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# downbeat

For Contemporary Musicians

**EARL KLUGH**

*Melody Maker*

**GEORGE RUSSELL**

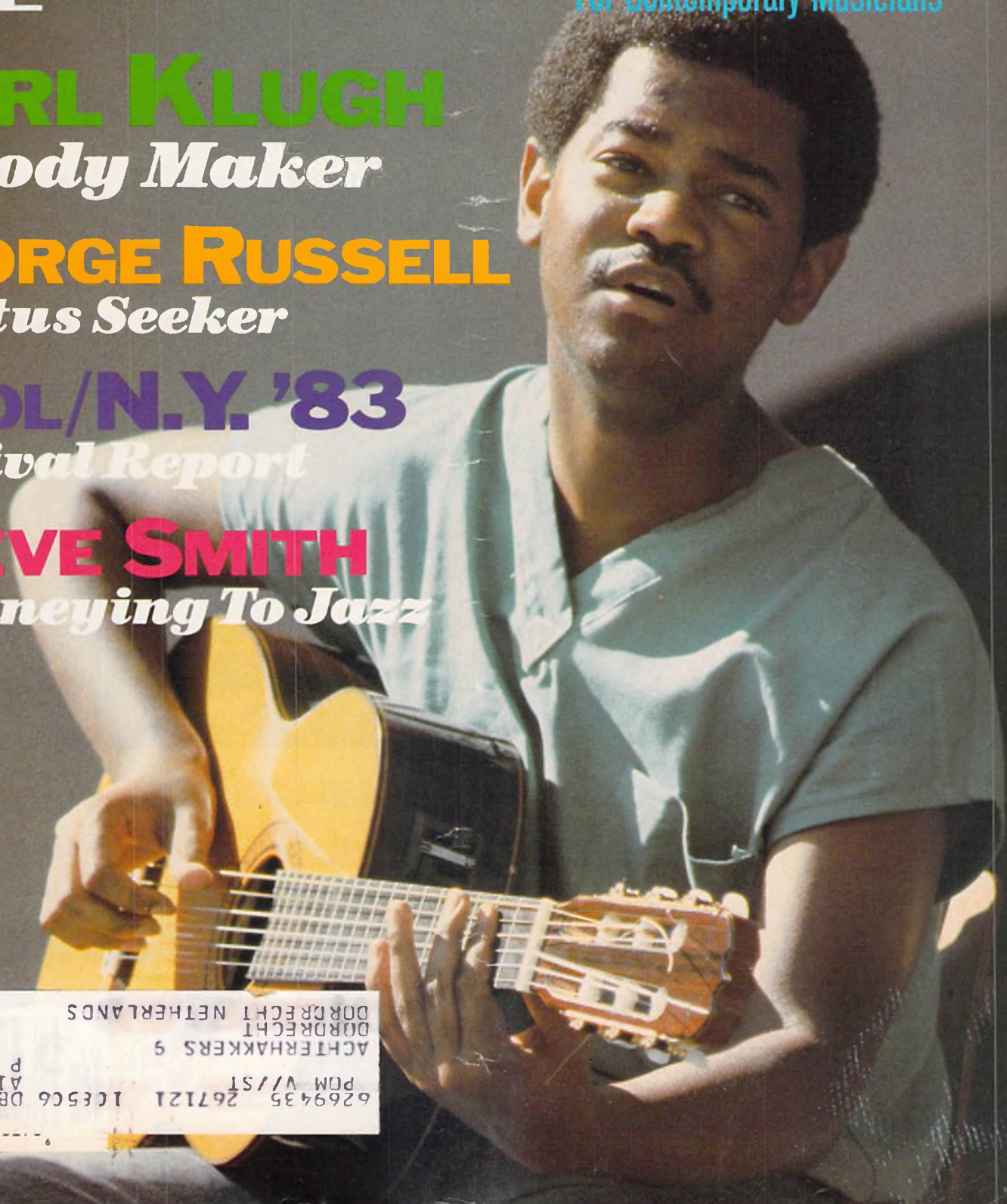
*Stratus Seeker*

**KOOL/N.Y. '83**

*Festival Report*

**STEVE SMITH**

*Journeying To Jazz*



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Michel Petruccianni at Kool/NY

MITCHELL SEIDEL



George Russell



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NOEL NEUBURGER

# down beat

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# EARL Klugh

## Melody Maker

By BILL MILKOWSKI

Consider the possible polarities of a sensitivity scale attempting to align all guitarists by their emotional appeal. On one end of the spectrum, you would have The Angry Players—dissonant Strat-stranglers like Robert Quine, Pete Cosey, Jimi Hendrix, and about a-million-and-one rock guitarists whose piercing, shrieking wails convey all the aggressive force of a sharp kick to the mid-section. Also in this company you'd have the jarring, nerve-jangling atonalism of avant gardists like Fred Frith, Henry Kaiser, and Sonny Sharrock, whose approach to the instrument assaults the senses like a pneumatic drill tearing up a sidewalk.

On the extreme opposite end of the spectrum, you would have The Gentle Players—serene-sounding nylon-stringed acoustic guitarists like Angel Romero, Andres Segovia, and about a-million-and-one classical players whose sweet sensibilities soothe the senses.

Included in this latter category would be Earl Klugh, a melodious player who probably hasn't plucked a mean-spirited note in all of the dozen or so albums he's recorded since his debut for Blue Note in 1976.

At 28 Klugh is already a major recording artist whose records consistently top the easy listening charts while gaining high marks in the jazz market as well. Yet in spite of his undeniable selling potential for Capitol Records, Klugh is sometimes scorned by embittered jazz critics and musicians who find his music too saccharine and formulaic for their tastes.

"Well, of course, everyone is entitled to their own opinion," says the Detroit native. "I think whatever anybody wants to call me is fine. But it's interesting . . . people who don't listen to jazz will call me a jazz player, and people with a real knowledge of jazz will say my music is too pop to really be jazz. I know it isn't very much jazz at all—there's only one or two songs on every album where I improvise at all—so it's really more pop than anything else."

Perhaps the fact that Klugh apprenticed with some stellar jazz names—Yusef Lateef at the age of 16, George Benson at 17, followed by brief stints with Chick Corea and George Shearing—forever links him with that genre. Klugh met all these players at Baker's Keyboard Lounge, a jazz club in Detroit where the young guitarist frequently hung out during his formative years. But jazz was hardly his first love.

Originally a piano player, Klugh had taken formal lessons from the age of three before switching to guitar at age 10. "I played for about three years before I began to really see the possibilities of the instrument. I was 13 when I made up my mind that playing the guitar was what I wanted to do."

The folk music boom was in full swing when young Klugh got serious with his guitar, so naturally his earliest influences came out of that movement. "I was interested in Peter, Paul and Mary, and Bob Dylan. I practiced their songs and my own arrangements to them. And I also loved listening to Spanish guitar music."

Through trial and error he had evolved a method of finger-picking, which many of the folk players and Spanish guitarists used. He began using this technique to play the melodies of many pop tunes of the day, especially tunes by the Beatles. "I

really liked their music. During that period there was really a lot of junk music around, but the Beatles had some very melodically beautiful tunes. As far as guitar inspiration, I was way beyond what they were playing. I liked their songs, but they really couldn't play."

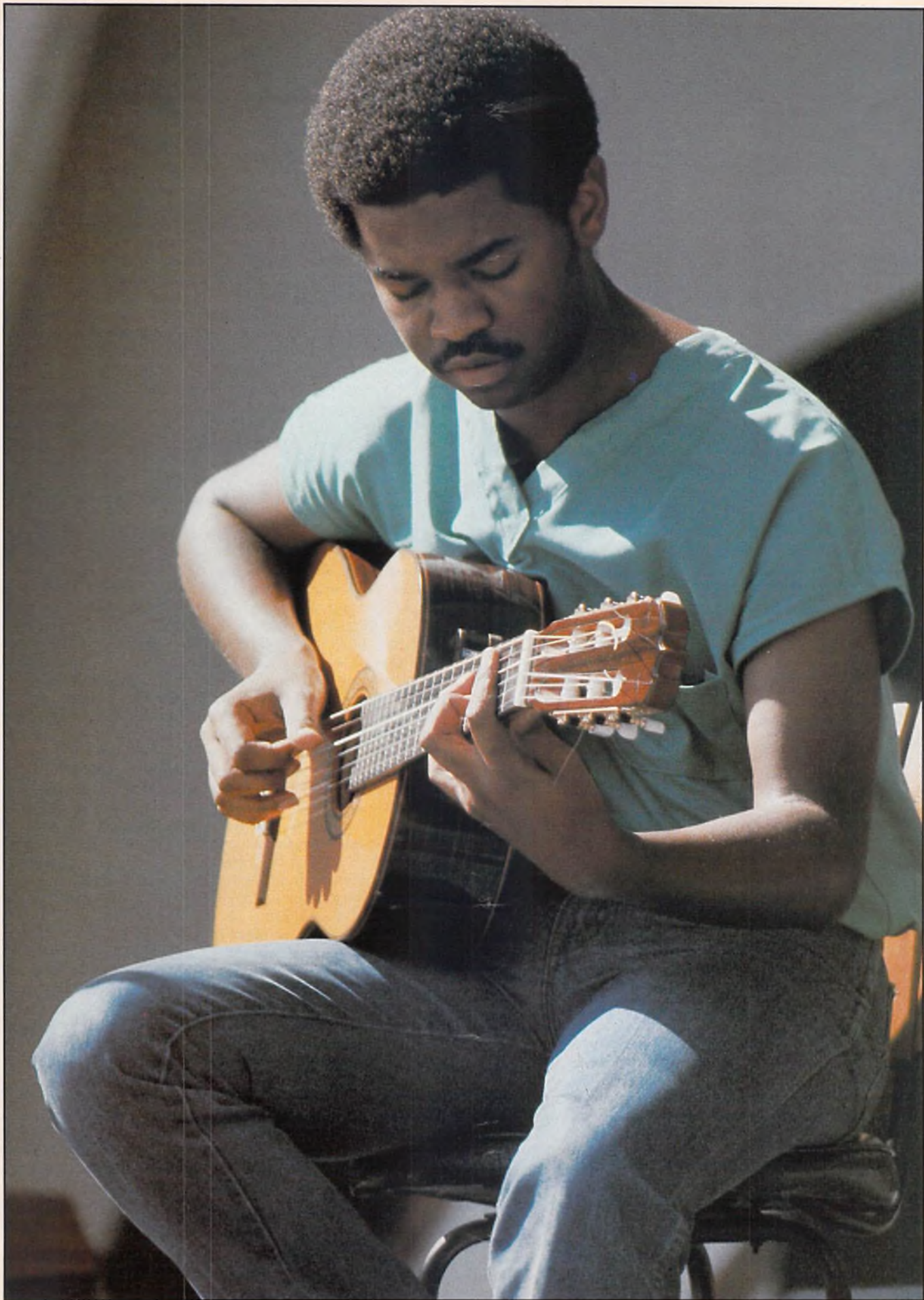
It was around this time, between ages 14 and 15, that Klugh discovered the guitarist who would become his single biggest inspiration—Chet Atkins. "I saw him on television, and he changed my whole concept of playing. He was the only person I ever heard up to that point who played the instrument like I wanted to hear it played, playing chords and melody simultaneously with a finger-style technique. In the next 18 months after seeing him on tv, I bought 40 of his albums and listened to them until I was able to copy from them. I did that for about two years. During this period I was never much interested in jazz. Most of the jazz players were just playing the melody like a linear instrument, and that had no appeal for me. I was looking for something in a chordal way, more like a piano player instead of just one note at a time. Even today I'm still not too interested in single-note lines. It's just not a full enough sound for me."

Klugh didn't really become interested in jazz until he heard George Benson at the age of 17. "He was very clean, very fast, and I really like the way he played. I got into Wes Montgomery after that, but George was really my first jazz influence." Klugh ultimately got to play and record with both of his biggest inspirations. He toured with Benson in a number of jazz clubs from January of 1973 to March of 1974 following the recording of Benson's CTI album *White Rabbit*. He met Atkins in 1977 when the Country Gentleman consented to play on Klugh's United Artists LP, *The Magic In Your Eyes*. Then in 1978 Klugh, Benson, and Atkins appeared together on television for a guitar summit meeting broadcast by PBS.

But in spite of his jazz background, Klugh denies being a "jazz musician who went pop." As he explains, "I think I have a real flair for writing melodic tunes. That's what I do because that's what I like to do. What I'm trying to get across in my music is really my songs, my production, and the sound of my guitar, which is why I think my records are as popular as they are. A lot of people relate to them. I never think in terms of like a horn player playing a bunch of notes. I think of the interplaying of the guitar, the harmony, the tone, the melodic thing."

He continues, "See, a lot of people just know a lot of scales and notes and have gone to conservatories or whatever. But to really solo, you have to go to the heart and never leave that for a minute. It's a gift, and you either got it or you don't. Charlie Parker had it. But just because you're playing a bunch of notes doesn't mean you can solo."

Klugh counts Herbie Hancock, Wynton Marsalis, George Benson, David Sanborn, Michael Brecker, Grover Washington Jr., Wes Montgomery, and Toots Thielemans among the few soloists he does enjoy listening to. "As for myself, I grow more frustrated trying to make a record where I improvise. I'll spend a week in the studio just redoing parts because I never like my solos. I don't think everybody can solo, even if they know how. I mean, I can play over changes and all that, but it



TOM COPI



GREG CALVIMONTES/CONCERT IMAGES

## EARL KLUGH SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

<b>as a leader</b>	<b>with George Benson</b>
EARL KLUGH—Blue Note LA596-G	WHITE RABBIT—CTI 6015
FINGER PAINTINGS—Blue Note LA737-H	
LIVING INSIDE YOUR LOVE—Blue Note LA667-G	<b>with Bob James</b>
DREAM COME TRUE—United Artists LT-1026	ONE ON ONE—Columbia FC-36241
MAGIC IN YOUR EYES—United Artists LA877-H	TWO OF A KIND—Capitol ST-12247
HEARTSTRING—United Artists LA942-H	<b>with Hubert Laws</b>
LATE NIGHT GUITAR—Liberty LT-1079	HOW TO BEAT THE HIGH COST OF LIVING—Columbia JS-36741
CRAZY FOR YOU—Liberty LT-5113	<b>with Yusef Lateef</b>
LOW RIDE—Capitol ST-12253	SUITE 16—Atlantic S-1563

## EARL KLUGH'S EQUIPMENT

On the road, Earl exclusively uses the new Gibson Chet Atkins nylon-stringed solid body, which completely eliminates any feedback problems. In the studio he uses a Manuel Velasquez classical for some pieces and either a Takamini or an Alvarez for others. "The Velasquez has a great sound, but it has such a classical neck that it's sort of hard to play a lot of modern things on it. It doesn't lend itself to playing improvisation that well, but it's great for a solo piece or a finger-style-oriented piece. The Alvarez and the Takamini are both a lot easier to play."

On tour he likes to use Fender Twin Reverb amps. He has never used picks, favoring the semi-classical approach of using the thumb and first three fingers to strum and pluck the strings. And the strings he prefers are La Bella Gold Recording strings.

At home Klugh also noodles on an arsenal of keyboards. Besides his Yamaha grand piano, he owns electronic instruments from Rhodes (an electric piano), Oberheim (a synthesizer), Sequential Circuits (a Prophet), and E-Mu Systems (an Emulator). As yet, no guitar synths.

just never moves me. I don't like to listen to it myself, so I've stayed away from it pretty much. When I'm in a club or something, I'll play solos because that's what you're supposed to do, I guess. But I never get kicks out of doing it myself. I'd much rather listen to other people solo . . . the few who really move me."

In his leisure time Klugh listens to a wide range of music, from classical to country, rock to jazz. "In general, I like melodic music pretty much. I don't have much tolerance for stuff that is really far away from being melodic, like heavy metal rock or some real hard rock. But I listen to a lot of it because I like to be aware of what everybody's doing. I really like Prince. I think he's real innovative. Just from a production standpoint I think a lot of the new r&b-pop music today is the most progressive stuff around. Stevie Wonder is also one of my favorites. I like James Taylor a lot too. And, of course, I listen to a lot of acoustic jazz, mainly the older stuff. I love Bill Evans, Herbie, Chick, and Ron Carter. It all influences me to some extent."

One other type of music that Klugh is interested in is movie scores, an area that he plans to get more involved with in the future. A couple of years ago he collaborated with Hubert Laws on the soundtrack for the film *How To Beat The High Cost*

*Of Living*, which carried a light-hearted funk feel throughout. He recently finished recording a soundtrack for a movie called *Marvin And Taig*, starring John Cassavettes and Billy Dee Williams. Klugh is the featured performer on the entire soundtrack, which was composed by Pat Williams. Capitol Records plans to release the soundtrack album this month, and the movie is due out in November.

Other future plans include continued collaborations with his kindred spirit, Bob James. The two combined in 1979 for the Columbia LP *One On One*, which went certified gold. They recently followed up that success with the Capitol LP *Two Of A Kind*.

"Lately I've been experimenting with altering the instrumentation on my own albums," says Klugh. "The *Crazy For You* album is one that I really spent a lot of time on, working over things with different arrangers and players. Every song on that album has a different rhythm section and is set apart unto itself. It's a totally different kind of record than the *Two Of A Kind* album I did with Bob. There we just took a rhythm section in, and that was the whole basis for the whole record."

One thing Klugh plans to do less of in the future is touring. "At this point I'm sort of tired of touring," he says. "When you're out on the road with the band, you're doing old music, so you don't really get a chance to grow. The most creative time for me is in the studio. So I probably won't go out again until sometime late next year. I have several record projects coming up that I'm going to be working on that all require a lot of time and material, so I'll spend the next several months just writing."

Klugh does most of his writing at home on a grand piano. He also spends a lot of time playing with an arsenal of keyboards at home, including an Oberheim, a Prophet, and a Rhodes. He also expresses some interest in the new musical technology. "The Fairlight is a very interesting instrument. I have an Emulator, which is like a real scaled version of a Fairlight—\$5,000 instead of \$30,000—but it's the same kind of thing, where it can actually make real sounds and environmental sounds. I haven't had a lot of experience with guitar synthesizers, though. It just seems that they're a lot further along with keyboard synthesizers than with guitar synthesizers right now. But what I'd like to do at some point is hook up my Chet Atkins guitar up to a really good guitar synthesizer."

The Gibson Chet Atkins guitar, a nylon-stringed solid body, is considered a great revelation to players like Klugh, who prefer the subtlety and warmth of acoustic guitars but also have to play at louder volumes to accommodate large concert halls and electric rhythm sections. For years Klugh struggled to find the perfect pickup for his favored guitar, a Manuel Velasquez classical, but he invariably ran into feedback problems. He tried a DeArmond, a FRAP, and a Barcus-Berry, but nothing quite suited him.

"What would happen more than anything else is the band would feedback into whatever pickup I would have, so it wasn't so much the volume of my guitar by itself that caused the problems. The volume of the band was always louder than the strings, and it would feedback into the guitar. It was always very hard to get the right sound. But now I use the Chet Atkins solid body exclusively on the road. There is absolutely no feedback with it. Plus, the size of the guitar is like an electric, which allows you to move around a lot more. It frees you up in a lot of ways from playing a traditional classical guitar, where if you move around it feeds back or you have added problems from hall to hall depending on the p.a. system. This Chet Atkins model is so very versatile because you can do a lot of things with it in the studio as far as effects. That's something I plan to pursue a bit more in the future."

But regardless of whatever technology he may dabble in, it's certain that Klugh won't stray too far from that gentle, melodic quality that has become his trademark. Whether his guitar is hooked up to a synthesizer for some studio project or played purely while guesting with a symphony orchestra, the music will always remain his prime consideration. **db**

# Journeying To Jazz

## STEVE SMITH

By Robin Tolleson



From left: Bernard Purdie, Steve Smith, Kenny Aronoff.

The 14-year-olds watching superstar rock band Journey don't know it, but they are seeing a little of Alan Dawson, some Bernard Purdie, and a touch of Buddy Rich behind the drums in the person of Steve Smith.

"He's the best rock & roll drummer in the world," shrieks one teenage girl in much the same tone of voice Journey vocalist Steve Perry had shouted those words during the show. "His solo was awesome," says another, affectionately eyeing the Journey backstage pass slapped on my thigh. "His left hand, the grace notes—he's so strong," says an aspiring 16-year-old drummer sporting a 1983 Journey Frontiers Tour t-shirt.

Smith takes well to ducking into limosines and mass adulation. He also seems to realize that when ZZ Top comes to town next week, they might be calling Frank Beard the "greatest rock & roll drummer in the world." "A lot of times it has to do with how good you spin your sticks anyway in the rock & roll world," he laughs.

I met Steve Smith when we wound up sitting next to each other in a jazz club in San Francisco, watching John Abercrombie's band. Jazz is, if not his first love, certainly an overwhelming passion. I asked Smith whom he would like to perform with, if he could choose. A smile came over his face as he launched into a list that might not mean too much to Journey fans. "Miles Davis, Weather Report, Eberhard Weber, Keith Jarrett, John McLaughlin, McCoy Tyner. . ."

The 29-year-old Smith's first solo album, *Vital Information*, is an important step in his career. It's a solid statement, a not-so-subtle nudge to the jazz world like, "Hey, I've never left you."

It was fourth grade in Whitman, Massachusetts when Steve Smith got inter-

ested in drums. He can't remember why he picked drums exactly, but does remember his mother taking him to parades and pointing out the drum section as it marched by. And she was an avid Gene Krupa fan. Smith studied drums all through high school with a big band drummer named Bill Flanagan. Through his teacher's influence, Smith became interested in jazz, listening to Count Basie and becoming a self-confessed "Buddy Rich clone."

Not wanting to be a music teacher and not wanting to only play classical music, Smith opted for the Berklee College of Music in Boston, "because it was a playing school." He arrived in 1972 with his Rogers pink champagne-sparkle Buddy Rich-style drum set—the two cymbals up flat and one down low. To his dismay, "Everyone was playing tiny Gretsch drum sets with K. Zildjian cymbals eight feet up in the air and flat like Alphonse Mouzon when he was with McCoy Tyner. I was uncool. Nobody would play with me. But I got hip.

"Berklee was real influenced by the ECM sound: Gary Burton, Keith Jarrett, Eberhard Weber, Jan Garbarek. So in a drummer's sense it was very much implied time. It was very uncool to play real strong time." Smith recalls with glee those college days—four jams a day, drums set up in the apartment, lots of good players around. "Everyone was playing really free and really out," he says, "and the funk thing was starting to come in. Herbie Hancock's *Headhunters* and *Return To Forever* were starting to get popular."

Smith played in Herb Pomeroy's Recording Band, in a group with bassist Neil Stubenhaus, jammed often with bassist Jeff Berlin, and met all the players that would years later play on the *Vital*

*Information* album—guitarists Dean Brown and Mike Stern, bassist Tim Langers, and reedman Dave Wilczewski. The *Vital Information* band actually performed around Boston on occasion under the name Not Bad For White Boys.

While at Berklee, Smith studied drums with Alan Dawson. He says it wasn't until a couple of years ago that he realized how much he had been influenced by Dawson. "Half of the stuff I play is derived from lessons with him. He breaks up between the drums and the feet all the time, and that's become a real integral part of my playing. I think a lot of the early Tony Williams stuff where he was playing real independent and a lot of interesting ideas with his hi-hat as well as bass drum comes from Alan. And through Tony it's influenced the world."

Smith was exposed to unconventional ways of moving around the drum set by Gary Chaffee—top to bottom, outward, backward. And there was a schoolmate named Doug Florence who was a strong influence on the drummers at Berklee. "He was really into David Garibaldi and Tower Of Power, and he had figured out all that stuff and written it down. Everyone used to go to him and get ideas, and listen to him play."

The first professional band Smith played in, at the age of 19, was trumpeter Lin Biviano's group. The band that put Smith into the spotlight was Jean-Luc Ponty's, which he joined in 1976 after an audition in New York. Smith stayed with Ponty for a year, playing over that time with Alan Holdsworth, Daryl Stuermer, Tom Fowler, Allan Zavod, Ralphe Armstrong, and Jamie Glaser. "There was quite a bit of freedom, and Jean-Luc basically wanted you to really stretch out each night," Smith says, "except he was always afraid of sounding too much like



the Mahavishnu Orchestra. If it got too much in that direction, he would calm you down."

After two months Ponty asked Smith to buy a larger drum set with two bass drums. "That started me in a rock & roll direction, because joining Ponty's band was the first time that I played real loud. At Berklee we were playing in rooms the size of hotel rooms, so we had to play real soft. That kind of super-soft playing was really happening at the time at Berklee. But I fell in love with playing big drums and started developing that real high-energy loud playing." Smith still uses two bass drums today. "Narada Michael Walden and Terry Bozzio inspired me to start working—practicing and developing the bass drums as an integral voice in the drum set and not just 16th notes," he says.

After Ponty, Smith joined forces with guitar whiz Ronnie Montrose for an eight-month stint. Montrose toured as opening act for Journey, and Smith immediately became friends with the band. When Aynsley Dunbar left the group in 1978, they asked Smith to join. Smith's years in Journey have influenced his

thinking and his playing, both in very constructive ways, he feels. "When I first joined Journey, I was overplaying quite a bit, but more than overplaying, I had a different time feel than what they wanted," Smith says. "My time feel was real edgy, real on top of the beat. Actually kind of a busy feel with a lot of little notes between the main beats. What I had to do was develop a sense of time that was more relaxed and not so notey—more to the point and more accurate."

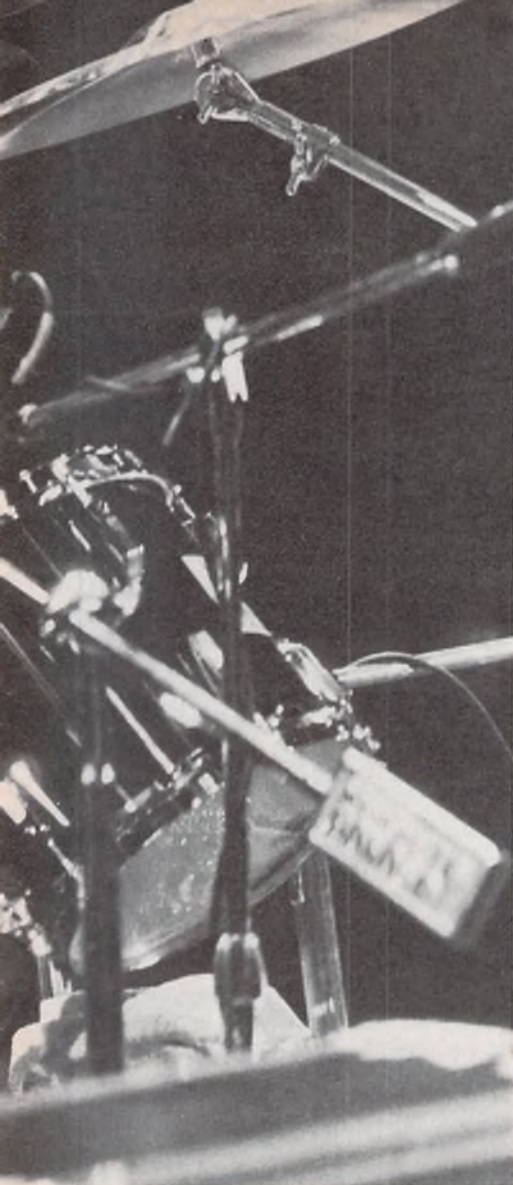
The stickster continues, "When you're trying to make real clean and clear records and to play for so many people, it has to be a little more obvious plus a little more accurate. I've applied that to my jazz playing, which makes it feel better to me than it ever did before—much more centered, relaxed, and controlled." Witnessing a Journey concert in Detroit, I was surprised at how much good playing Smith "got away with." "Especially this year, I don't have to hold back at all," he tells me. "Everybody in the band wants me to play with a lot of energy and react to what they do."

Smith sits low at the drums, as if ready to pounce. In fact he says it took him

some time to find a drummer's throne that would adjust that low. "I feel real comfortable down there, and I feel like my legs are real strong. I tend to consciously think about playing bottom heavy and light on the top. I tend to play a cymbal light, but hit the bass drum real hard and the snare drum medium hard. From playing rock and listening a lot, I notice that time is really generated from underneath, so I concentrate on building it from the bottom up."

The drummer is also possessed with a strong and accurate left hand and uses traditional grip. "Journey actually plays with more dynamics than about any band I've been in, and I found I had a distinct lack of control playing match grip when I joined," he says. "Since I had played traditional grip before I went to Berklee, it still felt real good, and I could actually play more things. It took about a year before I could use it again with the volume required to play loud, but I've found that it helps me immensely. I have a much better feel that way and a lot more control."

Being part of Journey has enabled Smith to learn the ways of the recording



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

had worked up a lot of original music over the years that sounded real good," Smith says. "I wanted to record it. I thought it was time to put out a record that showed people where I live, showed 'em exactly what I am and expresses it the way I wanted. I feel a need to be a producer, composer, and bandleader, and not just be part of a band where I'm mainly the drummer."

Smith's solo album follows not too far after a solo project by another former teacher of his, Peter Erskine. "I didn't really have anything to say on a solo album until just recently. I didn't feel like I had that much to offer," Smith says. "Maybe the same is true with someone like Peter Erskine. He just feels like now is the time he really wants to do something that has his name on it, that's his creation."

There's a lot to pick from on *Vital Information*—samplings from Smith's backgrounds of acoustic jazz, fusion, and rock & roll. The blues shuffle *Looks Bad Feels Good* spotlights the drummer's big band licks. "It's funny, that song does sound sort of big bandish," he says. "In a big band it's obviously real important to have a real strong swing, and to play fills that are strong setups for the band. Fills are there not so much to showcase what the drummer can do but to make the accents—downbeats in rock or figures in jazz-rock—real obvious and easy for the other musicians to play."

*All That Is* has a distinctly European flavor to it, with parts sounding like something Passport might do. You can hear that Smith listens to the new percussion coming from the rock world, with his latest recorded playing including cymbal effects, more time kept on the tom-toms and drums, "and less traditional playing," he says. "I think there's a lot of room for that in rock—a lot of room to play things that are new. It's funny but it almost seems like there's more freedom in the rock world than there is in the jazz world."

For Smith the experience of being leader was a new one, and admittedly not always a pleasant one. "[Guitarist Mike] Stern didn't show up to the rehearsals because something came up. I was really nervous about how it was going to come out, and probably had the least fun of any record I've ever made," he admits, "but I'm real happy with the end result. Stern ended up sight-reading the tunes in the studio and playing them great. It was pretty amazing, and maybe turned out even better."

The "boss" speaks highly of all his players. "Dean Brown really came across playing good solid parts to help develop the tunes. The soloing is Tim's best on record," he says of his bassist, Landers, "and this is David's [Wilczewski] first chance to stretch out on a record, and compose. I feel really proud of the musicianship." Brown and Landers have

been part of Billy Cobham's band for a couple of years. Wilczewski moved to Sweden in 1982; he graduated from the New England Conservatory of Music and has played with the likes of Al Kooper, Harvey Mason, and Matt "Guitar" Murphy of the Blues Brothers. Stern has until recently been part of Miles Davis' band.

Smith hopes to tour with the *Vital Information* band soon, and follow up with another record shortly after that if CBS is willing. But you can bet that he'll be back in the drum chair for Journey when their next tour of the planet takes place. "I'm real serious about my individual career, and I want to develop it—tour, write, and do more albums—but I don't want to leave Journey either," the popular drummer shrugs. Smith has tasted both worlds and likes it all. "I think there's room to do both." **db**

## STEVE SMITH'S EQUIPMENT

Steve Smith's main kit is a double-kick Sonor setup of two 14×20 bass drums with 8×10, 8×12, and 9×13 rack toms plus 16×16 and 16×18 floor toms. His snare is a 7×14 Paul Jamieson (Los Angeles). He has incorporated a Simmons electronic drum set into his live Journey act; he uses the Jamieson to trigger the Simmons snare (through the microphone line); mounted at left are Simmons bass and tom pads, with two more tom pads at right. The hardware is all Sonor except for Drum Workshop DW-5000 chain-drive pedals on both basses. Heads are Remo Weather Kings: clear Ambassadors on all drums save the snare which sports a CS (black dot) batter.

Cymbally speaking it's a Zildjian show. With Journey he uses a new 22-inch K. Zildjian ride; the rest are all A. Zildjians—17- and 19-inch crashes, a 10-inch splash, a 20-inch low China Boy, and 14-inch heavy rock hi-hats.

Smith finds the A's are perfect to power Journey, but likes the sensitivity of the K's for the *Vital Information* band, so in that situation he keeps the 22-inch K. ride, adds 14-inch K. hi-hats and an 18-inch K. crash, and rounds that setup out with a 20-inch A. flat ride and a 16-inch Amir crash. He also uses an UFIP Ice Bell in both situations. And Vic Firth 2B's are his sticks of choice.

The Claw microphone mounting system from Latin Percussion holds quite an array of mics nicely for Steve when he plays live. He uses Beyer Dynamic 201's on all the toms, snare, and hi-hat; AKG D-12's are on the basses, and overhead Audio-Technica mics pick up the cymbals.

## STEVE SMITH SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader  
**VITAL INFORMATION**—Columbia FC-38955  
 with Jean-Luc Ponty  
**ENIGMATIC OCEAN**—Atlantic SD-19110  
 with Gil Goldstein  
**PURE AS RAIN**—Chiaroscuro CR-201  
 with Focus  
**FOCUS CON PROBE**—EMI/Harvest FT-11721  
 with Journey  
**EVOLUTION**—Columbia FC-35797  
**DEPARTURE**—Columbia FC-36339  
**CAPTURED**—Columbia KC2-37016  
**DREAM AFTER DREAM**—CBS/Sony 25AP1950  
**ESCAPE**—Columbia TC-37408  
**FRONTIERS**—Columbia QC-38504  
 with Tom Coster  
**T.C.**—Fantasy F-9612  
**IVORY EXPEDITION**—Fantasy F-9623  
 with Schon and Hammer  
**HERE TO STAY**—Columbia FC-38428

studio. To record Smith's drum sound today, engineers use a bank of reverb units, digital delays, plate echoes, and all kinds of different outboard gear to give a doubling effect and, "get them to sound bigger than life," the drummer says matter-of-factly. During Journey's live show a Simmons electronic snare drum is triggered by Smith's snare drum mic, adding to the beefiness of the snare sound.

In 1980 Smith began recording and performing with Tom Coster, Santana keyboardist with a love of jazz similar to his. "We've let all the influence of rock come into our new jazz playing—our new improved and widened jazz playing. We have a great time playing together," the drummer says.

However, Smith didn't feel that the albums with Ponty or Coster represented exactly what he wanted to say musically. Coster and others encouraged him to do his own project. When he thought about it, Not Bad For White Boys came quickly to mind. A gig by the band in Boston in August 1982 helped cement the decision. "The band sounded real good, and we



# Kool

*Kool*

## KOOL JAZZ FESTIVAL



MITCHELL SEIDEL



MITCHELL SEIDEL



LAUREN DEUTSCH



MITCHELL SEIDEL



MITCHELL SEIDEL



MITCHELL SEIDEL

*The many faces of Kool/NY '83: (clockwise from upper left) pianist Ralph Sutton; saxist Paquito D'Rivera; bassist Gerald Veasley; Mayor Edward Koch at the tubs; guitarists (from left) Larry Coryell, Tal Farlow, and Joe Beck rehearse for the Mingus tribute under the watchful eye of Sy Johnson; ilugeler Chuck Mangione.*

B y L E E J E S K E

To say that the 1983 Kool/New York Jazz Festival was a musical success is to acknowledge that, while the lineup was the most conservative since the event moved to Gotham from Newport, RI in 1972, most concerts lived up to their objectives and the expectations of those in attendance. Opening up with Bob Wilber's Bechet Legacy tooting a 1919 ditty, and ending 11 days and 75 minutes later with Gil Evans' current rock-tinged big band pounding out a Charlie Parker melody, the fest kept its tires close to the middle-of-the-road and provided long, interesting programs hallmarked by surprisingly clear, bright sound.

The festival traditionally includes one lengthy, all-star benefit concert, and this year the blowout was the first concert out of the starting gate—a Thursday night tribute to Kai Winding at the Village Gate, proceeds going to the family of the late trombonist. The evening was long and varied, performers ranging from Chuck Mangione to Art Blakey to Henny Youngman, but the high point was provided by J. J. Johnson, rarely found in New York, leading a seven-trombone ensemble. Slide Hampton, Curtis Fuller, Wayne Andre, Dick Griffin, Bob Brookmeyer, and Eddie Bert were the other sackbuttists, but it was the divine J. J. who

brought the house down with an unaccompanied *Motherless Child*.

Friday the festival officially commenced with the Mayor of New York's jam session picnic—Ed Koch spelling Roy Haynes for a moment on the traps—before Ralph Sutton strode his way through a blithe recital at Carnegie Recital Hall. Sutton's left hand pumped and pumped, even finding time to push his glasses up his nose, through tunes by his striding forebears, Fats Waller and Willie "The Lion" Smith, and familiar standards. Then it was over to Soundscape, the stuffy 52nd St. loft where the "new music" was being staged, for a disjointed, jittery set by the Butch Morris Ensemble (despite the lovely cornet playing of the leader and the presence of such cooks as violinist Billy Bang and drummer Andrew Cyrille), and a splendid free-bop set led by pianist Michele Rosewoman and featuring such steady-as-you-go players as Baikida Carroll, Howard Johnson, Stanton Davis, Bob Stewart, and Pheeroan Ak Laff. Rosewoman is a good writer, good keyboardist, and, judging by this performance, an excellent band-leader.

Saturday evening got under way with the premier performance of the East Coast version of the Akiyoshi/Tabackin

Big Band at Carnegie Hall. When the band just sat there and played, things were fine—Toshiko's light, reedy writing was well delivered. This is a big band that deals in pastels; personally, I prefer a little oomph with my big band jazz. The concert also included its share of extra-curricular activities, including the heralded appearance of two *tzuzumi* players all the way from Japan—a long trip for two guys who grunted loudly and tapped their little drums hardly at all. Later that night Carnegie played host to an evening of Ellingtonia which was all that it should've been. There was an all-star band, under the direction of Aaron Bell, which played some of Duke's lesser-known songs (Clark Terry's rendition of *Boy Meets Horn* and Britt Woodman's workout on *All Too Soon* deserving special mention); brief appearances by such "stars" as Sister Sledge and Tammy Grimes doing the hits; and, the *raison d'être*, Mercer Ellington conducting the entire *Black, Brown, And Beige*. *B, B, And B* is a major work, and Mercer's band dug into it and wailed—Barry Lee Hall provided excellent plunger trumpet solos, with Art Baron doing the same for the trombone. This is the first time I've seen Mercer's band where I've felt they had a

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B y S A M F R E E D M A N

One listener's journey through the 1983 Kool/New York Jazz Festival was a study in almost schizophrenic extremes. Half the shows I saw featured the most commercially successful names in jazz, from such acoustic old-timers as Dave Brubeck and Stan Getz to those who have turned their profit from electric pop-jazz, like Dave Grusin and Chuck Mangione. These concerts took place in Avery Fisher Hall—normally a home for orchestras in the Lincoln Center complex—and most filled the several-thousand-seat hall with duly enthusiastic fans.

The other concerts I saw, however, showcased a grab-bag of musicians bound by the banner of "New Music." If anything, these shows proved just how elastic, at best, or worthless, at worst, such a term is, for it covered everything from a classic Cuban dance band to a mainstream star like Paquito D'Rivera to propagators of free jazz, funk, and something approaching performance art. The site for this smorgasbord was Soundscape, a deserving venue because its director, Verna Gillis, has discovered and booked much of the exciting latin and jazz-funk music heard in New York in the last few years. Yet the contrast in commercial viability—or public exposure—between the Avery Fisher performers and those at Soundscape could be measured in comparing the site. Soundscape is a loft in an anonymous neighborhood of warehouses and walk-ups, and this summer, without air conditioning, it was hot more ways than musically. The audiences at Soundscape were every bit as delighted as those at Avery Fisher, but they numbered only in the dozens for some shows, although D'Rivera, for one, sold out the 200 or so seats.

The juxtaposition illustrated several quandaries. One is the undeniable difficulty new music practitioners such as pianist Marilyn Crispell have in drawing listeners, even during a

highly promoted festival and even with their abundance of talent. Secondly, as Gary Giddins has pointed out in the *Village Voice*, the gulf between stars at Avery Fisher and up-and-comers at Soundscape left the middle ground of established innovators—Henry Threadgill, Chico Freeman, and their peers—without a place in a major festival. The Kool/Chicago Jazz Festival has solved the problem by presenting a free program that intersperses all styles of jazz in a given evening; Kool/New York, as an operation that sells tickets, cannot be expected to follow Chicago's example, but can at least look for some mid-sized halls for next year, in order that jazz that is both new and somewhat popular can be heard.

As it was, the festival had its revelations. And first among them for me was the Odean Pope Trio and, most specifically, its stunning bassist, Gerald Veasley. The trio itself, kicked along by Cornell Rochester on drums, can traverse from braying power to more subtle things—almost, if not quite, balladry. But the effect of Veasley, I must admit, was greater than that of the sum of the trio's parts. I have never heard anyone—not Steve Swallow, Jaco Pastorius, Jamaaladeen Tacuma, or Stanley Clarke—play more beautifully and more melodically on the electric bass. Veasley says his self-instruction included a book by Andres Segovia, the Spanish guitarist, and indeed he strums and plucks from his bass the sound of a classical or flamenco guitar. When the song demands it, he can funk out, too.

Beyond Veasley, Marilyn Crispell must rate as one of the pleasures of the festival. And like the bassist, she possesses a sound on her instrument like no one else's. She seems to hammer with all 10 fingers at all times, and she molds the whirling, swirling pieces of sound into waves of rhythm. The rhythm, in turn, gives the melodic logic to her music. One



More Kool faces: Gerry Mulligan on the straight horn, and Ella Fitzgerald belts one out with guitarist Joe Pass.

thinks of a more melodic Cecil Taylor or a more swinging Keith Jarrett, but Crispell, heard more widely, should become the influence against which to measure others.

Soundscape also featured some of the finest latin-inflected jazz in the city. Manny Oquendo's Libre, a traditional Cuban dance band, played a delightful set as the second act on a twin bill with tenorman Pope's group. Pianist Hilton Ruiz had his moments, but not enough of them, opening for D'Rivera. Ruiz' solos measured up—a bluesy *Blue Monk*, a powerfully dissonant *Lush Life*—but with his quartet he tended to amble through standards, easily but without a particular conviction. D'Rivera and his quintet, however, had conviction to spare. Even now, with the excitement of his arrival in New York almost three years old, the altoist plays with the fervor of a musician who just escaped from Castro's Cuba yesterday. He can navigate the trickiest passages with the ease of a slalom skier, yet emotion, mostly an effervescence, an exuberance, augments all of his technical wizardry.

Still, Soundscape saw its disappointments. Actually, I hesitate to say Billy Bang and the Gang let anyone down. The violinist dared himself with the somewhat difficult accompaniment of drums and two basses and played with range and a sharp edge, but the format seemed too limited, at least compared to the edition of the Gang with Charles Tyler on reeds and Curtis Clark on piano. Bang needed their voices to support and sometimes challenge his own. The singer Jeanne Lee, who appeared before Bang, mixed poetry, spontaneous remembrances of childhood, and a very breathy approach to jazz singing. A portion of the audience clearly responded to the performance, but it never captivated me. Lee has stage presence in her carriage, but her voice, on the evidence of this evening anyway, is nowhere nearly as commanding.

Meanwhile, at Avery Fisher Hall, the big names reigned. Chuck Mangione played and received the expected drubbing from most critics, but the slings and arrows perhaps hit the wrong target—if there is criticism due, it is for Kool booking Mangione and so many other pop or fusion acts under the jazz aegis. But Mangione never has presented himself as a jazz purist, and taken on his terms, he succeeded at Kool—sounding better live than on record, and better with his quartet than awash in orchestra and strings. Mangione did not solo extensively, but he conducted the moods and dynamics of the group, giving Chris Vadala's reeds and Peter Harris' guitar—with some lovely nods to Kenny Burrell—ample time to shine. Certainly one can say Mangione occasionally is too precious and that he comes up a bit short in his brief switches to a hard-bop style, but he played *his* music with life and earnestness, and I suspect that the people who heard their first

"jazz" at this concert will find the prospect less forbidding when someone offers to put on a Charlie Parker album.

The same sort of endorsement could not be given wholeheartedly to Dave Grusin and the NY/LA Dream Band. For an aggregation of major players in a genre—pop-jazz fusion—not known for circumspection, the band showed a fine sense of proportion and restraint in its first set. No solo sticks in mind, although Lee Ritenour's guitar heroics predictably delighted people and drummer Buddy Williams anchored and drove the group with a sort of polyrhythmic funk. However, a poor sound mix marred the first set, and the second—featuring singer Patti Austin—found the Grusin group giving a perfunctory reading to her Quincy Jones songs and arrangements. A brief cameo by Toots Thielemans—including a glorious harmonica and piano duet on *Body And Soul* with Grusin—only placed the shortcomings of the second set in greater relief. Austin thanked her musicians with grace, but they certainly let her down.

Three of the latter-day saints of mainstream jazz—Dave Brubeck, Gerry Mulligan, and Stan Getz—shared a Fisher bill. Mulligan led his lively, young big band but, if anything, he is too egalitarian with them. He is the best player in the band, and he should solo most. Brubeck himself was fine, especially on the haunting *Koto Song*, but the biggest change from his appearance last year was the improvement in his band, measured largely by the addition of Bill Smith on clarinet. Smith provides a foil for Brubeck and the sort of lighter touch that Paul Desmond once did.

Nonetheless, Mulligan and Brubeck seemed content to consolidate their pasts and present them to audiences all too eager to hear the old songs. Getz, however, was another matter. One can date a creative resurgence in the saxophonist to last year's Kool fest, when he debuted his powerful reading of Billy Strayhorn's *Blood Count*; the momentum continued with the release of Concord's *Pure Getz* album. And at Kool this year, he came with a superb trio of Adam Nussbaum on drums, George Mraz on bass and, best of all, Jim McNeely on piano. McNeely deserves much of the credit for the new Getz, for he wrote most of the songs—all melodic yet elusive and evasive. They were perfect vehicles for Getz, who could keep the soft cascades of sound for which he is known, and his melancholy, and yet challenge himself harmonically more than he can on the same old sambas.

Now the Kool festival itself must take a cue from Getz and find a way to freshen and challenge itself within a framework of tradition. For all the individual highlights of the 1983 festival, such a sense of growth and discovery was too often absent.

db

purpose—*nobody* else is going to regularly play the ambitious works of Duke Ellington, and if this band continues to do so with this much fire and style, they will truly remain a musical force. The 45-minute *Black, Brown, And Beige* was followed by the shorter, and duller, *New World A-Comin'*, but all in all this was an evening with luster.

Sunday evening began and ended with the Marsalis family. *Pere* Ellis had the soloist's slot at the Recital Hall, delivering a well-paced, highly romantic set filled with moonlight and fireflies, though he made sure to end with a thumping blues to prove that he can eat up the piano when he wants to. Two of Ellis' *fijs*, Branford and Wynton, ended the night some nine hours later blistering through a set at Avery Fisher with VSOP II. All I need tell you is that Messrs. Hancock, Carter, and Williams were as good as they can be, and that the Marsalis brothers were able to easily fill the shoes of their VSOP predecessors (Wayne Shorter and Freddie Hubbard) to let you know that their set was a corker. Opening for VSOP II was Miles Davis with his sextet. All I have to tell you about *that* is that Miles didn't play nearly enough, and his band played more than enough.

Sandwiched between all the Marsalis was a Carnegie salute to Charles Mingus that was as near to a disaster as anything at the festival. There was a sloppy set by the Mingus Dynasty (despite the return of Dannie Richmond to the fold and the presence of such superb soloists as Johnny Coles and Jimmy Knepper); a silly, though amusing, "dance" performance by Momix (it was actually highly developed shadow puppets, but no matter); a mess of a set that had Larry Coryell, Tal Farlow, and Joe Beck dueling as a guitar ensemble; a weighty, lumpy set that featured Gunther Schuller conducting two of Mingus' long works without much spirit; and an excellent four-bass battle that featured Ron Carter (who had a busy night), George Mraz, Eddie Gomez, and Miroslav Vitous muscling through *Haitian Fight Song*, but which came too late to redeem the evening.

Sunday evening opened with Michel Petrucciani at the Recital Hall. Petrucciani is a young, seriously deformed man (he's plagued by something called "glass bones"), and due to his handicap there is a tendency to want to lavish praise and hosannas on his head for just surviving, but his enormous talent won't allow for it—he's too damned good. His chops are secure; his influences (obviously a lot of Bill Evans and Lennie Tristano and McCoy Tyner) have been subsumed; and he's in complete command at the keys. He has a razzle-dazzle right hand, a powerhouse left hand, and a brilliantly inventive improvisatory mind. Perhaps his playing is, at times, a little overcrowded, but it didn't take away from this



Surrounded by paparazzi, Michel Petrucciani warms up for his solo recital.

being a highlight of the entire festival. Later that night another chopsmeister, Oscar Peterson, held forth in Carnegie Hall, and there were no surprises—lots of notes, few thrills, and the appearance, for a number of duets, of Milt Jackson, who meshed nicely with the pianist without causing any fireworks.

The piano fireworks came the next evening at the Recital Hall as Don Pullen pulled out all the stops for a tour de force of lightning, crablike runs in the treble, roaring *sturm und drang* in the bass, and lots of hair-raising pounding all over the ivories. That night Fisher was the site for a lovely tribute to Coleman Hawkins. It's hard to salute an instrumentalist, but Ira Gitler produced a well-planned show that began with Budd Johnson's arrangement of some of the old Fletcher Henderson pieces for a stellar big band and ended with a kindle of tenor saxophonists (Illinois Jacquet, Zoot Sims, Hal Singer, Nick Nicholas) paying homage to the mighty Bean. In-between were swinging bits by Benny Carter, Dizzy Gillespie, and others, and film clips of the great man himself. An excellent concert.

The late show on this night was at Carnegie and was purportedly a salute to the Swing Era, but was little more than short sets by Mel Tormé, Rosemary Clooney, George Shearing, the Count Basie band, and Full Swing (a Manhattan Transfer-ish vocal group including son of Tormé, Steve March, and daughter of Leonard Feather, Lorraine). Everybody played and sang well, and everybody saluted nobody but themselves—over three dozen songs were squeezed in, at least two dozen of them toe-tappers.

Wednesday evening was piano heaven. First Makoto Ozone unleashed his talents at the Recital Hall. Ozone is young and talented (he captured a "deebie" award in '82), but he fell into the trap of

playing *everything* every number. His touch is heavy, and he has yet to hone in on his own personal sound and style—this was a kitchen sink performance that included a few pots and pans as well. The main hall at Carnegie was the setting for a tribute to Bill Evans that was lovingly performed, but poorly programmed. The first half featured a string of solo pianists—George Shearing, Teddy Wilson, John Lewis, JoAnne Brackeen, Dave McKenna (his *Emily* a highlight), Warren Bernhardt (who was excellent and who captured some of Bill's unique tone), Jimmy Rowles, and McCoy Tyner. The second half featured group performances with such former Evans bandmates as Eddie Gomez, Philly Joe Jones, Zoot Sims, Freddie Hubbard, Lee Konitz, Kenny Burrell, Marc Johnson, and Eliot Zigmund providing variety. What was missing was a cogent narration tying all of this to Bill Evans and in some cases anything to do with Bill at all (John Lewis played *Django* for the umpteenth time, for example). Still the playing was cool and heartfelt, and there were a generous number of film clips of Bill Evans himself.

Thursday night opened with Walter Bishop Jr. playing cocktail piano with a bebop chaser at the Recital Hall, and continued with Betty Carter, in magnificent form on a set of ballads, and the Modern Jazz Quartet, looser and jauntier than ever and, finally, playing some new numbers, at the main hall.

Friday night featured that eclectic of ecclectics, Dick Hyman, filling Carnegie Recital Hall with stride, ragtime, swing, and bebop piano playing, frequently in the same number. His digit-demolishing stride was particularly affecting. Joe Williams held sway at Carnegie later in a concert featuring him with some

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DONNA PAUL

# George Russell Stratus Seeker

*By Bob Blumenthal*

**I**n 1983, at the age of 60, George Russell may be starting to garner the respect and attention his music has deserved for over 35 years. At least in Boston, where Russell has taught at the New England Conservatory since 1969, the works of this composer/theoretician have emerged from once-a-year student concerts to two major public forums. During the Boston Globe Jazz Festival in March, a specially assembled orchestra (including such luminaries as Ricky Ford, Fred Hersch, Dick Johnson, Bill Pierce, and Gary Valente) reprised such 1947-62 classics as *Cubano Bel Cubano Bop*, *A Bird In Igor's Yard*, *Ezz-thetic*, *All About Rosie*, and *New York, N.Y.*, and George Russell Day was even proclaimed by the Governor of Massachusetts. Three months later, with the support of the state's Council on the Arts and Humanities, Russell conducted a 25-piece orchestra in the local debut of *Time Spiral* from 1979, and the world premiere of a major extended piece, *The African Game*.

This Russell bonanza will not be confined to Massachusetts. He spent the summer organizing a new ensemble, similar in size to his late '70s New York Big Band, which he plans to break in at Manhattan's Swing Plaza before embarking on a West Coast tour in the fall. None of this activity, however, will deter

Russell from what he acknowledges as "a theoretical effort that I consider the most important contribution I can make." That effort has produced *The Lydian Chromatic Concept Of Tonal Organization*, the first volume of which was completed in 1953. Since that time, "the concept" (as Russell refers to his theory) has been widely absorbed and hailed as the most important systematic approach to music to have emerged from jazz.

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**R**ussell recalled the genesis of the concept in his Cambridge apartment on a hot summer evening. He had started his career as a drummer, joining Benny Carter at age 20, but his playing period was short-lived. "Max Roach took my place in Benny Carter's band," he recalls, "and that abruptly ended my career in drumming, after I heard Max. I decided to give myself completely to writing. I attempted to study music, but all efforts by the musical intelligensia to educate me failed miserably. The concept emerged as a willful act of George Russell attempting to educate George Russell. From the act of putting two and two together, the concept grew."

He was sustained in this effort by the example and active encouragement of the period's major innovators. "Night after night I heard Charlie Parker end tunes on the raised fourth.

At first it sounded very strange, but I knew I had grown through a period when it sounded strange to end tunes on the Major seventh. I knew that the raised fourth would only sound shocking for a time, that this was an indication of evolution, of a natural, instinctive intelligence taking it up to another level." Later, Parker would ask Russell to write out *Ezz-thetic* and other tunes. In 1947 Dizzy Gillespie collaborated with Russell on *Cubano BelCubano Bop*, a historic synthesis of jazz and latin music, as well as Russell's first modal work. This was the first, and for a time only, Russell composition on record. "I just wrote occasionally," Russell remembers. "I didn't have a rapport with Dizzy's band like that very underrated arranger Gil Fuller or Tadd Dameron. I couldn't turn out the music that fast, because I was shackled in a sense by the Lydian Chromatic Concept."

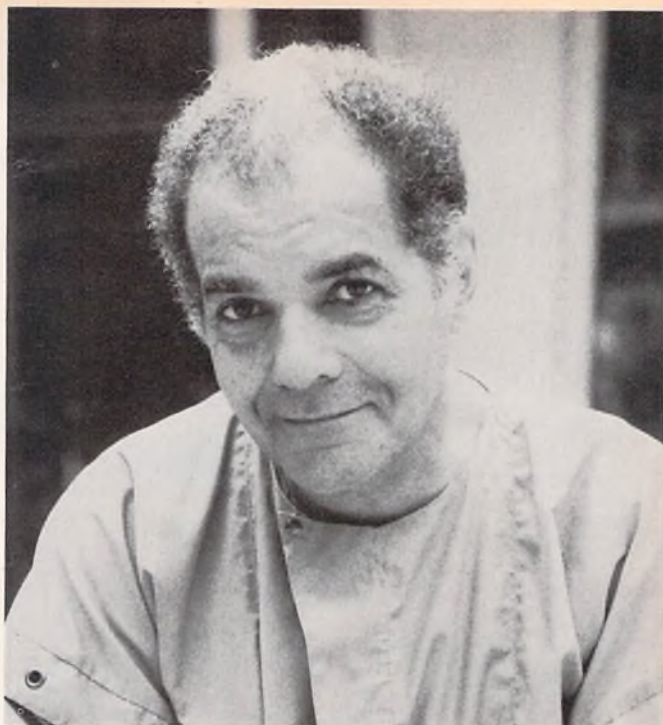
Other inspiration was drawn from the legendary scene at Gil Evans' basement apartment on 55th St. "It was part of my nightly routine to go to Gil's and stay for hours, and talk and live music with whomever happened to be there. When Charlie Parker lived there, it was Gil, Charlie Parker, myself, probably John Lewis—who was the first person to say I *must* complete this Lydian concept—Gerry Mulligan, a marvelous pianist named Sylvia Goldberg, Johnny Carisi, and a countless number of other people who just dropped in. We had a very broad approach to everything. We'd go to Juilliard and listen to Robert Craft prepare a concert for Stravinsky or Hindemith, or we'd listen to Dmitri Mitropolous prepare a concert. We listened to all kinds of music. I'd go to Miles' house, and we'd sit down for hours at the piano and trade chords."

During this period Russell focused on "the ladder of fifths, which produced the Lydian scale. That's when I knew I was onto something, because the ladder of fifths is a piece of objective truth rather than subjective knowledge. The ladder of fifths has been around for centuries; the pentatonic scale, the primary scale of ancient musics, is basically five fifths. Pythagoras discovered the mathematical relationship of the interval of the fifth and all other intervals; we in the West based our tuning system on the Pythagorean ladder of fifths for 1,500 years. The Lydian was one of four primary modes in church music, and the Major scale was not—it was a derivative mode. But in the 16th century, the Major scale came to dominate our culture's secular music and began to challenge the Lydian scale. The church finally, with great resistance, allowed the Major scale to become a primary mode around the Council of Trent in 1547. Then we turned it around, and began to use the Major scale.

"Why did we deviate? The Major scale fools us: it seems to sound its tonic tone, but it's really on the way to *becoming* its tonic tone. It's the scale of becoming; it's goal-oriented. The Lydian is its tonic tone, the scale from which gravity emanates. Some people hear the Lydian scale and say, 'It's not going anywhere.' Well it isn't going anywhere but up; it's evolving to higher levels. It finally evolves to embrace the whole chromatic scale, which is simply two Lydian scales, on C and F#."

Russell explained what he meant by the "scale of gravity." "Almost anybody in the world will hear the 'C' in the interval 'C' to 'G' as the stronger of the two tones. If you add a fifth on top of the 'G,' which is already a fifth on top of 'C,' and keep building up a ladder, the lowermost tone, the 'C,' still remains the tonic of that ladder. Therefore the Lydian scale, which is the scale of fifths, is the scale of gravity, whereas the Major scale could never be justified that way.

"That's when I knew I had justified the concept in a scientific way. I had taken gravity and justified its existence in music. As I proceeded to write the book, I demanded logical proof for everything. It all had to relate to the ladder of fifths and the overtone series. Music to me is the highest of sciences, because it reflects life in the way it behaves. So the concept has nothing to do with what I like or don't like; it's not about taste, or about dictating taste. It is the approach to music that allows the practitioner the widest possible range to express his essence in, and yet be within an organization. I wasn't interested in



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showing people how Charlie Parker plays—that all fits in, once you've found the objective law."

\* \* \* \* \*

This search for objective laws has never stopped. For a time, in the early '50s, it led Russell to pursue theory to the exclusion of composition. "The first book was completed in 1953. I'm still writing a sequel, and there's another sequel to follow that. The only way you build an objective concept is to have the courage to destroy it. First the law, then I tried everything I could find musically to challenge that law. I built upon that part of the law that didn't collapse, then took it to another level, where it embraced more of music.

"Between 1953 and '55 I wasn't in music. If the choice was to be a gifted improviser from day one, or else be relegated to a position of constant compromise, then I decided I would not use music as a means of support. I decided to build a First National Bank, as it were, of my best ideas, so that if I became commercial, I would not lose touch with these ideas. The building of this idea bank became absolutely consuming. There was no choice but to find outside work as a counterman at a place like Macy's—Macy's will hire anybody."

Again, he was sustained by his peers, particularly Gil Evans. "Gil was a beacon, both a musical mentor and a port in the storm. He not only opened the book of music for me, but he had such an incredible insight into life itself. In writing a piece for the Conservatory newspaper about my very dear friend, the late guitarist Barry Galbraith, it occurred to me that the Claude Thornhill band had the most incredible group of perceptive minds that I've ever encountered. The style of that band was actually low-key, yet the energy that projected was incredible. It was controlled energy, rhythmic thrust projected with very subtle orchestral colors that came chiefly from Gil. The band was expressing a fundamental yin/yang in music."

A similar balance—among what Russell cites as "the three elements present in all of the music I respect: the intellectual, the emotional, and the physical"—suffuses the compositions that Russell began writing again in 1956. Works such as *Lydian M-1* (recorded by Teddy Charles), *The Day John Brown Was Hanged* (heard on a Hal McKusick session), and his own *Jazz In The Space Age* album established Russell as a leader among those musicians beginning to look beyond the conventions of bebop. Yet Russell's music was playful, romantic, and funky as well as challenging, as exemplified in his best-known work, the 1957 *All About Rosie*. Like other works from the period, *Rosie* is



DONNA PAUL

## GEORGE RUSSELL SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

### as a leader

*ELECTRONIC SONATA FOR SOULS  
LOVED BY NATURE*—1980—Soul  
Note 1009  
*NEW YORK BIG BAND*—Soul Note 1039  
*VERTICAL FORM VI*—Soul Note 1019  
*LIVING TIME*—Columbia 31490  
*TRIP TO PRILLARGURI*—Soul Note 1029  
*LISTEN TO THE SILENCE*—Concept 002  
*OTHELLO BALLET SUITE/ELECTRONIC  
ORGAN SONATA NO. 1*—Soul Note  
1014  
*ELECTRONIC SONATA FOR SOULS  
LOVED BY NATURE*—Strata East  
19761  
*AT BEETHOVEN HALL*—MPS 25125  
*OUTER THOUGHTS*—Milestone 47027  
*EZZ-THETICS*—Fantasy OJC-070 (Riv-  
erside 9375)  
*THE OUTER VIEW*—Riverside 440  
*THE STRATUS SEEKERS*—Riverside 412  
*NEW YORK, N.Y. JAZZ IN THE SPACE  
AGE*—MCA 2 4017  
*STRATUSPHUNK*—Riverside 341

*SEXTET IN K.C.*—Decca 74183  
*SEXTET AT THE FIVE SPOT*—Decca  
79220  
*THE JAZZ WORKSHOP*—RCA 1372

### compositions recorded by

Dizzy Gillespie (*Cubano Bel/Cubano  
Bop*)—RCA 2398  
Lee Konitz/Miles Davis (*Ezz-Thetic*)—  
Prestige 7827  
Hal McKusick (*The Day John Brown Was  
Hanged*)—French RCA 43637  
Gil Evans (*Stratusphunk*)—Impulse/MCA  
29033  
(*Blues In Orbit*)—Inner City  
3041  
(*Blues In Orbit*)—Allantic  
90048  
Gerry Mulligan (*All About Rosie*)—Verve  
UMV-2652  
Buddy DeFranco (*A Bird In Igor's Yard*)—  
Capitol 11060  
Toddy Charles (*Lydian M-1*)—Atlantic  
1229

based on earlier black music, in this case an Alabama children's song.

When asked if *Rosie* had entered the repertoire of school bands, Russell again gave signs of his single-mindedness. "I don't think about that too much. I'm the publisher of most of my music, so it's literally unpublished in the sense that it's not printed. Gunther Schuller has just one piece of mine, *All About Rosie*, but that music has only been available for about two years. Gunther could tell you who's playing it and who isn't. It's viewed as kind of an obstacle course by musicians; when they can cut *Rosie*, they feel that they're on their way. It calls for astute reading, because my whole emphasis has been to make written music sound as though it's improvised. That's where I still am."

By the end of the '50s, Russell was ready to form his own sextet. "In '56 and '57 I had done things with musicians who were busy with many other projects, people like Hal McKusick, Barry Galbraith, Milt Hinton, Bill Evans. I realized I had to get something of my own going, which meant I had to play piano. It wouldn't look proper to be conducting a five-piece group. Maybe because musicians always adopted me, I've always felt a healthy respect for young musicians who had that energy, that single ingredient that magnetizes you. When I heard the guys from Indiana [trumpeter Alan Kiger, trombonist David Baker, tenor saxophonist Dave Young], I could tell that they had it. Later, when Kiger left and I couldn't get Don Cherry, I went to Don Ellis. Energy, coupled with imagination, that's what interests me. I don't care about stars."

Between 1960 and '63 the George Russell Sextet featured such musicians as those named above, and Eric Dolphy, Chuck Israels, Sheila Jordan, and Steve Swallow. Carla Bley, one of Russell's students, wrote for the group. Six albums were

recorded, but work was virtually non-existent. "We only had three or four gigs—maybe one week at the Five Spot, a couple of nights at Birdland, a couple in Kansas City, and that was it. Orrin Keepnews, who liked the band and saw to it that we did four albums for him, and Milt Gabler, vice president of Decca, really fathered the band. It was the record income that kept us going."

Russell emigrated to Europe in 1963, where he spent the remainder of the decade. He found greater opportunities to compose ("Most of my music has been commissioned by Europeans") and introduced players like Jan Garbarek and Terje Rypdal to the concept. Most importantly, his theoretical efforts expanded to address rhythm more directly. "Being involved in modes so deeply, I began to wonder what is meant by 'mode.' Then I realized that any particles of matter can form themselves into modes; the question is to define how these modes behave. Once I defined the basic way in which rhythm behaves, then I could begin to think about architectural structures."

This led to the concept of "vertical form," a focal point of Russell's music since the 1966 composition *Now And Then* (heard on Soul Note 1009). As Russell explains it, "Vertical form is going on all the time. I'm talking in my rhythmic mode, a bird is chirping outside in its rhythmic mode, cars are passing . . . it's all around us. An earlier piece like *The Day John Brown Was Hanged* has attempts, perhaps unconscious, to express these layers of rhythms; the effort became conscious once I attempted to write a theory about it.

"There is a correlation with the Lydian concept—there is rhythmic gravity. In an African drum choir, one drummer is immovable; he's the rhythmic gravity. This has gone on for thousands of years, the most sophisticated rhythms on top of this tonal rhythm. The whole isn't really evolving in a horizontal way, but it's evolving in complexity and density. It's vertical energy, getting higher and higher, compounding."

Russell's appointment at the New England Conservatory brought him back to America, and marked the beginning of a second intense theoretical period. "I stopped composing from 1972 to about 1978 in order to devote full time to the second volume of the *Lydian Chromatic Concept*. You can't write a book like that on the road every night. Also, I'm a Cancer, and Cancers are shell people. It's terribly difficult for me to feel comfortable as a performer, although once I get out there on-stage, I don't feel any hesitation. And I have to be commissioned to write music. Everything I've written is somewhere on records. If I'm not commissioned, I work on the concept.

"My central aim," Russell emphasizes, "is to complete the *Lydian Chromatic Concept*. To the extent that performance furthers my aim, I feel that it is a necessity." We are fortunate that Russell has entered such a period again, a time to bring musicians together to perform his work. "The music I want to play is always the latest, so we'll be doing *African Game*, *Time Spiral*, whatever the traffic will bear." Yet his focus will continue to encompass more than the new band, or the current tour.

"What concerns me is the degree to which the concept is being absorbed. It's out there, underlying this music we call jazz; it's making its contribution to the theoretical end, whether it's done officially in schools, or just by word of mouth—which is in a sense the more genuine way. I've heard it described as the Bible of avant garde music. That's what impresses me, not whether somebody's playing *Ezz-thetic*. That's history—Kenny Dorham with Max Roach, Grant Green, there are records on that.

"I was talking with Joseph Jarman in Norway, where we did a thing together. He told me that a long time ago, when he was in a classroom in Chicago, somebody brought in a bunch of papers. It was my book, which someone had copied, and he said 'We all got into it.' So musicians buy it on their own, they read it, they have to stick with it until they understand it on their own. I think that's probably more the way it's absorbed than through formal instruction. Once it's out there, it's a living thing."

db

**JAMES NEWTON**  
**JAMES NEWTON**—  
 Gramavision GR 8205

★★★★



James Newton has become widely, and deservedly, regarded as the most accomplished and original flutist in jazz, albeit with the tacit reservation that, since he is a "young lion," history—which is not the instant phenomenon critics would like it to be—has yet to make its pronouncement on the matter. Having been of musical age for some time, Newton has turned 30—that age, it used to be said, after which no one could be trusted—and has produced an album that simultaneously accommodates some of the most daring and the most conservative material he has released to date.

Newton opts for a faithful rendering of traditional values, rather than a startling reevaluation, when approaching standards, as is the case with the lovely version of Strayhorn's *Daydream*, which opens the set. Except for the leader's refreshing double-time passage, the reading is unprovocative, with Newton and violinist John Blake, who nods reverently to Stuff Smith, soloing exquisitely over the stately support of pianist Anthony Davis, bassist Cecil McBee, and drummer Billy Hart. For better or worse, there is little in the performance to inform the listener that the musicians are of Newton's generation, not Frank Wes's.

To varying, lesser degrees, similar statements can be made of Newton's *Budapest* and *Ismene*, as well as Davis' *Persphone*. *Budapest* begins with a lyrical sweep akin to that of *Daydream*, highlighted by Jay Hoggard's luminous vibes; yet, primarily at Hart's insistence, the rhythmic contours are expanded during the solos for a more tactile footing. While *Ismene* is built upon a pensive chromatic melody, Strayhorn is again evoked with swirling changes that employ augmented chords with extra notes, and in a poignant duet between trombonist Slide Hampton and the pianist. Davis' composition has the structural considerations and blues tinge that distinguished Andrew Hill's early work.

*The Crips*, on the other hand, is one of the riskiest compositions Newton has

committed to wax, and its success speaks to Newton's maturity as much as the aforementioned works do. Several organizational devices—including fugal and motivic materials of expanding and contracting intervals and the pairing of instruments in sequential passages that diminish in duration—combine with inspired improvisations (Newton is in exceptional form here) to create the album's most challenging music.

While *James Newton* is not the most far-reaching album realized by the flutist, the beauty of the music is more than adequate compensation. —*bill shoemaker*

**LARRY CARLTON**  
**FRIENDS**—Warner Bros. 23834

★★★★

A funny thing happened on the way to deadline: at the moment of execution, as it were, during the last "close" listenings, a seeming fog of blandness that had dimmed the writer's view of *Friends* somehow began to lift, and a negative review had to be changed to the positive one you are reading.

My original reservations ran along these lines: why would Larry Carlton, surely one of our premier guitarists today, and so much more than a session chameleon despite his long and ongoing career as a studio ace (he has appeared on more than 150 albums for other artists since the late 1960s)—why would Larry Carlton, given free hands to create and produce a new album, his fourth for Warner Bros., be content to release a record that sounded disturbingly like just another session date for the same old L.A. pros? And with a 14-piece pickup horn section under Jerry Hey, with the friends including Joe Sample, Paulinho da Costa, Michael Brecker, Alex Acuña, and with the material being predominantly groove-oriented compositions and arrangements, *Friends* does indeed come across as an overly inbred session product. Considering Carlton's achievements such as the development of a seminal guitar sound with the Crusaders, his razor-sharp contributions to albums by Robert Kraft and Steely Dan, and his distinct soundtracks for *Electra Glide In Blue*, *John And Mary*, and *Theme From Hill Street Blues*, *Friends* would appear to be a very undistinguished release.

While these questions and reservations, even in the final analysis, remain pertinent, their relevance is eventually negated by a realization that, one, Larry Carlton himself plays magnificently throughout the album and, two, that, below the glossy surface, *Friends* is stud-

ded with minor delights. Carlton is not—as originally perceived—simply adding a good lick here, a nice touch there (and thus sticking to the role prescribed for session guitar work), he is actually in complete control of every track, unfolding one superb, fully accomplished solo after another, track for track. As an example, take the opener *Breaking Ground*. Initially it is easy to acknowledge Carlton's well-balanced symmetries and lush sound, but gradually this four-minute composition deepens in its sensuousness into a small pearl of perfection with a lovely invocation of Mexican nights, subtle dynamics, and fluent development.

Similarly, instead of finding that the "stars" of the date have merely phoned in their appearances, as is so often the case with this type of production, one discovers that Jarreau is festive and infectious on a swinging update of *Tequila*, that B. B. King plays with unusual fire on *Blues for T.J.*, and that Brecker blows with great warmth on the title track and *Tequila*.

Obviously Larry Carlton is no revolutionary as a record leader. Rather he is a consummate instrumentalist working within a tradition that frequently is marred by trite, anonymous performances. How nice to be able to report that this "entertainment" is more than merely entertaining. —*lars gabel*

**STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN**  
**TEXAS FLOOD**—Epic 38734

★★★★



The state of Texas has produced more than its share of exceptional blues artists, and *Texas Flood* heralds the emergence of another star. Stevie Ray Vaughan is hardly an unknown—he has acquired a considerable reputation from his concert and club appearances, and he was chosen by David Bowie to play guitar on the *Let's Dance* album—but this album is his first as a leader. Recorded under the supervision of legendary talent scout John Hammond, it is a stunning debut.

First and foremost, Vaughan is a powerfully original guitarist, with a style that combines the gritty essence of Texas



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# RECORD REVIEWS

blues with the virtuosity of Jimi Hendrix. Vaughan often plays astounding versions of Hendrix tunes in his live performances, but his absorption of Hendrix' style is not the fawning mimicry of Robin Trower or any of the other Hendrix clones. He has simply assimilated Hendrix' ideas along with those of many other great guitarists, from T-Bone Walker to Jimmie Vaughan, his older brother, who plays in the Fabulous Thunderbirds.

Many of Stevie Ray's tunes recall the strong, basic sound of the Thunderbirds, but his playing adds another dimension to the music. He goes way beyond the usual limits of the blues to explore concepts that are strikingly original. It's hard to single out cuts on this uniformly excellent album, but there are some truly heart-stopping effects on the title cut, a slow blues, and the driving instrumental *Testify* is probably the clearest example of Vaughan's ability to string together chorus after chorus of fresh ideas. The ballad *Lenny* is also exceptional, with long, liquid guitar lines that recall such lyrical Hendrix tunes as *Little Wing* and *Drifting*.

Most important of all, this is an *honest* record. Vaughan is backed up by his regular working band, Double Trouble (bassist Tommy Shannon and drummer Chris Layton), with no additional musicians and no overdubs. The tunes are all short and to the point, and Vaughan's straightforward vocals ring with conviction. Stevie Ray Vaughan is creating his own unique style of the blues, and it sounds to me like it's coming straight from the heart.  
 —jim roberts

**WYNTON MARSALIS**  
**THINK OF ONE**—Columbia 38641

★ ★ ★ ★

**HAYDN/HUMMEL/L. MOZART:**  
**TRUMPET CONCERTOS**—CBS  
 Masterworks 37846

★ ★ ★ ★



Everyone admires Wynton Marsalis' talent and technique, his taste regarding the jazz tradition, his sartorial style, his industriousness and sincerity—all valuable assets for a 21-year-old trumpeter whose self-assurance will certainly lead

him to develop his originality. *Think Of One* is Wynton's second Columbia effort as leader—the first to use only the Marsalis brothers' working band, rather than feature Wynton and saxist Branford with Herbie Hancock, Tony Williams, and Ron Carter—and the *Trumpet Concertos*, performed with Raymond Leppard directing the National Philharmonic Orchestra, is Wynton's recording debut as a Western classical virtuoso. Together, the two discs define his accomplishments.

This young man is a superior instrumentalist. He's as facile as anyone from the post-World War II era, and there's every indication he's still studying. Having absorbed many ideas from his elders—harmonic conceptions, phraseology, all manner of attacks and smears, volume considerations, rhythmic treatments, structures and song forms—Wynton is a torch carrier keeping bright a steady light, rather than a firebrand kindling creative excitement by forging himself ever new.

From *Knozz-Moe-King* (no smoking?), which opens side one, through pianist Kenny Kirkland's *Fuchsia*, the standard *My Ideal*, bassist Ray Drummond's *What Is Happening Here (Now)?*, the title track by Monk, Wynton's two originals (*The Bell Ringer* and *Later*), and Ellington's *Melancholia*, the Marsalis quintet appropriates with little embellishment the sophisticated and occasionally explosive sound of Miles Davis' mid-'60s combo. If Hancock's *Empyrion Isles* were still in print, maybe Blue Note would be investigating a copyright suit, so reverently faithful are some of the references (particularly Kirkland's off-beat chord placements). Drummer Jeff Watts has good command of Tony Williams' ability to expand and contract the rhythms across his kit; both Drummond and Phil Bowler, bassist on six of the eight cuts, have the dark, rubbery tone, fast walk, and accuracy Carter made standard for bassists. Of the whole band, Branford's voice is most distinctly his own. Influenced though he is by Wayne Shorter, Branford blows soprano on *The Bell Ringer* as though in pursuit of a passionate impulse of his very own. Wynton, in contrast, reels off some of his most interesting twists as though they're expected of him; his ballad work is well thought out, but except for the energy he brings to *Knozz*, he seems to be detached from his prodigious maturity by not having experienced abandon.

Nurtured by a musical family and conservatory-trained, Wynton cites among his forebearers Clifford Brown, Booker Little, Fats Navarro, Dizzy, Miles, Don

Cherry, Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard—all players who fought to find themselves without the sort of establishment support Wynton enjoys. He must be aware that the music he's making with his brothers and peers is itself 20 years old, while other brassmen—Olu Dara, Baikida Carroll, and Hugh Ragin come to mind—are working to express something new of their own. Though from New Orleans, Wynton disregards that city's flavorful feeling to attend to a "classic" jazz style which Miles' fans of the '50s thought was revolutionary when he unveiled it. Fortunately, Wynton has more panache than such revivalists as the Concord youngsters—or most rockabilly bands—and what he assays, he completes, impeccably.

Including his Western classical album—these concertos, each composed between 1762 and 1804, call on Wynton to be stately, delicate, and bravura by degrees. His tone—always controlled, often golden—is here lilting, languid, and authoritative when necessary. His trills and quick tonguing are expert, and his interpretations seem coherent.

No one should expect less from a

highly regarded jazz musician who has the confidence to perform such repertoire—yet many do—so Wynton feels compelled to prove that young blacks are quality conscious, too. He, for instance, can excel almost intuitively at the classiest music from his own past. Having proved these points, Wynton must move on, to engage himself with problems that call for him to stretch his comprehension even as he applies his technique. Musicians, like any artists, must *live* if they're going to make significant contributions. And as for original conceptions, sometimes it's a struggle just to think of one.

—howard mandel

**DENNY ZEITLIN/  
CHARLIE HADEN  
TIME REMEMBERS ONE TIME ONCE**

—ECM 1239

★★★★½

Here's a happy meeting of kindred musical minds. Recorded in performance at San Francisco's Keystone Korner, *Time Remembers One Time Once* explores the potential of the piano/bass duo, delves into the musically arcane, touches on the

familiar, and mixes the musically pensive with pure musical exuberance.

Charlie Haden's *Chairman Mao* sets the tone for many of these tracks. As Haden rustles and twangs in aggressive slow motion, Denny Zeitlin replies with a languid single-note line, hauntingly simple. Haden accompanies himself with double stops and lightly descending figures, sustaining the mood of restless tranquility. Addressing Ornette Coleman's *Birdfood*, a happy free-bop line, the duo shifts into wide open improvisation. Haden solos with a wealth of interconnected ideas, and Zeitlin pounces into full, crashing chordal structures.

*Love For Sale* receives a sly, tangential reading, darker than even its composer Cole Porter might have imagined. As Zeitlin glances obliquely at the understated melody, Haden thumps pedal tones. Time floats, punctuated by Zeitlin's densely chorded passages and dark rumbles into the bass register. As *Long As There's Music* continues the album's pensive strain. It's Haden's vehicle throughout as he intones the line in dark tones, attacking each note with precise nuances of inflection.

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# RECORD REVIEWS

Lighter moments occur on *Time Remembers One Time Once*, a fragile, introspective waltz notable for Zeitlin's delicate voicings. *The Dolphin*, a medium bossa nova, similarly casts Haden in the role of a conventional bassist backing a mainstream pianist. The high point of this release, however, comes on *Satellite! How High The Moon*, a volatile melding of John Coltrane's chord maze with a work-horse standard. Zeitlin's high tension chord blocks sparkle, and Haden's lines drive in this complex climax to an intricate, satisfying record. —*Jon Balleras*

**JOHN McLAUGHLIN/  
AL Di MEOLA/PACO De LUCIA  
PASSION, GRACE & FIRE—  
Columbia FC 38645**

★ ★ ★ ½

Technical prowess isn't as fashionable as it once was. After serialism in classical music, avant gardism and fusion in jazz, and art-rock in pop music, it was tough to garner any respect as a virtuoso instrumentalist or composer. Just as it was easy to base musical credibility on the speed and dexterity of the performer, it became equally facile to criticize an artist for that same ability. It's become all too comfortable for a critic to equate instrumental brilliance with superficiality.

John McLaughlin and Al Di Meola have come in for more than their share of this criticism, and Di Meola, especially in concert, has deserved it at times. But when these artists are in a trajectory of high velocity creativity, there is no denying the thrill. Every foray down the neck of their guitars becomes a challenge, a test of skill. They grip you with a tension akin to watching a wide receiver reach out with his fingertips, his body horizontal to the ground, pulling in a long bomb. Like that receiver, their attention is focused on that one, pivotal moment, with a flurry of notes culminating in that crescendoing peak.

There's a lot to be said for athletic muscle, and on *Passion, Grace & Fire*, McLaughlin, De Lucia, and Di Meola flex a lot of it. Every solo has an edge of danger here, a sense that the artist is putting himself on the line. And they communicate that danger with a reckless passion, carrying you to the edge with them.

McLaughlin centers the trio with solos that are miniature excursions into a detailed world full of sharp angles and intricate bas-reliefs. Di Meola takes his steel-strung acoustic on the heroic route, trying to find the quickest way to the top of his high E string. In concert this is an

audience-pandering technique, but in the studio, with only his two partners to impress, he plays the corners and turns instead of heading out to the flats. The flamenco-based arrangements that dominate this album are De Lucia's home turf. He milks all his notes, tweaking them with worry on *Aspan* and giving them wry slants on *Orient Blues Suite*.

There's a competitive camaraderie here that is engaging. The unison ensemble runs are like dares and each solo is backed by furious comping. But it's not the joy of competition that fuels these artists, it's the joy of traveling together in their rarefied domain of sound.

—*John Diliberto*

**BUDDY TATE  
QUARTET—Sackville 3027**

★ ★ ★ ½

**ARNETT COBB  
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ALL-STARS LIVE AT SANDY'S—  
Muse MR 5236**

★ ★ ★



Before J. R. Ewing, Astroturf, and Gilley's, Texas was known as, among other things, the home of blues-drenched, wild and wooly tenor saxophonists. Two of the best surviving members of that breed are Buddy Tate and Arnett Cobb. Here are both men captured in the summer of 1978 but, for some reason (the heat?) neither man is captured at his best.

The Buddy Tate album is a typical "visiting tenor star meets local rhythm section" album—the menu consists of standards and the playing is rather polite. Tate, although a Texas player through and through, is more subdued and elegant an instrumentalist than some of his peers—he's a smoothie. Here he strolls through familiar territory (*Bye Bye Blackbird*, *Georgia On My Mind*) and a couple of neglected tunes from yesteryear (*June Night*, *Someday Sweetheart*) with his customary taste, but minus his usual fire. Tate is tightly in control the entire way, particularly when his tone mists over as he's interpreting Tadd Dameron's *If You Could See Me Now*, and he even pulls his clarinet out for an airing, but sparks

never do fly. The Canadian rhythm section (Wray Downes, piano; Dave Young, bass; Pete Magadini, drums) is not at fault—they flow along with Buddy nicely—it's that Buddy doesn't seem to feel like digging in his heels. This is a calm, breezy album from a tenor giant with the ability to unleash squalls.

Arnett Cobb lets hurricanes loose in his sleep. The problem here with Cobb is just the opposite as the problem with the Tate LP—when Arnett isn't inspired, we get a lot of the bluster, a lot of the moans and mewls, but little else. Combining Cobb, Tate (just back from Canada), and Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson with a pedigreed rhythm section, one cannot help but get sparks. Unfortunately, there's a lot of rumbling here, but very little serious, interesting music-making. It's a shirt-sleeve jam session, with Cobb the featured player—four numbers, lots of solo space for all, plenty of honking and barking. Cleanhead, a bebopper in blues clothing, has one excellent solo early on; Alan Dawson (who is to Boston drumming what Carl Yastrzemski is to Boston baseball), and bassist George Duvivier hold things together beautifully; and

Ray Bryant, one of the very best blues pianists, outshines everybody on the date. Tate is used sporadically and never really takes hold, but it's the leader who bogs things down here. Arnett relies on his effects—growling and moaning, wailing and braying—and never pulls off a truly first-rate solo. That's not to say this LP isn't fun—it ain't haute cuisine, but good old Texas barbecue with the sauce dripping down your chin—it's just to say that it's second-rate Arnett Cobb. He never really lets it rip, even on such warhorses as *Smooth Sailin'* and *Flying Home #2*. When Cobb is inspired, he's better than most. Why, even when he's just got his engine idling, he's better than most. But knowing what he sounds like at full tilt makes this album less than compelling. —lee jeske

**DAVID EARLE JOHNSON/JAN HAMMER/JOHN ABERCROMBIE**  
THE MIDWEEK BLUES—Plug 1

★ ★ ★ ½

The pairing of electric keyboardist Hammer and guitarist Abercrombie struck me as very interesting; both players are

known for a certain brashness in their playing, not discounting that they also play very soft at times too. Why then was I a bit skeptical as I picked up *Midweek Blues*?

Hammer has been slugging away at the rock & roll world as of late, on solo albums, with guitarist Neal Schon, and yes, with guitarist Al Di Meola. For Abercrombie *Midweek Blues* is a return to an electric rock band after a duet record with guitarist Ralph Towner and some mostly acoustic recordings on ECM. David Earle Johnson has played with Hammer at least as far back as the keyboardist's *The First Seven Days* album of 1975. This is my first time hearing him play drum set as well as percussion.

Johnson creates intense grooves, bolstered by his strong conga work. His trap drumming sounds sort of like Hammer's drumming as a matter of fact—not overly technical, but energized. His conga playing gives it muscle, shape, and movement. Basically what Johnson is asked to play is the blues—slow, medium, and fast—on *Midweek Blues*.

The only cut that sounds particularly Hammer-esque is *Young Filly*, a rolling

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romp like something the keyboardist might have written for Jeff Beck. Mostly Hammer is caught off guard on this album, and that's not bad news. His second chorus soloing through *Bluer Marshall* burns, at first halting, then fiery and pointed. He cranks it up after some snappy Abercrombie picking on *We'll Be Right Back* and lays into a needle-banging, crunching wail that certainly gets one's attention. I think these guys cured their blues with this jamming.

Abercrombie and Hammer rarely tread on each other's toes. *Easy Come Music*, almost six minutes of very soft playing, is a nice time even when their noodlings overlap. Johnson heats up midway through and shifts into overdrive. Hammer and Abercrombie play off each other's flourishes throughout the record, hot-licking or comping, and Johnson occasionally joins in a rhythmic joust. Watch out!

Listen to Abercrombie close out the jam, on the blues of course, and you'll hear more than a couple of great licks poking through. The guitarist is a pleasure all the way through, crackling, bending, and shifting but poised—he knows where he is—and in a slightly fuzzy voice.

These guys could have written things out, arranged endings and such, but here they are exposed, looking for the initial inspiration—and finding some of it. In these overproduced days, this kind of record is hard to come by.

—robin tolleson

**JIMMY FORREST/MILES DAVIS**  
**LIVE AT THE BARREL—Prestige P-7858**

★★★★



To an extent, tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest's commercial success with *Night Train* overshadowed the bulk of his career. His extensive big band experience began in 1940 with Jay McShann and continued into the '70s with Count Basie. Forrest's big, earthy sound was a fine foil to such brassmen as Harry Edison and Al Grey. And, like Coleman Hawkins, Forrest could fervently swing a bebop tune, of which *Live At The Barrel* is a welcome reminder.

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# RECORD REVIEWS

amateur recordings of a St. Louis club date, or dates, from around 1952. These performances find Forrest at the helm of a local quartet (pianist Charles Fox, bassist Johnny Mixon, drummer Oscar Oldham, plus the occasional addition of a still unidentified conga drummer) capable of fine-tuning their support to both the leader's robustness and guest Miles Davis' lean, spiky lines. Except for a smoky *What's New*, the program is standard uptempo bebop, though the inclusion of *Night In Tunisia* offers a rare opportunity to hear Davis tackle a Gillespie signature piece.

While Davis strongly asserts himself in each of his solos, it is Forrest who supplies most of the surprises, especially on *Night In Tunisia*, where he compresses everything from gut-bucket bluster to riveting reed effects into a rousing solo. Forrest's allusiveness, one of his finest traits, is very much in evidence throughout the album, as hardly a chorus goes by without reference to a contemporary or another anthem. Yet, for all the carefully placed nuances, Forrest still excudes a from-the-hip looseness and carefree swing, the qualities that the late tenorist is perhaps best remembered for.

*Live At The Barrel* is a rich slice of early '50s jazz life, so much so that more extensive background information on Forrest and the St. Louis scene would have been in order. Hopefully, Prestige has additional material for future release. Maybe by then they will know the identity of the conga player!  
—bill shoemaker

recorded live in 1982, is a documentation of where the group has been. A lot of the popular favorites are here. Metheny takes a gliding solo out of the cascading chord sequence that opens *Phase Dance*. His sound seems effortless, as if each note had its preordained destiny and the guitarist was just letting them fall into place. *San Lorenzo*, with its plaintive 12-string theme, features Mays' lyrical piano work.

Like other Metheny records, *Travels* is carefully painted and lovingly framed,

but it drifts off the walls because it's never quite nailed down. There's not enough edge to this music. Only rarely does Metheny really ignite a solo, and that usually occurs when he plays his guitar synthesizer as on *Are You Going With Me?* It lopes along in a lazy, syncopated shuffle with Mays' gentle synthesizer settings providing the main interest. But as it's about to walk off in a laconic snore, Metheny leaps in with the elephant-trumpeting clarion of his guitar synthesizer, screaming electronic choirs of in-



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## PAT METHENY GROUP TRAVELS—ECM 23791-1

★ ★ ★

There's always been a soft-focus sheen to Pat Metheny's music that's immediately attractive. Keyboardist Lyle Mays' subtle pastel shadings have always seemed the perfect backdrop for the shimmering reverb/delay of Metheny's guitar. The rhythms are never obtrusive, but supple and smoothly accentuated. It all becomes a bit diffuse and slushy with extended listening.

With material dating back to the first Metheny Group album of 1978, *Travels*,



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ner tension. He heads for the stars while the band strolls in the haze of a sultry summer afternoon. These moments are too rare on *Travels*.

Introspective journeys and intricate arrangements are fine, but they must engage the listener in their contemplation and transport them to those enraptured moments. The Metheny Group rarely does either, an exception being the live *As Falls Wichita, So Falls Wichita Falls* which does both. Its triumphant theme of bell-like tones, surging bass and synthesizer swells, and ringing guitar lead us out of a compelling dreamscape in which synthesizers and Nana Vasconcelos' drifting percussion seem to merge into a collective subconsciousness.

—john diliberto

**CHUCK MANGIONE**  
**JOURNEY TO A RAINBOW—**  
Columbia FC 38686

★ ★ ★ ½

Chuck Mangione, like a poet who expresses new ideas with imagery he's already wrung dry, approaches the concept of each new album with melodic and harmonic motifs so recurrent it is virtually impossible to mistake a Mangione composition and arrangement. *Journey To A Rainbow* offers neither innovations or disappointments; it is another collection of pleasant, catchy heads—the cornerstone of Mangione's reputation.

*Journey To A Rainbow*, as with most of Mangione's recent LPs, focuses on composition and interpretation rather than improvisation. This is clearly evident on the title cut and *Please Stay The Night*, where there is no real improvisation, limiting personal statements to individual interpretation of the melody. His simple, romantic approach, uncluttered with flourishes of instrumental technique, is augmented by a fine engineering job which highlights the acoustic beauty of Mangione's full-bodied flugelhorn tone and the fat, resonant sound from Chris Vadala's reeds.

High points of this LP are *Song For A Latin Lady* and *Chai's Theme*. Both tunes are examples of Mangione writing at his best, and both feature extended solos by both Mangione and Vadala. The former opens with an introduction played by guitarist Peter Harris into the flugelhorn head with a signature soprano and horn harmony at the bridge. Mangione's solo is interesting but seems to restate the same sentiments heard in the theme. Vadala's soprano improv is most impressive and reveals the promise of the simple (in the complimentary sense) harmonic structure laid out by the composition.

*Chai's Theme* (music originally written for the *Larry King TV Show*) allows drummer Everette Silver to strut his stuff (and not bad stuff at that) on the up bossa rhythm of the cut. Once more, the flugelhorn carries the lead, joined at the "B" section by the tenor. Here Mangione gets his solo chops going (chops which are often underrated mostly due to Mangione's own limiting of them on his arrangements), finding a comfortable groove in the changes. But again, Vadala's ability shines through, exploring the full potential of his tenor.

*Journey To A Rainbow* is a good album—pleasant, worth a listen, and refreshing for its acoustic quality. Mangione isn't breaking any new ground—he's reinforcing a strong foundation.

—albert de genova

**EDDIE CONDON**  
**1944 JAM SESSIONS—Jazzology**  
J-101/102

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**WILD BILL DAVISON**  
**AND HIS JAZZ BAND, 1943—**  
Jazzology J-103

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**ART HODES**  
**APEX BLUES—Jazzology J-104**

★ ★ ★ ½

At long last, George Buck, producer of Jazzology and its sister labels, Circle and GHB, has begun issuing his exhaustive program of complete World and Langworth radio transcriptions, but not just those sides leased to radio stations during the '40s—he is also releasing all of the alternate takes, breakdowns, and false starts as well. Anyone the least bit familiar with the important jazz material recorded for these services at that time will readily recognize the significance of this project. In the albums listed above we have the entire output of the Condon-led, Davison-led, and Hodes-led sessions of 1943 and 1944, thereby constituting an area of so-called dixieland recording activity never before made generally available to public access.

The Condon double-record album consists of two complete sessions, those of Mar. 30 and Dec. 14, 1944. Although the earlier date does include an extraordinary number of incomplete takes, the almost miraculous inventiveness of Pee Wee Russell will forever contribute to its interest. His teammates here are Max Kaminsky, most likely Wilbur DeParis, Joe Bushkin, Condon, Bob Casey, and George Wettling. Red McKenzie sings

quite effectively on two of the numbers. The later date, understandably in view of its instrumentation, is a bit more mannerly in tone vis-à-vis its use of head arrangements and its emphasis on ballads. The main thrust, however, is still on the small band sound, i.e. one clarinet (Pee Wee) and one sax (Ernie Caceres on bari), but there are also three trumpets heard in both tutti and solo (Billy Butterfield, Bobby Hackett, and Maxie) and a trombonist named Jack Teagarden who also sings a bit on *The Sheik Of Araby* and *Somebody Loves Me*. The other vocalist, the one who wore high heels and picture-frame hats, is a revered lady well known to lovers of this genre of jazz—Lee Wiley. She sings *Someone To Watch Over Me* and *The Man I Love* to the immaculately phrased intros and fills of that master balladeer, Bobby Hackett.

A tad more freewheeling but no less tidy is the date under Wild Bill's name. Here, we have intact the very same personnel that first managed to make Commodore a household name among traditional jazz collectors. (Of course, some of Billie Holiday's records and Eddie Heywood's *Begin The Beguine* didn't hurt either!) But at hand, with the Wild One, Pee Wee once more, George Brunies, Gene Schroeder, Condon, Casey, and Wettling, we find that same matchless team of yore performing in surprising variety alternate versions of such warhorses as *Muskrat Ramble*, *Squeeze Me*, *Royal Garden Blues*, *That Da Da Strain*, and *That's A Plenty*; but, of course, in the '40s a repertoire like this was not considered worn by any means.

Hodes, as opposed to most of the other names mentioned above, is quite happily still within the fold. Supported in traditional Chicagoan fashion by drummer Danny Alvin, Hodes does all he can to make the infamous clarinetist Mezz Mezzrow sound at his best. And, somewhat incredibly, it works, for on these sides, at least the better takes, Mezz comes far closer to realizing his musical goals than he ever managed to do either before or since. Employing a pastiche of sometimes well-practiced arpeggios in the New Orleans manner of his idol, Jimmie Noone, and sometimes embarrassingly ill-phrased, poorly intoned sudden "inspirations," Mezz' playing was most often a blister on the face of traditional jazz. But here, perhaps because this was a regularly working trio at the old Jimmy Ryan's on the old 52nd Street in NYC, Mezz was more into playing his horn than otherwise.

Although the first two sets can be recommended unreservedly to all lovers of Pee Wee- and/or Condon-style dixie-

land in general, the Hodes/Mezz must be regarded in sum as an occasionally rewarding but essentially expendable historical footnote.  
—jack sohmer

**MICHAEL MANTLER  
SOMETHING THERE—**  
Watt/ECM 23786-1

★ ★ ★



With *Something There*, trumpeter Michael Mantler makes more of an introspective, moody statement than has been heard from the Grog Kill Studio bunch in recent times. None of the six compositions here could be called "uppers."

Michael Gibbs conducts the London Symphony strings throughout the rec-

ord, apparently having arranged and performed his parts months after the material was recorded by Mantler's quintet. The strings just don't help the project much. They sound too much like an afterthought, and the writing isn't that interesting. At times they double a trickling piano line or a searing guitar melody, and their purpose escapes me. The music would have been equally dark and more enticingly sparse without the orchestra.

Mantler wrote all of the songs here, and has placed his horn well back in the crowd. His sound is sometimes more cloudy than crisp, sounding like 10 trumpeters playing in unison, standing on the far end of a football field. The delay effect suits his slow and haunting melodic sense well. I'd like to hear him stretch out and blow a bit more. Whenever he starts an interesting musical thought, as on *Twenty One*, the lead goes back to guitar.

Pianist Carla Bley is into more of a repetitive rhythmic flow here than usual, but manages to get in some distinctive flourishes. Bassist Steve Swallow's agility and quick wit also show through the

almost mechanical nature of this music. Nick Mason, drummer with the rock group Pink Floyd, is an interesting and effective choice on drums. He is recorded in typically huge fashion and is the foundation of the rhythmic current that jumps from one time signature to the next—again, in machine-like fashion.

Much of this musical show belongs to guitarist Mike Stern. Late of the Miles Davis band, Stern plays with a great deal of passion. He grinds out Mantler's melodies with interesting and proper shadings, and sends bluesy bebop solos swirling out with a sound becoming more and more identifiable to him. As the stuttering backbeat of *Nineteen* takes a breather, Stern sinks his teeth into a crunching solo, leading the listener on but not letting the climactic cat out of the bag too soon.

Using a Samuel Beckett poem as the album's theme, it is obvious Mantler's flair here is towards the dramatic. The fusion with the orchestra proves a bit weighty and bland, however, and obscures what could have been a more direct effort.

—robin tolleson



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—Guitar Player



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# RECORD REVIEWS

## PECK KELLEY JAM

—Columbia/Commodore XF2 17017

★ ★ ★ ½

Peck Kelley was a minor figure in jazz history who played piano and led various bands on his home turf of Texas. If you've come upon his name at all, it has probably been in biographical sketches of Jack Teagarden or Pee Wee Russell, both of whom played with Kelley early in their careers and praised his skills to the world when they became famous. Such praise, however, combined with a complete absence of recordings over the

course of an already obscure career, is the stuff from which, beyond the reach of empirical evidence, myth and legend can be safely conjured. And that's what happened in a small kind of way with Kelley. Except that now, two years after his death at 82, Peck has managed to get in the last word, after all.

In 1957, after nearly a decade of retirement, Kelley recorded some tapes with clarinetist Dick Shannon and a local rhythm section in a Houston radio station. And here they are, thanks to the good offices of Milt Gabler and the Commodore series from Columbia Special Products.

## critics' choice

### Art Lange

**NEW RELEASE:** Ronald Shannon Jackson & The Decoding Society, *Street Priest* (Moers Music). Can you name another contemporary band that sounds so cathartic in its violence and so melancholic in its lyricism?

**OLD FAVORITE:** George Russell, *Ezz-thetics* (Riverside). Newly reissued in Fantasy's second wave of Original Jazz Classics, the arranger's version of 'Round Midnight may be Eric Dolphy's most arresting moment.

**RARA AVIS:** UB40, *Signing Off* (Graduate). Britain's best two-tone band brings a bit of electronic tomfoolery to some reggae rhythm, skanking guitar, lead sax, and strong songs.

**SCENE:** Chicago's blues stars shone at the 12-hour barbecue bash sponsored by the B.L.U.E.S. club and *Living Blues* magazine.

### Charles Doherty

**NEW RELEASE:** Mama Estella Yancey, *Maybe I'll Cry* (Red Beans). Though physically frail, Mama can still belt out the blues with the best, here backed by Erwin Helfer's ever-tasty ivory tickling.

**OLD FAVORITE:** John Coltrane, *Meditations* (Impulse). Trane's heaviest set, with a fiery Pharoah in tow.

**RARA AVIS:** Roman Holliday, *Roman Holiday* (Jive). These seamen are comers based on this slap-happy, jumpy five-tune EP on an aptly named label.

**SCENE:** Pharoah Sanders Quartet (John Hicks, Walter Booker, Idris Muhammad) hotter than our record summer heat wave at FEPA's UndergroundFest '83 in the Windy.

### Howard Mandel

**NEW RELEASE:** Anthony Davis, *Variations In Dream Time* (India Navigation). Perhaps not his best recorded disc, but the pianist/composer is getting somewhere with his cellular structures.

**OLD FAVORITE:** Aretha Franklin, *I Never Loved A Man The Way I Love You* (Atlantic). Aretha still gives me chills, from *R-E-S-P-E-C-T* to her promise *A Change Is Gonna Come*; classic charts serve her fabulous voice.

**RARA AVIS:** Toninho Horta, *Toninho Horta* (EMI-Odeon). Gentle melodies, persuasive rhythms, accomplished arrangements (with Pat Metheny sitting in on a couple of tracks), this Brazilian import features a young composer/guitarist/vocalist whose sophistication seems unforced, and so is truly refreshing.

**SCENE:** Sweet Basil is the place to be when Gil Evans and his orchestra rock out—soloists have included Lew Soloff, David Sanborn, George Adams, Barry Rogers, Sonny Fortune, Jon Faddis; with key guitar/bass teams of Ryo Kawasaki/Mark Egan, Mike Stern/Jaco, Hiram Bullock/Alex Blake; plus Adam Nussbaum drumming, Pete Levin at the synth.

### Sam Freedman

**NEW RELEASE:** Talking Heads, *Speaking In Tongues* (Sire). Funky esoterica; not for artists only.

**OLD FAVORITE:** Kenny Burrell, *Stormy Monday* (Galaxy). A sumptuous selection of ballads—*I Got It Bad* slays me everytime—by the most lyrical of guitarists.

**RARA AVIS:** Rory Block, *High Heeled Blues* (Rounder). A white female folkie renders Robert Johnson, Skip James, and her own derivations with integrity and invention, never mere mimicry.

**SCENE:** Sundays in New York's Central Park find the usual street music scene enlivened by dozens of Cuban drummers—further proof of how the *Marielistas* have infused jazz here.

One might expect to find here something of a throwback at the keyboard, a style harking to, say, the stride school of the '20s. But not at all—at least not entirely. Kelley fills his solos with bright contrasts in which the past is set alongside the present. A stride passage will yield to a chorus of sharply linear playing. His left hand seems able to work almost as expressively as his right as contrapuntal lines bite into each other like the teeth on a couple of merging gears. There's even a crisp boogie woogie chorus on *Stompin' At The Savoy*. His ballads sometimes lean toward rhapsodic banalities too much, but most of the tempos are middle to brisk. Rhythmically Kelley's stepping stones are almost entirely eighth notes, which he attacks and releases with a smooth, even flow. Although his ear is alert and harmonically knowing, his sense of rhythmic form makes no accommodation for the fractured phraseology of bop. Yet Kelley still emerges on his own terms as a remarkably contemporary player in the classic (as opposed to the trendy) sense of the word. Perhaps this was because, unlike the other masters of his genera-

tion such as Joe Sullivan, Waller, Hines, or Stacy, Peck was not prisoner to a past recorded legacy to which audiences expected him to conform. Such things can trap an artist in odd ways, it seems.

Kelley's rhythm section is properly unobtrusive and supportive. It would have been nice to hear more of Felix Stagno's electric guitar and less of Shannon's middle-of-the-road clarinetting. The repertoire runs mostly to sophisticated popular standards—*Lover, Memories Of You, Body And Soul, Limehouse Blues, Moonlight On The Ganges*, et al.

Having said all this, however, the question remains, is Kelley worthy of his myth or have these 1957 tapes blown his cover posthumously? I suppose one could argue that one session, however generous it may be, constitutes insufficient evidence. Perhaps that's true. But for all the fine qualities Kelley exhibits on these two LPs, what is lacking is the distinctive mark of a unique style. In a musical form where enduring legends are founded on the boldness of a personal signature, Peck Kelley, it seems, wrote with nearly invisible ink.

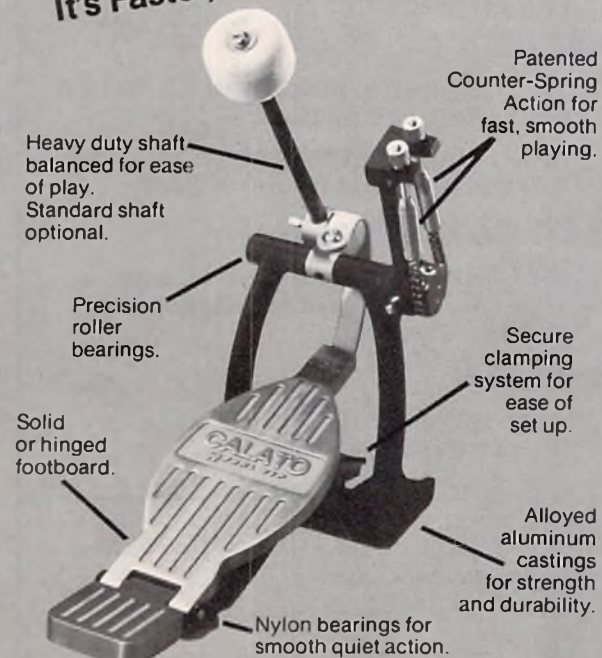
—john mcdonough

## old wine, new bottles

Country & western music remains anathema to many "serious" jazz listeners; as recently as 1980, a *db* feature on self-styled "country-jazz" performer Merle Haggard evoked howls of protest. Yet jazz and blues have been integral components of what was once termed "hillbilly music" at least since the days of Jimmie Rodgers, the father of the modern country sound, whose material and recorded instrumentation owed much to the jazz-accompanied "classic" blues singers of the 1920s.

Rodgers, a native of Mississippi, sought relief from tuberculosis in the drier climes of Texas, where he enjoyed immense popularity during his last few years. By the mid-'30s a number of jazz-oriented bandleaders had emerged from the Dallas-Fort Worth area, among them Bob Wills, Milton Brown, and Roy Newman, who were to spread the sound of "western swing," as their music was later

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# RECORD REVIEWS

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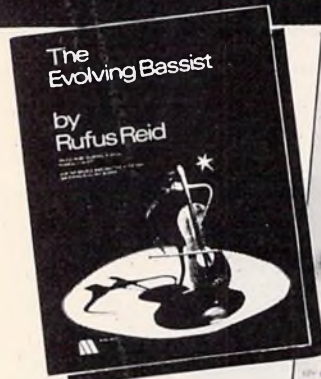
The heyday of western swing extended through the war years. Then, like their Northern counterparts, the country big bands were supplanted by smaller ensembles as vocalists like Hank Williams came to the fore. During the postwar "honky-tonk" period, boogie woogies and the jump blues of Louis Jordan, Lionel Hampton, and others were highly influential (as Cab Calloway's jive songs had been to the preceding generation), paving the way for '50s rockabilly and early rock & roll at a time when the more sentimental country ballads were already achieving national acceptance through cover versions by pop singers like Patti Page and Frankie Laine.

Seen in proper context, the crossover successes of Bill Haley and Elvis Presley were not isolated flukes, but rather the logical fruits of a process of musical cross-pollination that had been going on for decades. Carl Perkins' hits *Honey Don't* and *Everybody's Trying To Be My Baby*, later covered by the Beatles, were both recorded by Roy Newman and his Boys in the '30s. Kokomo Arnold's 1934 Delta classic, *Milk Cow Blues*, with its distinctive falsetto wails, had been covered by Cliff Bruner's Texas Wanderers by the time Robert Johnson recorded it as *Milkcow's Calf Blues*; the tune was waxed again, in a humorous vein, by the Maddox Brothers and Rose in the late '40s before Elvis Presley finally churned it into *Milkcow Blues Boogie* for Sam Phillips' Sun label.

Chris Strachwitz' Old Timey label issued its first LP compilation of original western swing recordings in 1966 (*Western Swing*, Old Timey LP 105), at a time when even Bob Wills' best-selling titles were scarcely obtainable; the second album in the eight-volume series was not released until nearly 10 years later. In the meantime a new band called Asleep At the Wheel had introduced western swing to the rock generation, while Merle Haggard revived Bob Wills' music among country fans. Bluegrass musicians like Vassar Clements and Jethro Burns began to flaunt their long-suppressed jazz chops, in company with ex-folkies like David Grisman.

Over the past decade the renewed interest in western swing has prompted

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the reissue of many rare sides, in both anthology and single-artist formats, on such independent labels as Rounder, Rambler, Delta, Longhorn, and Texas Rose, as well as Old Timey. British labels like String and Charly have jumped on the bandwagon, and at last the major companies have begun to disgorge their half-forgotten treasures.

Although Old Timey can boast of the most comprehensive collection, Columbia/Epic's recent *Okeh Western Swing* twofer (Epic EG 37324) is, in scope and depth, the best single-package introduction to the idiom. From the vaults of the old Okeh and Vocalion labels, John Morthland and Michael Brooks have culled a superb assortment of vintage material, taking western swing from its roots in minstrelsy and vaudeville through the definitive stylings of Bob Wills to the more formulaic sounds of the later West Coast bands.

Al Bernard, a former minstrel trouper who worked out of New York as "The Boy From Dixie," opens the Okeh sampler with his 1927 rendition of *Hesitation Blues*, a tune later recorded for Decca by Milton Brown (*Milton Brown And His Brownies*, MCA-1509) and also as a "folk song" by Leadbelly. Bernard's accompanying band, the Goofus Five, plays in a relatively pure dixieland style without noticeable hillbilly colorations.

From the following year, Emmet Miller, a Southern-born vaudevillian whom Bob Wills cited as his chief inspiration, is featured in his second recording of *Lovesick Blues*, which was to become Hank Williams' first million-selling single some 20 years later. Miller introduces the song with some dialog out of a blackface routine, but the tune itself, by Tin Pan Alley stalwart Irving Mills, is sung almost exactly as in Williams' hit (although Williams evidently learned it from an intermediate version). Miller's "Georgia Crackers" included such notable Yankees as the Dorsey Brothers and Eddie Lang.

Besides such East Coast progenitors, there were a couple of Southwestern outfits, Albert Hunt's Texas Ramblers and the East Texas Serenaders, who were combining jazz and pop flavors with traditional country fare in the late '20s. Bill and Jim Boyd had formed their Cowboy Ramblers in 1928; a few of Bill Boyd's mid-'30s sides appear on the first Old Timey album and reveal his predilection for older material, like *Spanish Fandango* and *Under The Double Eagle* (the familiar J. W. Wagner march), which he updated with sprightly swing rhythms.

Northeast Texas in the late '20s was a musically rich and cosmopolitan region.

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Not only was the Southeastern string band heritage deeply ingrained—the earliest old-time country fiddle recordings are of Texas players—but the boogie woogie piano genre and even the blues form itself quite possibly originated in the area. In addition there were cowboy ballads from West Texas, Mexican music from South Texas, Cajun music—along with the latest jazz records—from Louisiana, and the polka and waltz music of German and Bohemian immigrants. A more exogenous element was Hawaiian music, then at the height of its stateside popularity, which furnished western swing with its most characteristic voice, the steel guitar.

Bob Wills was fiddling at house parties and barn dances in the Fort Worth area when he was joined by vocalist Milton Brown in 1930. They first called their band the Aladdin Laddies, then the Fort Worth Doughboys, and finally the Light Crust Doughboys, after the flour company that sponsored their radio broadcasts. Soon Brown and then Wills left the group, but the Doughboys continued to record with various personnel (including jazz and ragtime pianist Knocky Parker) for the rest of the decade.

Wills and his Texas Playboys began broadcasting from Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1934 and were quickly signed by Arthur Satherly of Okeh Records. Wills achieved tremendous fame around the Southwest; his heavily bowed fiddle solos were widely imitated, and his spoken interjections ("Ah-ha! Take it away, Leon.") became a nearly ubiquitous western swing shibboleth. Playboys vocalist Tommy Duncan and steel guitarist Leon McAuliffe acquired followings of their own, and the Western sound, along with the cowboy look, spread throughout the South. Wills, who won national attention after Bing Crosby covered *New San Antonio Rose* in 1941, had his biggest success in the '40s, but the adventurous eclecticism of his early years gradually gave way to commercialized routine, and he was unable to withstand the onslaught of rock & roll.

A great many of Wills' recordings are currently available, including a number of radio transcriptions (most recently *Tiffany Transcriptions Vol. 1*, Kaleidoscope F-16), but many albums are of the later pop-oriented hits. Each of the first five Old Timey *Western Swing* volumes contains prewar Wills tracks, with emphasis on his adaptations of traditional country material. *Okeh Western Swing*, by contrast, displays Wills' jazzier side with seven aptly chosen selections. The dixielandish *Get With It* is built on the chords of *Has Anybody Seen My Gal* and forms the basis

for Johnny Cash's rockabilly classic, *Get Rhythm*, with much the same lyrical message. Two hot-jazz instrumentals, *Too Busy* and *Playboy Stomp*, are followed by *Oozlin' Daddy Blues*, a rollicking bit of hokum that provided the melody for Woody Guthrie's *Jack Hammer Blues*. By the early '40s Wills had assimilated the Basie sound; on *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, tenor man Robert "Zeb" McNally and clarinetist Don Harlan solo with a funky authority that many of their Northern cousins lacked.

Milton Brown and His Brownies might ultimately have had greater influence than Wills' Playboys had Brown not perished in an auto accident in 1936, after which his outstanding sidemen joined other ensembles or, like banjoist Ocie Stockard, founded their own. Unlike Wills, Brown never employed horn players, but his band was among the most jazz-oriented of the genre. He favored pop, ragtime, jazz, and blues compositions, especially the ribald, minstrel-like "hokum blues" (Brown's hilariously off-key *Garbage Man Blues* on Old Timey's *Western Swing, Vol. 2*, is an excellent example) that proliferated after the 1928 success of *Tight Like That*, by Tampa Red and Georgia Tom.

In late 1934 Hawaiian-style guitarist Bob Dunn joined the Brownies, and soon made history when he wired his round-hole Martin guitar to an amplifier. Dunn was determined to make his electric "steel guitar" into a legitimate jazz instrument, and his horn-like solos probably influenced Charlie Christian. Other outstanding soloists in the band were fiddlers Cliff Bruner and Cecil Brower (both of whom later became bandleaders), pianist Fred Calhoun, and guitarist Durwood Brown, Milton's brother. The Brownies also backed country singer (and later Louisiana governor) Jimmie Davis; Davis' *Honky Tonk Blues* (Old Timey vol.5, LP 120), based on the well-known *Deep Elm Blues*, is the apparent ancestor of the Rolling Stones' *Honky Tonk Women*.

After Milton Brown's death, Bob Dunn and Cecil Brower joined Roy Newman and his Boys. It was a logical move: Newman's repertoire was much like Brown's (he was quick to cover Brown's *Garbage Man Blues*), and his arrangements were even jazzier, with ragtime clarinet veteran Holly Horton supplying a grainy-toned, slap-tongued taste of New Orleans burlesquery. Newman had been a Dallas radio performer since the mid-'20s, and organized his Boys around members of Jim Boyd's disbanded Rhythm Aces. Boyd, the brother of Cowboy Rambler Bill Boyd, was one of the



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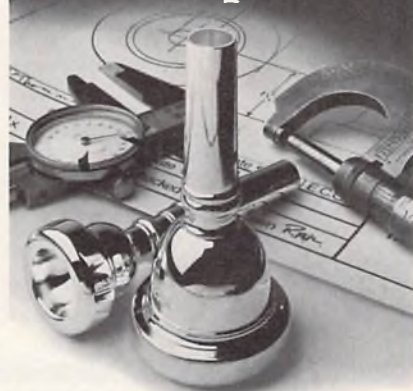
pioneers of the standard electric guitar, and remained with Newman until 1938, when he was replaced by the bluesy Julian Akins. Newman's Boys, featuring the sepia-styled vocals of Earl Brown, are heard on single tracks of the Okeh two-fer and Rambler's Texas Sand anthology (Rambler 101), and at length on Origin Jazz Library's *Roy Newman And His Boys* (OJL-8102).

An interesting sidelight on the period is provided by Harrison Records' *Masters Of Regional Jazz, Vol. 2* (HR-J), which presents sessions by two Houston-based combos, the KXYZ Novelty Band and Joe Kennedy and his Rhythm Orchestra. These groups used standard jazz instrumentation and consequently fall outside the ambit of western swing proper, but their material and stylistic approach are strikingly similar to those of Brown and Newman, especially on Kennedy's vocal sides.

Among the more typical western swing bands were the Tune Wranglers, Jimmie Revard and his Oklahoma Playboys, the Swift Jewel Cowboys, and Ted Daffan's Texans, variously represented on the Okeh and Old Timey collections, among others, along with such Southeastern swing converts as Hank Penny and his Radio Cowboys and the Prairie Ramblers. Later West Coast outfits like "T" Texas Tyler and his Oklahoma Melody Boys and Spade Cooley's Orchestra are also featured, as are harmony groups like the Sons of the Pioneers, with vocalist Leonard Slye (a.k.a. Roy Rogers) and the brilliant Farr brothers, western swing's answer to Joe Venuti and Eddie Lang.

The final three volumes of the Old Timey series (*Western Swing, Blues, Boogie And Honky Tonk*—(Old Timey 121, 122, 123) document the transitional postwar years. Many of the featured artists have been virtually forgotten, although some, like Webb Pierce, went on to lasting stardom. Bob Wills' style was still predominant, and Playboys disciples like Ole Rasmussen and his Nebraska Cornhuskers favored jazz standards like Ellington's *C-Jam Blues* (which Wills had also recorded), but the more modern bar room ballads and boogie woogies began to displace the big band school. Among the more forward-looking tracks are Arkie Shibley's 1950 *Hot Rod Race* (to which Charlie Ryan's *Hot Rod Lincoln* was the "answer song"), the forerunner of the car-song craze of the '60s, and Tommy Mooney's rocking *Bingo Boogie*. Charly Records' *Boogie Woogie Fever* (CR 30215) covers the same period, including hits by Tennessee Ernie Ford and others from the Capitol catalog.

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Arhoolie has also issued two albums of late '40s material by the Maddox Brothers and Sister Rose (Arhoolie 5016, 5017), a California-based family unit that was known for its colorful costumes and exuberant stage antics. Rose Maddox was a superior vocalist (compare her rendition of *Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain* to Willie Nelson's), and her brothers, for all their self-mocking humor, brought excellent musicianship to bear on a repertoire that subsumed nearly every previous country trend and foreshadowed the rockabilly movement yet to come.

—Larry birnbaum

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Saturday began on the Staten Island Ferry with some dixieland (and Maxine Sullivan tossed in for a couple of light swingers) leavened with cold beer and sultry humidity. A pleasant two hours, as always. The Carnegie Hall show that night featured Dameron and Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra. The former band laid out the gorgeous writing of Tadd Dameron with typical taste and class (Philly Joe Jones the molten lava in this nine-piece volcano), while the latter provided such soloists as George Adams, Craig Harris, Stanley Cowell, and others the chance to shine on some latin revolutionary music. This band was tight and playing much better

than they were earlier in the year at the Public Theatre, and I think some personnel changes are responsible. A spirited set.

Then it was on to Avery Fisher Hall for two of the doyens of the blues—B. B. King and Ray Charles. B. B. played some crackling guitar, sang in his smooth, yet gritty, voice, and never really got cooking. Ray reprised a number of his hits with his big band and, similarly, never took off the way he is capable of. A duet would have probably raised hairs on the back of my neck, but it never came to be. A rather perfunctory evening with the blues.

The entire festival ended Sunday night at Avery Fisher Hall with an important salute to Gil Evans. What made the evening important was that, for one, Gil is still alive and still a force to be reckoned with, so this wasn't a self-serious memorial concert; and, for two, Gil's arrangements for Claude Thornhill, Miles Davis, and others *never* get aired live anymore—Evans being too much a man of today to rehash those old charts. So we had a first half which featured an excellent all-star big band playing such Evans masterpieces as the Thornhill *Yardbird Suite*, the Miles nonet *Boplicity*, and *La Nevada* from *Out Of The Cool*, with such soloists as Budd Johnson, Gerry Mulligan, Lee Konitz, and Jon Faddis (doing an excellent job in the Miles Davis

chair) pouring out their hearts. This was followed by a film clip of Evans and Davis with a big band in the late '50s before Gil took the stage with his current ensemble for a typical set—lots of rock guitar from Hiram Bullock, lots of loose ensembles, lots of out-and-out blowing by the likes of David Sanborn and Lew Soloff, and lots of oddball electric piano chords from the leader. Evans is an arranger who has truly evolved, and this evening, produced by Gary Giddins, put a lot of things into perspective.

So, on its own conservative terms, this was a successful Kool/NY Jazz Festival. There were no surprises, however, and few concerts, at the main halls anyway, had much of a cutting edge to them. The performers, for the most part, delivered professional, polished presentations; the audiences were warm and enthusiastic; and all was well. George Wein has streamlined the event, knows what shows are going to sell (and one *must* sell tickets to justify the expenses of Carnegie and Avery Fisher Halls), and if things seem a little too pat, a little too unadventurous, that is, for better or worse, the nature of the beast. Perhaps Wein should start looking towards less expensive venues to present some shows with a twist, some shows with a bite, but from a listener's standpoint, few people were disappointed with the 1983 event. And that, after all, is what's important. db



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# BLINDFOLD TEST

**1 VAUGHN NARK.** *CUTTING THROUGH* (from *CUTTING THROUGH*, Lavenham). Nark, trumpet.

I don't know; that sounds like it could be somebody like Doc Severinsen, though I know that it wasn't Doc. That was a very technical trumpet player, and I think the concentration was more on technique than on music. I heard a lot of scale passages, but not too many creative things. So on that basis, three stars.

**2 DOC CHEATHAM/SAMMY PRICE.** *SOMEDAY* (from *BLACK BEAUTY*, Sackville). Cheatham, trumpet; Price, piano.

I enjoyed that one—it reminded me of the old thing that Louis Armstrong did with Earl Hines, but I know it wasn't Louis Armstrong and Earl Hines. I think that might have been Doc Cheatham. I know it's somebody who has a lot of experience, who knew what they were doing—they weren't changing their mind in the middle of phrases and stuff, which a lot of younger players do, myself included. So I enjoyed that a lot. I thought that had a lot of *feeling* in it. I don't know who the pianist is. Four stars.

**3 HOWARD MCGHEE/BENNY BAILEY.** *GET IT ON* (from *HOME RUN*, Jazzcraft). McGhee, Bailey, trumpets.

I didn't care too much for the recorded *sound* of the album, and I think a lot of times that can take away from the music. I know I recognized one trumpet player—Benny Bailey. Who else was on that, I have no idea. I think Benny sounded great, and I really enjoyed it when he played on the plunger, but other than Benny, there wasn't too much happening. The other trumpet player was, to me, not as steady, not as sure of himself. About three stars for that.

**4 THE DUKE ELLINGTON ORCHESTRA UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MERCER ELLINGTON.** *JEEP'S BLUES* (from *CONTINUUM*, Fantasy). Cootie Williams, trumpet.

That's a rough one. Again, I would say it's an older trumpet player, 'cause of the way the phrases trailed off—there ain't no younger cats ending phrases like that. Also the plunger. This is something I've been talking with a lot of people about—the art of playing with the plunger is kind of dying out, because there are not too many younger trumpet players around that are even interested in trying to do that type of playing.

That kind of threw me, because I heard all the saxophones and I was expecting Johnny Hodges to come in. I never heard that version before, but it was nice. Four stars.

## Jon Faddis

By LEE JESKE

Trumpeter Jon Faddis burst upon the music scene as Dizzy Gillespie's protege in the early '70s, while still a teenager. He has often played in groups led by his mentor, as well as with Lionel Hampton, Thad Jones/Mel Lewis, Gil Evans, and others. Recently, after several years in the New York studios, Faddis has returned to jazz playing, spending the summer of '83 (and his 30th birthday) touring Europe with Gillespie.

His initial recording as a leader, *Youngblood* (Pablo 2310-765), received four stars in these pages in 1976; he has subsequently waxed a fusion effort, *Good & (Buddha 5727)*, and duets with Oscar Peter-



son (Pablo 2310-743), among other sideman dates. He was given no information about the records played.

**5 WOODY SHAW.** *DIVERSION TWO* (from *THE IRON MEN*, Muse). Shaw, trumpet; Cecil McBee, bass.

When I heard that I thought it sounded like Woody Shaw at first, but then I didn't think it was him because of some of the things in the lower register which didn't sound so much like Woody, but some of the faster things reminded me a lot of Woody. Even the tones reminded me of Woody. But it wasn't Woody. Was it? There were some pedal things on the trumpet I've never heard him do. I thought that the trumpet player had good, basic, fundamental technique—he wasn't just playing out just to play out. But the bow on the bass, that scratchy thing, kind of got to me a little bit. Four stars for the trumpet, three-and-a-half overall—I'll take a half-star away 'cause of the scratchy bass.

**6 IRA SULLIVAN.** *OUR DELIGHT* (from *THE INCREDIBLE . . .*, Stash). Sullivan, trumpet, alto saxophone.

The trumpet player sounded more Fats Navarro-influenced than Dizzy-influenced. I think he might even come from that time. When you hear a vibrato like that, it gives the era away, because not many young players play with that wide Charlie Shavers-like vibrato. Then, for a minute, I thought maybe it was Red Rodney and Ira Sullivan. There was the sound of one little turn or phrase that reminded me of Red and Ira. The trumpeter's technique wasn't overshadowing the creative concept, and I was surprised when I heard the saxophone towards the end. That's when I thought it might be Red Rodney and Ira Sullivan. Almost four stars. Three-and-a-half.

**7 CHICO FREEMAN.** *JACKIE-ING* (from *TRADITION IN TRANSITION*, Elektra Musician). Wallace Roney, trumpet; Jack DeJohnette, piano; Thelonious Monk, composer.

Okay, all I can say is it reminded me a lot of Monk. I don't know if it's Monk or not. As far as the trumpet player goes, I don't know who it is, but he sounded like a younger trumpet player, and some of the things reminded me of some of the things I might hear Wynton do, but I know it's not Wynton. They drew from the same source somewhere, and I like it—he was creative. Not that the trumpet player is the greatest trumpet player, but the concept and the creativity were there. I would say four-and-a-half stars.

**8 LESTER BOWIE.** *CHARLIE M (PART II)* (from *ALL THE MAGIC!*, ECM). Bowie, trumpets.

Of all the things you played today, I think that's my favorite one. That had a little bit of everything in it. I would say this trumpet player is not somebody who is a traditional trumpet player, because of the concept of the piece. Some of the attacks were sloppy, some of the notes were out of tune, but in the overall concept of the piece, it doesn't matter. The music is there. There was humor; there was sadness; there was a lot of different emotional messages in that piece. I don't know who it was, but I liked it a lot, and I would give that one five stars.

One thing I found in doing studio work is that most times people get hung up on everything having to be perfect and, you know, humans aren't perfect. We're not perfect people. And there's a lot of humanness in that piece. db

## Malachi Thompson

Lester Bowie's cohort in the Hot Trumpet Repertory Company has roots that range from r&b to freedom.

BY TOM NUCCIO

It's not easy for a jazz trumpet player to attract much attention these days, when most eyes are glued on the doings of the instrument's glamorous practitioners like Miles Davis and Wynton Marsalis. However, beneath this crux of media attention, Malachi Thompson has been quietly honing his craft and running his valves through a gamut of musical territories.

Though born in Princeton, Kentucky in 1949, the highly accomplished Thompson chalked up his first accomplishments during his formative years in Chicago. As a teenager he entered the r&b circuit, and then joined the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians in 1969 where his trumpeting negotiated some freer terrain. The varied training he received through the AACM fostered his all-around musical



NOEL NEUBURGER

growth. "It prepared me to be a leader because of the AACM policy that required every member to write his own compositions and put on concerts with a small group." In addition, he was an active member of the AACM Big Band which provided his first soloing opportunities at a time when he considered himself to be "mainly a good reader."

While with the AACM, the trumpeter also became active in the Southern Christian Leadership Council's Operation Breadbasket Big Band. With this group

he went on his first tours—performing a gospel-oriented repertoire at political rallies and protest marches. Eventually, SCLC's extra-musical crusade became a constant commitment which took him away from the AACM altogether.

While on the SCLC's weekly tour circuit, Thompson found time to study at Malcom X College in Chicago where he organized a small group with classmates Ari Brown, Kirk Brown, and the late Milton Suggs. The group won Best Combo honors at the Amherst Jazz Festival with Thompson copping the Best Soloist award and a subsequent full scholarship offer from Governor's State University (IL) where he went on to pick up a B.A. in composition in 1974.

From there it was off to New York and a potpourri of gigs and musical formats. At various junctures he worked with the big bands of Sam Rivers and Sam Wooding, the small groups of Joe Henderson, Jackie McLean, Kalaparusha, and Roland Alexander, and the city-wide Jazzmobile tour. This diverse environment spawned versatility and an interesting outlook to his own playing. "Even though I wasn't the most stylistically individual trumpeter, I did learn the importance of playing in context. I even played with a calypso band during that time. I developed various techniques to fit the many styles in which I was playing. In freer settings I was able to experiment with and extend many of my techniques such as shakes, half-valves, and growls."

Thompson categorizes his emphasis on versatility and adapting to style with a single, hyphenated word: free-bop. It's a word that pops up frequently in his conversation and one which he religiously abides by. "I'm a free-bopper, which means free to go in whatever direction you want to go inside the black musical idiom. I don't want to say one style is better than another style so I incorporate all of it. I guess Lester Bowie would be the prototype for this multi-directional style. You can't pigeonhole him as a free-form player because he'll turn around and play some bebop on you, or play around with some r&b, or gospel, or *Howdy Doody!* In my humble opinion Lester Bowie is the Miles Davis of the '80s in terms of style."

In 1975 Thompson and trumpeter Norman Spiller formed a unique unit called Brass Proud which assembled seven or eight trumpeters plus a rhythm section. Lester Bowie and Olu Dara were frequently seated in the section, which at times also included Tommy Turrentine, Ahmed Abdullah, and Frank Gordon. Though quite active as a performing



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group for about five years, Brass Proud has no albums to its credit—just some studio tapes which Thompson might issue one day.

Brass Proud might very well be the forerunner of Bowie's current Hot Trumpet Repertory Company, of which Thompson is a charter member. He speaks fondly of the group. "We are historically preserving the trumpet's idioms from the beginning and taking it one step further. We're using all the techniques that came before us, and we're extending them to the next logical step. Our repertoire runs the whole gamut. We might start out with something totally spontaneous and then go into Ellington's *Black & Tan Fantasy*. From there we might play *Twilight Zone*, then go into some gospel or bebop tune. We refuse to focus on any particular style. We've got everything covered from mutes and growls to shakes. We can sound like the Duke Ellington trumpet section and then like a bunch of elephants in the jungle. I thank God for this group because it inspires me to play ideas I would never otherwise create."

Unlike Brass Proud, the Hot Trumpets are a trumpet choir *without* rhythm section accompaniment. As a result each of the five trumpeters at times is required to assume the role of either piano, bass, or drums. In addition to Bowie and Thompson, the group's flexible personnel most notably includes Olu Dara and Stanton Davis, and at one time Ray Copeland. Though together for about a year-and-a-half, the group has already established a reputation for its freewheeling antics and has elicited the interest of Woody Shaw and Don Cherry.

While not with Hot Trumpets, Thompson keeps busy leading his own groups in three cities. Since 1982 he's been splitting his residence between Chicago and Washington, DC, while also traveling to New York for various jobs. To date, he has one album under his own name, *The Seventh Son* (Ra 102), which consists of 1972 and '74 material with his Chicago group of the time. A second LP has already been completed for Ra Records and is set for release with the title *Heroes And Legends*. According to Thompson, this forthcoming album is

very representative of his current musical status and features some strangely titled, tributary originals. "I wrote a tune for Thelonious Monk called *Free-boppin' For Monk* which is more or less the [*I've Got*] *Rhythm* changes in a free format. To me, Monk was the original free-bopper and a big influence. On another tune called *The Ali Shuffle*, I've combined an old time New Orleans shuffle with an African 12-beat feel happening inside of it. On that tune I'm playing bluesy, r&b licks along with some freer stuff, tying it all together. That's the way I hear my style. I also do a ballad version of *Yesterdays* and concentrate on my tone and playing in a more conventional bop-oriented fashion."

Equipment-wise, Thompson plays a hand-made Colicio trumpet with a Schilke 15B mouthpiece, and a Conn cornet coupled with a Schilke 19B.

All in all, Malachi Thompson has played honest to his musical values and standards. And whether wailing with the Hot Trumpets or free-boppin' on his own, he certainly proves that one trumpet can fit all. db

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