

CAUGHT: Wayne Shorter

February, 1983

PROFILE: Tania Maria

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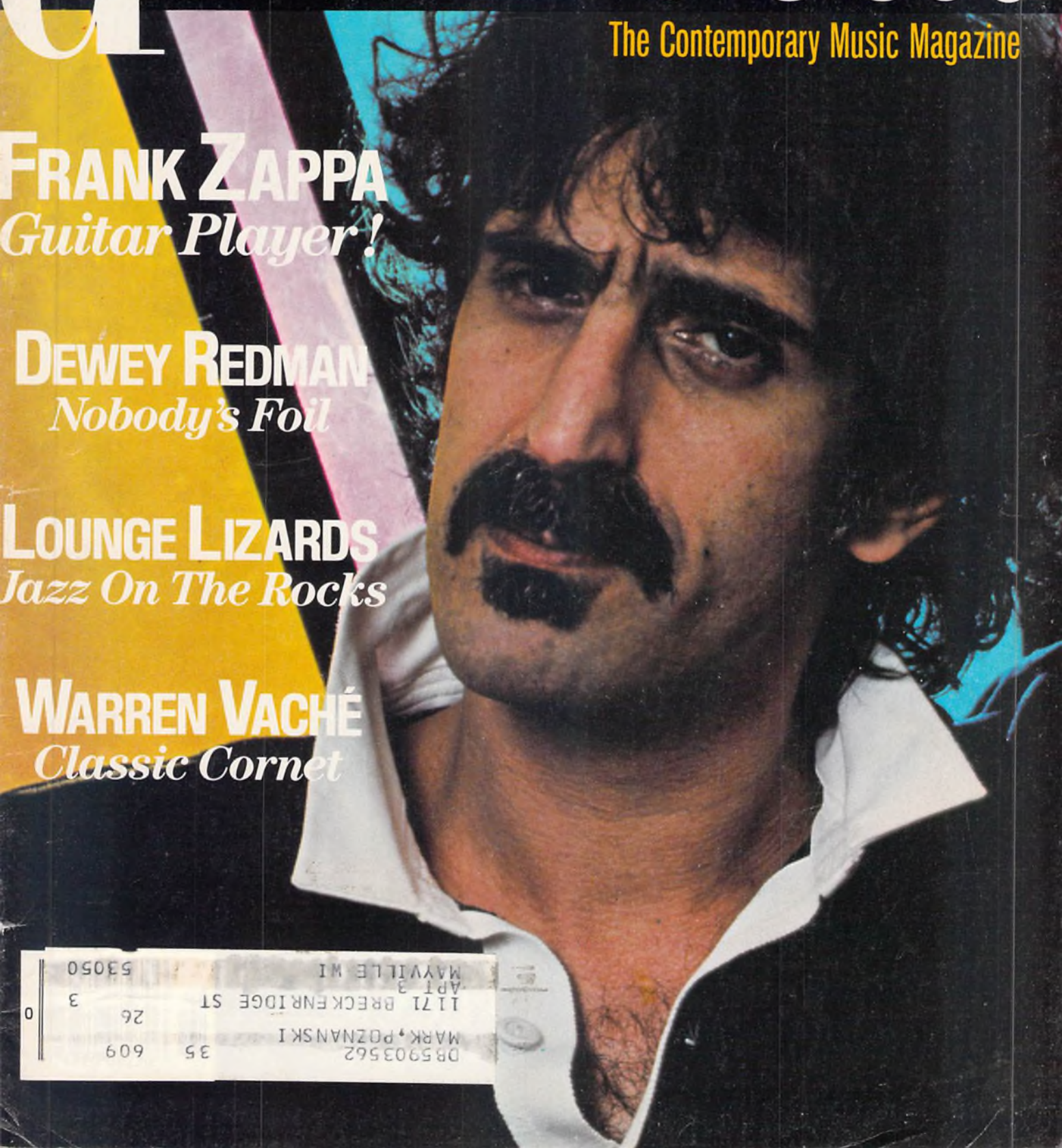
The Contemporary Music Magazine

FRANK ZAPPA
Guitar Player!

DEWEY REDMAN
Nobody's Fool

LOUNGE LIZARDS
Jazz On The Rocks

WARREN VACHÉ
Classic Cornet



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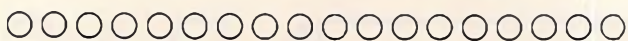
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interview

BY BILL MILKOWSKI

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ZAPPA:

Guitar Player

He considers himself too irascible and cynical to be interviewed, yet he remains one of the most outrageously outspoken, eminently quotable figures in popular music.

Over the past 18 years—an astounding, prolific career that has seen him produce 40-plus albums, four films, four ballets, various works for orchestras, and one musical stage play entitled *Hunchentoot*—he has been revered as a genius by some, scorned as a dangerous upstart by others. He has cultivated a large, loyal following from his endless outpouring of recorded music and his countless concert appearances. And he has made enemies (radio programmers, disco dancers, and the Moral Majority topping the list).

He is a social commentator, a humorist, a composer, a 41-year-old father of four, an independent businessman (having formed his own Barking Pumpkin Records in 1981), a filmmaker, a Sagittarius with Capricorn rising, and a former employee of the Nile Running Greeting Card Company.

Given that avalanche of credits, it is perhaps easier to understand how we sometimes lose sight of this very simple fact: FRANCIS VINCENT ZAPPA CAN PLAY THE GUITAR!

So to bring that point to light and clear up any questions about the matter, this multi-faceted Zappa released a stunning three-record set of strictly instrumental music last year, showcasing FZ at his fiendish best on guitar solos in various styles. This ambitious package is titled, appropriately enough, *Frank Zappa: Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar* "reviewed on page 29", and until recently picked up for nationwide distribution by CBS, was available to hard-core Zappa fans by mail only.

A terse comment on the back of the album box aptly states the premise of this project: "While the papers and magazines shouted the praises of every other fashionable guitar strangler and condemned Zappa for having the guts to sing lyrics they felt were disgusting, he quietly continued to play things on his instrument that were far more

blasphemous than any words could convey. In the rush to be offended by what he said, the music press forgot to listen to what his guitar was talking about. Zappa's guitar solos, as captured in this album, say a lot of things that just might prove to be embarrassing to the writers who forgot to listen."

So for this **down beat** interview, we decided to focus on this often overlooked side of the Renaissance man . . . Frank Zappa: Guitar Player.

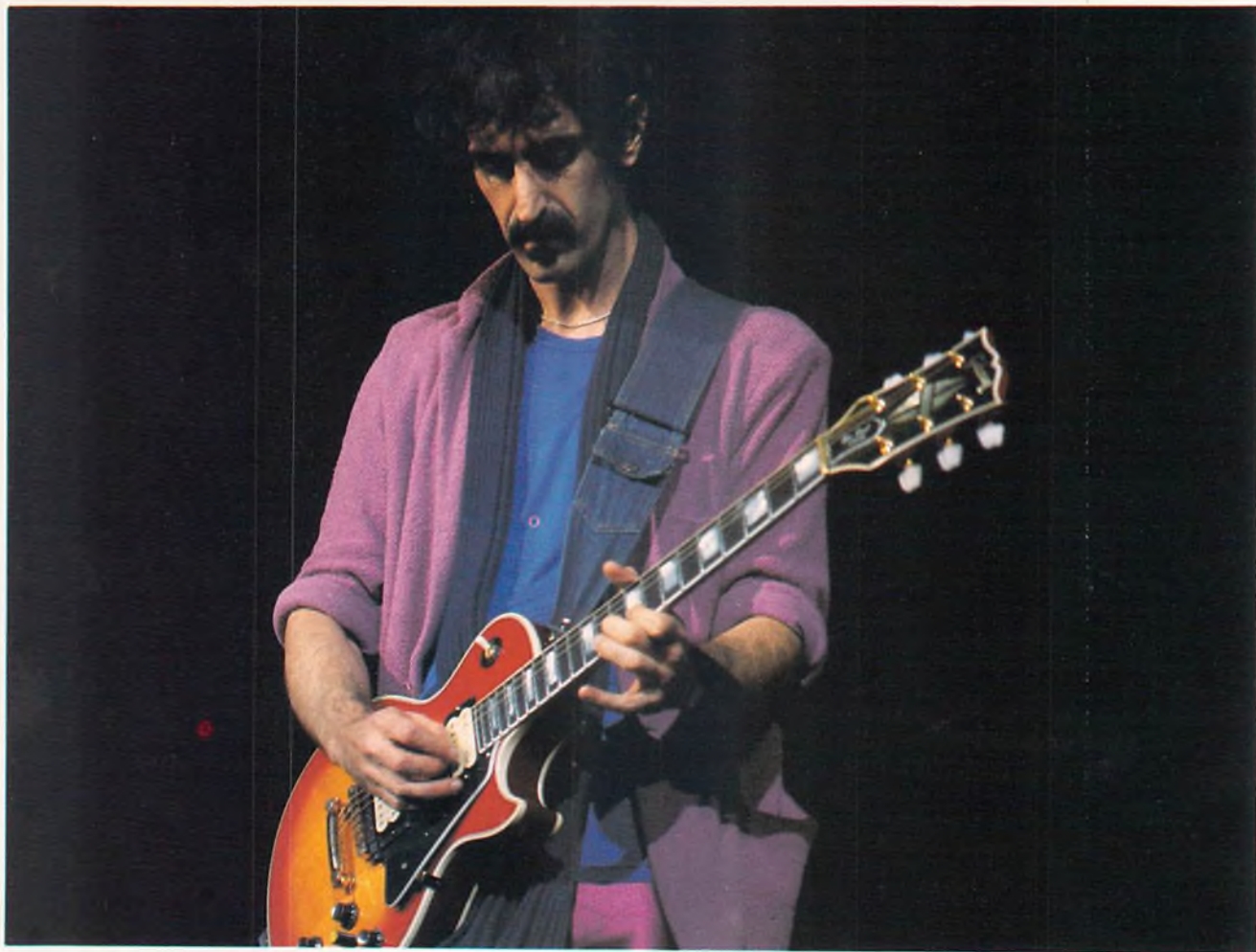


Bill Milkowski: You were actually composing classical music before you ever picked up a guitar, then at the age of 16 you got hooked on r&b music. What was the early fascination there?

Frank Zappa: Well, let's face it, there's nothing that sounds like an electric guitar. Good ol' distorted electric guitar is a universe of sound that transcends the actual noise that is coming out. I mean, you can take one fuzztone note from a guitar and look at it on a spectrum analyzer and calculate everything that's in it, but there's so much more in it than the harmonic components. It just says something that no other instrument says. It has emotional content that goes beyond other instruments. And nothing is more blasphemous than a properly played distorted guitar. It is capable of making blasphemous noises, and that's what first attracted me.

BM: You've mentioned Johnny Guitar Watson and Gatemouth Brown as major influences.

FZ: I wouldn't say that Gatemouth sounded so blasphemous. Johnny Guitar Watson was an extremely evil-sounding guitar player at the time, but the smuttiest one I heard was Guitar Slim [Eddie Jones] . . . just pure smut. The thing that I liked about the two solos I heard when I was 16 that really intrigued me—the solo on *Three Hours Past Midnight* and the solo on *The Story Of My Life*—was not just the tone of the instrument but the absolute maniac way that he spewed out these notes in a phrase with little or no regard to the rest of the meter or what was going on, but still being aware of where the beat was. He was just yellin' it at you.



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

BM: More like a voice, which is how you think about your own solo playing.

FZ: Yeah, I think that's the most direct way to communicate with somebody, using speech rhythms. That really makes a big difference. Because, if you listen to a guy playing nice neat scale patterns and things like that, no matter how skillful he is in making his stuff land on the beat, you always hear it as *Music*—capital "M" music—lines, chord changes, and stuff like that. Real studied. But if you want to get beyond music into emotional content, you have to break through that and just talk on your instrument, just make it talk. And if you're gonna make it talk, you have to be aware that there's a different rhythmic attitude you have to adopt in order to do that.

BM: Playing off the beat, around it . . .

FZ: No, you don't say to yourself, "I'll now play off the beat." I don't know how to tell you how to do it. You just make it talk, and if you then go back and analyze those rhythms, you'll see that there's some really strange looking things on paper. You have to take the approach that what you're doing on your instrument is that without using your own mouth you are getting some kind of theoretical idea or an attitude that transcends the actual notes or harmony of the song. It goes beyond all that and gets right to some emotional point you want to get across. And that's what I appreciated about those early solos by Guitar Slim and Johnny Guitar Watson; there was no f*ck#ing around. They got right to the point.

BM: Did you own a guitar at the time you first heard them?

FZ: No, my brother Bobby did. He had bought this old guitar for \$1.50 at an auction, and he never played it, so I just picked it up and started messing around with it. I actually started on drums when I was 12, but after hearing Guitar Slim and those guys, I began collecting r&b records and working out things. I didn't know any chords; I just started playing the blues . . . period. That's all I wanted to play. I hated jazz and didn't care about anything else then. The guitar I had wasn't electric—just an arch-top, f-hole, unknown-brand guitar with the strings way above the fingerboard. I didn't know about technique or

anything, I just had to teach myself what to do with it. It was all by ear.

BM: And during this period of learning licks off of records, did you also learn by watching other guitarists play?

FZ: There were none to watch, not where I lived, in Lancaster, California. There were no local groups, and as far as touring groups or anything, nobody at that time came to Lancaster. Before our family moved to that town, they had a rock & roll concert there at the local fairgrounds where a number of black r&b groups would perform, but some people began selling drugs to the local cowboys at these concerts, and the city council had sworn that they would never allow this evil form of entertainment back into the Antelope Valley. And there hadn't been any kind of movement in the area until I formed my band. Then they gave me a lot of trouble. My band played strictly rhythm & blues music. We didn't know any rock & roll songs. In fact, everybody in the band hated rock & roll. Rock & roll was that horrible Elvis Presley kind of hillbilly music. I liked Howlin' Wolf and Jimmy Reed and that kind of stuff.

BM: Were you singing then?

FZ: Naw, I'm still not singing, are you kidding? We didn't even have a microphone. It was all just instrumental boogie music.

BM: And what guitar were you playing with this band?

FZ: I started off with a [Fender] Telecaster, which I rented from a music store. After that I bought a [Fender] Jazzmaster, which I used for about a year-and-a-half while playing lounge gigs at places like Tommy Sandy's Club Sahara in San Bernardino. That guitar got repossessed, but then I made some money by writing music for a film, so I went out and bought a Gibson ES-5 Switchmaster, one of those big fat hollow-body jobs with three pickups on it. I used to really like that guitar; it had a nice neck on it, but there was a real problem with uncontrollable feedback whenever I needed more amplification for larger halls. That's common for hollow-bodies. A lot of people said, "Well, just stuff it with styrofoam and it won't feedback so much," but I didn't feel like doing that. So I switched to a solid body, a Les Paul gold-top, which I used for a couple of albums. And eventually I got a

Gibson SG. The hollow-body had a nice feel and I liked the tone of it, but you could never use a fuzztone with it, and there was no way to tweeze it up and make it work. Remember, in those days there were no graphic equalizers or any other scientific equipment.

BM: What was this first film project you mentioned?

FZ: It was called *Run Home Slow*, a western starring Mercedes McCambridge which was written by my high school English teacher [at Antelope Valley High]. It was an independent feature that I scored with a little orchestra, and I made enough money off of that to not only buy my first guitar but also buy the recording studio that I started off in.

BM: When did you start experimenting with fuzztones and other distortion effects?

FZ: Well, the very first fuzztone that I ever heard about was designed by a guy named Paul Bufl, the same guy who invented the Keyplex and the Gain Brain and a number of other studio utensils. He has a company on the West Coast now called Valley People. He was also the guy who I bought that first recording studio from . . . a real electronic genius. What he did was he plugged an electric bass into a phonograph preamp and then plugged it directly into the board, like a fuzz bass. It was one of the greatest noises I ever heard. Prior to that, if you wanted to distort a guitar, you could plug your guitar into the input on the amp that was supposed to be for microphone. The old Gibson amps used to be able to do that; you'd get some really ugly distortion. But the only other way to get distortion in those days was to slash the speakers.

There's a story I've told before about taking demo tapes to various record companies during the '60s. One of them was a recording I made with Captain Beefheart before he was Captain Beefheart; we had this group called the Soots, and he had done a deranged version of the Little Richard tune *Slippin' And Slidin'* . . . kind of a delta blues with fuzztone guitar. Now remember, this was 1962. So I took that tape to a guy at Dot Records, which was one of the few companies in Hollywood that was buying masters produced outside of the record company. So I took it to the guy and he said, "We can't release this! The guitar is distorted!" The guy's name is Milt Rogers.

BM: No doubt a vacuum cleaner salesman today . . .

FZ: Perhaps.

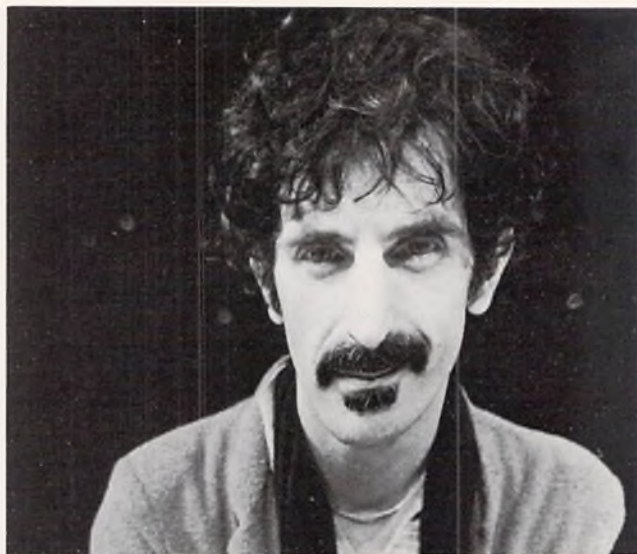
BM: And when did the wah-wah come into the picture?

FZ: After the fuzztone, around 1966 or 1967. I was one of the first guys to use one, I'll tell you that. I loved the noise. The last tour, though, I didn't use any wah-wah at all. In fact, the only effect that I did use were three DDLs [digital delays] for different functions: one to give me slight delay with a little bit of pitch shift so it makes a vibrato and just thickens the sound, and the other two for passages that we'd just play over and over again, like recording loops.

BM: What's interesting about your video, *The Dub Room Special*, is that we get a chance to see you in two very different settings—the 1974 band and the 1980 band. Did you use different equipment for each context?

FZ: Oh yeah. I played the Gibson SG in the 1974 segments and the Les Paul in 1980. But on the last tour, in Europe, I hardly played the Les Paul at all. I played all Strat. I've got a Floyd Rose apparatus on my Strat, and it just changed the world for me. Basically, it's a vibrato bar apparatus that doesn't go out of tune, which had been the main drawback to playing a Strat, because a couple of good yanks on the bar with that and you're out to lunch. But the Floyd Rose stays in tune. I had this thing installed so that you could not only bend way down but bend up on it; it'll take you up a whole step or drop it down below an octave, so it gives you the possibility to play glissandos and other types of sounds that you can't get any other way. I also had some special equalizer circuits put into the guitar so that I can make the thing sustain to disgusting amounts at any volume.

Of course, I didn't have the same amplification equipment in those earlier band segments that I'm using now. Science has come a long way since 1974. With that band I was using Marshalls, and in those days if you wanted Marshalls to distort, you had to turn them up all the way. But since that segment was originally intended for a tv show and was shot in a small place—like 200 people in the audience—I had to turn it way down. No sustain . . . a very old-fashioned kind of sound. So that's what you get from the '74 footage. The amplification that I was using on the last tour we did of Europe, I was using three different



ANNE FISHEIN/PHOTO RESERVE

kinds of amps—Carvin, Acoustic, and Marshall in different types of speaker configurations. I had each amp set up to do a certain type of a function. The Acoustic amp was set up to be more low and mid-range, a more muddy sound. The Marshall is always gonna sound like a Marshall—really screaming. And the Carvin would be used in a kind of a bright fuzztone sound. So all that blended together.

BM: Can you talk about the different rhythmic settings that the two bands offered and how that affected your role as a guitar player?

FZ: Well, playing in the group with George [Duke] and Ruth [Underwood] was a lot easier. I don't think I was playing that well there, but it was real easy to play with George, especially, because he's such a great musician and you can always count on him to play something musical behind you. It's not just a matter of having a keyboard player to blast his way through and be obnoxious during somebody else's solo. George would always seem to support whoever was doing a solo, whether it was Napoleon [Murphy Brock], me, or whoever. It was musical to play with him, and I don't always get that same sensation from other accompanists that I've worked with since that time.

Frequently within the last few years, I've been put in performance situations where there's been a temptation for other musicians to overplay in the background department, so I've had to create regulations within the band that will limit the amount of accompaniment that will support me. Especially when you have a large band, there's always a temptation for everybody to go into Jam Sessionland when a guy plays a solo. And it just makes a mess.

BM: You've made some comments recently about how proud you are of your current touring group, especially in terms of their rhythmic support . . .

FZ: Some yes and some no. And that's generally the way it's been for the last eight years. There's always a few who are right in there. I had a real good ESP/musical relationship with Vinnie Colaiuta, so I thought that playing with him was real good. And by the time the European tour was over, I thought the rhythm section in this band had turned out to be real good. But there's always those occasions when—this is especially true of the keyboards and percussion—they just play extra stuff that didn't need to be in there. Because when you're on-stage with a lot of lights, and the lights are going on and off, you always have a tendency to say to yourself, "Gee, am I doing enough for the audience to notice me?" And in times of stress, that would be the guiding factor in a musician's decision as to whether to be quiet or cavort.

BM: I would guess that Steve Vai might tend to unconsciously slip into cavorting because of his amazing facility on the guitar.

FZ: Well, Steve has many great attributes, but playing rhythm guitar is not one of them. He's really quite a virtuoso. His duties in the band are mostly to play the hard-written lines and real complicated stuff that is beyond my capability—all that whammy-bar stuff on Stratocaster. He's fantastic, but I don't really feel that comfortable with him doing rhythm because with the best intentions in the world, sometimes he will come up with stuff that might tweeze me off in the wrong direction. But he's a great player. Ray White, on the other hand, can

play fantastic rhythm accompaniment, but quite often he lays back and tucks himself away when he shouldn't.

BM: What is the ideal attitude for an accompanist in your band to have?

FZ: You have to be sympathetic to what's going on. You can't be concerned about your relative position in the musical universe. If you're out there playing a piece of music, you have to go for the music and not for yourself. And I could see situations where if the lead player was holding one note and the rhythm player knew what he was doing, that a passage of various chords against that would be fantastic to listen to, so long as when the rhythmic and melodic activity stepped up on the lead instrument that there wasn't a bunch of extra chords to go along with it to make it muddy. Remember, most of the places where we're working are large environments where the chords and notes hang in the air longer than they should, so they just tend to obliterate each other. It's difficult to do amplified music arrangements in an environment like that because you don't really know what's going to happen to the music until you stick it into the air mass that it's going to function in.

BM: So you're looking for a clean juxtaposition of the two . . .

FZ: I'm looking for music; musical ideas that will get the point across without worrying about certain types of industrial correctness. I don't think the audience gives a f*ck# about industrial correctness. They want to get some kind of message out of what you're playing. They want who you are and what you do and anything that gets in the way of that is, to me, not aesthetic.

BM: This idea of air mass is something that most bands don't consider.

FZ: Well, you've gotta consider it. If you're playing a room with very little reverberance, you can play a million notes and you'll hear all of them. But the decay time varies with the size of the room and the material of the walls and things like that . . . hockey rinks being the worst, which is where we usually tend to play.

BM: St. John's Cathedral in Manhattan . . . three-second delay.

FZ: International Ampitheatre in Chicago . . . 10-second delay. The Halle De Sporte in Leon . . . gotta be at least a 20-second delay because it's a circular building and the notes just go around and around and around, and after they go around, they hang. It's really horrible to play in places like that. You just can't enjoy it because you know the audience just doesn't get any sense out of what you're doing. They just gotta be watching you like some kind of tv show or something because they sure can't hear you. In extremely resonant places like that, you simply cannot play fast. It all just turns into a

cluster. So you have to compensate for it consciously in the band. The band has to want to do a good job in that kind of environment, and you have to be playing arrangements that permit that to happen. That's why I'm fussy about trying to arrange things and getting people to stick to their parts because I do give some thought as to what's gonna happen when you play it; there's gotta be enough space in there so that the sound will work in an air space. That's what makes the music work. It doesn't work on paper and it doesn't work in a vacuum. It works in air. You hear it because air molecules are doing something that happens to your eardrums. That's how you hear it, whether it's coming out of a record player or a p.a. system or acoustically in a concert hall. So without those little molecules you don't have nuthin'.

What we're talking about when you perform music is you're talking about sculptured air. Patterns are formed in the airwaves; all the different frequencies of all the instruments playing are making patterns, and your ear is detecting those patterns. And beyond the music, purely on a scientific level, these frequencies are also touching off certain psychological and physiological reactions in the listener. One certain frequency will stop your heart; something else will make you take a shit; another will give you a headache; something else will give you a nosebleed; another will spur sympathetic emotions in you. So my theory is that you don't just perceive music or sound just through your ears, you get it through your entire body. I mean, I hear things in my throat, in my stomach, in my arms, in my feet . . . you just get it all over. And when you're talking about the kind of amplification that you're using in a big concert hall, you are doing something to people besides entertaining them. You are affecting their bodies, and you should be aware of that while you're playing loud.

BM: Getting back to equipment, which of the three guitars you carry on tour—the Strat, the SG, and the Les Paul—do you prefer?

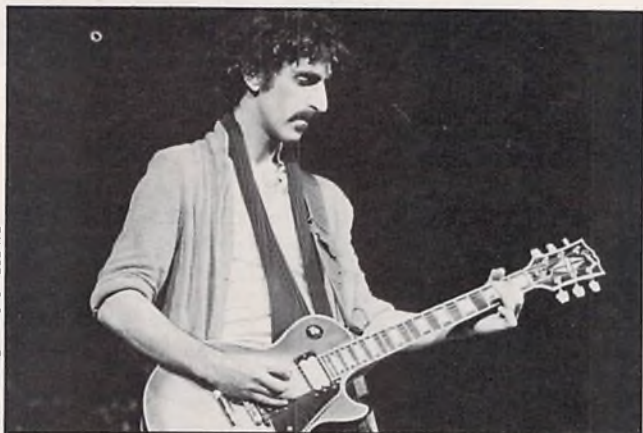
FZ: Each one has its assets and its liabilities. The Les Paul, even though it has a thicker neck, for some reason you can play certain passages on it three or four times faster than you can on the Strat. But then again, you can't get the same type of sustain or vibrato, and you can't play those weird glissandos on the Les Paul. So, it just depends on what you want to say on the instrument. The Les Paul has more 200 cycles [bottom end] to it, so it's got a meatier sound. The SG tends to have a brighter sound with the tone somewhere between 500 cycles to 1000 cycles. The Strat that I'm using now seems to have a little more bite at 2K [2000 cycles], but it has the option of a lower frequency distortion because you can turn the parametric equalizer and pick up a lower range and boost the snot out of that to reinforce that oinky high end that you normally get out of a Strat at high volume. It gives the appearance on tape of being as fat as the Les Paul but with the bite of a Strat, so you get the best of both worlds out of it. And that Floyd Rose apparatus on the Strat is interesting to me because you can really go out to lunch with it, then let it come back—especially with chords. It's an amazing sound to hear the complete deterioration and then hear it come back. It's right there.

BM: I'd like to ask you about a specific technique that seems to be a Zappa motif on several of your recordings—the Bulgarian bagpipe technique.

FZ: You mean with the pick on the strings? With your left hand you're fretting the notes and with your right hand you're also fretting the notes with a pick. Instead of plucking the string you're fretting the string, you hit the string and then that presses it against the fret so it actuates the string and also determines the pitch, and you can move back and forth real fast that way . . . just aiming it straight down at the string. On the guitar album you can hear it on *Gee I Like Your Pants* and *Variations On The Carlos Santana Secret Chord Progression*. Actually, I learned it from Jim Gordon, who is a drummer, and he picked it up from some other guitar player. He showed it to me in 1972. That's when I first saw anybody do it, and the first time I ever used it in concert was in Vienna in '72 or '73. I decided I would try it, and I've done it ever since.

BM: Do you play any of this Eddie Van Halen harmonic stuff on the other side of the nut?

FZ: Oh, I can. But everybody now is specializing in that. It's the new hip thing to do . . . including my son Dweezle. He's very good at it. Steve Vai taught him a few of those tricks. It's a nice sound, but it sounds so much like a gimmick. It's so freeze-dried because it's such



ANNE FISHER/PHOTO RESERVE

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<i>SHIP ARRIVING TOO LATE TO SAVE A DROWNING WITCH</i> —Barking Pumpkin 38066	<i>JOE'S GARAGE ACT II & III</i> —Zappa 1502
<i>TINSELTOWN REBELLION</i> —Barking Pumpkin 37336	<i>IN NEW YORK</i> —DiscReet 2290
<i>YOU ARE WHAT YOU IS</i> —Barking Pumpkin 37537	<i>GRAND WAZOO</i> —Reprise 2093
<i>SHEIK YERBOUTI</i> —Zappa 1501	<i>HOT RATS</i> —Reprise 6356
	<i>STUDIO TAN</i> —DiscReet 2291
	<i>ORCHESTRAL FAVORITES</i> —DiscReet 2294
	<i>SLEEP DIRT</i> —DiscReet 2292
	<i>WAKAJAWAKA</i> —Reprise 2094

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Dewey Redman



TOM COPI

Nobody's FOIL

BY HOWARD MANDEL

Tenor saxophonist, clarinetist, musette and autoharp player, composer/improviser, swing-loving traditionalist. *And* advanced interpreter of harmolodics. Texas-bred bluesman *and* sophisticated Big Apple habitue. Perhaps more literally than most other jazzmen, Dewey Redman speaks through his music. Vocalization has long been a distinctive characteristic of his sound; he used to alternate muezzin calls with throaty sax phrases, and has perfected adding his voice to the lines coming from the sax bell, as Rahsaan Roland Kirk used to mutter through his flute. But what Dewey has to say issues from his own long and varied experiences, and usually he depends on his song to tell the tale.

Redman has always seemed dignified and self-effacing on-stage. Whether he's led his own bands or performed with Ornette Coleman, Keith Jarrett, Old And New Dreams, or Pat Metheny, Redman has trusted his playing, rather than his public personality, to gain him attention and respect as a contributor to 20th century American music. I figured Redman might be reluctant to talk, feeling that music speaks for itself, to those who can hear it, and beyond that, little of value, critical or laudatory, could be written, read, or said. I was wrong.

"The word on Dewey Redman is he has a big mouth!" grinned the saxist, in his apartment a few blocks off Flatbush Avenue deep in the

heart of Brooklyn, on the top floor of a somewhat rundown older building.

"When I talk, I say what I think," he continued, and he was eager to talk of himself and his colleagues over the years. He was excited about his recently completed ECM recording, *The Struggle Continues*, a session he'd wanted for a long time, and gladly played me the unmixed tracks. Seeing I wasn't taking notes or taping our conversation, Dewey virtually thrust paper and pen upon me.

His forwardness, startling at first, came from a desire to be recognized at last for his own talents, rather than considered a talented sideman to other stars. Critics are often lazy, attributing the success of a band to its leader when, especially in the innovative ensembles where Redman's most often worked, more than one intelligence formulates the eventual creation.

"I first got hip to critics when I was traveling with Ornette, reading them night after night," Redman shrugged. "The same phrase was repeated endlessly: 'Redman is a perfect foil to Ornette.' I was always 'the perfect foil.' At least they could have used different words: 'Redman's style seems highly compatible with Coleman's . . .'"

So now, Redman understood he'd have to blow his own horn. There was much to say; apparently, his life is mostly music. Look at the clutter in his plainly furnished rooms: sheet music on the table, books on the shelves, posters from his gigs and a chart of the heavens on the walls. His tenor posed gently against the pillow on his bed. Staring out at the cloudy sky visible through a smudged window that opened on a courtyard below, Redman was reflective, but couldn't think of himself without remembering others, first.

"I'm still sad about Monk," he began. "What a loss. But I'll say this about Monk: he *retired*. Most of them play right through to the end. Maybe that's how they want it, but someone like Coleman Hawkins should have been able to retire, instead of having to play when he wasn't but a shadow of himself. I suppose Monk was lucky to be able to get royalties for his compositions all those years—if he did—and I guess there was something mental going on in his head towards the end, but I don't know of another musician who's *retired*. That's something."

Some of Redman's stories revealed his pride, like his version of trumpeter Donald Ayler charging into his home, vowing to make Dewey over to take the deceased Albert Ayler's place. Dewey declined; though flattered by the comparison, he insisted on being himself. And he recalled a comparable occasion, involving Thelonious Monk: "I had a chance to play with him; Ed Blackwell was working with him, and Monk needed a tenor player, so Blackwell told him about me. I called, and talked to his wife, Nellie, first; she said he wasn't in, but I should call back, and he'd talk to me. Monk didn't talk much on the phone.

"This was when I'd been with Ornette a couple of years. I knew Monk's music, of course—the songs—and I could have just played the changes, but to play Monk right, you've got to do better than that. And I had all of Ornette's stuff in my head—that's some stuff to carry 'round, let me tell you—so I told Monk, 'I'd like to make the gig, but I'd like to come over to your place and run through some things first, to get it together.'

"Monk just said 'Yeah,' like he didn't want to be bothered with a guy wanting to rehearse. You either knew his music or you didn't. I wasn't about to get up with Monk and just play changes, or treat his stuff Ornette's way, so I didn't really follow that up."

A shame, because Redman's usual understanding and understatement, raging from soft melancholy to ironic, controlled rage to (these days) sweet-tempered generosity, would have added depth and crackle to Monk's music. Wondering about lost opportunities, I noticed the front album of a pile of records leaning against the wall. Redman followed my gaze. "Gene Ammons, he was one of my big musical influences before I ever picked up a horn. He had a special *feel* in his notes. He could make me cry. And it happens that I'm old enough to remember his father, Albert—the piano player. But Jug really got to me.

"You know, one thing I always wanted to do was spend time in Chicago, playing with the real blues cats. Are there still some guys there who do it? There were a lot of them in Texas when I came up, who played that *deep* sound, guys you never heard of." (One of the tracks Redman cut for ECM is a less-than-three-minute, 12-bar blues, with



TOM COPP

DEWEY REDMAN'S EQUIPMENT

Dewey Redman uses a Selmer Mark VI tenor saxophone with a Berg-Larsen hard rubber mouthpiece, size 90/2. He says, "Every mouthpiece has a different system. This one has a medium bore. I've been using it since '74, and I've had my horn since '65. I use Rico Royal No. 4 reeds, but I've always said a player should study what's happening with his or her own embouchure to make these choices.

"I have a Buffet clarinet, and I bought my musette in San Francisco, where it was called a Chinese flute. It was very cheap, but the double-reeds for it are expensive; they're hand-wrapped with wire and imported from China.

DEWEY REDMAN SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

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|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| as a leader | | | |
| <i>THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES</i> —ECM 1-1225 | <i>EYES OF THE HEART</i> —ECM T-1150 | | |
| <i>SOUND SIGNS</i> —Galaxy 5130 | <i>THE SURVIVOR'S SUITE</i> —ECM 1085 | | |
| <i>MUSICS</i> —Galaxy 5118 | <i>BOP-BE</i> —Impulse 29048 | | |
| <i>TARIK</i> —Affinity 42 | <i>BYABLUE</i> —Impulse 29047 | | |
| <i>COINCIDE</i> —Impulse 9300 | <i>DEATH AND THE FLOWER</i> —Impulse 29046 | | |
| <i>THE EAR OF THE BEHEARER</i> —Impulse 9250 | <i>TREASURE ISLAND</i> —Impulse 29045 | | |
| <i>LOOK FOR THE BLACK STAR</i> —Arista/Freedom 1011 | <i>FORT YAWUH</i> —Impulse 29044 | | |
| with Old And New Dreams | | | |
| <i>OLD AND NEW DREAMS</i> —ECM 1-1154 | <i>SHADES</i> —Impulse 9322 | | |
| <i>PLAYING</i> —ECM 1-1205 | <i>MYSTERIES</i> —Impulse 9315 | | |
| <i>OLD AND NEW DREAMS</i> —Black Saint 0013 | <i>EL JUICIO</i> —Atlantic 1673 | | |
| with Ornette Coleman | | | |
| <i>SCIENCE FICTION</i> —Columbia KC 31061 | <i>BIRTH</i> —Atlantic 1612 | | |
| <i>BROKEN SHADOWS</i> —Columbia FC 38029 | <i>EXPECTATIONS</i> —Columbia KG 31580 | | |
| <i>FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS</i> —French RCA 43548 | with Charlie Haden | | |
| <i>LOVE CALL</i> —Blue Note 84356 | <i>LIBERATION MUSIC ORCHESTRA</i> —Impulse 9183 | | |
| <i>NEW YORK IS NOW!</i> —Blue Note 84287 | with Billy Hart | | |
| <i>CRISIS</i> —Impulse 9187 | <i>ENCHANCE</i> —A&M Horizon 725 | | |
| <i>ORNETTE AT 12</i> —Impulse 9178 | with Jazz Composers Orchestra | | |
| with Pat Metheny | | <i>RELATIVITY SUITE</i> —JCOA 1006 | |
| <i>80/81</i> —ECM 2-1180 | <i>NUMATIK SWING BAND</i> —JCOA 1007 | | |
| | <i>THE GARDENS OF HARLEM</i> —JCOA 1008 | | |
| | <i>FOR PLAYERS ONLY</i> —JCOA 1010 | | |

an Ammons-like head—*Turn Over Baby*—taken at a medium tempo. Redman said it is suitable for jukeboxes; don't laugh, ECM put out 45 rpm discs for guitarists Pat Metheny and Egberto Gismonti.)

"I got a call from Rafael Garrett—Donald, the bassist—he's in Chicago now, so maybe I'll get to spend some time there with him," Redman mentioned. "He and I go way back; I feel very close to Rafael—he made my first recording date [last available as *Look For The Black Star* on Arista/Freedom], in San Francisco in '66 or '67, about a year before I came to New York. And I think he was at this jam session we had one night at Bop City, this time Ben Webster was passing through. It was an afternoon session, and I was soloing when Webster unpacked and came up to play. He hit one note—boom, the walls buckled. He was such a power. I stood back and took my lesson that day. When Webster was leaving, he said to me, 'Little Brother, you

played good. Let me tell you this, though: if you can't outplay 'em, out-loud 'em.'

"I never could afford any music lessons," Redman admitted. "I never had \$25 for a half-hour of playing scales. I learned to play by watching cats who came through Fort Worth, and later, Los Angeles and San Francisco. I watched everybody; I watched everything they did. How they held their horns, how they fingered the keys, how they bit the mouthpiece, how they blew. And I'd go up afterwards to ask them different things. Oh, I had a million questions. And most of the guys were pretty nice. A couple weren't, but most would tell me what I wanted to know, and didn't mind.

"Eventually I got to playing all the instruments—except flute, I couldn't get anything out of that. But in Texas I was a school teacher, a bandmaster, so I tried out everything."

"The thing with [Ornette's] music is, it's approximate. You see the note on the page—that note is for reference in [his] music—you don't play that note; you just have to know how Ornette is going to play it."

As Redman slipped into talk of another self-taught bandmaster and Texan, I did nothing to get him back to himself. Of Ornette Coleman's circle, none has been so articulate about the man as Dewey.

"I'd heard Ornette play before I ever started playing," he said. "He had a high school band called the Jam Jivers—Prince Lasha was in it, and Charles Moffett, the drummer. They played jump tunes, Louis Jordan, and then Ornette went up to L.A., and he just blossomed. He was playing all that bebop, that Bird shit, and he could play Bird just like Bird, always could. I've never heard anybody get Bird down so well.

"In fact, a few years ago I was with Ornette at the Montreux festival, and Dexter Gordon and Sonny Stitt were in the dressing room next door. You know, they were thick with each other, but didn't mix much with Ornette—but they were cool. So they have their strong thing, and Ornette knows they're over there; he puts his alto together, and starts blowing this Bird shit through the walls. I was cracking up—I had to go next door and see what they were doing. Well, they felt the draft, I know they did; they just up and cleared out. It got kind of quiet in their room, and then they were gone.

"See, one thing they always forget about Ornette is he always had a swingin' drummer. Like Blackwell. Always. Ornette came out of Fort Worth, just like I did, and there were plenty of others—and that was just Fort Worth, there was a whole other scene with some great players in Dallas, just 40 miles away, and Houston. I tried L.A., to see what I could do after Ornette had gone up there, but it was very hard. L.A. is cliquish; I couldn't even sit in at jam sessions. I took a chance to go up to San Francisco for a couple weeks, and I ended up staying seven years.

"It was beautiful there—the mountains, the city, the people. There were good cats to play with, a nice club scene around Bop City, and all these kids from the Haight-Ashbury would come over to dig it. It was nice . . . I used to run into Janis Joplin on the street. After a while, though . . . you know, you've got to try New York. I hadn't but moved here and I was playing with Ornette. I didn't really have my stuff

together with his music for at least a year, and already I'd recorded two albums with him, Jimmy Garrison, and Elvin Jones. I couldn't believe it when I went into the studio with them. I was . . . I was . . . hell, I was scared shitless. These were some *giants*. Here I was, not knowing what I was doing.

"We'd go to the gig, and Ornette always liked to solo first, so he'd play his stuff, do it every way, take it all apart, put it back together inside out, upside down, really blow—and then it would be my turn, and I wouldn't know what I was going to do to follow *that*. But the records [*New York Is Now!* and *Love Call*, both on Blue Note] didn't come out badly, those things considered.

"It was prepossessing, to play with Ornette then. Blackwell had been with him 15 years, and they had a special thing, like Trane and Elvin did—something uncanny. Blackwell would play Ornette right around a corner and beat him there—he knew just where he was going.

"I was with Ornette three years, and I don't understand the harmolodic theory more than anyone else, not to explain it to you. It isn't because I haven't tried to understand it; I've asked Ornette all sorts of questions. The thing with his music is, it's *approximate*. You see the note on the page—that note is for *reference* in Ornette's music—you don't play that note; you just have to know how Ornette is going to play it. When I was learning his music, I'd watch the notes on the page, but I'd also study Ornette, listening to how he'd phrase it. Looking and listening.

"And the things I've heard Ornette say! Once we went into the studio for Impulse, with the producer Ed Michel, and the first thing Ornette said was 'Take the treble off the bass and put it on the bottom.' I knew we were going to have a serious time. But as long as I've known Ornette, I've never doubted his sincerity. He just sees things differently from anyone else, that's all. And he believes in what he's doing. He's even stubborn about it. I mean, he hasn't been so terribly successful yet with the electric band, Prime Time, but he sticks to it. He wants to do what he wants to do, and you've got to respect the man for that."

* * *

What does Dewey want to do for himself? Not make a million, necessarily, or star in Kool fests. He shook his head wonderingly. "I don't mean to sound immodest," he allowed, "but I think I'm underrated. Why isn't Dewey Redman up there in the polls, well known in the world of tenor saxophonists here in New York? Maybe I should go to Europe for a year or so—have my pick of gigs, and I could record for all those labels over there. Maybe not with the players I'd want, but they've got some good musicians there too." He considered this a moment. "No. The thing is, I can't get out of Brooklyn. I've lived here, in this same apartment, for 10 years."

Maybe *The Struggle Continues* will raise Redman's profile as a man with his own band. "I've been hoping to get this ECM date a long time, and I think it's the best thing I've ever done. It's the first all-tenor album I've made. I tried to use a variety of material, and it turned out like I want. Blackwell plays drums. Charles Eubanks is the pianist; he's from Detroit and has a real nice touch. He can play inside or out—I need a pianist who goes both ways. The bassist, Mark Helias, is a very talented young man. Sometimes in a club a brother comes up to me and says 'Why you got that Mark in the band? You should have a brother in the band.' I tell 'em why—'cause he can play his ass off." On Redman's Galaxy albums, *Soundsigns* and *Musics*, Helias offered the saxist a chance to explore their instruments' affinities, especially on *Piece For Tenor And Two Basses*, with Charlie Haden playing the second string part. Those albums, like *The Struggle Continues* and Redman's two Impulse discs, show him focused on his own interests. Not that he's ever cut his ties to past collaborations.

"Like, *Old And New Dreams* is a good thing; we've got no personality problems, and we get some good work—not enough, of course, and everybody wants to do their own thing first—but we could really clean up if Ornette came out with us. Forget *Old And New Dreams*; if Ornette said 'I want to play with Blackwell again, with Charlie Haden, with Cherry. . . .' There are people out there who want to hear us, and would pay a good price. We could work all we want. There's a joke Charlie Haden tells in the band: *Old And New Dreams*, with special guest artist Ornette Coleman. The guest who isn't there."

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THE LOUNGE LIZARDS:

Jazz On The Rocks

BY LEE JESKE

John Lurie is the leader of the Lounge Lizards—the Head Lizard, as it were—and the Lounge Lizards are a cross between Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and the Sex Pistols. They play raunchy, unbridled jazz/pop/new wave music that is at once reminiscent of soundtracks from grainy, 1950s B-movies—the kind of movies where the meek drugstore clerk falls in love with the gum-popping, buxom blonde and, together, they figure out a way to murder her rich, cigar-smoking hubby—and the fast-paced, zipping accompaniment to the latest special-effects cinema extravaganza. It is a goulash of styles that can appeal to a wide cross-section of listeners, or can, just as easily, cause everybody to heave a beer can toward the stage.

John Lurie is a goulash of styles himself—he's a tall, long-faced fellow in his late 20s with a shaved-around-the-ears haircut and a large-shouldered grey suit. Along with his slightly younger brother, Evan, he is already on his second set of Lounge Lizards. But that comes later. First we learn about John.

Born in Minneapolis, son of a traveling bond ("I thought it was bombs for a long time") salesman, John Lurie and family end up in Worcester, MA. Lurie (John) gets hooked on harmonica (a la Little Walter) and somehow ends up on-stage with John Lee Hooker at a young age. He then starts learn-



ANDY FREEBERG



ANDY FREEBERG

THE LOUNGE LIZARDS: (from left) Evan Lurie, Peter Zummo, John Lurie, Tony Garnier, and Dougie Bowne.

ing guitar, first listening to Jimi Hendrix, then trying to play classical guitar. He's 17 and his teacher informs him that he's too old to play classical guitar. Lurie picks it up from here:

"I was walking down the street, really depressed. I didn't want to go to college—everybody was going to college and I didn't know what I wanted to do. I see this guy walking down the street—this is four o'clock in the morning—with a wheelbarrow full of dirt. He was going to plant a garden on his roof, and he tells me he's just seen this statue turn into an angel. I mean, this guy was *out there*, but I was at an age when I was really hoping for some kind of miracle, so I was paying a lot of attention to this guy. He gives me a bicycle and a saxophone and he says, 'Bring it back in a week.' And I was so taken that I sold my guitar and started playing saxophone all the time."

Fair enough. But when did the jazz come in? "There was a guy in town who was really *out there*, but he had this amazing record collection. He disappeared for a while—he went to Las Vegas—and he came back and his voice had dropped two octaves lower, and he would stay in his apartment. He was *really out there*—he was, like, afraid to take a shit 'cause he was afraid it would be the end of the world. But he was a kind of genius in his own right, and he used to listen to records, and he would turn me on to all this stuff. There's always one guy in each town who'd know what was going on. So he played me Eric Dolphy doing *God Bless The Child*, and I just started blowing my brains out—I didn't even have a finger chart. Evan was just starting to play the piano, and we would just play.

"I didn't like Charlie Parker then because I didn't like the *color* of it. I mean, this is LSD-time too, and so the Beatles had a color to them and Dolphy had a color to him and Coltrane *Live At Birdland* had a color to it. I was much more interested in the color."

Fair enough. Then what? "I moved into this Cundalini Yoga place, and their lifestyle is: get up at three o'clock in the morning and do four hours of this insane yoga exercise called

Breath Of Fire. The theory is that you have this power at the base of your spine, and if you raise this power up your spine, it'll go up like an electrical current and enlighten your third eye. So it has some validity. But these people were driving me crazy; it also had not too much to do with the jazz world."

Okay, so far it all makes sense. But how does this lead to New York City and the Lounge Lizards? Well, Lurie went to Boston a couple of times and saw people like Charles Mingus and McCoy Tyner at the Jazz Workshop. He took a couple of lessons, but didn't like them particularly—one saxophone teacher had him play *The Godfather Theme* and that was that. He also didn't care for school very much. So he headed for Beantown, where he played saxophone for dance classes (his sister was a dancer there). He started going out with a dancer who eventually moved to New York. He followed. This is eight years ago, and we'll let him take it from there:

"I went to see Sam Rivers play, and I met this guy who was really pretty similar to the guy with the wheelbarrow full of dirt—it could've been the same guy: black, five-foot-10 with a little scraggly beard and a weird look in his eye—and he had me come out to his place in Brooklyn. He was a super-intendant in these two buildings, and he had these signs all over his apartment saying, 'I am the supreme light,' and other really weird sorts of things. After a couple of weeks, he went to Cape Cod, and I stayed and took over

his job. Except I tried to figure out how I could go there only two days a week and take care of everything. But they caught me and evicted me."

Evicted from Brooklyn, Lurie headed to Wales where his mother was living. "I lived in these people's summer home during the winter, and this whole sort of mystical/spiritual thing that I was pursuing just came to a head and I really wiggged out."

Wiggged out in Wales? "Yeah, I was five miles from anybody, living in this summer home on top of a mountain, and I went crackers. I went to London, to a bunch of jazz clubs, and I hated all that kind of stuff that those guys were playing—a bunch of saxophone players in a line playing over changes. Then I moved back to New York for good."

Back in New York, Lurie was collecting SSI (Supplement Security Income) for "being psychologically unable to work" and doing performance pieces and making movies, including one where he plays Humphrey Bogart, and James Chance, leader of a band called the Contortions, plays a leech—as in *The African Queen*. The goal was to make a film in the style of "film noir," and although the script wasn't written, Lurie wrote the music. One day somebody asked his suggestion for a band to open for the Love Of Life Orchestra at Hurrah's, a rock club.

"And I said, 'Oh, my band...' And he said, 'Your band?!' And I said, 'Oh yeah, we've been working on it for six months.' We just threw this thing together after four hours of rehearsal. I had all this music that I had written for the movie I wanted to make. That was me, my brother on piano, Tony Fier on drums, Arto Lindsay on guitar, and Steve Piccolo, who I went to high school in Worcester with, on bass."

The band took off. They began playing the New York new wave establishments and began attracting "the hip people—Andy Warhol would come in, Blondie would come in, everybody would be in the audience. We were on the scene—it was happening, it was eventful. None of these people in the rock business had heard anything like it. We were

LOUNGE LIZARDS' EQUIPMENT

John Lurie plays a Selmer balanced action alto saxophone with a high F#, and uses Rico Royal No. 5 reeds. **Dougie Bowne** uses Tama drums with A. Zildjian cymbals. **Peter Zummo** plays Vincent Bach 36, Bach 6, and King 4B (1404SF) trombones, with a Giardanelli 4D mouthpiece with an open throat, in addition to a Boosey and Hawkes euphonium and a Bach 37 trumpet. **Tony Garnier** schlepps his acoustic bass around, while **Evan Lurie** plays the acoustic piano provided at the gigs.

the first people who started doing this sort of crossover thing in the rock clubs; then a lot of people jumped on that wagon. We were doing that and, of course, all the jazz people were saying, 'Well, they're not really any good; it's just the way they dress.' They couldn't possibly accept it was a jazz phenomenon, even though that's what it was. At that time, I said it's 'fake jazz,' to protect myself against a lack of chops that we had at that point. I knew it was going to get attacked by the legitimate jazz world—I knew it."

The "legitimate jazz world" didn't attack the Lounge Lizards, it just ignored them—probably because "the legitimate jazz world" isn't usually found at clubs like CBGB's. After a year of playing in rock clubs in New York—and making the odd trip to Washington, Boston, and Toronto—Lurie and his cold-blooded compatriots were ready to record. John Lurie, his brother Evan in tow, headed directly for Teo Macero.

"All these people were interested in recording us, and I had to make sure that I had it all together on my end before I started getting hustled about by a record company that was going to tell me who my producer was. I didn't want to hear, 'Well, here's this guy who just produced the Ramones, and he's really hot; he's going to produce you.' That's what I didn't want, so we went to talk to Teo."

Macero was impressed with the Lurie brothers and impressed with their demo tape—a tape produced by Blondie's Chris Stein. He said, "Okay, when you get a deal, give me a call. I'll do it." The Lizards signed with Editions EG, a small English label specializing in new wave rock, and went into the studio with Teo Macero. The result (*The Lounge Lizards*, Editions EG EGS-108) is an astonishingly brash, fresh blend of Lurie's compositions and a few standards (including two by Thelonious Monk).

"If you go into CBS Studios with Teo," says John Lurie, "you get the most out of the engineers. And that takes a lot off my shoulders as leader as far as just what's going on. I don't know how he does it, but he gets a sound."

Teo was so taken by the band that he offered to manage them, but managing is not Macero's forte, so John Lurie became his own manager, press agent, and booking agent. "I was busy full-time just trying to keep the band afloat, so I had to drop the movie stuff entirely, which was a drag. We were all so poor, living on the Lower East Side with no money. We didn't make any money from the record, either; playing around New York sort of kept us alive, but it was not a good living. There was always the prospect that it was going to break into this enormous thing."

About as enormous as it got was a European tour in 1981 that culminated in a one-nighter at the Berlin Jazz Festival—an appearance for which the band was paid some \$8,000 and which was broadcast live throughout West Germany and other parts of Europe. "That was our last gig for eight months. I just couldn't stand the guys anymore, or most of them. I couldn't stand taking

care of everything myself. We were dividing the money five ways, and I was knocking myself out. My liver was falling out of my stomach, and I couldn't take it.

"It was my band from the start, but it was making so little money that you couldn't do anything *but* divide the money five ways, or there wouldn't be any point for anybody to do it. Also, the band could never relax—all the music was just *pushed* too hard. I'd write a tune before we'd go on tour, and it would be a very slow waltz, but by the time we'd come

"The press was writing things like, 'This young man's a genius,' which is just as embarrassing as if they say, 'He's a clown.'"

back it would be double-time. Everything was just breakneck.

"So Berlin was the last gig. I just let it drift out, but I had it in mind to then sort of regroup and actually *hire* guys, with my brother—guys who played better and guys who I didn't have to split the money evenly with when I was doing all the work."

The Lounge Lizards were due to tour many of the major European jazz festivals—including Montreux and Northsea—during the summer of '82, but prior to that summer, there were no Lounge Lizards. "And so," John says, "I thought, 'I should put a band together.' I had a tour paying good money, but it took a long time to find the guys."

So who are these guys? "The trombone player, Peter Zummo, was almost going to be in the first band. He's kind of like an *avant garde*, conceptual-type composer. He's got a great sound on the trombone. He was coming over to my house and playing with me and Evan, and it was working—he's a very nice guy, easy to work with. Tony Garnier is the bass player. He played with Robert Gordon, and he used to play with Asleep At The Wheel. It took all spring for me to find people who could play jazz, but would not be

really stuck in this tradition of . . . whatever. This guy worked out great—he does country & western gigs when he's not playing with us. Dougie Bowne, the drummer, used to play with Iggy Pop. Everybody was suggesting him to me, and I met him in a restaurant and, I don't know how tall he is, but he's tiny and I thought, 'How's this guy going to do it? He's got such little hands,' but he was great."

The new Lounge Lizards toured Europe where, according to Lurie, "we were always treated as the joke of the festival. But the press was writing things like, 'This young man's a genius,' which is just as embarrassing as if they say, 'He's a clown.'"

On the day that we speak, the new Lounge Lizards are two days out of the studios—an independent production by Teo Macero that, hopefully, will find a buyer (the deal with Editions EG having expired)—and two days before another European tour. But the band's prospects do not always appear so rosy. John Lurie tugs at his nose and discusses where he'd like to lead the Lizards:

"I want to make some money and just tour with this band and have it like a basketball team. Right now I need somebody to really *manage* the band. Teo says he manages us, but he doesn't. He's an idealist and he says, 'Oh, I'm managing the band.' And, meanwhile, he doesn't know that I don't have any money and that we don't have any gigs set up for next year. I'm up around the clock, making phone calls and stuff, and I don't even have time to practice. It's insane—I used to have friends sleep on my floor, and now they're selling their paintings for \$20,000.

"If we were managed properly, I could spend more time with the music. I want to be a composer; I want to create a color with the music. I'm not really interested in throwing myself into the throes of the jazz world and being compared to God-knows-who. I'm not too interested in playing the shit out of changes. I went to see Phineas Newborn and he's *amazing*, *incredible*, but that does not do anything for me—nothing happens.

"I'd like to find a manager who knew what he was doing, so I could just write music and have a rehearsal place with a piano and just play. I'd like to add a lot—I'd like to learn a lot, just about arranging and composition and stuff. With all the work I'm doing to keep this band organized, I could be a bank manager. I've got to get a manager who knows both the jazz and rock worlds. I'm tired of the rock clubs in New York; I'd like to do a jazz tour of America."

John Lurie's search for a manager makes him sound like the George Steinbrenner of the Lower East Side. Hopefully, everything will come together—the new album will sell; the Lizards' zany musical approach will find the right ears; all will be well. If not, John Lurie can always slither back up to Worcester, find the cat with the wheelbarrow, and hope for another miracle.

Or he could return to the Cundalinis.

And, after all, he does have some experience as a superintendent.

Things could be worse.

db

Some eight years ago I was about to complete a long interview for the National Endowment for the Arts' Jazz Oral History Project with the eminent trombonist Vic Dickenson. As an afterthought, I asked Vic if he could think of a young musician of particular promise who could carry on in the classic jazz tradition. The answer came without the slightest hesitation. "Warren Vaché," said Vic. "He's a fine player already, but he's going to be someone special; you'll see."

At 23 years old, Vaché was then just beginning to make his presence felt on the jazz scene. He had joined the house band at Eddie Condon's in New York City, where his front-line partners were Vic and clarinetist Herb Hall; he'd been working in an ill-fated Broadway show, *Doctor Jazz* (it previewed for three months, then closed within four days); he was soon to get a call from Benny Goodman, with whom he worked on and off until last summer; and in 1975, he was chosen to play the demanding role of Bix Beiderbecke in the New York Jazz Repertory Company presentation of the legendary cornetist's music.

Today, with some 20 LPs to his credit (including six as a leader), Vaché is perhaps best known for his long partnership with tenorist Scott Hamilton and his tours and albums with the Concord Super Band, named for the label for which he's done most of his recording. Few who've heard Vaché at his best would deny that Vic Dickenson's prediction has come true.

Among those few, on occasion at least, might be Vaché himself. Though a confident and often adventurous player, he is also a perfectionist and his own severest critic. He admits to being "just too painfully aware of where I am when I'm recording. I feel that so intensely when I'm listening to myself on records. I start analyzing myself into a knot. Bobby Hackett was right—listening to your own records is like talking to yourself. I hope to get by that one; it's been a long one for me."

When pressed, however, he'll admit that he's pleased with *Iridesence*, a quartet album that finds him in the company of Hank Jones, George Duvivier, and Alan Dawson. And he was looking forward to the impending release of his first LP with the trio that is his favorite working format—John Bunch on piano and Phil Flanigan on bass. "I really prefer that. I feel the loosest there, and with guys like these I can call pretty near anything. If I want to play *I Want A Little Girl* one minute and *Donna Lee* the next, they don't find anything wrong with it. I can have fun with *The Man I Love* and turn around and play *Apex Blues* [the Jimmie Noone classic]. It doesn't bother me, but I've been getting the feeling that something is wrong with me because it doesn't."

These remarks, of course, relate to the passion for categorizing music and musicians that has been the bane of jazz for many decades. The climate may be a bit more ecumenical now than in the days of boppers versus moldy figs, or in the turbulent '60s, but the malady lingers on. And it espe-

Warren Vaché

Classic Cornet

BY DAN MORGENSTERN

cially affects young jazz players like Vaché who don't fit any preconceived stylistic mold.

"I've been accused of being eclectic and non-committed," he said, "and maybe I am. But I just have to play what fits—or what I think fits. I started to play club dates with a dance band when I was 15, reading stock charts. The first jazz band I played with was a bunch of guys who went to a summer band school in New Jersey—trumpet, alto, and a rhythm section. The pianist was Alan Pasqua, who later went to Indiana University, and then with Kenton. We were the Atlantic Jazz Quintet.

"Then I worked everything from Your Father's Mustache to Polish weddings and Easter sunrise services . . . I just always figured it was better to be playing and making money than to be doing something else and making money. I always wanted to be a jazz musician, but I didn't always get to play jazz. And when I started to play jazz, it was with dixieland bands like those led by Chuck Slate and Red Balaban. And when you do that—it always amazes me—everyone automatically says, 'Oh, that's what he does.' Then, when you do something else, the ones who said that turn their backs on you and get very affronted because you've departed from their particular cross-bearing session, and the people at the other end of the spectrum all look at you and say, 'Hell, in another couple of years, maybe.' Look, I'm right here now, and this is what I can do, and it doesn't fit here and doesn't fit there, but this is what I do."

Rahway, New Jersey, where Vaché was born and raised and still makes his home with his wife, Jill, and infant son, Christopher, may not be everyone's idea of a jazz mecca. But Warren grew up with jazz all around him. "I never remember thinking about being anything else but a musician—

maybe a cowboy," he said with a smile. His father, Warren Sr., is a sales representative for a musical instrument company and a self-taught jazz bassist. (He is also one of the prime movers in the New Jersey Jazz Society and editor of its monthly magazine.)

"Dad had a marvelous record collection, and when I was a kid, he used to take a tape recorder with him on gigs, so on Saturday mornings I'd wake up to the sounds of the date he'd played the night before. The grown-ups who came to our house were musicians or interested in music, and like all kids, my brother and I wanted to be part of their conversation. [Warren's youngest brother, Alan, a clarinetist, makes his home in San Antonio, Texas, as a key member of the successful Happy Jazz Band.]

"Sometime around third grade, Dad started me on piano lessons. That went well until a year or so later, when they started a band in school and I came home and said I wanted to be in it—on the bass, I thought, since there was one in the house. But Dad said no, be a trumpet player. There's more work, and you don't want to be in the rhythm section—nobody ever tells you what key the song is in. He got me a horn and a teacher."

That teacher was Jim Fitzpatrick, who'd been with Hal Kemp and other name bands of the '30s, and was a tough taskmaster. Others followed, but the man whom Warren credits with keeping him in college, and much more than that, is the late trumpeter Pee Wee Erwin. "I was going to Montclair State College, and while the instruction was fine, it wasn't always my cup of tea. I expressed a great deal of dissatisfaction to Dad, who had just discovered the Erwin-Griffin School of Music in Teaneck, New Jersey [Griffin is Chris Griffin, like Erwin a veteran of the big bands and New York studios]. He mentioned he had a kid who played trumpet, and Pee Wee, being Pee

Wee, said he'd like to meet me, and it blossomed from there. He was exactly the right guy and it was just the way to get me out of feeling the pressure from school. Pee Wee showed me a hell of a lot and kept me involved and interested in the music and kept me in school. I thank him for it—not that I think I'll ever have to use that degree, but it's nice to know that it's there.

"I'd go to see Pee Wee about three or four times a week. I'd mind the store for him, and then we'd play, and he started me on some French etudes that were real ball-busters. I'd fumble all over the damn things, and he'd be very kind and say, 'No, no, no... you've got to do this and that, let me give you the idea.' So he'd put his cigarette down and cough about nine times—he had emphysema, and much worse than we thought then—and tell me that he hadn't got his reading glasses fixed yet and how he'd have to try to play from memory. And then he'd rattle the s.o.b. off as pretty as you'd ever want to hear it played.

"He was one hell of a trumpet player—very underrated. There was nothing about the horn he didn't know or couldn't do. Even with that emphysema, he could play 16 bars without breathing, and had tremendous flexibility and control. And he had an ancient Besson horn with patches all over it! I lent him my new Benge cornet, and after that, every

time I'd walk in on a gig of his, he'd say, 'Oh, you want your horn back!' He was a beautiful guy. I hope I can get through life and take everything I get and come out of it as positive an influence on people as he was. He had a lot of tragedy in his life, but came out without the slightest edge of bitterness."

* * *

Once Warren had started on the trumpet, he began to listen to his father's records in a new way. "I got to love Louis [Armstrong] and Bobby [Hackett] and Roy [Eldridge]—of all the records, theirs intrigued me the most. There was a Bobby Hackett Quartet record, with Dave McKenna [the pianist was to become Warren's teammate in the Concord Super Band], that had a thing on it called *Stereoso*, and I'd play along with that. A bit later I got to like Cootie Williams, and the Condon stuff—I loved Wild Bill Davison and Billy Butterfield. I didn't go much to live jazz things until later, when Dad had started to work with Chuck Slate's band and I'd go up on weekends and sit in for a tune or two."

Then came the club date bands and the jazz quintet, and the first musical disputes with his father. "I started to bring home Miles Davis records—at 15 and 16 I was very into Miles—and Art Blakey, Stan Getz, things like that, and we had arguments. He just didn't want to hear any kind of modern jazz at all. I

also liked Clifford Brown and Fats Navarro. Clifford's sound was marvelous; he was so damn clean. But for me Fats was a little more exciting. They're both monster musicians. I had a lot of respect for Dizzy, but he never landed on me."

Despite the disputes with his father, Warren feels he was fortunate to be far removed from the jazz battles of the time, which in retrospect make no sense to him at all. "I don't think I could have handled it," he said. "What vestiges are left of it make me nervous. For Christ's sake, it's music! So a man plays differently from the way you do—what's the difference? What is it you've got to defend? Why all the defensiveness?"

His first experience in the "big time," the *Doctor Jazz* show, did nothing to change his outlook. "It was a beautiful job—one hell of a good band. Luther Henderson and Dick Hyman wrote the charts; Sy Oliver was involved, Bob Stewart, Danny Moore—fine player—and there was a warm feeling in that orchestra pit. We all liked each other."

What he calls his "Bix for a day" experience was also memorable. "I got to meet and play with Joe Venuti, Bill Rank, Chauncey Moorehouse, Spiegel Wilcox... all gone now except Spiegel, who's still going like a house on fire. Being involved with all that living history was a real thrill." He also learned that



TOM COPI

not all involved agreed with the concept of recreating 50-year-old solos, especially their own. Trombonist Rank requested not to play a solo which he claimed never to have liked.

Finding support from older musicians has, with a very few exceptions, been Warren's experience, and he can't comprehend "the attitude that some young guys have—that here's an old guy, and I'm what's happening now. When I'm going to work with Vic Dickenson, well, here's a man who's been playing the trombone much longer than I've been alive—he's seen more situations and gotten himself successfully out of more stuff than I'll ever see in my life—and I'm going to tell *him* what's right and what's wrong?"

"Vic is terrible for busting trumpet players, you know, because he's got an idea that everybody should phrase the same way, and Vic's idea of phrasing is flawless, and if you start to get too fancy with the melody and too pyrotechnical, Vic will turn around and point the trombone at your ear and play the melody to you. There are guys who get very upset by that, and I'll admit that it sort of affronted me the first couple of times. But then it occurred to me: hey, dummy, when it's your turn to solo, he leaves you alone—you can stand on your head if you want to, he doesn't mind—but you're playing with a *band*, so let's all get together.

"So I learned a hell of a lot about how to pace yourself through an evening, how to make music without trying too hard, how to let the music happen. And yes, let's find out how to make a melody say what it's supposed to! It's incredibly difficult for me just to play a melody. It's hard for most people, I think. I always get involved in something that takes me away from it. Vic, or Benny, can play just straight melody for a chorus and make it swing, make it sing, and make it mean something. Just play the melody—that's taste, that's intelligence, and that's art—a hard thing to do.

"And Vic knows such great songs, from all over. He'll play *Gigi*, or he'll play the theme from *Spiderman*. And he has fun on the job. Guys like that are worth admiring. Hackett and Vic and McKenna—those are guys who've figured out how to put their personality and their musicality together, and get comfortable with it. That's the trick."

Sound also has a great deal to do with putting this kind of personal message across, and Warren is very conscious of sound. He has not played trumpet for some years now, preferring the cornet and the flugelhorn. "The cornet, for the stuff I do, is a much more comfortable instrument. When you try to play soft on the trumpet, it always tends to get very brittle and airy. Soften down on cornet, and you still get a sound with some kind of fatness to it. It's just friendlier for a small band kind of thing, and if I cheat a little and pull out the tuning slide, I can always make it a bit brighter if needed. The idea is to sound like yourself all the time, and I prefer the feeling of the cornet.

"The flugelhorn is a marvelous instrument, but it's so frail. It takes a lot of care to get the sound I want. I might be playing it exclusively if I could figure out how Freddie Hubbard or Clark Terry get it to sound just right all the time. It's a little like walking on eggshells

when you play it. But on the cornet I can try something and be 99 percent positive that it'll come out. Those are the pitfalls of doubling. . . ."

Whatever musical situation Warren may find himself in, he said, he "always just tries to play *with* the band. I have the greatest admiration for players who intuitively know not what *should* happen next, but can think on their feet enough to *make* something happen next. Ruby Braff—there's another underrated musician—is one guy who can really do that, and make everybody on the stand with him play their best. But I'm afraid that's going out. I find very few guys my age who really know how to work with the band. They may be great soloists and may be able to play a thousand notes a minute, and they know every chord change to *Donna Lee* and every permutation thereof, and they can play in 14 modes, but when it comes to playing with a band, they either don't know or don't care about making the band sound like a unit."

One reason, Warren suspects, is that "today, instead of bands, we've got schools." He has nothing against jazz education *per se*, but feels that it is often lacking in the emotional perspective that he himself has found to be supremely important.

"Charlie Parker was a genius, I agree. I love the way he played. So was Louis Armstrong. I guess from the intellectual aspect, you can focus on Parker because he came out of Louis and you should be able to get Louis' harmonic theory through Parker. But all of that just doesn't compute by looking at chord changes. There's another flavor and emotionalism that is present in the one and not present in the other. It works both ways. There's a different aspect of the human personality in each essence, and for me the idea would be to assimilate both of them. Each strikes some sort of emotional chord in my ears. So the idea for me would be to study and go through life and come out with some sort of synthesis.

"It's not going to happen overnight. God knows I wasn't born with the gift of doing it. I've got to work at it—that's what it is about."

Warren said his friend Scott Hamilton often chides him for being overly analytical and "looking over his own shoulder." He admits to all of that, but points out that he is also a firm believer in spontaneity, in taking risks even "if it doesn't always come off great. Looseness and blind faith that something will happen—you don't have to be worrying the music to death every day. That's one part of the music I fell in love with, and one of the reasons why I love to play jazz."

It speaks well for jazz, that music of continuing surprises, that it is still capable of producing unclassifiable players like Warren Vaché, who find new and personal ways of using aspects of the jazz tradition that others may have overlooked or neglected, or never been exposed to. Eclectic he may be (and that's no sin, by the way), but uncommitted he most certainly is not. He's got his own story to tell, and one looks forward to its further unfolding. Thus far, it's been getting better with each new chapter.

db

TOM COPPI



WARREN VACHÉ SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

- IRIDESCENCE—Concord Jazz CJ-153
- JILLIAN—Concord Jazz CJ-87
- POLISHED BRASS—Concord Jazz CJ-98
- JERSEY JAZZ AT MIDNIGHT—Jersey Jazz JJ-1002
- BLUES WALK—Dreamstreet DR101
- FIRST TIME OUT—Monmouth Evergreen 7081
- with Scott Hamilton
- SKYSCRAPERS—Concord Jazz CJ-111
- IN NEW YORK CITY—Concord Jazz CJ-70
- SWINGING YOUNG SCOTT—Famous Door HL-119
- with Benny Goodman
- LIVE AT CARNEGIE HALL—London 2PS 918/19
- with Rosemary Clooney
- SINGS COLE PORTER—Concord Jazz CJ-185
- WITH LOVE—Concord Jazz CJ-144
- HERE'S TO MY LADY—Concord Jazz CJ-81
- with Concord Super Band
- CONCORD SUPER BAND II—Concord Jazz CJ-120
- AT THE NORTHSEA JAZZ FESTIVAL—Concord Jazz CJ-182
- IN TOKYO—Concord Jazz CJ-80
- with Woody Herman
- A CONCORD JAM—Concord Jazz CJ-142
- with Buddy Tate
- THE GREAT BUDDY TATE—Concord Jazz CJ-163
- with John Bunch
- JOHN'S OTHER BUNCH—Famous Door HL 114

WARREN VACHÉ'S EQUIPMENT

Warren Vaché plays a Yamaha model YCR 231 cornet with a Jerome Callett mouthpiece, and a Yamaha flugelhorn.

Next among living legends in Warren's working life came the King of Swing, Benny Goodman. "I was awed in the beginning, and I'm not blasé about it yet," he said. "I don't agree with lots of things he does, and I certainly don't ever want to act that way, but nobody's ever played like that, and he can still play his ass off. He can also be very funny.

"He has a sense of humor about everything but money. Through the years I worked with him, there were some fantastically good nights, but most of the time it was just a waste of a damn good band. You learn to think on your feet with him, though. He may start to noodle between tunes and come out playing some song you've played all your life, like *Runnin' Wild*, except that where he's been noodling is not where you're used to it on that tune. He'll come out playing *Runnin' Wild* in E. Wherever he happens to be at the time, that's where you'll play it."

Warren recalled that on his first job with Goodman he was "so nervous I could hardly talk. But Hank Jones was the nicest cat in the world and took the time to show me things."

RECORD REVIEWS

★★★★★EXCELLENT

★★★★VERY GOOD

★★★GOOD

★★FAIR

★POOR

STEVE REICH

TEHILLIM—ECM 1-1215: *TEHILLIM, PARTS 1-4.*

Personnel: Pamela Wood, Cheryl Bensman, Rebecca Armstrong, Jay Clayton, vocals; Bob Becker, Russ Hartenberger, Garry Kvistad, Gary Schall, Glen Velez, Reich, tuned tambourines, clapping, maracas, marimba, vibraphone, crotales; Virgil Blackwell, clarinet, flute; Mort Silver, clarinet, piccolo; Vivian Burdick, oboe; Ellen Bardekoff, english horn; Edmund Nieman, Nurit Tilles, electric organ; Shem Guiborry, Robert Chausow, violin; Ruth Siegler, viola; Chris Finckel, cello; Lewis Paer, bass.

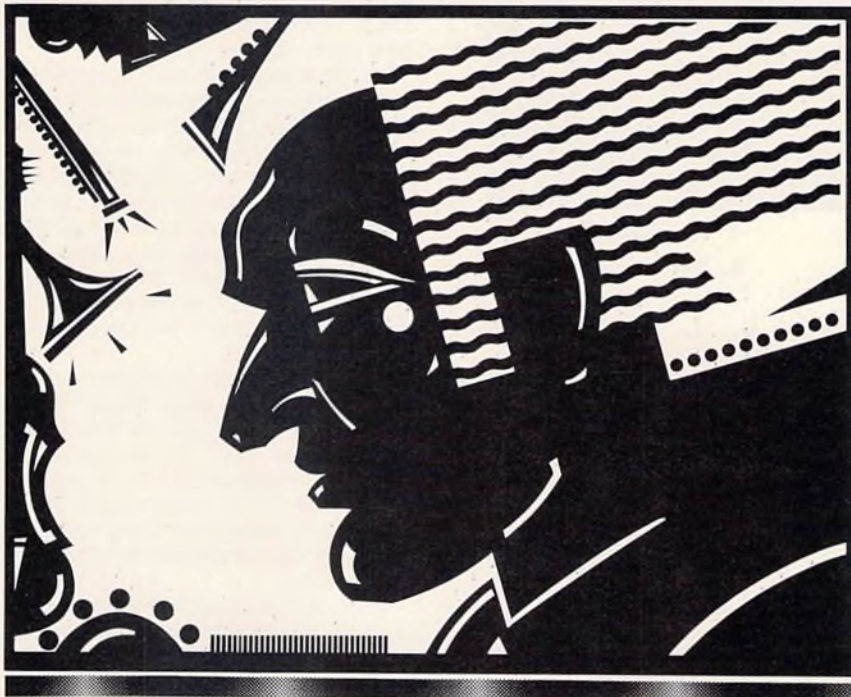
★★★★★

Even in this secular age some of our most creative music has been shot through with a spiritual force related to one religious teaching or another. John Coltrane, John McLaughlin, Krzysztof Penderecki, and Terry Riley have all couched their music in terms of spiritual beliefs. But unlike gospel music and devotional hymns that only attract the converted, their music reaches those without any specific religious grounding. It abstracts their spiritual consciousness and in the process strips it of rhetorical baggage down to a more penetrating essence. One does not have to be a follower of Sri Chinmoy, Guruji, or Christ in order to be compelled by the fervor in the music of these artists.

Steve Reich's music has never been devoid of passion or spirituality, but in creating a musical setting for four Psalms, *Tehillim* (Hebrew for *Psalms*) he places these aspects in the foreground. Yet, even though rooted in the words and language of Judaism, the real force of *Tehillim* lies in the music. As sung in Hebrew, the words are unintelligible to most listeners, hence it is not the words, but the sound of the words themselves that must speak and transcend the limitations of language.

Tehillim works not as a religious exposition but as an uplifting sound experience. It is Reich's most "classical" work to date, with four symphonic-style movements progressing in a linear fashion that differs from the spiral design of Reich's previous works. *Tehillim* continues Reich's evolution towards a richer coloristic and orchestral palette, but many of the devices are the same. The cyclical percussion that has been a trademark of Reich's since *Drumming* is still heard underpinning *Tehillim*, though it now sounds more like a small Renaissance percussion troupe rather than a gamelan orchestra. The Renaissance effect is continued in the choir, voiced in four female parts that alternately echo each other with Reich's delay techniques, or intertwine in a circular counterpoint.

Reich has given full reign to his melodic sensibilities, with melodies becoming more complex and embellished as they pass through different instrumental and vocal groupings. Coupled with the passing drones of the organs and strings, it creates the same



DAVID CSICSKO

translucent phase-shifting effect heard on *Music For A Large Ensemble* and back to his late 60s tape piece, *It's Gonna Rain*.

Tehillim is a sweeping work that employs Western devices to evoke the same timeless quality that we attribute to Eastern music. The ritual rhythms and cathedral ambience fill the room with an emotional passion that is, perhaps, more direct and less cerebral than previous Reich music. —john diliberto

MILES DAVIS

LIVE AT THE PLUGGED NICKEL—Columbia C2-38266: *WALKIN'*; *AGITATION*; *ON GREEN DOLPHIN STREET*; *SO WHAT*; *THEME*; *'ROUND MIDNIGHT*; *STELLA BY STARLIGHT*; *ALL BLUES*; *YESTERDAYS*.

Personnel: Davis, trumpet; Wayne Shorter, tenor saxophone; Herbie Hancock, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Tony Williams, drums.

★★★★

Recorded in December 1965 at a cramped but congenial jazz spot in Chicago's then-thriving Old Town area, this two-record release, heretofore available only in Japan, not only gives an historically important picture of a band in transition, but also paints a revealing portrait not of Miles Davis the recording and concert superstar but of Miles the working musician, plying his trade in front of one of the most demanding jazz audiences in town.

For many, the sidemen Miles played with during this time—Shorter, Hancock, Carter, and Williams—complete the seminal Miles Davis quintet. Replacing Sam Rivers (who had briefly replaced George Coleman), Wayne Shorter had joined the group only in

1964. The entire group remained intact from that time through the middle of 1968. For those who like to keep their recording chronology straight, this release follows Miles' openly textured *ESP* and precedes the mildly frantic *Miles Smiles*.

A hot band this was. According to Hancock, when Williams joined the group, Miles sensed that the band sounded best on cymbal-scorching pieces. Appropriately, Miles kicked up the tempos on many of the compositions in his repertoire, stirring just the right seasoning in his mix. Here, two pieces from Miles' classic *Kind Of Blue* receive Williams' shots of rhythmic adrenaline. The accelerated line on *So What* must have been a fingerbuster for even a bassist having Ron Carter's facility. And the drummer's remarkable metrical shifts, cross-rhythms, and shadings of dynamics inspire everyone to dig into this super-charged etude in dorian modality. *All Blues* receives a similar treatment. Miles glances at this tune's already purposefully sparse melody, while tossing off nonchalant scalar embellishments. Then, de-muting his trumpet, he launches into an aggressive, behind-the-beat solo that starts hot and burns hotter. Williams fans the flames. Miles led this band, but Williams took charge of the rhythm section.

In addition to his flat-out jazz vehicles, Miles also looked backwards to some serviceable standards. *On Green Dolphin Street* opens with Davis' punchy, muted trumpet, a sonority which, happily, he is currently again exploring. Then with open horn jabs, flutters, half-valve distractions, and other carefully exploited devices of tension-and-release, he artfully boxes the song into submission. Wayne Shorter's approach, though, is less

RECORD REVIEWS



**T. Akiyoshi
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effective. His tendency to use the time-tested strategy of gradually warming his solos from cool to hot is simply overshadowed by Miles' consistently high energy levels.

Two other pieces of Davis' standard fare wrap up this session. *Round Midnight* opens with Miles' uncertain, perhaps intentionally blasé phrases. Fortunately, the music coheres when Miles socks into the traditional send-off strain. *Stella By Starlight* follows. Shorter's statements are pointed and direct here. And, as in Miles' later bands, the group's level of concentration is so intense that Miles seems able to cue shifts in intensity with one trenchant, well-placed inflection.

Hancock and Carter, unfortunately, are the weak sisters on this date. Discounting *So What's* head, Carter gets no solo space. Hancock fares better, but his role on this session is downplayed (and his piano is slightly undermiked). This is quite a contrast to the forceful way in which Davis used such pianists as Red Garland and Wynton Kelly in earlier bands.

Minor blemishes aside, for fans of this band who never heard it in an intimate club, this is required listening. For those, like this reviewer, who remember nights like these at the long-gone Plugged Nickel, this is welcome, not only as a bit of nostalgia but also as exciting, compelling, timeless music.

—jon balleras

STRING TRIO OF NEW YORK

COMMON GOAL—Black Saint BSR 0058:

MULTIPLE REASONS; SPACE WALK; SAN SAN NANA; BETWEEN THE LINES; COMON GOAL; EXTENSIONS AND EXCEPTIONS.

Personnel: Billy Bang, violin, yokobue flute, gong; James Emery, guitar, soprano guitar; John Lindberg, bass.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

BILLY BANG

LIVE AT GREEN SPACE—Amina 2BT-7B:

ALABAMA AFRICAN; CLOSER TO THE FLOWERS; VIOPARI; LEGEND OF THE LAWMEN; ALOUTTE.

Personnel: Bang, violin, African thumb piano, bells; Charles Tyler, alto, baritone saxophone, harmonica, bells.

★ ★ ★

RAINBOW GLADIATOR—Soul Note SN 1016:

RAINBOW GLADIATOR; EBONY MINSTREL MAN; NEW YORK AFTER DARK; BROKEN STRINGS; YAA-WOMAN BORN ON THURSDAY; BANG'S BOUNCE.

Personnel: Bang, violin; Charles Tyler, alto, baritone saxophone; Michele Rosewoman, piano; Wilber Morris, bass; Dennis Charles, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Billy Bang has emerged from the relatively small pack of improvising violinists, synthesizing the fiddler's art with the structuralism of Leroy Jenkins in a way that is very much in

step with the neoclassical resurgence in jazz. Certainly, Bang's efforts to be a violinist for all seasons has had its successes, but he has yet to issue an indispensable album under his own name, and his eclecticism still occasionally works against him.

Much of Bang's most cogent work has been with the String Trio of New York, which is innocuously breaking new ground in chamber jazz. The vitality of his partnership with James Emery and John Lindberg is superbly represented on *Common Goal*, whose release within a year of the equally excellent *Area Code 212* (Black Saint BSR 0048) attests to the Trio's immense resources. Whether elegantly expanding upon string band "dawgma" (*Multiple Reasons*, Lindberg's airy yet somber ballad), giving textures native to composers from Bartok on a call-and-response earthiness and explosive power (Bang's *Space Walk*), or propelling a quirky ostinato with the heft of a larger, lower-registered ensemble (Emery's *Between The Lines*, a good example of how Bang interpolates Ornette Coleman's approach to the violin without sacrificing intensity for technical control), the String Trio of New York offers the listener a more challenging set than Bang often does on his own dates.

Bang's duo set with Charles Tyler, the underheralded associate of Albert Ayler, is marred by the opening excursion for thumb piano and harmonica, and the stilted *Aloutte*. Otherwise, *Live At Green Space* is a clearly detailed close-up of the front line of Bang's quintet. Tyler's intonation and articulation have vastly improved since his ESP dates, and his ideas have grown accordingly. His interplay with Bang is taut and incessant and for the remainder of the program—Tyler's stately, Euro-flavored *Legend* and Bang's percolating *Viopari* and *Closer To The Flowers*, which is more heated and angular than the title implies—the material merits their talents.

Rainbow Gladiator is a confirmation of the present neoclassicist position, forwarded by Lee Jeske in his notes as an amalgamation of traditions. Bang flirts with the position's liability of undercutting originality but never falls prey to it. In essence, *Bang's Bounce* is an old-timey stomp, *New York After Dark* connects the rhythmic nuances of stride and swing (delineated in Michele Rosewoman's fine unaccompanied intro), and the title piece evokes Michael White's work with Pharoah Sanders and others. Each composition and performance reflects Bang's inclusive (and, for the '80s, appropriate) view of tradition. Yet, there is a congeniality within the quintet that removes a measure of the material's paper-cutting sharpness (this is surprisingly true of Dennis Charles, whose pounding intro to Cecil Taylor's *Air* remains a milestone of post-bop drumming). *Rainbow Gladiator* suggests that Bang's meteoric rise in the press is a step ahead of his real progress as a violinist, composer, and, perhaps most importantly, leader. But only a step.

—bill shoemaker

FRANK ZAPPA

SHUT UP 'N PLAY YER GUITAR—Barking Pumpkin W3X 38289: FIVE-FIVE-FIVE; HOG HEAVEN; SHUT UP 'N PLAY YER GUITAR; WHILE YOU WERE OUT; TREACHEROUS CRETINS; HEAVY DUTY JUDY; SOUP 'N OLD CLOTHES; VARIATIONS ON THE CARLOS SANTANA SECRET CHORD PROGRESSION; GEE, I LIKE YOUR PANTS; CANARSIE; THE DEATHLESS HORSIE; SHUT UP 'N PLAY YER GUITAR SOME MORE; PINK NAPKINS; BEAT IT WITH YOUR FIST; RETURN OF THE SON OF SHUT UP 'N PLAY YER GUITAR; PINOCCHIO'S FURNITURE; WHY JOHNNY CAN'T READ; STUCCO HOMES; CANARD DU JOUR.

Personnel: Zappa, guitar, bouzouki (cut 20); Denny Walley, Ike Willis, Steve Vai, Ray White, Warren Cucurullo, rhythm guitar; Tommy Mars, Peter Wolf, Bob Harris, Andre Lewis, Eddie Jobson, keyboards; Arthur Barrow, Patrick O'Hearn, Roy Estrada, bass; Vinnie Colaiuta, Terry Bozzio, drums; Ed Mann, percussion; Jean-Luc Ponty, baritone violin (20).

★ ★ ★ ★

After nearly two decades of unusual shenanigans, no one expects Frank Zappa to do *anything* the way other rock musicians do things. If another rock star released three albums worth of guitar solos, one would wonder if that musician had slipped right over the edge. But when Frank Zappa does it, it's just business as usual.

Originally available by mail order only, *Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar* focuses solely on Frank Zappa, lead guitarist extraordinaire. That's it. No lyrics. No funny voices. No soft-core porn. No rude remarks. Just one hour, 40 minutes, 59 seconds of the man with the moustache and goatee improvising over a variety of grooves: reggae, mutant blues, jazz-rock, rock, etc. And, just to let you know right up front, most of this stuff is simply great!

As a guitarist, Zappa has always demonstrated a highly disciplined approach to the extended solo rarely found in a rock context. On these records his solos are extremely well thought out; each proceeds like the plot of a well-structured short story. Zappa has long flaunted his brain, and here, freed from his occasionally questionable humor (and the need to shock), one gets a lengthy dose of the Zappa intellect.

Zappa has a truly unique guitar sound. He gets a piercing, mercurial, slightly sinister tone that hints at life's darker secrets. He can play dirty and distorted (remember *My Guitar Wants To Kill Your Mama?*), sending spiked chunks of raw noise through a song, then suddenly shift to an elegant, clean attack: notes falling from his guitar like gold pieces through the fingers of some mythic king. Here Zappa demonstrates that he's got speed, technique, ideas, textures, and versatility. The uninterrupted eight-minute-plus solo that dominates *Return Of The Son Of Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar* presents some of the most exquisite rock guitar I've ever heard.

All three albums contain gems that anyone interested in lots of great guitar (uninterrupted by messy things like lyrics and vo-

cals) will find fascinating. A few highlights: *Pink Napkins* may sound off-color, but it's actually a mellow blues that finds Zappa in a reflective, philosophical mood. *While You Were Out* is a loose, atmospheric jam with Zappa and drummer Vinnie Colaiuta engaged in an exotic dance for guitar and drums. *Beat It With Your Fist*, on the other hand, features a rapid-fire attack that sounds like a rattlesnake bite must feel. In *Ship Ahoy* Zappa employs a wah-wah pedal. If you thought you never again wanted to hear

anyone use one of those dated devices, this five-minute number will convince you that in Zappa's hands, at least, even the most cliched of effects can be twisted to reveal something new.

Throughout these three records, drummers Terry Bozzio and Vinnie Colaiuta provide wonderful, dynamic counterpoints to Zappa's intense riffing. Both of them play like soloists in many instances, making parts of this set sound more like jazz than rock.

—michael goldberg



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RECORD REVIEWS

FRANK ROSOLINO

THE FRANK ROSOLINO SEXTET—Affinity AFF61: RAGAMUFFIN; EMBRACEABLE YOU; I'M GONNA SIT RIGHT DOWN AND WRITE MYSELF A LETTER; FRECKLES; BOO BOO BE BOOP; THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC; BESAME MUCHO; LINDA; FRANK N' EARNEST; CARIOCA; YO YO; PENNIES FROM HEAVEN.

Personnel: Rosolino, trombone, vocals; Sam Noto, trumpet; Charlie Mariano, alto saxophone; Claude Williamson (cuts 1-3), Pete Jolly (4-6), piano; Curtis Counce (1-3), Max Bennett (4-6), bass; Stan Levey (1-3), Mel Lewis (4-6), drums.

★ ★ ★

FRANKLY SPEAKING—Affinity AFF69: FRENESI; RHYTHM RASCALS; MOONLIGHT IN VERMONT; THE MISSUS; THERE'S NO YOU; OUR DELIGHT; NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO DREAM OF YOU; TAPS MILLER; SLAN; STAIRWAY TO THE STARS; KINGFISH.

Personnel: Rosolino, trombone, vocals; Charlie Mariano, alto saxophone; Walter Norris, piano; Max Bennett, bass; Stan Levey, drums.

★ ★ ★

HOWARD RUMSEY'S LIGHTHOUSE ALL-STARS: MUSIC FOR LIGHTHOUSEKEEPING—

Contemporary S7528: LOVE ME OR LEVEY; TAXI WAR DANCE; OCTAVIA; MAMBO LAS VEGAS; JUBILATION; I DEAL; LATIN FOR LOVERS; TOPSY.

Personnel: Rosolino, trombone; Howard Rumsey, bass; Bob Cooper, tenor saxophone; Conte Candoli, trumpet; Sonny Clark, piano; Stan Levey, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

THINKING ABOUT YOU—Sackville 2014:

SWEET AND LOVELY; WHO CAN I TURN TO; 'ROUND MIDNIGHT; I THOUGHT ABOUT YOU.

Personnel: Rosolino, trombone; Ed Bickert, guitar; Don Thompson, bass; Terry Clarke, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

IN DENMARK—Vantage LP 507: QUIET NIGHTS; WALTZ FOR DIANE; HOW ABOUT YOU; THERE IS NO GREATER LOVE.

Personnel: Rosolino, trombone; Thomas Clausen, piano; Bo Stief, bass; Bjarne Rostvold, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

Rosolino, a mainstay of the Los Angeles jazz scene, died tragically by his own hand in November 1978. He was a classy soloist in the tradition of J. J. Johnson, playing with a facile, often stunning technique and a robust, permeating sound. These discs document his mid-'50s work, as well as two nights toward the end of his life, and they reveal a performer concerned with giving the music life, enthusiasm, and swing.

Sextet is a likable, though unremarkable, 1954 date. The eclectic program ranges from good blowing tunes to forgettable pop items like *Linda*, plus a ballad and two vocals. Arranger Bill Holman's writing is often of the cool variety that was a mark of West Coast jazz, but it swings and is at times forceful and stimulating. Most pieces run about three minutes, the exception being *Frank*, where

Mariano demonstrates his fluid control and Noto plays with a bristling, full sound whose slightly ragged edges lend additional tonal color. *Embraceable* shows Rosolino fleet of hand, turning phrases around on a dime with a swarthy, distinctive sound. Other highlights here include *Freckles*, where Williamson speaks eloquently in the manner of Bud Powell, and *Letter*, where the horns are zestful.

The 1955 *Frankly Speaking*, another date with a variety of material and short takes, shows that the style and personal voice that Rosolino exhibited throughout his career were established early on. He shines on *You* and *Stairway*, gracing these ballads with an appropriately dusky sound. He builds his solos by alternating relaxed, flowing statements with bursts of staccato notes. *Our Delight* is sparked by brisk solos from the leader and Mariano and an ensemble chorus from composer Tadd Dameron's original arrangement. *Frenesi* is also well written, latin for the head and 4/4 for the solos, Levey's crisp cymbal work buoying it all.

The trombonist is moderately featured on *Lighthouse*, a 1956 set that is recommended for the playing of pianist Sonny Clark, another Powell disciple who is a constant joy. His clean, deliberate, very musical ideas make *I Deal* go way beyond a simple blues. Rosolino plays as if he left his technique at home, scuffling on the fast *Love Me* and *Mambo*, but turning smart and commanding on the medium tempo of both *Topsy* and *Latin For Lovers*. Cooper and Candoli certainly have their moments.

Thinking is an excellent set, with four standards played splendidly. The trio, spotlighting Bickert's sweet, Hall/Raney sound, offers a muted atmosphere that Rosolino revels in, working amongst his cohorts, not on top of them. The guitarist, bassist Thompson, and drummer Clarke are superlative accompanists; they make this session happen. *I Thought* is taken medium up and very strongly, Rosolino throwing out hearty, rhythmically vital lines. *'Round Midnight* has a Monkish feel, and here Rosolino hits jagged, clipped phrases, then contrasts with smooth, round ones. The tune grows softer until, after Thompson's solo, Rosolino breaks in with a startling high G. Bickert's ability to switch suddenly from single- to multiple-string lines is always a pleasure to hear. This brace of stretched-out takes was recorded live in Toronto and the sound is superb.

On the other hand, *In Denmark's* sound is terrible, with continuous pops and nicks, but get past that and you've got a treat. This live date is more of a bash-out than the Sackville affair, as Clausen's trio creates not-so-subtle heat behind the leader on *Waltz*, a fast minor blues, and the medium-up *Quiet Nights*. On both tunes the trombonist sounds right at home, reexamining his short, intense ideas from several viewpoints, sporting a broad, guttural tone. Clausen is a nimble dancer, with Oscar Peterson's technique and Herbie Hancock's harmonies, but he hasn't a voice of his own. Still, his solos are powerful and

well developed. Drummer Rostvold likes to go heavy on the ride cymbal, but that pays off with high energy performances.

—zan stewart

LES HOOPER BIG BAND

RAISIN' THE ROOF—Jazz Hounds JHR0004:

RESIDUAL FIRE DANCE; RAISIN' THE ROOF;
COFFEE AND CASTANETS; I WANT A LITTLE GIRL;
PAVANNE; CHICKENYARD SOCIAL; SAYING
GOODBYE; EL IMPROV GRANDE.

Personnel: Hooper, keyboards; Kim Richmond, Dan Higgins, Steve Kujala, Glen Garrett, John Mitchell, reeds; Nelson Hart, Rick Baptist, Ron King, Larry Lunetta, trumpet, flugelhorn; Bob Sanders (cuts 1, 2, 5, 8), John Leys (3, 4, 6, 7), Bruce Otto, Alan Kaplan, Mike Sexton, trombone; Nick Brown, guitar; Dave Stone, bass; Steve Houghton (1-4, 6, 7); Gary Miller (5, 8), drums; Efrain Toro, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LADD McINTOSH BIG BAND

ENERGY—Sea Breeze SB 2007: SUITE MESA (A

LITTLE LEFT-HANDED GROIN MUSIC, PLIZ;
TRANSPARENCIES—STONED SEX AT 3 AM; LAST
DAY OF A PANIC); LITTLE FLANNIE'S DOOZITS;
KILLER JOE; LA PENULTIMA; HEY BABE, WAH YEW
SO FONKY.

Personnel: Joe Farrell, Jon Crosse, Steve Fowler, Jim Snodgrass, Mike Nelson, Mike Galbraith, reeds; Joe Davis, Ron Vermillion, Dave Cushman, Bobby Pickwood, Rich Cooper, trumpet, flugelhorn; Jeff Enloe, Bruce Otto, Bruce Fowler, Don Bowyer, trombone; Fred Schwam, keyboards; Jimmy Johnson, electric bass; Scott Page, drums; Del Blake, percussion, vibes.

★ ★ ★ ★

OLLIE MITCHELL'S SUNDAY BAND

BLAST OFF—Pausa 7128: BLAST OFF;

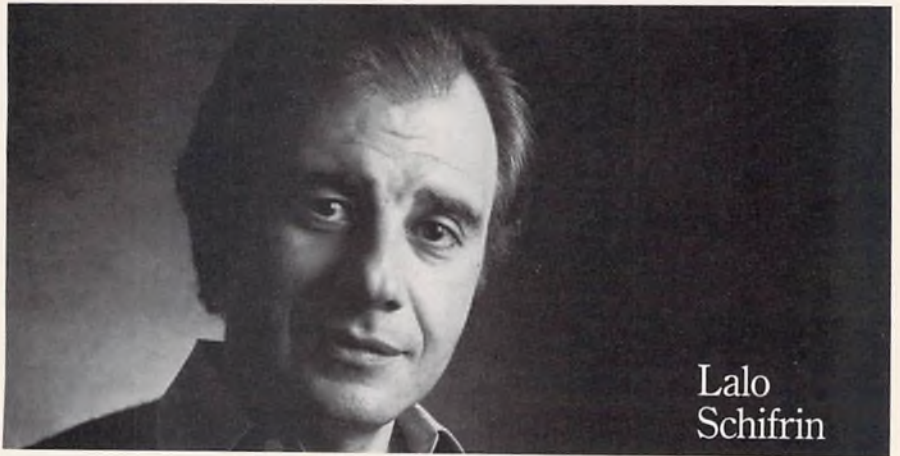
SALVATION; DOWN THE LINE; RAINBOW RIDE;
ANTIPHOSIS I; SWING YOUR THING; FANTASY
NIGHTS; EMPIRE STRIKES BACK.

Personnel: Gary Herbig (1-4), Dave Deichman (5-8), Steve Leeds, Bruce Eskovitz, Jerry Peterson, saxophones; Larry Hall (5-8), Ron King, Ralf Rickert, Charlie Davis, Paul Salvo, trumpet; Les Benedict (1-4), Mike Millar (5-8), Art Dragon, Chris Riddle, Jon Bonine, trombone, Dennis Herring, Tim Weston, guitar; Kevin Bassinson, keyboards; Peter Freiberger, bass; Evan Caplan (5-8), Claude Pepper, drums; Darrell Harris (1-4), Doug Dean (5-8), Paul Goldfield, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ½

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West Coast aggregations, which used to be identified by mellowness, glamour, and slickness. Musical geography has become less certain lately. There are the pervasive influences of rock (cum electronics) and latin music, television and movie scores, and rehearsal and school stage bands modeled after the sounds of Stan Kenton (a West Coastster, the jazz Wagner) and Thad Jones (Basie steeped in New York ideas).

Mitchell's Sunday (rehearsal) Band is (at least on this album) mostly a circus band. Its brassy, hard-hitting horns and relentless rhythm section (rockish and unsuited) owe more to fusion packaging than to jazz verities. Tenor saxophonist Bruce Eskovitz' title cut is a good overture to the roaring, pounding music which follows. Pat Rizzo's *Salvation*, with its chicken-scratching guitar interplay and popping brass, is a hip, danceable item, and Eskovitz' *Fantasy Nights* begins well with a hanging Gil Evansish ensemble and a latin undercurrent. *Swing Your Thing* is corny in places, and the others show ample horns but are hardly memorable. One appreciates the band for its chops, but the program lacks variety and dynamic contrast. Too... blasting.

The piledriver thud of Mitchell's band is replaced by subtlety, exoticism, ever-shifting colors, and rangy dynamics on the McIntosh album. The leader's tonal palette mesmerizes: flutes opening like a desert flower to reveal Enloe's warm trombone on *Suite Mesa*, the sumptuous bridge on Benny Golson's *Killer Joe* (the only non-McIntosh composition here), Johnson's lyrical electric bass and the wistful saxophone writing on *La Penultima*, the shades of blue on *Little Flannier's* and *Hey Babe*. The rhythm section rises and falls fluidly, lightly. Soloists (standouts include flutist Farrell on *Killer Joe*, tenor saxophonist Snodgrass in several wrenching outings, trumpeters Pickwood and Davis, and drummer Page in tasteful kicks and fills) emerge as alternate energy sources—all part of McIntosh's very original-sounding designs. A beautiful writer, McIntosh.

Hooper's album takes the award for swing, eclecticism, and clear melodicism. McIntosh's approach is symphonic; Hooper's has more jazz feeling (and he also paints vividly with various instrumental combinations). The rich impressionism of Gabriel Faure's *Pavanne* haunts. A Basieish glow emanates from *I Want A Little Girl* (nice soulful alto here by Richmond, too) Several funky developments (wiggling, Thad Jones-like polyphony on *Residual*, rhythmic strutting on *Chickensyard*, electric bass-lumescent riffs on the title cut) are memorable, grooving, and jazzy. *Coffee* and *El Improvo* are Spanish-tinged. Catch Kujala's flute flight on the former and the collective ad-lib on the latter. *Saying Goodbye* features King's smooth flugelhorn in a made-for-tv theme. Drummers Houghton and Miller bring a healthy brand of modern swing to everything, vitally enhancing Hooper's charts. *This* is a jazz band.

—owen cordle

STEVE LACY

SNAKE-OUT—hat Music 3501: *NO BABY; BLINKS; A CASE OF PLUS 4'S; SNAKE-OUT.*

Personnel: Lacy, soprano saxophone; Mal Waldron, piano.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

BALLETS—hat Art 1982/83: *HEDGES; (HEDGES; SQUIRREL; FOX I; FOX II; RABBIT; SHAMBLES); THE 4 EDGES; (OUTLINE; UNDERLINE; COASTLINE; DEADLINE).*

Personnel: Lacy, soprano saxophone, foot gong, voice, bells; Steve Potts, alto, soprano saxophone; Bobby Few, keyboards; Irene Aebi, cello, violin, voice; Jean-Jacques Avenel, bass; Oliver Johnson, drums, percussion.

★ ★ ★

Steve Lacy is an awesome figure: he is one of the finest jazz improvisers alive, an interesting and original composer, and one of the most prolific of all jazz talents. Lacy's albums don't come out one at a time—they come out seemingly by the dozen: on big labels, on small labels, on labels that are nearly impossible to find. The reason for this is twofold—Lacy is a restless composer who likes to see his music documented, so he almost always agrees to record; and Lacy is easy to record, since he comes in so many varieties—solo, duo, with his highly original sextet, etc. Here hat Hut gives us three sides of Lacy—duo, solo, and with his own band.

Snake-Out is a joy Lacy and Mal Waldron are both graduates of the Thelonious Monk school of music—they know well the use of dissonance, space, and humor, and both have an inbred rhythmic undertow. Lacy's twisted-ribbon solos are particularly pungent, overlaid on Waldron's dense, funky, chordal cushion. There is a merry, gay feeling to the session—Waldron happily chords his heart out, using a repetitive bass like a salsa band, and Lacy works his splendid variations on little fragments of phrases. Lacy's playing here is vocal and bluesy and open—on Waldron's *Case Of Plus 4's*, the sopranoist growls and oinks and chirps and barks over the pianist's jackhammer chords. There is an intensity here reminiscent of Eastern musics—Waldron's playing is spirited and deliberately trancelike. This album is all of a piece, well integrated, and the whole thing swings like crazy.

Ballets is more problematic. It is a double album that should never have been one—the first album is solo Lacy, the second is the sextet and the two records seem to be only marginally related (the music on the first was used to accompany a dancer, as was some of the music on the second).

The first album is called *Hedges* and it is Lacy at his less-than-best. First of all, this was recorded live while accompanying a solo dancer—we hear the pitter-pat of feet and it is quite apparent that Lacy is *collaborating* with him. We are left with half a performance; something is certainly missing. There is some of Lacy's lovely minimalist playing—he twists fragments around and around into little

Gertrude Stein-like musical poems—but there is an overabundance of his extra-tonal effects: whispers, moans, split-tones. A large segment of the record is played off-mic and although the church where the album was recorded gives a nice, echoey effect, something is lost. The whole project doesn't transfer that well and what we are left with is Steve Lacy's intensity minus the sculpted beauty of his best solo work.

The second album, *The 4 Edges*, is more up-to-snuff. There are quizzical, querulous conversations between two sopranos (Lacy and the underrated Steve Potts); flapping, tinkly piano chords from Few; Irene Aebi's zipping, stumpy cello and violin work; and typically unusual, droll vocals from Lacy and Aebi—one a Buddhist mantra and the other a vocalization of the chemical formula for marijuana (really). Lacy truly uses every member of the sextet—none of the players' capabilities are lost on him. And the music is, for the most part, vibrant—especially the peaceful *Coastline* and the mad-dash *Deadline*. However, there are a number of dull spots here and I, personally, prefer some of Lacy's earlier albums with his quintet and sextet. But there is no need to fret—there are probably nine or 10 more Lacy albums about to be released.

—lee jeske

JACK WALRATH

REVENGE OF THE FAT PEOPLE—Stash ST 221: *REVENGE OF THE FAT PEOPLE*; *DUKE ELLINGTON'S SOUND OF LOVE*; *BEER!*; *SLIDING DOORS*; *PIGGY LOVE*; *BLUES IN THE GUTS*.

Personnel: Walrath, trumpet; Ricky Ford, tenor saxophone; Michael Cochrane, piano; Cameron Brown, bass; Mike Clark, drums.

★ ★ ★

MONTANA

MONTANA—Labor LAB-5: *RON'S BLUES*; *WOLFGANG OF ARABIA*; *WHAT A THING*; *WHERE HAVE I BEEN HERE BEFORE?*; *GREY AND BLUE*; *MONTANA*; *REMEMBRANCE*; *SEPER B*; *A NOD OR A WINK*.

Personnel: Jack Walrath, trumpet, flugelhorn; Chuck Florence, tenor, soprano saxophone; Bob Nell, piano; Kelly Roberts, bass; Jim Honaker, drums.

★ ★ ½

For his second album as a leader, trumpeter Jack Walrath has teamed up with another no-jive, hard-swinging Mingus alum, tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford. *Revenge* is a bristling, two-listed horn-centered outing with allusions to the shimmering drive of Trane, the playfulness of Monk, and the churchiness of Mingus. Walrath wrote four of the tunes; pianist Michael Cochrane and Mingus contribute one each. The enigmatic title suggests Walrath's style—rubicund, fleshy, brash. Indeed, he plays like a fat man possessed, if not by the spirit of revenge, then by some overpowering passion. He carves original melodies out of the air like an acrobat. His tone could fill a circus tent

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THEORY AND MUSICIANSHIP FOR THE CREATIVE JAZZ IMPROVISER

by michael longo



RECORD REVIEWS

Walrath likes to pit fast, riffish lines against counter-rhythms. The title cut gathers heat not only from its breakneck tempo and spooky, descending half-steps, but also from three-against-two shotgun piano. The tune you come away humming, though, is *Beer!*, with its Monkish intro, pounding, square-time piano, bawdy-house backbeat, and jokey, "what next?" fermatas. Listen to the way Walrath grabs those changes as they drop by. He and Ford engage in some friendly, "outside" roughhouse here, but, as elsewhere, it is more decorative than structural. *Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love* catches perfectly that bittersweet Mingus sound, with Ricky Ford's curly phrasing and rich, Ben Websterish warmth an asset.

But the material on *Revenge* isn't consistent. *Piggy Love*, a grabby enough jazz-rock vehicle, catches my ear from the kitchen, but wilts under scrutiny; *Blues In The Guts*' clever counter-meters begin to feel like just a device; the dark, driving engine of Cochrane's *Sliding Doors* keeps whispering "McCoy, McCoy." (It speeds up, too, during Mike Clark's nevertheless musical, intelligent drum solo.)

In general, Walrath's celebratory enthusiasm carries *Revenge*. Not always so on his slightly homemade-sounding record with former home-state cohorts, *Montana*. Saxophonist Chuck Florence, an individualistic tenor stylist, whose unarticulated runs and

burry subtones sometimes recall Archie Shepp, has a thin, harsh soprano sound. Bassist Kelly Roberty doesn't occupy the space, he just describes it. Drummer Jim Honaker doesn't always have enough stuff for the Elvin backdrop he's trying to paint. And a bebopped light song (University of Montana's?) is funny only once. But Bob Nell is a catchy composer (*Seper B* and *Grey And Blue*) and a splashy, Daddy Longlegs on the keyboard.

Walrath's tunes and solos shine brightest. His extended *Wolfgang Of Arabia* builds from phone-dialing noise and colorist percussion through brooding solos over a caravan bass pulse, to a triumphant melody near the end. Great stuff. On the trumpet showcase, *Where Have I Been Here Before?*, Walrath half-valves, squirts, and sprays his way to the stars. His statement of the melody here alone qualifies him as a world-class player. But most of this record, though it feels good in places, lacks the crisp authority of journeyman jazz. —paul de Barros

GEORGE DUKE

THE 1976 SOLO KEYBOARD ALBUM—Epic FE 38208: *MR. MCFREEZE; LOVE REBORN; EXCERPTS FROM THE OPERA TZINA; SPOCK GETS FUNKY; PATHWAYS; VULCAN MIND PROBE; THE DREAM THAT ENDED.*

Personnel: Duke, acoustic piano, Rhodes electric piano, Mini-Moog, Arp Odyssey, Prophet V, bells, guitar, drums, clavinet, tambourine, Wurlitzer electric piano, Hammond B3 organ.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

With a title like *The 1976 Solo Keyboard Album*, and album cover art depicting a solitary baby grand, you might get the wrong impression about this latest George Duke release. It's definitely not one of those musty

vault finds, and it's not an esoteric set of acoustic piano meanderings either.

While previously released only in Europe and Japan, some of us in the U.S. are nevertheless lucky enough to have a copy of the original MPS Records version of this material. First released in '76 as *The Dream* (one cut has appeared on two other Duke LPs), the album stands as one of the most fulfilling Duke projects to date. And Epic's new, remixed edition sparkles more brightly than ever.

Far from an unaccompanied piano showcase, Duke's solo disc finds him accompanying himself on a bank of layered synthesizers, plus sporadic guitar, drums, and percussion. The album opener, *Mr. McFreeze*, represents the first—and only—attempt by Duke to play drums on record (with expert tutoring from Leon Ndugu Chancler and Chester Thompson). It's a fast fusion challenge too, with elaborate keyboards just managing to overshadow the man's debut on skins.

Next, in fact, comes an acoustic piano reprieve, a diverse work of impressionistic beauty called *Love Reborn*. As on the album-closing *The Dream That Ended* and segments of *Pathways*, this piano cut demonstrates a real feel for the ivories even at a time when Duke was running wild with electronics.

Speaking of which, Duke pulls off synthesizer work of note on this LP, gravitating between the space funk mode ("I was caught up in Star Trek fever in 1976," he tells us) and more extensive combinations of jazz and classical ideas. *Spock Gets Funky* and *Vulcan Mind Probe* sound sillier on paper than they do emanating from stereo speakers. And *Excerpts From The Opera Tzina* is a mysterious and impressive use of darker electronic hues, quite memorable and beautifully played.



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Working in this album are the influences of everything from Zappa to McLaughlin to Captain Kirk, and one can see, if only from the song titles, that Duke was destined to work with Stanley Clarke. It's one of the best looks we've had at his multifaceted instrumental abilities, and if you've never heard this 1976 material, consider it the George Duke missing link.
—*Robert Henschel*

ODEAN POPE

ALMOST LIKE ME—Moers Music 01092: *ELIXIR; ALMOST LIKE ME; MULTIPHONICS; SCORPIO TWINS; NO AIR; KYLE'S THEME; MWALIMU; GOOD QUESTION.*

Personnel: Pope, tenor saxophone; Gerald Veasley, electric bass; Cornell Rochester, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

Odean Pope belongs to a generation of John Coltrane-inspired reedmen who came of age under the coeval influence of rhythm & blues and avant garde jazz. The reconciliation of the two genres was one of the stated motives for the formation, some 10 years ago, of a fusion combo called Catalyst, which included Pope on tenor, flute, and oboe, together with fellow Philadelphians Eddie Green and Sherman Ferguson. After a series of albums for Muse, the fusion bubble burst and Catalyst disbanded. Pope, who had

previously toured with organist Jimmy McGriff, went on to replace Billy Harper in the Max Roach Quartet, where he honed his chops on bebop changes and adapted his modal yodel to the tonal nuances of an older tenor tradition.

With his new trio, Pope has emerged as a major figure in the neo-funk idiom pioneered by Blood Ulmer and Shannon Jackson. Unlike such born-again funksters as Oliver Lake, Pope cannot be accused of aesthetic apostasy: rather than a commercialized repudiation of an esoteric past, his present sound is simply the logical extension of his prior development. Although he has gained in confidence and maturity, his approach to the saxophone has not essentially altered since his Catalyst days; indeed, the difference would barely be perceptible if not for his updated rhythm section.

Despite his bop tutelage, Pope remains firmly in Coltrane's thrall as he winds his way through bluesy pentatonic scales, arpeggiated "sheets-of-sound" modulations, and ecstatic, coarse-grained ululations. Electric bassist Gerald Veasley combines a funky slap technique with the guitaristic acoustic bass innovations of Jimmy Garrison in an awesome display of prowess, while drummer Cornell Rochester, who has played with Ulmer and Jamaaladeen Tacuma, pays trip-hammer tribute to Art Blakey and Billy

Cobham with a relentless percussive barrage.

Pope's liltingly Trane-ish compositions are readily accessible without sacrificing artistic integrity. Accompanied by Veasley's "flamenco" chording, he exhibits a penchant for Caribbean airs, but never resorts to reggae. Even on the funkier tune, *Mwalimu*, Pope supplies his own multi-tracked Afro-chant, sans disco chorus. A lush, yet thoroughly modern, melodic sense pervades the album, as the febrile rhythms of Veasley and Rochester propel Pope's robust and resonant horn to virtuosic heights. Would that the fusion movement had taken this course the first time around.
—*Larry Birnbaum*

JAMES BLOOD ULMER

BLACK ROCK—Columbia ARC 38285: *OPEN HOUSE; BLACK ROCK; MOON BEAM; FAMILY AFFAIR; MORE BLOOD; LOVE HAVE TWO FACES; OVERNIGHT; FUN HOUSE; WE BOR.*

Personnel: Ulmer, electric guitar, vocals; Amin Ali, electric bass, vocals; Grant Calvin Weston, drums, vocals; Cornell Rochester, drums; Ronald Drayton, rhythm guitar; Sam Sanders, alto saxophone; Irene Datcher, vocals.

no rating

The eye of ethical memory is ill at ease as it plunges into this dizzying perspective, today submerged between the waves. Such are the



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RECORD REVIEWS

facts: this is Blood Ulmer's fifth album in three years and his second for Columbia. And three years later there is the profound sense of the earth no longer trembling beneath the footsteps of a giant knocking down great forests in his path. One is compelled to say this, to attempt a criticism of an artist who violently demonstrates on this album the ability to melt the ears of the most jaded listener. However, by naming the goals of his music, Ulmer comes up short, cut down by his own incredible skills.

Black Rock is Ulmer's mightiest statement on vinyl, yet it stands as a lesser achievement because it doesn't master the music it purports itself to be. Instead, this album carries on the tradition of jazz-fusion, whose objective of stretching far into the next wave has come up halting time after time by the musicians' stumbling knowledge—or appreciation, even—of half its two components: rock. What else can explain a record that offers

itself as the definition of what it is not? From captain to crew everyone gets all het up in a blizzard of brutal intensity that some may interpret as sincere emotional weight, but which still doesn't place the music at the level reached by artists of far lesser skills but with a greater understanding of the nature of the beast. Tacking harmonologies and a smothering improvisational style onto the architecture of fusion's amphetamine fusillades does not avant garde make. We have seen this building before. Recognition replaces hope.

One may argue Gustav Flaubert's claim that there is no definitive truth, "There are merely different ways of perceiving the truth." Listen to the trans-avant garde artist Francesco Clemente: "To know is to walk in a panorama, explanation after explanation, step after step. Logic and legs are not wide enough to take on the horizon." The disinterested gaze searches elsewhere

—jim brinsfield

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LJT-1-1: *CHIEF'S BLUES; LONELY TEARS; BEBOPPER'S BLUES; JUST FRIENDS; SAMBA DE BACH; BUT BEAUTIFUL; NEW YORK, NEW YORK; WAVE.*

Personnel: Todd Brock, Steve Mattox, Mike Gibbel, Gary Clem, Tim Grindheim, trumpet; Tim Hoff, Jim Kwack, Clint Anna, Jim Stalians, Bob Heller, trombone; Andrea Gilbert, Kent Smith, Tony Morris, John Whorff, Laura Nixon, saxophones; Jeannette Marrs, piano; Tim Holloway, vibraphone; Carol Chapin, bass; David Hitchins, drums; Tony Allen, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ★

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sure the "deebie" winning Hemet High School Jazz Ensemble against comparable bands of 15- to 18-year-old players. But no matter. This is a crackerjack band, even stacked up against the likes of Herman, Rich, Juggernaut, and others in the pro leagues. And this album is an excellent showcase for a remarkably precocious team of young ensemble tigers.

The brass section has sharp teeth, and the trombones particularly (five strong!) manage to put a little extra oomph and flare into certain phrases and punctuations. The saxes sound a bit thin occasionally, but manage to make a fine showing on *Beboppers Blues*, a specially commissioned piece with a challenging Benny Carterish reed passage. The skills are impressive not only en masse but occasionally in solos as well. I would single out Steve Mattox on flugelhorn on *Just Friends* because it is one of the album's few cuts that is a pure, straightahead swinger. Some of the other soloists, while skillful craftsmen, lack the heat of emotion or legato swing my own tastes respond to. There is perfection here, but without passion.

The academic incubator, with its emphasis on formal standards of technique, is perhaps not the best breeding ground for individuality and eccentricity. Indeed, the music here, while a triumph of technical excellence, is not marked by distinctiveness, personality, or style. It tends to reflect what is presently fashionable in big band scoring among jazz educators; i.e. big, splashy stabs of brass with the drummer accenting every note, a stiff rhythmic drone one or two generations removed from rock (*Chief's Blues*), and the rigid, tensed-up solos that inevitably flow from it. One would hope these players also get the chance to sink their talents into the work of Jimmy Mundy, Ellington, and certainly Benny Carter. In any case, this album serves notice that the future of big band jazz could be a swinging one. So four stars—for the future.

—john mcdonough

WOODY SHAW

LOTUS FLOWER—Enja 4018: *EASTERN JOY*; *DANCE; GAME; LOTUS FLOWER; RAHSAAN'S RUN; SONG OF SONGS.*

Personnel: Shaw, trumpet; Steve Turre, trombone, percussion; Mulgrew Miller, piano; Stafford James, bass; Tony Reedus, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

FREDDIE HUBBARD/ OSCAR PETERSON

FACE TO FACE—Pablo 2310-876: *ALL BLUES; THERMO; WEAVER OF DREAMS; PORTRAIT OF JENNY; TIPPIN'.*

Personnel: Hubbard, trumpet; Peterson, piano; Joe Pass, guitar; Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, bass; Martin Drew, drums.

★ ★

It may be time for Freddie Hubbard to take a tip from Sonny Rollins and head for the hills

for a while. Hubbard's recorded output—always considerable—has reached a fever peak in the past year. He has become a one-man record club. There are live albums, studio albums, big band and small band, funk and jazz. . . . Freddie has been spreading himself mighty thin, and it shows.

Face To Face is not a very noteworthy addition to the Hubbard catalog. It fits the usual Norman Granz formula, which has been repeated ad nauseam by now: an all-star jam session with Oscar Peterson and

Joe Pass, standard material, minimal arrangements, lots of solos. The recording job is indifferent, at best, and the record was not mastered or pressed with much care. This approach does not serve the talents of the players very well, nor does it make for very satisfying listening.

The best moments find Hubbard exploring his more lyrical side. His muted work on *Weaver Of Dreams* is tightly controlled and very pretty, and he glides through the ballad *Portrait Of Jenny* with sensitive understatement.

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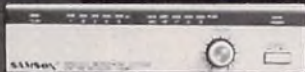
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ment. Even in this jam-session setting, an all-ballad album might have been very interesting. Unfortunately, it didn't happen, and on the uptempo tunes we are treated to variations on the Standard Freddie Hubbard Solo: smears, squeals, whinnies, and stratospheric blasts. It's technically impressive but emotionally empty.

Woody Shaw's *Lotus Flower* is a very different sort of record. It draws much of its strength from the simple fact that it was recorded by a real working group, a group that has played and grown together. The tunes were composed by members of the group and arranged to showcase the abilities of the players. Also, the music was very well recorded, and the record was mastered and pressed with obvious care. (The recording was done in New York City, but the record was manufactured in Germany.)

The virtues of this approach are obvious. The music has real coherence and internal vitality—it's clear that the musicians are used to listening to each other on the bandstand. And the group fits Shaw like a glove—he may not have the spectacular chops of Hubbard, but his style fits this music perfectly.

Shaw has a very singular, deliberate style on the horn. He tends to be a bit quirky, angling into phrases and skirting around the rhythm. The heritage of Coltrane and Dolphy is still audible in his work, but he has broadened his approach over the years. His lyricism is particularly impressive, if not always obvious. On this album, it is most evident on his composition *Song Of Songs*, a shimmering 6/8 piece that shows off the textural versatility of the quintet and captures Shaw at his best, mixing fire and poignancy in his playing.

The tunes are harmonically adventurous—often with an Eastern tinge—but consistently based on solid, swinging rhythms. The album includes an excellent remake of *Rahsaan's Run*, which first appeared on the superb *Rosewood* album in 1977. Shaw is obviously proud of this group, and he seems to be using this tune to make a deliberate comparison with the best of his earlier work.

Maybe Freddie Hubbard doesn't need a vacation after all—just a consistent, dedicated working group where his technique will have more meaningful surroundings.

—jim roberts

DEFUNKT

THERMONUCLEAR SWEAT—Hannibal HNBL
1311: *ILLUSION*; *I TRIED TO LIVE ALONE*; *BLUE BOSSA (COCKTAIL HOUR)*; *OOH BABY*; *AVOID THE FUNK*; *BIG BIRD (AU PRIVATE)*; *FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY*; *BELIEVING IN LOVE*.

Personnel: Joseph Bowie, trombone, vocals; John Mulkerin, trumpet; Richard Martin (cuts 1,8), Vernon Reid (2-7), Kelvyn Bell, guitar; Dave Hubbard, saxophone; Clarice Taylor, vocals; Kim Clarke, bass; Kenny Martin, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

The New York-based Defunkt belongs to the hazy stylistic territory settled by freewheeling

outfits Material and Jump Up and harmolodic expressionists James Blood Ulmer and Ronald Shannon Jackson. More determinedly ragged than their associates, Bowie's gang traffics heavily in roughhewn r&b, the James Brown-sired funk nourished in recent years by George Clinton and Kool And The Gang. Defunkt's mighty backbeat functions as an adequate vehicle for a dance floor denizen's rapture, but that's not their reason for being. They want us to *think* as we twirl about, be conscious of the rascally sageness behind their exploratory mixture of punk, rock, jazz, and . . . funk.

Defunkt's second record, *Thermonuclear Sweat*, follows their eponymous debut as another revelry in the shadow of the Bomb. Bowie as singer tenders some flawed jewels of punk/existential wisdom: love is fallacious, happiness equals illusion, Mammon holds us in thrall, world destruction via atomic warfare is inevitable. What elevates him above the miasma of role-playing pop mopers, the legacy spawned by Johnny Rotten's self-immolation, is the earnest sardonic edge to his vaguely tuneful tirades. He dispenses fire and brimstone on a debauched cover of the O'Jays *For The Love Of Money*, lending rage to Philadelphia-soul mogul Kenny Gamble's anti-materialism message. *Believing In Love* has the arch-ironist affecting Jimi Hendrix' vocal sensuousness for acidic lines such as "The curse is on you from the very same lips/ That you want to kiss." Similar in tone, *Avoid The Funk* turns on the use of the title as a challenge to resist the sirenic lure of the choked rhythm guitar, thumping bass, and commanding drums.

Indeed, the music is steeped in vitriol. *Money*, for example, lurches forward with a repeated guitar figure—a Morse code tocsin—goading brass and second guitar into the mindless boogie groove. Throughout the record whip-cracking rock guitars seize most of the solo space, though trumpet, trombone, and saxophone have opportunities to speak in avant garde or conventional jazz tongues. Bowie, clearly the best player, shines when he has the spotlight; he performs excitedly on Charlie Parker's *Big Bird*, a respite with Kenny Dorham's *Blue Bossa* from the neo-fusion inferno. May the cerebral and physical dance continue till the final curtain falls.

—frank-john hadley

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history. A compilation, ideally, should espouse a point of view both through its selection of performances and the annotations that accompany them. And they should deliver outstanding musical performances as well; the strength of the music compels our attention, and the underlying premise of the compilation, the intelligence with which it's been put together and annotated teach us.

None of the compilation albums under review here quite reaches that level of excellence, but each has something to recommend it. Perhaps the most completely successful are a pair of two-fer compilations from Prestige Records, **Glants Of The Blues Tenor Sax** (P-24101) and **Glants Of The Funk Tenor Sax** (P-24102). Of all instruments associated with jazz performance, the tenor saxophone is the one that seems to have lent itself most readily to popular acceptance (in more recent times, of course, the guitar has eclipsed other instruments in this respect). It speaks directly to the listener with a vocalized tonality, and the "crying" nature of the tenor's sound has been commented on since the earliest days of the instrument's use in the music. Both of these sets have been organized around its role and attendant popularity in preaching the blues. Then too, the two sets complement each other handsomely, the second taking up where the first leaves off, so that taken together they allow the listener to follow the lineage of the instrument as it has been used in modern jazz parlance by a number of its foremost popular practitioners. Both albums do admirable jobs of surveying their respective, overlapping terrains, with performances that in general have been well chosen to illustrate the albums' premises. There's not a dog among them, in fact, but there are no really outstanding performances either—ones that simply leap from the grooves and grab one's attention. A modest level of consistency, in repertoire and performance quality, are the sets' major assets.

Among the performers and selections in the *Blues* set are Arnett Cobb (*Smooth Sailing*), Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis (*I'm Just A Lucky So And So*), Hal Singer (*Blue Stompin'* and *Midnight*), Jimmy Forrest (*Bolo Blues*), Buddy Tate (*No Kiddin'*), Al Sears (*New Carnegie Blues* and *Record Hop*), and Coleman Hawkins (*Soul Blues*)—all in all, a pretty good cross-section of artists and representative performances. Solid, feelingful performances every one of them. One of the more attractive features of the set comes from the inclusion of several selections on which a number of the players featured on individual tracks are heard performing together—*Light And Lovely*, for example, brings together Cobb, Hawkins, Davis, and Tate; Forrest, King Curtis, and Oliver Nelson are heard on *Soul Street*, while *The Soul Explosion* pairs Illinois Jacquet and Frank Foster in the framework of an 11-piece band—a device that allows one to quite instructively compare playing styles rather easily.

There are some curious omissions, however. Neither John Coltrane nor Sonny Rollins is represented, yet each surely is a tenor sax "giant" who has on more than one occasion recorded blues (and quite powerful ones), whose recordings would fall within the album's overall time frame and who, more-

over, is generously represented elsewhere in the Prestige catalog. Other omissions: Dexter Gordon, Wardell Gray, Ben Webster, Lucky Thompson, James Moody, and Yusef Lateef. Still, the set offers a well-chosen repertoire of blues and blues-based performances and in general succeeds quite nicely in what it attempts to survey. Bob Porter, who compiled the package, has provided informative, knowledgeable annotations that properly focus on the performers represented.

Much the same is true of the *Funk* set, also Porter-compiled and -annotated. While each of us has his own idea of what's meant by the term, as a definable sub-genre with distinguishable features setting it off from other jazz idioms, "funk" might almost be said scarcely to exist at all. As is well indicated by the performances reprised here, funk seems little more than a continuation of the style and spirit marking those in the blues tenor album—the major and perhaps sole difference being in the greater prominence given certain stylistic conventions perceived at the time as typifying a more consciously fundamental, overtly emotional—and, hence, more purely "black"—musical expression. In light of funk's role as an adjunct of the black consciousness movement of the late 1950s and early '60s, this is understandable, but on purely musical grounds it differs remarkably little from the performance of blues and blues-oriented material by jazzmen in the period immediately prior to funk's emergence as a rallying cry for black power.

There is one element that marks the funk performances from those in the blues tenor set: the prevalence of organ and guitar in the rhythm sections, a usage that stems from the organ trio's ascendance in the late '50s and early '60s. Saxophonists featured in the set include Willis Jackson (*This'll Get To Ya* and *Tu'gether*) and Rusty Bryant (*Soul Liberation* and *Red-Eye Special*), both of whom had extensive backgrounds in r&b, Gene Ammons (a stunning *Hittin' The Jug* and *Chicago Breakdown*), Sonny Stitt (*'Nother Fu'ther*), Johnny Griffin (*Wade In The Water*), Stanley Turrentine (*Walkin'*), and Houston Person (*Goodness* and Joe Turner's r&b classic *Chains Of Love*). The performance level is actually a bit higher than that of the blues tenor album, and the caloric level considerably more so.

The very busy Porter also is responsible for assembly and annotation of the jazz volume **Okeh Jazz** (EG-37315), in Epic Records' recent series of two-fer reissues from the Okeh label (other sets in the series have dealt with Western Swing, rockabilly, rhythm & blues, soul music, and Chicago blues, of which more anon). The history of Columbia Records' Okeh subsidiary stretches back to 1918, and during the 1920s and '30s large numbers of jazz, blues, country, and other traditional music recordings were issued on the label, which was reactivated briefly in the early '50s. The period surveyed in the jazz set spans the years 1947-54 and brings together recordings by an oddly disparate group of performers: Arnett Cobb, Red Rodney, Mary Ann McCall, Johnny Griffin, Ahmad Jamal, and Wild Bill Davis. If there is a common ground to the recordings and artists, it is in the generally unpretentious nature of the

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music produced, for not one of the 28 selections can be considered of first-rank importance, although a number are certainly enjoyable. Most are of easy access, in a popular performance style rather than one that communicates the deeper expressive potentials of unalloyed jazz playing. Taken for what they are, however, they deliver value, though admittedly of a lesser sort.

The jump band approach followed by both Cobb and Griffin resulted in performances of only middling value. Cobb's at his effulgent best on the ballad *I'm In The Mood For Love*, with several others not far behind, but in the main his eight performances don't deliver that much of real jazz interest. Griffin's four entries boast stronger, more committed jazz playing, with a decided bebop cast to the younger tenorist's work, and a pair of fine Babs Gonzales vocals on Sy Oliver's *For Dancers Only* and Lionel Hampton's *Flying Home*. Red Rodney's four 1952 bop novelties possess more interest as historical curiosities than anything else, while organist Wild Bill Davis' three trio performances—*Azure Te*, *Rough Ridin'*, and *April In Paris*—influential though they undoubtedly were, have not weathered the years too well, sounding cluttered and inconclusive. Miss McCall's three 1947 vocal performances—with Howard McGhee, Dexter Gordon, Willie Smith, Jimmy Rowles, and Barney Kessel among her accompanists—are the sports in the collection, looking back to the Swing Era, and Billie Holiday in particular, rather than partaking of the modernist tendencies already at play in jazz of the period. Miss McCall's singing is delightful to hear, nonetheless, and the band and its soloists splendid. Most enjoyable of all are the six Jamal trio sides, products of his first recording sessions, full of understated, elegant pianism, subtle harmonic coloring, a restrained yet supple rhythmic ease, and a fine group rapport (guitarist Ray Crawford and bassist Eddie Calhoun rounded out the trio). They suggest nothing so much as an updated Nat Cole Trio, and their work is quietly ravishing, Jamal impressing in virtually every solo. It's easy to see how Miles Davis would have been taken with the group's approach (which formed the basis of the Davis mid-to-late 1950s quintet's rhythm section): light, airy, fresh, and resourceful. They're easily the best things in an album of greater historical than sheerly musical interest.

The *Okeh Chicago Blues* (EG 37318) set is something of a mixed bag. The first two LP sides consist of 14 single performances by artists more or less associated with the Chicago blues scene of the 1930s and '40s, and while among them are reprised some interesting titles as well as a half-dozen previously unreleased recordings, there is little rhyme or reason that can be discerned behind their selection, save their having been recorded in Chicago. If there is a theme or concept the recordings are supposed to illustrate, it escapes this listener. Compounding this confusion of purpose is the juxtaposition of these recordings, all of more or less polished urban blues, with the incipient modern electric blues of postwar bluesmen Muddy Waters and Johnny Shines, both of whose music is rooted firmly in the country blues of their native Deep South.

The early postwar blues of Chicago was reactionary rather than revolutionary in character in that it marked a return to the directly communicative, deeply emotional traditional blues of the rural South, although it was given a powerful contemporary sound through the use of amplified instruments in small ensemble settings. These 1946 recordings are poised midway between the older rural blues and the fully shaped modern styles based on them, and are welcome additions to the discographies of both Waters and Shines. (For whatever reasons, Columbia failed to release them at the time they were made, and the history of modern blues was subsequently told by the independent labels.) Complementing them are eight selections, including two previously unissued

ones, made in 1947 by singer/guitarist Big Joe Williams, accompanied by Sonny Boy Williamson (the original) on harmonica, Ramson Knowing on bass, and Judge Riley's drums, and splendid they are too, Mississippi country blues performed with plentiful spirit and emotional power.

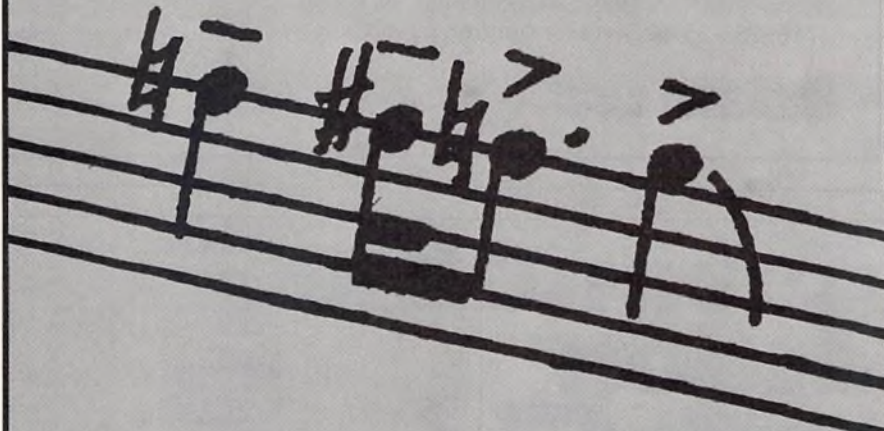
Okeh Chicago Blues contains the nuclei of two albums: the Waters, Shines, and Williams performances comprising one dealing with the country-cum-urban postwar blues; the 14 other selections surveying prewar blues recording activities in the Windy City. Jim O'Neal's fine notes notwithstanding, the twain represented by the two LPs doesn't quite meet here.

A similar confusion marks Savoy Records' *Southern Blues* (SJM-2255), volume 11 in its

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"Roots of Rock N'Roll" series, a two-fer that mixes John Lee Hooker's strong Mississippi-based music, the East Coast prewar-styled blues of singer/guitarists Little Boy Fuller (Richard Trice) and Ralph Willis, samples of New Orleans r&b by Billy Tate, Ernie K-Doe, George Stevenson, Earl King, and Little Eddie Lang, and Atlanta r&b vocalist Billy Wright. Despite the diversity of musical styles represented, the material was at least recorded during the same time frame (1947-54), and illustrates something of the multifaceted nature of black folk-based music during the important early postwar period, ranging from fundamental rural blues and ragtime styles to ones of relative sophistication.

The Hooker recordings alone are worth this album's purchase price—dark, brooding, immensely powerful and satisfying performances from his most rewarding recording period. Though neither is an important performer, Trice's four Blind Boy Fuller recreations and Willis' beautifully detailed guitar picking and fine traditional singing offer an enjoyable sampling of the ragtime-influenced blues of the Eastern Seaboard, with a high incidence of traditional lyric materials. With the exception of the amateurish vocals of Billy Tate, the 1953 and '54 New Orleans recordings are greatly satisfying examples of the buoyant brand of rhythm & blues associated with that city, and the eight performances by Billy Wright from 1950 and '51 impress with their unassuming charm, brio, and surefooted rhythmic power in a style that fuses elements of jump music, blues, r&b, and incipient soul music. If not an essential collection, *Southern Blues* is an interesting, varied, and generally enjoyable one that, in addition, fills some discographical holes. Excellent liner notes by Pete Lowry place everything in the proper perspective.

Savoy's *Ladies Sing The Blues, Vol. 2* (SJL-2256), the 12th album in the label's "Roots of Rock N'Roll" series, is not, properly speaking, an album of blues performances. With two exceptions, it documents the label's activities in rock & roll and other popular black musical styles of the early to middle 1950s. The exceptions are Albinia Jones, a poor Billie Holiday imitator represented by three undistinguished 1944 efforts that had been unissued until this compilation, and Helen Humes, represented by two 1950 location recordings—a perfunctory reprise of her 1945 hit *Ee Baba Leba* and a more feelingful *If I Could Be With You*. The balance of the performances—those by LaVern Baker (recording in 1950 as Little Miss Sharecropper), Dolly Cooper, Annie Laurie, Varetta Dillard, and Big Maybelle—chart various directions in r&b and rock & roll during the years 1950-57, and while a number of the selections are enjoyable enough, the chief defect of this large grouping of recordings stems not from any performance deficiencies as from the generally insignificant nature of the songs, which is reflected in the fact that none of the selections achieved any success at the time released, the sole exception being Ms. Dillard's *Johnny Is Gone*, a song commenting on the death of singer Johnny Ace which enjoyed slight r&b sales success in early 1955. For blues or jazz fans, however, the set will hold little interest.

—pete welding

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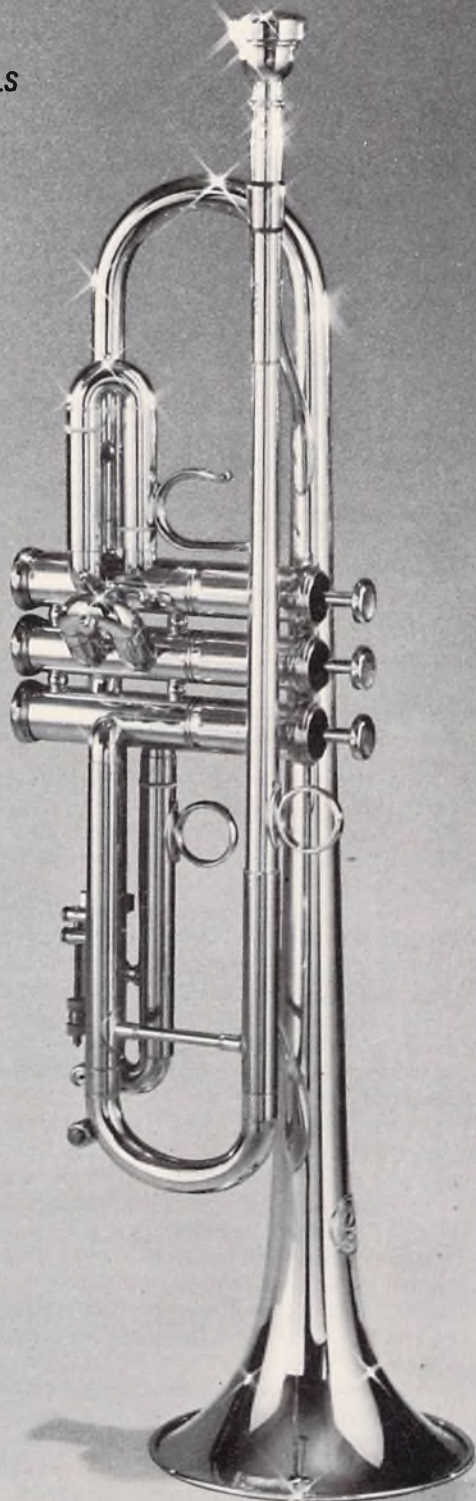
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a customary modern-day fuzztone syndrome, which is not part of my musical language. It's something that I can appreciate if somebody else does it, but it's not me.

BM: Do you still play your SG at all?

FZ: Well, right now I'm not playing at all. I just kinda stopped playing after the last date on the European tour. I haven't touched a guitar since. I just haven't been too enthusiastic about playing.

BM: What is your opinion of your own playing lately?

FZ: I think it's a case of too little too late. I mean, I really have just about lost interest in playing guitar. I tried. I did everything that I could, but I don't feel like doing it anymore. I'm interested in other things now. I mean, I did it. Now I'm thinking of selling my guitars.

BM: But wouldn't you say that your playing has improved over the years?

FZ: In some ways, yeah, in some ways no. In some ways it's a lot worse. I used to play more parts in the band, but I was never really accurate at it. I was a very unreliable parts player because I've always been sloppy. I wouldn't sit there and practice for months on end. I mean, there are guys who practice for life. I ain't got time for it. I got a few other things I have to take care of. I have to run the business of what I do. I can't sit there and devote myself to just playing really fast scales. Besides that, it would be boring for me to do it. I like the instrument, I like the way it sounds, I like the fun of playing concerts, but I tried for years and nobody gave a f*ck#. So that's it. I got enough tapes of me playing to release 'em for another 15 years. So it's senseless for me to keep doing it.

BM: But from what I've seen lately of you in concert, I would've guessed that you'd be more enthusiastic these days. I mean, you were playing your butt off on the last tour—*Whipping Post*, no less!

FZ: Well, I love to play the blues . . . but you gotta look at it from my point of view. Every time I play a solo with a band, it makes me feel like I'm wasting their time, you know what I mean? Like they have more

important things that they should be playing. Also, the audience's tolerance for instrumental music in the United States is not that great. They want to hear some songs. If you have some records out, especially if there's a new release that you're touring with, the audience expects to hear some songs they are familiar with. Otherwise, they don't feel that they got their value for their ticket. You could be ready, willing, and able to do something that is above the call of duty, but unless you perform those basic functions of playing things that they know and like for a certain part of the show, it's not only not fair to them because that's probably why they came there, but I think it's actually rude to defeat the audience's desires. So I try to mix and match. I try to play enough things that they want to hear, along with things that are brand new which are being rehearsed on the tour for recording, along with stuff that might even be made up on the tour, and some improvisations. On the European tour I was averaging eight to 10 solos a night in a two-hour show. But see, today people are very much oriented to the two-minute song. They want little quick songs that go bye-bye real fast. And the least fashionable thing that you can do on a stage is to play a real long guitar solo. I mean, everybody goes, "Ooooo, yuk! That's like the 60s! What is this, the Grateful Dead?" And journalists are also inclined to say in reviews that this is a bad thing to do.

BM: So f*ck# 'em if they can't take a joke.

FZ: Well, yeah, but by the same token, in certain countries the power of a journalist to destroy a group within a matter of moments is there. If you're getting bad reviews or somebody says your show is boring, then in times of economic stress, why would anybody buy a f*ck#in' ticket to go see your show when they could see this band that plays a mass of two-minute songs? It's disgusting to me, because if a society lets itself be led around by arbiters of taste like that, when you have to go by somebody else's word of what is good and what is bad, and you don't get to decide for yourself, and you're willing to give up your freedom of choice, then you're a fool. It's a sad state, but that's the way it is, and you have to deal with things as they are, not the way you wish they were. db

REDMAN

continued from page 20

Redman loved—loves—Ornette's music, his beautiful tunes, and wanted to know why a school of players hasn't formed to imitate his alto playing or spread his compositions further; of course, there is growing interest in Coleman's innovations, and every indication that such interest will continue. He was much less sanguine about Keith Jarrett, with whom he toured and recorded from '71 to '76. "Some of our music was good, but I wasn't happy with a single album I recorded with Keith. I've got to say, though, that the bread was always fine." For more, we'll have to wait for Redman's memoirs. Or Jarrett's.

Being with Coleman and Jarrett—and growing older, for Redman's 51 now, and felt time pressing his ambition in his 40s—led Dewey to want to try breaking out on his own a few years ago. Redman wouldn't talk about his Impulse albums, *The Ear Of The Behearer* and *Coincide*, though they involved his most original ensemble performing vigorous compositions, darkly lyrical and complex, driven by ruggedly individualistic voices—unlike his blowing date, *Tarik*, on which Redman unraveled his thoughts at length over the rhythms and moods of Blackwell and bassist Malachi Favors. *Ear* and *Coincide* examined group sonorities: violin, cello, and bass with tenor sax or clarinet, for instance. Some cuts are driving and dense, others dark but delicate and clear. They were coolly received when issued, and Redman must have been disappointed; he correctly insisted he had a killer band together in '73 and '74, comprised of the talented and underexposed drummer Eddie Moore, bassist Sirone, trumpeter Ted Daniel, percussionist Dannie Johnson, and occasionally violinist Leroy Jenkins or cellist Jane Robertson.

"For a while, I got very bitter. I couldn't get a gig with my band. I'd been all over the world, and on all these records, and club owners would say to me, 'Who's Dewey Redman? Nobody knows you—who's in your band?' And I sounded good, damn good. Or they'd say, 'You're avant garde—we don't book avant garde, because it doesn't draw.' Which was nothing, because I had a good following, at least here in

New York. There was no answer for it; some cats used to tell me it was racism, and I got hot. I said some things I regret now, man. Yeah, I was a racist for a while. Well, that was no good. I'm not like that now. Dewey Redman's not a racist any more. Now I'm concentrating on the positive aspects of my life, and I think I'm better for it. I feel better; I'm playing better; my business is more together."

With afternoon over and Brooklyn dark for the night, Redman turned on the radio. The WKCR dj dropped her needle on *Half Nelson* from Redman's *Soundsigns* LP. A few weeks before, I'd written in a local newspaper review of his night club set: "Is Dewey Redman just another bopper, with reheated variants on jazz standards like the Miles Davis tune from his new LP?" It was a straw argument, which I denied by declaring: "No, he's a harmolodic bluesman, with brains, blood, and guts, who dares to blow beyond the presumed limits of a song's formal design." Still, I was embarrassed I'd asked that question in print as we listened to that track now, Dewey with his eyes closed and his head tilted to one side.

His sax, in the low register, skittered effortlessly over Eddie Moore's propulsion and pianist Fred Simmons' chords. The notes flowed without being forced, becoming intentionally sour between octaves, then sweeping lightly higher, to fall against the rhythm with some purpose. Redman treated each chorus to phrase-length variations that revealed a fine insight into the tune's structure. His sax voice was selectively quirky—not loud for power's sake, nor were his intervals mathematically symmetrical, measured. Dewey mulled his tones in his mouth and falsified his fingerings. He was in control, yet airy—not blowing full-throttle, or convincing but bogus, or brimming with high spirits—but somewhat laidback, restrained. He flexed potential energy like a big cat just waiting to spring. He growled, a lion just awakening; fully aroused, he finished the melody by running an unexpected row of Major harmonies, and tossing off a gruff, resolving lick.

"Yeah," said the woman on the radio. "That was Miles Davis' *Half Nelson* by Dewey Redman."

"Yeah," Dewey Redman nodded dryly, confidently, "Why not?" db

BLINDFOLD TEST



ROBERT A. MILLER

Bobby McFerrin

BY LEONARD FEATHER

BOBBY McFERRIN WAS A LATE BLOOMER, at least in the standup vocal phase of his career, which began in January 1979 in New Orleans. His experience prior to that move was extensive and varied.

His father, the operatic baritone Robert McFerrin, sang with the New York Metropolitan Opera in the 1950s. His mother has chaired the music department at Fullerton College east of Los Angeles for the past decade. Bobby, born in New York in 1950, moved to Los Angeles in 1958 when his father was signed to dub the singing parts for Sidney Poitier in the film Porgy And Bess.

Bobby studied piano, clarinet, flute, and cello, was turned onto jazz by Miles Davis' Bitches Brew and later, hearing Miles at Shelly's Manne Hole, flipped over Keith

Jarrett. For several years he worked as a pianist in many contexts—an ice show, cocktail lounges—and sang only occasionally.

His singing career became a serious preoccupation late in '79 in San Francisco. Though wordless vocals are his specialty—hear his work on Bobby McFerrin, Elektra Musician 60023—he dislikes being compared to a musical instrument (see below). This was his first Blindfold Test; he was given no information about the records played.

1 MIKE CAMPBELL. *HONEYSUCKLE ROSE (from SECRET FANTASY, Palo Alto Jazz). Campbell, vocal; Tom Garvin, arranger; Tom Peterson, tenor saxophone.*

First off, I have no idea who that was; I can only guess. The band was tight, I liked the band—certainly a concise arrangement. Sounded like they rehearsed a couple of times, went into the studio, and that was that.

The singer . . . who was that? I didn't think that his vocal solo was all that imaginative. And I thought that when he sang lyrics, as opposed to when he sang wordlessly, was too much the same kind of thing. He has a good voice quality. I didn't particularly care for how his vibrato would sort of slip in there, sort of strained.

I would have loved to have heard, instead of the sax, heard him sing another chorus, see where he'd go with it. When you just have one chorus the same, sometimes your ideas start at the end of your first chorus, you really start to get into it. For me sometimes it takes that long to get warmed up, just to see where I'm going to go. That's why I don't have a horn in my band. They can just go on for days and days and days.

It's hard for me to rate things; but I'll give that two-and-a-half stars.

2 JACKIE & ROY. *JOY SPRING (from HIGH STANDARDS, Concord Jazz). Jackie Cain, Roy Kral, vocals; Clifford Brown, composer.*

Joy Spring—that's Jackie & Roy. I don't really know that much about them. I really like that song. Here's an instance where just singing the line together, in unison, doesn't really give me enough clues as to how I really feel inside about them. I wish I had some more musical information about them.

It was good for what they did, and the band was good. I'll give it three-and-a-half stars.

3 JON HENDRICKS & COMPANY. *THE SWINGING GROOVE MERCHANT (from "LOVE", Muse Records). Hendricks, lyrics, vocals; Jerome Richardson, composer, tenor saxophone; Bob Gurland, vocal trumpet imitation.*

Wow, wow, wow—got a couple hours? Five stars for Jon Hendricks. I love that man, I literally love him. He's a great teacher—and a great vocalist. The spirit that comes out of him is very touching. He can do just about anything, and it's like gold. That's the new album, "Love", I'm sure.

Hearing that tenor unison chorus makes me say a lot of people don't realize that Jon is a stickler for detail, even though those details aren't always carried out exactly the way he wants them. The first night I worked with him, we had a talk about how he wanted me to sing particular passages—which is difficult to translate—you know how if you want something done, it's difficult to get someone to do it exactly the way you hear it. We had this one discussion where we were going to

do this tribute to Eddie Jefferson or someone, and Michelle [Hendricks] and I were going to do a duo. He wanted me to sing the song exactly as it had been recorded. I argued with him on that point, because I didn't want to reproduce something that had already been done. But that's the kind of person he is; I was the trombone in the group.

LF: What did you think of the trumpet solo?

BM: Yes, I have something to say about that; that was Bob Gurland. Before I heard him, someone asked me if I'd heard this vocal mimic of the trumpet—and I hadn't. Finally, he came to New York early last year, and he did the trumpet thing, and I thought that was pretty good. This was early in my career when I had left Jon; I was with him for eight months. I was still formulating ideas about myself, which I still am at this point. But one thing that I am sure of is that I don't really appreciate what Bob Gurland does.

I'm going to try and clarify this. He's like the total antithesis of what I'm trying to do as a vocalist. I don't like to be thought of or considered a vocal mimic of instruments, because that's not what I'm doing. I'm simply using the voice as a color instrument. So when I hear Bob Gurland mimicking the trumpet, that's what he is doing—simply mimicking the trumpet.

This is not to invalidate what Bob does; if anything, it goes to prove that the voice can do several different kinds of things.

4 MANHATTAN TRANSFER. *KAFKA (from MECCA FOR MODERNS, Atlantic). Cheryl Bentley, Tim Hauser, Alan Paul, Janis Siegel, vocals; Jay Graydon, producer; Graydon, Bernard Kafka, composers; Steve Gadd, drums.*

I liked that quite a bit. The thing I liked most was the rhythmic interplay, the drums and the

vocals. I think it was Manhattan Transfer. It sounded like an album that was produced, maybe, by Jay Graydon.

I liked the composition; I liked the harmonic structure, the way that moved . . . who played drums on that? That seemed to be the most outstanding thing about it, the rhythm. It would have been nice to have heard someone take a solo there. See what they can do with those changes.

It was very good; I'll give it four stars.

5 OSCAR PETERSON QUARTET. *INCOHERENT BLUES (from OSCAR PETERSON TRIO + ONE, Mercury). Clark Terry, vocal.*

Oh, wow! I don't know who it was, but it could almost be Dizzy Gillespie, as crazy as it was—or King Pleasure. I really liked what he did, I thought it was great. Whoever it was must have quite a range. . . .

I'll give it four-and-a-half stars, only because I wish it could have been longer. I could have heard maybe another chorus or so, to see if maybe he would have developed that conversation between (*mimics the voice, high and low*) . . .

6 AL JARREAU. *AGUA DE BEBER (from AL JARREAU, Warner Bros.).*

That was wonderful. Five stars for Al Jarreau, yes indeed. What a great tune. I like his singing voice, it's really exciting, I wish Al would do more of that. Some of the things he's doing now are . . . fine; but the stuff he started out doing, like this album, the green album, more of the vocalese. . . .

Al, without a doubt, has paved lots of things for me, he's paved a roadway to make it easier to do what I'm doing. Jon Hendricks was certainly a big influence on him. **db**

Eddie Johnson

More than two decades after his initial successes, the tenorman returns to swing harder than ever.

BY R. BRUCE DOLD

It should have been a triumph, hearing the applause echoing through Carnegie Hall, but Eddie Johnson wasn't ready to enjoy it.

The 62-year-old Chicago tenor saxophonist returned to active playing in 1979 after a 22-year layoff and achieved raves from fans and critics in Chicago as a fresh voice in the styles of the swing masters. His first record, *Indian Summer* (Nessa N-22), and the Carnegie Hall appearance as part of a Chicago program at the '81 Kool Jazz Festival in New York won him further plaudits. But his return was spurred by misfortune: the deaths of his wife and son kept the modest tenorman from overcoming a twin hammer of self-doubt and sadness until this year, when he has finally begun to enjoy the acclaim.

Johnson grew up on the Windy City's South Side, getting his first taste of music from an uncle who adored Coleman Hawkins and wanted his nephew to emulate that style. "He said, 'That's the sound you want, that's the closest thing to a human voice playing this instrument.' But then I heard Prez, and Prez is swinging, so whenever my uncle left the room, I'd revert back to listening to Prez, trying to play like Prez. I finally said, 'What if you could sound like Hawkins and swing like Prez?' Somewhere in there I fit."

He was recruited to join a band at Kentucky State College, where the school paid all the expenses and the band toured the state on weekends, "playing coliseums, tobacco warehouses, wherever, ballyhoing the school." He returned after just a year in the South and played in Chicago clubs with his boyhood friends, the late pianist Jimmy Jones and singer Joe Williams, eventually watching Williams go off with Count Basie. "He geared his life toward it," Johnson said. "We just knew one day that Joe would make it, because of his faith in himself."

Johnson had his own growing career, touring with trumpeter Cootie Williams, alto sax star Louis Jordan, and his uncle's hero, Coleman Hawkins. "I was all ears, all eyes, trying to pick up on any little thing I could [with Hawkins]," he said. "I learned quite a bit from him, just being in his presence."

But by this time Johnson was married, and each tour became a tussle between his



Eddie Johnson, then and now.

JAMES F. QUINN

artistic desires and his family's needs. "An offer came from Jordan at the same time I got an offer from Duke Ellington. But I had been married for two or three years, and I needed the money, and Louis Jordan was paying the dollars. But that was like, Jordan saying, 'I am the star; I am paying you to, well, really to look bored,' that's what it amounted to."

Johnson made the kind of decision you look back on and want to second guess. The offer from Duke Ellington in 1945 was never repeated, and soon the rigors of the road proved too tough on Johnson's family. He had been taking odd jobs when times got tight, but in 1947 he quit the business altogether. "I wanted to stay out there, but I knew I had others involved," he said. "There's no way I could see me suffering or my family suffering for something I wanted to do."

He had lures to return, like the last-minute call he had to sit in for an ailing Paul Gonsalves when the Ellington orchestra was recording their version of the soundtrack to *Mary Poppins*. ("I could hardly play my part for being so excited," he said. "All during the session, he [Ellington] walks in and out, sneaks up behind you, and says, 'Put yourself into it,' urging you on to play and get the feeling of what's happening.") Yet, eventually, Johnson put down his horn completely for a 10-year stretch.

"There was this fight within. My wife—she was really in my corner—she'd say, 'Look, this thing is tearing you apart. Why don't you quit your job and go on back to playing?' But to be honest, I didn't really have the guts to get out there and go at it. I thought about it all the time, but I thought I was so far behind, I

could never make that step."

Johnson kept his job as a computer engineer for the city for 22 years, but in 1976 his son died of a heart ailment, and his wife died of cancer three years later. The losses made a decision for him that he had been unable to make for years. "I woke up one morning and said, 'Hey, ain't nobody here but me. I don't need this job.' I just had to go out and play. I was in a position where I could work when I wanted to, with whom I wanted to."

Chicago opened its arms immediately when Johnson began appearing at local concerts, working as a sometime leader in small groups and featured soloist in big bands. But he wasn't ready to believe that it was real. "I thought it was a put-on, I really did," he said of the applause and compliments he received. "I had no confidence whatsoever; somebody would come up and say 'Nice show,' and I wouldn't believe it. The things that have happened in the last two years are unbelievable. I never did those things when I was supposed to be in my prime."

The Nessa LP won critical praise and sold moderately well, and in 1981 Johnson joined the group of Chicagoans on the Carnegie Hall stage. It was the culmination, to that point, of his return, and an electric night for the visiting musicians, but it all became bittersweet for him. "It just wasn't as great for me as it should have been because there was nobody there to appreciate it. The other guys had their families, but my wife wasn't there, so there was nobody to say, 'Hey, you're playing Carnegie Hall.' It became just another gig."

What should have been a high became a reminder of what Johnson had lost, but it may have marked a turning point, too. Finally, in the last few months, the self-doubt and pain have begun to ebb from Eddie Johnson, three years after his talent re-emerged. Rather than shrink from acclaim, he has started to think about where he can fit in the jazz milieu. "My forte is ballads; I love ballads. And I'm leaning more and more toward the Prez style of playing, with some of my own, certain slurs. There's a way I would attack certain notes," he said. "I'm more laidback; it gives me time to think."

Johnson has still turned down offers to go on the road, and picks and chooses what gigs he wants to make in Chicago. But he is studying flute, though he doesn't expect to use it as a jazz instrument, and he dreams about playing with a symphony orchestra or recording a gospel album.

And he has learned to live with applause. "I don't try to understand it, and I don't try to fight it," he said, "but everything's falling into place. Right now, I'd have to say this is the most satisfying period in my career, because there's no pressure. And I'm enjoying every minute of it." **db**

Tania Maria

The Brazilian pianist/vocalist fuses her native samba with jazz styles and a bit of Ravel to create music of an international appeal.

BY FRED BOUCHARD

Misunderstood, frustrated, and underappreciated musicians have ever had to leave home to gain acceptance; as a case in point, Boston has welcomed back triumphant numbers of players who, lost in the student/teacher scuffle and academic in-breeding endemic here, proved themselves on the open talent market of New York. Tania Maria fled Brazil for even stronger reasons: the vibrant pianist/songwriter/singer got deep-frozen by macho musicians who could not deal with a woman playing keyboards, much less writing her own tunes, leading her own band, and playing music that extended beyond traditional samba.

It was off to Paris for the musical dynamo, where independent American women entertainers have been accepted with open arms since the days of Bricktop and Josephine

Baker, and "jazz" is not a dirty word. That was in 1974, where she immediately logged five solid months of packed houses at Via Brasil. "I felt I was freed of responsibility," said the outspoken Tania Maria, whirling her hands and mugging expressively to overcompensate for minor idiosyncrasies in her idiomatic English. "I put myself into my music, and played things I could not play in Brazil." The response was incredible: the French love the new, and they'd never seen a Brazilian singer/pianist before. Admirers included Stan Getz, Dexter Gordon, Kenny Drew, Art Blakey, and Toots Thielemans, who "gave me a big courage to continue."

Labeling Tania Maria has proven difficult and prompts her philosophical observations. "When I was in Brazil, people said: 'Oh, you are jazz; that's no good.' When I come to France: 'Oh, you play jazz; that is great!' If people don't know something, they call it jazz. I cannot say: 'Hello, I am jazz, I am pop, I am rock.' I say: 'I am Tania Maria. I play music.' I play all kinds because my ears are open. I like new sensations because I am a sensitive woman. I live the moment: for me it's the last one! Yeah! Today I want to be more, more, because tomorrow I don't know if you be alive."

"Alive" is a bit of a dim adjective to describe Tania Maria, both personally and musically. Her two Concord Jazz albums can't contain her incandescent spirit any better than weather maps contain storms, yet they are two of the hottest items of the label's 200 offerings. Her Boston premiere last summer transformed the Cabaret Jazzboat into a carnival cruise with fireworks. She hit the downbeat of her blistering stop-time *Yatra-Ta* at full gallop and did not loosen her grip on the mesmerized, swaying, double-sellout crowd for 90 magical minutes. The energy and passion which she puts over in practi-

cally every phrase of every chorus—especially when singing wordless scat or whistling in hot-wire unison with single-note lines on the upper end of the piano—earns her uproarious enthusiasm from audiences. No wonder: she not only communicates but involves them. Tania Maria believes in educating audiences by stretching their voices; she often demands responses to her extremely tricky four-bar scat licks, and people were amazed to find that they too could speak with her gift of tongues.

Tania Maria's international appeal (packed houses from Tokyo to Torino) almost certainly stems from her international upbringing. "I have a big influence from the north, where I was born, in San Luis Maranhao. My father played guitar and my sister piano, but we all play and sing—for us it's normal. In Bahia the big influence is Africa and folklore, but not too much in Maranhao, because under French colonization we are more classical. Egberto Gismonti is from Pernambuco nearby. I had to take classical lessons when I was a kid. I couldn't understand it and didn't like it, but I value it now. I play Bach now, I love him very much, and Ravel, so peaceful. In this moment I am very *Ravelienne*. It may be pretentious to say this, but I am writing a couple of pieces like Ravel now—well, [with an offhand shrug] at least the Ravel that I can do. Bach don't play for people—he play for God. He's so simple but so beautiful. In music, simplicity is beauty.

"I heard all things growing up: latin, bolero, Oscar Peterson. My first passion was Nat King Cole, singing and playing on tv when I was 10. Later I heard Bill Evans, McCoy Tyner. My last souvenir of music in Brazil was hearing Billy Preston [spreads her hands to make kinky chords]—dank! donk! dwank! And I heard Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea in Paris. For Brazilians it is difficult to prove the



DONNA PAUL

importance of our music because it is so new. Dorival Caymmi and Vinicius de Moraes are the fathers of us all who grew up on bossa nova, and the children are Joao Gilberto, Baden Powell, Jobim, Airtio, Flora, and me." Some of the Ravel may work its way into Tania's next album, which she would like to include three horns and guitar, quite a breakthrough from her usual full-throated trio, which benefits from the tidy, understanding traps of her countryman, Portinho.

Part of the thrill for audiences and a caution to her bandmates are Tania's headstrong unpredictability and hairsbreadth sense of pacing and timing, which might have her extend a vamp for three minutes and suddenly smash it with a break. Tunes like *Vem Pra Roda* can sprout floral arabesques as they grow in performance: at a typical Fat Tuesday's set it went from a light samba simmer into a hard driving boil; three stop-time choruses with beeps and trills; an acrobatic tight-rope line of voice and piano; a zany, conversational rap over a long vamp; a very high vocal chorus, and a recap; then

fade-out coda. Arranging-as-you-go requires long, hard rehearsal, constant eye-contact (sometimes tough under her floppy hats and shades), but the sidemen had learned to read her every arched eyebrow, emphatic pouty nod, amazingly toothy smile, and peremptory cut-offs like a roadmap.

Feelings, quite naturally, control the roller-coaster ride of a Tania Maria set. "When you feel beautiful, you make beautiful music. I am very selfish; I want to be happy. If I am, I can make others happy too with my music. When you have to play, you don't know whether you're ugly or beautiful. Then the music is so big that it takes over—it is. Later you can know, but not in the moment. It's another world to me when I play. Sometimes when people talk to me after I say, 'N'importe quoi.' It's hard to explain to people." (Here she went into French.) "Music is not just do-re-mi. It's a world apart, a private world. In this world I feel beautiful, happy. I feel light, spiritual, purified. I am sure others feel the same, because there is a big energy, an electric current between us."

About her unusual, effective style of singing and playing in unison, Tania's quite modest: "I'm a very lazy person and don't practice piano. My voice has a narrow range, and I drink and smoke. I write on piano, but the voice follows quickly. The one helps the other. You never know when you have to write; it's like making love. You only get eight, 12 measures, then it's something else."

Tania Maria and her husband/manager Eric Kressman (of a venerable family of wine merchants in Bordeaux) moved from Paris to Long Island two years ago. Tania loves the excitement of New York, and feels herself embarking on a new adventure and phase of her blossoming career. "What I play in New York feels natural in New York. It's in the air. It's not what I played in Paris, and it's not what I'd play if I lived in Brazil." (Tania's two tours back to Brazil met with great success.) "I'm captivated by the influences I hear when I turn the radio on—soul, rock. The accentuation of the music is different. It makes me happy; I like the new. I'm always attracted by things I don't know. And I don't know America yet." **db**

JAZZ PLAY-A-LONG SETS

by Jamey Aebersold

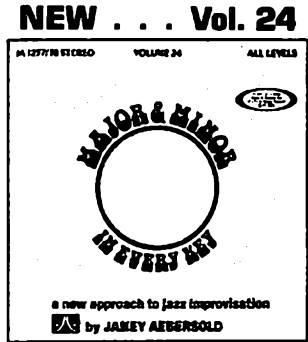
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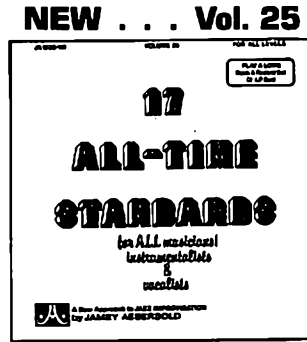
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