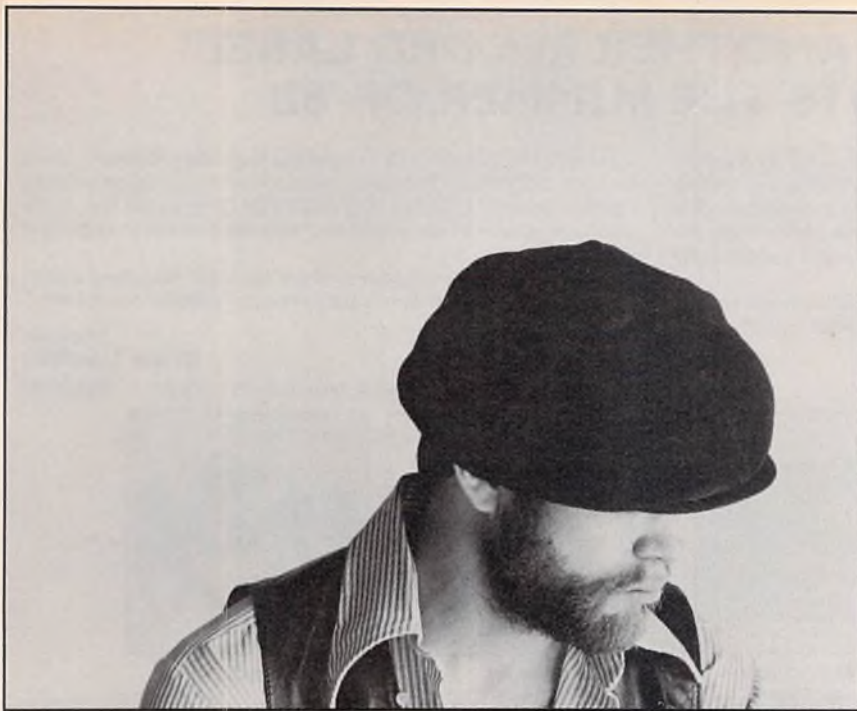
period. The two of us played every day for weeks—just trombone and drums. He's a warehouse of knowledge, with thousands of records lying around the house. He gave me insights on the history of the music and, in a way, insights on the trombone with what he had to say about non-trombonists, like Sonny Rollins."

Anderson's California hiatus ended with his arrival in New York in late 1972. While looking for musical action, Anderson drove a cab and moved into an apartment near the old Five Spot, then renamed The Two Saints for its 2 St. Mark's Place address. It was at The Two Saints that Anderson received his initiation to the Big Apple, under the auspices of, no less, the late Charles Mingus.

"Mingus played there all summer, every night for three or four months. So I went in there and sat in and, surprisingly, Mingus was real friendly and dug what I did. It was a great band that included Don Pullen and George Adams. If I had had more sense, I would have gone in and played with them every night. But I had just gotten to New York and didn't know the ropes. I was thinking, 'Well, if he digs what I'm doing, then I should get the gig.' I was too dumb to realize what an opportunity it was just to play with these cats and that they weren't making any money as it was. But I would have had to play with them every night just to learn the material—which was very difficult harmonically—even though I knew most of the pieces by ear from records. I was in a hurry. He was glad that I used a plunger mute because he said no one used it anymore. Though he was friendly then, I later tried to sit in with him at the Village Vanguard and he gruffly said he didn't need a trombonist. I guess I missed the boat."

Anderson's first paying gigs in New York varied from "the ghost of Tommy Dorsey's band," that necessitated traveling up to 13 hours for jobs that yielded \$30, and two summer tours with Hidden Strength, a funk band with a short-lived potential for a national break-out. Yet, with Maslak relocating in New York in the mid-'70s, Anderson refocused his energies in new directions in concerts coproduced with the saxophonist as the Surrealistic Ensemble in a Canal St. loft. This period saw the realization of the technical problems Anderson had been grappling with since he began to play.

"I was always frustrated when I listened to bebop, and the trombone was like a plodding dinosaur compared to the other horns. There wasn't enough drama for me in what bebop offered the trombonist. So I developed ways to expand the lip thing that Rosolino was into with lip slur exercises that enabled me to walk up the scale without the slide. It was at this point that I became able to rip through the scales with backsliding—where you put the slide out to raise the pitch, where normally you would bring the slide in to raise the pitch. But the thing is that the new music is a better forum for this technique than bebop because you can lose some accuracy with the speed, which can be deadly playing bebop. Plus there are things you can do with a trombone that you can't do with another



RAY ANDERSON SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

HARRISBURG HALF LIFE—Moers Music 01074

with Barry Altschul

FOR STU—Soul Note SN 1015

BRAHMA—Sackville 3023

SOMEWHERE ELSE—Moers Music 01064

ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE—Muse MR 5176

with Alan Jaffe

SOUNDSCAPE—Kromel 1001

with Anthony Braxton

COMPOSITION 98—hat Art #1984

PERFORMANCE 9/1/79—hat Hut HH2R19

SEVEN COMPOSITIONS, 1978—Moers Music 01066

with Gerry Hemingway

KWAMBE—Auricle AUR-1

OAHSPÉ—Auricle AUR-2

with Greg Alper

FAT DOGGIE—Adelphi 5009

horn that fit well with the new music. It's only lately that I've been able to fit these techniques correctly into bebop changes. At that point, though, I needed the space to take what's intrinsic to the trombone and bring it out in a lead voice—a trombonistic approach."

Anderson also became active with the budding new music community in New Haven, Connecticut, though he retained residency in New York. At the time, Lewis, Davis, Helias, and guitarist Alan Jaffe (also a member of the Slicaphonics) were students at Yale, local musicians included drummer Gerry Hemingway, and trumpeter/composer Leo Smith (in whose orchestra, co-led with Roscoe Mitchell, Anderson performed at the 1979 Moers Festival) had recently moved to the city. As with the Canal St. cooperative, Anderson benefited from the camaraderie, as evidenced by the close rapport on recordings led by Jaffe and Hemingway (who are one-half of Anderson's *Harrisburg* quartet).

Then, in 1977, things began to snowball for Anderson. A month after he began to rehearse with Barry Altschul—a turning point in itself, as the close association is in its sixth year—Anderson received the call to replace George Lewis in Anthony Braxton's quartet. Lewis himself recommended Anderson as his successor, which Altschul seconded.

"I had some initial problems playing Braxton's music. Braxton writes incredibly difficult heads from the trombonist's point of view. In

the beginning, those charts busted my ass! But Lewis had the gig before me and I thought that if he could do it, then I could do it. It was like the four-minute mile—for 30 years no one breaks it and then once it's broken a dozen guys break it in the next week. Lewis being there ahead of me made the impossible merely difficult.

"Braxton then got me into the idea of playing more than just the trombone. Until then, I had only played the trombone, though I had studied tuba when I was very young. Braxton has the concept of everyone becoming a multi-instrumentalist so they can bring different voices into his music. So now, with varying degrees of success, I play trombone, alto trombone, slide trumpet, cornet, and tuba.

"After playing with Braxton over the past few years, I don't understand how he gets this criticism of being a cold, unemotional, intellectual player who is a traitor to the music. That description does not fit the person I'm on the bandstand with. I think this criticism stems from his activity as a composer. Though the last piece we recorded—*Composition 98*—was 45 minutes long, had 50 to 60 pages of music, and the total improvised space amounted to a few seconds, it still has the same qualities that those same people have liked about Braxton's music when it has a fast tempo, syncopation, and hot solos. One possibility doesn't cancel out the other with Braxton. They co-exist."

Anderson is equally adamant about his relationship with Altschul, as he has worked with the drummer's group since its inception. The present edition of the Altschul group was formed in 1979, with Anderson's work with Helias and Hemingway (documented on *Oahspe*) prompting the trombonist to successfully lobby for a trio format with Helias. It has been in Altschul's band that the versatility Anderson possesses has come to the fore.

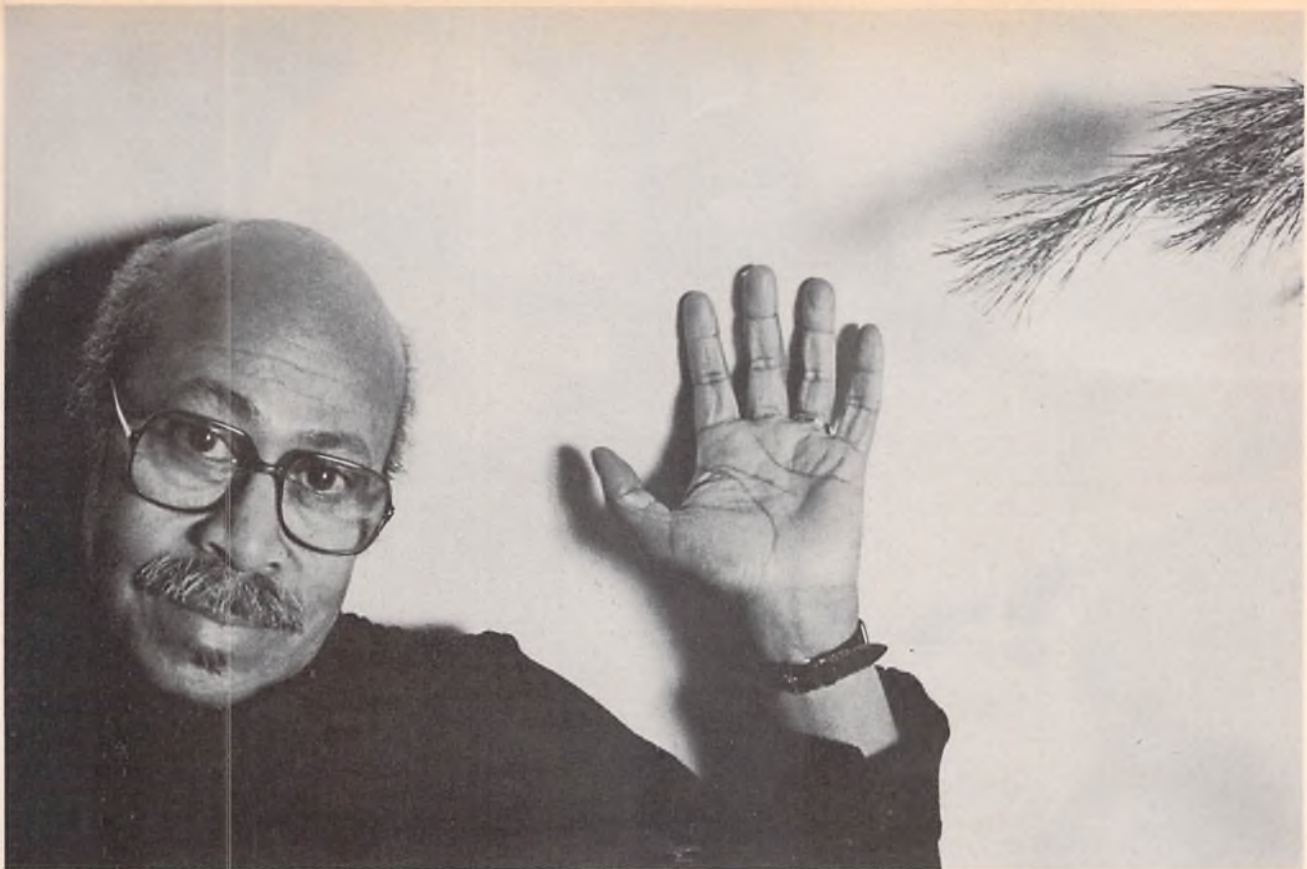
"In Barry's band we try to cover as much ground as we can—latin tunes, jazz tunes, extended forms. In 1982, that's where the challenge is—assimilating all these different forms. Like dixieland—there are different skills required than for bebop, and bebop licks don't apply. Same with latin music. Barry is very aware of this and he keeps the band moving conceptually as well as rhythmically. There's a lot of space with a trio, so there has to be a basic approach to filling it up that Barry provides."

Despite the prestige of working with the likes of Altschul and Braxton, the economics of creative music force Anderson to sustain a heavy free-lance schedule to support himself and secure adequate treatment for his juvenile diabetes. "Most of my free-lancing over the past five years has been in the New York latin scene. The great thing about that work is that you get to play for dancers. It's probably the closest thing now to playing in the big bands of the '30s because these folks on the dance floor get down.

"I love dance music. It's a different energy flow than in a concert situation, because the dancers watch each other instead of you. That's an audience-performer relationship we try to deal with with the Slicaphonics by taking ideas we've heard elsewhere and putting them around funk rhythms.

"Over the years I've come up with various techniques to deal with different performance situations. From playing all-night funk gigs I've developed several different embouchures to project the sound loudly. The challenge for me now as a trombonist is to integrate these different techniques—to shift back and forth between them—as smoothly as possible, and in a musical way. To a point, I've gotten speed, range, and sound down, but now I've got to apply these abilities in new ways in new situations. I recently toured with Bennie Wallace, Calvin Hill, and Dannie Richmond playing tunes with involved chord changes, and I worked on using techniques from other musics effectively in a music that relates to bebop. In [guitarist] James Emery's new quartet with [reedist] J. D. Parran and Robert Dick, an incredible flute player, I try to mix jazz and classical techniques in color/sound explorations that don't deal with tempo or swing in the traditional sense.

"As for leading my own group, I haven't really pursued it too vigorously since touring Europe in 1980 with the group I recorded *Harrisburg Half Life* with. Too much of what I was doing with that group I was already doing with Barry, and you can't ride in two cars at the same time. At this point, I'm committed to seeing where Barry's thing is going. I think we'll be around for awhile." **db**



DARRYL PITT

TOMMY FLANAGAN

on his own

BY
LEE
JESKE

IF TOMMY FLANAGAN'S PHONE WOKE him up tomorrow morning and Frank Sinatra was on the other end pleading with him to join him as his pianist, would Flanagan rush to the closet for his tuxedo?

"No, definitely not. I'm through with that kind of business."

Nothing personal, Frank. It's just that after three different stints with Ella Fitzgerald (two months in '56, two years from '63 to '65, and a grueling 10-year stretch from '68 to '78), not to mention a year with Tony Bennett, Tommy Flanagan is through accompanying singers.

He may take the odd one-nighter, but he'll nix anything longer. You want him as part of a

trio—you've got him. As a duo with a good bassist—fine. Solo—reluctantly, but okay. With horns, with another Detroit pianist, as part of an ensemble—no problem. But if it's a tour with a singer—be it Frank Sinatra or Ella Fitzgerald or Luciano Pavarotti—Flanagan would politely decline.

Since leaving Ella Fitzgerald's trio, Flanagan has proven himself to be one of the finest pianists working. He has recorded numerous times under his own name and in various intriguing combinations—duets with pianists Hank Jones and Kenny Barron, and one with saxophonist J. R. Monterose. Clearly grounded, stylistically, in bebop, Flanagan has a light touch and a style that is blues-drenched and soulful. He also has a head filled with little-known pop and jazz standards—he is always pulling underplayed gems out of the woodwork.

Flanagan's pianistic ability seems to catch some people by surprise. Although during Ella's summer vacations he would work Bradley's (the popular NY piano bar), and while on tour with her the last few years, he would open each performance with a trio set (sometimes with a guest artist), it wasn't until Flanagan started free-lancing full-time that people realized what a splendid soloist he is. In the **down beat** Critics Poll of 1979, the year after he left Ella, Flanagan placed 12th. In 1980 he rose to fifth, and by 1981 was a third-place finisher. That spate of recognition is due to his consistent performances in almost every setting imaginable. The association with Ella is finally being put out of people's minds.

Oddly, entering Tommy Flanagan's West Side Manhattan apartment on an early spring afternoon, it is the sound of Ella Fitzgerald that fills the air. "That's just the radio," says the pianist with some embarrassment. He doesn't really want to talk about the years with Fitzgerald, but the subject is unavoidable. Like it or not, he is tied to her.

It was a heart attack in 1978 that was the catalyst for his departure from her trio. "I'd been toying with the idea before then," he says. "You know, when was I going to leave? But it was work, and I had the feeling of, well, who is going to do this job after me? It was a kind of security, too. But it was tiring, a lot of jumps—cross-country things, going to Europe a couple of times a year, and pretty long tours of one-nighters. And sometimes the material wasn't that good—you know, whatever is current, she likes to do that. She started to go with the flow, and I didn't care for it that much."

After his heart attack, Tommy rejoined Ella, but he knew he wasn't going to be up to her normal 35- to 40-week a year touring schedule. "And I really wanted to do some playing on my own," he says. "I mean, there was no problem with me finding work; the problem was to find time to do the work I wanted to do. But staying with her kept me from it. I wasn't playing as much and there were a lot of opportunities to record, but I just never felt prepared to do them because I was doing enough preparing to stay up on her job. It was a good time to leave, I think. Ella was sorry that I was leaving, but she told me shortly afterwards that I *should* be on my



ANDY FREEBERG

own, not always backing her up. She said that I had too much talent to be in an accompanying role."

Tommy Flanagan was born on March 16th, 1930 in Detroit, Michigan. He started playing clarinet at age six, but he was more fascinated with the piano, which his brother played. "I started taking formal lessons when I was 11, basic stuff—scales and chords, Bach and Chopin. But I was listening to jazz from when my brother first started to bring it into the house. He brought home records by Teddy [Wilson] and [Art] Tatum and Billie Holiday."

By the time he was 15, Flanagan was playing professionally (though not with Dexter Gordon, as some reference guides have wrongly stated) and hanging out in one of the great meccas for jazz in the bebop years. The Detroit area was an incredible breeding ground for jazz talent—in one 12-year period, between 1923 and 1935, the Detroit

area saw the births of Milt Jackson, Frank Rosolino, Lucky Thompson, Doug Watkins, Kenny Burrell, Hugh Lawson, J. R. Monterose, Donald Byrd, Sheila Jordan, Curtis Fuller, Sonny Red, Betty Carter, Barry Harris, Roland Hanna, and Thad and Elvin Jones, to name a few. Not a bad environment for an aspiring jazz pianist.

"I was friends with most of the guys," says Tommy, leaning back on his bright blue couch. "I grew up with Kenny Burrell, and Milt Jackson didn't live too far away from me. There was always a place to play in Detroit, little workshop things. I think the school system was good, too—there was pretty good music right in the school system. Roland Hanna, Donald Byrd, Sheila Jordan, Sonny Red, and Doug Watkins all went to the same school I did."

As is usual in such a situation, there were some excellent musicians who got left behind when everybody finally headed for New

York. Tommy is quick to cite Terry Pollard, Will Davis and, especially, Willie Anderson as three top Detroit pianists who never really made it big on a national level.

Tommy played with everybody around Detroit—it was an interchangeable group of eager musicians playing with whomever had the gig. Some of his steadier things were with Lucky Thompson, Milt Jackson, and clarinetist Rudy Rutherford. He worked at the Bluebird club with a Billy Mitchell-led group that included the Jones brothers, Thad and Elvin, a band he was working with when he went into the Army and one that he rejoined after his discharge. In the mid-'50s he was part of a group led by guitarist Kenny Burrell, and it was with Burrell that, in 1956, he finally made the decision to leave Detroit and head for New York. "Kenny and I left together—we drove here. Nothing was happening in Detroit anymore. Nobody was paying any money. Plus, we wanted to get out and play, and we

wanted to see New York anyway. We all left around the same time."

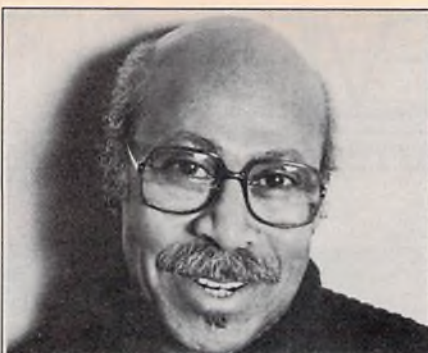
Shortly after his arrival, Flanagan was playing in a loft jam session that included bassist Oscar Pettiford. "I started playing *Jack The Bear* and, of course, that was his meat. I think I played the intro and started playing the first part of it. We had a good time and he asked me what I was doing on Friday. I had a rehearsal with his big band, and I ended up doing a Town Hall concert with him. Right after the concert, Elvin was looking for me because Bud Powell didn't show up that night at Birdland. So I finished that two weeks at Birdland for Bud. It was a trio with Tommy Potter and Elvin, and after playing all those years in Detroit with Elvin, it was comfortable. I guess people knew I was in New York then."

One of the people who noticed was Ella Fitzgerald, and that summer Flanagan got his first call from the diva of scat—she needed a replacement for a couple of months. "I was scared," Tommy admits. "It was the big time—the first big name artist I worked with. I was nervous about the gig. It took some doing and I'm glad it didn't last long. But it kind of introduced me to a lot of people, because it was the first time I played Newport."

Flanagan had backed up a couple of singers in Detroit prior to coming east, but he doesn't think it's any special talent of his. "I just think people need somebody to do it. I did want to do it because so many of my favorite pianists did it so well—Hank Jones, Jimmy Jones, and Ellis Larkins. I liked their piano playing and I liked the way they accompanied. I was just trying to get into that line of pianists that can play and do both."

Tommy spent the remainder of the '50s as something of a journeyman. "It was the only work I could get," he says. There were long trips with J. J. Johnson and shorter ones with people like Miles Davis. "I met Miles in Detroit; he came through as a guest and we played together at the Bluebird. When I came here, I don't know how it happened, but I had a call from him. He was just recording and was in search of a regular group. I did a tour with him and Cannonball, Philly Joe, Paul Chambers, and Bobby Jaspar. Shortly after that he formed that group with Coltrane and Red Garland."

Flanagan even had time to wax some classic Prestige sides with Miles. That same year he appeared on one of the seminal albums of the 1950s, Sonny Rollins' *Saxophone Colossus*. "It's accidental, it's accidental," says the pianist of his role on that classic LP. "A lot of people were recording for Prestige, and I was on the roster. Everything they did was kind of classic, when you look back. I'm just lucky to be on them. I played with Sonny a couple of times at the Vanguard, but I didn't go out of town with him or anything. Every once in a while now Sonny calls and says he wants me to work with him again, but he doesn't follow it up." Before the 1950s were out, Flanagan would have the chance to participate in one more classic recording session—he is the pianist on all but one cut of John Coltrane's *Giant Steps*.



TOMMY FLANAGAN SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

THE MAGNIFICENT—Progressive 7059
BALLADS AND BLUES—Inner City 3029
ECLYPSO—Inner City 3009
TRINITY—Inner City 1084
SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING BLUE—Galaxy GXY 5110
TRIO LIVE AT MONTREUX—Pablo 2308202
TOKYO RECITAL—Pablo 2310724
PLAYS THE MUSIC OF HAROLD ARLEN—Inner City 1071
SUPER-SESSION—Inner City 3039

with Ella Fitzgerald

AT MONTREUX 1975—Pablo 2310751
AT MONTREUX 1977—Pablo 2308206
IN LONDON—Pablo 2310711
AT CARNEGIE HALL—Columbia PG 32557
LOVES COLE—Atlantic SD 1631
SUNSHINE OF YOUR LOVE—MPS 21 20712-9
IN HAMBURG—Verve MGV 4069
AT JUAN-LES-PINS—Verve MGV 4065

with John Coltrane

GIANT STEPS—Atlantic 1311

with Sonny Rollins

SAXOPHONE COLOSSUS AND MORE—Prestige 24050

with Miles Davis

CHRONICLE—Prestige Ltd. Ed.
COLLECTOR'S ITEMS—Prestige 7044

with Coleman Hawkins

TODAY AND NOW—Impulse A-34
MOONGLOW—Prestige 24106
BEAN BAGS—Atlantic 1316
NIGHT HAWK—Prestige 7671
HAWKS ALIVE—Verve MG VS 8509

with Hank Jones

OUR DELIGHTS—Galaxy 5113

with Dexter Gordon

THE PANTHER—Prestige 10030

with Kenny Burrell

INTRODUCING—Blue Note 81523
ALL DAY LONG & ALL NIGHT LONG—Prestige 24025

with Pee Wee Russell

MEMORIAL ALBUM—Prestige 7672

with Oscar Pettiford

ORCHESTRA IN HI-FI—ABC 135

with Pepper Adams

ENCOUNTER—Prestige 7677

with Milt Jackson

JAZZ 'N' SAMBA—Impulse AS-70
BAGS' OPUS—United Artists UAS-5022

with Paul Chambers

QUINTET—Blue Note 1564

with Gene Ammons

BOSS TENOR—Prestige 7534

with Freddie Hubbard

THE ARTISTRY OF—Impulse A-27

with Wes Montgomery

INCREDIBLE JAZZ GUITAR—Riverside SMJ 6046

with Phil Woods

ALTOLOGY—Prestige 24065
RIGHTS OF SWING—Candid CJS 9016

with Blue Mitchell

A BLUE TIME—Milestone 47055

with Roy Haynes

OUT OF THE AFTERNOON—Impulse AS-23

with Gerry Mulligan

JERU—Columbia CS-8732

Nota bene: You can pick up a free copy of Tommy Flanagan's *Trinity* LP with your subscription to **down beat**; see page 43 for details.—Ed.

The early '60s found Flanagan in various different musical settings—playing dixieland with Tyree Glenn, swing with Harry Edison, and bop with anybody he could. In 1961 he joined Coleman Hawkins' quartet because, he says, "He liked pianists from Detroit. He said that and he used just about all the pianists who were here from Detroit. He liked our style. Well, we liked him too."

"In 1962 I was working with Hawkins and Roy Eldridge on a tour of England where we were the opening act for Ella. This was a long tour, covering every little city in England and Scotland. Ella got a chance to hear me quite a bit, and the next year I got a call from her."

That time the collaboration lasted for two years, until Tommy left for reasons he can't recall. "I think it was something about travel again," he says. A year with Tony Bennett (1966) followed, a year of free-lancing followed that, and then it was time for the long haul—a decade of *How High The Moon* and *Mack The Knife*, 10 years as one of Ella's "fellas."

Although Flanagan hasn't really led a set group in the four years since he hung up the accompanist's gloves for the last time, he can't be accused of sitting still. When he's in New York, he can usually be found at Bradley's, most often in the company of George Mraz, where the two spin out complex spider webs of bebop improvisation over the din in that popular Greenwich Village spot. "It's hard to get people to work with you," says the bald, bespectacled bebopper. "It's hard to get a group to stay together, and it's not my idea of really working, to have a steady group. I like to work in all facets of the game."

The facets have been many. Some early risers a couple of years ago were treated to the spectacle of Teddy Wilson, Marian McPartland, Ellis Larkins, and Tommy going at it on four pianos on the *Today Show*. Along those same lines, there have been albums of piano duets with Hank Jones and Kenny Barron (the latter for a Japanese label) and live duets with Barry Harris, Monty Alexander, Roland Hanna, and Jaki Byard. There have been sessions of the music of Harold Arlen, Bud Powell and, soon to be released, John Coltrane. There have been various trios—one with Joe Chambers and Reggie Workman, one with Elvin Jones and Red Mitchell, and one with Al Foster and George Mraz. And, on the day that we speak, Tommy is about to embark on a tour of Europe, where he will join expatriate drummer Ed Thigpen and a European bassist.

It would be hard to say that Tommy Flanagan has been taking it easy since coming in off the road. After he gets back from Europe, he will prepare for his first real concert as a leader—a concert that will take place on June 24 in Merkin Hall, part of the Abraham Goodman House. It is a small hall, favored by classical musicians, and the concert falls on the day before the opening of the Kool Jazz Festival—New York.

About the future, Tommy Flanagan says, with typical nonchalance, "I like what I've been doing. I just want to do more playing." **db**

RECORD REVIEWS

★★★★★EXCELLENT

★★★★VERY GOOD

★★★GOOD

★★FAIR

★POOR

ROSCOE MITCHELL

SNURDY MCGURDY AND HER DANCIN' SHOES

—Nessa N-20: *SING/SONG*; *CYP*; *STOMP AND THE FAR EAST BLUES*; *MARCH*; *ROUND*; *SNURDY MCGURDY AND HER DANCIN' SHOES*.

Personnel: Mitchell, soprano, alto, tenor, bass saxophone, clarinet, flute, wood flute; Hugh Ragin, trumpet, flugelhorn, piccolo trumpet; A. Spencer Barefield, guitar, 12-string guitar, electric guitar, piano; Jaribu Shahid, bass, electric bass, cello, percussion; Tani Tabbal, drums, percussion.

★★★★★

3 X 4 EYE

—Black Saint BSR 0050: *CUT OUTS FOR QUINTET*; *JO JAR*; *3 X 4 EYE*; *VARIATIONS ON A FOLK SONG WRITTEN IN THE SIXTIES*.

Personnel: Same as above.

★★★★½

MORE CUTOUTS

—Cecma 1003: *SONG FOR THE LITTLE FEET, TAKE A*; *MIX*; *MORE CUTOUTS*; *FANFARE FOR TALIB*; *ROUND TWO*; *SONG FOR THE LITTLE FEET, TAKE B*.

Personnel: Mitchell, soprano, alto, tenor saxophone, flutes; Ragin, trumpet, flugelhorn, piccolo trumpet; Tabbal, drums, vibes, percussion.

★★★★½

NEW MUSIC FOR WOODWINDS AND VOICE

—1750 Arch Records S-1785: *MARCHE*; *TEXTURES FOR TRIO*; *PRELUDE*; *VARIATIONS ON SKETCHES FROM BAMBOO, NO. 1 & 2*.

Personnel: Mitchell, tenor, bass saxophone, Eb soprano clarinet; Tom Buckner, voice; Gerald Oshita, sarrusophone, baritone saxophone, Conn-O-sax.

★★★★½

It is now generally agreed that the Art Ensemble of Chicago was the most pivotal small group of the '70s and remains one of the most important bands of the '80s. The Art Ensemble seemed to recognize, long before the rest of us, that something more than energy was needed to sustain a long, collectively improvised performance, and that the advances which had been made in improvisation during the '60s called for similar bold initiatives in compositional structure and in group dynamics.

But the Art Ensemble's renown as a unit has tended to obscure the individual accomplishments of its members, particularly those of Roscoe Mitchell. Mitchell is surely one of the most influential players and writers active today—his minimalistic, incremental "sound" pieces have had a profound effect on the thinking of Anthony Braxton, Leo Smith, and the emerging New Haven school, and *Tkkeh*, his pioneering anti-virtuosic 1968 solo alto improvisation, pointed a way for Braxton and the European "instant composers." Yet he is rarely extolled, even among the cognoscenti. Perhaps it is too difficult even for the knowledgeable listener to tell Mitchell's work from that of Joseph Jarman,



GILL SMITHERMAN

the Art Ensemble's other multi-reed player. Or perhaps Mitchell's best writing for the group (most notably the epochal *People In Sorrow*) subsumes itself too completely in group improvisation. Mitchell's structuralist sensibility so dominated the Art Ensemble in its formative years, and continues to be its *raison d'être* still, when all is said and done, that it is easier to isolate the qualities of street corner theatricality and gallows humor brought to the band by Jarman and Lester Bowie than it is to pick out the more deeply ingrained values of order and purpose implanted by Mitchell—let us not forget that the Art Ensemble evolved out of Mitchell's mid-'60s quartet.

Mitchell also continues to record under his own name, of course, and the occasion for these reflections is the release of three outstanding records featuring the young band he leads during the Art Ensemble's layoffs which emphasize his compositions. These records continue Mitchell's quest for a group logic, and some of their gradually developed sound pieces have an as-it-happens air to them—a sense that the music comes into being the moment it leaves the players' fingertips and enters the listeners' ears—which might suggest that they are collective spontaneous improvisations, but which more accurately indicates that a good deal of planning went into them beforehand, that Mitchell has allowed his players wide ranges of options within firm sets of guidelines. Even on the pieces which follow a conventional theme-solo-theme scenario, the solos function more like "breaks" in early jazz and swing than like the extended soliloquies of bop or

free jazz. There are constant exchanges between soloists and between soloist and ensemble, and some of the best-realized improvisatory passages are those created simultaneously by Mitchell—who uses space more shrewdly than any saxophonist since Rollins and whose unusual fingerings, "off" intonation, and flat vibrato recall African music in an oblique non-proselytizing way—and Ragin—an expressive young trumpeter who can convey both baby-faced lyricism and five-o'clock-shadow growl and menace.

Snurdy McGurdy is quite simply the best new record I've heard so far this year, and I will be surprised to hear a better one. There's abundant variety here, not only from cut to cut but from moment to moment and sometimes even from measure to measure. *Sing/Song*, for example, commences as a sun-parched impressionistic air before being disrupted by a pattering march figure which is the basis for a guitar solo and an interval-leaping alto improvisation. Ragin's brief trumpet solo introduces a buoyant but slightly bittersweet contrapuntal theme at yet another tempo; there is another good Mitchell solo based on this new theme, which is the theme recapitulated as the piece ends. The album's real tour de force, however, is *Round*, a running, muted tone poem which locates similarities between riddle canon and call-and-response. And the heavy bottomed abstract expressionist r&b material here (including Braxton's *March*, the only piece on the record not written by Mitchell) signals a delightful and unexpected new turn in Mitchell's work.

Jo Jar, on Black Saint's *3 x 4 Eye*, takes him

RECORD REVIEWS

even further in this direction. It rocks out harder than anything this side of Shannon Jackson, even though it is played totally acoustically (and partly satirically) and even though it moves on the doo-wack-a-doo rhythms of '20s jazz and pop rather than on the polyrhythms of '80s funk—it has some of the randy propriety of Jelly Roll Morton's music and the structural implacability of Ornette Coleman's *Ramblin'* (despite an obvious splice). Overall, however, this album is marginally less successful than the *Nessa*. Mitchell puts the cart before the horse deliberately and to great effect on the title piece and on *Folk Song (We Shall Overcome?)*, letting his themes emerge out of the group's variations; the band takes a Caribbean holiday on the former and an Asian fact-finding mission on the latter. But these pieces meander a bit, and *Cut Outs* seems especially protracted after 17 minutes of swelling *Zarathustra*-like chords. Admittedly, I might not have noticed these flaws had I not already heard the magnificent *Snurdy*.

Similarly, were I not aware of the balance and equanimity Shahid's grave bass lines and Barefield's flailing and yet rose-petal soft guitar can bring to this band, I might value Cecma's *More Cutouts* even more than I do. There is even greater certainty here in the brass and reed polyphonies, and since the resourceful percussionist is given even greater room to tintinnabulate, the play of color and mood is even more vibrant and finely shaded than on the *Nessa* LP. Mitchell's compositions are again preoccupied with rounds, marches, and the symbiotic relationship of composition and improvisation, and Ragin's *Talib* theme establishes him as a promising writer. Judged on its own merits, this is an exceptional record, and together with the *Nessa* and the *Black Saint*, it suggests both that the Sound Ensemble is as worthy a vessel for Mitchell's ideas as the Art Ensemble, and that Mitchell has found a way to make an immediately accessible music without striking compromises with European concert music, funk, or the jazz past.

New Music For Voice And Woodwinds samples Mitchell's music at its most recondite. The program consists of two pieces by Mitchell and two by Oshita, who writes in the epigrammatic, post-serialist manner of Mitchell and Braxton. Some of the sonorities here are heavenly, especially the blendings of Buckner's pure Anglican tenor with high pitched reeds like the Conn-O-sax and soprano clarinet. For the most part, however, this music comes across as stilted and wan, and the blame can't be placed entirely on the too academic sounding singer. Still, this is a provocative record, if only for the passages which remind us what a magnificent instrument the trained voice is and how surprisingly little modern literature there is for it, and if only because, together with the *Sound Ensemble* LPs, it serves to bring Roscoe Mitchell's art closer to the surface of public consciousness. —francis davis

JOHNNY HODGES

GIANTS OF JAZZ—Time-Life STL-J19:

TISHOMINGO BLUES; THE BLUES WITH A FEELIN'; FLAMING YOUTH; RENT PARTY BLUES; COTTON CLUB STOMP; WHEN YOU'RE SMILING; OLD MAN BLUES; ECHOES OF THE JUNGLE; THE SHEIK OF ARABY; BUNDLE OF BLUES (DRAGON BLUES); TOUGH TRUCKIN'; SUGAR PLUM; WHY DO I LIE TO MYSELF ABOUT YOU?; I CRIED FOR YOU; IN A JAM; ON THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE STREET; I KNOW THAT YOU KNOW; BLUE REVERIE; THE GAL FROM JOE'S; JEEP'S BLUES; JUNGLE LOVE; EMPTY BALLROOM BLUES; THE JEEP IS JUMPIN'; KRUM ELBOW BLUES; HODGE PODGE; WANDERLUST; DOOJI WOOJI; FINESSE (NIGHT WIND); THE RABBIT'S JUMP; GRIEVIN'; DAY DREAM; GOOD QUEEN BESS; THAT'S THE BLUES, OLD MAN; SQUATTY ROO; PASSION FLOWER; THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE; GOIN' OUT THE BACK WAY; HY'A SUE; BEALE STREET BLUES; ISFAHAN.

Personnel: Hodges, clarinet, soprano, alto saxophone; with various instrumentalists including Cat Anderson, Bubber Miley, Cootie Williams, Harry Edison, Mercer Ellington, Ray Nance, trumpet; Joe Nanton, Lawrence Brown, Tyree Glenn, trombone; Russell Procope, Jimmy Hamilton, Barney Bigard, clarinet; Juan Tizol, valve trombone; Harry Carney, baritone saxophone; Otto Hardwick, alto saxophone; Ben Webster, Bigard, Al Sears, Hamilton, Paul Gonsalves, tenor saxophone; Duke Ellington, Teddy Wilson, Jess Stacy, Billy Strayhorn, piano; Wellman Braud, Grachan Moncur, John Kirby, Jimmy Blanton, Oscar Pettiford, Sam Jones, bass; Lionel Hampton, vibes; Cozy Cole, Jo Jones, Sonny Greer, Rufus Jones, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

THE JOHNNY HODGES ALL-STARS WITH THE DUKE ELLINGTON ALL-STARS AND THE BILLY STRAYHORN ALL-STARS—Prestige

P-24103: FRISKY; LONGHORN BLUES; A FLOWER IS A LOVESOME THING; FAR AWAY BLUES; HOW COULD IT HAPPEN TO A DREAM; WHO STRUCK JOHN?; JUNE'S JUMPIN'; LOTUS BLOSSOM; VIOLET BLUE; SEARSY'S BLUES; A LITTLE TASTE; LET THE ZOOMERS DROOL; NIGHT WALK; CARAVAN; HOPPIN' JOHN; SHE; THE HAPPENING; SULTRY SERENADE (HOW COULD YOU DO A THING LIKE THAT TO ME); ALTERNATE; JUMPIN' WITH SYMPHONY SID; MOONLIGHT FIESTA; BRIT AND BUTTER BLUES; INDIAN SUMMER; SWAMP DRUM.

Personnel: Hodges, alto saxophone; with various instrumentalists including Taft Jordan, Harold Baker, Cat Anderson, trumpet; Lawrence Brown, Quentin Jackson, Britt Woodman, trombone; Juan Tizol, valve trombone; Willie Smith, alto saxophone; Harry Carney, baritone saxophone; Al Sears, Paul Gonsalves, Jimmy Hamilton, tenor saxophone; Billy Strayhorn, organ; Duke Ellington, piano; Oscar Pettiford, Wendell Marshall, bass; Wilbur De Paris, Sonny Greer, Louie Bellson, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

Does Johnny Hodges deserve to be included in the *Giants Of Jazz* series? He has never been credited with starting a "direction" in jazz; he co-wrote some pretty, swinging songs, but is not considered a major

Gallery*



Gallery ECM 1-1206

✪ The first recording from vibraharpist Dave Samuels and drummer Mike Di Pasqua (both ex-Double Image), oboist Paul McCandless (from Oregon), cellist David Darling (previous ECM LP: *Journal October*) and bassist Ratzo Harris. "Anyone used to reading the newspaper when listening to a record should not slip this one on the turntable. The music (here) calls for unrestricted attention." (*Audio*, Germany)

James Newton*



Axum ECM 1-1214

✪ He's been called "the most accomplished flutist now playing jazz" by the *New York Times*. And he's won three straight *down beat* International Critic's Polls. *Axum*, an album of flute solos, is the first recording on ECM by flutist James Newton.

Steve Tibbetts*



Northern Song ECM 1-1218

✪ His previous self-produced, self-distributed album *Yr* was, as they said in the '60s, an underground smash, embraced by rock, jazz and folk listeners alike. Now guitarist Steve Tibbetts has recorded his first album for ECM, with percussionist Marc Anderson.

ECM



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RECORD REVIEWS

composer; he led his own band for only four years and when it didn't succeed, came back to Duke Ellington, where he found security as a sideman for decades.

Why Hodges? Because he was the greatest star in the greatest jazz orchestra of all time. Because he was one of the very few musicians who was truly "unique." Because music is emotion and no other musician could so easily evoke a smile or a swoon. Webster, Coltrane, Dizzy, all have had imitators who could approximate their style. No one has recreated that sultry, honeyed ballad tone, or the effortless blues, of Hodges. He spent 38 years with Ellington and was the highest paid and best known sideman in the group. Try a Blindfold Test with someone not particularly knowledgeable about the Ellington orchestra. If he can identify any soloist, it will be Hodges.

Hodges started his career in 1927 with Chick Webb, but a year later he jumped to Duke, replacing Otto Hardwick (who returned shortly afterward). A disciple of Sidney Bechet, Hodges was featured on both soprano and alto, although by 1940 he had dropped the soprano entirely. His reputation grew in the late '30s and early '40s, when he recorded some of the ballads closely associated with him. Always in a friendly battle with Ellington for money, Hodges left the group in 1951, but returned in 1955 and stayed until he died in 1970.

The *Giants Of Jazz* set features Hodges prominently on soprano. His sound, though not as pure as it was to become, was a dramatic foil to Ellington's growlers, Bubber Miley and Joe Nanton, the most prominent sidemen at the time. Three pieces here feature both Miley and Hodges, but the editors might have included the Oct. 17, '28 version of *The Mooche*, in which Miley and Hodges share a remarkable solo, then play two solos back to back. It is a better contrast in style than any of the three cuts here.

There is a comprehensive look at the early band days with Hodges, yet several of the compositions are more interesting for what they show about Ellington's new ideas than what they reveal about the evolving Hodges. Not until side two's *Sheik Of Araby* is a recording totally dominated by Hodges. The emphasis on this period (one-fourth of the recordings are from Hodges' first five years in the band) is admirable, but it limits space for the completely developed Hodges.

Ironically, the first examples of his seamless singing horn—the exaggerated slurs and swift sliding up and down scale—come with Lionel Hampton's Orchestra on *Sunny Side Of The Street* and with a group at Benny Goodman's 1938 Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert on *Blue Reverie*. Many of the compositions associated with Hodges are in this set, and are signature versions, even though they are with small groups plucked from Duke's orchestra. There is only one recording, *Grievin'*, from the orchestra's greatest period, 1939-42. And this set sprints through the last 38 years of Hodges' career. There is one look

at how Hodges learned to command the blues in a stretched-out setting (*Beale Street Blues*, where Harry Edison's clear, compact, urbane trumpet is such a perfect complement to the altoist), and just a glance at Hodges' role in Ellington's thematic works, which really reached their fruition in the 1960s. Nothing is included from the period when Hodges had his own band, not even the r&b hit *Castle Rock*; there is just one piece under Hodges' name from the late '40s, when he had more control over his own dates.

The Prestige *All-Stars* set fills some of the gaps. The Hodges record in this two-record set is filled with more loosely swinging tunes than the *Giants* series, and Hodges is the centerpiece of each one. The sessions are all from 1947, four years before Hodges left Duke, but they are a precursor of the band he led, since they feature Al Sears, Lawrence Brown, and Sonny Greer, all sidemen who left Duke to work with him.

The other record is from four 1950 and 1951 sessions recorded with small groups from the orchestra. Hodges is out and Willie Smith, his successor in the alto chair, is in. These are generally unremarkable dates from an ebb in Ellington's career, but there are some works of note. *Night Walk* and *She* feature high-note specialist Cat Anderson in an uncharacteristic, Miley-like growl. *The Happening* is built around a frantically paced Paul Gonsalves, recorded six years before another Gonsalves sprint at the Newport Jazz Festival would signal the return of Ellington to prominence.

Perhaps Hodges' absence says as much about his music as his presence does, for the life he brought to any Ellington session is noticeably missing. Duke Ellington was the composer and leader of his orchestra, but Johnny Hodges, more than anyone else, was its life and blood and soul. —r. bruce dold

ORNETTE COLEMAN

OF HUMAN FEELINGS—Antilles 2001: *SLEEP TALK; JUMP STREET; HIM AND HER; AIR SHIP; WHAT IS THE NAME OF THAT SONG?; JOB MOB; LOVE WORDS; TIMES SQUARE.*

Personnel: Coleman, alto saxophone; Charlie Ellerbee, Bern Nix, guitar; Jamaaladeen Tacuma, electric bass; Calvin Weston, Ornette Denardo Coleman, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

One glance at the booklets contained in his Artists House LPs, *Body Meta* (AH1) and *Soapsuds*, *Soapsuds* (AH6), tells a story of discographical gaps in Ornette Coleman's output of the past decade. Valuable unissued material, ranging from electric ensembles to encounters with an Oklahoma blues shouter and Moroccan musicians, has been left sitting on the shelf. As the avowedly Coleman-influenced groups of Ronald Shannon Jackson and James "Blood" Ulmer gain in popularity, release of the mentor's work deserves attention. Digitally recorded in April 1979, *Of Human Feelings* is the most earthy,

visceral, and provocative high-decibel Ornette that I have yet heard. If Coleman's alto is somewhat more reserved than on *Dancing In Your Head* (A&M Horizon 21), nevertheless the eight songs of the present set cook various collaborative grooves in which his horn partakes.

"The most important thing was for us to play together all at the same time, without getting in each other's way," Coleman's own words are insightful, "and also to have enough room for each player to ad-lib alone." This description actually derives from comments quoted in Martin Williams' liner notes to *Free Jazz* (Atlantic 1364), Ornette's double quartet recorded in 1960. Almost 20 years later, his Prime Time band's "two of everything" approach sings electric: a Noah's ark made up of deuce guitars, double trap sets and, in recent concerts, twin electric basses. For all of Prime Time's density and megavoltage, Coleman's early ideas remain intact: melody in preference to chord progressions (changes), and the primacy of free pitch over tonic-dominant considerations.

Of Human Feelings, however, tosses in a wild card development of the '70s. Quarter-noted walking on the bass—underpinned by accented pattern drumming—gives way to liberation of the rhythm section from the conventional supporting role. Harmolodic theory permits every instrument to play lead and rhythm so that myriad variations on the melody can brush shoulders, often in different keys. Throughout *Of Human Feelings* instrumental voices chatter back and forth. Tacuma's bass, omnipresent, hums bold melodic lines. Guitars comp decoratively, but also whirl like sentimental buzz saws and emit telegraphic bleeps. Drums blather a continuous skewed backbeat of crazily overlapping hi-hat, tom-toms, and bass, through which slices the odd random (jazz) ticking on ride cymbal. The leader's alto sings overhead, or skanks riffing earthy rhythms down below. Primitive ethereal funk is the result, a polyphonic, collectively improvised mixture suggestive of African influences and trad jazz.

Coleman's toyful compositions provide rich topics for musical conversations on a frequently humorous tilt. Alto and guitars sensually and playfully intone the bassoon part from Stravinsky's *The Rite Of Spring* in staggered harmony (*Sleep Talk*). Coleman's birdlike sqawks inserted as phrase-ends lend a funky atonality to *Times Square*'s five-note head. *What Is The Name Of That Song?* invites comparison to his classic laments *Lonely Woman* and *Sadness*, but with a twist: the song's two-part construction sounds like Ornette's version of a TV game show. First, the "unidentified tune"—Coleman's loose, bittersweet ballad line stated as guitar/alto "unison" floating dreamily over the up tempo; next, a "hornpipe" section that explodes the contestant's daydream with *concentration music*. The sensation is of time running out.

I take exception with a trade paper's recent caution that *Of Human Feelings* is "not happy music." Years ago Coleman inscribed my

copy of an Atlantic album with the words "Stay Happy." Listening to his newly eruptive expansion of previous directions, I find it hard to do otherwise. The dancing in my head only gets louder.
—peter kostakis

TOMMY FLANAGAN

SUPER-SESSION—Inner City 3039: *DIANGO; MINOR PERHAPS; TOO LATE NOW; I LOVE YOU; RACHEL'S RONDO; THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE.*

Personnel: Flanagan, piano; Red Mitchell, bass; Elvin Jones, drums

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THE MAGNIFICENT TOMMY FLANAGAN—

Progressive 7059: *SPEAK LOW; GOOD MORNING HEARTACHE; OLD DEVIL MOON; EVERYTHING I LOVE; CHANGE PARTNERS; I FALL IN LOVE TOO EASILY; BLUEISH GREY; JUST IN TIME.*

Personnel: Flanagan, piano; George Mraz, bass; Al Foster, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Tommy Flanagan has been, for many years, one of the great underrecognized talents in jazz. In the last three or four years, he has begun to edge into the limelight by playing and recording extensively as a leader, and his skill as a stylist is captured on these two recent albums.

Flanagan has a prodigious but subtle technique. His style is rooted in bebop, but it reflects the whole jazz tradition, from gospel and blues through the romanticism of Bill Evans and into modernism. In his many years as a sideman and accompanist, he learned to listen and respond, aware of his musical surroundings. Consequently, his playing has the coherence and sense of purpose that mark the very finest jazz.

For those unfamiliar with Tommy's recent work, *The Magnificent Tommy Flanagan* is a perfect introduction. George Mraz has worked extensively with Flanagan, and they have developed a remarkable rapport. Mraz' classical sensibilities and fleet imagination are an excellent complement for Flanagan's elegant lyricism. Al Foster—who seems to be a drummer for all seasons—fits in beautifully. He is light and agile, often using brushes, and he never tries to overpower the rhythm. With the exception of Thad Jones' *Blueish Grey*, the material is all standards—and Flanagan has few peers in interpreting these chestnuts. His introductions are often striking—like a good lead on a story, they hook you into the material that follows. His arrangements are clean and straightforward but never commonplace. Most important, he is a very inventive soloist, never at a loss for a new harmonic angle on an old song. Mraz is an always adept companion, and his solos often pick up where Tommy left off.

As good as *The Magnificent Tommy Flanagan* is, *Super-Session* is even richer (despite the hackneyed title). There is more power, more drive—not surprisingly, with Elvin Jones behind the drums. When Jones recorded with Flanagan previously (*Eclipse*, released in 1977 on Inner City), he sounded a bit restrained, as if he were adapting himself to Tommy's style. This time around, he cuts loose. His relentless, turbulent drumming inspires a rousing performance from

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RECORD REVIEWS

Flanagan and bassist Red Mitchell. There is a lot of energy on the loose, from the jolting chords that kick off *Django* to the rippling conclusion of *Things Ain't What They Used To Be* (Mercer Ellington's blues, here mistakenly credited to his father). For those casual listeners who may have dismissed Tommy Flanagan as too light, too "cocktail," this album is the perfect antidote.

The driving power of most of the tunes is nicely balanced by a sensitive version of *Too Late Now*, which is given the full Flanagan ballad treatment, including a long, stately, rubato introduction. There are also two Flanagan originals to savor—*Minor Perhaps* and *Rachel's Rondo*—both of which reflect Tommy's continuing dedication to the joys of bop. Although it is shorter, *Super-Session* is fuller and more varied than the Progressive album. But *both* albums are impressive examples of the mature style of a very important pianist. —jim roberts

RALPH TOWNER/ JOHN ABERCROMBIE

FIVE YEARS LATER—ECM-1-1207: *LATE NIGHT PASSENGER*; *ISLA*; *HALF PAST TWO*; *MICROTHERME*; *CAMINATA*; *THE JUGGLER'S ETUDE*; *BUMABIA*; *CHILD'S PLAY*.

Personnel: Towner, 12-string acoustic guitar; Abercrombie, acoustic, electric guitar, electric 12-string guitar, mandolin guitar.

★ ★ ★ ★

JOHN ABERCROMBIE

STRAIGHT FLIGHT—Jazz America Marketing JAM 5001: *IN YOUR OWN SWEET WAY*; *MY FOOLISH HEART*; *BESSIE'S BLUES*; *THERE IS NO GREATER LOVE*; *BEAUTIFUL LOVE*; *NARDIS*.

Personnel: Abercrombie, electric guitar, electric mandolin (cut 3); George Mraz, bass; Peter Donald, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

These two recent releases by guitarist John Abercrombie are, to use an old cliché, as unlike as apples and oranges. An actual comparison of the two would, of course, be unfair—and just about impossible. Each recording has a totally different ambience and atmosphere and, for the most part, hardly sound like the same person (except for the odd identifiable lick, such as on *Beautiful Love* on the JAM LP).

His latest work is the collaboration with Ralph Towner, a partnership which is celebrated in the album's title, having been established in the late '70s, offering moody and haunting, dirge-like pieces (all of which were written by one or both guitarists). Although there isn't too much variety of rhythms and tempos on *Five Years After*, there is enough coloration and imagination to sustain one's attention throughout.

Actually, side two contains the more diverse sounds, with the first track in somewhat of a Spanish vein. *The Juggler's Etude* and *Bumabia* segue nicely, allowing the guitarists' abstractions to be highlighted. It is

in these two pieces that Abercrombie best displays his singular facility of bending notes, of running the full spectrum of the fretboard, and of finding new ways to sound the strings. The empathy between these two guitarists is, by now, well documented. It often seems as if one is watching the other's fingers to anticipate a move—and then moves to the same place at the same time. At other times, there is the sense that if one hadn't played a particular line, the other surely would have.

The JAM session, cut in 1979, represents Abercrombie in the more straightforward role of jazz guitarist, a role not often accorded him. However, *Straight Flight* sets the record straight, giving this extremely versatile guitarist ample opportunity to indulge in some of the more melodic jazz characteristic of earlier eras. Even in this setting, Abercrombie's is a singular sound, and his company for this date befits him well. Mraz is a commandingly gentle bassist, who knows exactly what's needed to complement the guitar. Donald is probably one of the subtlest trio drummers around. The tunes are standard material, all offering challenges of their own. The long, slow, drawn-out *My Foolish Heart* brings out the crystal clarity of Abercrombie's picking, with Mraz pungently echoing the melody line.

On John Coltrane's *Bessie's Blues* we are introduced to the electric mandolin, an instrument not often heard in a jazz context. A lighter sound and higher tuning makes for a refreshing change. Possibly the definitive work on this album is Miles Davis' *Nardis*, which starts out with a bowed bass intro, leading into solo drums, and then the trio tinting this classic jazz work with an ever so slightly dissonant flavor.

The JAM album, by the way, boldly states on its face: JAZZ \$5.98. A bargain by anybody's standards, as the content is well worth the expenditure. —frankie nemko-graham

JON HASSELL

DREAM THEORY IN MALAYA—Editions EG 114: *CHOR MOIRE*; *COURAGE*; *DREAM THEORY*; *DATU BINTUNG AT JELONG*; *MALAY*; *THESE TIMES* . . . ; *GIFT OF FIRE*.

Personnel: Hassell, trumpet, synthesizer, pottery drums (cuts 5, 7), bowl gongs (7); Brian Eno, drums (2, 4), bowl gongs, bells (5, 6); Michael Brook, bass (2, 3); Miguel Frasconi, bowl gongs (5); Walter De Maria, drums (2).

★ ★ ★ ★

In the Malayan aborigines' practice of dream interpretation, Jon Hassell found a perfect vehicle for his on-going musical concerns. The setting and dream-telling custom, which reportedly bring Malayan tribes psychological and communal well-being, befits Hassell's preoccupation with the integration of primitive instruments and futuristic technology, of Eastern and Western tonalities, and the balance between emotional content and formal structure.

On one level Hassell's overlaid and synthe-

sized treatment of instruments paints the landscape of Malaya as a multi-dimensional translucent watercolor. Variations on water motions—quick splashes, rolling tides, undulating waves—constitute the rhythmic pattern that prevails through most of the pieces. Although Hassell's library of sounds and colors are limited, he maintains textural diversity by interchanging the compositional roles and interactions of his instruments—primarily primitive drums, plus gongs, trumpet, bass, and synthesizer.

Often, rich bass tones, spaced with silence, act as counterpoint or accent to the repetitive, hypnotic rhythms while the droning of Hassell's electronically altered trumpet floats, diffuses, and eventually evaporates, much like an echo over a canyon. On *Chor Moire*, however, all the instruments retain a distinct rhythmic pattern, skittish in nature, jagged in sound. *Dream Theory* continues this musical system, but also tenders what might be the state of participation in the dream-telling custom. Sonorous rhythms boil as the underbelly for non-specific sounds that quiver a hazy, illusionary melody.

The sounds from Hassell's small vocabulary most often remain distinct, yet elucidate each other's tonal color and character. But his ability to compress his established electronic language into completely foreign sounds peaks on *Datu Bintung At Jelong*, where the water rhythms take on a machine-like clanging, without losing their quality of oceanic motion. A similar effect is achieved on *These Times* . . . , an atmospheric, ambient piece in which bells seem to chime as if blown and dispersed by the wind.

Although Hassell has carefully crafted his compositions to his self-stated musical goals, he falls short of balancing classical structure with feeling. Ultimately, *Dream Theory In Malaya* hedges on deep-seeded emotion. But the album edges closer to the mating of the emotions and intellect than Hassell's previous effort, *Fourth World Volume 1, Possible Music*, which was produced by Brian Eno. Hassell is an artist in process, and he is progressing, although he has yet to conceive his masterpiece. —divina infusino

LENNIE TRISTANO

THE LENNIE TRISTANO QUARTET—Atlantic SD2-7006: *APRIL*; *MEAN TO ME*; *CONFUCIUS BLUES*; *PENNIES IN MINOR*; *THERE'LL NEVER BE ANOTHER YOU*; *LENNIE-BIRD*; *S'WONDERFUL*; *SWEET AND LOVELY*; *BACKGROUND MUSIC*; *WHISPERING*; *317 EAST 32ND*; *MY MELANCHOLY BABY*; *DONNA LEE*.

Personnel: Tristano, piano; Lee Konitz, alto saxophone; Gene Ramey, bass; Art Taylor, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

This is an addendum to *Requiem*, which was voted reissue of the year in the 1981 *Down Beat* International Critics Poll, and like its predecessor, it belongs in every serious jazz record collection. Here, from out of the blue, are 13 previously unreleased quartet titles (an ar-

gosity of blues, standards, and originals descended from the high intervals of standards) from the June 1955 club date from which only the five live titles on *Requiem* were thought to exist. Far from being Tristano memorabilia, however, this may be the best set ever released under Tristano's name. It is certainly the most warmly appealing, and I wonder how his reputation might differ if this material had been issued in 1956.

Why it wasn't is, of course, a pertinent question, and I suspect that Tristano himself, rather than the record company, is the culprit. Given his phobia of assertive drummers, Tristano could hardly have been as pleased as I am with Art Taylor's drumming on these sides. Behind Tristano's solos here, Taylor, who was relatively discreet on the titles approved by the pianist for release on the 1956 *Lennie Tristano* (the five titles restored to circulation on *Requiem*), detonates rim-shots and press rolls lower in volume but almost equal in impact to those he might have planted behind Jackie McLean. Whether as a result of Taylor's jolts or not I can only hypothesize, but Tristano weighs in with muscular, rhythmically insistent solos which belie his prim schoolmaster's image. And comping behind Konitz, even comping quietly behind Ramey's bass solos, Tristano is like a drummer himself—contrapuntal, percussive, at times even obtrusively so.

Playing with Tristano, Konitz often regressed to the level of star pupil, but there is nothing diffident or preening about his work here. He was, and is, a *hot* player, however temperate his timbre, and his feverish, sharply defined age-of-anxiety intensity contributes greatly to the mood of questing lyricism, of querulous optimism which characterizes this date. There are mistakes here, errors of judgment and of emphasis, and some of the fours Tristano trades with Taylor are a shambles because of the irreconcilable rhythmic differences between them. But for all of that, there is a feeling of relaxation here, with none of the tension, none of the pressure to make it new, which make the Tristano Capitols so exciting but so enervating at the same time. History is not likely to hail Tristano as an innovator, for he had few followers aside from those who studied with him formally. But history will likely judge his work more leniently than he himself apparently did. It's wonderful to have this music available at last—flaws and all.

—francis davis

VARIOUS ARTISTS

THE GRIFFITH PARK COLLECTION—Elektra Musician EL-60025: *L's BOP*; *WHY WAIT*; *OCTOBER BALLADE*; *HAPPY TIMES*; *REMEMBER*; *GUERNICA*.

Personnel: Chick Corea, piano; Stanley Clarke, bass; Joe Henderson, tenor saxophone; Freddie Hubbard, flugelhorn, trumpet; Lenny White, drums.

★ ★ ★

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RECORD REVIEWS

prolific is not all fun and Rolls Royces. The hours are long and the results are mixed. So, as a public service, let the buyer be advised: *The Griffith Park Collection* is a good album that could be much better.

The latest release from Corea et al. has the makings of a super session. All talents are on deck, the tunes are shipshape. The record company, Elektra Musician, is on its maiden voyage. Since it wants to look smart its first time out, the crew has been given a free hand. They picked the songs and the acoustic instrumentation—look ma, no electricity. Lenny White even produced the album. What more could you want? Well, for starters, a little more inspiration and a lot more perspiration.

Both sides of the album begin with salutes to the Blue Note sound. White proudly stated in his liner notes that the LP came together with "no rehearsals." *L's Bop* and *Happy Times* show it. The ensemble passages lack cohesion. The solos are tentative first encounters. No one sounds completely at ease. The good news in *The Griffith Park Collection* comes from Joe Henderson on *October Ballade*, *Why Wait*, and *Guernica*. In a tone reflecting mahogany, Henderson adlibs with great passion and economy. His pauses, darting figures, and clipped notes give added emphasis to his occasional outbursts of 16ths and 32nds. His solo on Chick Corea's lament, *October Ballade*, has such beauty the song essentially ends with his last note. After that, the rest is just sensory overload.

Why Wait answers its own question. It cannot be rushed. Haste would waste its steady tempo and strolling soloists—led again by Henderson. The saxophonist's enthusiasm infects the others on the album's last and best cut, *Guernica*. While White gives his composition a martial cadence, Henderson's instrument sings of joy and sorrow. Freddie Hubbard's horn drops bombs. Stanley Clarke's bass moans. Corea's piano plays the winds of war. All honor the work's inspiration, *Guernica*, Picasso's indictment of military madness.

—cliff radel

STEVE KUHN

LAST YEAR'S WALTZ—ECM 1 1213: *TURN TO GOLD*; *THE DRINKING SONG*; *LAST YEAR'S WALTZ*; *I REMEMBER YOU*; *MEXICO*; *THE FRUIT FLY*; *THE FEELING WITHIN*; *OLD FOLKS/WELL*; *YOU NEEDN'T*; *CONFIRMATION*; *The City Of Dallas*.

Personnel: Kuhn, piano; Sheila Jordan, vocals; Harvie Swartz, bass; Bobby Moses, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Last Year's Waltz has all the elements of an ideal live album: musicians capable of inspired interaction and an intimate rapport with its material; an audience that becomes an equal partner in creating a highly charged atmosphere; and clean, buoyant engineering that captures it all. This is certainly the most exciting of Steve Kuhn's several ECM releases; yet, upon repeated listenings,

minor problems surface that tarnish an otherwise excellent date.

Two-thirds of the program find the spell-binding Sheila Jordan drawing fervent yet articulate support from all hands in a mix of standards and Kuhn originals that illustrate the various aspects of her artistry. Jordan's ability to bare the soul of a lyric gives Kuhn's *The Feeling Within*, a wistful ballad, and *Turn To Gold*, the churning, mid-tempo opener, musical as well as emotional momentum. *The Drinking Song*, which receives a more playful reading than on her own SteepleChase album, ends with a gutsy scat, while her interpretations of *Confirmation* and *I Remember You* are nimble, subtle, and winsome. At every turn Jordan proves herself to be a consummate stylist and a deft interpreter of Kuhn's labyrinthine lyrics.

The three trio pieces and Kuhn's solo medley are where the album shows the worse for wear. Kuhn's penchant for pat schmaltz and pyrotechnics obscures the strength of the title piece, a potentially Evansesque dirge. Many of Kuhn's stride flourishes throughout the album are tart and incisive, but his keyboard-smashing reference to *Well, You Needn't* does not serve the classic well. Despite the trio's zeal, *Mexico* remains a pedestrian set of latinate chord changes, and the rendering of *The Fruit Fly*, which appeared on Kuhn's *Non-Fiction* album, is little more than a rehash.

Overall, however, the Jordan/Kuhn partnership is in very good health, as *Last Year's Waltz* is one of the better recordings of its genre to appear this year. —bill shoemaker

DR. JOHN (MAC REBENNACK)

DR. JOHN PLAYS MAC REBENNACK—Clean Cuts CC 705: *DOROTHY*; *MAC'S BOOGIE*; *MEMORIES OF PROFESSOR LONGHAIR*; *THE NEARNESS OF YOU*; *DELICADO*; *HONEY DRIPPER*; *BIG MAC*; *NEW ISLAND MIDNIGHT*; *SAINTS*; *PINETOP*.

Personnel: Rebennack, piano, vocal (cut 4).

★ ★ ★ ★

JAMES BOOKER

NEW ORLEANS PIANO WIZARD: LIVE!—Rounder 2027: *ON THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE STREET*; *BLACK NIGHT*; *COME RAIN OR COME SHINE*; *KEEP ON GWINE*; *SOMETHING STUPID*; *PLEASE SEND ME SOMEONE TO LOVE*; *TELL ME HOW DO YOU FEEL*; *LET THEM TALK*; *COME ON IN MY HOUSE*.

Personnel: Booker, piano, vocals.

★ ★ ★ ★

It's been a good year for New Orleans r&b: the Neville Brothers promoted a charted album by opening shows for the Rolling Stones, and solo sessions showcased two leading pianists. The familiar name here is Dr. John/Mac Rebennack, who came up in the '50s under Huey "Piano" Smith, graced the psychedelic era with *Walk On Gilded Splinters*, and hit big in '73 with *Right Place, Wrong*

RECORD REVIEWS

Time. Since then he's done extensive studio work on both coasts, recently entering the lucrative fields of advertising jingles and Hollywood film scores.

In contrast to Dr. John's frequent flamboyance, Rebennack's new set is modest, subtle, and deceptively simple. Fans expecting a funky tour de force a la *Desitively Bonnaroo* (Dr. John's classic collaboration with Allen Toussaint and the Meters) may initially be disappointed; nor is Mac a devastating keyboard wizard. Instead the album provides a warm, informal glimpse of Rebennack enjoying both his own tunes and material ranging from New Orleans roots to Hoagy Carmichael. Mac's forte is rich, inventive chording full of unexpected turns, textures, and voicings. While maintaining a basic blues/gospel sensibility, he'll take you on some fascinating, convoluted excursions before the harmonic tension is finally resolved. This works best on *Dorothy*, a winsome original, and on a rambling rumba called *Delicado*, with *Big Mac*, *Saints*, and *New Island Midnight* following suit. Mac's *Boogie*, *Pinetop*, and *Memories Of Professor Longhair* demonstrate Rebennack's traditional boogie/blues mastery, though his limited left hand and blanket use of chords make for some dull intervals. The set's highpoint is Mac's rendition of *The Nearness Of You*, where his Creole/cocktail accompaniment of uniquely gruff, sensual singing turns trite lyrics into an eloquent declaration. Mac would sound great interpreting a whole set of standards, much as Willie Nelson did on *Stardust*.

While not his peer compositionally, James Booker is cut from the same cloth as Rebennack and is likewise a distinct stylist. A session veteran since the Fats Domino era, Booker now appears on various Toussaint productions. Stateside he's strictly a local figure, but fly James to Germany, where *Live!* was recorded, and crowds go wild over his gripping, all-out performances. Booker's singing style is fervently gospelish. His voice is high, thin, somewhat harsh and eccentric, and as strikingly effective as any soul star's. James' upper register residency gives him easy access to piercing falsettos and swooping ascents, and he's equally adept at tender, dramatic understatement.

Booker's also an excellent self-accompanist, backing his vocal forays with sanctified swells and dynamic crescendos. Besides gospel he incorporates Storyville jazz and Longhair blue rumbas, and, like Rebennack, enjoys mischievous, rambling endings. Booker's playing tends to be brighter, bouncier, and more aggressive than Mac's, equally rich but less harmonically adventurous. His German set pulses with passion and power: *Come Rain Or Come Shine*, *Black Night*, and *Come On In This House* reach incandescent climaxes; instrumentals *Keep On Gwine* and *Something Stupid* simultaneously reflect James' wit and technique; ballads *Please Send...* and *Let Them Talk* (also cut by rockabilly legend Lonnie

Mack) show his sensitivity. The audience is right in Booker's palm, and home listeners aren't likely to lag far behind. For a real treat, spin the two albums back to back.

—ben sandmel

ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO

URBAN BUSHMEN—ECM-2-1211:

PROMENADE: COTE BAMAKO I; BUSH MAGIC; URBAN MAGIC (MARCH, WARM NIGHT BLUES STROLL, DOWN THE WALKWAY, RM EXPRESS); SUN PRECONDITION TWO; THEME FOR SCO (SOWETO MESSENGER, BUSHMAN TRIUMPHANT, ENTERING THE CITY, ANNOUNCEMENT OF VICTORY); NEW YORK IS FULL OF LONELY PEOPLE; ANCESTRAL MEDITATION; UNCLE; PETER AND JUDITH; PROMENADE: COTE BAMAKO II; ODWALLA/THEME.

Personnel: Lester Bowie, trumpet, bass drum, long horn, vocals; Joseph Jarman, Roscoe Mitchell, reeds, percussion, vocals; Malachi Favors Maghostut, bass, percussion, melodia, bass pan drums, vocals; Famoudou Don Moye, sun percussion, vocals.

★ ★ ★ ★

I'll vote for the Art Ensemble as one of the very best bands in the world any day. They're consistently able to turn the most routine gig into an uplifting experience, with seemingly spontaneous creativity that envelopes and transports an attentive audience surer than Express Mail. Re: *Urban Bushmen*—kudos to engineer Martin Wieland and the people at Tonstudio Bauer; this live recording of a 1980 European concert captures the AEC's density and dynamic sensitivity as they are in reality, as if you're listening from the center of a moderately sized hall with a domed ceiling and woodpaneled walls, amid a crowd that's utterly still.

Considering the importance of such acoustic detail, and the role of contrast in the Art Ensemble's strategy of tension-and-release, the skillful mix is a truly valuable component of this document's success. Here is the whisper next to silence (*Ancestral Meditation*) and the full force near to noise (explosive climaxes and Moye's earthy pieces throughout). Here are the two reedmen—Jarman's hard tone and dervish momentum in relation to Mitchell's characteristic slight sourness and laidback stroll. Here is the special kissoff Bowie creates for each note he ekes out of his trumpet, and the richness of Moye's splendid sun percussion. And here the influence of bassist Malachi Favors Maghostut is revealed as seldom before.

Favors sets the tempos—Moye clings to his time, and shadows the bassist's flawless steadiness with fascinating accents. Favors makes the transitions seamless; he never strains. His playing is the unifying thread through an ensemble music that evolves like a novel without chapter breaks. The scenes and intensity of the narrative change; the players act and react according to their

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distinctive qualities; themes, which might be considered complete, if short, stories, emerge from the ongoing flow. Favors is always there, knowing where it's going, like the author of it all. Not since Mingus has an acoustic bassist been so central in a band—and Favors is much more self-effacing.

Modesty has seldom afflicted the Art Ensemble. The three individualistic front men perform well here, without the advantage of their emblematic features from earlier ECM LPs—Charlie M, Nice Guys, *Dreaming Of The Master*. The hottest blowing, where all seem to inspire each other, is on Jarman's *Theme For Sco* (first recorded live at Montreux in '74, on *Kabalaba* from AECO). It's Joseph on soprano, I think, and Roscoe on soprano, who charge Lester to heroics, before his mournful ode *New York Is Full* . . . Mitchell's composition *Uncle* is also moderately slow, spacious, and somber.

Perhaps the Art Ensemble is no longer the showcase for these guys' best ideas. Bowie has his several projects, Mitchell the University of Wisconsin and his Sound Ensemble, and Jarman's been recording with Moya for Black Saint. The AEC has undoubtedly melowed as it's consolidated the elements of Great Black Music; the energy runs less to flame, if maybe to harder burning fire, than in '72 when they taped a two-fer *Live At Mandel Hall* for Delmark and *Bap-Tizum* from the Ann Arbor festival for Atlantic.

So the ardent fan may think he's heard it all before; this is the AEC's fourth live set, and still no record producer has figured out how to capture their compelling, visual stage show on vinyl. There are more than a dozen albums in the Art Ensemble's discography, and one surely hears in this latest echoes of *Les Stances A Sophie* (Nessa), *Message To Our Folks* (Affinity), and others. The members aren't young Turks anymore, nor yet elder statesmen—but rather, Urban Bushmen in their prime, vigorous, experienced, with plenty to say, and still capable of discovery and invention. The AEC's best future work may involve ambitious, special projects—but for the totemic Emilio Cruz cover painting and the good Jarman liner prose, the clear ECM sound and the music! the music!—I'll

take this package as a momento of one night I missed, and be glad to have it.

—howard mandel

MAGIC SAM

MAGIC SAM LIVE—Delmark DL-645/646:

EVERY NIGHT ABOUT THIS TIME; I DON'T BELIEVE YOU'D LET ME DOWN; MOLE'S BLUES; I JUST GOT TO KNOW; TORE DOWN; YOU WERE WRONG; BACKSTROKE; COME ON IN THIS HOUSE; LOOKING GOOD; RIDING HIGH; SAN-HO-ZAY; I NEED YOU SO BAD; YOU DON'T LOVE ME; STRANGE THINGS HAPPENING; I FEEL SO GOOD (I WANNA BOOGIE); ALL YOUR LOVE; SWEET HOME CHICAGO; I GOT PAPERS ON YOU, BABY; LOOKING GOOD.

Personnel: Magic Sam, vocals, guitar; (on cuts 1,2,4,6,9)—Eddie Shaw, tenor saxophone, vocals; Tyrone Carter, electric piano; Mac Thompson, bass; Bob Richey, drums; (on cuts 3,5,7,8,10)—Shaw, tenor saxophone, vocals; A. C. Reed, tenor saxophone; Mac Thompson, bass; "Huckleberry Hound" (Robert Wright), drums; (on cuts 11-20)—Bruce Barlow, bass; Sam Lay, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

MAGIC ROCKER—Flyright LP-561: *EVERYTHING*

GONNA BE ALRIGHT; LOOK WATCHA DONE; ALL MY WHOLE LIFE; LOVE ME WITH A FEELING; ALL YOUR LOVE; CALL ME IF YOU NEED ME; ROLL YOUR MONEY MAKER; EASY BABY; MAGIC ROCKER; LOVE ME THIS WAY; 21 DAYS IN JAIL; ALL NIGHT LONG.

Personnel: Magic Sam, vocals, guitar; Willie Dixon, bass; Mac Thompson, Syl Johnson, (cuts 6,7), bass guitar; Billie Stepney (1,2,4,5), Odie Payne (3,8,11,12), drums; Little Brother Montgomery (1,2,4,5), Harold Burrage (3,8,11,12), piano; Shakey Jake Harris, vocals (6,7).

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The sudden death of Magic Sam in 1969, at the age of 32, sent a wave of shock through the Chicago blues community. He had been the fastest rising star of a generation of "West Side" bluesmen that included, among others, Otis Rush, Buddy Guy, Luther Allison, Mighty Joe Young, and Jimmy Dawkins. On the heels of his brilliant first album, Delmark's *West Side Soul*, he had broken out of the ghetto club circuit and into the national and international arenas. There was even spec-

ulation that the personable guitarist with the soaring voice and searing chops would become the first blues superstar—the purist's Jimi Hendrix.

Sam Maghett learned the rudiments of the blues on a self-made "diddle bow," or one-string guitar, in Granada, Mississippi, then spent his teenage years on the South Side of Chicago, where he formed his first band with next-door neighbor Syl Johnson and his brother Mac Thompson. Encouraged by Shakey Jake Harris, he began to sing, and by age 18 was performing in clubs. Two years later he brought a demo tape of the plaintive *All Your Love* to Eli Toscano of Cobra Records, backed with a double-timed version of Tampa Red's *Love Me With A Feeling*, the song became a minor hit and was followed by three other singles in a similar mold.

It is this material—the eight issued Cobra sides, plus two more tunes from the same 1957 and 1958 sessions—that appears on Flyright's *Magic Rocker*, along with a pair of Shakey Jake vocals that Sam accompanied for Toscano's Artistic subsidiary. The album is virtually identical to the original reissue on Blue Horizon, but the fidelity is improved and the discographic information has been updated. The accuracy of the personnel listing remains questionable, however: neither Little Brother Montgomery's piano nor Mac Thompson's "bass guitar" is audible on the '57 sessions, likewise Willie Dixon's upright bass in '58. (Flyright has already amended the '58 roster on the liner notes of its *Otis Rush & Magic Sam* out-take compilation, with Odell Campbell replacing Thompson.)

After the first tremulous rendering of *All Your Love*, Magic Sam matured rapidly, so that by the following year his Bobby Bland-inspired vocals had already achieved much of their ultimate range and power. Encouraged by Sam's initial success, Toscano took pains to enhance production values: no fewer than six takes were expended on *Easy Baby*, the last and most highly refined of the Cobra releases. The flip side of that tune, *21 Days In Jail*, was a departure from the previous formula, which had coupled slow and fast variations of the same fundamental theme on each disc, all loosely based upon



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the descending motif of Ray Charles' *Lonely Avenue*. *21 Days*, by contrast, is a driving rockabilly breakdown; like the unissued instrumental *Magic Rocker*, it reflects the seemingly transient influence of Chuck Berry.

In 1963 Northwestern University freshman Peter Kroehler, having heard Magic Sam at a fraternity dance, took his father's tape recorder down to the seamy environs of West Roosevelt Road to capture his new idol on home turf. He returned a year later, and the two resulting tapes form the basis, in Delmark's edited presentation, of *Live's* first LP. Playing for his accustomed audience, Sam attains the zenith of unforced ebullience; despite the less-than-ideal quality of the original tapes, this is one of the finest, if not the finest, realization of a club blues performance on record.

The diversified program at the Alex Club thoroughly dispels the repetitious image created by Sam's early records. None of his Cobra tunes are included here; instead, he refashions material by Jimmy McCracklin, Albert Collins, Freddy King, and Junior Wells, together with his Chief hit, *Every Night About This Time* (attributed to Fats Domino). The instrumental boogies *Looking Good* and *Ridin' High*, which were recast into elaborate set pieces on the studio LPs, are heard in their original form as intermission vamps, with Sam rapping casually over the changes.

The lively stage patter and audience response conjure up the Alex Club's smoky atmosphere with nearly palpable fidelity—one can almost see the beer signs on the walls and the year-round Christmas tree lights above the stage. The band is superlatively tight and rocking in both '63 and '64 incarnations. Saxophonist Eddie Shaw, Sam's longtime foil, supplies the riffing r&b flavor that the younger bluesmen preferred; when he is joined by A. C. Reed on the '64 tracks, the tandem tenors achieve an irresistible intensity. Sam's wailing voice is vivid and dynamic, but underrecorded and often barely intelligible, leaving his riveting guitar work to highlight the album. Displaying not only the influences of B. B. and Freddy King but of little-known Memphis sidemen like Roy Gaines and Clarence Holloman, Sam stretches out on extended improvisations—the slow instrumental, *Mole's Blues*, in particular—that vindicate his keening mastery once and for all.

Sam's performance at Ann Arbor took place just a few months before his death. The sound system at the festival was superb, but the present recording, taped on a portable machine from the lip of the stage, considerably vitiates the original impact. The set begins on an uncertain note, with Lay groping for the rhythm while Sam tentatively essays several slow blues. Soon the trio settles firmly into the groove as Sam sizzles Percy Mayfield's *Strange Things Happening* in the heat of sobbing emotion. He whips the young white crowd into a whooping frenzy with a supercharged version of Junior Parker's

Feelin' Good, and keeps them well in hand through a powerful rendition of *All Your Love* and a wrenching transformation of B. B. King's *I've Got Papers On You Baby*. In the end, the boogie buffs are rewarded with a guitaristic tour de force on *Looking Good*, all the more remarkable for the fact that Sam never played with a pick. Like the original performance, the album leaves its audience gasping for more, a fitting last testament to a soul-stirring musician. —Larry Birnbaum

RALPH SUTTON/ PEANUTS HUCKO

THE BIG NOISE FROM WAYZATA—Chaz Jazz CJ-112: *HONEYSUCKLE ROSE; MEMORIES OF YOU; THE WORLD IS WAITING FOR THE SUNRISE; AIN'T MISBEHAVIN'; I'VE GOT RHYTHM.*

Personnel: Hucko, clarinet; Sutton, piano; Jack Lesberg, bass; Cliff Leeman, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

PHIL BODNER

FINE AND DANDY—Stash ST 214: *FINE AND DANDY; BUT BEAUTIFUL; DEED I DO; ON THE STREET OF DREAMS; MOONGLOW; TOOT TOOT TOOTSIE; HONEYSUCKLE ROSE; THESE FOOLISH THINGS; IT HAD TO BE YOU; HAVE YOU MET MISS JONES?*

Personnel: Bodner, clarinet; Marty Napoleon (cuts 1-6), Tony Monte (7-10), piano; Rick Laird (1-6), George Duvivier (7-10), bass; Butch Miles (1-6), Mel Lewis (7-10), drums; Don Elliot, mellophone (10).

★ ★ ★ ★

A less wrenched coupling could hardly have been found than the one yoking these two prized releases under common scrutiny. Both are features for swing clarinetists of vast experience in a variety of different kinds of music, and both utilize exemplary rhythm sections at their base. An additional commonality lies in their both having been recorded live; but, as we shall see, the realism afforded by such situational encounters with the public is sometimes a two-edged sword.

The eye-catching "Wayzata" that boldly announces the Sutton/Hucko set is not, as one may first assume, a dialectical variant of the more famed Indian word, "Winnetka," but, in fact, is the name of an entirely different town—a posh suburb of Minneapolis/St. Paul, wherein resides the Woodhill Country Club and the headquarters of the Trans-Mississippi Golf Association, sponsors and presumed *raison d'être* of the gig in the first place. Bear in mind that extramusical information such as this is probably important, for it may just suggest a possible rationale for the unusual gentility attending the performances of said swingers, who, in less rarified atmospheres, have been known to shake loose even the most firmly implanted of dentures.

Recorded with superb fidelity and presence, the set proceeds to its conclusion both imaginatively and musically; yet the incendi-

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ary climaxes for which Hucko and Sutton are both duly reputed are, for the most part, kept discreetly in abeyance. Did the felt conservatism of their audience have a dampening effect on their customary ardor? Who knows?, but even on such tried and true Hucko flag-wavers as *World* and *I Got Rhythm*, the clarinetist appears cautious, reserved, and restrained—but only in comparison with other well-remembered outings. However, for those few who have no prior frame of reference, Hucko's playing here will be most impressive. His tone is full, dark, and pure, and embodies the combined qualities of sound generally associated with his more cherished influences, Benny Goodman and Irving Fazola.

Bodner's roots, like Hucko's, lie in that portion of the swing era largely dominated by such prepossessing figures as Goodman and Shaw. But therein the comparison must end, for Bodner's type of tone, as well as his purposeful use of technique, set him far apart from the more structurally conscious Hucko. Less concerned with dimension and breadth than Hucko's, Bodner's more centered sound gains its comparative corpulence by the occasional superimposition of a throated growl. Digitally speaking, his command of the instrument is enviable; but it is equally certain that, with increased opportunities such as the one this live gig at Bechet's afforded him, his discretionary use thereof will become even more pertinent.

Bodner is accompanied on the first six titles by Napoleon, Laird, and Miles, and on the remainder by Monte, Duvivier, and Lewis, with Elliot sitting in for the ultimate tune only. Everyone was in fine fettle on both nights of recording; but, unfortunately, that also includes the audience and engineer as well. Despite the almost constant chatter and tinkling in the background, side one is undoubtedly the better balanced of the two, for Bodner's clarinet was prominently placed in relation to the irrelevancies. On the reverse side, however, a poor mix places the featured artist at an unwarranted disadvantage, his sound at times being literally swallowed by the verve of his males. —jack sohmer

TALKING HEADS

THE NAME OF THIS BAND IS TALKING

HEADS—Sire 2SR 3590: *NEW FEELING*; *A CLEAN BREAK*; *DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT*; *PULLED UP*; *PSYCHO KILLER*; *ARTISTS ONLY*; *STAY HUNGRY*; *AIR*; *BUILDING ON FIRE*; *MEMORIES (CAN'T WAIT)*; *I ZIMBRA*; *DRUGS*; *HOUSES IN MOTION*; *LIFE DURING WARTIME*; *THE GREAT CURVE*; *CROSSEYED AND PAINLESS*; *TAKE ME TO THE RIVER*.

Personnel: David Byrne, guitar, vocals; Jerry Harrison, keyboards, guitar, vocals; Tina Weymouth, bass, synthesizer, vocals; Chris Frantz, drums; (on cuts 11-17)—Adrian Belew, guitar, vocals; Steve Scales, percussion; Busta Jones, bass; Bernie Worrell, clavinet; Dolette McDonald, Nona Hendryx, vocals.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

TOM TOM CLUB

TOM TOM CLUB—Sire SRK 3628: *WORDY RAPPINGHOOD*; *GENIUS OF LOVE*; *TOM TOM THEME*; *L'ÉLEPHANT*; *AS ABOVE, SO BELOW*; *LORELEI*; *ON, ON, ON, ON . . .*; *BOOMING AND ZOOMING*.

Personnel: Tina Weymouth, bass, vocals; Chris Frantz, drums; Adrian Belew, guitars; Tyrone Downie, keyboards, synthesizer; Loric Weymouth, Laura Weymouth, Lani Weymouth, Benjamin Armbrister, James Rizzi, Steven Stanley, vocals.

★ ★ ★ ½

DAVID BYRNE

SONGS FROM THE BROADWAY PRODUCTION OF "THE CATHERINE WHEEL"

—Sire SRK 3645: *HIS WIFE REFUSED*; *TWO SOLDIERS*; *THE RED HOUSE*; *MY BIG HANDS (FALL THROUGH THE CRACKS)*; *BIG BUSINESS*; *EGGS IN A BRIAR PATCH*; *POISON*; *CLOUD CHAMBER*; *WHAT A DAY THAT WAS*; *BIG BLUE PLYMOUTH (EYES WIDE OPEN)*; *LIGHT BATH*.

Personnel: Byrne, triggered flutes, bass, guitars, synthesizer, keyboards, vocals; John Chernoff, percussion; Yogi Horton, drums; Bernie Worrell, keyboards, synthesizers; Adrian Belew, guitars; Brian Eno, bass, guitar, vibes; Dolette McDonald, Sue Halloran, vocals; Twyla Tharp, water pot.

★ ★ ★ ½

JERRY HARRISON

THE RED AND THE BLACK

—Sire SRK 3631: *THINGS FALL APART*; *SUNK*; *THE NEW ADVENTURE*; *MAGIC HYMIE*; *FAST KARMA/NO QUESTIONS*; *WORLDS IN COLLISION*; *THE RED NIGHTS*; *NO MORE RERUNS*; *NO WARNING, NO ALARM*.

Personnel: Harrison, vocals, guitar, bass synthesizer, melodica, keyboards, percussion; Yogi Horton, John Cooksey, drums; Steve Scales, percussion; George Murray, Tinker Barfield, bass; Bernie Worrell, keyboards, synthesizer; Adrian Belew, guitar; Nona Hendryx, Dolette McDonald, Koko Mae Evans, vocals.

★ ★ ★ ½

"It's not yesterday anymore," sings a serious David Byrne in *New Feeling*, the opening song on Talking Heads' exquisite live two-record set, *The Name Of The Band Is Talking Heads*. That one line, more than anything else, sums up the philosophy of the most cerebral rock band in the world. True to their words, the material on this album—recorded from 1977 through '81—shows a band that refuses to stand still, refuses to let the music they created yesterday in any way limit what they're up to today.

Because these tracks were recorded over a period of three years, one gets a real sense of change, of transition. There is a vitality to the playing that is usually long gone by the time most rock bands get around to recording a live album that includes a good share of their older material. Talking Heads has accomplished this by using live recordings that

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were made while the material was still fresh, before it had become tired or boring to the band. In fact, most of the songs included are presented in much more exciting versions than those that appeared on the studio albums.

What is most enlightening about this live album is the way it shows us the dominant role that rhythm has played in Talking Heads music—right from the start. Here, even the earlier tracks (from 1977) are prime examples of the white funk that the group has gotten increasingly deeper into as time has passed. Listening to *A Clean Break*, the second track on the album, one can clearly see in the syncopation of the bass lines and drum beats, as well as the exaggerated funk guitar of Byrne, the antecedent of the more rhythmically complex, African-influenced music that emerged on the Heads' last album, *Remain In Light*. For their last tour (during which sides three and four were recorded), the Heads expanded to include a number of additional musicians including keyboarder Bernie Worrell, guitarist Adrian Belew, bassist Busta Jones, and vocalists Dolette McDonald and Nona Hendryx. My own favorite track is the seven minute *Houses In Motion*, Byrne's voice contrasted against the soulful high harmonies of McDonald and Hendryx while Belew, certainly one of rock's finest guitarists, oozes through the track like molasses, then suddenly begins to squawk like a mechanical sea gull swooping low over a dock in search of food.

If you're familiar with Talking Heads, you'll certainly enjoy these performances which put new twists on the original studio recordings; newcomers to the T. Heads School of Funk & Roll will find the percolating clavinet, singing guitar lines, layered rhythms, and eccentric singing of Byrne a stimulating and refreshing experience. This is music for the mind and body—and while this record is playing, both will be working.

The triumph of Talking Heads' live album follows three fair-to-excellent solo albums from the four core members of the band. This is an oddity in the rock world; solo records by members of a band are usually indulgent affairs, artistic and commercial failures. But bassist Tina Weymouth and drummer Chris Frantz, keyboarder/guitarist Jerry Harrison, and singer/guitarist David Byrne have all managed to take their individual talents and create exciting, adventurous music that manages to extend various aspects of the T. Heads' sound, while emerging with distinct musical personalities of their own.

Tom Tom Club is a loose aggregation of some 10 musicians headed by Frantz and Weymouth. Their music elaborates on the funkier, blacker side of Talking Heads. The first two tracks, *Wordy Rappinghood* and *Genius Of Love* have even been legitimate soul hits. This is body music, dance music. "Maybe you'd like a little melody/It's not the lyrics that move me," sings Tina Weymouth at one point—and it's certainly the music, more than the words, that is emphasized here. The

sound is fat and funky. A rumbling bass and a whip-cracking bass drum form the basis for layers and layers of rhythm. Congas and bongos, synthesizers, clavivets, organ, and guitar fill the songs with wave upon wave of dense, electronic sound. Clearly influenced by George Clinton's Funkadelic rock & soul group (the cartoon album cover gives that influence away before you even hear the record), Weymouth and Frantz have created a cleaner, much more melodic groove than most of Clinton's creations.

If Frantz and Weymouth have gone stone funky, Byrne and Harrison have steered towards the intellectual, Afro-funk of Talking Heads. *Songs From The Broadway Production Of "The Catherine Wheel"* is a set of pieces that Byrne wrote for Twyla Tharp's dance performance. Because he is both the voice and songwriter for Talking Heads, Byrne's solo music has much in common with the band, and could easily have fit on *Remain In Light*, where something like Tom Tom Club's *Genius Of Love* would have been completely out of place.

Byrne's solo music has a lot to do with polyrhythms and space. *What A Day That Was*, for example, is built mostly on a rolling rhythm created by congas, drums, and bass. Guitar and synthesizer add just the slightest bit of color to the piece as Byrne tells this tale: "There are 50,000 beggars/Roaming in the streets/They have lost all of their possessions/They have nothing left to eat." Other songs use what sound like found or taped vocals (*The Red House*) to create an effect similar to the one Byrne and Brian Eno achieved in their *My Life In the Bush Of Ghosts*, or are full of off-beat rhythms and weird distorted vocals that have an almost hypnotic effect similar to Steve Reich's trance music.

Jerry Harrison's *The Red And The Black* is the most unoriginal of the three solo discs, yet it is an endearing, at times humorous record that grows with repeated play. Heavily influenced by Talking Heads' sound a la *Remain In Light*, a track like *Things Falling Apart* sounds like a T. Heads' reject. Harrison's voice is the main problem—it's too normal, too much the typical white pop singer voice for the kind of funky music he is singing over. But maybe that's just my bias (and I have to admit that Harrison's voice, like his album, does grow on you). That said, there is much to recommend in this record, particularly Adrian Belew's guitar work, some terrific singing from Nona Hendryx, and Harrison's own instrumental work on a number of instruments. And he turns out to be a fine songwriter too.

Talking Heads' great accomplishment has been to create a smooth but quirky synthesis of white rock and black funk. They've done this by integrating the band and actively learning from African and black American music. The result is some of the most interesting rock music around, music that is both danceable and thought-provoking.

—michael goldberg

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RECORD REVIEWS

WAXING ON

Big Noise From Wherever

FULL FAITH & CREDIT BIG BAND: *DEBUT*

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JIM HOWARD/PAT SULLIVAN JAZZ

ORCHESTRA: *NO COMPROMISE* (Sea Breeze

SB 2005) ★ ★

ROB McCONNELL & THE BOSS BRASS: *LIVE*

IN DIGITAL AT THE EL MOCAMBO (Dark Orchid

601-12018) ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

HERB POMEROY ORCHESTRA: *PRAMLATTA'S*

HIPS (Shiah HP-1) ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THE DUKE BELAIRE JAZZ ORCHESTRA: *LIVE*

AT BOVI'S (Argonne AR-001) ★ ★ ★ ★ ½

MICHAEL BASS & HIS MODERATELY SIZED

ORCHESTRA: *PAINTING BY NUMBERS*

(Random Radar RRR 006) ★ ★ ★

SAHEB SARBIB & HIS MULTINATIONAL BIG

BAND: *LIVE AT THE PUBLIC THEATRE* (Cadence

Jazz CJR 1001) ★ ★

GARY WOFSEY & THE CONTEMPORARY

JAZZ ORCHESTRA: *KEF'S POOL* (Ambi

MG-1521) ★ ★ ★

CHARLI PERSIP & GERRY LA FURN'S

17-PIECE SUPERBAND (*Stash* ST-209)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"BIG BANDS REMAIN ALIVE AND THRIVING just about anywhere there are 15 professional musicians with a little camaraderie and swing in their blood." That's the lead from my Bob Florence record review (*db*, Feb. 81), and here are a dozen samples to bear witness to this pseudo-renaissance. You've heard it before: how can they come back when they've never been away? This present crop of small-name bands—many of them ex-sidemen with the big white orchestras of the '50s and '60s (Herman, Kenton, Ferguson, Rich, etc.)—show that the regional big band is certainly alive, though not necessarily very well in terms of creativity and groundbreaking. They were chosen for geographic distribution: three California studio bands, three Midwestern (Cincinnati and two Ontario, Canada), two from New England with long roots, a ringer released from Silver Spring, MD, three from New York City and environs.

The majority of these groups go to great lengths to show big bands can be "with it!" Boogaloos, funky back-beats, and other bows to the colors of the day appear on most albums, and several use electric keyboard for more than mere color. Production quality and technical ability of the musicians are

generally pretty high; sad to say, they're lots higher than the arranging brilliance, choice of material (overburdened with limp originals), and solo contributions. Like most corporations, big bands tend to be quite conservative and shy away from innovation; perhaps it is the nature of the beast. I for one would enjoy more ear stretching in the context; that it can be accomplished without getting too bookish or sacrificing swing is evident from the Pomeroy album.

Fresh and bouncy ensembles and well-integrated section work characterize **Full Faith & Credit's** extroverted album of fairly predictable writing in the flag-waving, heavyweight Kenton tradition. The main personalities that emerge are Ray Brown (not the bassist), who shows deep Kenton/Richards roots in his writing (*My Main Willie*, a suite in homage to Willie Maiden, saxophonist and arranger with Ferguson and Kenton) and glancing, pretty flugelhorn (an improved version of Mangione's *She's Gone*). There's a nice taste of Paul Robertson on alto (*The Song Is You*) and the fluid horn of Jim Benham (*Fast Bucks*); these cats deal bigger notes than quarter ones, being executives of a national money fund that underwrites this organization. Dr. Herb Wong wrote the properly exuberant liner notes in his inextinguishably phoenix-like fashion. Clean rhythm and recording.

Leaner and crisper, but skittish and greasy is **Pat Longo's Super Big Band**, where everything's hot and hurried and the improvisation quotient is low. West Coast studio mentality of run-through-'em-quick infects these hyper charts, all of which are conveniently labeled for lazy programmers and benighted listeners; the shrill, stomping title tune is as good as any though soloist Ray Reed gets trampled by ensemble ("contemporary jazz"); silky, sibilant original "pop ballads" are cooed by Stephanie Caravella; fairly sharp writing and solos emerge only on *Big Mama Louise* and *Longo's Boogie*. Less brains than muscle; less taste than brains; not a very amiable date.

Sammy Nestico has done quite a bit of neat writing for Count Basie, but here we have more studioitis: fancy glossy charts and complacent all-stars on side one. The Kenton spectre looms again with fat horns and brazen brass, but gets overlaid with taut Herb Alpert licks and misty voices. Whistles, flute, voices, and maddeningly syrupy Watrous trombone make *This Is Love* sound like a Neil Simon opening title theme. Quintessential Hollywoodiana: who needs it? Tenorman Pete Christlieb earns half-a-star for a couple of decent solos. Side two: different strokes. Hollywood goes Basie, with a couple of solos of note. *Warm Breeze* is in Sammy's tried-and-true Basie formula with pianist Pete Jolly well cast as the supple young count, plus propulsion by Bellson. *Samantha*, with a nice Bud Shank sice of alto, could make beautiful listening airplay. Overall, the languid and legato readings lack Basie's punch. The Coast big band scene really shows more

from Bob Florence, Clare Fischer, and Gerald Wilson.

Points for honesty, commitment, and live excitement go to the **Blue Wisp Jazz Club Big Band** of Cincinnati. This is more like it: healthy, raw-boned charts, plenty of solo space, varied sources and arranging styles. A little Bill Holman in the writing (as well as his textbook *I Remember You*) is not a bad influence. Some buttery plunger from trombonist Paul Piller (*Sweet Lorraine*) adds humor; punchy drums from co-leader John Von Ohlen underlines with zest. Nice tunes by Ellington, Strayhorn, Joe Henderson, and Jack Wilson are creditably arranged and played with vigor. (Note: This is the first of five albums of the dozen in this review to benefit from live recording. The circumstance of a big band blowing in a concert hall, or better, in an amiable club setting, positively affects performance and appeal, toppled glasses and dingy cash registers notwithstanding.)

There's nothing really wrong with the **Jim Howard/Pat Sullivan Orchestra's** Toronto release via California. The sections move along well enough; there's some spirited playing, especially from the rhythm (guitar and piano groove in duo more often than they step on each others' toes in ensemble), and for a student ensemble, it's not too bad. But there's nothing really right with it either: cho- raled brass are out of tune, charts lack lyric feel and dynamism, and none of the young soloists really hit me. Perhaps this band will jell someday under the tutelage of Jim Howard, trumpeter and arranger from Hamilton, Ontario via Berklee College.

Rob McConnell's magnificent, crackling **Boss Brass** is perhaps the only one of the dozen listed here that is no stranger to the North American big band fan. They have made three air-tight, high-flying albums on Pausa, following two direct-to-disc, 1977-78 double-pocket blazers on the Canadian label Umbrella (scarce as they are rare), and there are a few others lurking around. McConnell's charts beef the books of nearly every stage band from Vancouver to the Virgin Islands. This band is the jumbo jet of jazz orchestras; maybe a little shy on elegance and grace, but long on power with great thrust and surefire lift-off. As the name implies, the band is broad in the brass (22 men, with two french horns and extra percussionist), grey in the beard (nearly all vets with the best East and West), and long-time bed-fellows (organized in '68 with a lion's share of charter members still aboard). The rhythm propels at any tempo and volume level (Jim Dale, Ed Bickert, Don Thompson, Terry Clarke) and many soloists are masterful: hear Sam Noto on trumpet and Rick Wilkins on tenor, who take out each side and each opener respectively. McConnell, whose 'bone Brookmeyerishly bearhugs choruses opening each side in duo with guitarist Bickert, enjoys a rare penchant for the samba, and gives splendid examples in his pureal *Sambanice* and Jobim's whispered *Ana Luisa*. Without indulging in gratuitous muscle-flexing, the band's ensembles pack power enough to blow-dry the hair but still keep the easy good humor of that earlier Torontoan, Phil Nimmons.

As we move eastward, charts tend to get

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RECORD REVIEWS

more modern, demanding, even quixotic, and around Boston live audiences may get as manic and fierce as they do for the Red Sox. With no quarter asked for regionalism, I must rank near best-of-show the area outfits of **Herb Pomeroy** (here in Worcester at the El Morocco, the hippest hummus house in New England) and **Duke Belaire** (well ensconced at Bovi's Town Tavern in East Providence, Rhode Island). New England has lots of roots and tradition, and both these bands have active charter members, since 1956 and 1967 respectively. Two factors are paramount on both records: the sizzling high reeds of Dick Johnson and the bristly, exciting writing of Hal Crook; on the albums their paths cross on Pomeroy's fleet, multilayered *Amphibian Race* and Belaire's very satisfying *Duke Plays Duke Medley*. Both bands have much more spiritual kinship to Ellington than Basie; Pomeroy's has the more seasoned pros (with half the band on the Berklee College faculty).

Quibbles—that Pomeroy won't sustain a ballad and Belaire lacks trumpet depth—pall before the many highlights. On the Pomeroy: contrapuntal architecture (*Remember Mingus*) and well-tempered tenor (on Mike Gibbs' *Sweet Rain*) from John LaPorta, often curmudgeonly individualistic; multifloral exotica from the plume of Phil Wilson and reedy contributions by Mike Monaghan (lambent bass flute on *Camel Driver* and hot-wire piccolo on *The Great Hat*); Wes Hensel's redoubtable lead trumpet and Greg Hopkins' flurrying flugelhorn. On the Belaire: a three-thing *Cottontail*; romping ensembles on *Dues*; cross-sectional fire, especially among saxes, making Crook's trombone bubble on *Gradation* (an homage to soothing late-night DJ Fred Grady). Belaire's penchant for flag-wavers comes from outshouting the partying faithful that have celebrated Monday nights at Bovi's these 11 years. That's getting on for the consecutive Monday record that Duke Belaire's original inspiration—the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra—set at the Village Vanguard.

For comic relief, we turn on **Michael Bass** and his silly sinfoniettas. Perverse instrumentation (xylophone and bass clarinet), unjazzy odd ideas, clubfoot meters (7/4), unlikely dance forms (*Cardiac Arrest Polka*), and choppy suite-like structures make this wacko corpus something to be taken not seriously. Yet—as with apparent influences Erik Satie, the Residents, and Walter Lantz cartoons—Bass' wildly eclectic vignettes sometimes transcend idiot intent and amateurish execution to achieve minor masterstrokes, though no big boffola. This is more chamber music for wide-eyed flower children than hard-driving swing for the *Lush Life* set. Bass writes in a giddy, light style, spicing his four-square charts with satirical—or merely inept—non-soloists (trombonist Doug Elliott excepted). Tinny recording; good, grubby fun.

If **Saheb Sarbib's** unruly mob constitute the melting pot, give me nationalist su-

premac. His mini-UN of Japanese, Brazilian, South African, American Indian, Puerto Rican, etc. Gothamites-by-adoption wait this inchoate screecher, which careens over fat vamps from one over-wrought climax to another. Most textural subtleties (except nice bits like a three-trombone break midway on side one) mush up in the hubbub and the compressed recording. Few solo statements emerge unscathed, save a squeezed Jack Walrath trumpet outburst that misses impaling itself on *Daybreak*. The raw excitement that probably went down at the Public Theatre does not translate itself into the grooves as straighter bands better recorded usually do. Sarbib may be a good cheerleader, even a fair bassist, but his rough-hewn pieces are scruffily performed and abrim with disorganized energy.

Gary Wofsey has a lot more going for his Contemporary Jazz Orchestra on his own label—better tap into the Apple big band talent pool, more writing chops and discipline, far superior, crisp recording—and yet the end result is hardly more satisfying. If Sarbib is ragtag, Wofsey is prissy. Except for the attractive title tune, which has a pretty solo by its trumpeter/leader/composer, this album sounds too busy-busy with indulgence in changes for their own sake, fussy with overwriting, and bland with too few chances taken. A clipped, smart-ass *Slaughter On 10th Avenue* gets things off on mincing feet, not helped by over-bright, half-speed production and rushing rhythm that makes it all sound spun at 38 rpm. *Close To The Edge* repeats high brass figures that stress a paucity of lyric imagination. Side two loosens up considerably and gives, for example, a throaty turn to Ronnie Cuber's bari on a lively chart from reedman Gary Brown. Points, too, for guest altoist Phil Woods, who lifts ensembles in his long-patented fashion and solos aplenty with his lusty humor, clarity, and soulfulness: check his Punch & Judy trades with Dick Oatts on *New York Scuffle*.

The last one is a real joy. A fine mix of pros young and old, top-flight arrangements that breathe and roar from band trumpeters Jack Walrath and Frank Gordon, as well as those charts farmed out to the likes of Slide Hampton (*Manteca*), Frank Foster (*Once In A While*), and Gary Anderson (post-Woody sterner *Meantime*), and a peppering of fine solos well set give the **Superband** of veteran drummer Charli Persip and trumpeter Gerry LaFurn the cutting edge over most bands here. New York really ought to have the best and it usually does, but many do not make it to disc (e.g. the big bands of Jaki Byard, Sam Jones, George Russell). Happily, this one did. Sectional focus and identity are strong, and the rhythm (Gary Dial, Cam Brown, Bob Stewart, and Persip) swing to no end. Drummer Persip, ebullient and cohesive throughout, is tagged by note-writer Max Roach, rightly indulging in Ellingtonian hyperbole, as "premier multipercussionist for all seasons." Check it out. And check out all these bands—live, if possible. —fred bouchard

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BLINDFOLD TEST



Joe Pass

BY LEONARD FEATHER

1 KENNY BURRELL. *LA PETITE MAMBO* (from *CONCORD JAZZ GUITAR COLLECTION*, Concord). Burrell, guitar; Reggie Johnson, bass; Carl Burnett, drums.

That was good, I liked it, a good player. He knows the blues, and used nice voicings on the guitar, more harmonic voicings than most blues players would use. The licks are familiar, but I don't know who the soloist is. I'm guessing it might be one of the Concord people, maybe Emily Remler—she plays a lot of styles, I don't know if that would be one of them.

I liked the drummer. The recording sound of the bass was kind of . . . tubby. They obviously had an arrangement worked out. I thought maybe the guitar player would double up and I could hear the lines, but he just stayed with his rhythmic thing. I'd rate it three stars.

2 STEPHANE GRAPPELLI/ BARNEY KESSEL. *I REMEMBER DJANGO* (from *I REMEMBER DJANGO*, Jazz Man). Grappelli, violin; Kessel, guitar.

That was Barney Kessel and Stephane Grappelli; I heard it in the car on my way down to see you. It's called *For Django*, I think, and I wrote a tune with that name too. I thought it was Barney when I first heard it, then I identified a certain thing he does, a gliss or slur—his playing was different on this record; he usually plays more triplet feelings and back-picking, and this was kind of smooth. I'd give it three. An unusual tune—in a couple of places the changes were strange, but I liked it. Stephane I like all the time—I think the more he plays, the more musical he gets.

3 JAMES BLOOD ULMER. *TIMELESS* (from *FREE LANCING*, Columbia). Ulmer, guitar.

Okay, that's enough . . . you can take it off.

My son is 13 years old and he plays the guitar; he has two amplifiers, and he doesn't know one thing that he's doing, and he can do a lot of that stuff. I didn't like that. It's non-musical, and there might have been some form that they *thought* about, but I didn't like the sound of it, the tone quality—it was harsh, and the kind of free-form experimental thing where you just put your fingers anywhere and maybe get lucky for two bars or four bars. For me, there was no music. I'd give it zero stars. I suppose it was this guy Blood Ulmer. Now I know what he sounds like.

4 JIM HALL. *DOWN FROM ANTIGUA* (from *CIRCLES*, Concord). Hall, guitar; Don Thompson, bass; Terry Clarke, drums.

It was Jim Hall. I can identify his nice big round sound; his approach is sparse and

very definite, especially on the beginnings of tunes. I don't know who the bass player was, either Michael Moore or this bass player from Canada; the drummer I don't know. I liked the composition—two chord changes, and I think the improvising part was in the key of A, which leaves you a lot of room—the open E and A strings on the bass, and the guitar can do all kinds of movements against it, flamenco style or pure sixths or thirds. There's a thing on the guitar that sounds real good, when you play the third string and the first string, like for instance A and C#. You can move around freely, and it's nice. It sounded good, it was together, and it sounded like they were enjoying it. I'd give it four stars.

Joe Pass won his first *db* poll in 1963. That was in the TDWR section of the Critics Poll, when he had barely begun to establish himself as a jazz artist.

He crossed over into the established segment of the Critics Poll in 1975, and has won several times since then. In the Readers Poll he also won the first time in 1975, yielded to George Benson for the following year, but has headed the list annually since 1977.

Although Pass began playing guitar in 1939, immediately after hearing records by Charlie Christian and Django Reinhardt, for many years he was unknown in jazz circles. He toured with George Shearing from 1965-67, formed a guitar team with Herb Ellis from 1972-74, and since then has risen to a level of prestigious acceptance rare among jazzmen. Aided immeasurably by producer Norman Granz, he has toured as a

solo recitalist, in addition to working often with Oscar Peterson and becoming one of the most prolific of recording artists.

Among his Pablo recordings are a solo acoustic disc of Charlie Parker-related songs, duo performances with Neils-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, various dates with such artists as Oscar Peterson, Count Basie, and Stephane Grappelli, and as part of Quadrant (with Milt Jackson, Ray Brown, and Micky Roker). His most recent LP finds him playing songs by George and Ira Gershwin (Pablo 2312-133).

This was Pass' fourth Blindfold Test (the most recent one appeared in *db*, Feb. 26, '76). He was given no information about the records played.

John McLaughlin, but I think he plays a little bit more than that. I don't know who the piano player was, or anybody. It sounded like a set series of chord changes, and like the guitar player didn't know what kind of lines to play. In some places it sounded okay, in some places not right. I'd just be guessing if I said it was John or Larry Coryell or any of the more contemporary players. Two stars is fair? I'd give it one star. John Abercrombie? That's surprising, because from what I've heard he's a good player, and that wasn't together.

7 PAT METHENY. *AMERICAN GARAGE* (from *AMERICAN GARAGE*, ECM). Metheny, guitar; Lyle Mays, keyboards; Mark Egan, bass; Dan Gottlieb, drums.

It was either Lee Ritenour or Larry Carlton or this new player who's very popular; one thing he made was called, I remember, *American Garage*. I must say I like his approach, it's fresh. Once again, it's an organized kind of thing. They play very loud; I heard them in Ontario, Canada. Four guys, and it sounded like 15—several synthesizers. I think it's geared toward pop, fusion, whatever you want to call it. The tune had a lot of movement, yet the improvising was only on one chord. Just a pedal G with a few licks. For a pop thing I'd give that two stars.

L.F.: What do you think you would have given five stars, if I'd played it?

J.P.: If you had played anything of Wes' I would have given it five stars, because I consider Wes [Montgomery] a real jazz guitarist, an improviser. **db**

5 REMO PALMIER. *SIDE TRACK* (from *CONCORD JAZZ GUITAR COLLECTION*, Concord). Palmier, guitar; Lou Levy, piano.

I would guess if I said that might be Ron Eschete, who's from around L.A. It has that Ray Bryant kind of a flavor. I liked it, it was nice, a little bit involved in the bridge—seemed to be kind of sticky—but a nice feeling. I liked the rhythmic piano thing, it sounded like what a real latin player would do. I'd give it 2½ stars.

6 JOHN ABERCROMBIE. *PEBBLES* (from *M*, ECM). Abercrombie, guitar; Richard Beirach, piano.

Gee, I don't know who that was, unless it was

Material

Whether exposing the nerve-endings of free improvisation or inspiring movement on the dance floor, Material is creating a new body of music—electrically.

BY JOHN DILIBERTO

Many of us view music as a continuum in which "serious" forms such as jazz, classical, and the avant garde occupy one end and the "commercial" music of rock, pop, and r&b the other. There are a few musicians who skillfully maintain a balance in the middle, a few others who leap from end to end, and many who are content to remain at their respective polarities, ignoring any bonds of shared heritage or possible future collaborations. But there is another view in which music is perceived much like Albert Einstein perceived the flow of time when he stated "... the distinction between past, present, and future is only an illusion, even if a stubborn one." So it is that a new breed of musician experiences music as a unity of sound running concurrently. The creative artist exists amidst all music simultaneously with an infinite choice of possibilities unlimited by false illusions of generic boundaries.

Evidence of such a conception can be found in a loose-knit association from New York City called Material. Bassist Bill Laswell and electronic musician Michael Beinhorn form the core of the group, whose name implies a malleable or raw substance that can be shaped, interwoven, or alloyed with other "materials." They've done all these things and more with nearly every artist in New York's various hyperactive music circles—including Ornette Coleman, Brian Eno, David Byrne, Chico Freeman, Nile Rodgers (Chic), Daevid Allen, Jerry Gonzalez, Carla Bley, and Nona Hendryx. These may seem like fast waters, especially at ages 27 and 21 respectively, but Laswell and Beinhorn are more than capable navigators. In fact, they have a confidence that borders on being blasé. "We may be in awe of the music we make with these people, but if we were in awe of the people themselves, we'd never get anything done," claims Laswell.

It would seem that Material emerged full-blown onto the New York music scene, and that's very nearly true. Neither musician had a notable playing experience prior to Material. Bill Laswell was born in Salem, Illinois,



Michael Beinhorn and Bill Laswell

and while there wasn't any music in his family, in school he had the baritone saxophone and drums pushed his way. In the decade in which every teenager picked up an electric guitar, Laswell evinced the pragmatism that he maintains today. "I was interested in forming groups at that time, and everyone had guitars and drums. So if you had a bass you were in a group." His father's work caused the family to move frequently, and one of their stopovers was in Detroit, the home of Motown records at its popular peak. Laswell played in several forgotten r&b bands and soul groups touring the Midwest and South. At the same time he was ingesting James Brown, he was absorbing the psychedelic blues of Jimi Hendrix and the explorations of John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter, and Miles Davis. As the '70s came on, he expanded his listening to European progressive music such as Gong, Magma, Henry Cow, and others. It was late in 1977 that Laswell moved to New York to see what the city had to offer him. After a short period with downtown no wave artists such as James Chance and DNA, Laswell met Michael Beinhorn.

Beinhorn is native to New York City, born in Forest Hills. He also played in the obligatory high school band with an alto saxophone before picking up the synthesizer in 1975. "The synthesizer was my first instrument in the sense that I discovered a lot and I taught myself how to use it. There wasn't anyone around who was teaching. I had imagined a lot of sounds when I was younger and was influenced by sounds as much as strong music." Like Laswell, Beinhorn was influenced by European progressive music along with the outer reaches of jazz and the classical avant garde, especially Karlheinz Stockhausen. Stockhausen had a profound

influence on Beinhorn's sense of atonality as well as his techniques of radio wave composition and a textural approach to electronics. "I usually don't play tonally and I've never tried to be a keyboard player for that reason. You can get lost in a lot of technique sometimes."

In 1978 Laswell and Beinhorn got together with guitarist Cliff Culteri and drummer Fred Maher and were catalyzed into the Zu Band by producer Giorgio Gomelsky (guru to the Yardbirds, Gong, Magma, Soft Machine, and Julie Driscoll). The name was derived from Gomelsky's "Zu Manifestival of Progressive Music," a 14-hour music marathon capped by the American debut of Daevid Allen (founder of Gong and Soft Machine). In the ensuing hodgepodge of music, the Zu Band's early edition of stripped-down fusion was a highlight. Despite it being their first live performance, they were the tightest band of the day. A cross-country Zu Tour followed in 1979, again opening for Daevid Allen's New York version of Gong, and subsequently recorded a rather embarrassing album with Allen called *About Time*.

Within this timespan began the transition to Material. Pragmatism entered again and limited success was foreseen within the gypsy business practices of Allen and Gomelsky. "Giorgio was a great inspiration and was very supportive," opined Beinhorn. "He was like the person who could start the car really fast but couldn't take it anywhere." However, out of the "Zu phase" came the first Material recording, a 12" EP entitled *Temporary Music 1*. It featured pieces such as O.A.O. (Operations All Out), with an interlocking rhythmic drive of synthesizers, drums, and bass, and the ricocheting guitar work of Culteri. *On Sadism* uses a funky dance rhythm to underline a "found" tape dialog on

sadism, an early method of using words without lyrics that they borrowed from Stockhausen and which has subsequently been used by Robert Fripp, Brian Eno, and David Byrne. "We use the tapes to color the music differently, and it gave the music words before we actually had vocals," said Laswell. Sometimes Beinhorn takes tape segments and manipulates them or uses them naturally. "Sometimes I don't do anything at all to a tape because a voice or a piece of music is good in its pure state. On *Unauthorized* (from *Memory Serves*, their new Elektra/Musician LP E1-600042) I made a collage of things. I didn't do it with tape, I did it with the TV actually, working between channels, and it worked rhythmically with the music and set up a really nice texture." The collage switches back and forth from a Ronald Reagan speech to almost subliminal snippets of commercials and announcers on the other channels. It gives you an idea of where Material leans politically.

From this point on any attempt at a clear chronology is hopeless, as Material has compressed into three years the playing experiences that most accomplished musicians have in 20. Besides Laswell's frequent appearances on other peoples' records, the extended family of Material is itself in constant flux. Cliff Culteri appears to be a satellite member, while Fred Maher moves in and out of various Material productions. "There's a lot of combinations now," offers Laswell, trying to make sense of his own scheme of things. "It's really just an experience of meeting people and influencing them or trying to be influenced by them. Good music is just a product of searching for new things. The priority is really to grow and not kill the idea of self-expression, spontaneity, or experimenting with sound and music. A lot of people come into contact with us to get other information and expose yourselves and others to different combinations wherein you might make some type of new sound together. Instinctively it must have some type of unification or we wouldn't do it."

Perhaps a large part of Laswell's appeal as a bassist is that he is one of the first artists to reconcile the virtuosic development of the electric bass in the mid-'70s with its original role as an anchoring instrument. "I don't see the bass as being upfront with guitars and horns. I think that takes away from the music. I was talking with Miles Davis and he said, 'I want to feel the bass,' and that's the way I look at it." The result, especially when recorded by engineer Martin Bisi, another member of the Material organization, is a full-rounded sound that seems to reach up from the floor and churn around inside your chest cavity.

Material sees no conflict in swinging from totally improvised music right onto the dance floor. When many jazz musicians moved towards disco in the '70s, it was rationalized by claiming they were trying to communicate with more people. It was often in doubt as to how much they were getting across. Laswell sees no conflict here. "For people who like 'out' music, we're communicating with those

people, and people who like dance music, we're communicating with those people, and the only difference there is the number of people, because obviously there are more people who are in than out. Now we've gone from working with people like Fred Frith and Derek Bailey to working with Nile Rodgers of Chic, which is a pretty big area." Beinhorn thinks that it all coalesces into a larger whole. "A lot of people talk about creating a universal language for music, and by doing a lot of different things, people can associate the name Material and various projects that happen alongside that name with a language or way of approaching music."

But the best music from Material exists in several zones simultaneously. They've been honing their multi-directional vision over the course of three EPs and a single on Red Records (compiled on Celluloid 6576), and participated in several outside projects including the Eno/Byrne record *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts* and the forthcoming Eno LP *On Land*, Kip Hanrahan's *Coup De Tete* (American Clave 1077), and an ongoing improvisatory trio with guitarist Firth called Massacre (Celluloid 6597).

Their most recent release features their most organic work to date. They've gathered some of New York's finest improvisers on *Memory Serves* in saxophonist Henry Threadgill, trumpeter Olu Dara, violinist Billy Bang, trombonist George Lewis, the long-neglected guitar of Sonny Sharrock, and Fred Frith. Musique concrete, free improvisation, electronics, and rock are wrapped around relentless rhythms with a logic of sound that is formidable. In many respects it is the cogent updating of Miles Davis circa *Get Up With It* that Miles himself has failed to give us. It is aggressively electric, with Sharrock's guitar flailing against Beinhorn's tape constructions, electronic textures, and rhythmic pulsations. At the center of the vortex is Laswell's bass in an elliptical orbit with drummer Fred Maher, providing at once the leverage point around which it turns and the urban cavern in which it is contained. In spite of the structures, there is a feeling of reckless spontaneity. According to Laswell, "A lot of the structures were written, and some of the other parts were born out of improvisations. Even some of the pieces were conceived as improvisations and developed into structures, but for the most part the record is structured or composed."

The further adventures of Material should be no less exciting. A projected LP under Laswell's name features drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson, Cuban percussionist Daniel Ponce, and vocalist/percussionist David Moss in an extension of *Memory Serves*.

Considering the seemingly schizophrenic diversity of their musical creativity, the depth of their varied interests, the flexibility of their instrumentation, and the intensity of their commitment, the only question that seems to be left for Material is whether they can hold it all together without cracking at the seams or being diluted in the energy rush. **db**

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Tony Dagradi

From the Crescent City to the crowned heads of Europe, saxist Tony Dagradi has moved from Second Line to front line.

BY JOEL SIMPSON

Why do some very good musicians remain fixtures of their local scene all their lives while others move into the national spotlight? Is it talent, strategy, or luck? For an answer you might look at the career of Tony Dagradi. With the April release of his second album as leader (*Lunar Eclipse* on Gramavision) and with his regular overseas and national tours in Carla Bley's 10-piece band, the saxophonist, based in New Orleans, seems to be in dead center of making that transition.

You might call it unconscious long-term strategy that has kept Tony on the move over the past 12 years, in which he's grown, at age 29, to professional maturity. Originally from Summit, NJ, he first made his mark in the Boston area in the early '70s, then moved to New Orleans in 1977, simply because he liked the town, having visited it on tour with the pop group Archie Bell and the Drells. He has nourished himself on the musical culture of every place he settled, but his moves have come just at the right time to avoid the prophet-in-his-own-country syndrome, which for a jazz musician translates into becoming such an accepted part of the scene that nobody notices your musical growth.

When he first arrived in New Orleans, he had no idea of what Mardi Gras was all about or what Second Line was. His playing, however, quickly brought him to the forefront of the jazz scene, and the late New Orleans master of rhythm & blues, Professor Longhair (Henry Roeland Byrd), invited him to be on what would be Fess' last album (*Crawfish Fiesta*, Alligator AL 4718) and last European tour. There could be no better connection to the roots of the New Orleans musical tradition. "The most particular thing about it is the rhythm," says Tony. "It's a truly popular artifact of Afro-Caribbean derivation "which everyone immediately recognizes and grooves on down here." That rhythm is a mainstay of New Orleans r&b, but it inevitably crops up in both dixieland and contemporary jazz, lending the music a gutsy, homey connotation. "You can hear it in [drummer] Johnny's [Vidacovich] playing on the new album," says Tony.

But Tony became better known in town for his playing on the cutting edge of the contemporary jazz scene. Between 1978 and '80



MATT ROSE

you could hear him most nights of the week in one or the other of the two most dynamic jazz groupings in town: the mainstream/Afro-Cuban Astral Project, which he organized along with pianist David Torkanowsky, bassist James Singleton, percussionist Mark Sanders, and Vidacovich, or the more avant garde-oriented group led by bassist Ramsey McLean, the Lifers, whose album, *History's Made Every Moment* (Perscription RM 1981), featuring Tony on reeds, appeared last year.

Towards the end of 1980, Carla Bley signed him on. That year he toured France with her and recorded *Social Studies* (Watt/ECM11) as part of her big band. Since then he has toured with her regularly, just recently returning from France.

"I love Carla. People think of her as avant garde, but she writes some very beautiful ballads." This misperception of Carla is unfortunately typical of American audiences, though not of European ones. "They love her over in Europe," says Tony, "and we make more money over there than here. We only tour in the U.S. several weeks, but we spend two or three months out of the year in Europe."

But he no longer makes five or six gigs a week when he's home. "Ever since I started working with Carla, people won't give me a steady gig." So he lines up as much work as he can before he goes off on tour, usually for about four weeks, then comes home and works sporadically for six. "The money comes to about the same thing; I just have more spare time." Time to cut his new disc, *Lunar Eclipse*; this one featuring the whole Astral Project. The label, Gramavision, is a small, sensitively run recording and film company, which put out Tony's first album, the critically acclaimed *Oasis* (GR 8001), towards the end of 1980. "I really enjoy working for them," says Tony. "They want to put out a good product. They try to let the artist be seen in a positive light." In addition, they help

set up gigs for Tony during his brief stopovers in New York on the way to the studio or to Europe with Bley.

Tony first decided on a career in jazz at the age of 11 "when I heard someone play a tenor sax solo in a jazz band and something clicked." He had been playing alto since age seven. His father bought him a tenor, and the following year (1965) he was writing arrangements for his school band and going into New York City from his home in Summit to study piano, harmony, and theory.

With the gift that comes from knowing what you want to do in life at a very young age, Tony pursued his music single-mindedly, winning honor after honor, among them two **down beat** scholarships, one of which sent him to Berklee in Boston. By 1970 he was playing behind various nationally known pop and soul groups that came through Beantown. He left Berklee in 1972 after two years, and the following year organized a quartet called Inner Visions with Gary Valente on trombone, Ed Schuller on bass, and D. Sharpe on drums. They performed around the Boston/Cape Cod area and "developed a very distinctive unit sound," according to Tony. These were the sidemen he used on *Oasis*, along with Kenny Werner and James Harvey on piano. His musical association with Valente, whom he has known for 16 years, he feels is especially rich, and he intends to work more with the trombonist in the future. It was also at this time that he absorbed the major influences of his mature style, namely John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, Albert Ayler, and Archie Shepp. "I first heard of Coltrane when my mother showed me his obituary," he says regretfully. Later he spent almost three years listening to virtually no one else. Then he discovered Ayler and Shepp. "Ayler was a great conceptualizer," he adds.

As a complete musician he has an exceptionally broad range of idioms that he is comfortable and eloquent in, from funk through mainstream to free. "I like working with the whole spectrum of what's available." He gave that spectrum a workout in a suite of his compositions which he put on with help from an NEA grant and the New Orleans Contemporary Arts Center. Entitled *Portraits And Sketches* it was conceived as a tribute to his major musical influences, including among others, Charles Mingus, Miles Davis, and Sun Ra. Each composition dedicated to a particular person captured something essential of their style while providing a vehicle for some very moving soloing by Dagradi and his sidemen.

As for being a leader, Tony believes that quality control comes in the selection of personnel competent enough to create their own valid interpretations of his charts. "But what really makes a band outstanding is when players are not only good, but are interested in listening to each other."

It's a safe bet that Tony Dagradi will become more widely known. He has both the talent and the drive, neither of which gets in the way of his basic warmth as a human being. **db**

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GADD

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Chris, who was also real busy doing dates, and said, 'Listen, if you want to alternate . . . because *he* was saying, 'Man, I don't get out of here until four or five o'clock, and I've got a jingle to do at nine in the morning,' and I was saying, 'Yeah, I know what you mean . . . so, if you want to alternate a couple of nights . . . I did this because I was spending a lot of nights at that time just sitting in the hotel room. I'd just be *sittin'* there. So, we began alternating. When they were approached with their first record deal with Warner Bros., the band was named Stuff and there were two drummers; we weren't alternating anymore.

DP: Does Stuff still exist?

SG: That band always seems to do well, and we all have a real good time, so, yeah, as far as I know.

DP: What kind of music appeals to you the most?

SG: Good music. Beethoven. Chick Corea. Police. Supertramp. I play cassettes I put together. It might include a Count Basie track, an Edgar Winter tune, a Ray Charles tune, a Richard Tee track, a Bill Withers song, some Earth, Wind and Fire, an old Thad Jones tune, then I'll have some Aretha Franklin and Etta James on it.

DP: How do you spend your free time?

SG: What free time? I don't take vacations, but sometimes I'll add a couple of rest days and tack them on the end of a gig. If I'm recording in Florida, I might stay down for a couple of days; when I finish a Japanese tour, I might stay in Hawaii for a bit.

DP: Have you written any tunes?

SG: (*Laughing*) Yeah, but very few. A couple of them have been recorded.

DP: Have you ever been a leader of a group?

SG: Once. I did a job in Rochester with Warren Bernhardt, Eddie Gomez, and George Young. We booked the thing as the Steve Gadd Quartet, and I had to get up and introduce everyone. I was really afraid the first night, but then I started getting into it.

DP: So you'd like to be a leader again?

SG: Sure.

DP: Are you signed to a label?

SG: No. Not as a solo. But maybe someday. I've thought about it, but the time just isn't right now, but maybe someday.

DP: Do you give drum clinics? Are you giving lessons?

SG: I don't participate in drum clinics as a rule, but I have on a few occasions. No, I'm not giving lessons. I would want to be a good teacher, and I'm away [from home] too much of the time for that. I take my home with me to the hotels. There was a seven-month period last year when I was in Japan four different times. And studio projects keep me on the road too—studios in places like Miami, L.A., and Montserrat [the Caribbean island]. So lessons aren't part of the plan now, but it sure is frustrating to hear what the schools' systems are like. The stuff could be taught so much simpler.

DP: What advice would you give to a student who is an aspiring drummer?

SG: Advice? Hmmmm . . . (*reflecting*) . . . never pet a burning dog . . . we're talking about advice? I thought we were just talking about advice? Well, reading music is a good thing. I'm not saying that you *have* to be able to read, but it is an advantage. There are lots of guys who don't read who play great and work all the time. . . .

DP: What are your plans for the future?

SG: Two weeks with Simon and Garfunkel in Japan, then come back here for a week. A month with Simon and Garfunkel in Europe, then come back here for a couple of weeks before going back to Japan with Dave Grusin. Other than that, I'm not sure.

DP: Any particular goals?

SG: (*In a faraway voice*) I'd like to buy a house. A house with a great kitchen, a professional stove, and those really good pots, with a fireplace, cable TV, and a good sound system. I want there to be a brook right near so I can hear it, and lots of trees so I'll never have to mow the lawn. *No lawn mowers!* Just trees. That's what I'm going to do.

DP: What about musically?

SG: I'm thinking of writing a book, but that's not in the near future. (*Pause*) I'm happy now. I really don't have any goals other than being able to continue like I have been . . . having all these different projects that give me an opportunity to do what I love doing.

DP: What's your favorite drink when you're playing?

SG: It changes. Sometimes it's cognac. Sometimes vodka. Sometimes just soda.

On a recent evening in NYC, it's the liqueur Jagermeister. Al Di Meola's Electric Rendezvous Band featuring Gadd, Jon Hammer, Anthony Jackson, and Mingo Lewis is in concert at the Savoy. The band is recording live and sounds great; the SRO crowd is loud and enthusiastic.

Gadd, perspiring heavily, is playing his heart out. Even the clones couldn't keep up with him tonight. The band completes the high energy title track off Di Meola's new album, Electric Rendezvous. Al then moves to the mic: "Steve Gadd." The crowd erupts into a deafening wall-of-sound of appreciation. Toweling the perspiration off his face, Gadd breaks into a smile, acknowledges the audience, takes a shot of Jagermeister, then turns to a friend and yells over the continuing cheers, deadpanning pleefully, "What do they want from me? I'm doing the best I can." db

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