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FEATURES

16 THE ELECTRIC MILES—PART ONE
Bitches Brew threw jazz into the electric age, and there was no turning back. But according to Greg Tate, Miles Davis' subsequent sounds incorporated ever more far-reaching cultural sources than previously thought. In the first of a two-part article, he examines the acoustic foundation of Miles' electric vision, and carries us up to *Jack Johnson*.

19 ANDY SUMMERS: UNMASKED
Though he appears to simply be just another guitarist in a rock band, Police-man Summers reveals a remarkable background in jazz, 20th century classical, and technological musics, and proves, as Michael Goldberg discovers, that blondes have more fun.

22 RON CARTER: COVERING ALL BASSES
From studio cat playing electric bass to acoustic marvel alongside Miles, Herbie Hancock and Tony Williams, the Milestone All-Stars, and countless others, to his own piccolo-bass led ensembles, this perennial poll-winner does all, and says all in conversation with Lee Jeske.

25 LYLE MAYS: STRAIGHT TALK ON SYNTHS
Despite his undying affection for the acoustic piano, the multi-keyboardist from Pat Metheny's band is one of today's foremost exponents of new synthesizer technology, and he talks turkey with John Diliberto and Kimberly Haas.

28 THE 1983 down beat STUDENT MUSIC AWARDS
In the results of our sixth annual "deebee" contest for outstanding high school and college musical performances, you'll discover the movers and shakers of tomorrow's music today.

DEPARTMENTS

6 On The Beat

8 Chords & Discords

11 News

32 Record Reviews: Jane Ira Bloom; Thelonious Monk; Peter Erskine; Santana; Art Pepper; Albert Collins; Art Blakey; Philip Glass; Joe Pass; Jon Hendricks; Michal Urbaniak; David Grisman; Zoot Sims; Phil Wilson/Makoto Ozone; Jerry Gonzalez; Pancho Sanchez; Waxing On: Big Bands—Baaad & Beautiful (Blue Wisp Big Band, Paul Cacia Big Band, Dave Eshelman's Jazz Garden Big Band, Woody Herman Big Band, Don Lamond's Big Swing Band, Dave Matthews Orchestra, Ed Palermo, Doug Sertl's Jazz Menagerie, Valley Big Band, Ernie Wilkins).

47 Blindfold Test: Ben Sidran, by Leonard Feather.

48 Profile: Kevin Eubanks, by Bill Milkowski.

50 Caught: Return To Forever, by Bill Milkowski; New American Orchestra, by Frankie Nemko; Big Joe Turner/Jay McShann, by Lee Jeske; Ellis Marsalis, by Jon Balleras.

Pro Sessions:

53 "How To Change Pickups In A Strat Guitar," by Seymour Duncan.

54 "Prime Time For Harmolodics," by Ornette Coleman.

56 "The Studio As Compositional Tool—Part I," by Brian Eno.

58 Pro Shop

61 City Jazzlines

Cover illustration of Miles Davis by Paul Moch.

KIRK WEST/PHOTO RESERVE
Andy Summers

TOM COPI
Ron Carter

ANNE FISHBEIN/PHOTO RESERVE
Lyle Mays

ANDY FREEBERG
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THE *Electric*

Part 1

BEFORE WE BEGIN, look: exhaustive essays on Miles Davis usually bore me to no end too. Mainly because like many other Miles freaks, I've got a few theories of my own—theories so inspired by devotion as to border on church dogma, theories so anxiously airtight they favor choking off dissension from within the ranks, theories so conceived in arrogance all some other critical bozo will receive for repeating them is my Olympian nod of approval. Like religious passion, musical hero worship has often been known to induce such high hysteria—and on the subject of especially Miles' electric music, I won't deny raising the spectre of Cain over a few of my brother critics' heads. Not that I'm alone in this: ask some of the M.F.'s I know (*Miles Freaks*, okay?) what they think of the three bios out on my man, and they'll tell you, dem's fighting words jack!

Given the gauntlet before me, I'll explain upfront why I'm throwing my two cents into this ring. The first reason is **down beat** asked me to put my head on the chopping block. The second is that I've got a few axes to grind. Because to my mind the music Miles made between 1969 and now demands revisionist history, and no writer in my reading has made sense out of its revolutionary aesthetics or adequately appreciated its visionary beauty. Nor have few, if any, of Miles' critics shown enough background in black pop to place his electric music within the cultural context which spawned it. Moreover, when it comes to his last mid-'70s band, I don't think many of my, uh, esteemed colleagues could make heads or tails of *Agharta* or dig it in reference to Funkadelic and a punk revolution that was just around the corner. And don't let me get started on how none of them realized Miles' lead axe of the period, Pete Cosey, is the Cecil Taylor of the guitar (just hold on to that catchy bit of hype for later), or how they slept through the fact that Miles presaged current directions in modern pop and "classical" forms, or how deviously he revamped his own past and black music's avant garde through the use of electronics.

Besides feeding all that grist through the critical mill, what we're about to do here is explain the continuity between electric and acoustic Miles, and then beyond that, make a case for his much-disparaged *Agharta* as the work of a genius not in decline, but in ferocious forward motion, on fertile ground.

In his 1967 essay "The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music)" Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones) prophesied a black music unity which would be "Jazz and blues, religious and secular . . . New Thing and rhythm and blues." Seven years after its release, Miles' *Agharta* remains the closest anyone has yet come to seeing Baraka's prophecy of black populist modernism made manifesto. And the evolutionary process through which Miles will come to deliver this Unity Music sermon from the mount begins not with *Bitches Brew*, but with the 1966 release of *Miles Smiles*. On that LP Ron Carter and Tony Williams

M

TOM COPI

ILES

BY GREG TATE

so radically transform—indeed, so radically *subvert*—the role of bass and drums in improvised music as to make the solo skeins of Miles, Wayne Shorter, and Herbie Hancock come off like a tightwire act run through a rain forest: adventuresome perhaps, but given the setting more a quixotic excursion than one undertaken by someone in full command of their senses.

Operating in telepathic and telekinetic union, Carter and Williams mutate the LP's uptempo song forms into mazes where the bassist's line, pulse, and meter shifts and Tony's symphonic drum rituals impose syllogisms which dictate rather than follow the soloist's logic. Confronted by these puzzling equations, Miles, Wayne, and Herbie respond with linear, if contorted, harmonic suspensions—superbly balanced ones which don't play off the Carter/Williams axis so much as they cut across and through it. In a way, their brainy bypass surgery reminds you of the two-dimensional floorplans astrophysicists make up to map three-dimensional space. Because when there's no fixed center of gravity, space warps and curves like crazy, and when there's no set groove, what Carter and Williams lay down can't really be navigated, but at best only graphed, like space-time.

The impact of Carter and Williams' relativity theorems on Miles' music was instantly felt in the band's next two releases, *Sorcerer* and *Nefertiti*. These LPs, however, not only bear the stamp of the Einstein and Heisenberg of bass and drums, but Ornette Coleman as well. Jumping ahead a bit and taking the physics metaphor a quantum leap further, we can say that these two poles of attraction made Miles' polite chamber jazz world collapse, implode, then expand towards infinity from the inside (or as Wayne Shorter once put it, " . . . from the soul on out to the universe"). To be more musically specific about these transformations is to say this: the difference between the music on *Miles Smiles* and the two subsequent dates is that on the latter the melodies function more like elliptical motifs than like heads made to kick off a string of solos. On *Sorcerer* and *Nefertiti* melodic interpretation as much as harmonic improvisation is the rule—with the melodies continually being recycled into the improvs as structural devices. These lend symmetry and shape to the moody mise-en-scene which unfolds on both records, phrase by eerily lyrical phrase. Once again Carter and Williams play a game of disorderly conduct by design. Only wise to their antics now, the soloists don't compete. Instead they open up expansive passages which possess the thematic resolve of the melodies at every turn. And inasmuch as this music makes freedom, composition, chaos, and lyricism coexist in a collective improvisational organism—well, given all that, it refers us back to Ornette, whose music not only influenced Miles' direction in this regard but also, I believe, inspired the odd-man-out lines in Wayne Shorter's writing and playing. Coleman and Lester Young have been overlooked as influences on Shorter, though all three's strange phrasing is alike in seeming alienated, innocent, and knowing at the same time. Miles' is too, but then I've always had this other theory that the two musicians most responsible for Miles' style were Prez and Lady Day, especially on ballads.

As amazing as the level of playing and writing in the quintet was, equally so was the way in which each member's conception gave itself over to the fabric of the music. Ron Carter, for example, brought a rhythmic feeling which throbbed like the human pulse rather than just grooved you to death. And by working it into his extraordinary harmonic technique, made free improvisation sound as cyclical as eight-to-the-bar. Shorter's writing gave the band an intellectual persona equal parts rational, mystical, and romantic, while his playing provided crazed models of mathematic concision. Whether comping or improvising, Hancock gave the music orchestral breadth, and Tony's drumming, a force of nature unto itself, came across like a cross between a hurricane, a forest fire, and a cast of thousands conducted by somebody like Ellington, Disney, De Mille, Rostropovich, or hey, Tony Williams himself.

As an arranger and leader, what Miles did in making this cabal of artful astrophysicists cohere is create a context where the sublime funk of *Kind Of Blue* and the firepower of *Milestones* could be fused, accelerated, and then fissioned across four years and now nine albums—records whose breadth of texture, mood, and composition remain unparalleled in small band jazz. As a trumpeter, Miles made the band focus on how much emotional energy could be compressed, expressed, and released through pure tonality and imaginative phrasing. Like Lester Young's, Miles' solos have come to possess a quality of the inevitable, almost as if their beginnings contained their middles and ends. And as Miles' playing has assumed this capacity, so too has his way of organizing a band into a cellular organism. In all of Miles' bands since the one Trane fell into, the parts have come to sum up the whole, as the players became the tunes and the tunes then became absorbed into the ensemble's communal sound. As Ellington achieved with orchestras, Miles has done with smaller units: turned them into palettes which somehow work for him more like the democratic process than like pigments did for Picasso. Though for all of that, his charisma has also made each band seem like the product of his genius alone.

This enigmatic quality isn't of course Miles' and Duke's alone, since all the great jazz leaders have had it, as have the *baad*est urban bluesmen—like Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, and Chuck Berry—and the major black pop innovators as well: Berry Gordy, James Brown, Sly Stone, Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, George Clinton, Maurice White, and Bob Marley. Now, speculation as to why Miles stepped out of a black musical universe where Ellington to the nth degree was the directive into a parallel one where funk was its own reward has assumed motives on Miles' part ranging from racial, social, sexual, psychological, economic, and even by some as

musical. I think all probably apply, though only when understood as integral to the music rather than as proof of the music's supposed lack of integrity. Because to a brilliant hustler like Miles, all games are the same, everything is related, nothing is really left to chance, and like a good offensive runner, he knows how to cover his ass and when to take orders from the sidelines, if not, in fact, from his accountant.

On the purely musical side however, I think Miles left post-bop modernism for the funk because he was bored fiddling with quantum mechanics and just wanted to play the blues again. The blues impulse is charismatic because of its sexual energies, but as a ritual process, as a rite of passage, the blues are alluring because they make the act of confession a means of publicly redeeming your soul, as Mass does for Catholics and as speaking in tongues does for those in the holy-roller church. As an art form the blues are seductive because they give soulfulness and simplicity the same constructivist value harmonic complexity has in European symphonic music and bebop. This is what makes the blues the most difficult black music to perform convincingly, because not only do you have to convert its cliches into your own style, but you've also got to mean every note since the only thing more tired than some tired blues is some fake funk—and that's because when you come looking for the Holy Ghost and find nothing but some lame hypocrites thumping on a back-beat in the name of The One, well, your soul it do get weary. Leading us to reconsider Bootsy Collins' axiom: "Fake the funk and your nose got to grow" (see *The Pinocchio Theory*). Proof that Miles' funk wasn't fake, wasn't just the fetish work of a clone, is in the fact that all the real funkateers I know dig Miles as much as they do some P-Funk, and that's because the feeling in Miles' funk is just as for real while the schizzy musical fusions are maybe twice as surreal.

TOM COPI

MILES DAVIS' EQUIPMENT

Miles Davis' main axe over the years has been the Martin Committee model trumpet (via the G. Leblanc Corp.); he still uses the mouthpiece he has had since he was around 12 years old—its cup is similar to a cornet's, a hair on the deep side, and has been custom outfitted with a battery-powered Carl Countryman (Redwood City, CA) model EMW microphone/Schaffer-Vega (NYC) wireless system combo that allows Miles to roam freely around the stage. He often plays the horn with a Harmon mute. The Martin horn was a favorite of trumpeters in the '40s and '50s and was out of production for a number of years until reintroduced a few years ago, much to the pleasure of Miles and other trumpeters. Miles' Committee has a .460 bore, a hand-burnished bell, and a special coating of several layers of a black lacquer finish, through which certain portions of the brass is custom etched. In the post-*Bitches Brew* era Miles wired his horn through a number of effects devices, including a King wah-wah pedal, a phase shifter, and/or an octave divider. During this same time period he was also fond of noodling on Yamaha synthesizers, usually generating organ-type tones. Last summer he toured with a Rhodes electric piano in tow, and on this year's *Grammy Awards Show* he played an Oberheim OB-Xa synthesizer; he carried both keyboards on his recent European tour.

MILES DAVIS SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY 1966-83

MILES SMILES—Columbia PC 9401
E.S.P.—Columbia PC 9150
SORCERER—Columbia PC 9532
NEFERTITI—Columbia PC 9594
MILES IN THE SKY—Columbia PC 9628
FILLES DE KILIMANJARO—Columbia PC 9750
WATER BABIES—Columbia PC 34396
BITCHES BREW—Columbia PG 26
AT FILLMORE—Columbia CG 30038
BLACK BEAUTY—CBS Sony SOPJ 39/40
JACK JOHNSON—Columbia KC 30455
LIVE-EVIL—Columbia CG 30954
ON THE CORNER—Columbia KC 31906
IN CONCERT—Columbia PG 32092
BIG FUN—Columbia PG 32866
GET UP WITH IT—Columbia KG 33236
AGHARTA—Columbia PG 33967
DARK MAGUS—CBS Sony 40AP 741/2
PANGAEA—CBS Sony SOPZ 96/7
THE MAN WITH THE HORN—Columbia FC 36790
WE WANT MILES—Columbia C2 38005
STAR PEOPLE—Columbia FC 38657

What Miles heard in the musics of P-Funk progenitors, James Brown, Jimi Hendrix, and Sly Stone, was the blues impulse transferred, masked, and retooled for the Space Age through a low-down act of *possession*. And in them all he probably recognized pieces of himself. Like James Brown he was a consummate bandleader who knew his way around the boxing ring, like Sly he was a bourgeois boy who opted to become a street fighting man, and like Jimi he was a musician whose physical grace seemed to declare itself in every bent note and sensual slur. Visual evidence of Sly's and Jimi's impact on Miles can be seen in the dress styles he adapted from them: the multiple-hued fabrics and talismanic flow of attire. Now, I could try to be all cool and academic like only music is what matters here, but that would be about some bushwah. Because when you're out to unravel a legend, study of myth *and* material is inescapable, the two having assumed like proportions over time. And what any longtime Miles freak will tell you is that for every Miles Davis album, there's a crapload of Miles Davis anecdotes equally astonishing to the average human mind. And when Miles began exploring Sly's and Jimi's musical frontiers he also, so the stories go, made his way through a few human mine fields they'd cut across before him. So that we don't, however, degenerate into rank gossip here, we'll keep the discussion pretty much musicological—though with the understanding that when myth intervenes, we'll lay that sucker into it too.

With *Bitches Brew* Miles crossed over the threshold of bebop into Sly's and Jimi's stereovision New Jerusalems. While the music on *Miles In The Sky*, *Filles De Kilimanjaro*, and *In A Silent Way* marks his progressive march to the brink, they also depict, in retrospect, how cautiously the move was being made. In fact, for my money, the least interesting things about those LPs are their overt pop borrowings. *Miles In The Sky* haunts for how it extends upon the elliptical heads concept; *Kilimanjaro* is provocative for how much *static* tension Miles generates using James Brown riffs, for Tony Williams' ambient drumming, and for how the voicings on *Tout De Suite* spookily predict Herbie Hancock's Mwandishi band. (If you ever want to experience musical deja vu, play *Tout De Suite* back-to-back with *Water Torture* from Hancock's *Crossings*, then hear that against the third and fourth sides of *Agharta*—curiouser and curiouser.) As for *In A Silent Way*, it just may be the epitome of the beautifully designed and recorded artifact, being something like a Taj Mahal of music: that rare, man-made thing of beauty which rivals nature in its fixed and dreamlike universal perfection.

The difference between these records and *Bitches Brew* is the difference between Alex Haley's *Roots* and the novels of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Where Haley prosaically told a people's hellish collective history and redemption, Marquez through more poetic language uses history as a means into his folk's collective unconscious, that Jungian hideaway where the spooks really sit beside the doors to the kingdoms of heaven and hell. Where J. B. and especially Jimi and Sly took music isn't something that can be summed up in a few quotidian riffs anymore than a Marquez novel can be experienced through synopses. It's at once a thought process, a textural language, and a way of reordering tradition and myth unto itself. On evidence of *Bitches Brew* and the music thereafter, Miles seems to have believed

CONTINUED ON PAGE 62

ANDY SUMMERS *Unmasked*

KIRK WEST/PHOTO RESERVE

* * * * * * *

By Michael Goldberg

His image is pure pop. Shaggy blond hair (dyed) in a modified Beatles cut. Mod clothes that might have come from England's trendy King's Road: pants with wide black and white stripes, punky ripped t-shirts, European sports coats with lapels out to here, pink tennis shoes. When in Hollywood, he stays at the Sunset Marquis, the infamous rock & roll hotel where, night or day, limos can be seen picking up the stars to chauffeur them about town. The records he plays on reach the Top 10, and when he straps on his guitar and hits the stage, 20,000 or more fans scream. His face has been in all the magazines, from *Circus* to *Time*, *Rolling Stone* to *People*. An '80s pop star and proud of it.

His name is Andy Summers, and he's the guitarist in the Police, one of the most popular new wave rock bands to emerge since they started applying the term "new wave" to rock bands. At age 40 he has finally made it to the top. After 26 years of playing the guitar, slogging it out in jazz bands and blues bands, behind both fading rock stars and the "next big thing," Summers finds himself at the place where his dreams and reality meet.

Yet the pure pop image is just that, an image. And if Summers and the Police have adopted that image with a vengeance, their music is something else again—a rich mix of rock, jazz, and reggae, with 20th century classical and Third World strains. It is a complex and resonant music, and it has found favor with more than just teenyboppers. Last year, the Police's fourth album, *Ghost In The Machine*, was voted Rock/Blues Album of the Year by **down beat** readers, while the band itself was #2 in the Rock/Blues Group category. That **down beat** readers think so highly of the Police is not surprising; the group's music is not typical rock/pop fare. It fits rather uncomfortably on Top 40 radio, due to unorthodox rhythms, original guitar tones, and unusual song structures. "I hope the success of the music we play has helped broaden the caliber of rock music," says Summers. "My guitar playing comes from very strange areas that have nothing to do with traditional rock & roll at all."

The music of the Police. There are those quirky semi-reggae bass lines from Sting and the minimal, sparse drumming of Stewart Copeland, a rhythm section that leaves plenty of room for Summers to add color and atmosphere with vibrant chordings that float through the songs like clouds across a blue sky, and delicate melodies that glisten like sunlight reflected off a mountain stream. There is nothing ordinary about this music, and when you sit down and talk to Andy Summers about it, you find out why.

"Making music have its own voice," says Summers, when asked if there is a philosophy behind his playing. "It's like the desire not to sound like anybody else for the *right* reasons. I want my music to be a mirror of me, whatever I've lived through and what I've felt and what I find I can express as a person. I would like it to have the quality of poetry. I like ambiguity. I like mystery. I think one of the greatest things you can have in art is mystery. I don't like things to be obvious at all. I'm influenced by film, art, and writing as much as I am by listening to another guitar player. I'm currently rereading *Flowers Of Evil* by Baudelaire. One responds to things like that. And if your main voice is the guitar, you find that you can express those feelings through your music."

Up close, Summers is a bit of a contradiction, a 40-year-old wearing the hair and clothes of a teenager. Still, when he talks about music, he doesn't talk Top 40. The music that stimulates Andy Summers is quite varied—the works of Steve Reich and Jack DeJohnette, Max Roach and Terry Riley, Bulgarian choral music and Bartok, Robert Johnson and John Coltrane, Takemitsu and Schönberg are only some of the music that has influenced Andy Summers, which perhaps hints at why he sounds like no other rock guitarist.

Surprisingly perhaps, when one listens to records that Summers played on prior to joining the Police, one hears a good, but unoriginal rock guitarist who sounds nothing like the guitarist in the Police. A live album by Kevin Coyne called *In Living Black And White*, for instance, features Summers playing fairly standard blues riffs. Yet from the first Police album, *Outlandos d'Amour*, Summers' sound was truly his own. What happened? "The Police was a catalyst to throw away all the influences," he says. "Instead of that kind of three-chord power blast, I went the other way with it. I found that what I could do with the guitar was kind of drift and float around Sting's vocals lines. Rather than a wall-of-sound, it was much more like a light, floating thing. And as we played more and more, it just became a real trademark and style for me, but one that I'm very happy with. I have been enthusiastic to keep following that line because I feel it's more me than a lot of things I might have played in the past where I might have been aping other people, playing more standard rock stuff. I never felt that, as a person, I fit in the rock world. It's always been a shoe that never fitted. I mean I'm not a heavy metal type. I don't like a lot of loud music and the rest of it. The lifestyle doesn't fit me.

"Our sound sort of emerged organically.

You can sit here and verbalize and rationalize it, but in all honesty, you have all this stuff inside you and all these responses and get on-stage and off you go. And depending on what's up here [he taps his head], you can either make it sound different or just play all the cliches in the book. I think one decision we made was to try to sound different from any three-piece group. Not to sound like the Cream, not to sound like Jimi Hendrix. Really make it different. But then what was it going to sound like? Who knew?" he continues. "We started off being punky and loud, but I was uncomfortable with that. And gradually Sting started to get into his reggae bassline approach, and I got an echoplex, and these were the kinds of things that acted as a catalyst for a style to emerge. And so it came gradually. And there was a lot of improvisation. There just had to be, especially in the early days. Also, my education as a musician beams right across the board. I've been to a university and studied classical music and 20th century music. I'd always responded to all that, and all this stuff started to surface in this group. I found it the perfect vehicle to pull all these threads together of a very eclectic background. The diversity came together somehow to form a style that seemed to work.

"The sound really developed when we first toured the U.S. We'd go into things like *Can't Stand Losing You*, and Sting's playing away basically in D, and I would start going into things that were a little farther out than what had normally been heard. I didn't stand there playing three-note leads like a lot of rock guitarists. There was none of that at all. I started to play strange harmonies, and I started to play outside the song and go for all darker kinds of things, and it seemed to work. And Sting was sophisticated enough harmonically to really appreciate it. He really liked it because he'd been in a jazz-rock group and been into jazz all his life. So I started to do other kinds of things that weren't really rock things at all, and they combined with this sort of reggae bassline and open drumming, and suddenly we seemed to have something. And it dawned on us. We walked out of the dark and brought it back and turned on the light and there it was."

The creation of the Police sound has not been painless. The arguments between Sting, Copeland, and Summers are almost legendary at this point. According to Summers, every album is like a boxing match between three men. "I think we're all really different people, and we have a lot of different ideas about music, but it adds a kind of dynamic to the group. The lack of agreement sort of works out as a creative compromise. We're ruthless, really, with each other's feelings. It's shocking sometimes. It's hopeless to cherish anything, any musical idea. Your feelings get carved to pieces. It goes right across the board. But we're still together. This will be our sixth year this summer. Gradually we've learned how to ritualize all our feelings and ways of dealing with each other and knowing when to purposely upset one of the others to get the best out of him."

If it is Summers' work with the Police that has brought him into the limelight, it is another musical collaboration, an experimental partnership with King Crimson guitarist Robert Fripp, that has produced Summers' most intriguing music to date. Last year Summers contacted Fripp, whose playing he felt "had a lot of heart," about making an instrumental album. The two recorded *I Advance Masked*, using Roland guitar synthesizers and a grab-bag of sound-altering devices, improvising songs for several weeks in the studio to come up with a fascinating record of guitar textures. "I wanted to do a guitar music album, but one that was an extension of the guitar duet tradition," explains Summers. "Rather than playing obvious guitar duets, I wanted to take existing technology and do something that was really 1980s."

THE BOURNEMOUTH BOYS UNMASKED: *Andy Summers (left) and Robert Fripp.*

Though Summers and Fripp both grew up in Bournemouth, England, they had never met until they got together to make their album. "I had a lot of ideas in mind, music I hoped we would get to, but I didn't really know if it would work or not. I just had this instinct that it would. I think in a sense the real material for the album was what we were as guitar players. What we'd been carrying around in our heads for a long time, rather than actual prepared pieces. Obviously everybody has a sort of library of licks and riffs and phrases that you sort of dip into. I have thousands of them. And they start to surface, and you make music from them. I mean they are the seed that you can introduce to another musician, and then it grows from there."

Working with Fripp was quite a different experience for Summers than recording with the Police. "This was much more open," he says. "In the Police, obviously what we're working with is the song. And really, you're doing everything you can to enhance the vocal line, and to give it its best backing, I suppose. This was different. The idea was to be able to play music that was more abstract and less pop-oriented than the music I do with the Police."

I Advance Masked is certainly an artistic success, an album of hypnotic, spiritual music akin to the work of Brian Eno and Steve Reich, but focusing on guitar sounds. Fluid and pastoral, great waves of sound wash over the listener. It is music that seems to escape time and place. Summers hopes to record a second album with Fripp next year. "I definitely see it as an ongoing musical relationship. That's one of the reasons, really, why I wanted to do it. I guess I was going through a period in the Police where I felt claustrophobic, personally and musically. There is definitely a need to go and play with other people. And that's no criticism of your musical partners. But as an artist, you have to go out and do that. *You've got to!* I was keen to work up something that could possibly go on for years with another guitar player if I could find the right person to play with and develop another thing I could go back to and play with."

* * *

Andy Summers was born in Blackpool, England and grew up in Bournemouth, a seaside resort about 100 miles south of London. His parents cared little for music, but his older brother was a fanatic for American jazz, and so young Andy was exposed to, among others, Stan Kenton, Ella Fitzgerald, and Woody Herman. If his brother's records introduced him to the world of jazz, it was the skiffle craze that swept through England during the late '50s that turned Summers into a musician. "Someone gave me a guitar at age 14," he recalls, "and I never put it down. Learning how to strum G and D seventh and sing *Worried Man*—this was my earliest beginnings. And then I just went on from there. I remember learning *St. James Infirmary*, and that was like a major step forward—E minor, A minor, B seventh." He chuckles. "Tricky stuff. Then I got chord books and would sit in my bedroom for 16 hours at a stretch. I was fanatical about it, ignoring school work and everything." He spent his formative years playing and listening to jazz, not rock. "I listened to Django Reinhardt. I was really into American jazz guitarists when I was 16, 17, 18."

Summers' first gigs were at a small club in Bournemouth called the Blue Note Modern Jazz Club. "I went down there, and these guys who were really very good musicians

would play charts by Cannonball Adderley and John Coltrane. I kept going, and eventually they would let me play between their sets. I would get whomever I could to play with me, often it would just be bass and drums. I was 17 years old and totally ga-ga about music. They were nice to me, but they also treated me as a joke in a way. They'd take the piss out of me every week. Eventually they would let me sit in with the main band itself. I started off being completely crazed about jazz."

Later he moved to London and got caught up in the rock explosion of the '60s. Zoot Money's Big Roll Band was the first group he joined in London, and he soon learned the r&b catalog of the time, playing tunes by Ray Charles, James Brown, and Rufus Thomas, with some Jimmy Smith thrown in. A succession of different bands followed. He was in a version of the Soft Machine (a late '60s experimental rock band) and then a version of the Animals. But as time went on, life as a rock & roll guitarist playing in the shadow of singers like Eric Burdon grew tiresome and frustrating. "I'd been playing for six years on the road, and I suddenly thought I didn't want to be a musician anymore. I wanted to try other things."

He moved to L.A. in 1968 and enrolled at U.C.L.A. and "got involved in acting." But he soon came back to music. Still in L.A., Summers "decided that what I really needed to do was to start all over again playing the guitar, learn from scratch. I had never learned to read. So that's when I really started to study music. I studied classical guitar. I read a huge amount of classical guitar literature and practiced 10 hours a day for three years. Insane stuff. And went through about four years of training at U.C.L.A. Studied a lot of 20th century music, and it opened me up to a lot that I didn't know about. It was a complete re-education as far as music went."

To support himself while at U.C.L.A., Summers taught guitar lessons. He has some advice for young guitarists. Though he taught himself how to play and played professionally for many years before seriously studying music, he doesn't recommend that others follow his example. "I think you can save an awful lot of time with a really good teacher," says Summers. "But a really good teacher should also teach you to develop your own thing and keep it open and not copy other people. I mean it's so important to try to find your own voice. So many musicians just copy other people. Of course, you do have to acquire a certain amount of proficiency. And I think that's where a teacher can really help in the initial stages, but really the more important role of a teacher is to teach you about attitudes. And the main thing is to open the doors to music. I mean a guitar, although it's a wonderful thing in itself, is a tool for expressing something. What you've really got to get to is music. There are all these guitarists who all sound alike. It's the curse of the modern musical world—you can hear it just by turning on the radio. And if you spend all your time listening to other people's records—I'm talking about rock guitar—you just get your head stuffed with all that crap. There's so much of it and it's so mindless and vacant. It's really a dead end, not a route to follow. So you learn to play fast and learn all these rock licks. Where does it get you? What are you contributing to the world?"

It was his four years of study at U.C.L.A. that led to Summers' unique style of playing in the Police and with Fripp. "You assimilate what you've listened to. Over a period of years, it sinks in and becomes a part of your fabric. I don't think I play anything that is a direct reference, but it's colored by these things. What you've listened to does influence your musical thought and what you want to hear in your head and what you want to play. The 20th century music I've listened to definitely has affected my sensibility. Takemitsu has always been a great favorite of mine. Just the feeling of his music is something I've responded to and find incredibly romantic. And Schönberg—these kinds of feelings I'm interested in expressing."

* * *

Summers left U.C.L.A. in 1973 and returned to England. During the following four years he played sessions and played in other people's bands, including David Essex, Neal Sedaka, Kevin Coyne, and Kevin Ayers. Then he decided it was time for another change. "I was certainly tired of being what I suppose would be termed a sideman," he says. "I was excelling at that role. And I felt I was too big to be in that role anymore. I was definitely looking for a situation where I would be more upfront, have a much larger part in shaping the music, rather than be paid to enhance somebody else's thing. I wanted a different slice of the action."

The year was 1977 and the British punk movement, which would completely revolutionize the rock scene in England, was in full swing. "It was like a catharsis," recalls Summers. "It really was. Incredible energy. It was like a real organic shout in London. It was gritty and edgy and very exciting. Everybody looked different, and the music was different. It was a great thing to be involved in."

It was shortly after Summers saw a new punk band perform at the Marquee, a London club, that he did become involved in the punk scene. The band was the Police. They were unhappy with their original guitarist, Henri Padovani, and after Sting and Copeland jammed with Summers, they asked him to join the band. Summers' friends laughed when they heard what he had done. "People snickered at me in London when I dyed my hair and was pretending to be a punk. 'Oh yes, he's joined a group called the Police, dyed his hair. Ha, ha, ha.' Stewart and I were out there with our buckets of paste and our posters, slapping up Police posters all over London, trying to make it happen. It was fun." But though they tried to fit into the punk scene, the Police realized that their musical expertise made it ridiculous. They were too good. Soon they were stretching out, finding their own style. "We were trying to get that punky edge to what we were doing, but making it our own. Putting our own stamp on it. You start off being like that and gradually transform it."

A key element in the Police's sound is, of course, technology. Summers, in particular, uses all the modern equipment available to shape the notes that come from his guitar. Thus he has little patience for "purists" who decry synthesizers and other sound manipulation devices. "I can't understand it," he says. "They're here, and you can go for a whole other range of things with them. I can do all these cloudy and strange things. You can't do them if you're playing a guitar through an amp. I have no shame about using them, but you must use them in a musical way. You can't cheat with them. If you use effects the wrong way, it just sounds wanky, like too much use of the wah-wah pedal. That just sounds awful. You have to use them with as much musicality and poetry as you can muster. But some of the songs in the Police's repertoire would not sound the same without the effects. The technology has not dictated our sound, but it has become a very integral part of what we're doing. I don't see anything wrong with that. They're a very natural extension of the instrument now, and I see no turning back." **db**

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

ANDY SUMMERS' EQUIPMENT

Andy Summers uses a variety of guitars, including a Gibson Chet Atkins solid body, a customized '53 Fender Telecaster, and several Hamers. He also uses a Roland GR-300 synthesizer with an Ibanez guitar. His amps include two 100-watt Marshalls (for live performance) and three Rolands—a Roland 120, a Jazz Chorus, and a Bolt (which he uses in the studio). His customized effects board includes a flanger, phaser, Mutron, analog delay, and compressor. Everything goes through a Roland Space Echo.

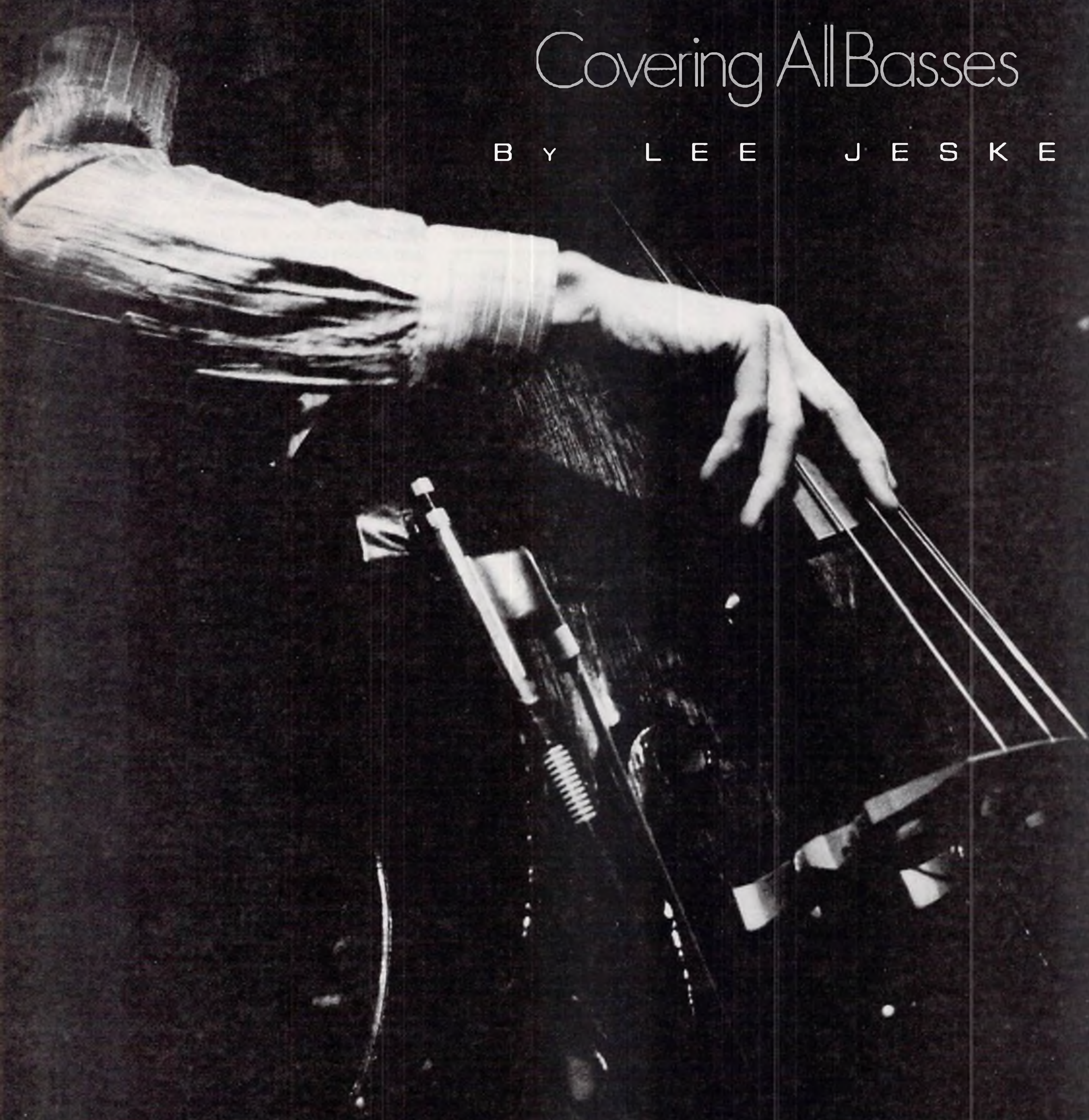
ANDY SUMMERS SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

with the Police
SYNCHRONICITY—A&M SP 3735
GHOST IN THE MACHINE—A&M SP 3730
ZENYATTA MONDATTA—A&M SP 4831
REGGATTA DE BLANC—A&M SP 4792
OUTLANDOS D'AMOUR—A&M SP 4753
with Robert Fripp
I ADVANCE MASKED—A&M SP 4913
with Kevin Coyne
IN LIVING BLACK AND WHITE—Virgin PZ 34757
HEARTBURN—Virgin 2047

RON Carter

Covering All Basses

BY LEE JESKE



Of all the instruments commonly used in jazz bands, none is taken more for granted than the acoustic bass. For example, of the 56 members of the **down beat** Hall Of Fame only one—Charles Mingus—is a bassist; and it's safe to say that Mingus was elected more for his composing and bandleading than his bass playing. Names like Blanton, Pettiford, La Faro, and Chambers are missing from the list.

There are several reasons for this. First of all, one of the hallmarks of a good bassist is his ability to support the band that he's in; to *not* be noticed is preferred. He is to the jazz band what the shortstop is to the baseball team (and how many of *them* are in Cooperstown?). Secondly, few bassists have been able to carve out successful careers as bandleaders because the public is not used to listening to an entire evening of bass playing, although, naturally, the fact that a leader is a bassist doesn't necessarily mean that the main soloist will be the leader (just go check out the Jazz Messengers and count Art Blakey's solos per set). But neither the public nor club-owners think in those terms. Thirdly, bassists are usually quiet, introspective people; soft-spoken, nice people; unassuming, gentle people. Whether the playing of the contrabass is the cause or the effect of this, I don't know. True, there are some bass players who are crazy as loons, just as there are some trumpet players who are *not* ostentatious and swell-headed, but they are decidedly in the minority.

Which brings us to Ron Carter. Carter is certainly one of the most in-demand sidemen in jazz. In 20 years he figures he has been a sideman on over 500 albums. This is not to mention the numerous jingles, studio dates, 1001 Strings sessions, and other anonymous gigs which he continues to take. Add those in, he says, and you've perhaps got 1,000 recordings. He is also seemingly quiet, soft-spoken, and gentle. Where Carter breaks the mold is in his career as a leader. He has released more than an album a year since *Uptown Conversation* came out in 1970, and he has managed, since 1976, to not only front his own quartet, but to be the principal soloist in the band. He's managed this by playing the piccolo bass, an instrument that is tuned higher than a standard upright and is, thus, more easily listened to over the course of an evening.

On this morning Ron Carter is standing, pipe in mouth, in front of Anita's Chili Parlor—his choice for a rendezvous spot, since it's not far from his apartment on Manhattan's upper West Side. Unfortunately, even Manhattanites aren't ready for a bowl of chili before noon, and we repair to a cafe down the street, Ron waving to his butcher on the way.

Over the two-hour lunch we do not discuss the well-known history of Ron Carter: born in Michigan in 1937, attended Eastman School Of Music and Manhattan School Of Music, did time with Chico Hamilton, Eric Dolphy, Cannonball Adderley, and others before signing on for five years (1963-68) with Miles Davis, joined the CTI roster of artists in 1972, formed his first quartet (with Kenny Barron, piano; Buster Williams, bass; Ben Riley, drums) in 1976. We pick things up from the break-up of that Ron Carter Quartet.

Lee Jeske: Why did the first band fall apart?

Ron Carter: It didn't fall apart. At the time I thought that we had gone as far as we could go, musically. We'd been together for four years, and it was time for a different point of view, from three different guys. I thought about this for a year, and I felt so emotionally tied in to them and responsible for their work, since we had worked for four years and the bulk of their income came from the quartet gigs. It took me a year to where I finally felt that now is the time, and one night at Sweet Basil I decided, "Well this is it, it's time to get a fresh band."

I had thought about it for a year, but there's no way to pleasantly break up a band—you either do it or you don't. You can't mail 'em no flowers or give 'em no candy or a gold watch, you just blurt it out, as it were. I said, "Well, band, this is our last gig. It's been wonderful. Let's have a drink to the four years before and the friendship afterward." And that was it.

As it turned out, they continued to work as a trio, doing some of the tunes we had done in the quartet, and playing some arrangements styled after the quartet arrangements, and they are now the rhythm section of Sphere. I feel that the four years we'd been together were not only productive for me as a leader, but also productive for them in terms of understanding formats and arrangements of trio rhythm section playing enough to maintain that unity. And in fact, to borrow some of the music that I tried to make available to them. I can't ask for more than that from anybody.

LJ: Yet you went out and formed a band with the same instrumentation (Ted Lo, piano; Leon Maleson, bass; Wilby Fletcher, drums).

RC: I liked the idea of being a leader; I liked the idea of having that unique instrumentation—with me playing piccolo bass in front of a rhythm section. So I went out and heard piano players, and heard drummers, and heard bass players, and these were the guys who were most ready to fill a slot that had been very ably filled by Ben, Buster, and Kenny—to come in for a band that had been together for four years already and had established a level of performance. And while there were guys who may have played as well, they just weren't as ready to feel that kind of heat. These guys were.

LJ: Were you looking for anything different from the new band?

RC: I was looking for the same qualities. I had to have a bass player who could read music and play in tune; I had to have a piano player who knew songs other than Chick Corea tunes; I had to have a drummer who could manage brushes. So I was looking for essentially the same qualities that the band that I no longer had could do.

LJ: I'd think you'd need a bass player with a very strong ego to play bass in a band led by a bass player.

RC: I don't think in those terms. I'm looking for a guy who plays in tune, plays the right notes, who is centered into a concept, who is punctual, and who doesn't mind taking directions from me, even though I'm a bass player. Now he may have an ego situation to deal with, I don't know. You can ask him that. I would think maybe—and this is only looking at it through my windows—that here's a chance for a bass player to get free lessons and get paid for taking these lessons. Because what I tell him is not only going to make my band sound better, but it's going to make him sound better, if he follows my instructions. I don't want to get into this silly comparative mentality that makes it very competitive on the level that's not necessary. All I'm trying to do is be a bandleader with three young guys who want to play some music. *And* are willing to follow my instructions and believe that my direction may not be the wrong direction.

LJ: You must have learned something from Miles Davis about being a leader.

RC: Well I'm sure I learned a lot from a lot of people who were leaders: I remember learning things from J. J. Johnson, and I was never in his band. I liked how he got the guys on the bandstand at the same time, how he counted the tunes off. I like Ahmad Jamal—and I never played with him—how he gives the signals from one part of the tune to the other. So my influence as a leader has been from sources other than those I played with, as well as my own sense of how I want to do it.

LJ: Every summer you do an all-star tour. How do you feel about these aggregations?

RC: They're great. If I didn't enjoy them, I wouldn't do them. To me it has to be a certain percentage fun, a certain percentage getting out of New York, and a certain percentage money. When I say fun, I mean they've got to be challenging. The guys have got to get along *off* the bandstand, and we all have to be the kind of daring players to gamble and play wrong tonight, but play right tomorrow. That's important.

LJ: But is it as satisfying as having a band with a book—going out and mainly doing standards?

RC: They are as satisfying. The areas where it may be more or less satisfying are the areas of responsibility vis-à-vis ticket reservations, hotel reservations, contracts, deposits. When you do a tour like that, those are huge responsibilities. So it's more satisfying in that I'm not feeling that weight. It may be less satisfying in that everyone's input as to tempo, tune, and program order is asked for and gotten. I may not agree with that, but as an all-star sideman, I accept that verdict. But the main problem seems to be getting there on time, because we're all traveling our own different ways. So sometimes we don't all arrive at the same time for a necessary soundcheck. If it's your band you say, "Look, man, you guys be there." And there's no question, no margin for error, for anyone to arrive at a soundcheck x-number of minutes late.

LJ: Do any of the tours stand out above the others?

RC: All of them are unique unto themselves. To hear Sonny Rollins play that style of music again was rewarding; to watch Wynton Marsalis grow during that 30-day tour, that was rewarding. There is enough growth in the music levels that takes place that they're all special for different reasons. There may be an incident that would

TOM COPI

RON CARTER'S EQUIPMENT

"When people ask me what I play I tell them it's just an old, ragged fiddle to dissuade them, because the upright bass is not marketed like a Fender or Precision or Gibson bass. I tell them that the model bass I use is not a model, per se, and the brand that I use is not critical to them. What's critical to them is if they see an upright bass that has the sound that they want, then that's the bass for them.

"Now, what I have is a Juzek bass that's about 95 years old. I have a French Tyrolian piccolo bass made in 1790 that I bought in Europe this past summer, and I have another old bass that I'm trying to sell because I don't play it anymore. I modify them with an extra fingerboard, about 12 inches long, on the low string. I have a Fred Lyman cello. I use a Barcus-Berry pickup and, on record dates, a Barcus-Berry preamp.

"Right now my strings are La Bella 7700s—they're black nylon strings with a steel chord wrapped around silk. They're the most consistently even-sounding strings, they last a long time, and they give me the kind of sound I've become identified with—a dark, warm sound with a very long note length to it."

RON CARTER SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

ETUDES—Elektra Musician 60214-1
SUPER STRINGS—Milestone M-9100
PARFAIT—Milestone M-9107
PATRAO—Milestone M-9099
NEW YORK SLICK—Milestone M-9096
PARADE—Milestone M-9088
PICK 'EM—Milestone M-9092
PICCOLO—Milestone M-55004
PASTELS—Milestone M-9073
PEGLEG—Milestone M-9082
A SONG FOR YOU—Milestone M-9086
SPANISH BLUE—CTI 6051
ALL BLUES—CTI 6037
BLUES FARM—CTI 6027
UPTOWN CONVERSATION—Embryo SD 521

with Herbie Hancock/Tony Williams

THIRD PLANE—Milestone M-9105
V.S.O.P. LIVE UNDER THE SKY—Columbia 36770
V.S.O.P.—Columbia 34976

with Milestone All-Stars

MILESTONE JAZZSTARS IN CONCERT—Milestone M-55006

with Eric Dolphy

MAGIC—Prestige P-24053
FIRE WALTZ—Prestige P-24085
DASH ONE—Prestige MPP 2517

with Miles Davis

LIVE AT THE PLUGGED NICKEL—Columbia 38266
CIRCLE IN THE ROUND—Columbia 36278
DIRECTIONS—Columbia 36472
E.S.P.—Columbia PC 9150
FILLES DE KILIMANJARO—Columbia PC 9750
IN EUROPE—Columbia PC 8983
MILES IN THE SKY—Columbia PC 9628
MILES SMILES—Columbia PC 9401
SEVEN STEPS TO HEAVEN—Columbia PC 8851
IN CONCERT—Columbia PC 32092
SORCERER—Columbia PC 9532
NEFERTITI—Columbia PC 9594
WATER BABIES—Columbia PC 34396

with Red Garland

CROSSINGS—Galaxy 5106
STEPPING OUT—Galaxy 5129
STRIKE UP THE BAND—Galaxy 5135

with Bill Evans

THE INTERPLAY SESSIONS—Milestone M-47066
STAN GETZ & BILL EVANS—Verve 8833

with Wynton Marsalis

WYNTON MARSALIS—Columbia 37574

make a tour more memorable, but it has nothing to do with the music. Last year I bought a bass in Europe, and I had to lug it around without a wheel for a whole tour. That's memorable, but it had nothing to do with the music.

LJ: Tell me about your relationship with Herbie Hancock and Tony Williams.

RC: We have found—and I will speak for them at this point—that we seem to make the most incredible music with the least amount of effort with each other. And the camaraderie that's involved—this is our 20th year of playing together—both on and off the bandstand has sustained itself, and I'm sure that plays a big role in our respect and response to each other's musical talents and our ability to sacrifice our personal needs, musically, to make that music go in the direction that it's going, without input.

LJ: Through all the years with CTI and beyond, you never did play fusion, did you?

RC: No. It was a conscious choice. I'm interested in all music, but I just feel that I function better in an atmosphere that requires as much natural sound as possible to make it work. I felt that to work 25 years for my own tone quality, my own sound, I wasn't really too enthused about the idea of having somebody fix it for me with reverb and echo and all that shit they use. And that stubbornness played a big role in me not doing it, because I didn't want anybody to f**k with my sound. I've been working for 30 years for that, man. I don't want anybody to plug it into a wall and have my shit sound weird.

LJ: Was there any gentle pressure?

RC: No, there's never been. If there was, I was oblivious to it, and it didn't dawn on me that the guy was saying, "You'd better do this record this way." I never felt that way.

LJ: Yet you've managed to record consistently, and your records are all slightly different from each other.

RC: Yes, and I'm not so sure that that was the right thing to do. I kind of hark back to the days of bands like Miles'—the working band was always the one on the record, no matter what. The Dave Brubeck band, the Ahmad Jamal Trio, the Oscar Peterson Trio—the band that made the gigs made the records. I think we've let ourselves get caught up in having each record sound necessarily different to attract the different listeners' ears, which may not be necessary. I think one of the problems we have today is establishing a level of identity and credibility, because the records are so diverse.

LJ: And your first album for Elektra Musician, *Etudes*, is something different for you yet again—no piano.

RC: I like playing without a piano. If the pianist that's available is not Herbie Hancock or somebody of that type, it's almost necessary to play without one. Years ago I did a trio gig with Tony Williams and Wayne Shorter in Boston, this was in 1963-64. We played three nights on top of the bar in a little club, during some time off with Miles, and it's been one of my fondest musical memories. I decided that at some point if I could get the kind of situation that would allow me to make a whole record with no piano, I'd try to do it. So this seemed like a good chance. Originally Wayne Shorter was going to be the tenor player—Wayne, Art Farmer, Tony Williams, and myself—but Wayne was not available at the last minute, so he recommended Bill Evans. That's how it came about.

LJ: Is it my imagination, or are you playing a lot of piano/bass duets with Cedar Walton these days?

RC: I've been visible doing this stuff, yes. About 10 years ago I didn't play in a New York piano bar for over a year. The pianos were so terrible that I didn't work any for almost 14 months. I had had enough. But what's happened is the pianos have gotten better. I'm traveling a lot less, and in order to maintain a certain level of physical camaraderie with the bass, you've got to play somewhere other than in your house. So I'm doing this thing with Cedar—we've got a nice little library, the hours are respectable, and it allows me to do other projects at the same time.

LJ: Like substituting for John Lewis at City College this semester.

RC: Right. I'm teaching four courses for him—Jazz History After World War II, a small ensemble class that I've written arrangements for, Advanced Improvisation, and a rhythm section class.

LJ: I'm curious about how you teach jazz history.

RC: I do classes on Bird, classes on Miles extensively, 'cause he

CONTINUED ON PAGE 62

Lyle Mays: Straight Talk On Synths

by John Diliberto and Kimberly Haas

The rise of the Pat Metheny Group as one of the preeminent and classiest electric ensembles is well documented. Guitarist Metheny's charismatic stage manner and creative guitar-work have dominated the band's image since its inception. Less known, but no less significant to the group's sound and success is Metheny's alter-ego, multi-keyboardist Lyle Mays. Since their first recorded collaboration, *Watercolors*, Mays' rippling keyboard leads and Tynerish orchestral chordings have provided the detailed chambers for Metheny's reverberant guitar.

In a genre dominated by yowling, pitch-bending synthesizer solos, Mays has found his own voice. He mixes acoustic and electronic colors and timbres into a rich, swirling broadcloth of sound. As the group has matured and as Mays has come to co-write most of the group's material, he's been relying on synthesizers more and more to flesh out his arrangements. On the 20-minute epic collaboration with Metheny *As Falls Wichita, So Falls Wichita Falls*, he creates a chamber symphony, layering synthesized textures and environments to form a stream-of-consciousness dreamscape.

Though he surrounds himself with musical technology, including the 1981 addition of the Synclavier (an advanced computerized synthesizer), Mays still falls back on the acoustic piano when he really wants to get loose. "The piano is the instrument that I grew up playing," he says during a backstage interview following a Metheny Group concert, "and that's the instrument that I feel most comfortable with. I play piano 90 percent of the time on-stage. I feel that I can express myself much better on piano; the piano is a more expressive instrument at this point in time. After all, the piano has been around for centuries, and synthesizers are just starting to be developed and refined."

STEVE KAGAN

Mays, born in 1953, is a member of what might be the last generation to make a distinction between acoustic and electronic instruments. Many artists now pick up a synthesizer as their first instrument and mix electric and acoustic sounds without differentiation. But for Mays, the acoustic piano is not only charged with a rich tradition going back centuries, but also carries the warm memories of his childhood in Wisconsin. "Both my folks were musically inclined," he recalls. "My mother played organ in church and piano for the church choir, and my father taught himself how to play guitar by ear in the army. There was always a lot of live music around my house when I was growing up. I think that, more than anything else, got me started on the right track. I took lessons and everything, but I really got my love for music and my desire to play it from my folks."

Mays himself recognizes that he may be the last of a breed. "I don't see that happening much these days," he laments. "Everyone's got incredible stereo systems, tvs, cassettes, video machines. There's so much input now. I feel fortunate that I grew up when the piano in the living room was used more than the television set."

The emotional baggage of tradition is often the most difficult to leave behind. Though he's surrounded by technology, Mays is reluctant to embrace it with the same fervor he reserves for the piano. One gets the impression of someone being overwhelmed by the weight of evidence, like people must've felt after the globe had been circumnavigated by 20 different means and their flat earth had to be discarded. That might be overstating the case, because Mays isn't near becoming a member of the acoustic version of the Flat Earth Society. "There's a book called *A Confederacy Of Dunces*, by John Kennedy Toole," relates Mays, "that says something like, 'You know you're a genius when the confederacy of dunces rises up against you' [actually a Jonathan Swift quote paraphrased]. The people who invented the synthesizer are geniuses, and those who want to ban them are dunces."

* * *

Synthesizers were still new in the mid-'70s, only recently having become available to the performing musician. The original Mahavishnu Orchestra had come and gone, Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, and scores of others were plugging in, so it was natural for a young pianist in his early 20s to look into the possibilities of electronics. "When I was living in New York around 1975, doing a starving jazz musician number," he recalls sardonically, "I bought a little Micromoog because that was the only thing that I could afford. I was determined to check out synthesizers. It seemed that here was another tool that a musician could use to make music."

Impressed by the possibilities, Mays began searching for synthesizers that would mesh with his already established personality and piano style. "The first synthesizer that really excited me was the Oberheim Four-Voice," offers Mays affectionately. "That's the synthesizer that I still use on-stage for most of the sounds that I do, most of the warm, full sounds. It's my first, and it's still the best for me. From there I just added things as I could afford them."

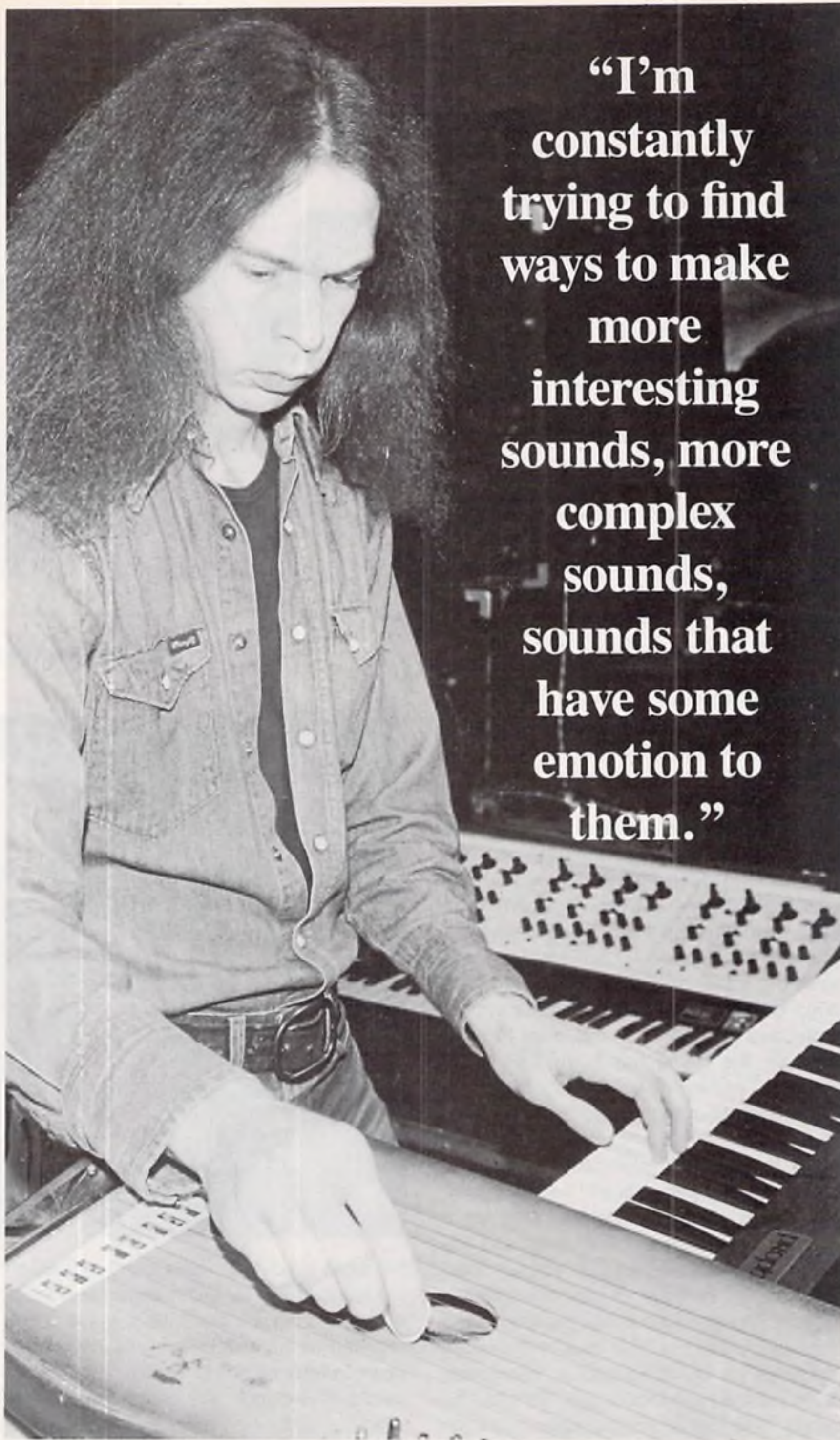
A listen to Mays' recorded output finds the

synthesizer in a supportive role, as a backdrop for lead instruments, or playing a composed melody line. Rarely does he solo electronically. "Up until this point, I felt that the synthesizer functions best in a background role," admits Mays. "I've yet to come across a sound or method of playing the synthesizer that really moves me emotionally. I think I can get some very good effects from the synthesizer as long as they're balanced with acoustic instruments. Maybe it's just a quirk of mine, but I don't like the sound of a normal synthesizer amplified. I don't like to solo on synthesizer.

"I think in many ways that a synthesizer's actual sound characteristic is too simple," he explains. "If you look at the graph of a note from a violin being bowed or a piano string being struck, it's incredibly complicated. The wave shapes from a synthesizer are extremely simple by comparison. That simplicity after a while results in boredom for me, and I think for the listener too. It grates on my ears. If you get this simple sound, amplified and coming at you constantly, it tires you out and bores you. So I like to keep the synthesizers in a background role. I'm constantly trying to find ways to make more interesting sounds, more complex sounds, sounds that have some emotion to them. It'll probably be a lifetime pursuit."

* * *

Mays' search has recently brought him to the advanced area of computer synthesis. It seems like the last place that an improvising jazz musician in love with the piano would find himself. The idea of computers alone seems enough to send spontaneity packing. And unlike the piano, which has a long and fabled history to fall back upon, the computer has a brief life and a cold image to overcome. If you mention computer synthesis to most people, their first thoughts will be of dissonant noises and random structures and relationships. Yet, both Mays and Metheny are using the Synclavier digital synthesizer. Mays believes you have to jettison these old ideas of computers. "One potential problem when one sets out to write computer or electronic music," Mays says, "is that there are certain things that electronic instruments do easily or naturally. And to limit your vision to only those ideas means you'll end up with bleeps and blops that sound spacy and cold and will turn people off. I don't think in the future that we'll be listening to computer music as we conceive it today."



"I'm constantly trying to find ways to make more interesting sounds, more complex sounds, sounds that have some emotion to them."

STEVE KAGAN

Mays might be reticent about embracing the synthesizer as he would his first love, the piano, but he is clearly enthusiastic about the Synclavier's possibilities. "The Synclavier seems to be a very important instrument right now," he opines. "It's a digital synthesizer, and it's capable of some amazing things. It's got a 16-track memory recorder in it so the composer at home can play his ideas into the machine, and it's recorded in much the same way that a recording studio works. You also have a virtually unlimited storage of sounds that you can synthesize yourself because the instrument is based on floppy disc storage. So you just have a library of floppy discs for your sounds. The other thing about the Synclavier that I think is significant is how fast they're moving. They add new updates and capabilities to the machine almost monthly. They now have a program that will print out music that's played in real time into the memory record. So that means that a lot of paper work is eliminated and you can go right from the musical idea that you play on the keyboard to a printed piece of music. That could have some serious consequences. It's really speeding things up and eliminates the drudgery of copying parts."

So instead of becoming a barrier to emotional playing, the computer becomes a more direct link between the composer's musical thought and the realization of that thought into sound. One might make a case that an improvising jazz musician does the same thing, but a jazz composer must transmit his music to several other musicians, a process that can be cumbersome and often imperfect. Imagine the possibilities of Duke Ellington's music coming to you directly from his head without the translators of his orchestra, even as fluent as that orchestra was in Ellington's language. "Instead of being used to produce the sound," projects Mays, "they can be used as an aid to the composer. I think that could possibly be more revolutionary than any of the computer synthesizers that are around right now. For instance, that

printing program is going to enable the composer to compose more quickly—or at least it will shorten the time from the conception of the idea to the performance of the idea. If computers and synthesizers are used as composing tools, music will get more well-defined and well-developed and more exciting because the composer will have had a lot more chances to experience his ideas before he finalizes them. Just in the initial stages of working with synthesizers you can hear tremendously complicated ideas instantly."

* * *

Another aspect of digital synthesis is that its sounds are more complex, and wave forms as complicated as those of violins and pianos can be synthesized. Many digital synthesizers, like the E-MU Emulator or the CMI Fairlight, record sounds from the real world and play them back on the keyboard. Speaking of the Synclavier, Mays claims, "They have a sound sampling system that will sample any sound from anywhere for up to 50 minutes with incredible resolution, up to 50 kilohertz, I think, and you can play it back on the keyboard. You could take a mic, record your own voice humming, whistling, or singing and play that exact sound on the keyboard."

This obviously reawakens the controversy of "imitative" synthesis that Walter (Wendy) Carlos started with the *Switched-On Bach* recordings. One can take the best piano sounds of McCoy Tyner or the best flute tones of James Newton and have them available chromatically on a keyboard. "The imitation side of it is almost going to be a moot point pretty soon," predicts Mays. "You can not only imitate, but actually duplicate now. The sounds coming out of a synthesizer will be indistinguishable from the real sounds. It'll work the way the digital recording process works. We'll probably look back on the imitation thing as being an interesting phase. Maybe historians won't even notice that music went through that phase."

The digital synthesizers not only duplicate but transmute known sounds into different shapes. The already nebulous reality of sound becomes totally surreal. "The exciting thing about the Synclavier," says Mays, "is that when you get all this stuff hooked up with the other capabilities, you can then manipulate the sounds that you record. You can change them just like you would if you were synthesizing them from scratch—make it brighter, darker, change the attack, the register, the whole character—you can do all these things to a basically acoustic sound. It will still sound acoustic because it's got that nature to it, but it'll have envelopes and characteristics that we've just never heard. There are a lot of sounds that are gonna be coming out over the airwaves that no one's heard. I think there's gonna be a lot of interesting music—or noise—out there."

It would seem like Mays has done a turnabout from his earlier talk about only being able to express his full emotions on piano. But he's just looking for sounds, and he'll get them whether it's a piano, a synthesizer, or his electrified autoharps. "My approach to sound is that there can be a song in anything," says Mays. "There may be somebody in Brazil that can play a briefcase. The synthesizer's just another sonic tool. I think we're losing sight of a lot of sonic possibilities because there are so much electronics around. I think that using electronics to incorporate the real sounds that are out there may be the next thing."

* * *

The mixture of electronics into the sound of the Pat Metheny Group has been dramatic on recent recordings, particularly *Offramp*, with Mays playing a Synclavier keyboard and Metheny a Synclavier guitar. On *Barcarole* Metheny's wails are like harmonic elephant cries against Mays' tinkling autoharp and synthesized string lines. On *Are You Going With Me?* it's difficult to tell who is taking the lead as they intertwine synthesized lines. On-stage everyone plays a synthesizer, including drummer Dan Gottlieb, who plays a small Casio while everyone else's hands are full. But the Metheny Group isn't in danger of becoming all synthesized, or just a studio group that makes music so physically complex that it can't be performed live. "We try to do as much as we can in real time," confirms Mays. "That's the way it sounds best to us. To get an emotionally satisfying performance is difficult if you have different people playing different parts on different tracks on different days. We do some overdubs if that's the best or only way to do something, but we try to do as much live as we can. We also work it out on the road before we record it, so it's tailored to what we can do live."

Live performances are also the main reason he still uses his Prophet Five synthesizer. An improvising artist doesn't want to have to change patch cords or interface with a computer terminal in the middle of a performance. "I got a Prophet Five mainly because it's simple to use on-stage," says Mays. "It's very simple to get from one sound to another. It's kind of a luxury to be able to concentrate on what's happening musically and in a split-second get a sound up. The Prophet makes it real easy not to have to get bogged down in technology."

Computers and synthesizers give the potential musician a greater range of choices and also gives the world a greater range of potential musicians. The garage rock band or parlor jazz group of the '80s might be a couple of people with a computer terminal. "I think that a lot of people will start making music that couldn't in the past," says Mays hopefully, "because they didn't have the particular talents or skills that a traditional composer had to have, to hear very complicated things in his head. There may be a machine 50 years from now that will transmit thought patterns into music. In that case, people who couldn't even deal with synthesizers or computers can be composers." It strips away all of the trappings of music and reduces it to a central core of creativity. "It's still the individual," claims Mays. "It still comes from the mind or heart, or a combination of both."

The computer synthesizer might represent our highest musical achievement as a culture, the culmination of centuries of musical thought and development. But acoustic instruments are probably more tenacious than even their staunchest supporters will admit. They represent our most ancient yearnings to express ourselves through sound. After all, the synthesizer is a baby when compared to the piano or percussion. "I feel that's a validation of the instruments that we've developed to play our music on," claims Mays. "After playing the synthesizer and then sitting down to a good Steinway, it's an incredible experience. The piano still sounds so good, so right, and so wonderful to me. I don't think that the instruments we have will ever be replaced. They'll just get more and more refined. The same kind of technology that's producing synthesizers can maybe be applied to do research and development on how to make acoustic instruments sound better. There's no doubt that acoustic instruments will be around."

It all comes back to the first and original musical idea. The most gifted musician may not ever have a fulfilling musical thought in his/her life, while the so-called untrained artist can offer insights through sound that become masterworks. "If you've got a good musical idea, you can play it on a rhythm box or you can play it with some musicians in a garage," agrees Mays. "If it's not a good idea, all the technology in the world won't help it, and all the great musicians in the world won't help it. I think the real exciting thing about synthesizers is there's going to be so many new sounds that no one has ever heard, that in the hands of a true composer or musician, they can make some great music." **db**

STEVE KAGAN

LYLE MAYS' EQUIPMENT

Lyle Mays' current lineup of equipment includes an Oberheim Four-Voice synthesizer, a Prophet Five synthesizer, the Synclavier digital synthesizer, a Yamaha electric organ, a Hamburg Steinway piano, and several autoharps with pickups.

LYLE MAYS SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

with Pat Metheny

WATERCOLORS—ECM-1-1097
PAT METHENY GROUP—ECM-1-1114
AMERICAN GARAGE—ECM-1-1155
AS FALLS WICHITA, SO FALLS WICHITA FALLS—ECM-1-1190
OFFRAMP—ECM-1-1216
TRAVELS—ECM-1-23791

with Eberhard Weber

LATER THAT SAME EVENING—ECM-1-1231

Record Reviews

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

JANE IRA BLOOM

MIGHTY LIGHTS—Enja 4044: 2-5-1; *Lost In The Stars; I Got Rhythm But No Melody; The Man With Glasses; Change Up; Mighty Lights.*

***Personnel:** Bloom, soprano saxophone; Fred Hersch, piano (cuts 1, 2, 4, 5); Charlie Haden, bass; Ed Blackwell, drums.*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Three authoritative voices—Sidney Bechet, John Coltrane, and Wayne Shorter—have guided the jazz development of the soprano saxophone. Steve Lacy, who has been suggested as Coltrane's real inspiration on the horn, was initially the only modern soprano saxophonist. Coltrane's revolution was, of course, more than the rebirth of an instrument, it was a religious experience. Its progress was inevitable and proved ultimately confounding as his disciples' voices collided. Subsequently reinterpreting Trane (and his own employer, Miles Davis), Wayne Shorter moved obliquely toward economy, dark beauty, and preciosity. Others could only copy Trane, applying his celerity with greater refinement to bebop, modal, and funky jazz. And that is where we have been stuck for the last decade.

Jane Ira Bloom and *Mighty Lights* may have something to say about the way out (no pun intended). First, she is not playing cliches, Coltrane exercises, a double (the soprano is her primary instrument), freak-out jazz, or bebop for the '80s. Nor is she intoning Mideastern muses on a pseudo-oboe. She is not imitating nature—birds, wind, creaking trees . . . . She *is* uncoiling swift lines in rapturous tones, with facility to the fore (but never narcissistically): a continuum of phrases—long and tender and sweeping, interstitial comments, sequences—and emotion-drenched tones like those of trumpeter Miles Davis—aching held notes, a rounded but not fat sound, and moving-near, moving-away (Doppler) effects. This differs from Shorter in its sustained linearity and ecstasy of tone.

All this and Hersch, Haden, and Blackwell, too. Haden is always an interesting bassist, not only in his expressive freedom, but also in his timbral unity with longtime section-mate Blackwell. They are one, with their tapping exchanges on *I Got Rhythm But No Melody* exemplifying their best work on this album. Like Bloom, they are cliche-free. Pianist Hersch echoes Bill Evans, which is okay with me: I'm an Evans fan. Hear his ethereal intro and fragile solo on *Lost*, rhythmically independent lines on *Change Up* and *2-5-1*, and his intensifying reverie on *The Man With Glasses*, the leader's tribute to Evans.

The talents here are sufficient to turn a motif into a symphony, but fortunately Bloom is also a composer of much more than fragments. Combining five of her tunes with the Kurt Weill/Leroy Anderson ballad *Lost In The Stars* (a most seductive performance), she has charted a diverse program including familiar harmonies (but what challenging melodies!), motion and suspension (the title cut), and overtones of two great pianists (*Glasses*—Evans, *Change Up*—surreal Monk).

TOM HERZBERG

This is an arresting album, full of feeling and well-considered statements, and Jane Ira Bloom is an estimable young jazz musician with an authoritative voice.

—*owen cordle*

THELONIOUS MONK

'ROUND MIDNIGHT—Milestone M-4767: *Straight, No Chaser (two takes); Decidedly (two takes); 'Round Midnight; Rhythm-A-Ning; Sweet And Lovely; I Mean You (three takes); 'Round Midnight (in progress); 'Round Midnight (as issued).*

***Personnel:** Monk, piano; Gerry Mulligan, baritone saxophone (cuts 1-10); Wilbur Ware, bass (1-10); Shadow Wilson, drums (1-10).*

★ ★ ★ ★

LIVE AT THE JAZZ WORKSHOP—Columbia C-2 38269: *Don't Blame Me; Ba-lue Bolivar Ba-lues-are; Well, You Needn't; Evidence (Justice)/Rhythm-A-Ning; 'Round Midnight; I'm Gettin' Sentimental Over You; Bemsha Swing; Memories Of You/(Just You Just Me); Blue Monk; Misterioso; Hackensack; Bright Mississippi; Epistrophy.*

***Personnel:** Monk, piano; Charlie Rouse, tenor saxophone; Larry Gales, bass; Ben Riley, drums.*

★ ★ ★ ½

Gratifying as it is to have all the Monk music issued since his death, one can at the same time question the wisdom of Columbia, for example, releasing *Live At The Jazz Workshop*, a two-fer of Monk and his working quartet in 1964, just months after issuing the superior *Live At The It Club*, featuring the same quartet and recorded only four days earlier. Monk's repertoire at the time was set, and the two packages share eight titles. The *It Club* performances are starker, statelier; we realize Monk's gang of four is having an off night at the *Jazz Workshop* through the false starts and endings, botched cues, samey tempos, and routine play of Rouse, Gales, and Riley.

Monk himself doesn't help much—he seems to enjoy throwing his sidemen off track, stretching themes beyond the expected phrase lengths, modulating without warning, tossing in latin quotes that require percussive comment but dropping them before it comes. The combo gets warmed up by side three, following an unaccompanied piano rendition of *Memories Of You* that sounds like a retired entertainer reflecting wryly on his surviving skills, and leaps into *Just You Just Me*. A smooth *Hackensack*, a rare, rambunctious *Bright Mississippi* (based on *Georgia Brown*), and a truly strong *Epistrophy*, with Rouse alluding to Mid-Eastern harmonies and wailing like a muscular sephardic with Monk in complementary stride, justify the album—but it might have been better as an edited-down single LP. Sometimes completist compulsions detract from, rather than enhance, the reputations of musicians so served. That's not likely with Monk, but a flood of quite similar albums did obscure his singularity during the Columbia phase of his career.

Recording for Orrin Keepnews in the '50s, originally on the Riverside label, Monk was teamed with a number of contrasting soloists. Gerry Mulligan may not have been the single most appropriate co-star of any Monk session, but he works hard to come up with something true to the spirit of the pianist's compositions, and characteristic of his own low-down, fleet, and cool, melodically varying sound. Though the interest in issuing *everything* is at hand in the two-fer of reissued and previously unreleased tapes called *'Round Midnight*, there's quite a bit to learn from the alternate takes Monk recorded with Mulligan, and especially the classic-in-progress solo piano title track.

Far from the intractability he demonstrates

at the *Jazz Workshop*, Monk proves to be a cooperative leader and an interactive accompanist when Mulligan has enough grasp of the material to contribute compelling statements. On his own *Decidedly* and the quartet version of *Midnight*, Mulligan is especially cogent. He lunges fearlessly through *Rhythm-a-ning*, mixing up the count slightly on the way out of his solo. He doesn't *quite* match Monk's feeling on *Sweet*, and due to evasive details neither *I Mean You* nor *Straight* ever jell.

But we discover that Monk was prepared on every take. We hear his resounding left hand give impetus to the band, know the strange chords are opening doors to Mulligan's blowing, and realize the pianist is aware of every inflection in the whole band—his presence is even effective when he's laying out. Side four opens with 21 minutes of Monk exploring *'Round Midnight*, and the preparation's laid bare. He studies the hidden voices in the dissonances, practices the trebly tinkle and fragile cascade that he'll later toss off casually, tests syncopations, mulls dynamic considerations, sounds again and again the low tone that anchors the composition, and creates the mood that he enters and sustains in the six-minute-plus version that evolved from his process. Some tangents turned up in the rough draft are discarded by the final take—but there's so much Monk knew he could do with this music, surely some of the ideas appeared in his performances.

That thought sends one back to the *Jazz Workshop*, the *It Club*, the Five Spot sessions, and finally all the music Monk left behind, to listen again to artfully wrought treasures. *—howard mandel*

PETER ERSKINE

PETER ERSKINE—Contemporary 14010: *Leroy Street; In Statu Nascendi; E.S.P.; Change Of Mind; All's Well That Ends; My Ship; Coyote Blues.*

Personnel: *Erskine, drums, percussion, OBX synthesizer (cut 5); Don Alias, congas, shakers (4); Mike Brecker, tenor saxophone (1,4,5); Randy Brecker, trumpet, flugelhorn (6); Eddie Gomez, bass; Don Grolnick, OBX (1), electric piano (5); Kenny Kirkland, piano (1,3,4,7); Mike Mainieri, vibes (3,5-7); Bob Mintzer, tenor saxophone (1,3,4,7), bass clarinet (5).*

★ ★ ★

Drummers don't get to lead dates unless they have hot groups (R. S. Jackson), super concepts (Billy Hart's 1978 *Enhance*; I'm still waiting for his next), or big names. Erskine, big name by association as alumnus of one of the hottest groups in jazz (Weather Report) gets his chance with a rather cool, low-key studio set that is singularly self-effacing. Cover portraits and title must assert identity because the six reasonably tight pieces with flexible small group and one tiny, inconclusive drum sketch do not showcase Erskine in any way.

Erskine leads with his best shot: a lively, well-arranged *Leroy Street* that boasts attractive horn writing, neat OBX color, a catchy turnaround bridge. That and a three-minute *E.S.P.* (tidy Shorter homage with so-so Mintzer and tip-top Kirkland) sound radio-play bound. Mintzer's bright ballad *Change* is the other good piece of this set: classy two-part melody inspiring thoughtful statements from Bob and Randy, with rich textures and good harmonies. This should wear long, provoke covers.

Side two is less remarkable. *All's Well* is a loose, moody tune with Mike Brecker's only solo (a longish, crafty, boot-tops one); I had to peek at the cover to distinguish him from Mintzer. Alias and Gomez find a copacetic companionship for Erskine's metronomic time, and Randy cuts a quieter, oblique groove. Tentative filigree between brief horn riffs finally gives way to brisk cannonades by the apparently reluctant leader, and the long fade whimpers away. Is all well with such

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uncertainty? Light samba Weill (*My Ship*) and easygoing 12-bar *Blues* bring introspective noodling from Randy's flugel and some pretty, cogent piano from Kirkland, easily the best soloist on the session.

Some of the tenuous nature of the project must be attributed to the feathery, echoey presence of vibist Mainieri who, except on *My Ship*, has the role of walk-on. Hovering at the edge of audibility, he's the nice guy who has to be plugged into ensembles, which only makes them shimmer hollowly like will-o-the-wisps. The whole set's too cool and glib for my taste. Don't these session cats ever play anything slow and hot? Like the blues?

—*fred bouchard*

CARLOS SANTANA

HAVANA MOON—Columbia FC 38642: *Watch Your Step; Lightnin'; Who Do You Love; Mudbone; One With You; Ecuador; Tales Of Kilimanjaro; Havana Moon; Daughter Of The Night; They All Went To Mexico; Vereda Tropical.*

***Personnel:** Santana, guitars, percussion; Booker T. Jones, keyboards, vocals (cuts 5,8); Barry Beckett, keyboards; David Hood, bass; Graham Lear, drums; the Fabulous Thunderbirds (2-5,8); Greg Walker, vocals (1,9); The Santana Band percussion section (1,2,5-8,10); Tower of Power horns (1); Richard Baker, keyboards (6); Orestes Vilato, flute (6); Alan Pasqua, keyboards (7); David Margen, bass (7); Christ Solberg, guitar (7); Leonardo "Flaco" Jiminez, accordion (10); Mic Gillette, trumpet (10); Willie Nelson, vocal (10); Raymundo Coronado, Francisco Coronado, Gabriel Arias, violenes (11); Roberto Moreno, Candelario Lopez, armonios (11); Luis Gonzalez, bojo (11); Jose Salcedo, Oscar Chavez, tromp (11); Jose Santana, cantador, violen (11).*

★ ★ ★ ★

The late Ralph J. Gleason, writing in the pages of *Rolling Stone* a dozen years back, suggested that the Santana band had the latinized musical power to sweep a listener off his feet. Their first three albums were indeed rhythmic gale winds. The fifth outing, *Welcome* (1973), a jazzy sanctification of Coltrane, provided another type of ascension—spiritual uplift. Since then, Carlos Santana's group and solo recordings have usually been weighted to the ground by jejune pop or fusion considerations. As surprising, then, as snowfall in Palm Beach is his emergence from limbo with a soulful and virile new album, a sort of personal catharsis.

Havana Moon shows that you *can* go home again. With the help of fabled r&b producer Jerry Wexler, equally storied Memphis Group organist Booker T. Jones, and a host of more mundane musician friends, Santana taps the well of sounds and emotions he encountered growing up in the Mexican border city of Tijuana. A revitalized *Watch Your Step*, that rock & roll warhorse, kicks off with the Tower of Power horns and never looks back. Greg Walker, the best singer ever employed by Santana, exudes rough-and-easy confidence here as he does on the gentler latin-tinged *Daughter Of The Night*, where the poignant question of whether to stay put or move on is raised.

Blues feeling has long been part of Santana's constitution. Using revivialists the Fabulous Thunderbirds for honky tonk swagger, he captures some of the low-down dirtiness of Lightnin' Hopkins' country blues in the tribute *Lightnin'*. (Actually, Jimmy Vaughan's guitar cuts closer to the blues core.) *Mudbone*, featuring Kim Wilson's understated harp, shimmies with a sensuous abandon befitting John Lee Hooker, and a spirited rendition of *Who Do You Love* pays homage to rock pioneer Bo Diddley. The real killer, though, is the cover of Chuck Berry's *Havana Moon*. Booker T. deadpans the comedic hard luck lyrics, the players work out an impassioned splendor, and the overall effect is as stirring as a dusk viewing of Havana's Morro castle from sea.

Santana and Wexler take some personnel and programming chances which pay off handsomely. *One With You* is a lazy afternoon jam—almost guaranteed boredom—but the piece gets by on the musicians' intuitive camaraderie. Country music icon Willie Nelson gives involved expression to *They All Went To Mexico*, and Santana's father emotively croons his way through the ballad *Vereda Tropical*. To sum: 46 minutes of honest, sky-reaching music.—*frank-john hadley*

ART PEPPER

GOIN' HOME—Galaxy GXY-5143: *Goin' Home; Samba Mom Mom; In A Mellotone; Don't Let The Sun Catch You Cryin'; Isn't She Lovely; Billie's Bounce; Lover Man (Oh, Where Can You Be); The Sweetest Sounds.*

***Personnel:** Pepper, alto saxophone, clarinet; George Cables, piano.*

★ ★ ★ ★

RICHIE COLE AND . . .—Palo Alto PA 8023: *Return To Alto Acres; Things We Did Last Summer; Art's Opus #2; A & R; Palo Alto Blues; Broadway.*

***Personnel:** Richie Cole, alto, tenor, baritone saxophone; Art Pepper, alto saxophone, clarinet; Roger Kellaway, piano; Bob Magnusson, bass; Billy Higgins, drums.*

★ ★ ★

DARN THAT DREAM—Realtime RT-309: *Section-8 Blues; Someday My Prince Will Come; Sweet Lorraine; Mode For Joe; Darn That Dream; Who Can I Turn To.*

***Personnel:** Pepper, alto saxophone; Joe Farrell, tenor saxophone; George Cables, piano; Tony Dumas, bass; John Dentz, drums.*

★ ★ ½

Goin' Home is Art Pepper's last album, recorded in May 1982, about a month before he died. It is a quietly beautiful valediction pronounced upon a stormy life and career. But with *Richie Cole and . . .* and *Darn That Dream*, also among Pepper's last recordings (February and March), one can only be disappointed. It is not that they are bad, but that they hardly feature Pepper at his best and (except for Cables on *Dream*) with his best collaborators and sidemen. Still, if in nothing else, all three albums succeed equally as testaments to Art Pepper's protean sensibility, his refusal to become wedded to a particular style or even to a single instrument.

On *Richie Cole . . .* Pepper plays alto and clarinet (Cole plays tenor and baritone in addition to his usual alto). It is worth the price of this otherwise lightweight but workmanlike album to hear Pepper on clarinet in Cole's composition, *Return To Alto Acres*. Art's first instrument was the clarinet, and, late in his career, he returned to it sporadically. Unfortunately, *Return To Alto Acres* is the only truly satisfying Pepper/Cole (playing baritone on this cut) collaboration. Cole is an excellent musician, but Pepper long ago outgrew the kind of glossy and transparent bop purveyed here. Cole's *A & R*, which the composer calls "a New York City type of sound," is really more of an *hommage*-cum-throwback to early Art. Well, this should at least be charming, but it comes off a trifle hollow and even half-hearted. Pepper's own *Art's Opus #2* is a more adventurous work. The most complex and demanding composition on the album, it showcases some bravura ride cymbal work from Billy Higgins, but Pepper has sounded much better before.

For Pepper fans *Darn That Dream* has even less to recommend it. Tenorman Joe Farrell probably deserves top billing here instead of Pepper because he is more in evidence. And while Farrell and Pepper each do a solo cut, pianist George Cables takes *two*—very lovely—solo turns. Maybe *his* name should go on top. His *Sweet Lorraine* opens with a bluesy nonchalance that strolls before us like a Gershwin miniature before jogging into an improvisation savoring Bud Powell with a dash of Art Tatum for elegance. No wonder Pepper enjoyed playing with Cables. The pianist's work is certainly the most successful thing on this recording.

But Joe Farrell and Art Pepper do not make a happy pair. With its absence of nuance, Farrell's fat tenor simply overpowers Pepper's bright but delicate alto on everything except *Mode For Joe*, in which the two manage as effective foils. And while Farrell's solo on *Someday My Prince Will Come* is embarrassing—a commonplace, faintly boorish treatment of a silly tune—Pepper's best here is *his* solo on *Darn That Dream*. We don't get the kind of acerbic invention for which the altoist is most prized, but the unabashed lyricism, elliptical though never stinting, is most welcome.

While neither *Richie Cole and . . .* nor *Darn That Dream* is essential to the Pepper enthusiast's collection, *Goin' Home* is—very much so, and not just because it is Art's last recording. The work here is quiet, sweet, introspective, mellow, mature. The album is also highly valuable as Pepper's only duo recording. Pepper found his ideal partner in Cables. The veiled blues of Art's clarinet on the title cut—the traditional American tune *Going Home*, which Antonin Dvorak used in his "New World" symphony and which is presented here in Cables' own arrangement—is supremely eloquent set against the quietly romantic keyboard. Pepper's clarinet work on *In A Mellotone* and *Lover Man* both recall Pee Wee Russell with their breathy tension between dusky reflection and straightforward melody. On *Isn't She Lovely* Pepper plays both clarinet and alto, with

Cables providing a brilliant bass line worked into a kind of jazz continuo. It is with *Don't Let The Sun Catch You Cryin'*, though, that we hear the partnership at its most effective, Cables countering Pepper's moody horn with sunny repose.

This is what *Goin' Home* is all about: a soft echo of Pepper's career. That career defies definition, but we can discern one constant throughout it: a moving tension, the power of emotion exquisitely tempered by invention rich as it is tough. —*alan axelrod*

ALBERT COLLINS

DON'T LOSE YOUR COOL—Alligator 2403: *Get To Gettin'; My Mind Is Trying To Leave Me; Broke; Don't Lose Your Cool; When A Guitar Plays The Blues; . . . But I Was Cool; Melt Down; Ego Trip; Quicksand.*

Personnel: *Collins, guitar, vocals; Chris Foreman, keyboards; A. C. Reed, tenor saxophone; Abb Locke, Dino Spells, tenor, alto saxophone; Larry Burton, guitar; Johnny B. Gayden, bass; Casey Jones, drums, vocal.*

★ ★ ★ ½

Between his smoldering guitar work and his pyrotechnic stage act, Albert Collins is the hottest of bluesmen, so it is ironic that cold has been his metaphoric motif since he cut his first hit, *The Freeze*, for the Houston-based Kangaroo label in 1958. Collins' early sides were almost all instrumentals—Texas guitar shuffles that harked back to the jump blues of the '40s while pointing the way toward the hard funk of the late '70s. Never a great singer, he is nonetheless an expressive vocalist who emphasizes the meaning of a lyric with his bluff, speech-song delivery. Still, his forte is a piercing, single-string guitar attack, an amalgam of Gatemouth Brown's pulsating energy and B.B. King's searing intensity that appeals to heavy-metal addicts as much as to blues fans.

Drawing its title track from his 1963 single on Hall-Way, *Don't Lose Your Cool* is Collins' fourth LP for Alligator. The format is essentially the same as on *Ice Pickin'*, *Frostbite*, and *Frozen Alive!*: Collins, backed by his crack Chicago touring band the Ice Breakers, performs a mixed set of uptempo rockers, keening blues, amusing narratives, and airplay-oriented neo-funkers a la Johnny "Guitar" Watson.

Most of the material is second-hand, but Collins has a knack for borrowing little-known tunes that suit his style and remaking them in his own chilly image. Big Walter Price's *Get To Gettin'* is an apt choice for adaptation, since Collins himself accompanied the San Antonio pianist on his obscure 1965 recording. Here, as on Guitar Slim's *Quicksand*, Collins' incendiary guitar comes to the fore; the superb band is cast strictly in a supporting role, and mixed accordingly. Collins is a master showman who can whip an audience into a frenzy as he struts and grimaces his way through a blistering solo. On instrumental scorchers like *Melt Down* and *Don't Lose Your Cool*, his fierce fingerpicking hints at such ecstatic peaks, but none of his albums, including *Frozen Alive!*, captures his full in-person impact.

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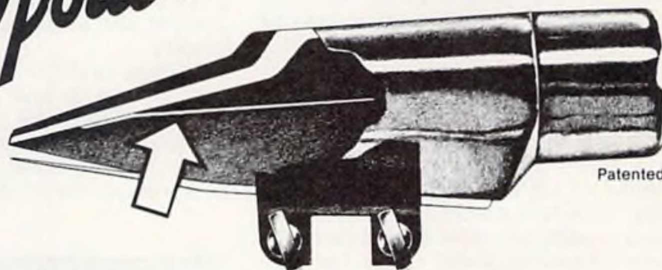

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Record Reviews

Unfortunately, Collins quickly exhausts his limited supply of hot licks. After three quite similar albums, *Don't Lose Your Cool* offers only the minimal novelty of Chris Foreman's soulful organ. New material and more ambitious arrangements would seem in order; Collins, who once aspired to be a jazz player, is certainly capable of greater variety. A case in point: his hilarious reading of Oscar Brown Jr.'s . . . *But I Was Cool*, with the Ice Breakers riffing behind him in classic hard-bop harmony. —*larry birnbaum*

ART BLAKEY

KEYSTONE 3—Concord Jazz CJ-196: *In Walked Bud; In A Sentimental Mood; Fuller Love; Waterfalls; A La Mode.*
Personnel: *Blakey, drums; Wynton Marsalis, trumpet; Branford Marsalis, alto saxophone; Bill Pierce, tenor saxophone; Donald Brown, piano; Charles Fambrough, bass.*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

OH-BY THE WAY—Timeless SJP 165: *Oh-By The Way; Duck Soup; Tropical Breeze; One By One; Sudan Blue; My Funny Valentine; Alicia.*
Personnel: *Blakey, drums; Terence Blanchard, trumpet; Bill Pierce, tenor saxophone; Donald Harrison, alto saxophone; Johnny O'Neal, piano; Charles Fambrough, bass.*

★ ★ ★ ★

When the Jazz Messengers came through Chicago in Spring 1982, fans and critics who were looking forward to hearing the acclaimed band with the Marsalis brothers were disappointed. The Marsalises had just left the Blakey School of Music, and the new band received mixed-to-negative reviews. In reflection, the disappointment may have masked the fact that they were watching the essence of what has made Blakey such a force for 30 years: change and growth.

The band with Wynton Marsalis is destined to be remembered in a league with those incorporating Lee Morgan, Clifford Brown, and Kenny Dorham; Wynton has been tabbed already as the jazz trumpeter of the '80s. All the more reason to savor *Keystone 3*, which comes from a live date at San Francisco's Keystone Korner. *Oh-By The Way*, recorded four months and three personnel changes later, lacks the overwhelming strength of the Marsalis-fed Messengers, yet it is an impressive album, showing how Blakey could in short time begin to meld musicians with dynamics different from their predecessors into another powerful group.

Much has been written about Wynton, who is on his way to devising his own language for trumpet out of the roots of Brownie. Yet he doesn't dominate *Keystone 3*, a near-classic because Blakey achieved a tremendous balancing act with the headstrong talents of three disparate front-liners (including the scholarly Wynton and freewheeling Branford).

The interest in Wynton may have overshadowed the development of Bill Pierce, who contributes a wonderfully breathy *In A Sentimental Mood*. Much like Coltrane's way with a ballad, he works subtly with the melody, confident that excess isn't needed to express his own signature, while Donald Brown contributes Tyneresque chordings.

The brothers shine on *Waterfalls*. Branford plays a broad-ranging solo, both gutty and fluid, on a Wynton composition that shows the influence of Herbie Hancock. Wynton's drive, crystal-clear tone, and careful phrasing mix best as he steams through Monk's *In Walked Bud*. And through it all Blakey is clearly the catalyst, the ubiquitous trapsman who never needs to overpower the listener to show his control, who talks in several tongues simultaneously and distinctly. There's no doubt that Wynton was ready to go on his own, but I wonder if he'll ever find a drummer who knew so well how to caress and prompt and surround him.

The new band on *Oh-By The Way* lacks the discipline and singularity of purpose of its predecessor, but it suggests that the voices were developing, the cohesion was finding a groove. Terence Blanchard, 19 at the time of the recording, avows a love for Miles Davis and unabashedly emulates Miles on *My Funny Valentine*. Yet he has a hefty stable of influences and, considering his age, could inherit Wynton's sobriquet as the lad "mature beyond his years." Johnny O'Neal adds a quite different piano color than Brown. O'Neal has an airy, flowing style that gets a workout on *Tropical Breeze*, a trio number that is the best chance on either record to hear Blakey's style.

This group doesn't have the presence of the other, and if there is a particular weakness, it may be Donald Harrison, who contributes *Duck Soup*, a bright tribute to Charlie Parker, but is a little short of ideas on alto. Yet the band also has a more mysterious quality to it, a sometimes ethereal sound not usually given to hard-bop, that is built on a collective ability to shift and slide through shades of intensity.

So there are quite different reasons to like each of these albums. It is natural to lean toward that wonderful group with the Marsalis brothers, yet the ultimate pleasure is in knowing that, as Blakey reached a pinnacle on one album, the other promises evolution. —*r. bruce dold*

PHILIP GLASS

THE PHOTOGRAPHER—Columbia FM 37849: *Act I: "A Gentleman's Honor"; Act II; Act III.*
Personnel: *Glass, electric organ; Paul Zukofsky, violin; Jack Kripl, flute, soprano, alto, baritone saxophone; Lew Soloff, Ed Carroll, trumpet; Jim Pugh, Alan Raph, trombone; Bob Carlisle, Ron Sell, french horn; Jeanne Ingraham, Carol Pool, Lew Ely, Jill Jaffe, Maureen Gallagher, Judy Geist, Ted Israel, strings; Marin Alsop, concertmaster; Adrienne Albert, Betty Baisch, Mary Sue Berry, Rose Marie Jun, Dora Ohrenstein, Marlene VerPlanck, vocals; Michael Riesman, keyboards, piano, bass synthesizer, conductor.*

★ ★ ★ ★

The allure of Philip Glass' music is that it's not rooted to any particular image, including the image of live musicians creating it. The music appears from nowhere and develops its momentum, colors, and changes with its own inner logic. Like the music of Bach, with whom Glass shares a contrapuntal sensibility, the musicians are played by the music.

The Photographer continues Glass' movement towards more expansive music with a wider dynamic range than his earlier juggernaut pieces like *Music In Similar Motion* and *Music In 12 Parts*. His recent compositions are more joyful and less demonic in their intensity. The short, repeated melodies spin like a double-ferris wheel, with independent circles rotating within a larger sphere. Synthesizers, flutes, voices, reeds, strings, and brass intertwine, unravel, and change places in space like a berserk carnival sound machine.

Glass' *The Photographer* was composed for a play based on the life of Eadweard Muybridge, who conducted photographic studies of humans and animals in motion in the late 19th century. Like Muybridge, Glass plays with time and motion in his score. In *Act II*, using the same underlying pulse, Glass creates a dazzling display of movement with layers of intricate counterpoint and the bluegrass breakdown of Paul Zukofsky's backsliding violin. But by using fewer events at the end, the music sounds like a music box at the conclusion of its wind, even though the pulse remains the same.

Glass still operates with a self-limited palette of melodic and rhythmic material, but his orchestrations are more colorful and full of contrasts. The electric reediness of Glass' organ plays off Kripl's dexterous flute. Bass synthesizer lines phase in and out of the trombones and cellos. Magritte-like windows into space are opened when Glass carves out a hole in the trumpet-led charge of *Act III* to reveal the chorus in a gentle glide pattern.

The Photographer fits easily in a progression with other Glass works. It continues an evolution in his music, yet it retains the recognizable traits by which we've come to identify him. If this music can still be called minimalism, then it's minimalism with drama. —*john diliberto*

JOE PASS

VIRTUOSO #4—Pablo 2640-102: *Lush Life; Indian Summer; Autumn Leaves; Yesterdays; Come Sunday; Lover Man; Come Rain Or Come Shine; My Shining Hour; I'll Remember April; Someday My Prince Will Come; Acoustic Blues; I Can't Get Started; It's A Wonderful World; Now's The Time; The Man I Love; The Nearness Of You; Limehouse Blues; Easy Living.*
Personnel: *Pass, acoustic, electric guitar.*

★ ★ ★ ★

Joe Pass is the most comprehensive jazz guitarist in the business. Counterpoint, rubato exposition and swinging extemporization, chordal embellishment and brilliant runs, call and response, the blues—he does it all.

This double-album set, recorded in 1973 at the same sessions that produced the earlier *Virtuoso* releases, is notable for Pass' depth of feeling and low-key approach. These are

not always complementary elements in lesser hands, but Pass' nuances speak cogently.

There is some similarity of performance among the tunes here. Pass segues in and out of tempo, moving from single lines to chords, sketching in bass lines, and superimposing different time emphases even in the in-tempo passages. When he establishes a groove (e.g., *Come Rain Or Come Shine*, *My Shining Hour*, *Acoustic Blues*, *Now's The Time*, *Limehouse Blues*), he generates plenty of controlled steam, whether chugging slowly on *Acoustic Blues* or flying on *Limehouse*. His debt to Charlie Christian surfaces most frequently on the blues, but in the consummate unveiling of melodies and harmonies elsewhere, he might be closer to Segovia, the great classical guitarist.

Producer Norman Granz mentions in his liner notes a Pass/Segovia preference for solo performance. He also states that *Virtuoso #4* is "played totally on acoustic guitar." However, Pass seems to be playing electric on *Indian Summer*, if not on some of the others: timbral differences appear from cut to cut.

The rating is for what these performances communicate as a unit and in relation to Pass' previous recorded work. —*owen cordle*

JON HENDRICKS

LOVE—Muse MR 5258: *Royal Garden Blues; Bright Moments; Willie's Tune; Good Ol' Lady; Lil' Darlin'; I'll Die Happy; Love (Berkshire Blues); Tell Me The Truth; The Swinging Groove Merchant (Groove Merchant); Angel Eyes; In A Harlem Airshaft (Harlem Airshaft).*

Personnel: *Hendricks, Michele Hendricks, Judith Hendricks, Bob Gurland, Leslie Dorsey, vocals; Harry "Sweets" Edison, trumpet (cut 4); Jerome Richardson, tenor saxophone (4, 9); Jimmy Smith (4, 9), Eric Doney (5, 8, 11), David Hazeltine (1-3, 6, 7), piano; Ray Scott, guitar (10); John Williams (4, 9), James Leary (5, 8, 11), Jon Burr (1-3, 6, 7), bass; Marvin Smith, drums.*

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

CLOUDBURST—Enja 4032: *No More; It Was A Dream; Shiny Stockings; Jon's Mumbles; Here's That Rainy Day; Watermelon Man; Everyday I Have The Blues; Gimme That Wine; Cloudburst; Arastao.*

Personnel: *Hendricks, vocals; Larry Vuckovich, piano; Isla Eckinger, bass; Kurt Bong, drums.*

★ ★ ½

There were two schools of thought on Lambert, Hendricks and Ross. Some people thought they were too cute, too clever, too jivey, and pointless; why, these people would ask, put tongue-twisting lyrics to great solos?

Then there were the rest of us: we loved them. As a devoted L, H and R fan (and a slightly less-devoted Lambert, Hendricks and Bavan fan), the kindest thing I can say about Jon Hendricks And Company is that they pick right up where L, H and R left off. And this is very high praise indeed.

This is very much Jon Hendricks' group: he is the featured vocalist, and it's his peppy personality that permeates the proceedings.

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Philip Elwood, Music Critic — San Francisco Examiner

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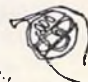

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RECORD REVIEWS

Neither wife Judith nor daughter Michele can capture Annie Ross' vocal pizzazz, but between them they manage to anchor Jon's smooth, though burnished, tenor while taking care of their short solo business: Judith handling the soprano wails and shrieks, Michele taking the purring kitten route. The two other vocalists here are used, mainly, in the ensembles—except Bob Gurland does step forward from time to time for some mouth-trumpet schtick. The ensembles are quite superb throughout, especially on the sumptuous *Lil Darlin'*, and the accompaniment is short and to the point. But the bottom line here is vocalese, and Jon Hendricks delivers up platefuls: scatting soulfully or delivering trip-hammer romps through his hip lyrics. Fortunately, the lyrics—as they were on the old Lambert, Hendricks and Ross LPs—are reprinted here.

When the Pointer Sisters were prime contenders in the jazz vocal group department, they called on Jon Hendricks; similarly, Manhattan Transfer has utilized his talents in their award-winning efforts. Well, after a number of solo albums, it's good to hear Hendricks back in the setting of a harmonizing group.

One of those solo albums, recorded during Jon's tenure in Europe, is *Cloudburst*. According to the notes, it was taped live in 1972, but there is a reference to President Johnson on the album. All in all, it is a disposable effort.

At least half the album's material has been recorded elsewhere, by Jon solo or with Lambert, Hendricks and (usually) Ross. We don't need new versions of *Cloudburst*, *Gimme That Wine*, *No More*, or *Shiny Stockings*. They are throwaways, a souvenir of the days when Hendricks worked with nothing more than a rhythm section. Similarly, two numbers here are retreads from the song books of Clark Terry (*Jon's Mumbles*—CT does it better) and Joe Williams (the Basie version of *Everyday*). The most interest here, for longtime Hendricks fans, is in *Here's That Rainy Day* and *Arastao*, the former a raspy version of the Jimmy Van Heusen chestnut, the latter a samba in Portuguese with too much space for instrumental solos.

Jon Hendricks recorded a number of solo albums in Europe, most of them better than this, and a fine Arista album a number of years back. I don't know if they are still available, but they are meatier than *Cloudburst*, and far more interesting. This is a harmless live album, but not much more.

—lee jeske

MICHAL URBANIAK

MY ONE AND ONLY LOVE—SteepleChase SCS-1159: *My One And Only Love; Bells; Folky; Mazurka; Apology.*

Personnel: *Urbaniak, violin; Gene Bertoncini, guitar; Michael Moore, bass.*

★ ★ ★ ½

The Americanization of Michal Urbaniak has found the Polish saxophonist/violinist reliving the gamut of styles that he ran in Warsaw at age 20: hot swing, jazz-rock, avant garde, late bop. His latest *avatar* carries him near full circle to swing revivalist with a gypsy twist, alongside a pair of sympathetic companions. Michael Moore, whose agile, moody bass ever seeks the perfectly complementary counterpoints, has long been a favorite of singers, and makes the perfect accomplice in currently and deservedly fashionable piano/bass duos. Guitarist Bertoncini—likewise an understated (and, by corollary, underrated) accompanist, has logged time with Tony Bennett and Lena Horne; I have heard him to advantage with Susannah McCorkle and Bobbi Rogers. These low-key individualists make up the rhythm of Urbaniak's Jazz Trio, and assure that there will be neither Motown jive nor overstrained changemaking, but an easy cushion for the leader's throaty custom five-string viola/violin to "sing like Ben Webster."

Jam At Sandy's (JAM 5004) was released last year and escaped reviewing, though it had four nice standards well played (two on Lyricon) before Sandy Berman's typically receptive audience. The only standard here is the title tune, teamed on side one with Bertoncini's pretty *Bells*; both are deliberately introspective, with peaks as the burly violinist's solo gets volatile. Urbaniak fiddles in the lusty Venuti manner, with flamboyant doublestops and catmeowling glissandi. Side two's Urbaniak originals measure up quite well to the lyrical intent of the album. After a brief solo cadenza with some demonic sawing a la *Night On Bald Mountain*, Urbaniak launches the zesty *Mazurka* (a Polish folkdance in triple time) which diverts to a lovely ballad melody before grappling with a blues variant of the opening hoedown. *Apology* is another pretty ballad that peaks with headlong bowing before subsiding into murmurs of contended rhythm solos. Tempered with only a little of Grappelli's sheen and grace and fraught with none of Ponty's fierce electrification, Urbaniak has veered toward his most melodic and romantic streak since coming to America. *—fred bouchard*

DAVID GRISMAN

DAWG GRASS/DAWG JAZZ—Warner Bros. 23804-1: *14 Miles To Barstow; Swamp Dawg; Dawggy Mountain Breakdown; Wayfaring Stranger; Happy Birthday, Bill Monroe; Dawg Grass; Dawg Jazz; Steppin' With Stephane; Fumblebee; In A Sentimental Mood.*

Personnel: *Grisman, mandolin, mando-viola; Darol Anger, fiddle; Mike Marshall, guitar, mandolin, fiddle; Rob Wasserman, bass; Stephane Grappelli, violin; Earl Scruggs, banjo; Tony Rice, Martin Taylor, guitar; Ed Shaughnessy, drums; Tommy Newsom, John Banbridge, alto saxophone, clarinet; Pete Christlieb, tenor saxophone; Ross Tompkins, piano; Don Ashworth, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Jerry "Flux" Douglas, dobro; John Audino, Conte Candoli, trumpet, Gil Falco, Bruce Paulson, trombone; Bernie Pack, bass trombone.*

★ ★ ★ ★

Jazz and bluegrass merge on this two-faced disc—*Dawg Grass* and *Dawg Jazz* on opposite sides, each with its own album cover. The dawg metaphor continues. . . .

There can now be no question about Grisman's virtuosity on mandolin or his ability to change gears between traditional country instrumentals and jazz. His excellent playing is here set off against living legends in both idioms: Earl Scruggs on *Dawggy Mountain Breakdown*, and regular compadre Stephane Grappelli on *Steppin' With Stephane* and *In A Sentimental Mood*. This relationship with Grappelli has yielded fruits on at least a couple of previous recorded efforts, and both men share a combination of attributes: the feeling of total, effortless command of their respective instruments, and a facility for fresh enthusiasm each time they play.

Both Grappelli cuts deserve praise. *In A Sentimental Mood* is contrasted by Darol Anger's deep, melancholic, second violin. Anger and the other two regular members of Grisman's quartet, Rob Wasserman and Mike Marshall, show their savvy throughout, and Anger's jazz cut *Fumblebee* demonstrates the ease with which this group can refocus their creative juices.

The *Dawg Grass* portion of the record won't be entirely uninteresting to jazz fans; *14 Miles To Barstow* and *Swamp Dawg* contain more than a hint of improvisation, and other cuts are energetic and well done. But it is the *Dawg Jazz* track, performed with the Tonight Show Orchestra, that comes closest to being a radical departure for Grisman—bristling big band horns driven by drum strongman Ed Shaughnessy.

Still, David Grisman is at a point where an even higher degree of experimentation would be welcomed by his fans, and it doesn't necessarily have to come from the jazz side of the tracks. This record is very good, but it doesn't really push the mandolinist into the unknown. We're ready for some new moves. *Future Dawg*?

—robert henschen

ZOOT SIMS

PLAYS FOUR ALTOS—MCA Impulse 29069: *Quicker Blues; Slower Blues; Let's Not Waltz Tonight; The Last Day Of Fall; J'Espere Enfin; See, A Key Of "C"; I Await Thee, Love.*

Personnel: *Sims, alto saxophone (multitracked); John Williams, piano; Knobby Totah, bass; Nick Stabulas, drums.*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

BLUES FOR TWO—Pablo D2310879: *Blues For Two; Dindi; Pennies From Heaven; Poor Butterfly; Black And Blue; I Hadn't Anyone Till You; Takeoff; Remember.*

Personnel: *Sims, tenor, soprano saxophone; Joe Pass, guitar.*

★ ★ ★ ★

Upon first glance at the instrumentations listed above, it will be clear that neither of these two widely disparate sessions can be considered a routine show for Zoot Sims. A recording artist for 40 years (q.v. Benny Goodman's 1943 airchecks and Joe Bushkin's 1944 Commodores), Zoot has been heard in virtually every type of musical configuration possible, but primarily in either big bands or combos of varying sizes and persuasions. Only twice to my knowledge, in late 1956 and early 1957, did he ever under-

take the challenging task of multi-tracking, while only once previously has he been discovered in such a limited partnership as he here enjoys with Joe Pass.

Four Altos is a joy from start to finish. With the exception of a few brief piano solos, it is prime Zoot all the way in solo, sax section soli, and call-and-response patterns in big band style. And according to George Handy's notes from the original ABC-Paramount issue, it was as difficult for him to score as it was easy for Zoot to perform: Zoot and rhythm cut a swinging seven-tune session in one easy day; Handy picked up the tapes and transcribed all of the sax solos, heads included, with structural decisions to be made somewhat later. After wrestling with myriad problems of notation, Handy ultimately came up with the right decisions—i.e., unaccompanied solos if harmonization proved technically impossible, contrapuntal interweaving of lines when feasible, and voicing alterations as dictated by circumstances. Harried arranger and challenged soloist then returned to the studio for a two-man headphoned multi-track session. That's all, folks! Just two sessions and the whole album's done. No six-figure budgets, no cross-country calls or flights, no consultations with corporate vice-presidents . . . just two consummate talents and a free hand at creative production. What results is not only a classic, but one unique even for Zoot.

Also recorded in two sessions, in March and June of '82, *Blues For Two* represents the first-time-ever union of the world's most respected mainstream guitarist and tenorman in a duo setting. And while there is nothing particularly amiss in this pairing, by the same token neither does it make any special point that could not have been made quite a bit more satisfyingly by the addition of an empathetic bassman and drummer.

There is an attempt at variety in the choice of material, but because of the limited textural resources available, there is also an unfortunate sameness of sound that prevails throughout. The title tune is a slow swinger, *Dindi* an attractive Jobin bossa, *Pennies* a medium-tempo swing-style outing for Zoot's soprano, *Butterfly*, *Black And Blue*, and *Remember* bluesy ballads, while only *I Hadn't*, a bounce, and *Takeoff*, an upper, show glimpses of what this duo could do if they but had some support. *—jack sohmer*

PHIL WILSON/ MAKOTO OZONE

LIVE AT THE BERKLEE PERFORMANCE CENTER—Shina Records SR 113: *Stella By Starlight; Here's That Rainy Day; Gravy Waltz; These Are The Days; Blues My Naughty Sweetie Gave To Me; Giant Steps.*
Personnel: *Wilson, trombone; Ozone, piano.*

★ ★ ★ ½

Duets in jazz are a special kind of ensemble performance. The risks are great and there's no place to hide. In this album trombonist Phil Wilson and pianist and '82 "deebee" award winner Makoto Ozone enter into a small corner of jazz tradition reserved only for the greatest masters—Armstrong and Hines, Ellington and Blanton, Goodman and Rowles, Peterson and Gillespie, Braff and Larkins—and they bring it off very nicely.

The reason is, I think, because encounters such as these have always been a greater test of skill than of concept or emotional power. And both players here demonstrate superb skills. It is not particularly surprising for a good musician to successfully essay an unaccompanied solo or a solo backed by other players in supporting roles. Either way, the player has a clear, relatively unobstructed track on which to make his run. In the duet format though, obstacles are everywhere because both players are equal partners who must thread their way through the intricacies of each other's ebb and flow as it ebbs and flows. So the tensions are constantly rebalancing, relationships shifting from bar to bar. Wilson may dominate with a strong line, as in *Stella By Starlight*, suddenly feel a percussive undercurrent from Ozone, pick up on it, and the focus of the performance is suddenly on the piano. Sometimes the interplay is so well fitted (in and out parts of *Gravy Waltz*) it's probably the result of an evolved head arrangement, or at the very least mutual familiarity with the material. For

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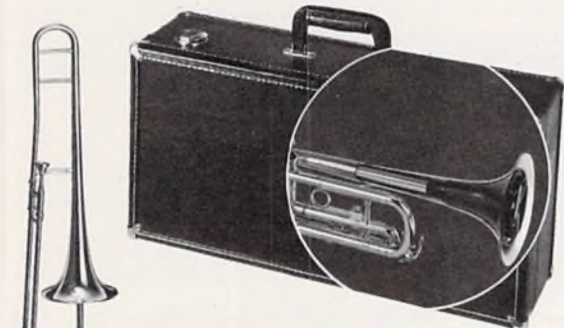

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the listener, however, the unpredictability is subtle but constant.

Phil Wilson's extraordinary articulation fully overcomes the inherent clumsiness of his instrument in comparison to the piano. His attack of eighth notes and double-time sprints contains no hint that is not intended of the slide, whether it's the walking strut of *Naughty Sweetie*, the Olympian leap he takes near the end of *Rainy Day*, or the immaculate tonguing of *Giant Steps*. The pace of his interaction here with Ozone is stupifying.

Such feats are less impressive on piano, where speed is taken for granted. But this young pianist is nevertheless a player of the first rank. His strong right hand can pump out driving single-note lines of startling power, and his ear can pull in the floating harmonies of Bill Evans and make them swing. He is a composite of many great pianists, as one would expect from a youthful virtuoso yet to find a personal voice. You will hear dazzling Petersonisms in *Gravy Waltz* as he rips through a long swirling break with both hands in parallel motion. You will hear Garner as he plays catch-up with hs own beat on *Naughty Sweetie*. You'll hear it sweet and hot too. Makoto Ozone has it all.

The result of their pairing is a showcase of skill and virtuosity of the first order. If it was perhaps more impressive to those who witnessed it in person than it comes over on record as an emotional jazz experience, that in no way reflects on the quality of the work or the taste with which the skill serves the material. *—john mcdonough*

JERRY GONZALEZ & THE FORT APACHE BAND

THE RIVER IS DEEP—Enja 4040: *ELEGUA; BEBOP; RIO ESTA HONDO; GUIRO APACHE; PARISIAN THOROUGHFARE; WAWINA ERA WO.*
Personnel: *Gonazlez, congas, trumpet, flugelhorn, bells, coro; Frankie Rodriguez, lead vocal, claves, conga; Wilfredo Velez, alto saxophone; Steve Turre, trombone, bass trombone; Angel "Papo" Vasquez, trombone; Edgardo Miranda, guitar, cuatro; Jorge Dalto, piano; Andy Gonzalez, bass, coro; Steve Berrios, trap drums, bata, chekere, coro; Gene Golden, conga, chekere, bata, bells; Hector "Flaco" Hernandez, conga, bata, chekere; Nicky Marrero, timbales, guataca, percussion.*

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

PONCHO SANCHEZ

SONANDO—Concord Jazz Picante CJP-201: *A NIGHT IN TUNISIA; SONANDO; THE SUMMER KNOWS; CON TRES TAMBORES BATA UN QUINTO Y UN TUMBADOR; ESTE SON; ALMENDRA; SUEÑO; CAL'S PALS; PERUCHIN.*
Personnel: *Sanchez, congas, percussion; Ramon Banda, timbales, drums; Tony Banda, bass; Luis Conte, bongos, bata, percussion; Gary Foster, saxophone, flute; Jose Perico Hernandez, vocals; Steven Huffsteter, trumpet; Mark Levine, trombone; Dick Mitchell, saxophone, flute; Charlie Otwell, piano.*

★ ★ ★ ½

If, as Jelly Roll Morton asserted, the "Spanish tinge" was integral to the very conception of jazz, the term "latin jazz" may be considered somewhat redundant. But although Cuban and Puerto Rican immigrants like Mario Bauza and Juan Tizol continued to influence jazz tradition through the Swing Era, it was not until the 1940s that jazz melodies and latin rhythms were self-consciously compounded to create a distinct genre. Since then, latin jazz has displayed its hybrid vigor, surviving through fat years and lean; like many hybrids, however, it appears incapable of reproducing itself: the parent strains must be cross-bred anew in each successive generation.

Percussionists Jerry Gonzalez, a New Yorker of Puerto Rican extraction, and Poncho Sanchez, a Chicano from California, have both had ample latin jazz experience: Gonzalez as a founding member of the Latin Jazz Quintet, Sanchez as a seven-year veteran of Cal Tjader's combo. Gonzalez, who doubles on trumpet, has also dabbled in another kind of fusion music, as a sideman with Jeremy Steig, McCoy Tyner, Tony Williams, and Larry Young. Still, neither he nor Sanchez seems able to achieve a true unification, rather than a superimposition—however provocative or entertaining—of the two disparate, though related, idioms.

The superlative rhythmic core of the Bronx-based Fort Apache band—Jerry Gonzalez, Frankie Rodriguez, Andy Gonzalez, and Gene Golden—has recorded with the Grupo Folklorico, Conjunto Libre, and Totico Y Sus Rumberos, all exponents of Afro-Cuban folkloric music in contemporary ensemble settings. On Jerry's first date as leader, *Ya Yo Me Curé* (American Clave 1001), he combined the same sort of African-inflected

critics' choice

Art Lange

NEW RELEASE: Cecil Taylor, *Calling It The 8th* (hat Hut). A typical Cecil quartet caught live, meaning convivial, conniving, and compulsive.
OLD FAVORITE: Pee Wee Russell, *Memorial Album* (Prestige). The wry clarinetist taught his horn to talk with a gracious growl and a melancholic majesty.
RARA AVIS: The Nighthawks, *Times Four* (Adelphi). From *Ubangi Stomp* to *Boppin' The Blues* via Elvis Costello's *Mystery Dance*, this bar band par excellence rips it up.
SCENE: The world premiere of Clinton Carpenter's completion of Gustav Mahler's miasmatic *Symphony No. 10*, by the Civic Orchestra of Chicago.

Charles Doherty

NEW RELEASE: Various Artists, *The King Of Comedy Soundtrack* (Warner Bros.). This delightful grab-bag presents Ray Charles to the Pretenders in a surefire party mix; produced by Robbie Robertson.
OLD FAVORITE: The Kinks, *Arthur* (Reprise). Still stands as the pinnacle of Ray Davies' LP career despite his many mountainous peaks (and occasional valleys) since its '69 release.
RARA AVIS: Shockabilly, *The Dawn Of . . .* (Rough Trade EP). Five golden olden molden classic blasts from the past transmogrified and eclectifried into boogie music for 1999; look out Prince, King Gene of Chadbourne approacheth.
SCENE: Codona, a pan-global pleasure best heard when seen, viz the tri-continental string trio of Collin Walcott (sitar), Don Cherry (doussn'gouni), and Nana Vasconcelos (berimbau); at Tuts in the Windy.

Howard Mandel

NEW RELEASE: Bill Laswell, *Baselines* (Elektra Musician). With Ronald Shannon Jackson among the drummers, Fred Frith, George Lewis, and the Material members, the bassist makes music sound weird and good again.
OLD FAVORITE: Thelonious Monk, *Brilliant Corners* (Riverside). Roach, Rollins, Terry, Pettiford or Chambers, and Monk, arranging such touches as celeste and timpani. But beautiful.
RARA AVIS: Sun Ra and Arkestra, *Disco 3000* (Saturn). Electronic big band skips this century's end, and the next 10; Miles should blow over these textured rhythms.
SCENE: Bassist Dave Holland, hale as ever, leading a swift quintet (with slippery Julian Priester) through his new and old tunes at the Public Theatre, New York, New York.

Michael Goldberg

NEW RELEASE: Eddy Grant, *Killer On The Rampage* (Portrait). Don't let the dreadlocks fool you, this LP's an amazing synthesis of rock, synthi-pop, soul, and Third World musics.
OLD FAVORITE: Bob Dylan, *Blonde On Blonde* (Columbia). Dylan went to Nashville in the mid-'60s and cut this bluesy masterpiece—the best of all his albums. Now if it only had contained *Like a Rolling Stone*. . . .
RARA AVIS: Sly And The Family Stone, *There's A Riot Goin' On* (Epic). Ten years after his star began to fade, Sly's influence continues to dominate black pop music. And where do you think those white English dance-rock groups got most of their ideas?
SCENE: George Clinton and the P-Funk All-Stars. Still ahead of his time, Dr. Funkenstein and the cream of Parliament/Funkadelic (yes, even Bootsy!) for two glorious nights at L.A.'s Beverly Theater. The guitars (thank you M. Hampton, E. Hazel, and G. Shider) turned the sky crimson.

chanting and multi-layered percussion with the linear improvisations of modern jazz. *The River Is Deep*, recorded live at the Berlin Jazz Festival, is similarly structured, alternating Cuban cult and street forms with novel bebop adaptations.

Elegua invokes the Yoruba god of the crossroads (whose Haitian-Dahoman cognate is Papa Legba); Frankie Rodriguez, another native New Yorker, leads the chorus with authentic fervor to the accompaniment of the sacred, double-headed bata drums. Dizzy Gillespie's *Bebop* is set to a Cuban carnival beat so frenetic that the horns are hard-pressed to keep pace. More successful is the title track, *Rio Esta Hondo*, a driving rumba performed sans brass in traditional street-song fashion. An elaborate arrangement of Bud Powell's *Parisian Thoroughfare* (salsa pianist Ricardo Ray previously recorded a more straightforward rendition) is fitted rather clumsily to a guaguanco rhythm, but features impressive solos by altoist Wilfredo Velez, trombonist Steve Turre, guitarist Edgardo Miranda, and pianist Jorge Dalto. *Wawino Era Wo* closes the session on a rousing note, with trombones replacing the responsive vocal chorus as Rodriguez chants soulfully in Cuban-accented Yoruba.

Poncho Sanchez addresses latin jazz in a more conventional manner, infusing New York salsa with the smooth sonorities of West Coast jazz. The California cool is numbing on bloodless ballads like *Sueño* and Michel Legrand's *The Summer Knows*, but on brighter material the band's technical polish and verve shine warmly. Salsa tunes like *Sonando* and *Este Son* swing in progressive harmonies that suggest an imaginary Thad Jones/Tito Puente band. There is even a "bata rumba," *Con Tres Tambores Bata Un Quinto Y Un Tumbador*, which appeared on the *Totico Y Sus Rumberos* album with Jerry Gonzalez soloing on the quinto, or small conga drum—here Luis Conte's bongos take the part of the quinto.

Mark Levine's sleek arrangement of Gillespie's *A Night In Tunisia* contrasts sharply with the Apaches' ragged *Bebop*. Former Akiyoshi-Tabackin trumpeter Steve Huffsteter provides a further contrast with his Dizzying facility; ironically, Gonzalez, who once backed Diz on congas, plays trumpet in a more Hubbardish, staccato vein—oddly, his playing reflects little of the Cuban trumpet tradition, a most fertile field for modern exploration. Sanchez proffers the only second-generation latin jazz on either LP, a reworking of Eddie Cano's tribute to Tjader, *Cal's Pals*. Pianist Cano, with whom

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Sanchez still gigs, was one of the pioneers of West Coast latin jazz in the '50s, and his inventive compositions remain remarkably modern and effective today.

—*larry birnbaum*

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ERNIE WILKINS: *AND THE ALMOST BIG BAND (Storyville SLP 4051)* ★ ★ ★ ½

Frank Sinatra wrote in the foreword to George T. Simon's book *The Big Bands*: "The big bands differed as much in personality as any random bunch of individuals you might pass on the street. Some tried for a strictly commercial style and a mass audience; sometimes the corn was as high as a piccolo's A. Others, and this was especially true when the Swing Era began, had objectives that reached beyond entertainment and dancing: they played for fans who wanted to listen, think, and even analyze."

The listening quotient has increased while the dancing component has decreased in big bands since the end of the big band era, but the objectives of entertainment and art—and they are not necessarily in opposition to each other—are still with us. A whole generation has grown up on rock music since the 1940s heyday of jazz (via big bands) as a popular music. This generation has appropriated big band instrumentation for its own purposes, which often run counter to the swinging mainstream of jazz. Adapt or die, they seem to be saying. Conversely, there appears to be a lot of tenacity—even nostalgia—in the old verities: learning to play together with subtlety, dynamic contrast, and power; exploring greater rhythmic complexities while swinging; adapting the bop and post-bop repertoire for big band; framing a good jazz soloist; stretching the tonal palette of jazz; and just plain cooking, with 16 or so musicians daring you *not* to feel a lift from this music.

The bands represented by these albums run the gamut of styles, with a contemporary commercial ingredient being present in negligible-to-overdosed amounts. The players' alignment with the demands of the idiom stretches from barely adequate to nearly perfect. The worst soloists are slick and vapid, others grope toward mastery, and the best supercharge the arrangements. In short, a mixed bag of bands, personnel, and attitudes.

Cincinnati's **Blue Wisp Big Band** boasts a first-class rhythm section, a nicely unified horn ensemble, and a houseful of competent soloists. The charts could be a little more adventurous, although baritone saxophonist Larry Dickson's adaptation of Thelonious Monk's *Evidence* is outstanding, and Carroll DeCamp's three arrangements swing comfortably. On the bottom, Lynn Seaton's bass and Gary Langhorst's bass trombone are solid and magnetic; on the top, the trumpeters deliver workmanlike punches. Soprano saxophonist Mike Andres takes solo honors with finesse and fingers on *Weep*, the late Gary McFarland's tune arranged by Dickson. Sometimes in certain minor-key passages, this band recalls the Kenny Clarke/Francy Boland big band.

All In Good Time by the **Paul Cacia Big Band** is an odd mix of pompous theatricality, straightahead jazz, Armageddon rock (aptly titled *The End Of The World*), and mellow Elton John pop—all fused by the leader's Maynard Ferguson-like trumpet and flugelhorn. If the purpose of this record is to trumpet Cacia's chops, it scores high; if the purpose is eclecticism, it fails on several counts—taste, imagination, and quality of programming. Drummer Louie Bellson is aboard for a good volley on the title cut (his only appearance). The band also swings on *Some Kind Of Lonely* and *Hay Fever*, but otherwise it's mostly overt and latent hysteria screaming from these grooves.

Trombonist **Dave Eshelman's Jazz Garden Big Band** is a modern, technically dazzling soundscape, with *The Jazz Garden* displaying the leader's skills as a smooth bop-and-beyond 'bone man, a substantive composer, and an even better arranger. The title track assembles a montage of Stan Kentonish regality, early Gil Evans-like lightness, and Henry Mancini cool. *There Will Never Be Another You*, the single standard among five compositions by Eshelman and one by Chick Corea, features Glenn Richardson's winged flute fantasia followed by an absolutely brilliant flute solo. More sunny flute, this time by Mary Park, enriches Eshelman's *Viva Corea*, and there are clean-running solos throughout these lush charts, adding individual excitement to collective virtuosity, vivid colors, and rhythmic/compositional variety.

The **Woody Herman Big Band** *Live At The Concord Jazz Festival* (1981) is "the best sounding big band album that I have been associated with in 46 years," says the leader's succinct liner note. That statement,

though debatable, manifests the kind of brashness Herman's bands have always projected. This *is* a fine album, from the tenors digging in on *Things Ain't What They Used To Be* (with a guest spot by Four Brothers-tenorist Al Cohn) to the ballroom-nostalgia-warmth of Gene Smith's trombone on *You Are So Beautiful* to the slugging lift-off of the shout chorus on *John Brown's Other Body.* Stan Getz' tenor swimmingly graces *The Dolphin*, and elsewhere pianist John Oddo's compositions and arrangements are prominently featured. That beautiful rolling momentum in the drum beat is by Dave Ratajczak, who often recalls one of his predecessors, Jake Hanna.

Or Don Lamond, for that matter. Down in Florida, **Don Lamond And His Big Swing Band** have waxed a danceable mainstream jazz album, with shades of former boss Herman (a medley of *Early Autumn*, *Four Brothers*, and *Apple Honey*), early Kenton, and '60s Buddy Rich. Bill Pape penned the chart on Ellington's *What Am I Here For*, bari saxophonist Butch Evans penned the remainder, and there's not a bad one in the lot. All the solos have depth, precision, and personality. Tenor saxophonist Barry Weinstein creates an assured yet relaxed drive, and trombonists Sonny Tucci, Vic Bird, and Dick Fote are memorable slide-men. This is a tight band, with the right amount of bravura and bluesiness.

The **David Matthews Orchestra**'s *Delta Lady* is primarily a showcase for Earl Klugh's acoustic guitar in a spanish-dominated setting. For an album that also includes contemporary funk, soft rock, and ballads, the rhythm section of electric guitarist Paul Metsky, electric bassist Gordy Johnson, (especially) drummer Jim Madison, percussionist Dave Charles, and composer (of all tunes save David Gates' *If*)/pianist/arranger Matthews keeps a human touch on the beat. Nothing mechanical here. Echoes of Gil Evans float through the horn charts (three reeds, two trumpets, trombone, french horn, and tuba) while Klugh weaves and broods quietly. This album could grow on you.

Ed Palermo's *Ed Palermo* comes with Gil Evans' imprimatur on the album jacket and alto saxophonist Palermo's unusual arrangements on the record inside. An unsettled, butt-in quality characterizes these charts—bits and pieces of ear-twisting instrumental combinations, broken rhythms, Kenton-like brass, Bob James-ish flutes and reeds, quasi-symphonic entrances, and the solo voices of Edgar Winter (alto and organ), Randy Brecker (trumpet), and Dave Sanborn (alto) among less well-known voices. Five of the tunes are by Palermo and/or Bruce Whitcomb, one is by David Leone. A rock beat (however fractured) underlies most of them. No really strong melodies nor cooking 4/4 surface. The rating is mostly for the chord voicings and instrumental colors, which I wish were sustained more.

Trombonist **Doug Sertl's Jazz Menagerie** is a great bop band. The adrenalin-charged players tear into tenor saxophonist Chick Esposito's seven arrangements like hungry tigers. *Eternal Triangle* and *Airegin* are from the uptempo textbook of bop. Nick Brignola, the album's chief soloist (on bari, alto, and soprano), tumbles through a fast latin-paced *Invitation* on soprano, every note thrashing, the cumulative effect powerful and complete. Brignola's *Groovin' On Uranus* is a blues on which Sertl's double-timing, sputter-speaking facility clicks. *Guess Who I Saw Today* briefly presents the romantic ballad side of his style, but the pervasive romance of this album is its shout, swing, and hot solos (including those of alto saxophonists Pete Yellin and Dick Oates, tenor saxophonist Jerry Niewood, trumpeter Mike Canonico, guitarist Joe Cohn, and pianist Phil Markowitz). Will someone please get Dizzy Gillespie a gig with this band?

Lightnin' by the **Valley Big Band** is probably a premature effort. This Massachusetts-based outfit led by trumpeter Don Abrams manages a serviceable ensemble sound, but the soloists are weak. Sometimes they can't hang on to the tempo (*Check The Oil* by lead trumpeter and chief chartmaster Jeff Holmes), and at other times their ideas run out of fizz (*Snap, Crackle, Crunch*, also by Holmes). The title cut is a transcription of a 1932 recording by Duke Ellington; Slide Hampton's arrangement of *In A Sentimental Mood* was borrowed for the record; the remainder were crafted by Holmes and include flashes of Count Basie (and some corn), Rich, and Thad Jones. But the ensemble lacks bite and the true professionalism to make these performances shine.

Ernie Wilkins And The Almost Big Band was a dream realized in Copenhagen in 1980. Danes and expatriate Americans comprise the personnel—12 musicians, with the leader's tenor saxophone making a baker's dozen on some tracks. Wilkins' flowing arranging style depends a lot on massed horns (not much counterpoint here) and solos with rhythm-section-only backing. The horn soloists (trumpeter Tim Hagans, saxophonists Sahib Shihab, Jesper Thilo, Bent Jaedig, and Per Goldschmidt, trombonists Richard Boone and Erling Kroner) are blessed with an excellent rhythm team whose members (pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Mads Vinding, and drummer Ed Thigpen) are as prominently featured as the horns. Wilkins' *Ballad For Paul* (Gonsalves) stands out among the likes of *Hi-Fly*, *Lollipops And Roses*, and Duke Pearson's *Is That So*. The main item of revelry here is a suffusing instrumental warmth surrounding a perfect jazz heartbeat. The structural clarity of Wilkins' writing also impresses.

These albums may be ordered from: Mopro Records, 5950 Beech Dell Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45238; Alexander Street Music, 500 Newport Center Dr., Newport Beach, CA 92660; Jazz Mind Records, P.O. Box 3643, Santa Clara, CA 95055; Concord Jazz Inc., P.O. Box 845, Concord, CA 94522; Progressive Records, P.O. Box 500, Tifton, GA 31794; GNP/Crescendo Record Co., 8400 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069; Vile Heifer Records, c/o Susan Cullinane, 229 W. 26th St. No. 3A, New York, NY 10001; Mark Records, Box 218, Clarence, NY 14031; Long View Records, c/o The Valley Big Band, P.O. Box 63, Northampton, MA 01061; Storyville Records, The Moss Music Group Inc., 48 W. 38th St., New York, NY 10018.—*owen cordle*

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BLINDFOLD TEST

BEN SIDRAN

By LEONARD FEATHER

Words such as eclectic and chameleonic scarcely begin to characterize Ben Sidran. Over the past 20 years or so he has racked up hundreds of credits as pianist, singer, composer, record producer, liner-note writer, journalist, author, and, since last October, host of the nationally syndicated *Jazz Alive!* radio show.

Born in Chicago but raised in Racine, WI, Sidran led a jazz trio at the U. of Wisconsin before teaming with Steve Miller and Boz Scaggs in a rock group. A few years later he attended the University of Sussex in England, found himself in the vortex of the British rock world, and played on sessions with the Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, and Peter Frampton while earning his PhD in American Studies.

His uniquely perceptive book *Black Talk*, published in 1971, is considered a definitive work among studies of black American music and culture. His most recent recorded work is *Old Songs For The New Depression* (Antilles 1004).

This was Sidran's first Blindfold Test. He was given no information about the records played.

1 DAVE FRISHBERG. *Z's (from THE DAVE FRISHBERG SONGBOOK, OmniSound Jazz). Frishberg, composer, piano, vocal.*

It's *Give Me Some Z's*, a song I associate with Dave Frishberg, although that sounds like Bob Dorough to me. The piano playing, interestingly enough, sounded like early Mose Allison—obviously it wasn't—but very straightahead. The early period of Mose is what I used to like best.

Well, I'm a big fan of that whole presentation; I guess it's pretty obvious in what I do—the piano player who's also a singer, as opposed to the singer who happens to play a little piano. A song like that is very clever, but I think it's really written as an excuse to play a little piano in-between. It sets it up, if you're playing all night long . . . "I got to get me some Z's," that's a great line . . . "I'm starting to look Japanese . . . " bon mots.

I envy both Dorough and Frishberg, and Mose in a way. They have been around long enough to be making really first-person statements. A lot of times what I do is more second-person statements; it's about something that's come down before me, and as writers they tend to be there, talking about a first-person experience. As for stars, I guess in the grand scheme of things, three. It's not great, but I like it.

2 JIMMY ROWLES. *MUSIC'S THE ONLY THING THAT'S ON MY MIND (from MUSIC'S THE ONLY THING THAT'S ON MY MIND, Progressive Records). Rowles, piano, vocal, composer; George Mraz, bass.*

I feel very close to that song. I'm looking to the lyrics for clues; I don't know who it is. He grew up in Northern California, with the redwoods. I love the sound of the recording—and talk about using the mid-range to evoke emotions! The sound of the piano—he's playing very softly, and it's recorded beautifully, and without drums there's so much more room for the bass and voice.

Marvelous lyric—he's singing my song . . . a song that I can relate to. I give it four stars, whoever it is. [*After being told who it was*]: The vocal style is not unlike the Nat King Cole-style, the way he's using the resonances. He's not afraid to get that dirty sound. Again, it's a piano player singing.

3 BOBBY SHORT. *GEORGIA BLUES/ GEORGIA ON MY MIND (from MOMENTS LIKE THIS, Elektra). Short, piano, vocal; Dick Hazard, conductor, arranger; Sweets Edison, trumpet.*

I thought maybe it was Sweets Edison on trumpet, but when I listen to that little lick in the back, it sounds like Blue Mitchell with a mute. The string-writer sounded like an L.A. writer, whoever it was. I don't know the vocalist, and I must say it doesn't even strike a familiar chord in my memory.

What can I say, except I've never heard the verse of the song that way. Is that tagged onto *Georgia*, or is that part of the way it was originally written?

LF: It's a separate song; *Georgia Blues* is an older song than *Georgia On My Mind*.

BS: As far as the singer is concerned, let me be frank. It's not my style; it's very formal, stylized, very open-throated and educated sounding. I personally don't respond as well to that style of singing, whether it's . . . without naming a lot of names, I'm more a fan of musicians; I like to hear a musician sing, or somebody who approaches it from the musician's point of view. So, it didn't warm the cockles of my heart the way the string-writer wanted it to, who was going for a very romantic, lush thing. That middle register string writing reminds me of Hollywood.

It's a nice recording, good sounding, a real flashy, showy thing, but I'll give it three stars. As opposed to the first one, that one was a much better piece of music, but I can't give something a two in good conscience, unless it had some negative aspects.

4 CHICK COREA. *AGAIN AND AGAIN (from AGAIN AND AGAIN, Elektra Musician). Corea, Rhodes electric piano, composer, producer.*

To me that's not a particularly distinguished piece of music. It's a Rhodes player—the playing sounds somewhat familiar to me—I've heard this player . . . I can't identify who. And I think that's part of the problem with electric piano in general, it really does mask a lot of the stylistic elements that a piano player brings to an instrument.

Also, about the production, it's got all the whistles and bells of a high-tech studio production, but it didn't have the musical force that the Jimmy Rowles cut had. And that's another thing I object to, with going in and cutting a record with a lot of whistles and bells. These days we're all making high-tech records, and everybody can get it perfect; that's a real clean recording, but it's not distinguished.

I don't know how to rate it; if I give Frishberg a three, I guess I gotta give it a two. There's just not enough personality, not enough attitude in it.

5 GEORGE SHEARING. *TWO FOR THE ROAD (from TWO FOR THE ROAD, Concord). Shearing, piano, vocal; Henry Mancini, composer.*

It sounds to me like a lyricist singing his own lyrics. Sounds more like an end-of-the-road song than *Two For The Road*. It's hard to say whether that's a piano player singing or vice versa. I would think that anybody who wrote those lyrics didn't play that piano, simply because the lyrics are very sophisticated, and so is the piano playing, and generally you don't find that coming down at the same time. But it's a very sophisticated player, in some respects—it's not a blues player, but then the lyrics aren't blues either.

I don't recognize it; again, I'm not as drawn to it as heartily as to something that came out of the blues idiom, or something that came out of the bebop idiom—those are my favorites. It's moving, primarily because of the human quality in the voice. I hear age when I hear that, the wisdom of age. But again, not what I would put on, given endless possibilities. So, we can give that 3.4.

LF: What would you have given five stars, in the whole history of jazz?

BS: Blue Mitchell's solo on Horace Silver's *Juicy Lucy* . . . or Gene Ammons' *Happy Blues* . . . or Mose Allison's *City Home* from his original Columbia record. **db**

PROFILE

Kevin Eubanks

A well-rounded guitarist with roots from McLaughlin to Montgomery, Eubanks is ready to roll on his own.

BY BILL MILKOWSKI

ANDY FREEBERG

The title of his debut album says it all: *Kevin Eubanks—Guitarist*. Not bebop guitarist or fusion guitarist or funk guitarist. The generic term is particularly suitable here.

For his auspicious first recording as a leader (Elektra Musician 60213-1), Eubanks presents a sampler of sorts, chronicling some of the styles he's dabbled in since turning professional. The high-energy offering *Urban Heat* recalls the 25-year-old's fusion days back in Boston while he was attending the Berklee College of Music. His solo acoustic playing on the Miles Davis/Bill Evans composition *Blue In Green* and on his own composition *The Novice Bounce*, reveals more classical influences. His gentle rendition of the Otto Harbach/Jerome Kern standard *Yesterdays* shows the more straightahead side that he pursued with Slide Hampton's band. The loosely structured original *Untitled Shapes* suggests some of the free playing he did on a tour with avant gardist Sam Rivers. And his version of the Thelonious Monk tune *Evidence* even features yet another former employer, drummer Roy Haynes.

As diverse as this debut album is, it doesn't truly represent *all* sides of Kevin Eubanks—guitarist. For that, you might have to catch him live.

"It's definitely more conservative than you would ever find me at a gig," he said. "There is one thing on the album, *Untitled Shapes*, which is probably the closest thing to what I would sound like live, and the way we perform it live is so much more gone than how it was on the record. Since I didn't have a band together for the record, it's more of a sampler package, really. I mean, we used three different drummers on the record. But preferably, I would like to be on the road with a band for five or six months and then go in the studio, so there is more of a group sound as a whole rather than disjointed cuts."

So the next Kevin Eubanks LP promises to be a looser affair, much closer to the vein of music he explored with Rivers, whom the young guitarist considers as his most resounding musical influence to date. "That gig made the most impression on me of any gig I ever had. We went out as a quartet last year with Wesley Grant on bass and Newman Baker on drums. I had been recommended to Sam by some friends—he called me up on a Friday and said, 'We're leaving on Monday!' I had never seen him live, but I had heard some of his music on records. Up to that point in my career, I had never played anything like that before—just playing from beginning to end totally free, no tunes, nothing written down. I was a bit skeptical at first, but at the same time I felt privileged that he even chose me to play with him.

"We started rapping a lot, and he would explain his conception of things, and after a while I really started to see what was going on. One time, sitting in a restaurant in Munich, he told me: 'Just take the chains off your mind. Nothing you play is wrong. Don't worry about making any sense of what you're playing.' And that really made an impact on me. He knew that I had been in a more traditional thing with Art Blakey and Roy and all these cats, so he told me to just loosen up and go where he was going. And it really didn't take much for me to adjust because he was so definite about where he was going. It didn't seem like he was playing randomly at all after I got used to it. After I stopped worrying about things that I worried about before—if this was or was not avant garde music, and was it better than the stuff I had been playing before or not?—I began to flow right in there. I was getting a lot better, and it didn't take long before we started hitting on some real hip things without any written music at all. By the time I got off the tour with Sam, I wasn't even calling it 'out' anymore. I was just calling it music."

The effects of that eye-opening gig with Rivers stayed with Eubanks long after the four-month tour ended. His ideas about music had been so radically altered by Rivers' liberating concept that he had a hard time relating to straightahead music again when he returned to the States.

"I found it hard to adjust," he said. "My conceptions of things had been shattered, not just musically but in a larger sense as well. Just walking down the street or talking with somebody . . . to be so restricted in everyday life suddenly seemed strange to me. The music I played with Sam had such a freeing effect on me in all aspects. So when I got back here to play gigs, I just couldn't help but get a little too loose. I was always kind of wild anyway, and Roy dug that. But cats like Ronnie Mathews wanted me to stay more inside like Wes [Montgomery] or Grant Green. Cats would say, 'Hey, you can get a little loose, man, but we're playing some changes here!' So that free influence started to wear off as I started working more gigs around New York. Now I can adjust when I want to, but I don't want to restrict myself too much anymore. Not after playing with Sam. It's so much fun to just go out there and play. It's so refreshing."

Though Sam Rivers remains a towering influence, Art Blakey was the one who got the ball rolling for Kevin Eubanks in 1980. The aspiring guitarist had been playing around Boston with his own fusion band when he auditioned for a spot in the Jazz Messengers. "He was taking a semi-big band out on tour," he recalled. "The Jazz Messengers were playing a gig in Boston, and some cats in the band asked me to come down to audition, so I just sat in the next night and Art liked me. I got the job."

After a European tour with the Jazz Messengers, playing in Boston no longer held any attraction for Eubanks. He moved to New York and quickly hooked up with Roy Haynes around the early part of 1981. "That was a quartet, so I got to be much more involved with the music," he said, "and after a while, Roy was asking me to pick out tunes and contribute some originals."

He next landed another quartet gig with pianist Ronnie Mathews, followed by a short stint with Slide Hampton before embarking on the mind-expanding musical excursion with Sam Rivers. "When I came back, I started right away playing with Slide again, and I felt like I was boxed in. Here I had been playing free for four months, and suddenly I was having to play *Straight, No Chaser* and *Donna Lee*. I wanted to stretch so much, but I couldn't."

The idea for a Kevin Eubanks album came about in May of 1981, when he was playing a gig with Haynes in New York. Composer/producer Michael Gibbs was so impressed with the talented guitarist that he proposed the project to Bruce Lundvall, president of Elektra Musician. Recorded between May and August of 1982, the album features the supportive work of Kevin's cousins David Eubanks on acoustic bass and Charles Eu-

banks on piano, and Kevin's brother Robin on trombone.

Eubanks plays a Gibson 225 electric guitar and Yamaha acoustic guitars. His mellow-sounding Gibson has one pickup and a single cutaway. To eliminate feedback problems, he stuffed the hollow body with foam. He also uses a DeArmond volume pedal to control the feedback. He uses heavy gauge strings and has evolved his own technique—he actually pulls, plucks, and snaps the strings much in the manner of a bass player. His thumb strums the downstroke while his other four fingers pull on the upstroke, somewhat reminiscent of the Wes Montgomery technique. "I used a pick for about seven years, then I got into using the pick on the downstroke and my middle finger on the upstroke. I did that for about two years, then decided to drop the pick altogether. And since I was playing fusion and funk for so long, I got real strong at being able to pull the strings. But sometimes if you go too wild, it can go out of tune."

One radical departure from the music on his debut LP was Eubanks' recent involvement in a fatback funk album by the Steve Arrington Hall of Fame (Atlantic Records 80049-1). He's even talking about possibly reviving his old Boston fusion band, when the time is right.

"From the time I was 14 until I was 22, John McLaughlin was the single biggest guitar influence on me. I just loved his music and the energy of his band. To me, rock and fusion put the instrument on a whole other plateau. The tone and sustain you can get and the powerful sound of the single-note lines really puts the guitar in the same league of where a horn is in jazz. Fusion and rock guitar are so forceful, and you can say so much in just one note, just like Dexter Gordon can do with one note on his tenor. So I put together a copy band of the Mahavishnu Orchestra, although we played all my original tunes. I had a lot of offers to record that band from independent labels around Boston, but it was starting to get boring to me at the time because I hadn't really learned enough harmony. But now I could really put it together and make it interesting.

"Of course, at the same time I started getting bored with fusion, I was starting to hear Wes. Maybe that's why it started sounding boring to me. But the first Return To Forever album and the first three Mahavishnu Orchestra albums summed up what fusion was all about. After that went down it just got to be a tired old formula of bands playing everything fast, unison lines with strong drummers. It got so abused that all those fusion bands became like a dime a dozen."

While Eubanks does not consider himself a traditionalist, he does have the utmost respect for where jazz came from. Appropriately, he pays a special tribute to Wes Montgomery with the Bruce Johnson composition *Blues For Wes*, which features the tag of Montgomery's own composition *The Thumb*. As he said, "To me, Wes is the greatest cat, and I learned a lot about chord soloing from what he did. But I don't have any hang-ups about trying to sound like him. When I sit down to practice, I put on some Freddie Hubbard or Oscar Peterson or Wes because that's where you learn. But as far as doing what I want to do, it might be some rock or funk or it might be swinging. When I go to listen to somebody, I don't care what they're playing as long as it feels good. If it's swinging, have it swing. If it's funky, let it funk. I really don't care if it's classical or whatever. If I dig it, I dig it. And that's the way I would like the audience to feel too. I don't want them to come and see a swinging guitar player. I just want them to be open to what I want to do because I don't really stay the same but for so long. I don't want to feel hemmed-in. And if I can get a career going where people don't really have a certain thing to pin me into, I can't ask for much more than that." **db**

DAVIS

continued from page 18

that to go as out there as them he would first have to lose some ego and enter their worlds not as a master but as a disciple. And in time as he became a master of their language, he would affirm Jung's observation that in ritual sacrifice, the sacrificer gives of himself to become one with the sacrificee.

On musical terms though, *Bitches Brew* is an orchestral marvel because it fuses James Brown's antiphonal riffing against a metaphoric bass drone with Sly's minimalist polyrhythmic melodies and Jimi's concept of painting pictures with ordered successions of electronic sounds. *Bitches Brew* can also be heard as a devilishly Milesish take-off on John Coltrane's spiritual energy music and that music's saxophone, percussion, and bass batteries, modal improvs, tone clusters, and cosmic yearnings, thus making the double-set rank as an act of comic blasphemy with Richard Pryor's Preacher routines or with certain African genesis myths in playing prankster with God's tongue by dragging the heavens back into the province of the vernacular—namely the streets—and the language of the streets, the dozens, sermons made scatologies which find their musical parallel in what funk did to gospel. The streets though aren't just a funky run of avenues where mom-and-pop stores front for numbers runners and storefront churches pimp for jackleg preachers. They're also a place of mystery and romance, and given that Miles knows them and their music inside out, it's not surprising that the melodies on *Bitches Brew* croon, sway, and reveal themselves like those of such balladeers as Smokey Robinson, Marvin Gaye, Curtis Mayfield, and Stevie Wonder—all of whose gorgeous melodies and harmonies have yet to overcome the precious corn of Tin Pan Alley in the ears of other improvising composers—excepting Zawinul, Cecil Taylor, and Bennie Maupin, whose overlooked *The Jewel In The Lotus* ranks beside Miles' *Great Expectations*, Weather Report's *Mysterious Traveller*, and Cecil's *Solo* in channeling the charm of exotic musics into forms which are as tightly knit, free-flowing, and fetchsome as Stevie's, Smokey's, Curtis', and Marvin's vocal arrangements.

In 1970 Miles recorded two live dates, *Black Beauty: Miles Davis At Fillmore West* and *Miles Davis At Fillmore*. I've never cared for the latter because two bands are fighting for control on it: Miles' and Circle, the collective Chick Corea and Dave Holland formed with Anthony Braxton and Barry Altschul when they left Miles. In this battle of the bicameral bands, Miles' night-trippers dig into blues and ballads like they were victims for slaughter; the Holland/Corea twins meanwhile run away from the murder site to throw temper tantrums which are quite gonzo given the context, but lacking in the anthemic-cathartic qualities of say, Trane.

Black Beauty is another story altogether, debuting a 19-year-old bassist named Michael Henderson, who brings with him lessons learned from Motown's legendary James Jamerson and from maybe a few listenings to Ron Carter and Buster Williams besides. As far as focus and intensity, the performances of Zawinul's *Directions* and Shorter's *Masquelero*, which open and close the double-set, get the prize hands down—primarily for the brassy blur of blips Miles phrases in implosive runs akin to Hendrix' experiments with backlooped guitar, and for Corea's explosive solos, which come about as close as anybody ever will to cutting Cecil Taylor and McCoy Tyner on Rhodes electric piano.

On evidence of the music that Miles released following *Bitches Brew*, it's clear he was out to create not only a new trumpet voice, but also a new improvisational process—one which would enable his electric band to make music equal, on its own terms, to the music of the quintet. What he discovered, however, as he progressed further into electronics, was that those terms would first compel him to overturn his prior aesthetic sensibilities, and to enter into a zone of musical creation as topsy-turvy as the world of subatomic physics—which is to say, one governed by laws as seemingly random as those of material reality seem fixed and eternally observable. **db**

Next month Greg Tate continues his Miles journey from Jack Johnson *to 1983 and the brand new Davis LP*, Star People. *Stay tuned.*

CARTER

continued from page 24

affected music so much in the cool school era, the small band era, the quintet era, the stirrings of jazz/rock; now I'm doing Ornette Coleman. I have to go downtown now to buy some John Coltrane records, 'cause I don't have the right ones I need. Then I have to sit down and figure out how he moved music. That he did is no question; I have to analyze it so I can explain it to them. It's a matter of finding enough records to back up your theories.

LJ: How hip are the students?

RC: I'll find that out come final exam. This is a class of players and non-players, so the problem arises of how to explain Ornette's song form as opposed to a 32-bar song form. Sometimes I have to use apples and oranges. A lot of them don't even know who Bird is, because they're coming in from a whole different point of view. I always tell them, "These players we're talking about right now are alive and well in New York. You should go hear them and see where they are *now*, in '83, as opposed to whatever era we're studying." They're not just supposed to sit in my class and take notes and go to the library and listen to records. One of the assignments is to go out and hear a jazz band and write a review of it.

LJ: Do you have private bass students as well?

RC: I do now. I only have two or three students, which is the most I can do right now, but I get calls all the time. I try to take the mid-range to upper students. My patience right now is not very long for, "This is the bass, these are the strings . . . ." I'm sure at some point I'll change my attitude 'cause I think one way to have a bass player get to where you want him to be is by starting from scratch. I used to do that, in the late '50s and early '60s, and it kept economic hounds away from my door until I got established in New York.

LJ: And you still do studio dates as well. You never stopped that?

RC: If I've stopped, it's because I didn't get calls; I never voluntarily stopped. Right now the industry is slow; a lot of companies that would make fresh music for commercials find that they can use old music as well, given the product and the need at the time.

LJ: I would think you're on the top of everybody's list.

RC: On certain lists. On other lists they think that jazz players only want to play jazz, are only interested in playing jazz, and are unavailable to play whatever music there is. Plus a lot of the calls are for electric bassists. I have fun doing them when I can, because it's a semi-lark. But there are guys who really play it amazingly well, better than I, and they get the calls first, as it should be. I play it one hour a week just to be able to play in tune, but I don't put the kind of quantity of time into it that *those* guys do, certainly.

LJ: It would seem to me that there are a lot of electric bassists around now who have *never* played an upright.

RC: Oh yeah, no question of that. They became aware of music during Weather Report's era, for example, and the upright was not so accessible visually or on the radio. Now they have the environment to go see Cedar Walton and I, or Kirk Lightsey with Ray Drummond, or Tommy Flanagan and Rufus Reid, or Tal Farlow and George Duvivier. They can sit for an evening and hear a quality upright player do the things that they were simply not aware of. But in order to switch over, they've got to get a teacher; they can't do it by themselves.

LJ: Ron, you must feel fairly fortunate.

RC: I don't know if it's fortune or being prepared for the job. I don't get to those kinds of thoughts 'cause I feel it's almost self-destructive—if you keep looking around and saying how fortunate you are, the shit is over. I still practice; I still worry about playing in tune; I still worry about playing the right note at the right time; and I still worry about whether I'm providing or projecting the kind of image that I want the young bass players who follow me to respond to.

LJ: The obvious closing question: What would you like to do, not necessarily this year or next year, but in the long run?

RC: Write for films; write for string orchestras; develop my cello choir writing; and buy an Astin-Martin station wagon. And play with three people I've never been able to check off my list of people I'd like to play with—Kenny Clarke, Ahmad Jamal, and Oscar Peterson. Otherwise, it's all covered. **db**