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Solo Transcription

down beat

For Contemporary Musicians

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Seduced By Synths

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Altoist On The Attack

Ganelin Trio
Jazz Detente

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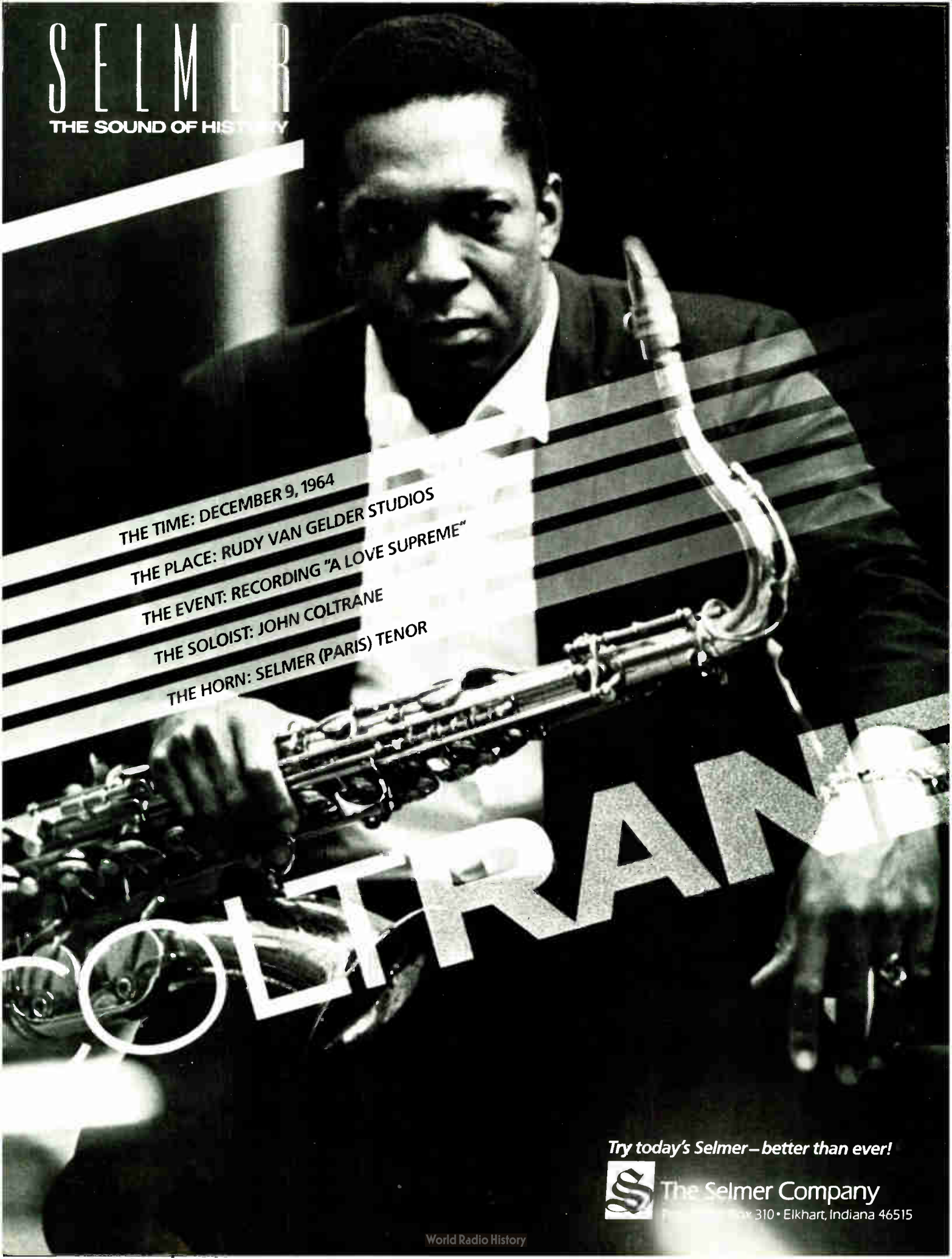
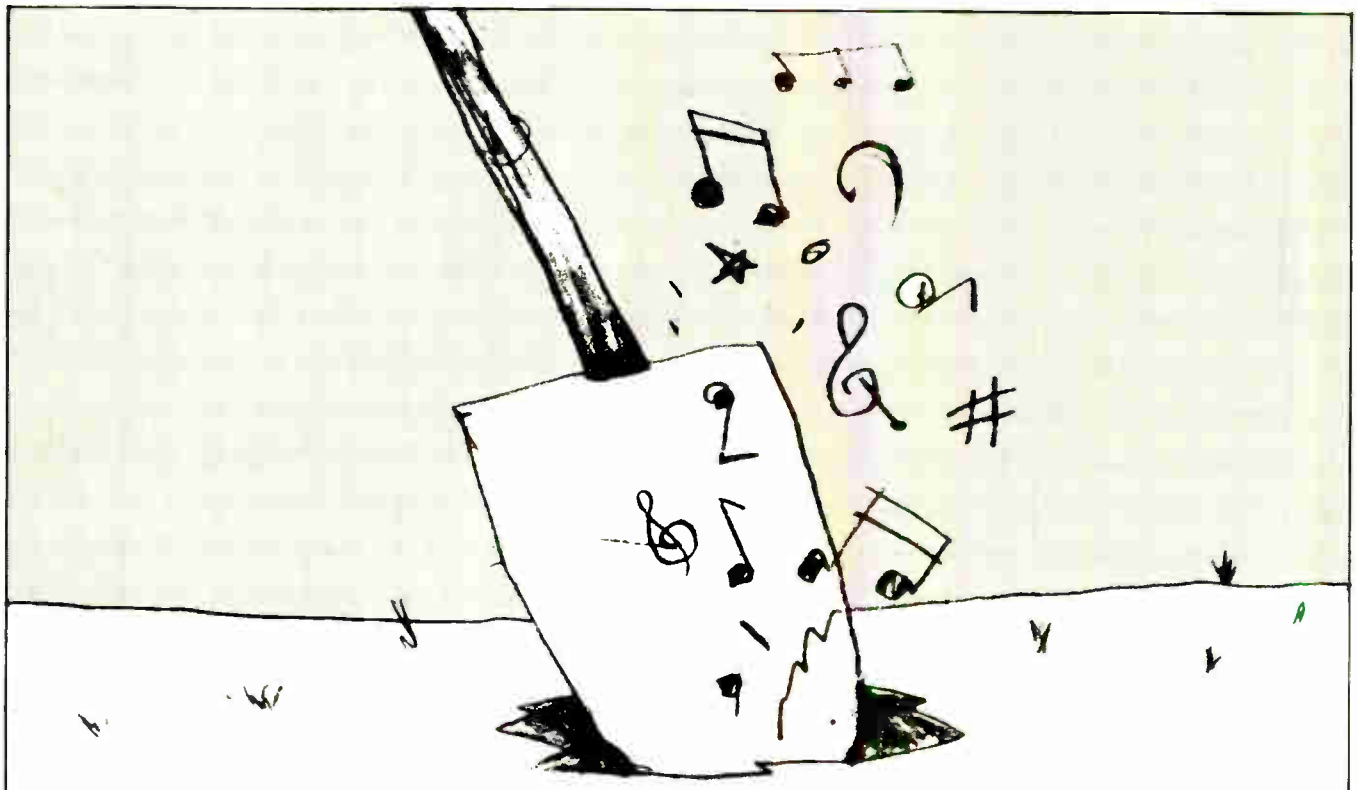
High-Energy Lyricism





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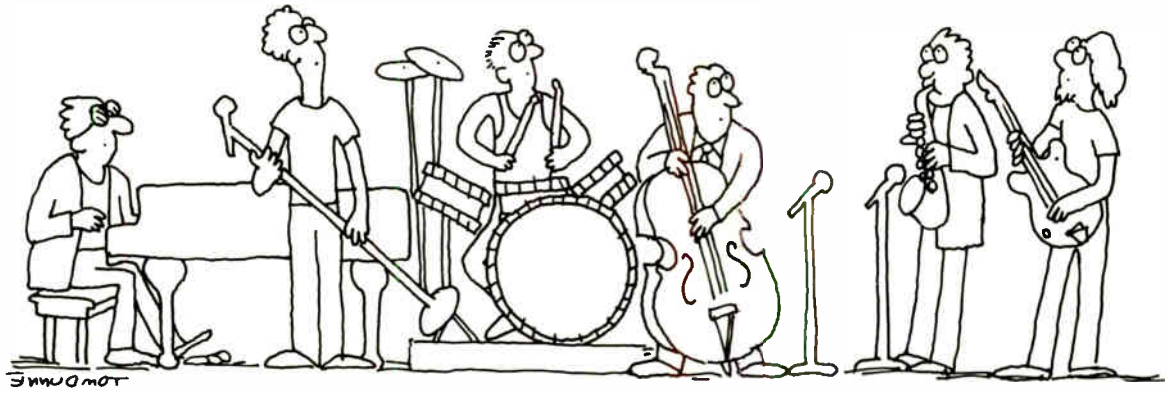

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ON THE BEAT

By ART LANGE

When you think of jazz, it's natural to think first of its most legendary figures, the icons of its history. Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Benny Goodman, Thelonious Monk, Jelly Roll Morton, all appear larger than life, and have served as beacons lighting the music's forward path for as long as most of us can remember. Though many doubted it was possible, jazz survived their passing—fortunately their music will remain with us to entertain, instruct, and mystify on disc—and the music has progressed into even newer areas inspired by younger artists. People haven't always agreed with these new directions, but such vocal opposition to the "New Thing" has been a part of jazz's heritage almost from its birth.

For example, when bandleader/arrangers like Fletcher Henderson streamlined the New Orleans two-beat rhythm into a smooth four-beat glide, many felt it meant the end of jazz. Then, who could forget Louis Armstrong's chastising bebop as "Chinese music"? Critics and audiences alike initially labeled Ornette Coleman's '59 quartet as "anti-jazz," and were perplexed and often vehement against the '60s' subsequent Free Jazz movement. Or consider the response to electric Fusion, which sizzled controversy in the '70s.

The fear that jazz today has spread itself too thin, been aligned with too many alternative styles, and that, with its Old Masters disappearing, the music has lost its ties to its originators, has caused the recent spate of "Jazz Is Dead" articles. Actually, doomsayers have prophesized the music's demise for almost 60 years now.

The future of jazz, as it always has, lies in its youthful practitioners. It's important to remember that, with the possible exception of Ellington, all of jazz's innovators did their pathbreaking work at an early age, and spent the rest of their lives refining, consolidating, and in some cases, repeating, their musical advances. They were able to create their innovations because their revolutionary vision was nurtured through a self-sustaining educational system which allowed the musician to serve an apprenticeship at the side of an elder master. This is a noble and honorable tradition; in fact, jazz history is full of such opportunities: Armstrong at King Oliver's ear, watching him and imitating his valve work; Miles Davis ditching classes at Juilliard in favor of on-the-job training with Charlie Parker; the big bands serving as traveling universities without walls. Today, given the country's cultural climate and economic reservations, such opportunities have been for the most part lost. (One exception is the ongoing University of Art Blakey, which has a longer roster of working alumni than some accredited schools.)

The lack of practical training—through which a young player could learn the basics, hone his craft, and build a solid foundation for his/her own personal variations—has forced today's players to follow one of two courses: either a formalized music program at a school like Berklee, North Texas State, or another which offers jazz instructors in-residence, or to study the tradition on their own, often in public, *before* they forge their own voice.

This is why some writers have bemoaned the seeming lack of originality in much of today's music, and why it seems like jazz is undergoing a period of "neo-classical" conservatism. Actually, it's merely a younger generation who, unable to come into contact with old masters directly, have set about exploring elements of traditional music in a new light. And it is to the credit of these younger artists that they are using the traditional vocabularies in their own—admittedly second-nature—voices. From Wynton Marsalis to John Zorn, this generation is incubating the music of our future.

Jazz has the potential today to reach a larger audience than it has enjoyed over the past two decades (despite its almost total neglect by the mass media, radio, and television—which would be the topic for another article completely), a younger audience which grew up with rock & roll but has outgrown the rock lifestyle and is looking for a music which is more sophisticated while still stimulating. These younger listeners are not into nostalgia; when they hear Billie Holiday, they enjoy her for her great artistry, not because she triggers some fond memory in their past. Given the opportunity to link these listeners to this powerful generation of younger musicians, audience and artist would grow together in a mutually beneficial collaboration. It would prevent jazz from becoming a museum piece, and would insure the future of America's greatest native art form. **db**

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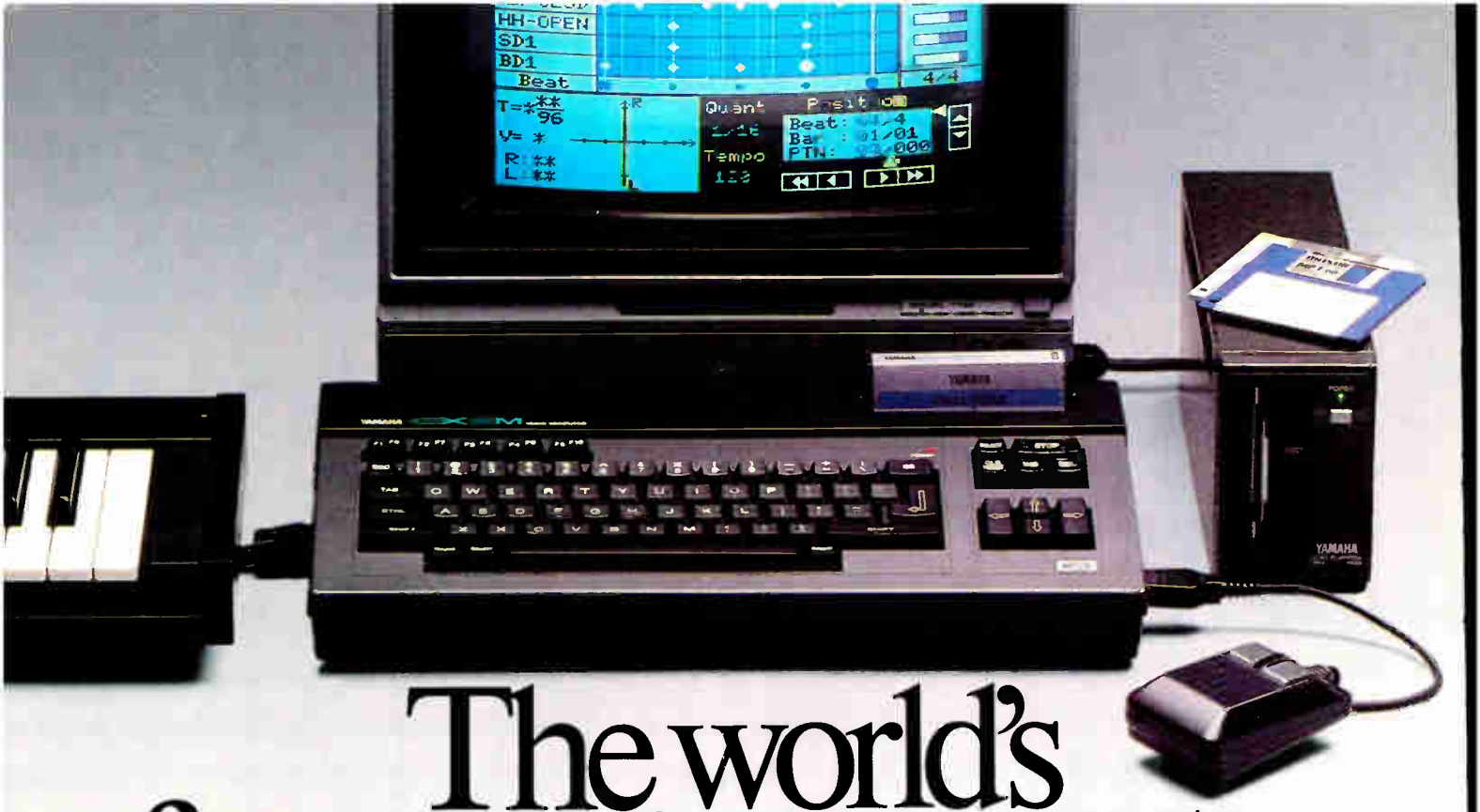

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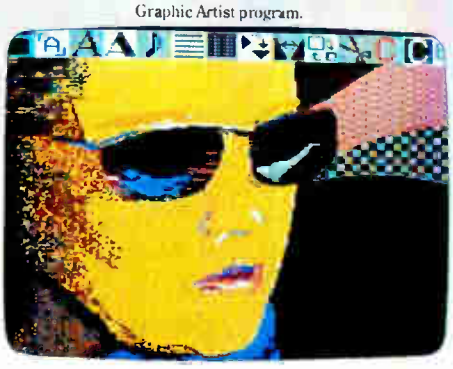
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Jeff Czech — Evanston, IL
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Burrell bites

Thanks much for the article on Kenny Burrell in the July issue. Always happy to read about the world's finest (by far) jazz guitarist.

Two little bites behind the knee, though: the Village Vanguard trio sessions happened in September 1959, not 1969. I've seen this same mistake once before. Possibly a misprint in the liner notes of one of the (at least) three reissues of that album? Also, I was sorry to see omitted from Burrell's selected discography Jimmy Smith's *Midnight Special* (Blue Note 84078). Burrell's solo on the title cut contains the finest blues licks ever recorded. In fact, the controlled bluesy playing of Smith and Stanley Turrentine, in addition to Burrell, makes this one cut the very essence of what '60s organ groups were all about.

Bo Petroff — Springfield, OH

Too, too kind

John McDonough is perfectly on target in his assessment [Book Reviews, June '86] of *Good Morning Blues*, Count Basie's flawed autobiography, but I can't help believing that the reviewer has perhaps been overly kind in absolving collaborator Albert Murray of responsibility for some of the book's appalling errors. At the very least, Mr. Murray should have exercised enough editorial control to eliminate misspellings of the names of prominent musicians and other people important to Basie's career.

I find the following names misspelled in the book, either consistently or occasionally: trumpeters Idrees Sulieman, Reunald Jones, and Joe Keyes; trombonists Vic Dickenson, Jake Frazier, Kid Ory (who is identified as "Kid Only"), Benny Morton, Louis Taylor, Johnny Mandel, and George Matthews; saxophonists Caughey Roberts, Paul Quinichette, Sal Nistico, and Harold Ousley; banjoist Clarence Holiday; guitarists Freddie Green, John Trueheart, and Cliff McTier; bassists Billy Hadnott and Artie Bernstein; bandleader Lennie Hayton; singers Katie Crippen, Jimmy Rushing, Lynne Sherman, and Hattie Noels; and New York hotel owner Maria Kramer. Also misspelled is the name of Detroit's legendary Graystone Ballroom.

Almost incredibly, on page 194, Kansas City bandleader/pianist Bennie Moten is credited with Benny Morton's trombone solo on Basie's Decca recording of *Out The Window*. There are other factual errors as well.

As I pointed out in letters to Mr. Murray and the publisher—both communications, predictably, went unacknowledged—the depressing thing about all these mistakes is that 95 percent of them could have been avoided had someone taken the time to check the various jazz discographies and/or any readily available books on jazz history.

John W. Miner — Oshkosh, WI

I like Eich

Your review of Marc Johnson's *Bass Desires* [July '86] was thrilling and intelligently written, though I found the remark concerning Manfred Eicher's guitar mixing talents very inaccurate.

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 59

NEWS

Benny Goodman, 1909-86

NEW YORK—In the early afternoon of June 13, clarinet virtuoso and bandleader Benny Goodman was found dead of cardiac arrest in his New York apartment. Goodman's death ends one of the longest and most brilliant music careers of the century, the first to successfully embrace both jazz and classical music, and the only one in the history of jazz ever to exert a direct and decisive impact on the course of American popular music. In the '30s Goodman's band represented a break with the past as significant and enduring as that spearheaded by Bob Dylan and the Beatles in the '60s. He became an involuntary pop idol, the "King of Swing." For a time audiences were swept into hysteria when he played.

Yet unlike all other such seminal media figures of this century, from Crosby to Springsteen, Goodman exuded no personal magnetism or sex appeal whatsoever. He was neither a showman nor an entertainer. His charisma lay entirely in his musicianship. He stood foursquare in front of a microphone and played. That's all there was. It was enough. His sharp, clean, legato clarinet solos performed against the smooth, unbroken, ensemble curves of his band were the perfect musical equivalent to an optimistic era marked by speed, sophistication, and streamlining. Although the foundations of his style shifted and evolved over the years, there was a clear, unbroken line of continuity from the brash Leon Rapollo-inspired clarinetist of the '20s through the sleek power hitter that was Goodman to the end. He was perhaps the last of the original hot players to come out of the New Orleans-via-Chicago school of the '20s. His solos nearly always had a strong sense of pace and drama. They held back, then built, climaxed, and quickly resolved. It was a sense of structure that was first learned, then became second nature. His influence reached everywhere.

If Goodman was the "king," though, arranger Fletcher Henderson, who died in 1953, was the royal architect and conceptual braintrust. It was Henderson who designed the basic principles of swing orchestration in the '20s. By the mid-'30s his arrangements had reached a mature perfection of form. When Goodman became Henderson's biggest customer in 1935, one of the greatest partnerships in jazz history was forged. Though Goodman, not Henderson, became the famous star, he always acknowledged Henderson's "genius." Goodman specifically dedicated the last half-dozen concerts of his life to the memory and work of Fletcher Henderson.

Born May 30, 1909 in Chicago Goodman began studying clarinet at age 10. Within five years, he was playing professionally at Guynon's Paradise for $58 a week with the Jules Herbuveaux orchestra. "We didn't play jazz at Guynon's," Herbuveaux, 88, said after Goodman's death. "But Benny was happy to take home a nice check to his mother every week." Benny did play jazz with the local colony of young jazz musicians—Bud Freeman, Dave Tough, Gene Krupa, Jimmy McPartland, and others. Many would be at his side during the height of the Swing Era. He joined Ben Pollack in 1926 and made his first commercial records as a sideman for RCA Victor in December. Between 1927 and '31 Goodman did other occasional jazz sessions while mainly working lucrative studio jobs. After 1931, however, jazz opportunities became almost nonexistent.

In 1933 John Hammond, whose interest in jazz was matched by a network of record company connections, offered him some jazz dates for the English market. The two became fast friends. On one of the early sessions, Goodman used a Hammond singing discovery named Billie Holiday. Hammond's energy and optimism invigorated Goodman, who, tired of playing other leaders' music, began to think more and more of playing his own. In 1934 he organized his first steady band. Benny was groping—work prospects were slim, and more importantly, his band lacked an identity.

By the end of the year—and at the cost of a substantial kickback to an ad agency—Goodman won a slot on an NBC Network show called *Let's Dance*. He would later insist this was the key break of his career. Drummer Gene Krupa joined the band at the end of December. The first Henderson arrangements came the first week of January. Things were coming together. Goodman took some transcriptions to Victor Records and was signed beginning in April. When the radio series ended, the new band went on a cross-country tour booked by MCA, an agency that was built entirely on "sweet" bands. Its booking instincts were nearly fatal to Goodman, despite a rave **down beat** review from Helen Oakley. "It was magnificent," she wrote of a performance in Milwaukee. He finally reached California in July, severely wounded by a string of failures. It was there he discovered he had begun to build an audience through the *Let's Dance* show. From then on, success followed success.

It was in Chicago, at the Congress Hotel, that Goodman hired pianist Teddy Wilson. Thus the Goodman Trio became the first known group in American music in which black and white artists performed as equals. The 1936 addition of Lionel Hampton made the trio a quartet. There were movies in Hollywood, the *Camel Caravan* on radio, and the famous concert in Carnegie Hall in 1938. In 1939 Goodman expanded his quartet with the introduction of Charlie Christian, the first great electric guitar virtuoso in jazz history. More innovations were to come. Eddie Sauter and Goodman protege Mel Powell expanded the horizons of big band orchestration in the early '40s. Goodman, Red Norvo, and Wilson formed the nucleus of another great combo in 1944-45.

Goodman's most enduring work was done in the 1935-45 decade. After the war the band business never recovered its pre-war momentum. Swing had evolved into bop, and many wondered if swing's leading figure would evolve with it. Goodman experimented, but was in a no-win position. To the insurgents of bop, he was passe; to the old swing audience, he was an apostate.

He turned increasingly to classical study, a challenge he relished and could pursue away from public scrutiny. His credentials were already formidable: recordings of the Mozart *Clarinet Quintet* with the Budapest String Quartet in 1938, Bartok's *Contrasts* with the composer and Joseph Szigeti in 1940, plus concert performances. In 1949 his study with Reginald Kell produced a general overhaul in his approach to the instrument. "Benny is a very refined classical player," Larry Combs, principal clarinet of the Chicago Symphony, said recently. "But his most enduring contribution to the music has been the fact that he's solely responsible for commissioning a whole new repertoire for us. Were it not for Benny, we would not have the Bartok *Contrasts*, the Copland and Hindemith concertos, and other works." Goodman recently said his only regret was not commissioning a work from Benjamin Britten, whose $2,000 fee was four times that era's going rate.

For the next 35 years Goodman worked in spurts. He assembled big bands for a Far East tour (1957), the Brussels World's Fair (1958), Russia and a post-Russian American tour (1962), and England in 1969 and '70. There were many reunions with the original stars of the '30s, including sessions for the film *The Benny Goodman Story* (1955) and a final tour of the original Goodman/Krupa/Hampton/Wilson quartet (1973). Goodman continued to listen to new music and would occasionally incorporate it into his repertoire. He even played *Aquarius* and *Spinning Wheel* in the late '60s. He admired good tunes and enjoyed Chick Corea, Stevie Wonder, and Stephen Sondheim. (He recorded *Sunshine Of My Life* and *Send In The Clowns* in 1975.) But the core of his repertoire remained the familiar swing standards of the 1935-45 period. Critics sometimes took a dim view of his stand-patism. But Goodman continued to be challenged, and his playing was often

CONTINUED ON PAGE 61

No prisoners

EAST RUTHERFORD, NJ—A crowd of 55,000, ranging in age from pre-pubescent youngsters to middle-aged adults, sweated it out on the field of Giants Stadium recently—while millions more stayed glued to their MTV—for the Amnesty International benefit concert. Featured performers for the 11-hour extravanganza included rockers Lou Reed, Carlos Santana, Steve Van Zandt, U2, Joan Armatrading, Jackson Browne, and the specially reunited Police, plus such eclectic luminaries as Miles Davis, the Neville Brothers, Rubén Blades, and special guest Fela Anikulapo Kuti (whose recent release from a Nigerian prison Amnesty International helped secure).

Amnesty International is an international organization aimed at freeing political prisoners. The benefit concert staged by Bill Graham and Don Shear, two of the most prominent music producers in the United States, proved a huge success both technically and financially. Running from noon until just after 11:30 pm, the concert was one of the smoothest-run outdoor rock events produced this year. Graham directed the entire entourage from the wings, moving musicians and stage crew around like chess players, throwing celebrities—Muhammed Ali, Robert Duvall, Christopher Reeve—onstage to pay their respects and to instruct the audience about the goals of the organization.

Special guests Carlos Santana and Fela Anikulapo Kuti performed with Rubén Blades and his latin salsa beat. Santana later hooked up with Miles Davis, whose electric jazz rhythms drew a soft cry of heckling from the sidelines, and Fela added his African percussion to the Neville Brothers' uplifting Southern swing.

Lou Reed strutted across stage while singing his 1970s hit *Walk On The Wild Side*; Third World invited dancing with their reggae beats; Peter, Paul and Mary revived their 1960s folk songs; and Peter Gabriel sang his tribute to Steven Biko, followed by his current hit *Sledgehammer*. Preparing the ecstatic crowd for the grand finale reunion of the Police, U2's lead singer Bono captivated the audience with a medley that included John Lennon's *Cold Turkey* and Bob Dylan's *Maggie's Farm*.

Amnesty International more than doubled its membership and steadily increased its income during the six-city U.S. tour that this concert concluded. More students stood in line to fill out postcards addressed to congressmen than to buy t-shirts. Unlike past celebratory benefit rock concerts like Live Aid and Farm Aid, where the audience passively enjoyed the show after paying an entrance fee, Amnesty International informed the audience about its cause and sought active participation from its new members.

"It's only a beginning. Let's not kid ourselves," Joan Baez commented. "I don't know if we will see more concerts like these, but I think something has ignited."

—*brooke wentz*

DONNA PAUL

HOT HERITAGE: *'Gator sausage, crawfish, red beans & rice, and blackened redfish aren't the only reasons to journey to the Crescent City, especially when the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival is cookin'. Over a quarter million fans and fanatics attended the two weekends this year, and enjoyed the various food, crafts, and music tents which fill the fairgrounds. Evening concerts included outstanding sets by The Leaders (Don Cherry, Arthur Blythe, Chico Freeman, Kirk Lightsey, Cecil McBee, Famoudou Don Moye), Nawlins' own clarinet master Alvin Batiste, and the notable pairing of the Neville Brothers and Ebenezer Obey; meanwhile, red-hot blues, rock, jazz, cajun, and zydeco bands (such as Terrance Simlen & The Mallet Playboys, pictured above) enlivened the fairgrounds. The sponsoring New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation uses proceeds to fund local musicians in citywide concerts and public school workshops. They hope to return to the community this year more than the $100,000 they donated after last year's event.*

POTPOURRI

Keepin' busy: **Rubén Blades** new album will feature songwriting collaborations with **Bob Dylan**, **Elvis Costello**, **Paul Simon**, and **Lou Reed**, with Blades singing English lyrics on part of the album; Costello, meanwhile, has already been reported back in the studio recording a follow-up to *King Of America*, which will be produced by **Nick Lowe** and feature the Attractions, and will be appearing as a magician in the British movie *No Surrender*. Other artists on the go include Dire Straits' **Mark Knopfler**, who is slated for work on new albums by **Tina Turner** and **Willy De Ville**; the Band's **Robbie Robertson** has a solo album, a movie script, and the soundtrack for **Martin Scorsese**'s *The Color Of Money* all in the works (**Don Henley** may kick in a couple of tunes for the latter); **Phil Collins** is working on a 90-minute film documentary based on his last tour, due for release this year; and the **Talking Heads** have a film (*True Stories*), two accompanying albums (a soundtrack and an album with lyrics), and a book of photo stills (with text by head Head **David Byrne**) on tap for release this month . . . honor roll: the Jamaica, Queens community the late **Count Basie** called home now boasts a Catherine and Count Basie Junior High School, renamed for the Count and his Missus, who did extensive volunteer work with community youths; the Basie Band showed up two days after the school's dedication to treat the students to a concert. Elsewhere, ASCAP president and composer **Morton Gould** and trumpet great **Dizzy Gillespie** were recently honored with American Eagle Awards from the National Music Council for their contributions to American music . . . jazz convention: the fifth ***JazzTimes*** Magazine Convention runs 9/4-7 at NYC's Roosevelt Hotel; applications should reach Ira Sabin, *JazzTimes*, 8055 13th St., Silver Spring, MD 20910 by 8/28 (registrants qualify for a drawing for two tickets for a one-week cruise on the S.S. Norway with **Dizzy Gillespie**, **Joe Williams**, **Milt Jackson**, **Buddy Rich**, **Woody Herman**, **Cab Calloway**, **Anita O'Day**, et al) . . . label news: MCA Records, has put out a passel of reissued Impulse recordings, a new compilation CD (*John Coltrane/From The Original Master Tapes*), and albums by two new Impulse signees—New Orleans pianist **Henry Butler** and trumpeter **Mike Metheny** (brother of guitarist Pat) . . . bebop banking?: "Romance without finance ain't got a chance," goes the quote attributed to **Charlie Parker** in an advertisement for Northern Trust Bank that's been popping up in various places this summer, including a full-page layout in the *Chicago Tribune*; the ad copy goes on to boast that Northern Trust offers its clients "a financial relationship with all the creative force and flexibility of Charlie's mu sic" . . . music business: for longtime **db** publisher **Char. Suber** is offering an updated 198 guide to *Business-Of-Music Schools & Careers*; the 52-page softbound booklet features a detailed listing of Business-of-Music Schools and may be purchased for $7.95 by writing Charles Suber & Associates Inc., 600 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, IL 60605 . . . composition contest: the **International Horn Society** is offering three $1,000 prizes for compositions in the following categories—horn and piano jazz composition (parts must be written out, but chord symbols may be included for optional improvisation, and bass and drum parts may be included if the composer desires), horn and string quartet (violin, two violas, cello), horn ensemble (five-16 separate parts); entries must arrive to Jeffrey Agrell, IHS Gibraltarstrasse 1, CH-600[illegible] cerne, Switzerland by [illegible] summer happenin[illegible] grapher **Mit[illegible]** among th[illegible] recen[illegible] e[illegible]

Andy Narell

ALBANY, CA—Like most mature instrumentalists, steel drummer Andy Narell has taken his instrument beyond its roots, yet has never forgotten the importance of those beginnings. Although he was born in New York and resides in California, Andy's heart feels the pulse of the Trinidad panyards where the first steel drums were hammered in the '40s. "I don't exclude any kind of music from the pan," he says. "I have always pursued my various musical interests with the instrument. But lately, I find my interests have been returning to Trinidad. I made two trips there last year. Each time I go, I learn a lot and get new ideas.

"I played over there in a band with 100 players—90 were steel players and the rest played other percussion. It was part of an annual event called 'The Panorama' that occurs right before the Carnival. It's the Super Bowl of steel bands—a competition in which everyone has 10 minutes to play a long, complex theme-and-variation on the same tune. At the finale, they pick a national champ. I also played with two other bands there: Phase Two Pan Groove and The Renegades."

Winner of the Talent Deserving Wider Recognition award (Miscellaneous Instrument category) in this year's **db** Critics Poll, Andy is an eclectic composer and player. *Slow Motion* (Hip Pocket 105), *Light In Your Eyes* (Hip Pocket 103), and *Stickman* (Hip Pocket 101), all distributed by Windham Hill, showcase Narell's knack for buoyant melodies and infectious grooves that draw upon jazz, Afro-Caribbean, funk, and folk music.

The Andy Narell Group has toured Europe, the U.S., and in June, they played the grand opening of Japan's Bravo Club. On his own, Andy has kept busy in the studio composing jingles, playing album dates (Aretha Franklin, The Pointer Sisters, Manhattan Transfer, Debarge), and soundtracks (*Cocoon, Ghost Busters, 9½ Weeks*). When Andy first broke into the studios, steel drums were used mostly in novel situations. "Now, when I get studio calls," he says, "there are more and more people who have heard what I do, and they write especially for that."

—jeff potter

IRENE YOUNG

Big Nick Nicholas

NEW YORK—In a career spanning 40 years, tenor saxist Big Nick Nicholas has but two albums to his credit as a leader. Asked why he has recorded so little, Nick does a comic turn the timing of which is vintage Jack Benny. He mulls the question. "Son . . . ," he milks the moment coolly, ". . . Let me say this . . . ," then delivers his kicker, ". . . No one ever asked me!" *Brrrmmp! Crash!* Punchline approved. Echos of the cosmic drumkit.

Stories about Big Nick and his larger-than-life tenor are legion: he befriended Bird, counseled Coltrane, gave work to "every jazz player worth a hoot" while booking talent at the famed Paradise Club in Harlem. But there isn't much recorded evidence of his sumptuous sound. And with little but tall tales evincing his legend, few people know his music first-hand. Hasn't that been enraging?

"No," he insists, "it never got to me because I knew time well. I worked all the time. I learned to entertain, to emcee, to sing. Consequently, I learned how to communicate. It humanized me. I realize what people really want." Big Nick (nee George) and the name obvious; he *is* a large man with an insatiable appetite for life, a throwback to a former era when saxophonists held their horn high and made people happy by playing "the prettiest notes I could find."

RONALD ECKSTEIN

Nick got his start in the early '40s, leaving his home in Lansing, Michigan and settling in Saginaw, where he joined a group with the Jones boys—Thad and Hank. He soon traveled East and came to the attention of big band leaders Lucky Millinder and Dizzy Gillespie, each of whom tapped the show-stopping appeal of his booming tenor. "My sound was always important to me," he explains, "because years ago you had to have a sound first, or they wouldn't hire you in the band."

In 1950 he became a featured performer and booking agent at the Paradise Club, a room that saw a remarkable confluence of uptown talent drawn from the worlds of art, music, dance, literature, and entertainment. Nick welcomed everyone. "When the guys came in," he fondly remembers, "I'd announce their names and give them respect."

Perhaps his most celebrated association was with John Coltrane, who, taken by Nick's generosity of spirit, composed the tune *Big Nick*. Their relationship did much to fuel Nick's reputation, and Nick honored Trane by recording the composition on his latest album, titled—you guessed it—*Big Nick* (India Navigation 1066). "Every human being," he asserts, "has one song in his heart. If you can play it, if you can touch that person with his secret song, you've made a friend. Music is the best friend there is. It will never let you down."

—jeff levenson

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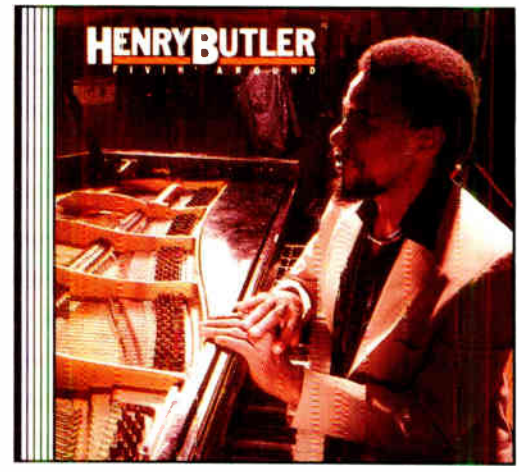

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JOHN ABERCROMBIE:

ANDY FREEBERG

Seduced By Synths

By Bill Milkowski

It's a Thursday night at Sweet Basil's, the Greenwich Village jazz club in New York. Pianist Paul Bley is leading a quartet that includes drummer Barry Altschul, bassist Glen Moore, and guitarist John Abercrombie. Only this night, John's not just a guitarist. Add some extra pieces of hardware, a pedalboard, a bunch of extra chords and *voila*—he is instantly transformed into a *guitar synthesist*, one of the new breed of plectorists popping up all around us since the technological innovations initiated a few years back by the people at Roland.

It's been an unpredictable gig, to say the least. Though each night is being recorded at the club for possible release on Black Saint, the irreverent Mr. Bley refuses to stick to any rehearsed game plan. He's calling tunes off the top of his head—some Ornette Coleman numbers, a few Carla Bley pieces, some standards, all of which he dutifully twists and contorts into mutant versions of the originals.

Suddenly, quite unexpectedly, Bley launches into a gentle rendering of *The More I See You*, catching Abercrombie off guard. Bley remains faithful to the melody for maybe eight bars before he gradually begins drifting away, taking it all the way out to Pluto. John looks lost. Not only is he unfamiliar with the tune, but the way Bley is taking liberties with the melody it's unlikely that Abercrombie will ever find his way on this one. He shakes his head and laughs, wondering how and where to jump in.

Finally, after tastefully laying out completely, he takes the plunge, copping the chord changes by cleverly following Bley's left hand. He cues up an orchestral program on his pedalboard and comps along as Bley plays over, under, and around the melody. Gradually, the piece opens up more and more, moving further and further away from the original melody. It's pot-luck time. John's dancing on his pedalboard, running from violin to flute to some giddy slide whistle effect, which breaks Bley up at the piano. John does a double-take. He seems to have surprised even himself with that one.

A couple of weeks later, Abercrombie is gigging just down the road from Basil's, fronting a quartet for a five-day stay at the Village Vanguard. And this time he's got even more hardware up there on stage with him. Along with his regular Ibanez Artist solid body guitar for the "jazzy" numbers, he's got his trusty Ibanez MIDI guitar, which is patched into the Roland GR-700 pedalboard and a whole bank of digital delays, echoes, choruses, and the like. He's got a Yamaha sequencer MIDI-ed up to a Casio CZ-101 keyboard synthesizer, to reproduce a few of the tunes from his latest ECM release, *Current Events*. While Marc Johnson and Peter Erskine lay down a groove, John cues up another ethereal sound on his guitar-synth. Guest soloist Mike Brecker suddenly pulls out a piece of his own technology (an odd-looking reed synthesizer called the Steinerphone) and heads into synthland with Abercrombie. It's micro-chip night at the Vanguard.

In spite of his present acceptance of technology, Abercrombie admits that he was slow to come around. "I held out for a long time," he says. "I didn't want to invest any money in it, and I was skeptical about it musically—because of the tracking problems, the glitching problems. I just didn't know if I wanted to get into that. I've always had a fear of too many wires, too many plugs, too many things on stage. I still do. There are days when I wanna throw it all away and just play *Stella By Starlight* with a regular guitar and not be bothered by all that technology."

In fact, he did just that recently at a small piano bar called Bradley's. "Just for a change of pace, I did a duo gig with [bassist] George Mraz there. I just took my little Roland cube amp and one guitar. It was so light. I was just like a regular guy going to a gig or something. All of a sudden it was like 1950. It was great. I mean, I love all the stuff that synths can do. I just dislike all the equipment, especially when I have to hook it all up and break it all down and take it somewhere. Then I wish I didn't have it. It takes me about 45 minutes to set everything up. It's such a hassle. If it could all be in one easy-to-move package where you could just close the lid and everything would snap shut and you'd carry it to the gig and it'd be all set up when you opened it—and it only weighed eight pounds—that'd be ideal."

Hassles aside, Abercrombie had been investigating the possibilities of guitar-synthesizer since purchasing a Roland GR-707 guitar-synth last year. A friend, guitarist Bob Ward of the New York Jazz Guitar Ensemble, initially turned him on to the technology. "I was curious about it, and Bob had one," he recalls. "I used to visit Bob once a week. He'd put it in my hands and let me play while he changed parameters and patches and stuff. So I'd go over there just to fool around and get my little fix of synthesizerland."

Eventually, he took the plunge. "At a certain point I made a decision. I said to myself, 'I have to have this. I want to check it out, and I think I'm a good person to play this 'cause I've always been interested in different ways to express myself on guitar.' In the old days I was always interested in fuzz tones and wah-wah pedals and phase shifters and all that stuff. And a couple years ago I did an album with George Marsh (*Drum Strum*), where I experimented with the MXR Pitch Transposer and the Zeta Systems Poly Fuzz, which was a polyphonic fuzz tone. So getting into the guitar-synthesizer was just a natural extension for me."

He confides, however, that his first on-the-gig experience with the guitar-synth setup was "terrifying. The very first time I had all this stuff set up was at a gig with my trio in Hamburg, Germany. I was literally the most nervous I had ever been before a gig, because not only was I going to play the guitar, I was going to play all of this stuff and I had to remember so many things. I had to keep a little checklist: Is it all MIDI-ed up right? Is the tempo set right on the sequencer? Is the sequence even loaded in?

"And then I found myself up in front of a lot of people and I was playing a musical line, but only half of it was coming out—the tracking problem. I started sweating and getting even more nervous than usual. Yeah, that was a terrifying gig."

Eventually, after woodshedding with the setup for some time, John did become more comfortable with the technology. "It becomes automatic after a while," he says. "I even got to where I could load sequences into the machine during one of Peter's drum solos. I would just turn around and casually call up the function, step on a pedal, and away

we'd go. There are still some problems with it, but I've learned to accept them. If I play a phrase and don't hear all the notes or I hear some awful glitch here or there, what am I gonna do? You just have to have a certain kind of patience and acceptance with this instrument until the companies themselves improve things. And I think that's just down the road."

Abercrombie used the Roland GR-707 on *Current Events*, though he's currently using the new Ibanez MIDI guitar in conjunction with Roland electronics. "The Ibanez is very similar to the 707, but I think it's a bit faster in tracking. And it feels more comfortable to me as a guitar. And one of the secrets of these type of synths is if it feels more comfortable as an instrument, if you can play it better as a guitar and your technique is more comfortable on it, then it'll probably track you better. If the guitar feels awkward it's just going to make things more complicated. And the Ibanez feels fine to me."

Rather than substantially altering his own technique to adapt to the parameters of the instrument, John prefers a different approach. "Everyone says you have to play according to the timbre you've chosen. If you have a flute sound you have to play it almost as if it were a flute. But I don't want to give up all my technique for this machine, so it's kind of a fine line in-between for me. I try to adjust my playing to the timbre and learn something about how to play that sound, yet at the same time I have to try and force the instrument to play with me a little bit. In other words, I sometimes try to overplay the instrument. They say you should limit your playing technique, but I'll only limit it to a certain point. I don't want to be controlled by a machine."

Abercrombie is enthusiastic about all this technology, but he does offer a few words of caution to those who may wish to dive in. "The technology is all really fascinating to me, but I don't want to lose touch with the actual playing of music. I've found that with the synth, the problem can be that I get lost in the world of sound. Sometimes I don't write music, I just play sounds. When I'm at home I have so much freedom that I just sit around and play with sounds for days. And I realize that a few days have gone by and all I've come up with are a few pretty sounds, and I haven't written a song and maybe I haven't practiced playing at all. So you have to be careful with it. It can take you down this weird, uncharted path, which has its good points but also its bad points."

While some may look at the guitar-synth as a controversial new weapon to divide the old and new schools of jazz, John sees it as a useful tool to be used by anyone with imagination. "I've asked a few of the older guys what they thought of it, and they said things like, 'Well, I kinda like it, but it sorta hurts my ears.' Now, if the sound of it affects somebody negatively, then I can accept that. But if they just don't like the *idea* of a synth—you know, when people hear the word *synthesizer* they conjure up all these bad images—that, I don't buy. I don't think it's good for people to disregard something without hearing it or without trying to be open to it. I think that's a mistake."

Further, he adds, "Many people won't agree with this, but I think the guitar-synth is more musical than the keyboard-synth in a lot of ways. I think it's more human. You can still feel the vibration of the string, and you don't get that at the keyboard-synth.

"It could be that keyboard-synths have become so commonplace that the players all tend to sound alike. That hasn't happened yet with the guitar-synth. It's too new, at least among the improvising players who are using it, like Pat [Metheny], Bill [Frisell], and John [McLaughlin], and myself. We're all trying to do different things with it, and each player is working to develop his own personal voice on it. So I think it's still a very creative tool in the hands of creative musicians."

Despite the fact that he is wholeheartedly embracing technology, Abercrombie is mindful of never straying too far from his roots. "I try to keep in touch with what the basic root of my music is, which has to do with basically being a jazz guitar player."

One way he keeps in touch is through teaching. In the past year he's held clinics in Italy, France, Germany, and throughout the States, as well as conducting private lessons in New York City. "I'm doing a lot more teaching now and it's changed my attitude in a lot of ways," he says. "It's made me a better player just because I have to be able to communicate and organize my thoughts. And it makes me investigate my own playing more. I mean, if I'm going to tell these kids about playing one continuous line through *Stella By Starlight*, I'd better be able to do it myself. Otherwise, it's not going to have much meaning.

"So teaching got me back into investigating the eighth-note line a bit further. And if there's one thing I practice all the time, that's it. That seems to be my bottom line, my core, what I'm always trying to improve. On the other stuff I can just let myself dream a little more. I can get lost in a composition or in the available sounds on the synthesizer. That's the ecstasy stuff for me. And playing eighth-note lines is like the other 'work' that has to go on at the same time. They balance each other. That's really what I'm striving for now—having certain kinds of tunes that may be more simplistic, that allow me to be lyrical and also at the same time allow me to develop my linear playing."

Though he heartily recommends teaching as a means of enriching the scope of his own playing, Abercrombie is careful not to get too immersed in the academic side of the music. "I wouldn't want to do it too much, so much that I begin organizing my thoughts to the point of having them

ANDY FREEBERG

be rigid or locked in. I want to stay open for change. I always want to keep that element in the music, preserve the freshness of it. I wouldn't want to overburden myself with teaching to the point where I become a stale, mechanical player who does so much teaching that he sounds like one of his students. That's the danger in too much teaching."

For a lecture to music students at Harvard, John put together a composite tape on the history of jazz guitar. That little exercise not only enlightened the students, it put Abercrombie in a reflective frame of mind.

"I went through my record collection and borrowed some records of all kinds of stuff, starting back with Eddie Lang and Lonnie Johnson, all the way up through contemporary players like Bill Frisell and John Scofield. And I found I was really attracted to Charlie Christian's playing, to Django's playing, and to Wes Montgomery's playing. I hadn't been listening to that kind of music in a while, and I found myself playing it over and over again. I was especially attracted to the way Wes would put together his lines—the way they'd move. They were lyrical and his sound was so fat and warm. And I heard how Jim Hall is a direct offshoot of that. Django was a different kind of thing, a very passionate kind of player. And I heard how John McLaughlin is a direct offshoot of *that* kind of thing.

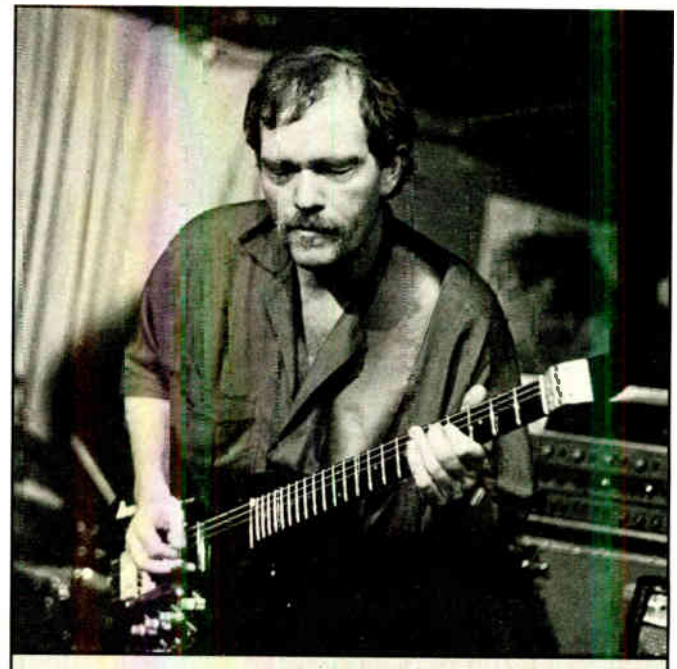
"But in listening to all these players, especially some of the older players, I realized how much I love standard tunes. There's things I can do on a standard tune that I can't do on other material. When I'm playing tunes like *Autumn Leaves* or *Stella By Starlight*, as much as I've played those tunes over the years, I still enjoy playing them. And because I know them so well, I'm very free with them. I'm just as free with them as when I'm playing with no chords at all. That, to me, is free jazz.

"I think if you feel loose and relaxed playing on a standard tune that may have a million chord changes, then that's free jazz. Jimmy Smith is a free jazz player, as far as I'm concerned. When he plays he sounds like he's doing what he wants to do. And that's what it ultimately boils down to, for me."

Abercrombie documented his love for standards on *Straight Flight*, which he recorded with bassist George Mraz and drummer Peter Donald. On his landmark *Timeless* album, recorded for ECM in 1974 with keyboardist Jan Hammer and drummer Jack DeJohnette, he played freely with his own composition *Ralph's Piano Waltz*, and he reprises that tune on his latest for ECM, *Current Events*. "That's almost like playing a standard tune for me now," he says. "I've been playing it for 12, 13 years now, and I'm so familiar with it that I can bend it and do so many things inside the rhythm and harmony of the tune. It's probably the closest I've gotten on my ECM records to playing standard material. When I wrote that tune back in 1974 I really didn't know how to play on it. The harmony was a little too complex for me to play at the time. I was still trying to figure out how to improvise on those kind of chords. And now I'm so comfortable with it, it's like free jazz for me."

With his trio and quartet he's a guitar synthesist. In a duet setting with bassist George Mraz he plays straightahead jazz guitar. With the Paul Bley quartet he goes all the way out. With guitarist Ralph Towner he dabbles in folk melodies and ethnic musics. With fellow Connecticut native John Scofield he's a stone bebopper (check out their hot duo album, *Solar*). What's next for this versatile, probing, ever-evolving guitarist?

"Well, I thought it would be very interesting to get five players together who all play and understand the guitar-synthesizer, and write some music for that. I mean, not only could you write four- and five-part harmony things, but with all the parameters and possibilities you could get some god-awful sounding things. It could really be orchestral music. Get a timpani player—man, it could be really wild!" **db**



ANDY FREEBERG

JOHN ABERCROMBIE'S EQUIPMENT

In his current setup with his trio and quartet, John Abercrombie includes an Ibanez MIDI guitar with its programmer (which can store 128 different sounds) hooked up to the Roland GR-700 electronics pedalboard, and Roland GR-300 electronics. A Casio ZA-101 is used to trigger a Yamaha QX-7 sequencer. He also brings along a regular Ibanez Artist electric guitar and an Ovation shallowbowl acoustic when he goes on the road.

He has an old Les Paul gold top with humbucking pickups that he uses solely for practicing on at home. And his two mandolin guitars (one made by Fender, the other made by Schwabb Mandolins out of Minneapolis) are generally reserved for his work with Ralph Towner.

He carries a Roland 60-watt cube amp with a Walter Woods power amp, which he runs through a 15-inch Electrovoice speaker. He plays in stereo with those two amps with a Lexicon PCM-60 digital reverb and an Ibanez SDE-1000 digital delay and a small six-channel mixer. "With that mixer I'm able to control a lot of the sound from the stage. I can control the amount of volume on each instrument—the guitar, the guitar-synth, the sequencer, the Casio, the two Roland synths. Maybe a sequence pattern will be very dry while the lead guitar sound will be very wet with a lot of reverb. It varies from tune to tune."

He prefers D'Addario strings, generally a set of .10s. And he's recently settled on copper picks made by a company called Hot Licks. "Steve Swallow turned me on to them. They're very thin but they have a certain rigidity to them. I think they bring a little more sustain to the sound." On his Ovation acoustic he uses a thinner-gauge string and heavy picks. And he uses a set of .09s on his Ibanez MIDI guitar. "It seems to track better with a light touch, so I go with thinner strings."

JOHN ABERCROMBIE SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

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NIGHT—ECM 25009-1
ARCADE—ECM 1133
QUARTET—ECM 1164
STRAIGHT FLIGHT—Jam 5001
QUARTET: M—ECM 1191
TIMELESS—ECM 1047

with John Scofield

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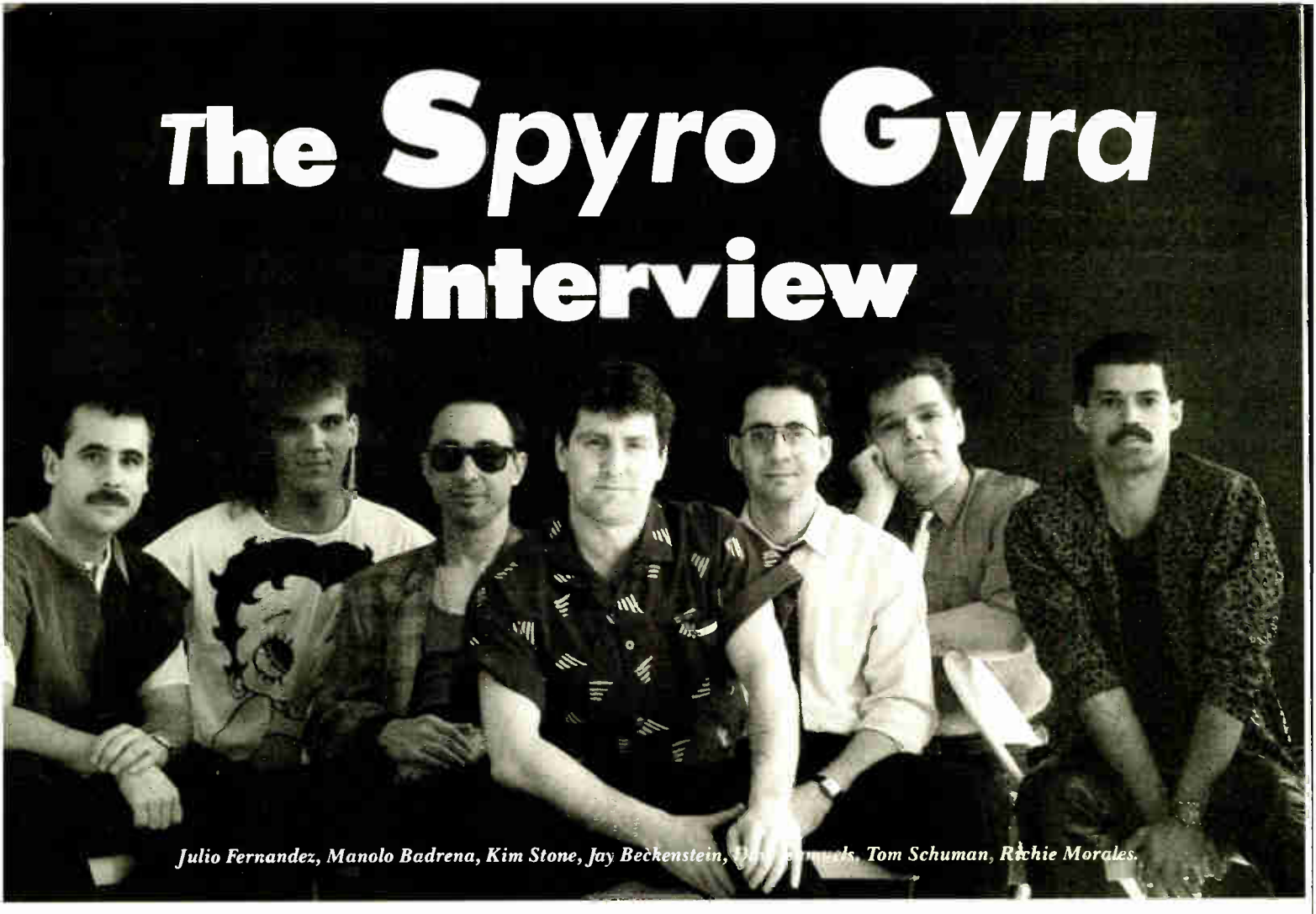
The Spyro Gyra Interview



Julio Fernandez, Manolo Badrena, Kim Stone, Jay Beckenstein, Dave Samuels, Tom Schuman, Richie Morales.

by GENE SANTORO

Almost a dozen years ago, a small sign appeared outside a Buffalo club announcing, "Tuesday Night—Jazz Jam." In effect, it was also announcing the birth of Spyro Gyra, one of the more durable institutions spawned during the heyday of fusion. Saxman Jay Beckenstein, tired of club dates and Top 40 gigs and seeking a more venturesome venue, started those jam sessions with high school buddy Jeremy Wall, whose writing remains an essential part of Spyro Gyra's character. Once a core of session-attenders coalesced, Jay and the others soon decided to give up their other work and devote seven nights a week to their fledgling brainchild, an amalgam of musical styles that continues to be the band's dominant musical trait. At this point enter Richard Calandra, an ex-drummer involved in production, who hooked up with Jay to lease a 16-track studio; by renting the studio out to other musicians part of the time, the duo financed Spyro Gyra's first recording. When shopping their tapes brought them no label response, they began Crosseyed Bear Records, which launched the band's chart-topping career with *Shaker Song* from *Spyro Gyra*. Amherst Records (and later MCA) picked up the band and its first LP, and then released *Morning Dance*, which went gold.

If that is the color so many Spyro Gyra records have attained since, it's due largely to the consistent yet flexible group concept and a lot of hard road-work. And, of course, to the evolving vision of Jay Beckenstein, who still formulates the band's guiding principles, albeit with an increasing amount of input from the other members. In this interview, Beckenstein discusses both his own role and the changes in the group's personnel as well as writing, arranging, and recording procedures, with special emphasis on their recent release, *Breakout*. Percussionist Manolo Badrena and mallet master Dave Samuels, recently added to the band's stage lineup, chime in with their own observations about their new roles as well.

Gene Santoro: You wear so many different hats in Spyro Gyra—composer, player, producer, leader—how do you keep them all straight?

Jay Beckenstein: With difficulty [*laughs*]. I'm always feeling that there is some difficulty in doing each of them well because I'm doing them all: if I didn't have to write I could practice more, if I didn't have to go on the road so much I could write more. But fortunately, Spyro Gyra is set up to give everybody input, so I end up sharing each one of those hats. I don't write all the songs, I'm not the only soloist, I coproduce with Rich Calandra, and frankly I'm helped out by all the guys. So while I may be the only guy who wears *all* the hats, each individual hat is shared, which has allowed me *not* to go crazy.

GS: Since your last **db** interview (Oct. '81), among other LPs you've released a live double-album. What prompted that?

JB: It was sounding good. We'd put out quite a number of studio albums, but we started getting a lot of, "You guys sound better than your records." And given the nature of our music, the fact that there *is* a lot of improvisation, the live thing lets us blow more. With records you're dealing with a limited time frame, and if you're going to have eight tunes on a record you're obviously going to have to limit them. So our studio albums weren't giving us all the space we were getting on

the live shows, *and* some stuff was happening onstage musically that was special and was difficult to translate back to vinyl. The solution, then, was to do a live album and make it a double so that if we needed a 12-minute cut we could have a 12-minute cut. We didn't rearrange anything, we didn't encourage people to play shorter; we just went out there and blew.

GS: One reason I asked is that it seems that record changed your approach to recording. You stopped using guest artists, for instance, and did less layering to get a more live feel.

JB: Yes, that's true, though we're talking about degrees here from tune to tune; there are still tunes that we build up from the rhythm tracks. We don't go so far as to build them up from the drums and bass; we lay down full rhythm tracks, and there may even be some people blowing pilot things on top to keep that feeling happening. But that approach is becoming the rarity. The band has evolved a lot over the years: the personnel has changed, for the better, and we've all gotten stronger and more confident after 10 records and 1,500 performances. So we've developed a strong improvisational ensemble feeling, and we try to capture as much of that as we can on records now—that's the vital thing this band has, so in the studio we've been trying to leave more up to chance.

GS: That obviously precludes using outside players, to some extent.

JB: Yes, but besides that, it's simply not necessary any more. The players in the band cover all the styles that the writers in the band cover, and in fact the band is filled with the studio musicians we used to hire. Dave Samuels was always on our records and never on our tours, but for the last three years he's done both. Manolo Badrena, too.

GS: What is it the new members have that you felt Spyro Gyra needed?

JB: In Dave's case, he was always brilliant on our records, and his playing vibes and marimba provided us with a different solo voice that wouldn't interfere with the saxophone or keyboards. And by playing on some of our most popular recorded material, he'd already made himself a part of the group sound even though he wasn't touring with us. For the other people we've brought in over the last few years, we held auditions here in Manhattan and chose from among some very fine musicians—and all the choices we've made have lasted.

Dave Samuels: For the first seven years of our relationship I played strictly in the studio, going in to overdub my parts once a year. Then three years ago I went out for a month with them, which evolved into another month and another month, over a period of three years; this is the first year I've actually completed all the gigs. As far as what I bring to the group's sound, it means the live group is now a much stronger reflection of what's happening on the records. Of everybody on the front line I probably have the strongest jazz background, so in that sense I bring in that tradition, along with the avant garde things I've done. To my mind my contributions reflect a change in their attitude toward what's being played. That's also true of Richie Morales and Manolo: the three of us have played with a lot of different people, and that kind of input is important to keeping Spyro Gyra viable and growing. There's much more radar going on onstage than in the past, making it a much more improvisational kind of environment, rather than a totally structured one. And there's the input in terms of the tunes I've written that they're playing; everybody brings a different viewpoint through their music, and I think mine adds a new flavor. I get plenty of room to play, which is great both for me to express myself and to let people hear these instruments, which is all too rare. But I should add that I haven't abandoned my other projects. In fact, Double Image has just released a new record called *In Lands I Never Saw* [Celestial Harmonies].

Manolo Badrena: I'd already done two albums with Spyro Gyra, so after they held the auditions in December I joined. I guess what I can contribute to the band is a new facet of rhythm and maybe vocals, and I hope some composing as well. For the older material I'm adding a new rhythmic dimension that I always thought *could* be there but wasn't. Overall, I'm trying to add more dynamics and colors.

GS: With your new lineup and emphasis on live recording, how do you now approach an album from the writing stage on up?

JB: Each composer has a different method, but I'll start with myself. I begin with piano, fooling around, and then I *lightly* demo with piano, sax, drum machine, and synth bass. My demos are not fantastically tight or professional, just an idea of what it's supposed to sound like. At that point I write it out and bring it to the band, which often changes it: it might open up, for instance, or I might rework or reevaluate certain parts based on their responses. See, since everyone in the band is a writer, everybody's willing to help the others' compositions sound great, make suggestions and contributions without ego problems, because it's reciprocal. Then we record with everybody there on the initial tracks, which makes for some difficulties in separation and whatnot, but we deal with them rather than exclude anybody from that magic of the initial tracks. We try to have everybody play their actual solos then, though if a solo doesn't come out well and the rhythm section is cooking I'm not against overdubbing it later. I'm not obsessed with purity, I just want to get the best music I can. But generally the best way to make it all sound great is to get it all in the beginning.

As far as some of the other composers in the band, Tom Schuman, our keyboardist, demos to the max—they're so beautiful the band has to *compete* with them [*laughs*]. Of course, it's still improvisational music, so the band can always win because the demos are all machines; but he does develop very intricate arrangements, much more so than mine. And lately Tom and [guitarist] Julio Fernandez and [bassist] Kim Stone have been sharing an apartment, so they've become a terrible trio of demo'ers, doing up each other's material [*laughs*].

PAUL ROBICHEAU

REVVIN' IT UP: *Julio Fernandez and Jay Beckenstein.*

PAUL ROBICHEAU

GS: Let's talk about the new material on *Breakout*. You've picked up the two strands of *Alternating Currents*—the rock strand *and* the jazz strand. At the same time, it seems that *Breakout* features a lot more raunchy guitar.

JB: I guess that's the double direction. Some tunes seem to be taking on a rock face, some a more progressive-jazz face. I don't love one direction more than the other, so as a producer I'll do what the tune dictates, using the appropriate sounds. But regardless of whether the sounds are distorted guitar or sweet marimba, we approach the blowing the same, we approach either style with enthusiasm—and *both* styles are improvised as an ensemble, whether the drums are playing a rock or a jazz beat. You know, a lot of fusion jazz fell into a rut of having a steady underpinning while a soloist would blow a jazz solo across the top. What we're going for is all of us soloing a little bit at once—make the rhythm section looser, get those conversations happening between the players. I think that's a direct result of not using outside players, of having the same band that tours 200 days a year do the record. That's how you develop that interaction and capture it on record.

GS: The tunes themselves are often structured around an interaction between different styles from one section to the next.

JB: Yeah, we do that on the record in general and then we sometimes do it inside the tunes as well. I guess one of the reasons for that is that Spyro Gyra is a group rather than an individual. I've never used it as a vehicle to highlight myself, even though I'm a leader. So even when it comes down to the individual tunes, with us it's not so much about a whole tune's worth of me blowing and exploring as it is me making a statement, followed by somebody else responding to that statement, followed by somebody else doing something else. Because of that, the tunes have sometimes become a little fractured; you can't succeed at everything, or if you do, you're not trying hard enough. But at their best I find our records infinitely more colorful than most other records in this genre; they present lots of facets to the gem.

GS: *Double Take* sounds as if you've added gating to your production techniques—something I don't hear much on jazz records.

JB: You mean the gated drums? Those were mix decisions, not playing decisions, so it was after the fact. But I really am attracted to a lot of the digital synthesized sounds. I am *not* attracted to the concept of preprogramming the music, because I don't like trying to improvise with a personal computer—no thanks [*laughs*]. But some of the sounds people are getting out of digital synthesizers and some of the sounds coming out of rock & roll are exciting. As long as it fits something we play I don't care what kind of sound it is, I'll go for it.

GS: In fact, Eddie Jobson did some programming for *Breakout*, I hear.

JB: Yeah, he used our studio, and I was able to see his Synclavier setup and meet him—he's got some great sounds on that axe. So when it came time to do our record I said, "Hey Eddie, how about a couple of days of free studio time for some sessions, y'know?" [*laughs*] But Tom Schuman did all the actual playing; Eddie was there to help us with the equipment and programming.

GS: You're off on another tour now. You guys spend a lot of time on the road.

JB: The road has been our way of reaching people. Despite our early acceptance on radio, over the last four years our music has certainly not appeared on pop radio, and jazz radio has seen some hard times. So there wasn't much of an outlet for our music other than the road; it's been the only way to let people know that what we've been doing is worth listening to. I attribute a lot of our record sales to the fact that we're one of the touringest bands in the business. And *because* we're one of the touringest bands in the business, we've learned how to put on a good live show, how to reach an audience with our music—which usually isn't what they're used to seeing. It's not that we surprise a jazz audience, it's that we attract a lot of people who ordinarily wouldn't go to a traditional jazz concert. And they come back. We don't work out choreography or anything: it's not a rock show. The furthest we go that way is a well-coordinated light show. And because so much of what we do is indeterminate, our light man is improvising along with us; he may have preset things for individual sections of the tune, but as far as *when* those things are going to happen, he's got to catch the visual cues just like the rest of us. The show is exciting because we've learned how to go up there and make our music and show all the joy we have making it. If we're cavorting around stage it's because the music is happening and animates us, and the audience catches that and gives it back to us.

GS: You mentioned fusion before; it's a term I know you dislike.

JB: I don't know what it means. If you define fusion as a previously existing jazz form that combines with outside musical influences to come up with a hybrid, you are talking about the history of jazz from day one. What was jazz but a fusion between European and African music? Each decade jazz has been *replete* with fusion, whether it was Broadway shows combining with jazz or Afro-Cuban rhythms combining with jazz or Brazilian music combining with jazz. The concept of jazz revitalizing itself with outside elements and yet that hybrid still retaining the tradition and flavor of jazz *is* the history of jazz; and we are doing exactly that. It's our music, we love to play it, and I think time will show it's in the mainstream of the '80s. **db**

SPYRO GYRA'S EQUIPMENT

Jay Beckenstein plays Yamaha YS-6 soprano and alto sax prototypes. **Tom Schuman** uses a Memorymoog, a Multimoog, a Yamaha CP-70, a Yamaha GS-2, a Korg DW-8000, a Korg DW-6000, and an Emulator 1. **Dave Samuels** plays Musser M-55 and M-250 vibes as well as Musser orchestra bells, all of which he feeds through an Ayotte sensor system; he also uses a KAT mallet synth. **Julio Fernandez** plays Ronaldo custom electric guitars and Washburn acoustics, which he feeds into Sundown amps. **Kim Stone** plays a Tobias five-string electric bass and a Bass Shop vertical bass, which he runs through a Mesa Boogie head and a Guild Hartke speaker cabinet.

Richie Morales uses Pearl's GLX Superpro line. His two free-floating steel-and-copper-shell snares are six-and-a-half and five-and-a-half-inches; his deep-shelled toms are 10-, 12-, 13-, 14-, and 15-inches and are suspended from the Pearl rack. His electric drums are Pearl DRX-1. His cymbals are Zildjians: a 20-inch K-ride, 18-inch Brilliant K-crash, 19-inch A-crash/ride, 16-inch Dark K-crash, 20-inch A Chinaboy, 18-inch medium-thin A-crash, and 14-inch QuickBeat hi-hat. He also doubles on Latin Percussion Timbales as well as assorted LP cowbells. **Manolo Badrena** plays Latin Percussion congas, high-pitched timbales, and assorted cowbells and woodblocks. He also uses handmade drums, two eight-inch Paiste cymbals, Pearl Syncussion, an Ibanez Digital Delay/Harmonizer for voice, a turtle shell, and assorted shakeres.

SPYRO GYRA SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

BREAKOUT—MCA 5753
ALTERNATING CURRENTS—MCA 5606
ACCESS ALL AREAS—MCA 6893
CITY KIDS—MCA 5431
INCOGNITO—MCA 5368
FREETIME—MCA 5238
CARNAVAL—MCA 5149
CATCHING THE SUN—MCA 5108
MORNING DANCE—Infinity 9004
SPYRO GYRA—Amherst 1014

PHIL BRAY

That Old New Feeling

BUD SHANK

By Burt Korall

Bud Shank has made an admirable new beginning. For too long an anonymous sound on records, film and tv soundtracks, commercials, and jingles stemming from Hollywood, the veteran alto saxophonist and flutist has put studiowork behind him and is reaching out with a highly charged manner of jazz performance. His essential concern is *feeling*, sometimes rather potent in character, shaping and giving substance to his playing. He has buried the old Bud Shank.

The very essence of competence, the old Shank was always smooth and logical. His playing reminded this listener of a well-dressed gentleman: nothing out of place, everything blending, a feeling of elegance, taste, and control predominating. He was cool; his sound, mellifluous. Lee Konitz—a major influence, Art Pepper, and Paul Desmond had had their effect. Shank's playing caressed the ear. Primary emphasis was placed on the melodic line and how it moved. Shank seemed most concerned about the architecture of jazz solos—the building rather than what he had in it. Sometimes inner-directed passion broke through, bringing to his playing a bit of heat. But grab-your-lapels emotion was more the exception than the rule.

Basically a product of the 1950s—and the reaction, notably in California, to the starkness, the mixmaster of emotion and technique of Charlie Parker—Shank mirrored the reserve and sophistication of the music of the West Coast. He fit right in with the trend to structure and orchestration and restraint and melody. Miles Davis laid the groundwork with his *Birth Of The Cool* nonet sides in 1949 and '50; Gerry Mulligan followed through with his Tentette recordings. Shorty Rogers and Jimmy Giuffre and others carried it further, until "West Coast Jazz" became a full-grown movement. Shank, as an improvisor, offered all that was needed: a silken, thoughtful, melodious compound that mirrored the laidback Eisenhower years so well.

Although perfect for the times, he felt a lack in the music of the West Coast. In interviews he noted that a number of the players never got down "to good emotional swinging." He spoke frequently about making use of emotion. But he obviously had a problem bringing it to the surface. When he ultimately found the way to himself early in this decade, multiple feelings broke through. Organizing them in a potent but not arbitrarily abrasive way, he played—and continues to play—as he never had before, communicating with and impressing old friends, fans, and those of us who seldom paid close attention to him after his flash of recognition in the 1950s.

The jazz community's reaction to the new Bud Shank is typified by the reactions of three of his musical associates. Jimmy Giuffre says: "I've always liked his playing. But the wildness, the freedom in his work now—that surge is powerful, impossible to deny. The man is ferocious." Manny Albam concurs: "When we were working on my piece for him—*Concerto For Alto Sax And Orchestra*—during a rehearsal with the Royal Philharmonic in London about a year ago, I noticed how very musically mature Bud had become. I'd been listening to him since 1958, when he recorded Johnny Mandel's music for the film, *I Want To Live*, with Gerry Mulligan and a bunch of really good players. He did some commendable work then. But what he's currently into goes beyond being idiomatic; he plays in an inventive, original way." Adds Mel Lewis: "I wish Bud was in New York. I love the way he's playing. His stuff is harder, bolder, more heartfelt and swinging. He would fit with the best here."


TOM COPI

"In the beginning, when I was a kid," recalls Shank, "just being around music was enough. I began playing clarinet at 10 and saxophone three years later, while still in Ohio. That's where I'm from. But my family moved around a good deal; my dad was in the Army. Before I went out into the world at 20, we spent several years in North Carolina.

"I got my view of the world and music from radio. Though most young people might find it difficult to believe, there was no tv in those days. Radio introduced me to the big bands. They were exciting. I'd wait every night for the late remotes from hotels, ballrooms, and clubs around the country, featuring Goodman, Shaw, Miller, Krupa, Ellington, so many others.

"While living in North Carolina," Shank continues, "I experienced Jim Crow in reverse. White people weren't allowed in the place where the black bands played. But there was a section in the balcony for us. I was there every time a good band appeared. I heard Dizzy with Billy Eckstine, Lucky Millinder, Tiny Bradshaw, Basie. Lester Young became my idol. I sensed that Coleman Hawkins was very creative and sophisticated, but he didn't have what I needed."

Prez reached out strongly to the players of Shank's generation. His exploratory quality, purity of sound, and the charm and beauty inherent in his playing during the Basie years captured many. So tight was Prez's hold on most of his disciples that they could not accept anyone else. Brew Moore, one of the more interesting tenor players shaped by Young, once asserted, "If you don't play like Prez, you're wrong!" That's how it was.

That's how it was for Shank who, for three years, played tenor with a band based at the University of North Carolina, led by Johnny Satterfield. The young saxophonist learned a great deal; his associates were older and more experienced when it came to life and music. The music itself was adventurous and fashioned along Ellington and Lunceford lines. Part of the time, Shank attended the university, majoring in clarinet and then economics. The rest of his days and nights were devoted to the band, which played throughout the South on weekends. When Satterfield tried to make the ensemble a full-time proposition, he couldn't get sufficient bookings to justify the move and the band broke up.

Rather than go back to school, Shank borrowed money from his father and migrated to California in 1946. He'd already been making trips to New York to take saxophone lessons from Walter "Foots" Thomas and to listen to music, on a restricted budget. During these trips, he managed to hear Charlie Parker on 52nd Street and a Woody Herman concert at Carnegie Hall—"the one during which the band premiered Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto*."

Shank scuffled in Los Angeles. He was supposed to spend his father's money on school, but he did everything but that. He played in a few local bands, after joining the union, parked cars, cleaned houses, did a little second-hand studying. One of his roommates—four musicians shared one big room in the back of a house—took saxophone and flute lessons on the G.I. Bill, and spread the lessons around to his roommate, which is how Shank first learned to play flute.

Late in 1946, Shank joined Charlie Barnet on tenor. "I was hired along with two other kids—trumpeter Doc Severinsen and pianist Claude Williamson. Doc and I roomed together. There were some great players in the band, like Clark Terry and Jimmy Nottingham in the trumpet section and drummer Dick Shanahan. I had a good time; we did mostly theaters and concerts. I finally got a chance to play alto. Walt Weidler, the lead man, quit and I asked Charlie if I could have the chair. Being quite timid, it took a lot for me to make that request. But Charlie said okay. I guess he liked the freedom I had given him; until then, I had played all his solos while he was off the stand."

Though he continued to study his horns whenever time permitted—with Clifton Moore (saxophone) and Victor Goldring (flute)—Shank found the road the best teacher. He learned his craft playing in front of people. "I had no idea what I was doing when I first began playing jazz in Charlie's band," Shank says. "I let my ears do all the work. I *had* to do that. Most of the time, I didn't even know what key I was in. Sure, I did a lot of practicing on the road and, before that, back at school. It gave me an exterior that was deceiving. I had learned to play the *horn*, not the *changes*. I didn't have all the elements together. But my ears gave me an edge until I got into really serious studying in 1952."

One of the most crucial periods in Shank's career followed his leaving the Barnet band in 1949. He stopped traveling and put down roots in L.A. at about the same time as much of the Stan Kenton band did. Kenton was taking a respite between ideas. Jam sessions abounded. It was learning time. Shank notes, "We jammed seven nights a week all over Southern California. I'd generally get paid one night out of seven. The players were terrific. I made some marvelous friends: Shelly [Manne], Shorty [Rogers], Bob Cooper, Art Pepper, Teddy Edwards, Wardell Gray, Giuffre. That's when I began to develop as a soloist.

"I was recommended by my friends for a spot in the Kenton 'Innovations in Modern Music' Orchestra, a large ensemble with strings. I played lead alto and flute, so my jazz temporarily took a back seat. Art Pepper was in the band; he had all the alto solos. It was an exciting experience, a great time. I wish there was some way I could bottle what happened in 1949 and '50 and give it to young kids coming up."

Still an introvert, Shank profited from the Kenton experience. He began to loosen up. But West Coast Jazz began to take hold; it wasn't cool to be hot. Shank mingled a variety of experiences as the '50s unfolded. He had a fun gig with George Redmond's honkin', stompin' Blues and Jitterbug Band that played jitterbug contests in and around L.A. Then he spent three years (1953-56) at the Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach, a vitalizing 36 months that included associations with excellent players: Shorty Rogers, Shelly Manne, Claude Williamson, Max Roach, Jimmy Giuffre, Russ Freeman, Milt Bernhart, Howard Rumsey—the owner—and others. Playing almost every night gave Shank an opportunity to further sharpen his tools. But he was not yet ready to break loose.

The Bud Shank Quartet was formed in 1956 and lasted until 1959. The best work was done by the group including pianist Claude Williamson, bassist Don Prell, and former Woody Herman drummer Chuck Flores. Shank recorded a good deal on alto and flute—most of his albums on Pacific Jazz are long out-of-print—and began turning the corner when it came to expressing emotion. "I was changing, finding myself. The quartet records, particularly the live set at the Haig, show I was beginning to think a little differently. I no longer felt compelled to structure the perfect melodic line. I sensed I was starting to say more, to swing harder and more aggressively.

"But just as I was actually getting into a new thing, the bottom fell out of the jazz market. In 1963, clubs closed all over L.A. Jazz recording just about came to a halt. It was the beginning of the Dark Ages in California. There was nothing else I could do, so I went into the studios."

Shank made an occasional record, even had a hit with a single, *Michelle*. But the years of experimentation seemed to be over. There was no more recording with Laurindo Almeida or Ravi Shankar or with a Japanese koto player—the blending of Western ideas with other cultures. The movement to maturity on alto and flute halted. For well over a decade, Shank traveled no further than Burbank and began to shrivel on the vine.

"I was making a lot of money. Finally by the close of the '60s, I was so deep into the industrial studio life, I pretty much had given up the idea of ever having a chance to play again," Shank explains. "It was tragedy with a financial rainbow. I started racing sailboats. I was not practicing. I knew how much I could get away with in the studios. Then in 1975, with the renewed interest in jazz, I began to bail out. Someone called Laurindo and asked if we could do a local concert of the stuff we had done in the 1950s. It went very well and encouraged us. Ray Brown and I put together the LA 4, with Laurindo and Shelly. We thought there was a chance for jazz. But both Ray and I were gun-shy; that's why we organized a group as commercial as the LA 4.

"But the important thing," he adds, "was getting the juices flowing again. I became really interested in my horns. Other jazz jobs came my way. I looked back on where I'd been and got a pretty good idea where I might be going. I picked up where I left off and found I could open up. My sound was more muscular and real, less attractive than in the past. I'd just been on 'hold' for 12 years. One of the key things that allowed me to make contact with all that I felt was a physical change. I'd had an eye problem all my life. I was cross-eyed; it really bothered me. More times than not, I wanted to hide—no wonder I was inhibited. Well, I finally got it straightened out by a doctor. That had a hell of a lot to do with my confidence. It turned around a lot of things in my life that filtered down into my playing.

"That's when I decided I wanted to get the hell out of the studios. I'd had enough of that sort of oppression. I cleared my life of all that might get in the way of my music. The final happening in the chain of events was that I put aside the flute, for the most part, and decided to go for it—to be an alto saxophone soloist. That's always been my ambition. I've concentrated on the horn since 1982.

"I live in Port Townsend, Washington. My last link with the studio life in L.A. has been cut. I'm exclusively involved with jazz, as a player and composer and teacher. Of course my wife and I miss the money I made in the studios. But we're much happier. That's what is really important.

"I've worked with Shorty, and a lot as a soloist," Shank points out. "I make the kind of records that feel good to me. I'm particularly satisfied with the Muse and Contemporary quartet albums. On both I play with a strong, challenging rhythm section. Though my playing is freer and far more emotional than it ever was, I don't listen to people you might suspect had an effect on me—like Ornette. I spend my spare time with the recordings of Bill Evans, Zoot Sims, Al Cohn, and Stan Getz.

"What do I envision down the line? Just playing and learning. I feel the time in the woodshed will lead me into the future. The good things I learn keep coming out in my playing. As long as I remain excited about performing and making progress, I'm going to keep at it. I feel young again, having made this new beginning. I'm fortunate to have had another chance. Not too many people are allowed that second time around in music." **db**

TOM COPI

BUD SHANK'S EQUIPMENT

"I use a Yamaha alto saxophone, model YAS 6X6—the X indicates experimental," says Bud Shank. "I also still own five 'balanced action' Selmers, made between 1934-38. They were the horns I played from 1948—when I was with the Charlie Barnet band—until 1984, when I got the Yamaha.

"As for my flutes, I have two different instruments made by Pearl: the SS98E (closed hole) for my jazz work and an SS800RBE (open hole) for my classical concerts."

BUD SHANK SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

THAT OLD FEELING—Contemporary 14019
THIS BUD IS FOR YOU—Muse 5309
LIVE AT THE HAIG—Bainbridge/Choice 6830
CRYSTAL COMMENTS—Concord Jazz 126
HERITAGE—Concord Jazz 58
SUNSHINE EXPRESS—Concord Jazz 20
EXPLORATIONS: 1980—Concord Concerto 2002
SELECTED CLASSICAL WORKS FOR FLUTE AND GUITAR—Concord Concerto 2003

with Martin Scot Koscins

SONGS OF THE SEEKER—Open Sky 2251

with Shorty Rogers

CALIFORNIA CONCERTS—Contemporary 14012
YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOREVER—Concord Jazz 223
BACK AGAIN—Bainbridge/Choice 6829

with LA 4

EXECUTIVE SUITE—Concord Jazz 215
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The Ganelin Trio
Jazz Detente

By Howard Mandel

"Good mornink. America!" Leningrad expatriate editor, radio and record producer Leo Feigin beamed in total innocence to hundreds of thousands of early morning television viewers, and within moments of NBC *Today Show* co-host Jane Pauley's recovery ("Er, that's the other network . . .") we were watching the Ganelin Trio, the first Soviet-sponsored jazz ensemble ever to tour the U.S., launch their seriously silly improvisation on *Mack The Knife*.

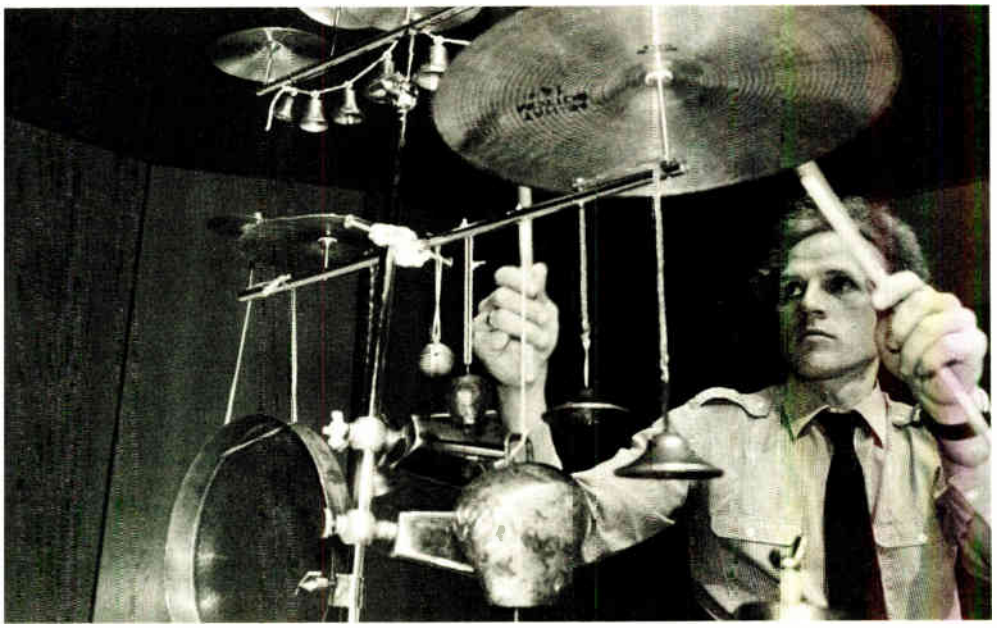
The camera focused on Vladimir Tarasov's hand—he held a small, cracked ping cymbal—then the angle widened to include Vladimir Chekasin, who had two saxes hanging from his neck, and a pair of wood flutes stuffed in one of the bells. At the piano was Vyacheslav Ganelin, deep circles under his eyes, like most jazz players at 8:55 am. Though he'd been in North America less than 24 hours, he was ready for anything.

After all, he's led the most seriously radical trio to operate under Soviet government sanctions since 1971; what could they do that's new? Chekasin, at least, takes that question as a challenge, and in the first performances of a 21-day, 16-city tour (some venues played twice, so very little rest along the way) the saxophonist from Sverdlovsk, 1,000 miles east of Moscow, blew a gritty, harsh wind that Ganelin caught in his two hands and applied to the grand piano and synth keyboards, while Tarasov found clever ways to capture and combine their contrasting energies with brushes and sticks on traps kit and strands of tinkling chimes.

Sound familiar? Yes, the Ganelin Trio's music, though it employs some classical structures and occasionally quotes folk themes from the myriad ethnicities who live in the U.S.S.R., are not unlike such post-Ayler, Coleman, Coltrane, and Taylor innovators as the Art Ensemble of Chicago, the Jazz Composers Orchestra, and Steve Lacy. They respectfully cite these Americans, and others from Louis Armstrong to John Zorn, when asked what jazz players they know of "over there."

Though it's not easy to obtain records from the West in the Soviet Union—it's illegal to send Soviet rubles out of the country, and there's a stiff import tax required to receive more than one record in a package sent as a gift from the West; mailed cassettes are either returned or confiscated—it's long been possible to hear the new music, whether on Voice of America broadcasts or by picking up East Berlin, Poland, Czechoslovakia, or Finland on shortwave radio. Besides, the Ganelin Trio has been traveling in Western Europe since 1980, and has had the chance to shop. Their tastes are ecumenical: Ganelin wants to hear new electronic and contemporary symphonic compositions; Tarasov is interested in solo drums and percussion ensemble productions; Chekasin loves the first Golden Palominos album, with its funk-heavy Tacuma and Laswell bottom, it's raw Lindsay and Zorn top. They aren't alone in these enthusiasms at home (which is now, for all three, Vilnius, Lithuania, where Ganelin was born). There's an avid fandom for the latest art, aural or otherwise, in both large cities and small towns, from Tbilisi on the Turkish border to Odessa on the Black Sea to Tallin on the west coast to Arkhangelsk on the northern White Sea, Tarasov's hometown.

Since the late 1970s, music from the East has appeared in the West mostly on Leo Records, the independent label Leo Feigin has tirelessly promoted, despite limited distribution and scarce personal funds. Though East Wind Records is presently licensing officially produced Melodya discs for sale in the U.S., including Ganelin's *Poi Segué*, Leo is responsible for nine "unofficial" Ganelin



Trio albums and some 30 other recordings by such valuable voices as pianist Sergei Kuryokhin and tenor saxist Anatoly Vapirov; besides working for the BBC's Russian service, Feigin recently compiled an anthology of essays on underground and official new music from the Soviet Union, titled *Russian Jazz: New Identity* (Quartet Books). Feigin's edge of fanatic support for his cause may have mellowed, but none of his dedication has subsided. As only Tarasov of the Ganelin Trio speaks English with any fluency, Feigin's translation of a breakfast discussion on the morning of the Trio's U.S. debut at the New York/JVC Jazz Festival was most helpful.

"Chekasin says Ganelin started enjoying the U.S. tour even before he left the Soviet Union," Feigin offered to a table including, besides the trio, John Ballard of the Space Agency, which set up the dates after negotiations with the Soviet booking agency Gosconcert starting in summer of 1984. Ganelin had heard the tour was being okayed last December, after Ballard found possibilities improving rapidly following the Reagan/Gorbachev summit in Geneva, Switzerland, in November '85. Ganelin, who first became interested in music at age four, imitating an older sister at the piano, "twiddling, trying to play tunes," is from a Jewish family; his mother worked in health services, and his father, though long retired, was a highly placed civil servant, a position which can result in many valuable perquisites in the U.S.S.R., including permission to travel to the West.

"There's a photo of me with a small accordion I was playing at age four; they hung up a blanket as a background, so I always say I was playing from behind my baby blanket," Ganelin grins as Feigin relates. "Chekasin," he suggests, "was playing *before* he was born."

"But I started playing the piano first, and the violin, also at age six," says Chekasin through Feigin; he's apparently uncomfortable talking about the Ganelin Trio, or about music theory or himself in general, though later he tells me if I ask him a direct question he will, of course, answer it. The degree of tension between Chekasin, who is reputed to be a man of action, sometimes gruff, crude, or rude, and Ganelin, more obviously refined and intellectually polished, seems even greater off the bandstand than on. "Since that time, I can't stand the violin. And the biggest joke for me today is to break a violin on stage, in public. I was 10 years old when I started to play clarinet, and took up saxophone when I was 16." Besides alto and soprano saxes and flutes, Chekasin still plays clarinet and bass clarinet, and sometimes plucks at a fiddle hung over his shoulder.

"Chekasin went through music school, the Sverdlovsk Conservatory, finishing in 1970," Feigin continues. "Ganelin says he's still in music school. Now he's a teacher."

Less of a distinction is made between contemporary classical music and advanced jazz in the U.S.S.R. than here, and Ganelin doesn't mind his ensemble being called a jazz band—in fact, he prefers that honorific. "They started as a jazz band," Feigin translates, "and very often still they play jazz. When someone says they don't play jazz, Ganelin tries to defend the band. He considers the basic elements of jazz are a swinging sound and improvisation; the rest is extra. Because you can play some contemporary symphonic music with an element of swing rhythm, but without improvisation, it's not the same as jazz, and aleatorics—chance operations—give you a chance to improvise, but it's not jazz because it doesn't swing. They consider that they play jazz because of these elements, although both their public and their critics sometimes think what they play is outside the category of jazz.

"Already, Chekasin disagrees," Feigin sighs. "He says the music he plays speaks for itself—because sometimes the music he plays *isn't* jazz." A lone wolf freelancer when not teaching, Chekasin works with gutsy rock and pop people, too.

"For Ganelin, jazz is a very broad term; otherwise, there is no development, and he doesn't want to limit himself to certain styles," Feigin says. "The point of view that jazz is narrow, rather than broad, exists in Europe, too, but Ganelin says it really depends upon the individual's background and sophistication. If you want to remove the word jazz, you can say they play contemporary music with elements of improvisation. But Ganelin believes jazz refers to swing first and foremost.

"Maybe they consider swing a little differently than others do," he goes on. "For them it's the attack, the getting of the sound, the momentum, those tiny fractions of each second, which provides swing. It's what gives you the urge to continue forward, even without regular rhythm. After the pulse, the sound still travels, it lives, it's there. Even within the silence there is this sound, this swing."

Tarasov says in English, "We see musicians who swing, even in classical music. A few years ago the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, with Seiji Ozawa conducting, played the Soviet Union. This was classical music—the first piano concerto of Tchaikovsky—and they had fantastic swing, a very active attack. When music doesn't have this attack, it's not alive. Even the Soviet state symphony orchestras play this kind of thing sometimes, if maybe subconsciously." Tarasov completed two months on the road as percussionist in the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra before coming to the States.

"Jazz, more than any other art form, we Americans consider ours . . .," I begin.

"And that's correct," Tarasov concludes. "Mainstream, bebop, it's all American."

"The essence and development of this music is purely American, and that's something they understood from a very young age," Feigin indicates Ganelin's concurrence. "But they didn't care that it was American music—what was important to them was that they liked it. The first music of this kind Ganelin heard, for example, was Czech."

Were they familiar with Alexander Tsfasman and Leonid Utesov, the Stalinist era jazz players documented by S. Frederick Starr in his history *Red And Hot: The Fate Of Jazz In The Soviet Union*?

"Yes, of course, that music was very widely known. But they realized at a very early age that it was light entertainment. Maybe both Utesov and Tsfasman, at the

MITCHELL SEIDEL

very beginning, tried to play jazz, but later on they became entertainers with small bits of sentimental improvisation."

So Ganelin, Tarasov, and Chekasin recognize that seriousness of purpose—though not lack of humor—is another aspect of jazz?

"Yes, of course," Feigin supplies. "Tarasov says that symphonic music deals only with notes, and they're kind of eternal, they're always going to be there. But what is important in making jazz is the moment, now, nowness. And Ganelin says jazz expresses the essence of the human being, his character, his personality, his individuality. Because jazz is the only music which gives you direct communication with other people. Some time ago, he says, he was given the task of writing a classical opera. But he decided to introduce jazz elements, as far as methods of making sounds, and the opera became alive."

"It was for the City Opera, called *The Redheaded Liar And The Soldier*," Tarasov explains. "The redheaded liar was a woman." Oh, of course.

"It's very difficult to explain such things, Ganelin says, and he's very happy you understand this," Feigin flatters me. "There are critics who refuse to understand: on the surface, it seems they know a lot, but in reality, they refuse to cross the borders."

Tarasov interjects that there's another important feeling he has while playing, namely that he doesn't want to interfere with the process, the flow of inspiration, coming from within himself. There is a stream of subconsciousness, or consciousness, that he doesn't want to disturb.

Yet whenever Feigin describes the Ganelin Trio's process, he claims it's a struggle of musical wills. "That's the essence of it, a clash of ideas," Feigin affirms. "Each of them has a personal viewpoint concerning the structure they've improvised. Sometimes they break the structure, sometimes they try to sustain it. When they play, the flow, the balance of their playing, the communication amongst them all—I think that's what Tarasov doesn't want to disturb, but to encourage or accent or sustain. From my point of view, their best album showing this is *Catalogue, Live In East Germany*."

The three musicians think they're envied by classical musicians in the Soviet Union, rather than criticized by them for trying to express themselves. "They're very popular amongst violinists, organists—but everyone comes to hear them," Feigin asserts. "The music is universal, and people understand that. They don't divide music into genres, or favorite genres. But," he hesitates as Ganelin makes a point, "he says all over the world there are people who love classical music, but don't like contemporary music. He always asks why. Because they don't understand music in general. The old classical music, he thinks, is easier to perceive because one can sing it; there are points of departure, very easy ways to start, and the various arrangements, the movements of harmony, are understood. But a person with deep appreciation of contemporary music, he knows what music texture is, and if he's trained well, he can appreciate classical music for its subtleties, and contemporary music for its supersubtleties."

For Tarasov, a lover of modern art and architecture, contemporary directions began in the '20s, and in the U.S.S.R. have continued to develop, with certain intervals of interruption, ever since. "It may be that certain things happen faster in the East, and different things develop faster in the West," he concedes. "It's difficult to compare how productive artists are in different societies. But the process of development is happening all over, if in somewhat different ways." Furthermore, gaps between developments in the arts, worldwide, are closing with the increased availability of information, Tarasov believes. He mentions proudly that his friend the painter Eric Blotov was awarded a top prize in a recent Chicago international exhibition of art. But when I suggest that the trio must be proud to be in the vanguard of musical communication, as it's practiced worldwide, all three demur.

"It's not for their own sakes they're proud—they don't think about it," Feigin says. "They're glad that they're contributing something, when it happens, and they're very happy that someone understands what they're doing. What they hope for in the States, as any artists hope for, is that audiences trust them—they trust the audience with their art. It would be nice if audiences trust the musicians, because nobody deceives them. They hope," and Ganelin, Tarasov, and Chekasin nod in agreement with Feigin's translation, "that the audiences will not have any blinders on, and don't reject what they give them. They hope to see audiences who come to their concerts with open minds." **db**

THE GANELIN TRIO'S EQUIPMENT

The most sophisticated musical instruments and supplies aren't as readily available to Soviet musicians as one might assume, and pianist **Vyacheslav Ganelin**, who has ambitious ideas concerning synthesizers, fears he's "perhaps a little behind."

"We—the Ganelin Trio—are always looking for colors; instrumentally, there are never enough," he comments through interpreter Leo Feigin. "Of course, we could always invite a big orchestra, but then one very important detail would be lost—what I call 'good egotism.' That's when you feel, 'At *this* moment trumpets should come in, strings should come in, while I improvise.' And improvise not only on the piano—I want to initiate the whole arrangement of the entire notated orchestration. That would be the highest, the ultimate pleasure. If you have an orchestra that responds to someone's suggestions—well, that's a start.

"There was a stage in my life when I rejected electronics, when they were at a stage of being purely electronic. But now when you have clever machines—which unfortunately I haven't, but which I'm looking for—I welcome them. I used to have to put a guitar on my piano, not because I'm a master of the guitar or even play it, but because I needed its special sound. I'd take a bow and try to get the sound of a string orchestra. Only when I needed it, of course.

"I'm using a Roland GX3P; this is the synthesizer I've been able to afford. I'd be happy to find and buy a sampler while I'm here, if I have the money. I'd love to be able to record any voice, any noise, the sound of a symphony orchestra, so then I could play with a symphony orchestra, but my music, my chords, my notes, my passages—at *this* particular moment. The Yamaha DX7 is a good machine, I understand. But I've never seen one with a sampler."

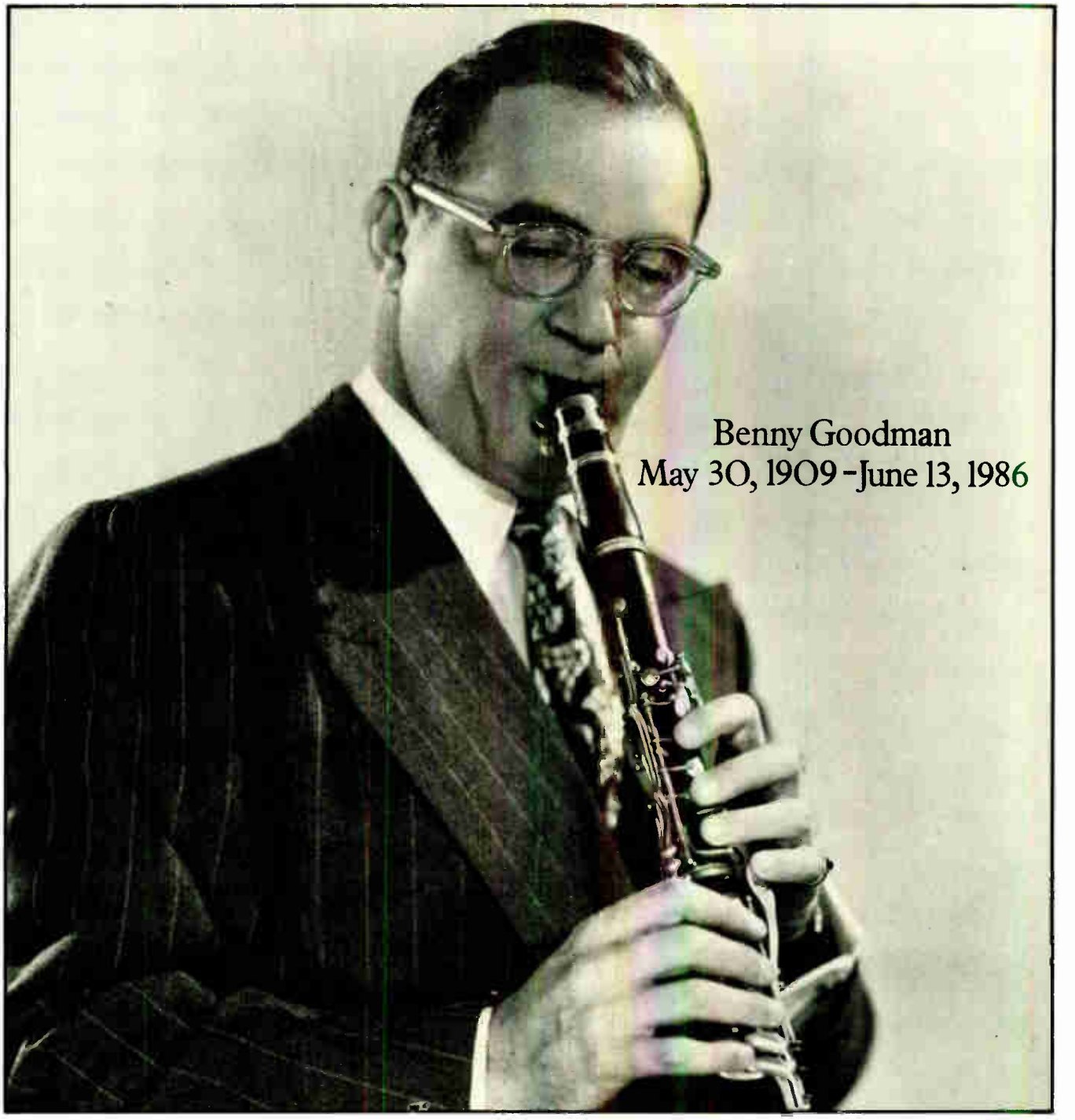
Like most pianists, Ganelin, who plays both the keyboard and the inside of a conventional grand, is at the mercy of the instrument he's provided by various venues. In the U.S., Ganelin added a polyphonic Casiotone, had a small drum machine within reach, and a small cymbal he could bang; he bought an Octopad and spent free time in musical instrument stores. Percussionist **Vladimir Tarasov** traveled with only his own strand of bells and gongs, borrowing drum kits enroute; he's a Sonor endorsee and loves the sound of his own kit. **Vladimir Chekasin** has a Selmer alto and soprano sax, but his second alto and clarinets are of Czechoslavakian make.

GANELIN TRIO SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

POI SEGUÉ—East Wind 20647
NON TROPPO—hat Art 2027
CON AFFETTO—Leo 137
VIDÉ—Leo 117
CON FUOCO—Leo 106
NEW WINE . . .—Leo 112
ANCORA DA CAPO PART 1—Leo 108
ANCORA DA CAPO PART 2—Leo 109
CATALOGUE, LIVE IN EAST GERMANY—Leo 102
STRICTLY FOR OUR FRIENDS—Leo 120

Vladimir Chekasin

NOSTALGIA—Leo 119



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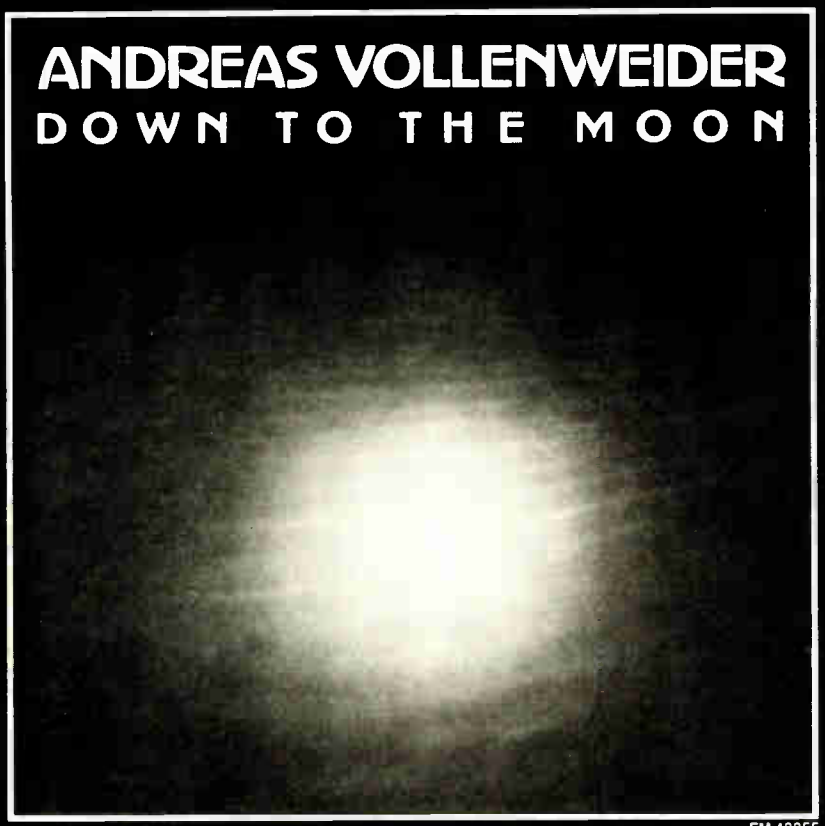
ANDREAS VOLLENWEIDER
DOWN TO THE MOON



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8/31 Pine Knob, Detroit
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9/27 Greek Theatre, Berkeley
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9/30 Greek Theatre, Los Angeles

Additional dates to be announced.

FREDDIE HUBBARD/ WOODY SHAW

DOUBLE TAKE—Blue Note 85121: *Sandu; Boperation; Lament For Booker; Hub-Tones; Desert Moonlight; Just A Ballad For Woody; Lotus Blossom.*

Personnel: *Hubbard, trumpet, flugelhorn; Shaw, trumpet; Kenny Garrett, alto saxophone, flute; Mulgrew Miller, piano; Cecil McBee, bass; Carl Allen, drums.*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

At the end of the '70s, when Woody Shaw's career took its deserved upswing, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard felt the heat of his competition and stylistic kinship. Both were then with Columbia; their friendly rivalry intensified, but no two-trumpet recording occurred until now, with *Double Take* for a revived Blue Note label. Giants within the same generation playing the same instrument have seldom taken so long to collaborate on an album, but Hubbard and Shaw sharing the spotlight was as inevitable as the *Tenor Madness* of Rollins and Coltrane or Dexter with Jackie McLean.

Hubbard is not many years Shaw's senior, but he (and his late contemporary, Booker Little) pursued individualistic lines of descent from Clifford Brown. Capable of arabesque runs and a blistering attack, Hubbard's trumpet style became the first in modern jazz to display the thinking and energy of a saxophonist. And his manner on the instrument can signify with the humorously brilliant impudence that mocks its Brownish inspiration in favor of a much older school. Credit Art Blakey for realizing Woody Shaw's similar tone and attack and placing him in an unrecorded Messenger front line with Carlos Garnett.

Fans and pundits have had over two decades to compare the merits of each and debate a favorite's superiority. The careful listener can certainly move beyond the seemingly mirror identities heard on this album, which should refresh the jazz spirit from current musical distractions and stupors. The two agreed on seldom performed tunes from the trumpet/small group repertoire—like Fats Navarro's *Boperation*, Brown's *Sandu*, and Lee Morgan's Eastern-flavored *Desert Moonlight* for uptempo vehicles—which the entire group perform flawlessly. Flutist/altoist Kenny Garrett, a welcomed new voice in jazz, makes the most of his single choruses, sections, and occasional ensemble colorations. Don Sickler contributed excellent arrangements, achieving a near-arresting quality from flute and Hubbard's flugelhorn on *Just A Ballad For Woody*, a Shavian showcase co-authored by his wife, and with Shaw's trumpet backing flugelhorn on Hubbard's *Lament For Booker*.

These ballad features, and the Kenny Dorham number, *Lotus Blossom* (aka *Asiatic Raes*), offer superb comparisons of the brassmen, especially the latter, a quintet outing propelled into high gear by the world-class teamwork and consistency of the rhythm section. Hubbard is the more idiosyncratic of the two—he's certainly the unpredictable one, executing flamboyant runs and stratospheric blisters, or deliberately distorting his timbre to make a point. Shaw's noticeable reserve does not belie outright caution; soloing with a measured intensity is his forte. Choosing Mulgrew Miller as his current pianist and for this date, Shaw acknowledges both their propensity for arpeggios and phrases established by McCoy Tyner—having made the Tynerish contours his own some years back. The eight-bar exchanges closing *Lotus Blossom* crackle with fiery splendor. Everybody wins here! —*ron welburn*

JAN HAMMER

THE EARLY YEARS—Nemperor 40382: *The Seventh Day; Plants And Trees; Bambu Forest; Oceans And Continents; The Animals; Your Love; Night; I Remember Me.*

Personnel: *Hammer, piano, synthesizers, drums, percussion; Steve Kindler, violin (cuts 1,5); Jerry Goodman, violin, viola (7,8); Fernando Saunders, bass (3,6); Tony Smith, drums (3,6); David Earle Johnson, percussion (3,5,6)*

★ ★ ★

This compilation of previously released material is cashing in on two phenomena—*Miami Vice* and the New Age boom. Perhaps the folks at Columbia thought they were sitting on a goldmine when they acquired the Nemperor catalog from Atlantic. This stuff does tie in neatly with the relaxing, meditative sounds of the New Age movement, and the record provides an interesting look back at the history of someone who has become a highly profiled pop soundtrack star.

Jan Hammer is the resident soundscape architect for *Miami Vice*, and as such his music is heard by more people in one week than all the fusion freaks who bought Mahavishnu Orchestra records in the early '70s. *The Early Years* draws chiefly from two Hammer solo albums—his 1974 debut, *Like Children* (which featured Mahavishnu bandmate Jerry Goodman), and his 1975 followup, *The First Seven Days* (both of which received four stars in **down beat** when they were first issued). While *The Seventh Day* and *Oceans And Continents*, structurally speaking, recall the minimalist, meditative mode favored by George Winston and the Windham Hill gang, Hammer's virtuoso mini-Moog noodling on top of the singsong flow is actually too busy and too challenging to pass as the pablum that is currently being marketed as New Age music. (Sorry, Jan. As Emperor Joseph II said of an early Mozart work, "Too many notes!")

Bambu Forest, from the '76 Jan Hammer Group album, *Oh, Yeah?*, recalls the dark and fiery fusion of the Mahavishnu Orchestra (with a noticeable absence of guitar) while the spacious Middle Eastern/African percussion piece *The Animals* (from *The First Seven Days*) is along the lines of early Weather Report exotica. *Night*, a moody duet with Goodman, sounds like the score for an ominous evening in New York City. Eerie, haunting, melancholy, it certainly evokes an atmosphere of forboding, just as Hammer's pieces do now, some 10 years later, for *Miami Vice*.

All told, the collection is mildly engaging with some peaks of excitement. A must for New Agers and *Vice*-aholics. —*bill milkowski*

CEDAR WALTON

BLUESVILLE TIME—Criss Cross Jazz 1017: *Rubberman; Naima; Bluesville; I Remember Clifford; Ojos De Rojos.*

Personnel: *Walton, piano; Dale Barlow, tenor saxophone; David Williams, bass; Billy Higgins, drums.*

★ ★ ★ ★

LOVE IS THE THING—Red 189: *Naima; Easy To Love; My Old Flame; Easy Living; I Didn't Know What Time It Was; 415 Central Park West; What's New.*

Personnel: *Walton, piano; Steve Grossman, tenor saxophone; David Williams, bass; Billy Higgins, drums.*

★ ★ ★ ★

Since the rhythm section is the same, the main difference in these albums lies in the tenor men. Barlow, 25 at the time of this session in Holland, was born in Sydney, Australia, and is a Coltrane disciple. (That's Trane circa 1960.) Grossman, eight years older than Barlow, served a youthful year (1969) with a Miles Davis band-in-transition, of course, and has developed into a hard-blowing Rollins disciple. *Love Is The Thing* was recorded in Italy one month after *Bluesville Time*.

I don't mean any disparagement by these references to Trane and Sonny. Both Barlow and Grossman can cut the changes up, down, and sideways. Barlow is more fluid, Grossman

Guitar Appeal

"One thing about guitar playing in jazz is that very few people have transcended the problem of dynamics," said Pat Metheny in an interview published in the June 1986 issue of **db**. He continued: "The so-called traditional 'jazz guitar sound' [is] not that appealing to a lot of listeners. It's very easy for the guitar to become monodynamic."

Metheny's remark stuck in my mind as I listened to these albums, a sample of players working in (or near) the mainstream and favoring the "so-called traditional 'jazz guitar sound.'" There *was* a disturbing sameness to many of these albums: too many stale bebop licks; too many long, even, "monodynamic" lines; too many unimaginative arrangements of familiar standards. The problem, ultimately, is not one of technique—all of these guitarists have chops—but *emotion*.

What makes an album emotionally involving? That's subjective, to an extent, but the "sound of surprise" has a lot to do with it. That expression, coined by the critic Whitney Balliett, describes the element of unfamiliarity that captures our imagination. Music that is completely new is bewildering, while music that is completely familiar is boring. The best music combines new and old ideas in a way that is both reassuring and stimulating.

One guitarist who has never been afraid of doing something new—sometimes to the point of bewildering his listeners—is **Larry Coryell**. Once a disciple of Kenny Burrell, Coryell ventured far afield into fusion during the '70s but is now intent on establishing himself as a mainstream player. On *Equipoise* (Muse 5319), his tone is close to the traditional sound but retains its razor edge. Coryell has gone full circle but hasn't forgotten where he's been: you can hear John McLaughlin as well as Burrell in his solos. But mostly it's pure Coryell. He goes out of his way to break up his lines with pauses, abrupt leaps, double-time outbursts, harmonics, and other surprising sounds. His phrasing—always an adventure—is more precarious than ever. Perhaps most important is his control of dynamics—he hammers out certain notes for emphasis, while smoothly stringing others together. His sidemen, especially drummer Billy Hart and pianist Stanley Cowell, are solid and ingenious. The material is well-chosen, too, especially Clifford Brown's *Joy Spring*, Cowell's *Equipoise*, and Coryell's *Unemployed Floyd*, with Pamela Sklar's calm flute contrasting with the manic guitar.

Even better than *Equipoise* is *Together* (Concord Jazz 289), Coryell's duet album with **Emily Remler**. Without a rhythm section to anchor him, Coryell is more rambunctious, rattling off long runs and slashing his way through the changes. There's another version of *Joy Spring* here; Coryell plays some of the same figures but goes beyond them into uncharted territory before circling back to a contrapuntal dialog with Remler. In the face of Coryell's outbursts, Remler is cool and unflappable. Her even-tempered playing—which can be monotonous on its own—makes her the perfect foil for Coryell. She strums calmly behind Coryell's solos and threads melodies through his busy comping.

The energy and unpredictability of the Coryell/Remler exchanges is in sharp contrast to the music on most of the other albums. Consider **Steve Brown**'s *Good Lines* (Cafe 731), for instance. The production is sparkling and the music is impeccably played, with Brown's elegant guitar backed by pianist Bill Dobbins, bassist Steve Gilmore, and drummer Bill Goodwin. Every note is so carefully placed it's almost painful. In the end, it's just too controlled—like a portrait painted only in shades of gray. **Rick Stone**'s *Blues For Nobody* (Jazzanne 2001) is a little looser but suffers from a similar problem. Stone's laconic, Jimmy Raney-influenced style is too cautious to be very involving. The material doesn't help; the originals are generic bebop—and *Autumn Leaves* hardly qualifies as a daring selection. The rhythm section, anchored by Billy Hart (obviously a favorite with guitarists), is buoyant but can't quite lift the music out of the doldrums.

Hart turns up again on **Doug Raney**'s *Guitar Guitar Guitar* (SteepleChase 1212), a trio session recorded in Copenhagen. Raney's group is democratic; Hart and bassist Mads Vinding have plenty of room to operate, and you can hear the ideas flowing back and forth. The album's highpoint is *Minor Majority*, on which Raney tosses off long, convoluted lines and Hart flings back crisp responses. Give-and-take with another instrument is a good way for a guitarist to shake the monodynamic blues, but it has its pitfalls, as demonstrated by **Joe Carter** on *My Foolish Heart* (Empathy 1004). Carter enlisted Art Farmer as a sideman—a good idea, but the flugelhornist steals the show. I'm sure that wasn't Farmer's intention, but he simply outswings Carter, who sounds flat-footed and hesitant. Carter's thin, fragile guitar sound accentuates the problem.

In contrast to the simple, small-band approach of the albums considered so far, **John Basile** opted for grandiose, CTI-style production on *Very Early* (SeaBreeze 2024). Basile gets a big sound and selects his notes carefully, letting the orchestra fill out the sound behind him. It's great dinner music, and Basile chose some excellent tunes, including Billy Strayhorn's *Isfahan*. Unfortunately, the fancy production can't cover for a lack of original ideas. The California guitarist **Calvin Keys** also took a production-oriented approach on his album *Full Court Press* (Olive Branch 5453). Instead of violins, Keys went for synthesizers, cooing background vocals, and a commercial funk backbeat—but the net effect is about the same: slick and unexciting. Keys does work up a head of steam on the title cut, but it's the last thing on the album. Too little, too late.

Nathen Page's *A Page of Ellington* (Hugo's Music 110) is at the opposite end of the production spectrum: just solo guitar and the vocals of Ronnie Wells. It's hard to find fault with an all-Ellington program, but why record *Satin Doll*, *Mood Indigo*, and *Take The "A" Train* when there are so many wonderful Ellington tunes that haven't been done thousands of times already? Maybe Page felt he had to play it safe. He certainly does as a player, using a thumb-and-fingers style a la Wes Montgomery and hardly ever rising above a whisper.

Restraint is also the order of the day on the album (Unisson 1002) made by Canadian guitarist **Lorne Lofsky** and his "friend"—fellow Canadian **Ed Bickert.** Both Lofsky and Bickert favor the traditional sound, although both use non-traditional, solid-body instruments (Lofsky's is a Les Paul, Bickert's a Telecaster). Lofsky and Bickert are not exactly rock & rollers, however. There's little fire on the album, although there is some good material, including Steve Swallow's *Falling Grace* and Tom McIntosh's *The Cupbearers*. Part of the problem is that their styles are too similar—or, perhaps, that Bickert was being too polite. Playing with his own quartet on *I Wished On The Moon* (Concord Jazz 284), Bickert is much more energetic and colorful. He's especially masterful at weaving counterpoint with saxophonist Rick Wilkens, and he really gets *down* on Milt Jackson's *Blues For Tommy Oki*. Bickert's single-note lines are quirky and angular. Some of them trail off as if he were muttering under his breath; others end with abrupt question marks or imaginative substitutions.

If Ed Bickert's solos have the flat accent of Western Canada, then **Cal Collins** plays with a Midwestern twang. His album *Crack'd Rib* (MoPro 107) is a loose, unassuming collection of blues and swing tunes that might be the sleeper in this bunch. It's fun. Despite a weird mix (the piano is in the next county), Collins comes through clearly as a warm, relaxed player with more than a few novel ideas and an expansive sense of humor. **John Collins** (no relation) is a veteran swing player whose credits include stints with Art Tatum, Nat Cole, and Billy Taylor. His album (Nilva 3412) has solo, duo, trio, and quartet (with trumpeter Sweets Edison) selections. The material is all standards, but Collins has more than a few original ideas about how to play them. He mixes single-note lines with chord melody passages very effectively and has the melodic instincts of a great singer (not surprisingly, since he has backed Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, and Frank Sinatra). Most importantly, John Collins just flat-out *swings*.

The late **Lenny Breau** was a guitarist with a concept so original that it bordered on eccentricity. Like Coryell, he broke up his lines with rapid figures, pulloffs, arpeggios, and other non-linear devices. He knew bebop, but he was more likely to choose a Bob Dylan song than *Groovin' High* as a vehicle. *The Lenny Breau Trio* (Adelphi 5018) documents his style, but the album (a remastering of a direct-to-disc recording) suffers from brittle and uneven sound. Still, Breau's originality is unmistakable on *You Needed Me*, a duet with Chet Atkins, and

especially on the second side of the album. The two pieces, listed as Breau compositions, are fantasies based on standards: *Neptune* begins as *Green Dolphin Street*; *Claude (Free Song)* takes off from *The Shadow Of Your Smile*. This is hardly a flawless album, but it's one that guitarists ought to hear.

The Norwegian guitarist **Thorgeir Stubø** is a hard-bopper solidly in the tradition of Wes Montgomery, Jim Hall, and Pat Martino. In that respect, his album *Flight* (Hot Club 25) is a fairly predictable mainstream effort. But the ballads are unusual: Stubø plays them on acoustic guitar with a refreshing folksiness and clarity. His lines are strong and simple, and his interpretation of Wayne Shorter's *Fall* (backed only by electric piano) is strikingly original. **Jean-Pierre Llabador**, a young French player, sticks to the electric guitar, but his tone alternates between the mellow, traditional sound and the crisp, jangly sound of early Pat Metheny. The 11 tunes on *Coincidences* (Breakthru 4) are all originals that range from bop to samba to ECM-ish impressionism. Llabador's style needs some refinement, but his "post-modern" approach is promising.

Guitarist **Peter O'Mara** of the trio Sun Dial has abandoned the traditional sound altogether in favor of the early-Metheny tone (which seems to be emerging as the mainstream sound of the '80s). Not surprisingly, Sun Dial's album (RST 120840) sounds more than a little like *Watercolors* and its many clones. The group is a little too cerebral, perhaps, although there are some pleasantly weird vocal chants that break up the atmospheric improvisations. Even more audacious is the **David Widelock** Trio, a slightly nutty group whose music on *Too Many Vitamins* (Beegum 001) falls somewhere in the middle of a triangle defined by the mainstream, the AACM, and Windham Hill. Widelock plays a big-body electric jazz guitar but also uses six- and 12-string acoustics to get more variety on offbeat tunes with titles like *Squeak's Suite* and *Expletive Deleted*. Widelock may not be the next trendsetter on guitar, but he gets points for originality.

Taken as a group, these albums are marked by a stylistic conservatism that seems artificial and outdated. The tradition of the jazz guitar is certainly a worthy one, and there will always be an audience for solid mainstream playing. But it's worth remembering just how daring the electric guitar once seemed. The future of jazz, I think, will belong to those musicians who can connect the emotional core of the music with the emerging technology for shaping sound—just as Charlie Christian did in the early 1940s. The guitar, with its wide range of expressive possibilities, could be the one instrument best suited for taking the mainstream into the future. Not every guitarist should rush out and buy a synthesizer, of course, but I think Pat Metheny had a valid point when he questioned the appeal of the traditional tone. He's right to encourage his fellow guitarists to explore the sounds available to them.

—jim roberts

more abrasive. Both show the fashionable style of improvisation, which involves intellect more than intuition. Today, we take the clean articulation of a Coltrane approach like Barlow's for granted. Barlow's Trane-ish tone, with it's alternation of incantation-like tranquility and yearning restlessness, communicates more expressively than Grossman's rather unyielding tone. But Grossman is more likely to pull you along in his momentum.

Another difference in these albums is the selection of tunes. *Bluesville Time* offers a couple of originals by Walton (the nicely voiced, medium-tempo *Rubberman* and the burning, latin, minor key *Ojos De Rojos*), the ballads *Naima* and *Clifford*, and the (what else?) bluesy title cut. *Love Is The Thing* offers all ballads (most eventually taken at double time) except for Grossman's modal *415 Central Park West*.

Walton, Williams, and Higgins form an all-star, five-star rhythm section on each record. Walton's intro to *Naima* (*Bluesville Time* version) is worth the price of admission. Later, he runs tangy block chords up and down the keys. He exhibits a surprising variety of single lines, resolutions, and chordal punctuation everywhere on these records. Everything's clean and orderly, with suggestions of Jamal, Tatum, Wynton Kelly, and Red Garland—but only suggestions, because Walton has firmly established his own identity over the years. Williams' funky, low-note, double-stop solo on the tune *Bluesville* is outstanding, and he anchors all those ballads on *Love Is The Thing* resoundingly and meaningfully. He's definitely a beautiful bass player deserving wider recognition. Higgins kicks up boppish chatter, fluttery brushes, and dancing cymbals all over the place—all in good time (even when he takes the time outside) and all very musical. He's one of the great ones.

Actually, these records complement each other: excellent piano, bass, and drums; the two main approaches to modern jazz tenor; state-of-the-art jazz. *—owen cordle*

THE ART OF NOISE

IN VISIBLE SILENCE—Chrysalis 41528: *Opus 4; Paranoimia; Eye Of The Needle; Legs; Slip Of The Tongue; Backbeat; Instruments Of Darkness; Peter Gunn; Camilla—The Old, Old Story; The Chameleon's Dish; Beatback.*
Personnel: *Anne Dudley, Gary Langan, J. J. Jeczalik, keyboards, engineering; Frank Riccotti, Geoff Dugmore, Camilla Pilkington, Roger Dudley, Deram Le Sage, voices.*

★ ★ ★ ½

In a recent *Esquire* article, critic Tom Shales dubbed the 1980s the "Re Decade" because of the current propensity for cultural recycling: Madonna as Marilyn Monroe, VCR time-shifting, *Metropolis* as rock video, etc.

The Art of Noise may be the ultimate "Re band," using digital sampling keyboards to recontextualize the sounds of nature, industry, and music into a landscape that has the surreal familiarity of a junkyard. Even their name is recycled from Russolo's "Futurist Man-

ifesto," in which he celebrated the music of the machine in the 1910s.

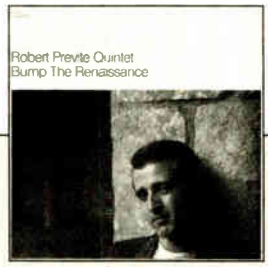
In Visible Silence is the first album from a splintered Art Of Noise. Formerly associated with Trevor Horn's pop music laboratory in England (Yes, Frankie Goes To Hollywood), three Noise-makers have appropriated the name for their own group—but making barely a byte of difference in their disconnected sound world.

Found sounds, shards lifted from records, bass riffs made from voices, and percussion made from everything but drums, are forced into *Eye Of The Needle*—musique concrete with a beat. An alien Bing Crosby voice croons through a quirky cabaret over shuffling rhythm and vibes that could be a Milt Jackson sample. In fact, jazz lifts inform much of this recording. Rather than using the familiar "Orch. #5" of Fairlight's stock library, they've sampled a big band jazz orchestration for *Legs*, a crunching dance-groove tune.

The Art of Noise's techniques are down and dirty. This isn't the refined sampling and sound shaping of Tangerine Dream or Todd Rundgren's *Acappella*. The feel is as spontaneous as you can get with computers and sound bites as instruments. Images collide like time capsule films, with an entire era zooming by in flash-frame snapshots. They jump from a P. W. Botha speech set and cut to a fragment of Gustav Holst's *Mars* (from *The Planets*), to Duanne Eddy's guitar sampled for the ostinato riff of Henry Mancini's *Peter Gunn*.

The Art of Noise are recycling sonic artifacts as a new audio collage art form—a digital update of Spike Jones.

—john diliberto



ROBERT PREVITE

BUMP THE RENAISSANCE—Sound Aspects 008: *Short Of Breath; Art For Now; Untitled; Cover The Earth; Not Since; 1958; Dark Ride; Soundtrack; Otto The Auto.*

Personnel: *Previte, drums; Lenny Pickett, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Tom Varner, french horn; Richard Shulman, piano; David Hofstra, bass.*

★ ★ ★ ★

On the cover, the quintet look like figures out of the '50s: pale guys in shades and conservative suits, Manhattan by night at their backs. The portrait updates images of East Coast cool. So, in its own way, does much of this music.

In true cool fashion, deceptive calm may mask bottled-up tension—the dirgey *Not Since* and *1958*, the darkly oneiric *Untitled*. Not one lick sounds like Lennie Tristano. And yet, somehow, that renegade's legacy pervades. His hallmarks are here: long, rococo piano lines (*Art For Now*); a steady pulse under more freely moving horns (*Short Of Breath*); an orderly reed sound (Pickett's sometimes mournful tenor, and minor key bass clarinet).

One Tristanoic echo—the rhythm players' apparent subservience to the melodists—seems an unlikely element on a drummer's date. But Previte is composer and leader first, drummer second; he allows himself no zany 13/8 showcases, no scene-stealing fusillades. Nevertheless, tunes are built from the rhythm up: riffs (for the slippery *Cover The Earth*, a broadly waltzing *Soundtrack*, the exuberant *Otto*), bass walks, Mingusy pedal points. Very unlike Tristano, Previte pens bright, catchy figures; the way riffs from high and low interweave isn't cool school, but happily analogous to Jack DeJohnette's minimal method.

This music never betrays stereotypical cool's sapped energy, either. Tom Varner's french horn, while harking back to Miles' *Birth Of The Cool* nonet, sounds as big, warm, and flexible as tailgate—or bass—trombone. Pickett (who riffed through Talking Heads' *Little Criminals*) often boasts an appealingly throaty, guttural tenor—even if his screaming emphases are mod cliches, misplaced in these fresh settings. Inventive syntheses of hot and cool, of slender horizontal threads and bold vertical patterns, keep Previte's attractive music from sounding quite like anyone else's.

Like Tristano's (or Mingus', or DeJohnette's), Previte's music suggests avenues of exploration the bopping mainstream has bypassed. It suggests, too, that one should never declare any old school a dead end. One never knows what new forms its ideas may take.

—kevin whitehead

BOB WILLS AND HIS TEXAS PLAYBOYS

THE TIFFANY TRANSCRIPTIONS VOL. 2: BEST OF THE TIFFANYS—Kaleidoscope F-19: *Take Me Back To Tulsa; Faded Love; Right Or Wrong; Bring It On Down To My House; Cherokee Maiden; Steel Guitar Rag; Stay A Little Longer; Roly Poly; Cotton Eyed Joe; Time Changes Everything; Corrine, Corrina; Ida Red; Maiden's Prayer; San Antonio Rose.*

Personnel: *Wills, vocals, fiddle; Tommy Duncan (cuts 1-10, 12-14), Dean McKinney, Evelyn McKinney, vocals; Joe Holley, fiddle (1-8, 10, 12-14); Louis Tierney, fiddle, saxophone (1-10, 12-14); Millard Kelso, piano; Alex Brashear, trumpet (1-6, 8, 10, 12-14); Ocie Stockard, banjo (9, 11); Noel Boggs (2-3, 8, 13-14), Roy Honeycutt (1, 4-7, 10, 12), Herb Remington (9, 11), steel guitar; Lester (Junior) Barnard (1-8, 10, 12-14), Eldon Shamblin (9, 11), electric guitar; Tiny Moore, electric mandolin (1-8, 10-14); Billy Jack Wills, bass; Johnny Cuviello, drums.*

★ ★ ★ ★

THE TIFFANY TRANSCRIPTIONS VOL. 3: BASIN STREET BLUES—Kaleidoscope F-20: *Basin Street Blues; I'm A Ding Dong Daddy; Crazy Rhythm; Milk Cow Blues; Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone; Four Or Five Times; Frankie Jean; It's Your Red Wagon; A Good Man Is Hard To Find; Barnard Blues; I Never Knew; Baby Won't You Please Come Home; Take The "A" Train.*

Personnel: *Wills, vocals, fiddle; Tommy Duncan (1-5, 7-14), Dean McKinney, Evelyn McKinney, vocals; Joe Holley, fiddle (1-5, 7-9, 11-13); Louis Tierney, fiddle, saxophone (1-2, 4-5, 7-9, 12-13); Millard Kelso, piano; Alex Brashear, trumpet (1-2, 4-5, 7-9, 12-13); Ocie Stockard, banjo (3, 6, 10-11, 14); Noel Boggs (1, 4-5, 7, 12), Roy Honeycutt (2, 8-9, 13), Herb Remington (3, 6, 10-11), steel guitar; Lester (Junior) Barnard (1-2, 4-5, 7-9, 11-13), Eldon Shamblin (3, 6, 10-11, 14), electric guitar; Tiny Moore, electric mandolin (3, 6, 10-11, 14); Billy Jack Wills, bass; Johnny Cuviello (1-10, 12-14), Monte Mountjoy (11), drums.*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THE TIFFANY TRANSCRIPTIONS VOL. 4: YOU'RE FROM TEXAS—Kaleidoscope F-21: *Texas Playboy Theme; You're From Texas; Beaumont Rag; Lum & Abner Special; Texarkana Baby; Little Joe The Wrangler; New Spanish Two-Step; Texas Plains; Home In San Antone; Blue Bonnet Lane; Across The Alley From The Alamo; Along The Navajo Trail; Spanish Fandango; My Brown Eyed Texas Rose; Red River Valley; Texas Playboy Theme.*
Personnel: *Wills, vocals, fiddle; Tommy Duncan (1-7, 9-16), Dean McKinney, Evelyn McKinney, vocals; Joe Holley, fiddle (1-2, 4-10, 12-16); Louis Tierney, fiddle, saxophone; Millard Kelso, piano; Alex Brashear, trumpet (1-2, 4, 6-10, 12, 14-16); Ocie Stockard, banjo (3, 5, 11, 13); Noel Boggs (8, 10, 12), Roy Honeycutt (1-2, 4, 6, 9, 14-16), Herb Remington (3, 5, 11, 13), steel guitar; Lester (Junior) Barnard (1-2, 4-6, 8-10, 12-16), Eldon Shamblin (3, 5, 11, 13), electric guitar; Tiny Moore, electric mandolin, fiddle (3, 5, 11, 13); Billy Jack Wills, bass; Johnny Cuviello (1-4, 6-12, 14-16), Monte Mountjoy (5, 13), drums.*

★ ★ ★

Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys are "in" again, their legacy being audible in the dawg music and swingrass of a new generation. The appearance of the *Tiffany Transcriptions* could not be timelier. Numbering over 370 selections, most of them unreleased, the original Tiffanys were issued as 16-inch discs expressly for radio broadcast.

The Kaleidoscope period graphics and color tint photos have nostalgia appeal. They also remind us how Wills' easy-going-down eclecticism got that way. In the '40s, when big bands held sway, jazz was America's popular music, its influence extending to the Texas Playboys and beyond. The heated swipes from Alex Brashear's cup mute trumpet on *Right Or Wrong* (Volume 2) can easily be mistaken for Buck Clayton while Wills as Basie cues a band of cacti on the purple sage: they spring from similar roots. The saddles could not be more blazing.

Western swing is jazz with a cowboy uncle. Enter Wills himself with fiddle in one hand and stogie in the other. Resistance to his string-driven arrangements, limber eight-to-the-bar hybrids out of western pop, boogie, and plain old swing, is hopeless. In keeping with jazz tradition, Wills' material is decidedly diverse and his treatments often unpredictable: schottisches, cowboy ballads, *Take The "A" Train*, a sentimental ditty about a pinto pony and a Navajo "singing out an Indian hi-de-ho." But before you hang a "white jive" label on him (it fits too, sometimes), remember that Wills composed the perennial favorite *San Antonio Rose*. "You never played the same tune twice the same way," guitarist Eldon Shamblin recalls on the notes to *Basin Street Blues*; Wills varied breaks and solo order so much he kept the Playboys in a permanent state of surprise.

The Tiffanys present the band at peak spontaneity, in contrast to conventional studio recordings of the day. Soloists such as fiddler Joe Holley, pianist Millard Kelso, guitarist Junior Barnard, mandolinist Tiny Moore, and a trio of alternating steel guitar players cut loose and make the most of the freer format. (Volume

3's *Barnard Blues* at just over four minutes is the longest cut.) The looseness means a transcription is likely to sound "hotter" than its commercially released counterpart—but not always. The Tiffany *Milk Cow Blues* (Volume 3) has lost urgent riffs and sliding bluesy fiddle to become charmingly countrified, complete with muted trumpet obbligato reminiscent of *St. Louis Blues*. The manic *Roly Poly* (Volume 2) has never been swung harder, which only adds to the song lyric about a boy PacMan, hungry all the time: "He can eat an apple pie/and not even bat an eye/he'll eat anything from soup to hay."

Recorded in 1946 and '47, each volume focuses on a different corner of the Wills repertoire. Volume 2 collects many song favorites associated with the band. Volume 3, which accents swing, blues, and jazz with a fair degree of hokum, offers a fine blend of songs, arrangements, and solos. Volume 4, with tunes about the Lone Star State, contains some of the fluffiest material (don't tell that to a Texan) Willsian humor, sincerity, and good feeling have had to overcome.

The Tiffanys' musical value is enhanced by details too numerous to catalog: Louis Tierney's unexpected rhapsodic saxophone solo on *Beale Street Blues*; Tommy Duncan's genuinely affecting whistling blues about *Frankie Jean*, a boyhood horse; *Crazy Rhythm* (all Volume 3) transformed into a romp for steel guitar and electric mandolin; the rampaging, but above all, *dirty* fingerpicking of Junior Barnard that bruises many grooves, including *San Antonio Rose* (Volume 2) and his namesake *Barnard Blues* (Volume 3).

Wills contributes his own share of fond memories. The trademark vocal interjections and asides (*"Aw, Tiny!"*) are a disrespectful Stoogeian stream-of-consciousness that everywhere hits and runs. When Duncan, a suave straight man if there ever was one, croons, "I can't say that I won't love again," in *Time Changes Everything* (Volume 2), Wills stage whispers, "Can't say you will either, huh?" Wills, a gremlin forever young, undercuts sentiment with comic relief in just the right places, rescuing the weepiest and starchiest of tunes.

Enjoy these as classic sass, as Americana, as jovial jazz with a Texas accent—the choice is yours. Kaleidoscope, keep those Tiffanys coming or may a Shetland throw ya.

—*peter kostakis*

CRITICS' CHOICE

Art Lange

NEW RELEASE: Tim Berne/Bill Frisell, . . . *Theoretically* (Minor Music). Alright, so it's not technically new (though one previously unreleased cut *has* been added)—how many of you picked up on this electrifying sequence of alto and guitar-synth duets when it was issued to no fanfare on Berne's label last year? Huh? 'Nuff said.

OLD FAVORITE: Bob Dylan, *Blonde On Blonde* (Columbia). Even if you subtract the ambitious but flawed sidelong *Sad-Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands*, there's still three sides of Dylan at his absolute best—wry, enigmatic, prophetic, sarcastic, and moving.

RARA AVIS: Gil Melle, *Primitive Modern* (Prestige/OJC). Perfect for this month's "Where is he now?" award, back in '56 the saxist was exploring expanded harmonies and alternative, classically influenced structures, with a pianoless quartet. Newly reissued, but hurry—it's a limited edition.

SCENE: The Paris Reunion Band's steady groove came courtesy of the sterling rhythm section (Kenny Drew, Jimmy Woode, Idris Muhammad), but the soloists set off sparks—especially the lyrical trumpet darts of Benny Bailey. If you missed the tour (I caught them at the Blue Note in New York), their LP on Sonet is a close approximation.

Bill Beuttler

NEW RELEASE: Lou Reed, *Mistrial* (RCA). Legendary Lou's gravelly vocals and jagged guitarwork coupled with partner Fernando Saunders' slick bass playing and drum programming earn this discful of hip lyrics and hot hooks a thumbs-up verdict. Poet/rocker Jim Carroll and salsa star Rubén Blades contribute background vocals.

OLD FAVORITE: Duke Ellington, *At Newport* (Columbia). A Blindfold Test remark by David Murray sent me scrambling back to Paul Gonsalves' renowned solo at the '56 Newport fest; like the '84 Cubs and '86 Mets, the normally solid-but-unspectacular sax soloist played over his head to the ecstatic delight of his fans.

RARA AVIS: Various Artists, *Reefer Songs* (Stash). A compilation of 16 swingin' charts from the likes of Benny Goodman, Sidney Bechet, Cab Calloway, Chick Webb, and a dozen other '30s and '40s bands, all tied together by the album's marijuana theme. (And the beats and hippies thought *they'd* discovered grass!)

SCENE: Earwax Control added a reading from their July **db** writeup to their weird grab bag of music and shenanigans at a gig at Orphans in Chicago.

Jeff Levenson

NEW RELEASE: Terry Gibbs, *Dream Band* (Contemporary). A perfect answer to East Coast elitism. No head-turning soloists or superstars on this club date from 1959, just California cats playing air-tight arrangements that explode with vitality. And a sound only Wally Heider could vinylize.

OLD FAVORITE: Dexter Gordon, *Go!* (Blue Note). Rumors about his health, and recent accounts of his appearance in Bernard Tavernier's film *'Round Midnight*, inspire thoughts of Dexter at his most sublime.

RARA AVIS: Arthur Jones, *Scorpio* (BYG Actuel). The expatriate altoist who rubbed shoulders with Paris' freethinkers in the early '70s cries here with a sound so painful and raw one wonders what ever happened to him. Anyone?

SCENE: The Paris Reunion Band paying homage to old pal and spiritual leader Kenny Clarke at the Blue Note in New York. Rewarding as it was to see these guys together, the most compelling voice belonged to trumpeter Benny Bailey. Let's hear more.

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

PIANISM—Blue Note 85124: *THE PRAYER; OUR TUNE; FACE'S FACE; NIGHT AND DAY; HERE'S THAT RAINY DAY; REGINA.*

Personnel: *Petrucciani, piano; Palle Danielsson, bass; Eliot Zigmund, drums.*

★ ★ ★

COLD BLUES—Owl 042: *BEAUTIFUL, BUT WHY?; AUTUMN LEAVES; SOMETHING LIKE THIS; THERE WILL NEVER BE ANOTHER YOU; I JUST SAY HELLO!; COLD BLUES.*

Personnel: *Petrucciani, piano; Ron McClure, bass.*

★ ★ ★ ★

Michel Petrucciani is a romantic. Left to his own devices, his music runs to the prolix and the florid. Swept up in lavish embellishments and lush fancies, he loses sight of the simple virtues of complex swing.

But put the articulate, big-toned bassist Ron McClure behind him, to keep his rhythm on track, and Petrucciani switches to swingtime. Two decades ago, Ron played in Wynton Kelly's trio, and he still remembers his straight-ahead stuff. Not coincidentally, *Cold Blues* is best where he's an assertive keeper of the pulse.

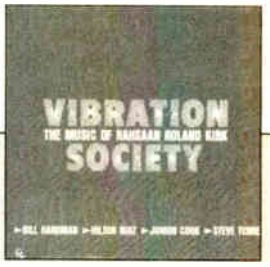
Beautiful, But Why? makes the point. At the outset—when McClure plucks around a rubato melody—Petrucciani's an unhurried, melancholy balladeer. When Ron accelerates to a brisk walk, the pianist's audibly cheered, indulging in the sheer pleasure of running the changes he's spoon-fed. Furthermore, Michel's jittery, unpredictable comping in support of the bassist's feature choruses emphasizes that this is a conversation between equals, not a lopsided pairing of soloist and sidekick. Jumping into *Autumn Leaves*, the

duo leapfrog each other, alternately taking the lead for short phrases of irregular length, instead of trading the usual fours. On the reliably lovely *Another You*, they finish each other's thoughts like a comfortably married couple.

On two ballads—*Something Like This* and *Hello*—McClure grabs the ear with crying long tones, letting the tails of held notes droop for expressive effect. But it's no accident that the quiet *Hello*, on which Ron provides little direction and push, is the least compelling piece here. Jazz may be a romantic's art, but McClure's firm discipline saves the date.

For *Pianism*, Michel's treated to a full rhythm section. Yet there's less flexibility and overt interaction; the pianist glides over his support, unswayed. The Zigmund/Danielsson pairing implies a trio approach that crosses Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett, and Michel's mode here *is* rapt self-absorption, whether in meditative *Prayer* or on an ebullient steel-band bounce, *Our Tune* (where the three players most successfully pull as one).

Pianism is pleasant and lyrical enough. But in this conventional soloist-and-rhythm frame, Petrucciani rarely betters a dozen or more dues-paying pianists who enjoy far less exposure and acclaim. With all due respect to the classic trio format, the more vibrant *Cold Blues* says romantic Michel soars highest when free of its strictures. —*kevin whitehead*



VIBRATION SOCIETY

THE MUSIC OF RAHSAAN ROLAND KIRK—Stash 261: *Serenade To A Cuckoo; Theme For The Eulipions; A Handful Of Fives; Spirits Up Above; The Inflated Tear; My Delight; Bright Moments; Steppin' Into Beauty.*

Personnel: *Bill Hardman, trumpet; Steve Turre, trombone, bass trombone, bells, conch shells; Junior Cook, tenor saxophone; Hilton Ruiz, piano; Paul Brown, bass; Leroy Williams, drums; Suzanne Klewan, Timmy Shepherd, vocals (cuts 2, 4, 7).*

★ ★ ★ ★

As the keeper of the Kirk flame, the Vibration Society emerges as more reflective than incendiary. Although this record isn't as wild or highly charged as some of Kirk's records, a lot of preparation, ensemble spirit, and remembrance has gone into it.

Turre is the real star of this session—after Rahsaan, that is, whose compositions and spirit form its basis. The trombonist arranged five of the tunes and is on top of his instrument from wah-wah to J.J. (Johnson). His writing often recalls the horn voicings from the Blue Note days of the Jazz Messengers. He gets a full, funky trombone sound, with and without the plunger mute, and his lines lie right, whether he's preaching the melody on *Spirits Up Above*, slipping a concluding tag onto *Inflated Tear*, or bopping on *My Delight*.

Pianist Ruiz arranged *Serenade* and, with the vocalists, *Eulipions*. *Bright Moments* is a collective chart. Turre's conch shells behind the vocalists and Hardman on *Eulipions* create an intriguing mellow sound.

This session really has the '50s written all over it—Hardman's huddled and smoking bop lines, Cook's unhurried and slightly Hank Mobley-ish tenor, the solid and fundamental bass and crums, the horn voicings. Ruiz's piano is more contemporary, with a more exciting rhythmic edge than most of the '50s bop pianists. Check his solos on the last three tunes for that good drive and feeling.

Cook assumes the Kirk tenor role without overt imitation. The tonal warmth is the same, especially on the ballads (*Tear* and *Steppin'*),

and his solo entrances suggest Kirk. Interestingly, neither he nor anyone else double-times on the ballads.

This group grew out of the Hardman/Cook Quintet. Most of the players worked with Kirk at some time in his career. Vocals are part of the heritage, too. Here, they're integrated into the ensemble, as well as performing solo roles. This record is pretty much on target all the way around. Let's vibrate some more.

—*owen cordle*

DAVID MOSS

DENSE BAND—Moers Music 02040: *STRIDE; SHUFFLE; SLOW CLIMB; NEW FEET; FALLAWAY; SURFACE TENSION; SIXTH SENSE; SAY SO; THREE METAL MOVES; NEXT WITNESS; DANCE BAND; UNSAFE AT ANY SPEED; IN THE DARK TIMES, WILL THERE BE SINGING.*

Personnel: *Moss, drums, percussion, metal, steel drum, vocals (cuts 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 11, 13), invisible drums (6); Fred Frith, electric bass, six-string bass (3, 4, 9), voice (5), guitar (2), rain, manipulations (6); Tom Cora, cello (2, 3, 6); Wayne Horvitz, DX7 (1, 3, 5, 7); Arto Lindsay, vocals (2, 5, 8, 11); Christian Marclay, turntables, manipulated records (2, 3, 9, 10); Jules Moss, drums (1, 2, 12); Tenko, vocals (3, 7); John Zorn, alto saxophone, game calls (2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11).*

★ ★ ½

On *Dense Band*, kitchen-sink percussionist David Moss rails mightily against the boundaries of the art-funk genre—rails against them with steely determination that demands your admiration. Rails so hard you have to ask: Why not bypass them altogether?

Like any regulation modern funk, no matter how rarefied, the Dense Band's is built from the rhythm section up. On a typical track, producer Fred Frith repeats a bass ostinato ad infinitum, which David underscores twist for twist, semiquaver for semiquaver. Over that, there's the usual filler—manipulated records, synthesizer carbonation—capped by vocals.

It sounds like the familiar mix, but Moss and Frith turn it on its head. For one thing, these singers aren't into rappin' or self-reflexive riddles, but Eolithic jabber that sounds like a demented gargantuan blubbering in the shower, or Fred Flintstone impersonating early Yoko Ono. For another, that filler layer may include such unorthodox material as John Zorn's bird-call squawks—unorthodox except on the Manhattan new music scene, where Zorn's engaging Audobon schtick/non-schtick is now as fashionable as it is overexposed. Which brings us to the root of *Dense Band*'s

problems. It's awfully self-conscious and trendy: an ironic critique of itself; metafunk.

Still, the leader's drumming forestalls a total washout. Left unmentioned above is that the Frith/Moss funky underpinnings ain't necessarily your standard James Brown retreads. The best of them—*Sixth Sense*, say, or *Next Witness*—are convoluted knots of rhythm, treacherous temporal briar patches, which Moss neatly unravels or contorts through unscathed. The drummer is too-little appreciated as the inventive stylist he is, having forged a sturdy amalgam of Europe's "junk percussion" rattling and America's "industrial" noise music. Hyperkinetic yet precise, Moss' metallic clangor is not only technically superb, it's funny: a parody of showy drumming; meta-Rich. But that taste for parody contains the seed of *Dense Band*'s undoing; it's what made Moss want to squeeze into the old art-funk knothole in the first place.

—*kevin whitehead*

WAXING ON

Blues In B&W

OTIS CLAY: *Soul Man—Live In Japan (Rooster Blues 7609)* ★ ★ ★ ★ ½
JIMMY JOHNSON: *Bar Room Preacher (Alligator 4744)* ★ ★ ★ ★
ALBERT COLLINS/ROBERT CRAY/JOHNNY COPELAND: *Showdown! (Alligator 4743)* ★ ★ ★
JOHNNY COPELAND: *Bringin' It All Back Home (Rounder 2050)* ★ ★
CLARENCE "GATEMOUTH" BROWN: *Pressure Cooker (Alligator 4745)* ★ ★ ★ ½
JAMES COTTON: *Live From Chicago—Mr. Superharp Himself! (Alligator 4746)* ★ ★ ½
JOHNNY LITTLEJOHN: *So-Called Friends (Rooster Blues 2621)* ★ ★ ★
EDDIE SHAW: *King Of The Road (Rooster Blues 7608)* ★ ★ ★ ★
WILLIE DIXON: *Live! Backstage Access (Pausa 7183)* ★ ½
RONNIE EARL AND THE BROADCASTERS: *They Call Me Mr. Earl (Black Top 1033)* ★ ★ ★ ½
POWDER BLUES: *Red Hot/True Blue (Flying Fish 343)* ★ ★ ½
BARRENCE WHITFIELD AND THE SAVAGES: *Dig Yourself (Rounder 9007)* ★ ★ ★ ½
ROY ROGERS: *Chops Not Chaps (Chops Not Chaps 1)* ★ ★ ★ ½

Blues artists have increasingly come to depend on white patronage since middle-class collegians first discovered urban blues in the mid-1960s. After a period of diminished interest during the '70s, the blues seems to be rebounding today. And although whites have been slow to accept the lush brass and string orchestrations now favored by black listeners, their tastes have expanded from guitar-oriented electric blues to embrace a wide variety of styles, from jazzy 1940s-style jump blues to the gospel-inflected soul-blues of today.

A sample of recent releases by artists both black and white illustrates some of the diversity of the current blues scene. There are old masters and newcomers, the well-known and the obscure, musicians from familiar locales like Texas and Chicago, and others from the West Coast, Canada, and New England. Their styles range from re-creations of Robert Johnson songs to a fusion of blues and highlife recorded in West Africa.

All of these albums are on independent labels and all are directed primarily toward white audiences, although some have the potential to cross over, so to speak, to the commercial soul-blues market. Generally, however, it is the older styles, no longer suitable for black radio play, that are appropriated by white listeners and players. This is now true of vintage soul music as well as blues. Pre-disco r&b may be the source of many of today's pop hits, but its surviving practitioners are largely ignored. A number of them have turned to blues audiences for support, sometimes adopting 12-bar material.

RECORD REVIEWS

After a long career on the gospel and r&b circuits, **Otis Clay** began working in white blues venues in his hometown of Chicago several years ago. But he remains an unreconstructed soul singer—perhaps the finest interpreter of classic southern-style gospel-soul since Al Green. On the double-album *Soul Man—Live In Japan*, he gives a superb extended performance that should help bring him the wider attention he deserves. Clay has been a celebrity in Japan since the late '70s, and on this recording of a 1983 Tokyo concert he shows why. Backed by the great Hi Records rhythm section from Memphis and a crack horn trio from Chicago, he serenades the eager audience with irresistible ardor, far surpassing the intensity of his previous studio work. His robust, rasping voice—gruff, yet tender—projects a winning sincerity through a set of original numbers and cover versions of recordings by Al Green and O. V. Wright. Clay moans, screams, pleads, and soothes, improvising lyrics and quoting other singers during the vamping codas that invariably climax these songs. Although it begins to drag toward the end, this beautifully recorded package is a must for soul devotees.

Singer and guitarist **Jimmy Johnson** is another Chicago-based artist with a gospel and r&b background. Unlike Otis Clay, though, he has embraced the blues with a convert's zeal, performing in a modern West Side style strongly influenced by his old friend Magic Sam. Still, Johnson's high, clear tenor voice is ingrained with gospel feeling, and his sophisticated guitar work reflects his experience outside of blues. *Bar Room Preacher* was recorded in France and originally released there on the Blue Phoenix label. Less venturesome than Johnson's two previous domestic LPs for Delmark, it nonetheless captures a potent performance by Johnson and his solidly swinging rhythm trio. In contrast to the Delmark albums, it consists mainly of cover versions of songs by such Chicagoans as Fenton Robinson, Junior Wells, and Bobby Rush, although Johnson's own cleverly crafted compositions—such as the enigmatic *Heap See*, featured here—are a major source of his appeal.

Showdown!, a blues battle featuring **Albert Collins, Johnny Copeland**, and **Robert Cray**, reveals an underlying unity in their three quite individual styles. Their compatibility can be attributed to Collins' influence on both Copeland and Cray, and it is Collins who dominates the session, setting the tone with his stinging guitar work and nearly managing to hold his own as a singer. Backed by the rhythm section of Collins' Chicago-based touring band, the three bluesmen trade vocals and guitar solos, with Collins most often in the spotlight. Copeland—like Collins, a product of Houston, but with more of a background in soul and rock & roll—is largely overshadowed, though his gravelly singing is the strongest on the album. The much younger Cray, from Seattle, seems slightly abashed, yet sings and plays effectively even on unfamiliar turf. His haunting minor key composition *The Dream*, on which his soulful crooning is punctuated by Collins' barbed-wire licks, is *Showdown!*'s most striking track.

Johnny Copeland also has a new album of his own, *Bringing' It All Back Home*, proclaimed on its liner to be "the first blues record ever recorded in Africa." After a 1982 USIA-sponsored tour of West Africa, Copeland wrote several African-inspired songs and returned to Abidjan, the capital of the Ivory Coast, to record them, accompanied by members of his own band together with local musicians. The result is a crude and ragged fusion of funk and highlife, similar to, but less integrated than,

recent experiments along the same lines by both African and Caribbean bands. Copeland was clearly moved by his experience, and listeners will surely be affected by his emotionally charged if rather naive compositions ("I been out in the jungle," goes a typical lyric, "but I ain't found no jungle at all"), but in purely musical terms they are less satisfying, and the one-chord instrumental jams that fill out the album quickly grow tedious.

Both Copeland and Albert Collins were strongly influenced by another Houston-bred singer/guitarist, **Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown**, who rose to prominence in the late '40s and was rediscovered in the '70s. *Pressure Cooker* is Alligator's re-release of edited material from a pair of Gatemouth albums produced by the Black And Blue label in France in 1973, prior to his resurgence in the U.S. Backed by such jump-blues veterans as Jay McShann, Milt Buckner, and saxists Hal "Cornbread" Singer and Arnett Cobb, Brown displays a much jazzier disposition than on his later recordings with young electric-blues combos. The arrangements here—mostly of Brown originals, with a few Louis Jordan covers thrown in—lack the aggressive bite of Gatemouth's classic early sides, but his own solos and those of his accompanists are supple and tasty. On *Just Lippin'* he plays and scat-sings a la George Benson, while on the title track, Arnett Cobb delivers a turbo-charged tenor sax break.

Vocalist and harmonica player **James Cotton**, who performed in Memphis with Howlin' Wolf and recorded for Sun Records before coming to Chicago and joining Muddy Waters' band, won fame only after forming his own band and moving to New York in the late '60s. The albums he recorded at that time are still his finest, although he continues to be one of the best-known Chicago-style bluesmen. *Live From Chicago—Mr. Superharp Himself!* is Cotton's second LP for the Alligator label. Recorded at Biddy Mulligan's, a Windy City blues bastion that caters to the college crowd, it offers a representative set by Cotton and his brassy seven-piece show band. The young, funk-oriented group is hot and tight, but Cotton himself performs listlessly, as if by rote. The inclusion of soul songs such as *Part Time Love* only emphasizes his inadequacies as a vocalist, and he saves his trademark harp routine for the all-too-predictable final track.

Perhaps because of his stolid bearing and lack of showmanship, **Johnny Littlejohn**, a fixture on the Chicago scene for more than 30 years, has yet to receive the recognition that he surely merits. A strong singer with a bright, expressive voice, he is also an excellent guitarist who alternates between bottleneck glissandos in the manner of Elmore James and single-note runs a la B.B. King. *So-Called Friends* is Littlejohn's first U.S. release since 1973. In an apparent attempt to modernize his deeply traditional sound, he is accompanied here by a 12-piece band composed of some of Chicago's top soul and blues session players. The horn arrangements, by trombonist Bill McFarland, are rich and resonant but a shade too urbane for Littlejohn, whose style, like James Cotton's, is firmly grounded in the rural Mississippi Delta. Despite this and the rather pedestrian material, however, *So-Called Friends* is an effective showcase for Littlejohn's talents, especially his luminous slide-guitar technique.

Tenor saxophonist **Eddie Shaw** played with Magic Sam and for many years with Howlin' Wolf's band, taking over that group after Wolf's death. An often-mediocre stage performer with a limited stock of raucous riffs, he acquits himself surprisingly well on *King Of The Road*, which includes six newly recorded songs plus previously issued and unissued material from as far back as 1966. One key to the album's success is the strength of Shaw's own compositions, which make up all but two of its 14 tracks. Another is that he is playing with such familiar colleagues as Magic Sam (on two 1966 instrumentals), Howlin' Wolf's longtime guitarist Hubert Sumlin, and his son Eddie "Vaan" Shaw Jr., who takes a mean solo on *Long Way From Home*. Shaw Sr. displays his personal warmth and salty humor not only in his songs but in spoken asides and introductions, and his bellowing horn is recorded to maximum effect even on the older sessions.

The legendary songwriter, producer, singer, and acoustic bassist **Willie Dixon** is now in his 70s, and to judge by his album *Live! Backstage Access*, age is catching up with him at last. Recorded before a cheering crowd at the 1983 Montreux Jazz Festival, it succeeds mainly as a vehicle for blues harpist Sugar Blue, who made his reputation in Paris and New York before finally settling in Chicago. But Blue's dazzling virtuosity and the band's solid musicianship cannot make up for Dixon's faltering vocals. On *Backstage Access*, this former colossus of the blues inspires more pity than awe.

Ronnie Earl is the guitarist with the Boston-based jump band Roomful of Blues, which specializes in brassy, swing-style blues from the late '40s and early '50s. In that context Earl appropriately follows the models of T-Bone Walker and Gatemouth Brown, but on his own he favors a more modern, Chicago-oriented sound. *They Call Me Mr. Earl*, his second album as a leader, also features harmonica player and songwriter Sugar Ray Norcia, in whose band Earl was once a sideman. Especially considering that he did not listen to the blues or take up the guitar until he was in his 20s, Earl is an amazingly fluent stylist, with a flair for supple articulation and a keen ear for shading and dynamics. His playing reflects such influences as Magic Sam, Buddy Guy, and Otis Rush, but his fleet, legato phrasing is distinctively his own. His vocals are less convincing, and yet he nearly compensates in smooth intonation and adept timing for his deficiencies in range and power.

Powder Blues, a seven-piece combo from Vancouver, British Columbia, takes up where Roomful of Blues leaves off, combining vintage jump, r&b, and rock & roll material in a brightly updated synthesis. Although highly derivative and, like many white groups, short on emotional conviction and depth, Powder Blues packs a tightly polished wallop with punchy, soul-flavored horn arrangements, suggesting that the band might be heard to better advantage in a club than on record. Tom Lavin is an adequate lead singer and guitarist, but the

emphasis here is on crisp ensemble work.

While Powder Blues straddles the line that divides blues and rock, another roots-conscious band, Boston's **Barrence Whitfield and the Savages**, has left the blues far behind. On its second album, *Dig Yourself*, the group approaches the classic rock & roll tradition from a distinctly contemporary perspective, at times suggesting a more conservative version of the Cramps. Propelled by Peter Greenberg's boogie guitar and Steve LaGrega's buzzsaw tenor saxophone, the Savages serve up a relentlessly uptempo blend of '50s rock & roll and rockabilly, flavored with the raunch-rock of the mid-'60s and driven with the energy of new wave and punk. Whitfield's singing lacks emotional commitment, though, somewhat blunting the band's instrumental impact.

Roy Rogers is a virtuoso slide guitarist from the San Francisco Bay area who has performed with John Lee Hooker and with the Coast to Coast Blues Band. *Chops Not Chaps*, his self-produced debut album, reveals not only his mastery of the Delta stylings of Skip James and Robert Johnson, but also his gift for country-rock songwriting. Rogers has absorbed Johnson's instrumental sound beyond the point of duplication; his reconstruction of Johnson classics like *Kindhearted Woman Blues* and *If I Had Possession Over Judgement Day* recalls John Fahey's similarly analytical approach to country blues. But Johnson's instrumental and vocal techniques were wedded to one another and to the poetic expression of his most profound and personal feelings, whereas Roger's amiable but detached singing on these tunes seems only an adjunct to his showy guitar licks. On such original compositions as the reggae-styled *Hot To Trot* and the c&w-tinged *Feel So Blue*, however, Rogers' own personality shines through, indicating that he may have a brighter future as a mainstream rocker than a blues purist. —*larry birnbaum*

NEW RELEASES

(Record Companies: For listing in the monthly New Releases column, send two copies of each new release to Art Lange, **db**, 222 W. Adams, Chicago, IL 60606.)

CONCORD

Gerry Mulligan/Scott Hamilton, inescapable pairing of sympathetic reedmen from different generations in mostly Mulligan pieces, SOFT LIGHTS & SWEET MUSIC. **George Shearing/Barry Tuckwell**, pianist plus classical french hornist and strings PLAY THE MUSIC OF COLE PORTER.

BLACKHAWK/ASPEN

Maynard Ferguson, big little band (or little big band) led by the high-flying trumpeter, BODY & SOUL. **Billie Holiday**, never-before-released live set with guests Gerry Mulligan, Benny Carter, and Buddy DeFranco, AT MONTEREY 1958. **Sheila Jordan**, endearing vocals on standards and revealing originals, THE CROSSING. **Abdullah Ibrahim**, South African expatriate pianist and his energetic septet Ekaya (inc. Ricky Ford), WATER FROM AN ANCIENT WELL. **Phil Woods**, lovely recording of stylish improvisations on classic tunes, HEAVEN. **Kenny Barron**, versatile pianist duets with a pair of alternating bassists—Ron Carter and Michael Moore, 1+1+1. **Jimmy Stewart**, former Gabor Szabo collaborator waxes his own guitar impressions, THE TOUCH. **Richard Trythall**, four flowing piano pieces of a lyrical nature, SOLO PIANO. **George Stavis**, banjoist plus some "newgrass" stars (Darol Anger, Mike Marshall), MORNING MOOD. **Earl Robinson**, legendary folk songwriter (*Joe Hill*, among others) offers eight of his best, ALIVE AND WELL.

WINDHAM HILL

William Ackerman, label founder and guitarist joins friends of varying instrumentation for pastoral program, CONFERRING WITH THE MOON. **Shadowfax**, lyrically electric sextet grows more popular with each outing, TOO FAR TO WHISPER.

PSI

Anthony Braxton, two versions of his string quartet, with and without alto sax obbligato, from Sound Aspects, 8KN-(8-12)-R10. **Robert Previte**, drummer debuts sizzling quintet, from Sound Aspects, BUMP THE RENAISSANCE. **Spencer Barefield/Anthony Holland/Tani Tabbal**, guitar/alto/percussion trio edges outside the boundaries, from Sound Aspects, LIVE AT NICKELSDORF KONFRONTATIONEN. **Tim Berne/Bill Frisell**, reissue of selcom-seen alto/guitar duets plus a bonus cut, from Minor Music, . . . THEORETICALLY **Black Swan Quartet**, improvising new music string quartet (violin, two cellos, bass) play originals plus Ellington and Lee Morgan tunes, from Minor Music, BLACK SWAN QUARTET. **Sphere**, live '85 Italian gig, only one Monk tune, alas, from Red, ON TOUR. **Cassandra Wilson**, vocalist in the company of hot young players like Steve Coleman and Lonnie Plaxico, from JMT, POINT OF VIEW.

CONTEMPORARY

Bud Shank, alto refugee from the L.A. studio scene adds more fire to his West Coast roots; George Cables burns on piano too, THAT OLD FEELING. **Shelly Manne**, the late drummer's trio (Frank Collett, Monty Budwig) recorded in '84, IN ZURICH.

LEO

Sakis Papadimitriou, sensitive inside-the-keyboard effects plus other piano predilections, FIRST MOVE. **Harry Tavitian/Cornelius Stroe**, pianist and percussionist double on flutes to perform works with roots in the Romanian soil, TRANSILVANIAN SUITE.

STEEPLECHASE

Paul Bley, iconoclastic pianist offers an album of standards in trio format, MY STANDARD. **Tete Montoliu**, reissue of '71 solo set by the brilliant Catalonian bopper, LUSH LIFE. **Joe Bonner**, pianist rethinks the MJQ instrumentation with '85 outing of all originals, SUITE FOR CHOCOLATE.

HAT HUT

Steve Lacy, live two-LP reissue of '79 settings of Lao Tzu poems for improvising quintet, THE WAY. **Dave Burrell**, solo piano transduction of his jazz opera, reissued from '79, WINDWARD PASSAGES. **Jimmy Lyons/Sunny Murray**, live '80 soaring trio concert caught, JUMP UP—WHAT TO DO ABOUT.

INDEPENDENTS

Kenny Davern, classy clarinet set finds the vet backed by Brits, from Gray Associates, THE VERY THOUGHT OF YOU. **Jerry Coker**, second LP since the tenorist's return to the scene, from Revelation Records, REBIRTH. **Francis Vanek**, quartet from the burgeoning Pacific Northwest jazz scene led by the tenorman, from Valentine Records, REDWOOD RANGE. **Allen Lowe**, tenorman's premiere waxing adds Bob Neloms' piano expertise, plus others, from Fairhaven Records, FOR POOR B.B. AND OTHERS. . . . **Alex Dean**, Canadian saxist fronts quintet inc. Lorne Lofsky's guitar, from Justin Time Records, DREAMSVILLE. **Scott Henderson**, well-traveled young electric guitarist leads his own fusoid sextet, from Passport Jazz, SPEARS.

John Renbourn, ex-Pentangle guitarist picks new blues and Renaissance dance tunes, from Flying Fish Records, THE NINE MAIDENS. **Jim Page**, original songs about people and places he's seen, from Flying Fish, VISIONS IN MY VIEW. **The Smith Sisters**, sound as good as they look on updated folk tunes and original pieces produced by Merle Watson, from Flying Fish, MOCKINGBIRD. **Dave Mallett**, Nashville session chronicling *Highways, Dreamers, Old Fashioned Women*, and others of that ilk, from Flying Fish, VITAL SIGNS. **Sandy Owen**, New Ageish pianist attacks a more energetic style with relish, from Ivory Records, BOOGIE WOOGIE RHYTHM AND BLUES. **Johnny Wicks**, almost unknown yet infamous blues-playing tubaist circa 1952, from Delmark/Pearl Records, JOCKEY JACK BOOGIE. **Michel Genest**, "visionary synthesizer music" lights up the atmosphere, from Sona Gaia Records, ASCENSION. **Rick Wakeman**, former classical-rock organist creates acoustic piano tone poems, from Landscape/Jem Records, COUNTRY AIRS. **Claire Hamill**, imaginative resettings of the human voice, from Landscape/Jem, VOICES.

Amstel Octet, two LPs expand on Miles' *Birth Of The Cool* concept, one of all originals, AMSTEL CROSSING, and the other with guest Chet Baker, HAZY HUGS. **Jarmo Sermila/Emil Viklicky**, Finnish trumpeter joins Czech pianist in an international pairing, from Jase Records, CONFLUENCE. **Finnczech Quartet**, those two are at it again, this time with a guitarist and bassist in tow, from Jase, FINNCZECH QUARTET. **Jarmo Sermila/Rudolf Dasek**, Finnish trumpeter and the Czech guitarist in a suite glorifying nature, from Jase, DAYDREAMS. **Jarmo Sermila/Teppo Hauta-Aho**, Finnish trumpeter (lest you forget) and fellow countryman/bassist/cellist, from Jase, create FEBRUARY CONVERSATIONS. **Pino Minafra**, Italian trumpeter and cohorts play a *Tarantella* and their own jazz takes, from Splasc(h) Records, COLORI.

Buddy Greco, recreations of all his biggest numbers, from Bainbridge Records, GREATEST HITS. **Gene Lees/Roger Kellaway**, noted songwriter/critic and free-thinking pianist team up, from Choice Records, LEAVES ON THE WATER. **Janice Borla**, a "singer's singer" from the Windy City and a jazz educator as well, from SeaBreeze Records, WHATEVER WE IMAGINE. **Rodriguez**, latin trumpeter uses electronics in his accompaniment, from SeaBreeze, TELL AN AMIGO. **T. C. Waters**, a man with swing on his mind debuts a program of original songs, from MNF Records, IN THE GROOVE. **db**

MAIL ORDER SOURCES

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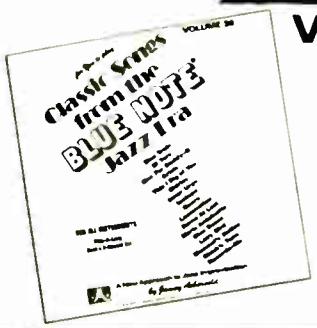

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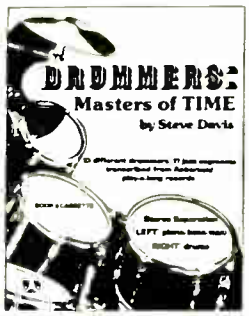

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WHITE

continued from page 61

better virtues will have a tendency to go unacknowledged and/or unrewarded solely because of a lack in the "glitter" department. A quiet, shy, and soft-spoken man, John Coltrane was the supreme antithesis of a show biz personality.

So actually what has happened since Trane died is that the jazz business has fallen to the pits of havoc and disorientation. This has been good for the businessman, in a sense, because he's been able to exert more control over musicians than ever before. What do they say? Kill off the leader and the followers are up for grabs. That's what's happened. To put it mildly, one source told me that when Trane died "they were dancin' in the streets." Trane had started to create a positive image for jazz musicians. After all, for the unofficial record he was "the one who cleaned up and stayed clean." Jazz ain't dead, it just lacks context. There'll always be clubs, gigs, underpay, chicks, and dope. That's all a part of society. Gotta maintain that underclass, you know what I mean? But the lack of integral artistic direction will always be felt without a leader at the helm of the field.

Remember when we had bands to look to for leadership and role models? Art Blakey with Wayne Shorter, Freddie Hubbard, and Curtis Fuller? Miles with Red Garland, Paul Chambers, and Philly Joe? Miles with Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, and Tony Williams? There were industry standard-bearers then. The last *band* was the one with McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison, and Elvin Jones—Trane's "classic quartet." As a friend of mine said one night about 18 years ago, with tears in his eyes after leaving the bandstand, "We're playing in a vacuum. We don't have any more bands. No more leaders. Nobody to define what we're doing."

Even more to the point today: you go listen to a saxophone soloist with a pickup rhythm section. How does he sound? You really don't know because you don't have a "context" to listen to him in. There is no leader to set the standards. Cats just be playin', that's all. The cat can be an "A," "B," or "C" saxophone player and he'll basically sound the same, because he has no standards to define what he's playing. In Trane's time everybody sounded better because Trane offered the context. If you so desired, you could compare other players to Coltrane in order to "focus" on what those cats were doing, but who do you compare them to now? Nobody!

On a brighter note, however, you can rest assured that although the commercial interests in the jazz business community have all but wiped out the virtues of an artist like Coltrane, there still remains a strong interest in his work. As I've said on other occasions, I doubt if Coltrane could have "made it" today. There's no real need for him. The industry has redefined the "jazz star," and he's definitely not of the Coltrane genre. Fortunately Coltrane has tremendous historical significance and can therefore be cast in that light. However, in spite of jazz industry dictates, more and more young people are being exposed to Coltrane reissues and bootleg items. In their quest to hear something "better" they all eventually come home to the ingenious work of the most important saxophone player in the history of jazz, John Coltrane. **db**

Andrew White, saxophonist and transcriber, is considered the world's leading authority on the music of John Coltrane. He has made 421 Coltrane solo transcriptions and written a book, Trane 'N Me. A catalog of the Coltrane solos is available for $1.00 ($2.00 non-USA). A comprehensive catalog of all 1,200 Andrew White Products (including Coltrane, Charlie Parker, Eric Dolphy, and Andrew White transcriptions) is available for $4.00 ($5.00 non-USA). For all information write to: Andrew White/Andrew's Music, 4830 South Dakota Ave. N.E., Washington, DC 20017.

BLINDFOLD TEST

Bud Freeman

BY ROBERT WOLF


LAUREN DEUTSCH

Among the oldest, yet most vital, of our outstanding jazz musicians, 80-year-old tenor sax legend Bud Freeman maintains that players his age can command fairly steady work because audiences "just want to see if we can pick up a horn without falling down."

Since the 1985 release of his latest album (*The Real Bud Freeman*, Principally Jazz Productions 01), Freeman has continued to tour, mostly in the Midwest. His 1984 appearance at the Nice Jazz Festival, though, may well have been his last European trip. (He's had enough of living in airports.) The last two years have included performances at jazz festivals in Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Madison, St. Paul, and Indianapolis. Freeman continues to be a popular draw at various jazz clubs and private clubs in the Midwest. His anecdotal lectures also draw audiences, and his 1985 tour of New England included a story session with Harvard undergraduates.

Freeman was given no advance information on any of the selections.

1 JOHNNY DODDS. *STOCKYARD STRUT (from NEW ORLEANS HORNS, Milestone). Dodds, clarinet; Freddie Keppard, cornet; Eddie Vincent, trombone; Arthur Campbell, piano; Jaspar Taylor, woodblocks.*

Well, I'd say the clarinet player could be Larry Shields or it could be Johnny Dodds. I haven't the faintest idea who the cornet player was because the jazz that I listened to as a young man was beyond that. Louis [Armstrong] and King Oliver had this wonderful, marvelous beat, whereas this fellow sounds like he's reading the part. "Yippy-dippy-dippy! Whippy-dippy-dippy!" I thought that the cornet player—God, I hope he's not still alive—was truly a corny player. He didn't have that wonderful, powerful feeling of what we called jazz music when I was a boy—although we didn't call it anything. I would call him more of a ragtime cornet player, and I wouldn't know who he was because I wasn't interested in anybody that bad.

2 JABBO SMITH. *GOT BUTTER ON IT (from THE ACE OF RHYTHM, MCA). Smith, trumpet; Ikey Robinson, banjo; Alex Hill, piano; George James, clarinet; Lawson Bufford, tuba.*

If it isn't Louis it's someone who really copied the bejeezus out of him, someone who had a pretty good idea of Louis. So it could be . . . it's either Louis Armstrong or Jabbo Smith.

That wasn't a bad group, was it? I don't know who they were, but they did swing a hell of a lot more than the previous group. Can you see now how Jabbo Smith was so mechanical, that he copied Louis' singing, all the phrases as though he were reading it? Jabbo didn't have that wonderful beat that Louis had. But you see how he copied Louis bar-for-bar. People don't know that, but I know it because I was there.

The guitar player, could it have been Lonnie Johnson or Johnny St. Cyr?

3 JIMMIE LUNCEFORD. *MARGIE (from BLUES IN THE NIGHT (1938-1942), MCA). Sy Oliver, arranger; Trummy Young, trombone, vocal; Willie Smith, alto saxophone.*

I think it's a Don Redman arrangement. It might have been Don Redman on the alto saxophone and it might have been Don singing, but I don't know.

It was all Louis. That arrangement was all taken from Louis Armstrong phrases. Louis created every bar in that thing. Whoever it was really idolized Louis, even to the singing.

(Later): I wouldn't say it was very creative. No, I wouldn't say I got a kick out of it. But bear in mind I *did* like Lunceford's band. I think he did a lot for music.

4 EARL HINES. *THAT'S A PLENTY (from SOUTH SIDE SWING (1934-1935), MCA). Hines, piano; Darnell Howard, alto saxophone; unidentified big band.*

The pianist is Earl Hines. I think it's the Earl Hines big band. It could be Omer Simeon on saxophone. That was a style of playing that Benny Carter created. I used to love the band in those days. They had some fine arrangers—a very musical band. Everything's tight brass, just a background for Earl. I always liked Earl's playing.

5 JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC. *I GOT RHYTHM. (from BIRD AND PRES: THE '46 CONCERTS, Verve). Buck Clayton, trumpet; Willie Smith, alto saxophone; Coleman Hawkins, tenor saxophone; Charlie Parker, alto saxophone; Lester Young, tenor saxophone.*

(Naming soloists as they play): It's Roy Eldridge. . . . Alto saxophone next, wasn't it? Hard for me to say who it was, because there were so many [altos]—that could've been Benny Carter on alto, 1946. It's a concert. It may not have been Benny Carter. That's Hawkins, Coleman Hawkins. That's Charlie Parker. This is a very fine record, very fine.

It could have been Jazz at the Philharmonic. A concert, that's what I think it is. I know *that* isn't Hawkins. This guy plays too clean. Could be Lester Young. I think it is Lester—yeah, he just played one of my things. That's how I know it's Lester Young. That's some of the best saxophone playing you'll hear in years.

6 BUD POWELL. *52ND STREET THEME (from THIS WAS BUD POWELL, Verve). Powell, piano; Ray Brown, bass; Osie Johnson, drums.*

Art Tatum. I loved Art Tatum's playing. I think Bud Powell was very strongly influenced by Tatum. What really impresses me about this record is the bass. Just an incredible bass player. Could be Ray Brown—wonderful.

(Later): That isn't the best Powell. Powell played magnificently. Those are arranged bop phrases, you know. But that isn't the Powell that I heard in person.

7 DAVID SANBORN. *LET'S JUST SAY GOODBYE (from VOYEUR, Warner Bros.). Sanborn, alto saxophone; Steve Gadd, drums; Marcus Miller, bass, Moog bass; Buzzy Feiten, electric, acoustic guitar; Lenny Castro, percussion; Michael Colina, OBX synthesizer.*

I like this. I love this. See, that's a great beat, isn't it? Oh, that's nice. That's great. Beautiful. I tell you, if you're a dancer—and I've been a dancer all my life—this is powerful stuff. I'm not talking about the sax solo. I'm referring to the beat. It's marvelous. And what he does fits with it.

It's camp and all that, but there's a lot of jazz that doesn't swing like that—we've heard some tonight.

I don't reject anything. I've spent a lot of time by myself listening to these rock shows, and I've always found something I liked. I'd get up and I'd dance. It's the only way you can learn, to go on and on, never stop. Music's too deep. **db**

PROFILE

Ronnie Drayton

Self-characterized as a "modern urban bluesman," the guitarist puts passion into his high-energy playing.

BY GENE SANTORO

DONNA RANIERI

There may be other guitarists whose chops are as consistently sharp and surprising, whose computer-printout list of credits is as long, varied, and impressive, and whose names remain as little known outside musicians' circles as Ronnie Drayton's—but if there are, I don't know about them either. From the Chambers Brothers to Ryuchi Sakamoto, Nona Hendryx to Blood Ulmer, Kashif to the reformed Defunkt, this versatile axemaster has demonstrated time and again his ability to slide with agility, grace, and daring into whatever the musical mode demands, whether greasy r&b or fatback funk, fullblown harmolodic excursions or burning metal meltdown. "I think of myself as a modern urban bluesman," the 32-year-old says thoughtfully. And indeed he is: the scorching electronic solos, out-of-phase funk arpeggiations, shimmering plucked chordal harmonics are all part of his arsenal of urban sounds, but when you see him close his eyes, tilt his head back, and blow, the passion glows with a bright blue flame.

He comes by both range and passion naturally. "My uncle used to play sax, was into Trane and Bird and all of them, and my mother was a classical pianist with perfect pitch, and a prima ballerina too," he begins. "They used to have trouble putting me to sleep, so from the time I was nine months old they'd put me in front of the radio and tune in jazz: Bird, Mulligan, Mingus, all the greats would be coming out of there." By the sixth grade he'd joined St. Clement's drum and bugle corps (which also produced Billy Cobham); soon he was entering competitions and studying trap drums, using the little cardboard set his grandmother bought him. When he hit high school he began gigging in local Queens clubs, places like the London Manor and Club Ruby, which provided work for musicians like Coltrane and the Electric Flag while doubling as the proving grounds for local up-and-comers like Marcus Miller and Lenny White. One of Ronnie's earliest bands, the Soul Shakers, featured as vocalist The System's Michael Murphy. "There's a whole network of players who came up from that neighborhood in Queens," he explains.

Ironically, the player who catalyzed Drayton's conversion from drummer to guitarist was someone he'd previously encountered at jams in those Queens clubs, though it wasn't until a guitarist friend played the 16-year-old Ronnie Jimi Hendrix's first LP that he was inspired to make the switch. Being left-handed, he picked up a friend's Gretsch Country Gentleman, turned it upside down, and started where most pickers of the period did: "*G-L-O-R-I-A*," he laughs, and adds, "but within a year I'd gone to *Third Stone From The Sun* to Howlin' Wolf to Albert King to Atilla Zoller. Because I play upside-down, I had to spend time at first just figuring out how to invert all the chord forms from the Mel Bay books. Then I did a lot of homework with records, listening for emotional intent, duplicating sounds and technique—I must've burned out seven or eight record players slowing the records down to 16 rpm so I could cop the flow of the lines."

Ronnie had already been gigging on the road with the Persuaders and the Exciters, using loaned axes, by the time he acquired his own electric as a gift from Willie Chambers. "I met him at the Apollo; a friend of mine got us in, talking some story with his white suit and white hat," he grins. Backstage in the band room, Drayton picked up an instrument and started to play. "They were all standing around listening," he recalls. "I thought they were angry at me, 'cause they said, 'You better be waiting here when we come off, because you took that guitar.' Me being this Catholic kid, I thought, 'Oh, God, I'd better take my punishment [*laughs*],' so I waited. They came offstage, took me upstairs, took another amp out, and started making bets who could play better, me or [their then-guitarist] Velvet Turner, who was wearing Jimi's clothes and playing one of Jimi's Strats." You can guess who came out on top by the results: Drayton got to keep the Les Paul Goldtop he was using.

It wasn't long before he was putting it to work, with the Chambers, with Edwin Birdsong, with Roy Ayers, with a succession of acts he characterizes as "a blur. I've been on the road almost 15 years now, and it's a funny life—you're in suspended animation until you get onstage." For a brief time in the early '70s it seemed like he might move off the road's endless grind and into the fast lane to superstardom. He'd formed a rock quartet called Aura, and producer/engineer Eddie Kramer (Hendrix, Stones, Zeppelin), who the Chambers Brothers had introduced to the young picker, gave him a beautiful '54 Strat and signed him to an exclusive contract. The relationship soured, largely, Drayton claims, for a reason that all-too-often haunts black rockers: "He had it in his mind to make me the next black Messiah, pigeonholing me into the Hendrix thing. He kept trying to get to that instead of getting to *me*, and I'd signed my life away to him." Five years' hassle wrested Drayton his legal life back, but by then everyone else had lost interest in signing him.

And so it was back to life as a road warrior, with groups like the Flamingos and Parliament, cruising the chitlin' circuit and broadening his musical education. "It's just on-the-job training," he shrugs. "The more I listened, the more I heard the guitar as a horn section, or a string section, or a chorus of voices—that's what I would go to. As a drummer, I was really caught up with rhythmic content, so my rhythm parts would slot between the hi-hat and snare drum and my solo lines would fit in between the snare and bass drum. That's how I started to develop this flowing concept. If you really listen to Hendrix with Mitch Mitchell, or Pete Townshend with Keith Moon, or Jimmy Page with John Bonham, that's what they're doing; it just goes back to the r&b I grew up listening to and playing. And Southern guitarists like Larry Lee, who worked with Al Green, had voicings you never heard up North, which I learned spending a lot of time on the bus with those package tours. Accompanying singers teaches you how to stretch and move intervals around, especially after being tongue-lashed a few hundred times. Listen, man, the r&b

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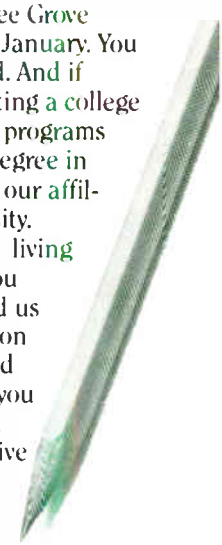

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circuit is *brutal*: if you can't cut it, you're out of there. You have to have the chops, be ready to walk into any circumstance and play, from cabaret to bebop to killin' rock & roll. *That's* where I learned my theory."

It's also where he picked up a skill vital to session players in particular, essential to any real musician in fact. "The road is where I learned to be a team player," he continues. "You get in and extract something new from the situation while you keep yourself in there and keep the camaraderie." You can hear the results on records as diverse as James Blood Ulmer's *Free Lancing* (Columbia 37493) and *Black Rock* (Columbia 38285), Nona Hendryx's *Nona* (RCA 1-4565) and *The Heat* (RCA 1-5465), or Anne Murray's latest release.

While continuing his longterm association with Nona (he started working with her in 1980, when he was a member of both Deadline and Material, two Bill Laswell bands whose funk got grafted onto the lady's own) and heading out for roadwork with the likes of Ryuchi Sakamoto, Drayton has been developing the sounds of his own metallic funk with Sirius, which boasts Bernard Fowler on vocals, Sean Solomon on bass, Oscar Deric Brown on keys, and David Prater on drums—all of them, like Drayton, veterans of the road and studio wars. "One of the things I want to do with this band is to get to a different harmonic concept, get out of the standard changes but still have pop overtones over erotic r&b rhythms. I just don't hear much passion in today's music. I mean," he laughs, "if Madonna is passion, sex is in trouble." **db**

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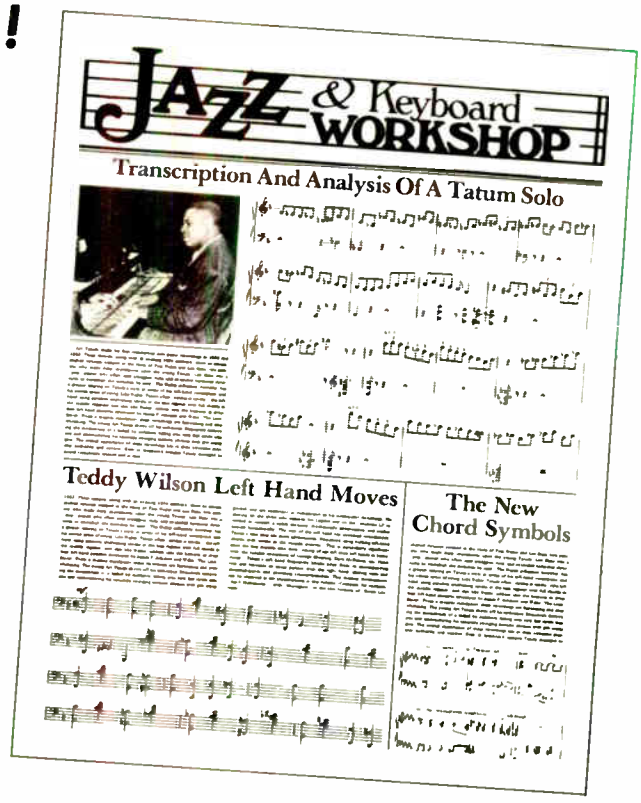

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PRO SESSION

John Coltrane's Solo on *Countdown*— A Tenor Saxophone Transcription

BY ANDREW WHITE

Saxophonist/author ***Andrew White*** *is among the leading authorities on the music of John Coltrane. A catalog of his prolific output of transcriptions and articles concerning the music of Coltrane and other musicians is available by writing Andrew's Music, 4830 S. Dakota Ave. N.E., Washington, DC 20017.*

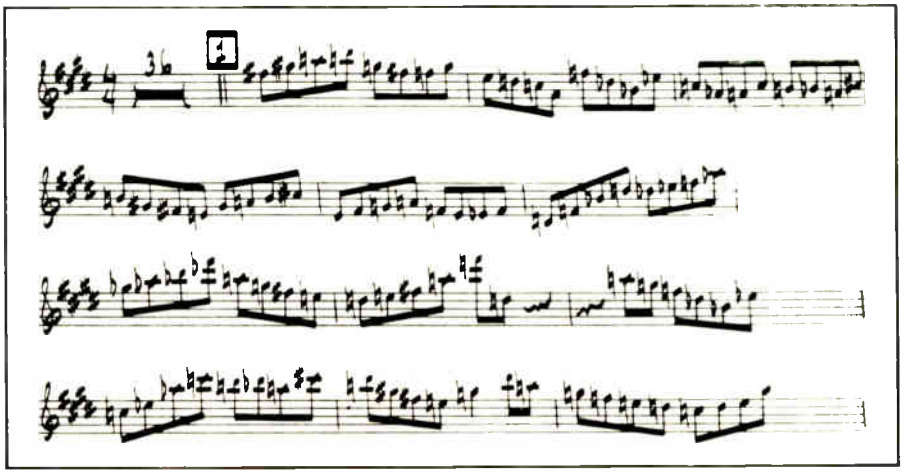
From John Coltrane's 1959 album *Giant Steps* (Atlantic 1311) come two classic tunes that display Trane's formulistic approach to improvising: *Giant Steps* and *Countdown*. Alternate takes of both tunes have been released subsequent to Coltrane's death on the album *Alternate Takes* (Atlantic 1668). Comparisons of all four takes make interesting listening from the perspective of the formulistic approach to improvising.

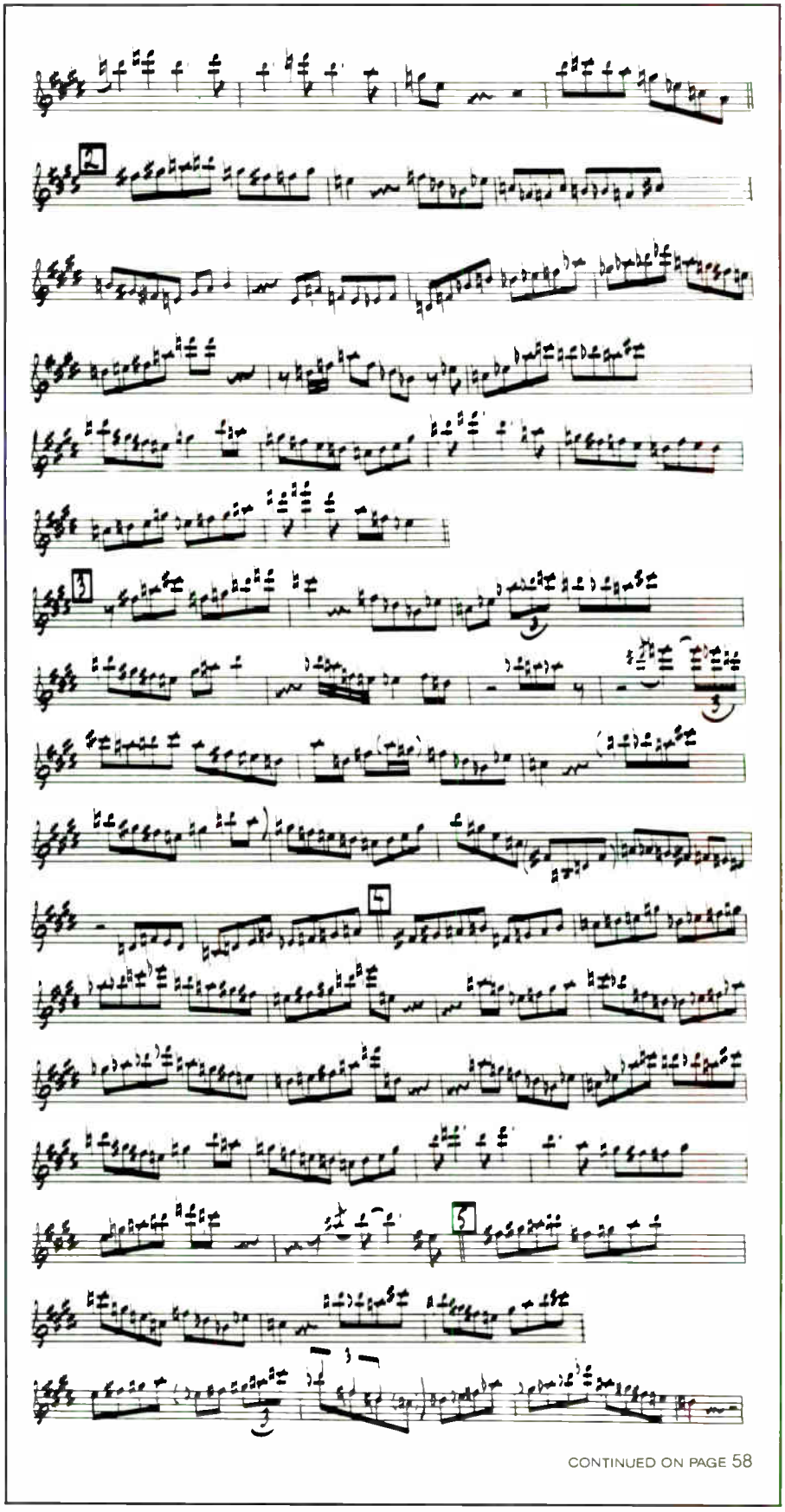
Giant Steps has been the most popular of all Coltrane tunes and improvisations by far. Probably because of so many eighth-note patterns, this solo offers an etudic reminiscence to young players, thus rendering the pre-artistic attitude of, "Oh yes, I can play this one like Trane!" This attitude coupled with a "sufficient" technique has helped perpetuate the Coltrane legacy to an extent, but more often than not "technique" is as far as it has gone. The study and/or performance of any transcription should go toward the broadening of a frame of reference for further developing the creative process, not to mimic a source. If you want to clone somebody, pick Prince, not Coltrane. You'll generate more cash from Prince.

In studying transcriptions of formula-based solos—especially Coltrane's—one must be extremely careful to remember at all times that Trane remained musical, expressive, and swinging as well as being formulistic. The combination of all of these elements is what has made the *Giant Steps* recordings great and lasting throughout all of these years.

In my opinion, of the two tunes *Giant Steps* and *Countdown*, *Countdown* is the more difficult. Both tunes are 16 bars long but, unlike *Giant Steps*, the harmonic scheme for *Countdown* does *not* rest on the third measure of each four-bar phrase. It rests on the fourth measure, thus elongating the feeling of perpetual motion. Also, the first three four-bar phrases are the same music, with the harmonic patterns being transposed down one whole step each for the second and third phrases. (See chord symbols at the end of the transcription.)

Countdown was performed at a much faster tempo than *Giant Steps*, thus heightening the intensity of harmonic motion. In spite of this, Coltrane maintained a high level of musicality, expression, and swing. Thus, as the dictum goes in solo playing, "If you can't swing alone and unaccompanied, you can't swing," and I say, "If you can't swing at a fast tempo you *may not* be able to swing at all." Coltrane could swing at any tempo.





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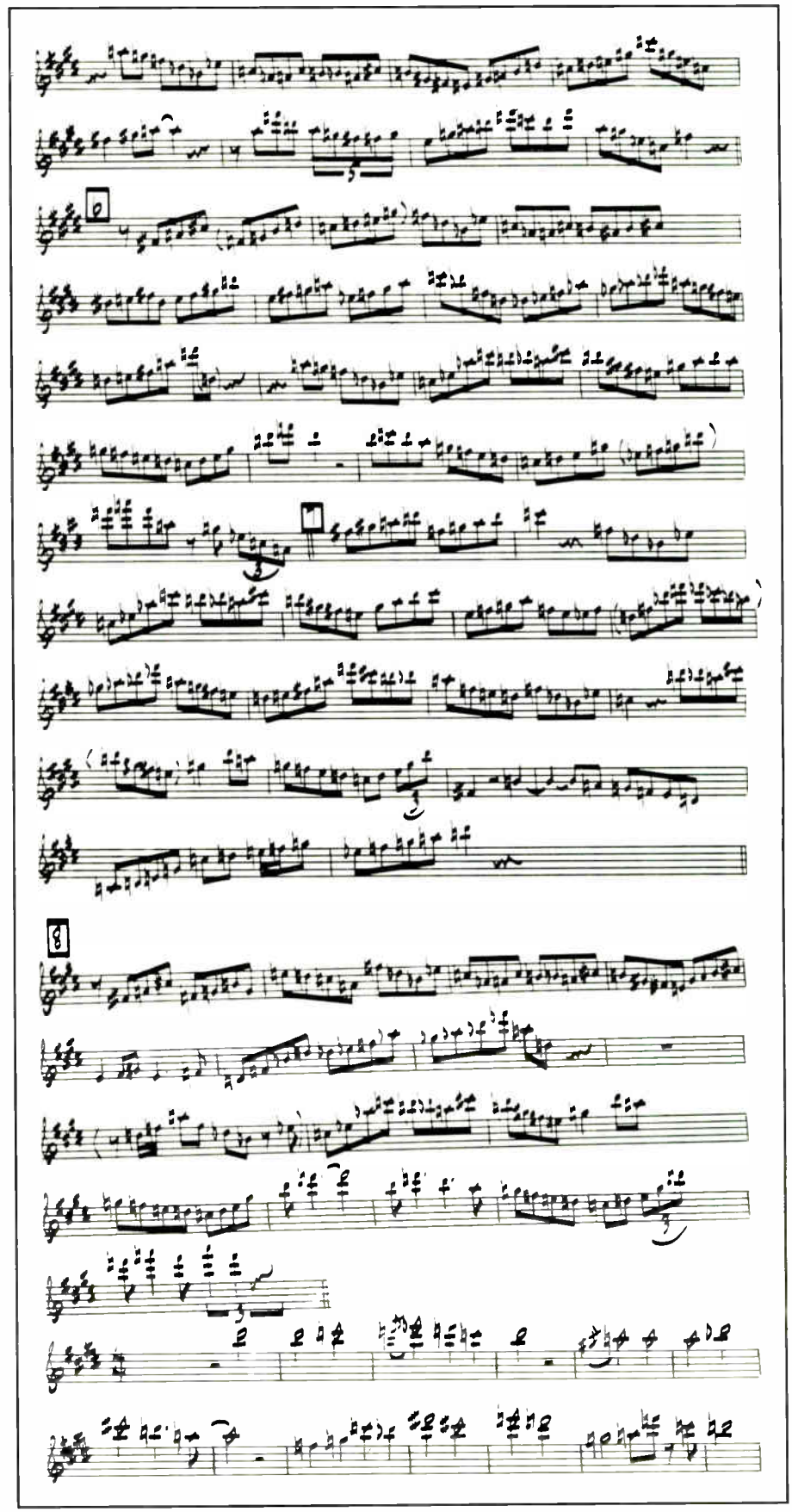
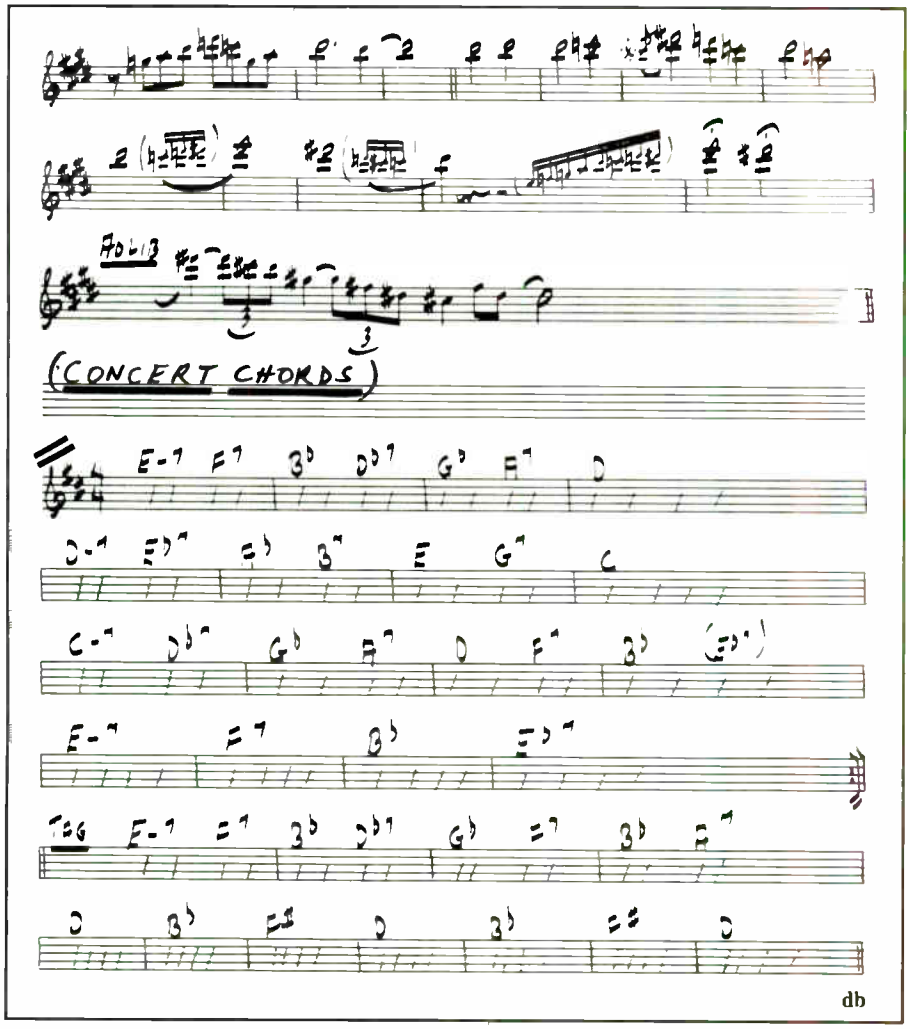




CHORDS

cont. from page 11

expand their sonic capabilities and compositional/improvisational structures through the guidance and support of [Eicher's] ECM Records. Names like John Abercrombie, Bill Frisell, Terje Rypdal, David Torn, and many more have all recorded and mixed under the very high standards of the ECM sound concept. A perfect demonstration of bright guitar mixing can be found throughout the evolution of Pat Metheny's sound. All of those phenomenal performers were undoubtedly assisted by a professional who has exquisite taste and understands guitars' and other instruments' roles in music.

Andy Schejter Somerville, MA

Threadgill defense

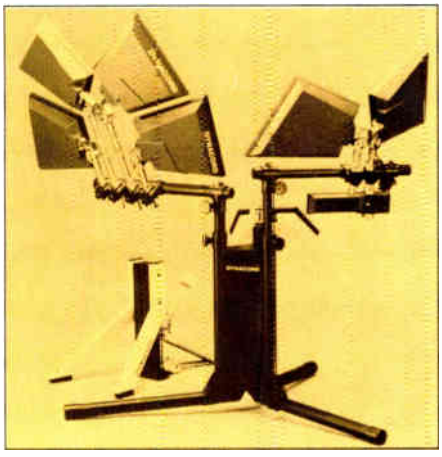
Reader Norman Maranus' dismissal of Henry Threadgill (Chords, Jan. '86), on the grounds that "his bop playing was ridiculed" angers me for two reasons:

1) Mr. Threadgill's tenor sax roots in Rollins should be obvious to anyone whose hearing aid hasn't malfunctioned. Listen to such recorded solos as *Untitled Tango*, *Buddy Bolden's Blues*, and *King Porter Stomp*. His alto solo on David Murray's *Jasvan*, to pick just one example, demonstrates that he plays changes brilliantly; I heard an equally brilliant alto solo on *Night In Tunisia* at Chicago's Jazz Showcase several years ago, where no one left the bandstand. How much further back can your jazz roots go than to record compositions by Scott Joplin and Jelly Roll Morton, as Mr. Threadgill, (on *Air Lore*) almost alone among bop and post-bop musicians, has done? Surely Mr. Meranus could have found a more vulnerable avant garde target for his little sermon on musicianship.

2) Other musicians whose "bop playing" has been "ridiculed" include Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane, Herbie Nichols, Elvin Jones, Eric Dolphy. Jazz history is studded with stories of great musicians being scorned by their colleagues—for example, Lester Young's rejection by the Fletcher Henderson band because he couldn't play like Coleman Hawkins—in fact, *everyone*, including Ellington, has been put down *by other musicians* at one time or another. The recent sentimentalization of the jazz tradition into a sort of happy hunting ground where all the "real" musicians (i.e. the musicians you like) recognize and respect one another while excluding everyone else strikes me as one of the most fatuous conceits of the '80s.

Tony Alexander Chicago

PERCUSSION SHOP



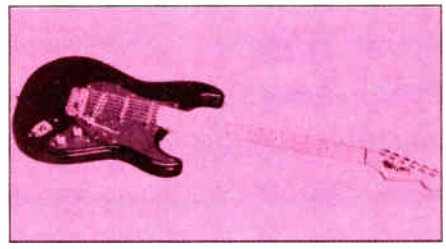
Dynacord's Power Pads, Kick

DYNACORD has introduced a new line of drum pads and kick, available through Europa Technology Inc. (Venice, CA). Available in dark-grey, light-grey, or red, the power-pads include a playing surface using a spring design for extra resilience. The Dynacord Power-Kick responds like a natural bass drum head, giving into the body of the drum slightly when struck by the drum beater due to its low, spring-mounted mass. The Dynacord Drum-Caddy completes the line, offering individual and flexible arrangements.

Korg's DDD-1 Digital Drums

KORG U.S.A. INC. (Westbury, CT) has introduced the DDD-1 Digital Dynamic Drums, whose PCM-encoded sounds include two bass drums and two snares, two sets of open and closed hi-hats, and assorted ride and crash cymbals, toms, and other sounds. Tuning, decay, and dynamics are programmable for every drum, on every beat; each sound can be assigned to any of the 14 pads, or each pad can play different tuning/decay settings of one sound. The pads are touch-sensitive; cymbals can be set to retrigger each attack like typical digital drum machines (monomode) or for a more natural sound allowing the first sound to continue to ring (polymode). The DDD-1 has one-button automatic control of rolls and flams; it also includes MIDI In and Out and Sync-to-Tape, allowing each sound to be transferred to a different note of any MIDI keyboard. A sampling option lets sounds be recorded directly and stored in memory; the memory also stores 100 patterns and 10 songs and displays their names in an alphanumeric readout. RAM cards can also be used to store sounds.

GUITAR WORLD



Schecter's Yngwie Malmsteen Model

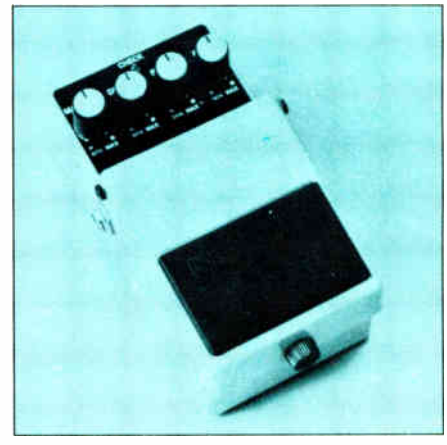
SCHECTER GUITARS (Dallas, TX) has combined vintage design with '86 electronics in creating a guitar line based on four custom axes built for company endorser Yngwie Malmsteen. The YM-1 features a handcrafted scalloped neck to facilitate string-bending and improve technique; it is available with rosewood or maple fingerboard with 22 jumbo frets and 25-and-one-half-inch scale length. The body is of two-piece alder with an adjustable bridge and two-piece tremolo; three high-output single coil pickups reduce hum. Other features include three-way pickup selection, graphite nut, Eastern hardrock maple neck, vintage peghead, and roll-off-styled volume, bass, and pedal controls. The guitar comes in cream or black finishes with chrome hardware.

KEYBOARD COUNTRY

Yamaha's CP7OM

YAMAHA INTERNATIONAL CORP. (Buena Park, CA) has introduced a CP MIDI line of electric pianos, enabling users to add the sounds of MIDI-controllable instruments to pianos with real strings and hammers. The 73-note CP7OM model features a built-in seven-band graphic equalizer with an EQ On/Off switch; two independent send and return loops permit patching of echo, flanger, chorus, or any two signal processing devices and can be bypassed by a panel switch. A fully variable tremolo adds vibrancy to the piano's sound, and each string bridge is fitted with a high-performance piezo-electric pickup to eliminate amplification problems like feedback, pedal and hammer noise, and loss of high frequencies. A MIDI Split feature permits selection of upper and lower note limits for MIDI signals, effectively splitting the keyboard. Two balanced XLR-type outputs send direct feeds to the p.a. system, while on-stage monitors may be connected to two phone jacks; a volume fader on the front panel lets on-stage volume be controlled without affecting the p.a. level.

ELECTRONIC GEAR



Roland's High Band Flanger

The Boss HF-2 High Band Flanger from ROLANDCORP US (Los Angeles, CA) uses some of the circuitry and control functions of the line's BF-2 model, but goes one step further by providing flanging effects one octave higher than other flangers. The high-band range lets the HF-2 provide clear, bright flanging colors without the distortion and muddiness that occurs in low frequencies; the HF-2 is especially effective in the upper ranges of keyboards and synthesizers, as well as all types of electric guitars. Control functions include rate, depth, resonance, and manual controls; rate control is variable from 100mS to 16S, delay is adjustable from 0.5mS to 13mS. On/off switching is done with a silent switch, and the pedal operates with a DC 9V battery or the optional PSA-120 Adaptor. **db**

SHOEMAKER

continued from page 63

Lateef, and Olatunji (whose Center of African Culture in Harlem Coltrane gave a benefit concert for three months before he died) were to co-produce a concert program at Lincoln Center's Philharmonic Hall in March, 1968 tracing Black music from its African roots; at the time of Coltrane's death, the hall was booked, design elements such as scenery were being considered, and touring possibilities were being discussed. Biographers are sketchy about plans Coltrane had shortly before his death for opening a loft in Greenwich Village where rehearsals could be attended for the price of a soft drink, but there is nothing to suggest that had Coltrane lived the idea would not have been realized.

In short, Coltrane's truncated transition from being the beneficiary of increasingly lucrative commercial enterprises to being the provider of grassroots alternatives is an integral piece of the puzzle. Still, such activities are overshadowed by the apocalyptic music of his "late period." Generally, the recording of *Ascension* (Impulse A-95) on June 28, 1965, is considered to be the watershed event, bringing Coltrane's zeal to the fore with a between-the-eyes impact that dwarfed even *A Love Supreme* (Impulse A-77); in the June, 1986 issue of **down beat**, Ornette Coleman cites *Ascension* as Coltrane's renunciation of the commercial ("he played strictly commercial music before that") in favor of the "strictly spiritual side." The late period has lasted long after Coltrane's death because of thorough vault-culling, which, in turn, has given the last two years of Coltrane's life the semblance of a wholly complete "period," when, in all probability, what Coltrane was building toward was left as incomplete as his plans for new means of production.

Albert Ayler was correct in suggesting Coltrane's greatness lay in his unrelenting striving for purer musical communication and communion. Coltrane could have played it safe, but didn't. He couldn't. He had to, as he told Nat Hentoff for the liner essay for *Meditations* (Impulse A-9110), continually "clean the mirror." Within this simple image is the crux of Coltrane's eschatology and art—the process is more valuable than the product. Though it is pointless to speculate about the directions Coltrane's music would have taken if had lived (and Alice Coltrane's remark, made shortly before his death, that he was spending more time composing than practicing poses intriguing possibilities), it is safe to say that Coltrane would still be searching, faithfully.

Happy day, Ohnedaruth. **db**

WHITE

continued from page 63

Miles Davis on the album *Kind Of Blue* (Columbia 8163), he used chromaticism in primarily a standard non-harmonic Ionian fashion.

The uniqueness of polydiatonicism was that it not only served a tremendous thematic function in its own right (which has seemed to be sufficient for the "Coltrane clones"), it also offered Coltrane the opportunity to expand the hard swing of the mid-'50s (which the "Coltrane clones" have seen fit to ignore for whatever reason). The combination of these two components made Coltrane the crystallizer of the bebop era and the father of the avant garde.

In most instances, when people think of Coltrane it is the artistic side which draws the most attention. This is good in that a creative artist can be acknowledged for his work, *but this is America*. More specifically, *the United States*—where the "buck" is king (pardon the pun). It's not enough to have artistic success in order to win friends and gain influence. And because we are such a conspicuously consumptive society,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

astonishingly fresh and virulent within the classic molds.

A tough taskmaster in front of an orchestra (the small groups were more relaxed), he said that he never demanded more than he was prepared to give himself. This was small comfort to musicians, however, to whom Goodman often loomed as a vague, eccentric, sometimes inscrutable and despotic leader. His thorny relationships with sidemen over the years have produced an enormous lore of tales and anecdotes which musicians have come to share with a mixture of awe, puzzlement, and affection.

Goodman's death came as a surprise. At 77 he appeared fit and hearty, and continued to play superbly, often with almost superhuman energy and drive. A tv special taped in October (see News, **db**, Feb. '85) with a new big band was broadcast last March and produced a very good album. Goodman also recorded the band in several studio sessions in Purchase, NY, during January. He kept the orchestra on-call and played concerts in Washington, DC, Ann Arbor, and Radio City Music Hall in New York (the last with Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald). Dates for the band were booked into November. At the time of his death, he had recently played chamber music in a Century Club recital in New York, and a concert with his band the previous Saturday at Wolftrap, near Washington, DC.

The lifetime Goodman discography is large enough to fill a book—and, in fact, already has and will again. D. Russell Connor's *BG: Off The Record* (1958) was revised and updated in *BG: On The Record* in 1969. A third and final edition is expected shortly. Goodman received two Grammy Hall of Fame Awards and a Grammy Life Achievement Award last February. He was a Kennedy Center honoree in 1982, the sixth musician to enter the **down beat** Hall of Fame in 1957, and received numerous honorary degrees, including one from Columbia University last May. *—john mcdonough*

FREE AND EASY IN THE PARK: *Grant Park, that is, where the 1986 Chicago Jazz Festival will run from August 27-31. The open-air, free admission fest, sponsored by the Mayor's Office of Special Events and programmed by the Jazz Institute of Chicago, will again be broadcast live via satellite over National Public Radio stations across the country. In addition to the grand finale featuring guitarist George Benson (pictured above) reunited with ex-boss Brother Jack McDuff, the fest this year takes on an international flavor with such artists as England's Humphrey Lyttleton, Spain's Tete Montoliu, Denmark's Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, the Misha Mengelberg/Steve Lacy Quintet from Paris and Amsterdam, Pierre Dørge's New Jungle Orchestra from Copenhagen, and Eddie Palmieri from Puerto Rico. Other headliners include Cab Calloway, Sarah Vaughan, Abdullah Ibrahim, the Ellis Marsalis Quintet with Alvin Batiste, the Benny Golson/Art Farmer Jazztet, and a special recreation of the Monk/Hall Overton Big Band. Info is available from the JIC Hotline, 312/666-1881.*

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The Coltrane Legacy

BY BILL SHOEMAKER

CHARLES STEWART

There is a poetic justice in John Coltrane being born on the autumnal equinox, September 23, 1926, as day and night are in equal measure, the season of cultivation giving way to the season of harvest. The milestone of his 60th birthday this month is a reminder that Coltrane was, and remains, a larger-than-life figure, whether approached from musicological or folkloric perspectives. Only such a larger-than-life figure could be the subject of both meticulous scholarship and cultish worship and still remain, in some essential respects, a mystery.

Despite the biographies, oral histories, critical analyses, and even the exhaustive transcriptions of Andrew White, large questions still loom about Coltrane's seemingly monomaniacal musical passion, a flame whose very brightness consumed the oxygen of a lifetime all the sooner. In the last years of his life, Coltrane pursued his music without apparent regard for his deteriorating health, often in noticeable pain (photographs taken during his 1966 tour of Japan show Coltrane placing his right hand over his abdomen; he went against the advice of his physicians that he remain inactive for a year, but by then it was too late—he died of liver cancer on July 17, 1967); yet his prodigiousness during his illness rivaled Mozart's under similar circumstances, and the startling final transformation of his music makes Mozart's seem like a minor fine-tuning.

The question of what propels someone to ignore his health, or at least discount or misinterpret one's body signals, in the furtherance of an artistic ideal usually can only be answered in complex terms; in Coltrane's case, however, to say he was compelled by religious fervor is a maddeningly simple answer. Still, this is not to say that Coltrane's religiosity is a simple matter. Certainly Coltrane's faith did not obscure his worsening health from himself; in responding to a question about the addition of Pharoah Sanders to his group posed by Frank Kofsky in the summer of 1966 for Kofsky's book, *Black Nationalism And The Revolution In Music*, Coltrane candidly stated, "It helps me stay alive sometimes, because physically, man, the pace I've been leading has been so hard . . . I like to have somebody there in case I can't get that strength."

Likewise, his faith did not—contrary to what the posthumous image of the transfixed, clarion Coltrane suggests—isolate him from the politics of the day; more acutely then than now, the politics of the day for Black musicians centered around establishing a self-determined economy. Throughout his tenure with Impulse Records, Coltrane lobbied—though not always successfully—for recording contracts for Archie Shepp, Olatunji, and many others, but his championing of such artists, and their causes, took on more profound, far-reaching dimensions in his last years. He laid the legal groundwork for his own recording company, Coltrane Records, which produced much of Coltrane's posthumous output for Impulse. Coltrane had tired of the club circuit that was the mainstay of his performance schedule in the U.S. and began to develop more culturally relevant alternatives. Coltrane, Yusef

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BY ANDREW WHITE

Since John Coltrane's death on July 17, 1967, 19 years ago, we have experienced vast changes in the jazz industry. To say that Coltrane's influence on the music of current jazz practitioners has diminished over the years would be an understatement. Though it is true that many of the "Coltrane clones" have had marginal success in redefining the jazz market, it is also true that those elements of the Coltrane style that have made Trane an anomaly have been forsaken in order to create a faceless music.

As I wrote in my book, *Trane 'N Me*, "The stylization of jazz has taken place. Jazz has been reduced to its lowest common denominator. Only those elements that can be bought and sold in the academic marketplace have been emphasized at the expense of the elimination of the individualistic components which made jazz the unique form of music it is."

As in the case of Wynton Marsalis, the media and the music business community jumped on the bandwagon *quick* to dissect this young man's work in order to create copy, maintain salaries, and influence shallow public opinion. All of this is an effort to further the cause of a jazz industry that has been faltering artistically and financially ever since the death of John Coltrane. Yep! When he died he took it with him. To paraphrase Dan Morgenstern in a speech he made at a Smithsonian presentation in early 1985: "Our last charismatic leader was John Coltrane." I'm glad he said that publicly. I'd been thinking that for 18 years, but was reluctant to say it without hearing it from someone else first.

Besides being one of our greatest saxophonists, improvisors, innovative and creative contributors, Coltrane *was* our last great leader. As a matter of fact, he was the *only* leader we've had in jazz who successfully maintained an evolutionary creative output as well as building a "jazz star" image. *He merged the art and the money.*

That doesn't mean he became rich. I don't know anything about that. It means he was the only jazz "star" in our time to be of a contemporary artistic predisposition who actually had a substantial enough business posture to complement his artistic following. Sure, there were many jazz musicians making more money than Coltrane, then and now, but none of them could claim the immediate and significant contributions to the enhancement of the total jazz language that Trane could.

Coltrane's "polydiatonicism," as described in *Trane 'N Me*, is in my opinion the last major linguistic contribution made to jazz. Polydiatonicism was Coltrane's way of superimposing one diatonic system, usually a half-step above, upon another. This technique was primarily used in his "modal" pieces like *Impressions* and *Afro Blue*; however, there are many traces of it in other fabrics, like his blues and ballads. I think Coltrane thought of the minor mode and the Dorian mode as interchangeable, thus he never played "modal" in the pure sense of modality. His chromaticism and polydiatonicism can be related directly to super-tonic and dominant functions in large part. Even as far back as the first recording of *So What*, with

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AUDITIONS

down beat *spotlights young musicians deserving wider recognition.*

DAVID GORDON, 30, began playing trumpet at age 11 in a St. Louis junior high school jazz workshop run by Joel Glickman. By 17, he was working locally with Albert King, Little Milton, and Bobby Bland. Since then, he has gone on to perform on the album *Man-Dance* and tour Europe with Ronald Shannon Jackson and the Decoding Society as well as recording and touring with Sun Ra.

Gordon studied Music Performance on a scholarship to Northland College and Superior College. He won a first-place performance award at the 1980-81 Au Claire Jazz Festival, where the clinicians were Bill Berry and Mondell Lowe. Before leaving St. Louis, Gordon studied with Sly Stoner and David Hines; in 1982, he moved to New York to study under John Gilmore, Sun Ra, and Marshall Allen. Gordon counts Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard, Woody Shaw, Cootie Williams, and Louis Armstrong as those who have influenced him most musically. His goals are to record albums and travel the world performing jazz.

DOUG TALLEY, who turns 27 this month, is saxophonist, staff arranger, and composer with Paul Gray and the Vista Orchestra in Kansas City, where he also teaches music in the Shawnee Mission Public Schools. He was recently commissioned to do arrangements for the Third Annual Stage Band Festival and the T-Bone Sizzle, both in KC. Talley's other accomplishments include an outstanding soloist award from the Wichita Jazz Festival, and appearances with Paul Gray and the Gaslight Gang at the 1981 Mayport Jazz Festival and the 1982 National Association of Jazz Educators' Convention.

Talley took piano and cello lessons before switching to clarinet in the sixth grade, then moved on to tenor saxophone in high school (he's since added soprano and alto saxes and flute to his axe arsenal). Talley attended the University of Kansas from 1977-82, where he earned numerous scholarships and awards, including some for outstanding jazz performances. He spent the summer of '82 backing such acts as the Four Freshmen, the Platters, the Diamonds, and Jackie Gayle at the Dunes Hotel in Las Vegas, then went on to earn a masters degree from North Texas State University, where he studied with John Scott and Rich Matteson and performed with various groups in nearby Dallas.

CHRIS SUTHERLAND, 17-year-old drummer, was given his first drumset by his parents at age five. By seventh grade he was performing in his school's concert band and with the Vincent Massey School Jazz Band in Brandon, Manitoba. Sutherland has since performed with the Kawai Combo at venues in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Calgary. He has also appeared at three Canadian Stage Band Festival National Finals, and was named the Junior All-Star drummer in 1985 at Quebec City as well as his school's outstanding band member.

Sutherland presently performs with a wind ensemble, a stage band, and a Brandon University-formed sax combo, all of which were invited to the Canadian festival finals; he also performs with a r&b/Top 40 group called Doctor Rhythm. Sutherland's influences include Steve Houghton, Ed Soph, Garry "Kid" Curry, and Mark Herndon, each of whom he has received instruction from, as well as his band director, David Schmidt. He will begin studies at the Percussion branch of the Musicians Institute of Technology this fall.

BILL FERREIRA, 27, is keeping the solo jazz piano tradition alive in Nashville. While a student at Peabody College, he was named "Best Piano Soloist" at the Ohio Collegiate Jazz Festival and "Outstanding Soloist" at Memphis State University's Jazz Week. Since then he's become known locally for his bluesy, stride-influenced solo playing in Nashville nightspots.

Ferreira's solo playing on his 1984 album, *'Round Midnight*, was compared with that of Abdullah Ibrahim in *Sound Choice* magazine; that same year he collaborated with pianist Floyd Cramer and Rhett Davis on the tune *If You Didn't Love Me*, which was mentioned in *Cashbox* magazine's "Feature Pick" column. Ferreira recently performed an original composition dedicated to boogie woogie pioneer Jimmy Yancey, which prompted an enthusiastic reviewer to report: "The Blair auditorium became a 1920s Chicago rent party, cold-water flat for a few minutes as the music bounced along, showing off the young composer's solid jazz training and experience." Ferreira hopes to bring his "neo-stride" improvisations to a wider audience with a new solo LP scheduled for release this summer.

KEITH CALMES, 20-year-old guitarist, played piano and trumpet for several years before switching to guitar at age 14. Calmes has been teaching guitar and playing local gigs while attending Fresno City College; this fall he will transfer to California State University in Northridge, where he plans to perform with one of the school's half-dozen jazz bands while continuing his jazz and classical guitar studies.

Among Calmes' music accomplishments are a Command Performance for the California Music Educators Association, Outstanding Musicianship certificates from the National Association of Jazz Educators in 1985 and '86, and playing guitar and singing with Fresno City College's jazz choir on a tour of Mexico this summer. Calmes has written arrangements of jazz standards for his school's big band and composed 20th century classical works influenced by composers Leo Brouwer and Villa-Lobos. His major jazz and guitar influences include Jim Hall, Larry Carlton, Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane, and Gene Vincent's backup guitarist, Cliff Gallup.

TIM DONAHUE, 26-year-old guitarist, is garnering widespread acclaim from musicians and critics for his fretless acoustic and electric guitars, which produce sounds resembling other instruments—including trumpet and violin—without the use of effects. The Lewiston, NY, native built the instruments because of the limited availability of fretless guitars and his desire to find and play "that sound in my heart."

Donahue's fretless guitars are showcased on his recently issued debut album, *The Fifth Season*, the first release from the newly formed Avalon Records (South Pasadena, CA). The LP, recorded and mixed at Mad Hatter Studios in Los Angeles, also spotlights Donahue's jazz, fusion, and classical compositions. Donahue, who graduated from the Berklee College of Music in Boston in 1982 with a degree in Professional Music, currently resides in Tokyo, where he teaches guitar at several universities. **db**

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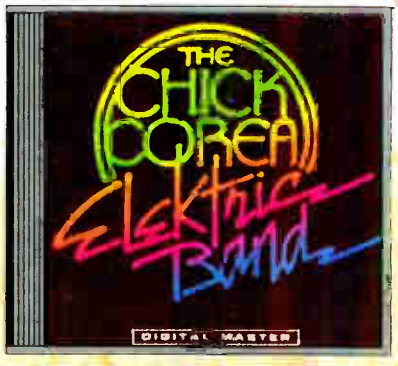

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