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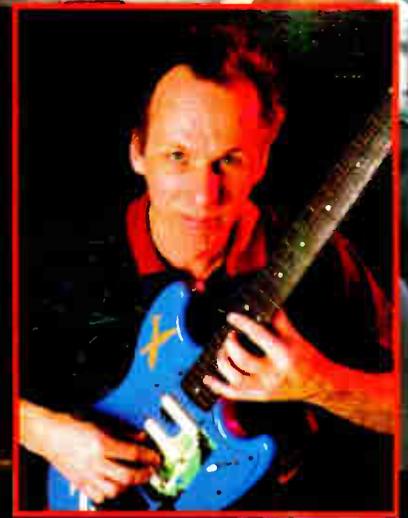
**PETER  
ERSKINE**  
*Steppin'  
Out*

**WINNERS!**  
*51st Annual  
Readers Poll*

*Weather  
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It's Tuesday afternoon in Chicago. The interview has gone well. Peter Erskine is on his way to a favorite local pipe store—he's an avid collector—so he tugs on a jacket and scarf and suggests we walk up Michigan Avenue together on my way to the *db* offices. The jazz chitchat continues on the elevator ride down—his buddy Mitchel Forman's having a good time in Wayne Shorter's band, so-and-so has a new record out, etc.

Our good spirits are squelched as soon

as we step outside. Weather Update's three-man road crew is pacing the sidewalk, in obvious distress: the band's equipment truck is missing, presumably stolen. A Chicago cop, via walkie-talkie, is checking whether the truck has been towed, but that's highly unlikely—not even the city's notorious Lincoln Park Pirates would dare yank away an equipment truck from in front of a hotel so brazenly. A hotel worker says he saw three guys drive off in the truck around

11 a.m. Erskine decides to stick near the hotel to await further developments.

It turns out the truck *was* stolen. All of that expensive equipment—\$150,000 worth, according to the police report—gone. That night's Park West show—and likely the rest of the tour—cancelled. Word goes out quickly to local music retailers to look out for the stolen equipment; I make some calls to police reporter friends with the Chicago papers, then check in that evening with Erskine.

"It destroys the tour," he reports. "I called up Yamaha, and they're pretty shocked. A lot of the accessory gear I've got is shot, and the whole Simmons setup I told you about is gone. And unfortunately, my insurance had run out and I hadn't gotten it renewed.

"I think we're being optimistic to think we'll recover the stuff," he continues, the tone of his voice polite but weary. "All I've heard is that we'll probably fly home tomorrow. What a drag. People that do this have no idea how many lives it affects. We wanted to play—the most disappointing thing was not getting to play for Chicago. We'll just have to keep our fingers crossed and see if it turns up."

Later that night the truck turns up abandoned on the city's West Side. The bulk of the equipment—including Zawinul's synthesizers and Erskine's near-prototype Yamaha Electronic Percussion System (there are only a half-dozen or so floating around the country at the time)—is recovered, still in the truck. WBBM-TV runs footage of the truck on that night's news, and the next morning's *Sun-Times* carries a blurb on the theft. The tour resumes as planned the next night in St. Louis.

Erskine phones us an update that morning. "I took a little licking," he admits, "several hundred dollars worth. But compared to what I thought it was going to be, I came out okay. I lost a new Anvil case and the Yamaha QXI, which is the computer that stores all the data. But I'll be back in business again this afternoon; we're going to borrow one for today's show. Steve [Khan] and Victor [Bailey] and our house soundman took the worst beating. But everyone took it real well, everyone was very calm about it."

Erskine is full of praise for how his equipment manufacturers had leant him support during the crisis. "The Korg people came through like champions. They shipped out some replacement gear, as did Yamaha." These companies also passed along information that should sound a warning note to all musicians in this age of expensive electronics. "They said that we were the eighth band to be hit real hard [by theft] recently," relates Erskine. "Unfortunately, we've become targets." **db**

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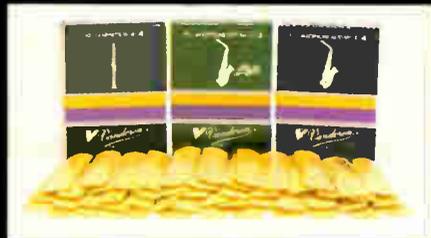
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## Fan Mail

Your pieces on Butch Morris and Tangerine Dream in the Oct. '86 issue were fabulous. I have enjoyed your magazine for four years now, as I am a fan of everything from Van Halen and Jimi Hendrix to Ornette Coleman and Miles Davis to the far-out avant garde (John Cage, John Zorn, George Lewis), and your magazine covers it all great. Thanks again for the excellent articles—and is there a chance for full-length interviews with John Zorn and George Lewis in the near future?

Domenick Macri Brooklyn, NY

## McConnell man

I would like to enlarge on Joseph Hoar's "Missing Persons" letter in *db's* October issue. Unfortunately, there is one big band of world-class status that I don't see mentioned in *db*—Rob McConnell and the Boss Brass. I've been listening to and performing swing and bebop for over 40 years, and Rob McConnell thrilled me as much if not more than Woody. Stan, Basie—you name them—as a composer, arranger, soloist. Put the Boss Brass against any big band today and they will win in any category, including presentation. I would advise any big band or jazz enthusiast to buy McConnell's records and video for thrills, thrills, and more thrills.

John Taylor Vernon, CT  
We last featured McConnell in June '83—but catch the Boss Brass (and other big band) reviews on page 40. —Ed.

## Blues credit

Larry Birnbaum's blues features are a welcome addition to your publication. I especially appreciated his Fabulous Thunderbirds piece in the Feb. '86 *db*.

However, in his review of *They Call Me Mr. Earl* in your Sept. issue, Birnbaum credits guitarist Ronnie Earl with the "smooth intonation and adept timing" of the vocal work. It's actually Sugar Ray Norcia who handles the singing throughout the record. Sugar Ray, whose band the Bluetones is New England's answer to the T-Birds (circa 1978), deserves the credit.

Tom Reney Florence, MA

## Miles apart

I was surprised to read Jeff Levenson's negative review of Miles Davis' performance at the JVC Jazz Fest in New York (Oct. '86). In August Miles played the Concord-JVC Jazz Fest in California and

blew the house down. Miles and his band stretched the limits of musical imagination, and Miles pushed his range and endurance to dizzying heights, including a 20-minute encore to a wildly enthusiastic crowd.

Either Miles saves his good stuff for West Coast audiences, or Mr. Levenson would look at a Kandinsky painting and think the artist was bored.

Larry Cadey

San Francisco

## Adams bio search

I have been collaborating with Pepper Adams on his biography for several years, and would like to finish it as a lasting tribute to him. If anyone has information about Pepper that they would like to share, I encourage you to contact me. I'm sure it will be helpful in some way. Write me at 18 Becket Rd., Belmont, MA 02178.

Gary Carner

Belmont, MA

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## Steps Ahead

**NEW YORK**—Once upon a time there was a jazz band called Steps, consisting of five seasoned New York session pros—drummer Steve Gadd, pianist Don Grolnick, bassist Eddie Gomez, vibist Mike Mainieri, and tenor saxist Michael Brecker. Several albums and personnel changes later, they are Steps Ahead, a powerhouse electric jazz ensemble on a par—energy-and-volume-wise—with the likes of Weather Report or Chick Corea's Elektric Band.

The two founding members, Brecker and Mainieri, remain. But the cast of characters has changed considerably, as has the group's direction. As Brecker explains, "It began acoustically. We went through a period where we were going back and exploring our roots and that idea manifested itself in Steps, which began just for fun. We toured Japan, released a couple of albums, and then as things progressed we began investing more and more energy into the group. Personnel changed and our direction changed with the advent of technology. We began blending in some electronic instruments with the acoustic, and now we are employing more and more."

Indeed. The current lineup includes former Miles and Sting electric bassist Daryl Jones replacing the upright Gomez, former Miles guitarist Mike Stern replacing the acoustic piano of Elaine Elias (who had replaced Grolnick when the band became Steps Ahead), and former Journey drummer Steve Smith replacing Peter Erskine (who had in turn replaced Gadd a few years back). This is one powerful group, and they're MIDI-ed to the max.



From left, Michael Brecker, Mike Stern, Daryl Jones, Steve Smith, Mike Mainieri

While Mainieri is still playing vibes, he has his instrument MIDI-ed to an arsenal of synths for a true cutting-edge voice. And Brecker has enhanced his faithful tenor with his new Steinerphone, a wind-driven synthesizer created by Los Angeles trumpeter Niles Steiner. "It has an eight-octave range and it's really a very, very expressive instrument," says Brecker. "It's similar to the Lyricon in that it's a wind-driven synth, but other than that there are quite a few differences.

"I've always been into synths, but I'm not that good a keyboard player," he adds. "And now I can actually bring synths onstage and play them via the Steinerphone, so it's really opened up a whole new world for me."

Brecker's Steinerphone gives him new cutting power in the context of the new and considerably

more bombastic version of Steps Ahead. "The band is just so fiery i've now," he says. "We're talking about doing a live album next because we want to capture that high-energy thing that happens on-stage every night."

The band recently completed a tour of Japan and plans to hit the road stateside this winter on the strength of their latest release, *Magnetic* (Elektra 9 60441-1). Although that energetic electric LP features a large cast of guests, including guitarists Chuck Loeb, Hiram Bullock, and Paul Jackson, synthesizer players Kenny Kirkland, Robby Kilgore, Mitchel Forman, and Phil Ashley, the current touring lineup is evolving into a strong band with a solid identity. Catch them in concert and be blown away by their sheer force.

—bill milkowski

## John Renbourn

**CHICAGO**—An evening with guitarists John Renbourn and Stefan Grossman includes the music of Mingus and Mozart, guitar rags and Celtic dances, maybe a spiritual thrown in with Booker T and the MGs' *Sweet Potato*. "We're two solo guitarists who are orchestrated together," explains Grossman, who has lived in Italy since 1968, about his recording (most recently, *Live . . . In Concert*, Shanachie 5001) and touring with British working class bloke Renbourn, best remembered for his work with the '60s folk group Pentangle.

While Grossman's share of the set leans heavily toward the guitar rags he learned from Rev. Gary Davis as a youth in New York, Renbourn's eclectic solo spot (as does his new LP, *The Nine Maidens*, Flying Fish 378) features guitar arrangements of the folk music of the British Isles traditionally played on fiddle and pipe, as well as blues inspired by memories of Big Bill Broonzy. During his early British tours in the '60s, in his suit with his bottle of whiskey, Broonzy had quite the effect on British folkies in general and skiffle guitarists in particular. "They'd never seen a black American before and wondered how he had escaped from the plantation," remembers Renbourn. "Broonzy



would tell them he had a real good master who took off the shackles once in a while and let him go play guitar. People actually believed that. Broonzy, Jesse Fuller, Jack Elliott, and Josh White got us skiffle players into playing American finger-style guitar."

At the same time the first generation of British folkies like Davey Graham, Burt Jansch, and Martin Carthy were playing traditional British folk

music on that most un-British of instruments, the guitar. Out of that schism between finger-picking folkies and the old music school came eclectic groups like Pentangle, playing Chi'd ballads as well as the Jaynettes' *Sally Go Round The Roses* and compositions by Charles Mingus. Renbourn and Grossman still play Jansch's arrangement of *Good-bye Porkpie Hat*. Renbourn added melody, a bluesy intro, and a middle break to the chords of *The Shoes Of The Fisherman's Wife* that Grossman had learned from Larry Coryell. *'Round Midnight*, on their next duet album (produced by Led Zeppelin bassist John Paul Jones for Shanachie), is also pretty far removed from the original.

"We approach it as two guitarists, not as jazzmen," he says. "I listened to the originals and covers by Wes Montgomery and others, but neither of us is as good at improvising as the average jazz musician. We're not into a chord-and-scale way of thinking. I hear a linear part in these jazz tunes and write counterpoint to go with it. Jazz can be a jumble to transcribe—I've not heard a solo guitarist who was convincing when he played Jelly Roll Morton, for instance."

"Contemporary guitarists miss the feeling in getting too accurate a transcription of early jazz," adds Grossman. "We go for the feeling."

—dave helland

# James Brown



RON DELANY

**NEW YORK**—His nicknames tell only part of the tale that stretches back now over 30 years: Mr. Please Please Please, The Godfather of Soul, The Original Disco Man, Founder Of The Funk, The Hardest-working Man in Show Business. As a boy he sang and danced for the World War II-era troop trains that passed by his hometown of Augusta, GA, entered amateur contests at the local theater, and at 16 got busted as a car thief. In prison he sang gospel; when he got out he switched back to ballads and jump-style r&b. Signed to King Records on the basis of his charismatic stage show that combined utter abandon with razor-edge precision, he incorporated into his act elements from labelmates Little Willie John and the Five Royales.

His 1962 recording *Live And Lowdown At The Apollo, Volume 1*, made over label-owner Syd Nathan's objections and without his financing, burned up the charts for an astonishing 66 weeks. In 1964 he uncorked the chug-a-lug syncopations of *Out Of Sight* and *Papa's Got A Brand New Bag*, the blend of sweet-and-sour, bop-inflected horns, bumping, octave-jumping bass, metallic scratch guitar, and jagged shrieks that melded into a totally new sound and won him a vast, racially mixed audience for the series of hits that followed. By the early '70s his recordings deepened into an implacable rhythmic onslaught of proto-funk, while onstage his band would segue from ballads to blues to the Popcorn to funk with the honed precision of an edge-city machine. The mid-'70s brought trouble: band lineups shuffling, political backlash, IRS investigations, the loss of popularity that came with the triumph of disco—a style that, like the music of Sly, George Clinton, the Rolling Stones, Blood, Sweat and Tears, Tower of Power, Fela, Talking Heads, Michael Jackson, Prince, and countless others, bears his inimitable mark.

He, of course, is James Brown, and he's following up last year's rousing comeback (*Living In America* from *Rocky IV*) with another attempt to recapture the commercial success that has largely eluded him for over a decade. "The new record is more or less expressing our way of life, the different things we are involved in," is how he sees his new album, *Gravity* (Scotti Brothers 43380). "It goes in all directions, musically speaking. We do

a bluegrass-funk thing that's very stretched-out, a step beyond country, but it gives the country ear a chance to listen because it's at a slow pace. So you see, the material is quite different from anything I've done on my own, with my own band; I think we've mellowed it down to where we can be what you call a crossover-type thing." And while they're not the frenetic jump-cuts of his still incomparable stage act, the sizzling Uptown Horns' licks and drilled rhythms driving the first single, *Gravity*, may well bear his assertion out. Certainly the cha-cha feel of *How Do You Stop*,

with its evocation of Muscle Shoals soulsters like Clarence Carter, should reach out to a broad audience.

"Live, my band and I speak very, very fast," purrs that familiar torn voice, "and I've got some things recorded that nobody *still* will let me put out. I think the *audience* can handle it, I don't think the *record companies* can; they don't want you to be an Einstein in an A-B-C world, they want you to relate and move at a slower pace." But even at his slowest, JB stays out in front.

—gene santoro

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by Bill Beuttler

**“I** just found out for certain last night that I’m going to be a father,” says Peter Erskine, the man who launched a sort of musical chairs among top-ranking drummers earlier this year with his decision to leave the cooperative combo Steps Ahead—which he’d been confronting with tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker and vibist Mike Mainieri—to join Joe Zawinul’s Weather Update (Steve Smith quit the rock group Journey to step into Erskine’s old job, with studio whiz Mike Baird taking over in Journey).

Baby isn’t due until sometime in ’87, of course, but news of his becoming a daddy for the first time is just one more instance of what a fertile year this has been for Erskine.

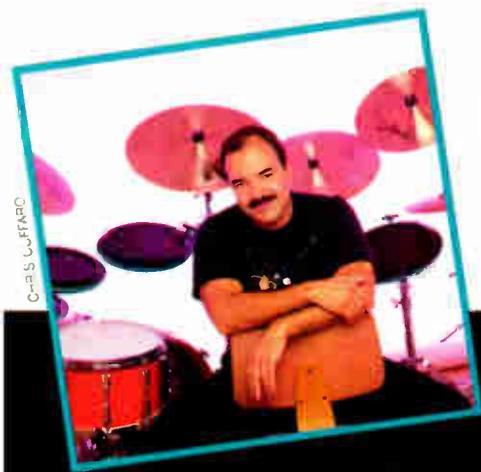
Highlights include work on four important albums (Steps Ahead’s *Magnetic*, John Abercrombie’s *Current Events*, Marc Johnson’s *Bass Desires*, and Weather Report’s *This Is This*) and a lengthy summer-and-fall tour with Joe Zawinul’s Wayne Shorter-less Weather Update. Erskine also gigged

whenever possible with Steps, John Abercrombie’s trio (sometimes supplemented with saxman Brecker), and *Bass Desires*; began work on his second album as leader (to be released as a Denon CD early next year); composed incidental music for a production of Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, and published an instructional drum book, *Drum Concepts And Techniques* (21st Century Music Publications). And ’87 looks to be just as busy, with albums by Weather Update, Abercrombie’s quartet (the existing trio plus Brecker), the Bob Mintzer Big Band, and a Warren Bernhardt-led trio (with Marc Johnson on bass) all in the works, as well as music for another summer theater production, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

In his wood-framed glasses, a blue-grey checked short sleeve shirt with button-down collar, grey slacks, white socks, and light brown moccasins, the amiable 32-year-old looks more like a young suburban father than a 14-year veteran

# PETER ERSKINE

## STEPPIN’ OUT



of world-class jazz/fusion ensembles. But, in fact, Erskine joined Stan Kenton's big band at age 18, then moved on, after pausing for studies at Indiana University, to drum for Maynard Ferguson, whose band he remained with until being hired by Weather Report in 1978. Erskine stayed with Weather Report through 1982, establishing a longevity record among the fusion band's revolving cast of drummers, before switching to Steps Ahead, which remained his main musical home until this year's return to Zawinul and Weather Update.

The following interview took place beside the window of Erskine's 26th-floor Chicago hotel room, the clear fall day providing a fine view of Navy Pier and Lake Michigan below. Erskine's Yamaha DX100 synthesizer, which he uses to compose on while on the road, sat on a table between him and his interviewer, and at one point he dug out a suitcase crammed with 11 manuals—homework for his new Yamaha Electronic Percussion System. Erskine was in town for that night's scheduled Weather Update performance; ironically, as the interview was in progress, the truck containing the band's equipment was stolen, forcing the cancellation of their lone 1986 Chicago appearance [the equipment was later recovered; see *On The Beat*].

**Bill Beutler:** Why did you leave Steps Ahead to join Weather Update? Are you leaving Steps Ahead for good, or is there some chance of your getting back together with them once in a while?

**Peter Erskine:** It turned out that I had to leave Steps for good. The main reason was due to a schedule conflict, which ironically is the original reason I left Weather Report to start playing with Steps. But you do in your life what you feel you've got to do at a certain time. When I originally left Weather Report, I'd just moved to New York and wanted to start playing with musicians there—namely guys like Michael Brecker and Eddie Gomez. I welcomed the chance to start working in a more intimate kind of setting, and with Zawinul's blessing I had moved to New York to do just that. It's hard to be in more than one band at a time, and I finally had to say goodbye to Weather Report because I'd committed to doing some touring with Steps. I also wanted to do more writing, and Steps was very accommodating about playing my tunes. It was a great several years. The band really reached a point where we influenced a lot of musicians and reached a fair number of people; there was something listenable and appealing about Steps.

Then along comes a phone call from Zawinul's managers, and they ask me if I would like to come out and play on the new Weather Report recording—this was last Christmas or so. So I go out to L.A. As it turned out, with Omar Hakim's schedule conflicts I wound up playing on just about the whole record. In fact, I even wound up co-producing the album. All of a sudden I'm in a situation where my input was not only openly welcomed, I saw it going into effect. With Steps, because it had wound up being a three-leader band—myself, Mike Brecker, and Mike Mainieri—it was real hard to come to a quick consensus on decisions. The Steps recording was taking over a year to finish, which was driving me insane. I like to do things quickly—do the homework, go in, finish it.

At the same time, I felt ready to learn from Zawinul again. He's always been my favorite musician, especially since I first started working with him. Happily, it was a good parting of the ways with the guys in Steps, and I'm still getting to play with Michael Brecker a lot, particularly now with John Abercrombie and Marc Johnson—we're expanding that trio into a quartet.

**BB:** How does Weather Update compare to Weather Report?

**PE:** This group has more going for it potentially than the last few editions of Weather Report, basically because we're all just a little older and wiser. Joe's going for something, and he's going for it with a determination I've never seen before. You know, of all the keyboard players of the '60s and '70s—all the guys who played with Miles, let's say—they've all been wearing a lot of different hats. Joe's always been wearing the same hat—that beanie he wears [laughs]. He's always done Weather Report; he's never done an outside thing, never had to team up with this or that. He's narrowing down, and the music is getting more and more focused toward this thing he's pursuing—the tonality, the rhythm of it. And that's what this band means, I think: we're getting the closest yet to his musical vision.

Most of Weather Report's music was written by Joe. Of course, Wayne Shorter added the dimension that made it Weather Report. There's no replacing Wayne, so in picking a new frontline player a guitarist seemed the natural choice. And Steve Khan's working out perfect, because he's completely versatile, a great team player. He has a wonderful sound, solos great, and when he's not playing the melody or soloing he's there in the rhythm section—so rhythmically I think the band is stronger, too.

I think the other band was more muscle-bound than this one; though that quartet in '78 with Jaco, myself, Wayne, and Joe was great. Now we're working on new music, just playing a couple of the old Weather Report tunes. The sound of Weather Update is also different, because we're all playing on new instruments. Zawinul's keyboards developed and he has more and better-sounding instruments, and they work better than ever. He can spend all his time free to play, whereas a lot of times before he was looking down at his pedals and wondering why something wasn't working [laughs]. The guitar, of course, gives us a whole different sound. And the drums are different now. I'm playing a new instrument that I'm real excited about, the new Yamaha Electronic Percussion System [see *equipment box*].

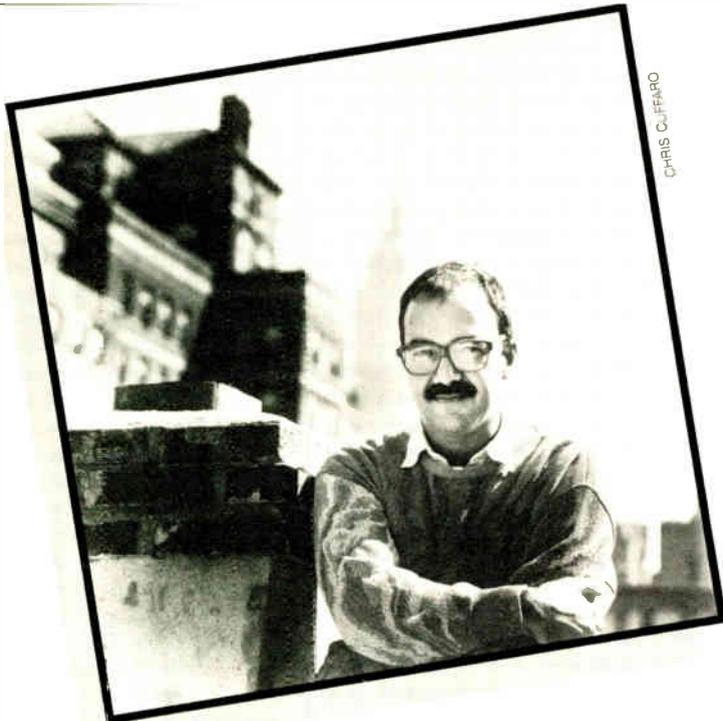
**BB:** Let's talk about your other recent projects. You're playing with a lot of guitarists lately.

**PE:** Guitar bands are great.

**BB:** That's a new thing for you isn't it? You started out with big bands, then moved to Weather Report and Steps—none of which used guitars much, if at all.

**PE:** Somehow I just got into it. After playing with Abercrombie, I got into Bass Desires with John Scofield, Bill Frisell, and Marc Johnson—that's a very, very hip band. Chuck Loeb was playing guitar in Steps for a while, and now we have a guitar in Weather Update. Guitar's a very hip instrument. With a guitar you don't have that left hand of the keyboard, and that opens things up rhythmically.

I had tried playing in some trios before, but didn't know how to do it. I always sounded stiff. Once I started playing with Abercrombie and Marc Johnson—and Marc, of course, had played with Bill Evans, and John was certainly influenced by Evans' and Jim Hall's trios as well as leading his own—I learned how to let go, to relax and not try to box the time in. A lot of it has to do with being confident, and you gain confidence by developing your inner clock, making it a strong reference point. Ironically, I got a lot of that not from playing creative music but from doing jingle work, where you're recording a 30- or 60-second spot and everything's got to be right on the money. It really teaches you to focus your playing—your inner clock is moving along much more firmly and securely, at least for me. That allowed me to let go and not to try to keep control of it externally. It's like the young jazz drummer who every two bars has to hit a big downbeat on the bass drum,



CHRIS CUFFARO

## PETER ERSKINE'S EQUIPMENT

The drum setup Peter Erskine used on the recent Weather Update tour—the Yamaha Electronic Percussion System (YEPS)—was barely beyond the prototype stage this fall, but expected to be in the stores soon. The heart of the system is Yamaha's Percussion MIDI Converter (PMC1), which stores the MIDI note assignments and performance function data needed for a usable performance system, and a Yamaha QX1 computer. The system's main tone source is the Yamaha TX816, essentially eight DX7s rack-mounted with FM synthesis. "It's a total hi-fi sound," enthuses Erskine, "totally clean. When you mic acoustic drums, there's always phasing problems that you run into, leakage from one drum to another. An acoustic instrument ceases to be an acoustic instrument as soon as you throw a mic in front of it. So if you can get acoustic sound directly from electronics, that can be pretty great."

A 22 x 16-inch bass drum and an 8 x 14-inch snare drum (both from Yamaha, as are all of his pedals and hardware) are the lone acoustic drums in Erskine's Update setup; otherwise, his kit includes one Yamaha PBD1 bass drum pad and five Yamaha PTT1 electronic drum pads. The main differences between acoustic and electronic instruments, says Erskine, are that electronic drums provide a more compressed dynamic spread than acoustics, and volume is controlled with knobs rather than by how hard the instrument is struck. "I'm just starting to find the right level of playing with the sensitivity controls, and they respond well. It took us a couple of days to get used to the difference, but the band loves it. Zawinul was actually jealous [laughs], because it's not just drum sounds; it's total percussion sounds, total hi-fi—claves, steel drums. . . . With the foot switch, I'm roaring."

Erskine's system is rounded out with Yamaha, Lexicon, and Korg outboard gear and mixers. "Because YEPS is MIDI, its architecture is open. In other words, I can play any sound through the MIDI interfacing and trigger stored sounds of snare drums, bass drums, whatever. Right now I happen to be using the new Korg drum machine—the DDD-1—which has some real good snare drum and bass drum sounds in it, also nice percussion stuff." Erskine's cymbals, all from Zildjian, include a 17-inch brilliant A. crash ride, a 22-inch K. heavy ride, an 18-inch medium crash, a 19-inch china with eight-inch K. piggy back, a 13-inch K. top hi-hat, and a 13-inch Z. bottom (hex) hi-hat. His sticks include Vic Firth 7A wood tips and Regal Tip Blasticks and brushes.

For composing, Erskine uses a Macintosh computer with Southworth Total Music System software; a trio of MIDI keyboards including a Korg DW-8000, a Korg DW-6000, and the Yamaha DX100 that accompanies him to his hotel room; a non-MIDI Oberheim OBX-A synthesizer; and a pair of non-MIDI drum machines, the Märk MX1+ and the Simmons SDS 5.

If all this sounds like more than enough equipment to keep any drummer busy, guess again. When backing Abercrombie, Erskine goes acoustic: "I still love a four-piece kit. That's still, when all is said and done, the most pleasurable playing for me." His four-piece setup includes an 18 x 14-inch bass drum, a 12 x 14-inch tom, a 14 x 14-inch floor tom, and a 5 x 14-inch snare (all from Yamaha, likewise pedals and hardware). Zildjian cymbals include a 20-inch K. ride, a 17-inch brilliant crash ride, an 18-inch flat K., and a 12-inch Z. splash. "I find myself using different cymbals for different groups, and the biggest determining factor is whether I'm playing acoustic or electronic music. And of course volume. A heavy ride cymbal has a lot more cutting power and clarity, and the Weather Update band likes that. The drummer has to make sure that the musicians he's working with can hear his ride cymbal, because that's where all the subdivisions are coming from. If you've got a cymbal that washes out all over the place they can't tell how you're swinging the eighth notes. By the same token, if you've got a cymbal that's too dry it just won't blend; that's why guys like the K cymbal—you can get that K sound and it still has definition." All of Erskine's drum heads are Remo coated Ambassadors in acoustic settings; for studio work and electronic contexts, he switches to clear Emperor heads on his tom-toms and bass drum. Finally, Erskine favors Vic Firth SDS 4 sticks when performing acoustically.

## PETER ERSKINE SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

### as a leader

PETER ERSKINE—Contemporary 14010

### with Weather Report

THIS IS THIS—Columbia 40280  
 WEATHER REPORT—Columbia 37616  
 NIGHT PASSAGE—Columbia 36793  
 HAVANA JAM II—Columbia 2-36180  
 HAVANA JAM I—Columbia 2-36053  
 8:30—Columbia 2-36030  
 MR. GONE—Columbia 35358

### with Steps Ahead

MAGNETIC—Electra/Asylum 60441  
 MODERN TIMES—Electra Musician 60351  
 STEPS AHEAD—Electra Musician 60168  
 STEP BY STEP—Better Days (Nippon/Columbia) YF-7020  
 SMOKIN' IN THE PIT—Better Days (Nippon/Columbia) YB-7010/11  
 PARADOX—Better Days (Nippon/Columbia) YF-7044

### with Marc Johnson

BASS DESIRES—ECM 1299

### with John Abercrombie

CURRENT EVENTS—ECM 1311

### with Maynard Ferguson

CARNIVAL—Columbia 35480  
 NEW VINTAGE—Columbia 34971  
 CONQUISTADOR—Columbia 34457

### with Stan Kenton

FIRE, FURY AND FUN—Creative World 1073  
 KENTON PLAYS CHICAGO—Creative World 1072  
 7.5 ON THE RICHTER SCALE—Creative World 1070  
 BIRTHDAY IN BRITAIN—Creative World 1065  
 NATIONAL ANTHEMS OF THE WORLD—Creative World 1060

### with Joni Mitchell

MINGUS—Asylum SE-505

### with George Cables

CABLES VISION—Contemporary 14001

### with Joe Farrell

SONIC TEXT—Contemporary 14002

### with Joe Henderson

RELAXIN' AT CAMARILLO—Contemporary 14006

because that's terra firma. Once a guy becomes secure, he doesn't have to outline every time he takes a step. Modern music will really teach you how to do that. Modern music isn't about playing a whole bunch of extra notes; it's really making every note count for a whole lot more.

**BB:** You're playing with some of the hottest guitarists around. Can you compare their styles?

**PE:** Abercrombie's a genius—very free, always surprising. Scofield is another amazing musician. He's one of the most burning musicians I've ever played with, amazingly hip. Frisell is a whole different ballgame; the sounds he gets, the mood that he creates when he plays—his sound and personality are so strong that he plays one note and it throws the music immediately into that direction, wherever he wants to take it. Obviously, I greatly admire all three.

I've already talked about Steve, and what he's done for Weather Update. I've known Steve for a lot of years, and I think he's been a great addition to the band. Carlos Santana came and played on the new Weather Report album, but that was an overdub. Boy, what a sound that guy has!

**BB:** How about comparing the ECM guitar bands?

**PE:** Bass Desires bears the stamp of Marc Johnson, and of course with Sco and Frisell it has that very unique sound. With any other guitar players it wouldn't sound quite like that. To me, it's quite a lot Marc's band, although we all get to write. Abercrombie's trio is very much John's band, even though we all put in an equal amount of . . . whatever. That group has been developing to the point where we could just walk out on-stage and only know that we're doing a free tune, just like three guys sitting down and talking about anything that comes to mind, with everyone having something to say. It's that kind of rapport—no struggle, no overriding sense of ego. It really approaches a perfect Zer. kind of thing, where we completely let go of ego—a very pure and direct expression of all the things that we've ever played or listened to or dreamt of. That's when it's really great music-making.

**BB:** How's it going to be now that Brecker's in the band?

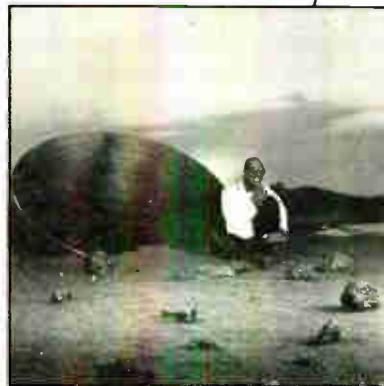
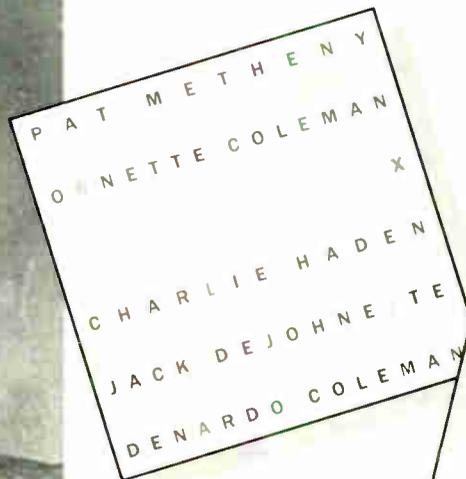
**PE:** It burns just that much more.

**BB:** Does he affect the empathy you guys had built up?

**PE:** At first it threw us, because we'd gotten into a trio mode heavily—and there was a special society we had [laughs]. But some of the concerts we've played with Michael have been stunning. It's different, a different chemistry.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 69

# THE 51st ANNUAL down beat READERS POLL



## HALL OF FAME

- 91 **Stan Getz**
- 75 Red Rodney
- 65 Dave Brubeck
- 59 Thad Jones
- 50 Teddy Wilson
- 46 Lionel Hampton
- 41 Lee Morgan

## JAZZ MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

- 153 **Wynton Marsalis**
- 128 Ornette Coleman
- 74 Miles Davis
- 73 Pat Metheny
- 54 Rob Wasserman
- 53 David Murray
- 40 Thad Jones
- 40 Red Rodney

## JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 183 **Pat Metheny/Ornette Coleman, *Song X* (Geffen)**
- 129 Wynton Marsalis, *Black Codes (From The Underground)* (Columbia)
- 117 Woody Herman, *50th Anniversary Concert (Concord Jazz)*
- 66 Manhattan Transfer, *Vocalese* (Atlantic)
- 55 Chick Corea, *Electric Band* (GRP)

## POP/ROCK ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 46 **Whitney Houston, *Whitney Houston* (Arista)\***
- 45 Peter Gabriel, *So* (Geffen)
- 22 Stevie Wonder, *In Square Circle* (Motown)
- 21 Sting, *Bring On The Night* (A&M)

\*138 readers voted for Sting's *Dream Of The Blue Turtles*, which was disqualified since it won the 1985 Readers Poll.

## SOUL/R&B ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 106 **Stevie Wonder, *In Square Circle* (Motown)**
- 74 Sade, *Promise* (Portrait)
- 49 Whitney Houston, *Whitney Houston* (Arista)
- 27 Aretha Franklin, *Who's Zoomin' Who* (Arista)

# THE 51st ANNUAL down beat

## POP/ROCK MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

- 275 Sting**  
74 Stevie Wonder  
68 Phil Collins  
51 Prince

## POP/ROCK GROUP

- 276 Sting**  
98 Talking Heads  
55 Dire Straits  
41 Prince  
41 Stevie Wonder

## SOUL/R&B MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

- 227 Stevie Wonder**  
107 Ray Charles  
78 B.B. King  
76 Prince

## SOUL/R&B GROUP

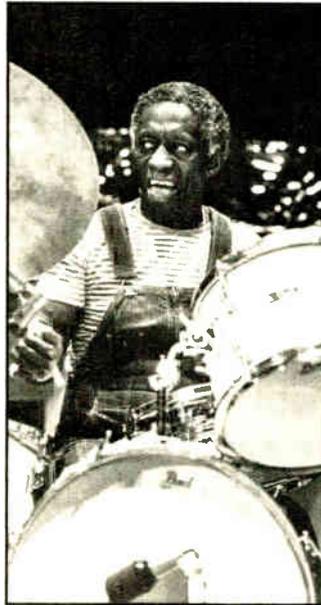
- 121 Neville Bros.**  
103 Prince  
99 Ray Charles  
93 Stevie Wonder  
91 Sade  
81 B.B. King

## ACOUSTIC JAZZ GROUP

- 225 Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers**  
188 Phil Woods Quintet  
152 Wynton Marsalis  
60 Red Rodney/Ira Sullivan  
51 Art Ensemble Of Chicago

## ELECTRIC JAZZ GROUP

- 240 Miles Davis**  
183 Steps Ahead  
159 Weather Report  
143 Pat Metheny  
139 Chick Corea's Elektric Band  
72 Spyro Gyra  
56 Ornette Coleman & Prime Time



Art Blakey



Miles Davis



Toshiko Akiyoshi

TOM COPP

## COMPOSER

- 161 Toshiko Akiyoshi**  
129 Carla Bley  
88 Wayne Shorter  
59 Ornette Coleman  
57 Rob Wasserman

## ALTO SAX

- 486 Phil Woods**  
274 Ornette Coleman  
160 David Sanborn  
71 Benny Carter  
50 Richie Cole  
50 Donald Harrison  
46 Paquito D'Rivera

## ARRANGER

- 300 Gil Evans**  
154 Thad Jones  
114 Carla Bley  
111 Toshiko Akiyoshi  
79 Quincy Jones  
46 Rob McConnell

## BIG BAND

- 266 Count Basie**  
210 Woody Herman  
171 Akiyoshi/Tabackir  
66 Sun Ra  
57 Carla Bley  
54 Rob McConnell & Boss Brass  
52 Mel Lewis  
46 David Murray

## TRUMPET

- 357 Wynton Marsalis**  
177 Miles Davis  
123 Tom Harrell  
112 Freddie Hubbard  
95 Lester Bowie

## TROMBONE

- 177 J.J. Johnson**  
120 Jimmy Knepper  
104 Slide Hampton  
99 Craig Harris  
99 Bill Watrous

## FLUTE

- 394 James Newton**  
146 Hubert Laws  
140 Lew Tabackin  
106 James Moody  
69 Frank Wess  
46 Dave Valentin

## CLARINET

- 229 Eddie Daniels**  
227 Buddy DeFranco  
161 Benny Goodman  
135 John Carter  
114 Alvin Batiste

## SOPRANO SAX

- 389 Wayne Shorter**  
210 Branford Marsalis  
206 Steve Lacy  
77 Bob Wilber  
68 Dave Liebman  
53 Jane Ira Bloom



# READERS POLL



Chick Corea

## TENOR SAX

- 225 Sonny Rollins**  
 161 Stan Getz  
 123 David Murray  
 113 Michael Brecker  
 92 Branford Marsalis  
 67 Wayne Shorter  
 61 Joe Henderson  
 53 Dexter Gordon

## BARITONE SAX

- 401 Gerry Mulligan**  
 313 Pepper Adams  
 118 Hamiet Bluiett  
 66 Ronnie Cuber  
 52 Nick Brignola

## ELECTRIC BASS

- 219 Steve Swallow**  
 140 Jaco Pastorius  
 122 Stanley Clarke  
 104 Marcus Miller  
 75 Jamaaladeen Tacuma

## ACOUSTIC BASS

- 261 Ron Carter**  
 211 Ray Brown  
 205 Charlie Haden  
 81 Eddie Gomez  
 80 Marc Johnson  
 63 Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen  
 61 Cecil McBee  
 60 Dave Holland  
 60 Rob Wasserman  
 49 George Mraz

## VIOLIN

- 247 Stephane Grappelli**  
 165 John Blake  
 105 Jean-Luc Ponty  
 68 Billy Bang  
 46 L. Shankar

## GUITAR

- 216 Pat Metheny**  
 166 Stanley Jordan  
 163 John Scofield  
 129 Kenny Burrell  
 120 Joe Pass  
 95 Jim Hall  
 50 Bill Frisell  
 47 Emily Remler  
 40 John Abercrombie

## ELECTRIC PIANO

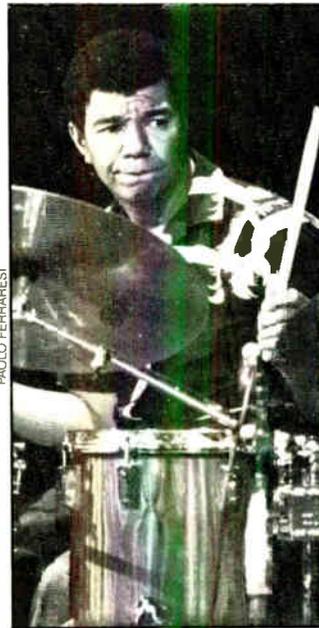
- 492 Chick Corea**  
 186 Herbie Hancock  
 89 Lyle Mays  
 68 Joe Zawinul  
 50 Sun Ra



Gary Burton

## PERCUSSION

- 260 Airtio Moreira**  
 205 Nana Vasconcelos  
 111 Tito Puente  
 72 Famoudou Don Moye  
 67 Mino Cinelu



Jack DeJohnette

## SYNTHESIZER

- 348 Joe Zawinul**  
 201 Lyle Mays  
 155 Herbie Hancock  
 141 Chick Corea  
 60 Sun Ra

## ORGAN

- 470 Jimmy Smith**  
 105 Carla Bley  
 70 Sun Ra  
 63 Jimmy McGriff  
 42 Amina Claudine Myers

## ACOUSTIC PIANO

- 201 Oscar Peterson**  
 129 McCoy Tyner  
 89 Keith Jarrett  
 75 Kenny Kirkland  
 70 Tommy Flanagan  
 59 Cecil Taylor  
 55 Michel Petrucciani  
 52 Kenny Barron  
 52 Herbie Hancock  
 45 Mulgrew Miller

## VIBES

- 318 Gary Burton**  
 303 Milt Jackson  
 289 Bobby Hutcherson  
 117 Mike Mainieri  
 107 Lionel Hampton  
 52 Dave Samuels

## MISCELLANEOUS INSTRUMENT

- 299 Toots Thielemans (harmonica)**  
 110 Andy Narell (steel drums)  
 101 Howard Johnson (tuba)  
 72 David Murray (bass clarinet)  
 50 David Grisman (mandolin)

## DRUMS

- 241 Jack DeJohnette**  
 140 Max Roach  
 115 Art Blakey  
 99 Billy Higgins  
 97 Tony Williams  
 86 Elvin Jones  
 74 Buddy Rich  
 60 Peter Erskine  
 53 Steve Gadd  
 50 Omar Hakim

## MALE SINGER

- 370 Bobby McFerrin**  
 324 Joe Williams  
 152 Mel Tormé  
 124 Al Jarreau  
 51 Mark Murphy

## FEMALE SINGER

- 345 Sarah Vaughan**  
 230 Ella Fitzgerald  
 101 Betty Carter  
 93 Sheila Jordan  
 61 Nancy Wilson

## VOCAL GROUP

- 634 Manhattan Transfer**  
 147 Rare Silk  
 45 Jackie & Roy  
 39 Singers Unlimited  
 38 Hendricks Family



Oscar Peterson

# Terence Blanchard/ Donald Harrison

*Young, Gifted, & Straight Ahead*

by Howard Mandel



TONY BARBOZA

**A**t a time when straightahead seems to be the new hip direction for jazz, saxophonist Donald Harrison and trumpeter Terence Blanchard are among the most out-front and young spokesmen of the new young lions—emphasis on young—who are revitalizing the main stem of the jazz tradition—the jazz we know is jazz—over recent decades’ embrace of hybrids, far-flung influences, insistently “original” directions, and a profusion of experiments.

“Anybody can be original—a baby can pick up a horn and play something original,” Harrison scoffed one night outside the Village Vanguard, where he and Blanchard led their quintet for a week in early autumn. “But if you come out of a heritage, say like Coltrane did, then your original contribution will have more depth.”

Pride in knowing the depth of the heritage passed down to them through such teachers as pianist Ellis Marsalis, clarinetist Alvin Batiste, trumpeter Bill Fiedler, saxists Kidd Jordan and Paul Jeffrey—knowing it on their instruments, not just recognizing it on disc—motivates the two New Orleans natives who followed their schoolmates the brothers Marsalis into Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers. They eye the high standards of musical excellence set by the original beboppers, at the same time choosing a strict regimen of post-collegiate study (Blanchard went to Rutgers, Harrison to Berklee), little drink and no drugs, which might help them endure the gig grind that’s worn down so many aspiring youngbloods. If there’s any truth to the claim that “jazz is back,” it lies not in the record bins filled with reissues,

but in the renewed fervor of musicians and listeners Blanchard and Harrison’s age for the real thing, rather than watered-down offshoots. See the score of rather serious, well-dressed horn players, pianists, bassists, and drummers under 30 on the New York scene, and you’re persuaded the future of jazz is going to be affected by folks making the most of the present from love for its past.

Terence and Donald have polished their own apple with Nascence, their debut on Columbia after two well-received George Wein productions for Concord Jazz Records; lately, they celebrated the music of Eric Dolphy and Booker Little, working a week in Sweet Basil with pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Richard Davis, and drummer Ed Blackwell (the original rhythm team on the Dolphy/Little Five Spot date of 1961 Prestige recorded for posterity). Terence used to play keyboards in funk bands, and keeps a bank of electronic equipment in his Brooklyn apartment—“I’m not going to talk about this; it’s just my hobby, something I love, but it’s mostly useful to compose on, a substitute for the grand piano I’d have if there was more space,” the brassman insists. Donald claims he listens to “everything: African music, pop music, the whole spectrum.” Together, they incorporate what they’ve learned outside the jazz tradition even more subtly than Dolphy brought Bartok and bird-calls to bop rhythms and standard song forms, than Little bent Dizzy and Clifford and Miles and Kenny Dorham’s contributions to his own voice and sensibility. But then, they’ve just begun. Who can guess where Harrison and Blanchard’s careers will take them?

**Howard Mandel:** What does a jazz player think about while improvising?

**Terence Blanchard:** First of all, the musical situation you’re in, and what you want to convey, musically. How you want to deal with the band—call-and-response, conversational devices, whatever. And then—it’s hard to answer, man, because at different times you’re thinking different things, like melody, or rhythm, or phrasing over a span of time.

**HM:** But you’re pretty much focused on the immediate musical situation?

**TB:** Oh yeah, definitely. The thing I want to get together individually and for the band is learning how to play for the moment, and understanding what to do when certain things arise. Part of trying to play jazz and being young is—I have all the records, I’ve listened to so many things that when I start playing my first reaction is, “Oh, that’s not what Clifford Brown would play, that’s not what Miles would play, let me stay away from that.” But now I’m trying to accept those things I’d turn away from, the musical ideas I’d naturally hear, and develop them to their highest level.

**HM:** Is that what you’d call “playing yourself,” Donald?

**Donald Harrison:** I try to learn as much music as possible, then react on the bandstand to whatever’s going on. I work on melody, say, rhythmically—trying to play a lot of meters at one time and fuse them. It’s an African technique; we might be in 4/4, but I might play 6/8 on top of it, and switch into 4/4, then go to 3/4 against it. Also harmonically I’ll be working on certain concepts. I think about all those things, and try to get them into my subconscious mind. Then, when I get on stage, I’m free. So when I’m playing I’m reacting to the guys around me and *playing*. Basically, that’s what I do.

**HM:** You’ve said there are things you used to play you don’t play any more; what is it you’ve stripped away?

**DH:** I was working on trying to have a five-octave range, and I would always try to inject that into everything I was doing. Now I try to play exactly what’s called for at a particular moment. I might have to play low and pretty, or loud and aggressive; I try

to inject emotion into what I’m playing, too. But if you play for the moment, the emotion will be there.

**HM:** How do you feel about emotion in your music, Terence?

**TB:** To me that’s something that comes naturally, so my main concern is more with the content of what I’m playing. Whether I’m really saying something, and being musical in that statement. It’s really hard—playing this music you’re always evaluating yourself, and I guess I evaluate myself too much.

**DH:** You could never do that.

**TB:** Even on the bandstand. I might play something and immediately say, “No, no, let me do something else,” when I haven’t given myself a chance to see if I could develop *that*. That’s something I’m working on now, because when I was with Art [Blakey] I think I had a tendency to play too much, not let the music breathe. Anyway, I think the emotional thing just comes naturally.

**DH:** Yeah, I really believe what Bird said: “If you didn’t live it, you can’t play it.” If you’re a musician, you’re actually telling your story. My teacher in Baton Rouge, Alvin Batiste, use to say “If you’re really playing yourself, you’ve got to accept yourself.” If you accept yourself, then you’re playing yourself, and whatever you’ve experienced, whatever your life is about, will come through in the music. Hopefully you’ve experienced both emotion and intellect in your lifetime, and you can get both across.

**TB:** If you learn as much music as you can, and you play from your heart, then there’s emotion there. But intellect must become a part of it, too, because sometimes you can play from your heart and just play a lot of noise. You have to decipher whether you’re being musical, and saying something that’s valid, or profound.

**HM:** This must be a pendulum swinging through the music’s history, because when you hear Dizzy Gillespie or Charlie Parker records, it doesn’t sound like they’re being self-evaluative, but rather that they’re just bubbling up with ideas.

**DH:** But they *had* to think about the music at some point. They were taking the music somewhere, they were doing things, and

you *have* to think about it; there's no getting around that. Otherwise, there's no intellect and it's just like the rock & roll thing.

**TB:** You know, part of the problem we have to deal with is that many people look at things that aren't jazz and call them jazz. One record company executive admitted to me that a lot of instrumental music couldn't hold its own against vocalists in that kind of music. They call it jazz so people could think they were part of this elitist subculture listening to great music. In actuality, they were listening to another form of commercial music—rock & roll, or funk, or fusion, or pop. And, in turn, in the '70s the guys who were trying to play straightahead didn't get any recognition at all, because they were being nostalgic, as far as the public was concerned. We're not being nostalgic; we're just trying to play in a certain tradition. We want to play this kind of music, and we need to uncover all the bones, to let people know what's really happening, what's jazz and what's not, so people can make an honest choice. If you lay it on the line, then the consumer can make the choice. The other way, you're talking down to people.

**DH:** In school you're taught that Beethoven and Bach were great, which is true, but you're not taught that Bird and bop were great, too—there's not the same reverence. If people knew that jazz musicians were great musicians, and what jazz really is, then people would have the knowledge to make the choice of what they want to hear.

**HM:** Do you think people in general have the patience and desire to listen to truly great music?

**TB:** Of course.

**DH:** They're not given the opportunity; it's snatched away before they're even given the chance to know what it is.

**TB:** When you're growing up, you're educated about European classical music, so there's a wide audience for that. Maybe not on the level of the audience for Bruce Springsteen, but it's being supported by the public and certain interest groups. We have to educate people as to what really is jazz, what's part of the tradition. Because the music has been associated with greatness only in the subculture. For a long time, and I guess even now, people thought of jazz musicians as being the clowns, the sex fiends, the drug addicts. And that isn't what was really happening. Our guys were really intelligent.

**DH:** Wynton Marsalis has proved that if jazz is brought to people in the right fashion, they'll buy it. He's sold a lot of albums—but he's almost the only one out there. That's got to turn around. We don't know how many people will listen to jazz, because nobody knows what jazz is.

**HM:** Donald, is the album you made with Don Pullen, *The Sixth Sense*, a jazz album?

**DH:** It has jazz influences in it, but I wouldn't say it's a very traditional album.

**HM:** You're on Tony William's album *Foreign Intrigue*, too—what about that?

**DH:** That's a very traditional album.

**HM:** Does Tony talk about the difference between tradition and . . .

**DH:** He doesn't have to, 'cause he's doing it. We shouldn't have to either, but we're put in this position. As well as being jazz musicians, we have to be educators to the people, because the scene is so messed up right now. Don't get me wrong; I had fun on Pullen's record date. But he's not *trying* to be traditional.

**HM:** But he's not playing what you'd call commercial music either, is he?

**DH:** No, he's not playing commercial music at all.

**HM:** So is that music as emotionally and intellectually demanding, with the same kind of potential for greatness as jazz within the tradition?

**TB:** I don't think so. Jazz has a lot to do with depth of knowledge. We haven't had a certain generation of musicians to carry on that part of the tradition that's a level of excellence we can judge music against.

**DH:** Terence and I have a slight difference of opinion about some of this; he leans more towards playing what's traditional

first, and I think it's important to know *all* the music you can, but play something you've developed that's your own. In the '60s many of the musicians came up with their own things, but they were still in the jazz tradition; then guys came up trying to skirt learning the whole tradition, trying to just come up with something new. And a lot of them came up with something new, but it ain't in the jazz tradition. That's what I'm saying, and that's the truth. Look 20 years from now, and you'll be able to tell. There are a lot of guys who came up with experiments, and if they're not for real, they're not going to be here. We're learning from the guys who know what they're doing, who we think are saying something musically.

**TB:** When we say tradition, we mean the evolutionary process—how the music came about, how it grew, and how it continues to grow. How you develop your craft on your instrument, first of all, and use that as your means of expression.

**DH:** When you hear Terence, you know it's Terence, but you can hear Miles, you can hear Louis Armstrong, you can hear Clifford Brown—you can hear that depth of understanding of the jazz tradition. And if you *can't* hear it in a musician's playing, he's *not* in the tradition.

**TB:** The biggest problem is we don't establish the process of becoming a musician by getting from point A to Z. That's also part of the problem of people looking at young jazz musicians and saying, "They aren't playing anything new." They haven't even given us a chance to develop. **db**

### TERENCE BLANCHARD/ DONALD HARRISON SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

#### as leaders

NASCENCE—Columbia 40335

DISCERNMENT—Concord Jazz 3008

NEW YORK SECOND LINE—Concord Jazz  
3002

#### Donald Harrison

with Don Pullen

THE SIXTH SENSE—Black Saint 088

#### with Art Blakey

LIVE AT SWEET BASIL—GNP Crescendo

2182

NEW YORK SCENE—Concord Jazz 256

OH BY THE WAY—Timeless 165

BLUE NIGHT—Timeless 216

#### with Tony Williams

FOREIGN INTRIGUE—Blue Note 85119

### TERENCE BLANCHARD/ DONALD HARRISON'S EQUIPMENT

"I play all the saxophones," says Donald Harrison. "Soprano, alto, C melody, tenor, and baritone. For the Dolphy gig, I had to practice bass clarinet. I recorded on soprano with Art Blakey and on *Tacit Approval*, Terence's song on *Nascence*, I played C melody. I was into both tenor and alto players, and have a concept that's in-between; the C melody incorporates all of it. The one I have has both sonorities from the alto and the tenor. It's a Conn, and I've got to get it fixed; we're going to Boston, so I'll have Emilio [Lyons] tighten it up for me.

"I use classical mouthpieces made by Van Doren, with the largest bores they have. For some reason, mouthpiece makers think jazz musicians want this very bright, almost r&b-sounding sound, but I use Charlie Parker as a model; he had a dark sound with a little edge on it. Those mouthpieces capture that sound for me. I use Van Doren reeds too, fours or fives, depending on how hard the drummer plays. With Art Blakey I played fives.

"My alto is a Selmer U.S.A., something new—I had a Seven before. This one has a dark, mellow sound that I had to get used to. When I first got it, I wanted to send it back to the factory, but after I played it a while, I realized it's a better horn for me, personally."

"I play a Bach, and there's not too many things to say about trumpets," Terence Blanchard demurs. "It's medium-large bore, very standard. I've shopped around; I did that a couple of years ago and played a horn that Dizzy had, a brand new Martin. Then I tried some Yamahas and a couple of Conns. None of them had what I was looking for. I was lucky to get this horn from Selmer. The guy in charge at the time said, 'What do you like?' I said, 'Dark sound, free movement of the air.' So he sent me this horn, which is very much what I wanted.

"There's one horn I want to try, the one Wynton plays: Monette. It's handmade by a guy in Chicago, and it's very expensive, but everybody's talking about it, saying it's more responsive in the upper register, that the harmonic partials are farther apart and add more definition upstairs. They say it's more in tune than some other horns.

"Every once in a while people say to me, 'Man, you've got a flugelhorn sound.' I've been trying to get a very warm sound on my trumpet, but I have no interest in playing cornet or flugelhorn—not at this point; maybe later. I have a flugelhorn, but after begging my mother to get me the thing for Christmas, I don't even play it now."

# Adrian Belew

By Gene Santoro

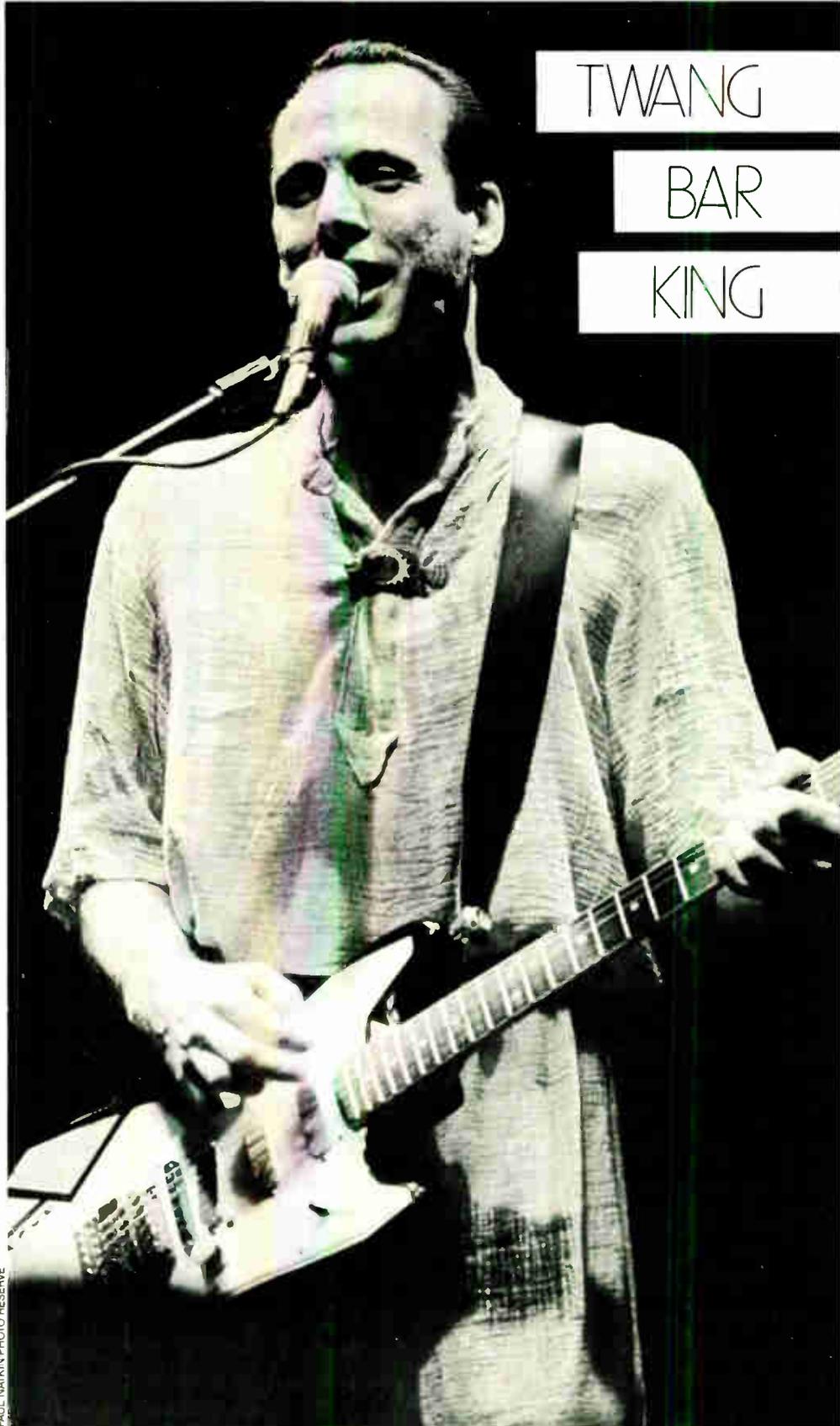
In the decade since he first burst into the big-time music world, guitarist extraordinaire Adrian Belew has persistently challenged and reshaped the boundaries of his instrument.

Taking his initial cues from the sonic explorations of Jimi Hendrix, eschewing the amphetamine-style blues licks overused by legions of rockers and turning instead to a variety of tunings and an acute sense of color, employing an awesome array of outboard effects and, more recently, the Roland GR-700 guitar synthesizer, Belew has generated a new vocabulary for his axe. Somehow, in the process, he's managed to avoid being trapped in the rigid categories too often superimposed on the music from outside, whether by marketing types or artists.

Maybe that's why such stellar musicians as Frank Zappa, David Bowie, Brian Eno, King Crimson, Talking Heads, Laurie Anderson, and Paul Simon—themselves thriving on marketing and aesthetic interstices—have time and again tapped Belew's supple guitar to fill out their own unique musical visions. Serrated feedback, twang-bar sorcery, wheezing Strat stutters, synth patches of flute, fiddle, or Turkish zurna, animals like rhinos, elephants, all manner of birds—these are only some of the many tones from this sonic painter's chameleonic palette.

And in fact, painting with music is the mode through which Belew has chosen to work for his latest and most ambitious Island LP, *Desire Caught By The Tail*. "I'd been reading a lot about the lifestyles and works of Picasso and Miro and people like that whom I admire," the soft-spoken axemaster explains, "and I really liked the idea that they'd get up every morning and have their coffee and go to their studios and work all day without any consideration for trends or commercialism, or even what this thing is going to be—just to realize what you have in mind." Thus came the decision to sandwich a-year-and-a-half's recording sessions in a small studio near his home between his other musical commitments, the decision to lay aside pop-song structures, the decision to play all the instruments—from trap drums to dobro to guitar-synth, with mallet-tapped upright bass and dobro thrown in for good measure—himself.

The result: a scintillating canvas of rainbow hues daubed painstakingly over sturdy compositional sketches. "When I'm writing I have a tendency to hear



TWANG

BAR

KING

PAUL NATKIN PHOTO RESERVE

music complete, as if someone were playing a record; and so then the task is just to figure it out," he laughs. You can hear his conclusions on *Tango Zebra*, with its percussive dobro vari-speeded, videogame bleeps, arctic howls, and Beatlesque harmonic movements; the waltz-time *Laughing Man*, with its carnival-flavored accordion patch that segues into an introspective synth duet with overtones recalling Ravi-meets-Yehudi; the ungainly but endearing riff that structures *Beach Creatures Dancing Like Cranes* until a gunshot propels the piece into Oriental resignation; the sonic waves of war-torn horror on *Guernica* that recapitulate and expand the terror first uncorked on Jimi's *Machine Gun*; the architectonic wrapup on the last track, *Z*, which reiterates the LP's key musical ideas, first backwards, then forwards. In short, this album depicts a vision.

**A** multifaceted vision, over two decades in the making, starting with 10-year-old Adrian beating the worn linoleum in his bedroom to produce different tones and later playing in the school band and hooking up with a cover band called The Denims. "That was the point where I switched from drums to guitar," he recalls. "It was coincidental with the advent of Jimi Hendrix, which made the guitar more exciting all of a sudden. And there were things like fuzztones which really fueled my interest in guitar as well." So much so that through the years he lugged his Gibson Firebird through a dizzying succession of bands and venues—with a notable lack of financial gain. Finally, tired of living hand-to-mouth with a wife and family to support, Belew went back to drumming in, of all things, a Holiday Inn lounge band for over two years ("We played things like *Tie A Yellow Ribbon*," he laughs). When a band called Sweetheart offered him the chance to play original as well as cover rock material, Belew jumped at the prospect and moved to Nashville in 1976, "where I promptly bought the Stratocaster I'd decided I really wanted. I worked at it very hard, trying to break all my old habits and find my own style." He succeeded well enough to attract the attention of Frank Zappa, who exchanged phone numbers with Adrian and promised to call him for an audition.

Long months dragged by before the phone rang, but when it did Belew instantly chucked the disco band he was roadworking with and lit out for the head Mother's California lair. He wasn't prepared for what he found. "The band was getting ready for a tour, and so there was lots of activity in Frank's basement, where I was auditioning. There I was, standing alone with the guitar, singing into a mic, with Frank sitting behind a 24-track board; it was very uncomforta-

ble. I'd had about a week to learn to sing and play the 10 songs he'd prescribed. Since I'm not a reader I had to learn them from records, which I borrowed from my friends—I didn't have enough money to go out and buy the catalog of Frank Zappa material necessary [laughs]. So I would start a song like *Wind Up Working In A Gas Station*, and he'd stop me after a couple of bars and say, 'No, that's wrong, try another one' [laughs]." Despite his apparent failure, Belew hung around through the rest of the day's auditions. "Finally," he continues, "I just said, 'Frank, I really thought we'd just sit down someplace quiet and I'd show you I could play and sing these songs,' and he said, 'Okay, let's go upstairs.' So we went up to his living room and sat on the couch, and I did the audition a second time with my Stratocaster and a Pignose amp, the way I'd practiced at home." And that way landed the gig with one of rock's great proving-ground ensembles.

Which provided for him, as it has for so many others, a musical education. "At that time I was strictly a 4/4 player," he admits, "so for the audition no doubt I *did* have things all wrong [laughs]. In fact, the first thing Frank showed me was how to play in 7/8." In addition to the three months rehearsing 12 hours a day, five days a week for the tour, Belew spent weekends learning material by rote.

And did it well enough to catch Brian Eno's eye when the Zappa tour swung through Germany. Producer Eno told David Bowie he'd seen a guitarist he thought would be right for his upcoming tour. "So David came to the Berlin concert," Belew relates, "and when there was a break for me in the music tapped me on the shoulder, so to speak, and asked me to play with him. I said, 'I'm playing with that guy out there' [laughs]." Soon, however, the tour took a three-month break to allow Zappa to edit his *Baby Snakes* film, and rather than sit around on salary Belew hit the road with the Thin White Duke.

As Zappa's plans kept changing and Bowie's tour kept lengthening, Belew

never turned back, though he says, "I've always felt a little strange about leaving Frank so soon, because he was really very good to me." As was Bowie. "He gave me a lot of room to be a lead guitarist, to jump around on stage and be a partner to him, in that respect. So for the first time ever I was free to burn up on guitar." His freedom produced such classic solos as the thick-toned, register-jumping squalls of *Boys Keep Swinging* (from the *Lodger* LP). "That resulted partly from the accidental recording method that Eno and Bowie were using at the time," Belew explains. "You didn't get to hear the material beforehand; you only heard the song for the first time as you played it, guessed what you should play, then played it all the way through. Maybe they'd let you do that two or three times, then they would go back, pick and choose the best parts, and fit them together the way they wanted them."

Soon Eno fit Belew into Talking Heads' *Remain In Light* sessions as well. "That was a slightly different procedure, in that there was lot more direction going on," he points out. "Here's what happened, basically. As I went through all my different sounds to check my equipment, they got more and more excited and said, 'Let's try this one,' and, 'We can put that one over there;' pretty soon they had a whole lot of ideas about what they wanted to use. I remember, for instance, that *The Great Curve* was just this solid track in one key—no singing, and they said, 'Just play a solo where you feel like it should be.' So I played one sort of in the middle and one sort of toward the end, and then the band went back and retrofitted all their parts around that, I think. It was very magical; everything worked just right, there were no snags or down time, no problems with the equipment, and everything I tried to play seemed to work right."

**S**till, after those sessions and 18 months of touring and a pair of al-



**CRIMSON IN CLOVER:** Former King Crimson'ers Bill Bruford, Belew, Robert Fripp, and Tony Levin.

PAUL NAYKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

bums with Bowie, it suddenly seemed as if things had stopped working right for Belew. "There was about a year and a half, actually, where I was waiting for David to make his next move and planning to be a part of it; he never called me back," he says candidly. Moving to Springfield, Illinois, he joined forces with the players who eventually appeared on his first two Island LPs. "We had a home studio called Cwazy Wabbit," he grins, "with seven tracks—the eighth track never worked. At that point I was working every day without the pressures of *having* to do anything—I had a little money stashed away, and the studio didn't cost us that much to run. That's when I began building my chops toward the first album. All the material was written, the band was rehearsed, and eventually we took it and toured around the Midwest." Nobody in the industry was buying their demos, though, and they'd largely given up hopes of landing a deal.

Until, as luck would have it, Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth tapped Belew for their *Tom Tom Club* sessions, which brought him down to Compass Point and the house of Island Records' chief Chris Blackwell. "One day after the sessions he just asked me what I'd like to be doing, and I said, 'My own music, of course.' So he asked me if I'd like to do it with Island Records, and I said sure—and before I knew it we were settled into the Bahamas doing *Lone Rhino*."

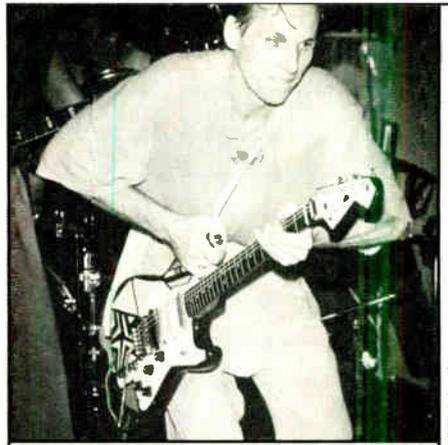
That eclectic musical assemblage of past influences—the Beatles, Hendrix, Zappa—blended to showcase his own sensibility and, of course, his unique guitar work. "One thing that had consistently bothered me was that no one realized I was a singer and had been writing music all my life," asserts Belew of his sideman period. *Lone Rhino* changed that, with tunes and lyrics that range from the wacky and humorous (*The Momur*) to the elegaic (*The Man In The Moon*). Naturally, Belew's lithe guitar stalks through the crafted arrangements like a sure-footed chameleon, now vamping like an r&b sax (*Swingline*), now gliding over microtones (*The Man In The Moon*), here swelling like church bells (*Hot Sun*), there bellowing with animal rage (*Final Rhino*). It was a tour-de-force that grabbed a lot of ears.

Including the sharply attuned pair belonging to Robert Fripp, who'd met Belew in the Midwest before he'd signed with Island. Quickly Fripp enlisted him in the revamped King Crimson. "It was a very complex band, and at first very intimidating to me," is how Belew sees it now, "mainly because I was thrust into several roles that I'd been working toward all my life but wasn't sure I was ready for. Suddenly I was the singer, the lyricist, and the front man, and engaged in a dual-guitar role with Robert Fripp playing pretty complicated things. But

by the end of the first album that feeling of intimidation was gone." He outlines King Crimson's typical approach to recording this way: "Our normal procedure was for Robert and me to get together for about a week and write outlines of songs, pieces of music; then in came Bill [Bruford] and Tony [Levin] so the four of us could sort that music out and begin adding to it and changing it. Then we would take the music out live, and in a very adventurous manner we'd play it for audiences for two or three weeks, and then go in the studio. So by the time we recorded them the songs had gone through many different lives, and were really what they were supposed to be. We most often recorded together, without the vocals; there usually weren't very many overdubs. There are always exceptions to any rule, of course; for the second side of *Three Of A Perfect Pair* we went into the studio totally unprepared and deliberately *didn't* listen to each other to try to create this industrial music we wanted—very chaotic, a kind of *imbroglia* music," he laughs.

Somehow in between three King Crimson LPs and several tours Belew managed to write and record *Twang Bar King*. Continuing though it does the conceptual bases of *Lone Rhino*, Belew's second release benefitted from a key personnel change. "There was more of a band sound happening on that one," he declares, "because we were able to rehearse fully as a live band, since we'd added Larrie Londin on drums. For the *Rhino* album we'd recorded with the rhythm section—bass, piano, and myself on drums—and then [saxist] Bill Jansen and I would go back and do the top-line parts. But for *Twang Bar King* most of the five of us were playing at the same time: the idea was to create more of a live-band feel." At the same time, like his hero Les Paul, Belew was more and more mastering the art of tape manipulation: "Take *She Is Not Dead* on *Twang Bar King*. To create that we played *The Man In The Moon* from *Lone Rhino* instrumentally, then turned the tape around and played it backwards while we started playing things frontwards on top of it [laughs]. Just about every day I devoted an hour or two to that song; a backwards piece of music is often very hard to figure out but it's one of my favorite things to do."

It's not too surprising, then, to find that *Desire Caught By The Tail* frequently finds him doing just that, albeit with completely instrumental pieces of more ambitious musical scope. Coupling the nearly 200 sounds he's developed for the Roland GR-700 guitar-synth ("I even found a way to make it play itself!") with his increasingly adept use of backwards tracking and vari-speeding, Adrian Belew has taken a commercial risk that pays off artistic dividends—and, once again, helps redefine the voice of the guitar. db



RON DELANY

## ADRIAN BELEW'S EQUIPMENT

Adrian Belew says, "I'm using four guitars now. First are the two Twang-Bar Wonderbeast guitars with artwork by Mike Goetz. Each has a different tuning—one is normal, the other has the G tuned up to A so I can get different voicings; and avoid penatonic scales. Starting off at the headstock, they have bow-and-tuning heads, thereby eliminating the need for retaining bars which stop you from being able to play in the back of the head or bend strings at the nut. They have Seymour Duncan pickups, Kahler tremolo arms, and all the guts from the Roland synthesizer. The same is true of the third guitar I use, except that the artwork is by Laurie Anderson, and that it's tuned to the same tuning as my dobro, E-B-E-E-B-E, with heavier gauge strings, the low E being a .052 and the high E being a .012. Usually I use medium-light Gibson strings, with the high E being a .010 and the low E a .042. I use Fender medium picks. The fourth guitar is my battered 1967 Stratocaster from the David Bowie period, with a broken bass pickup [laughs], and it feeds back better than any other guitar I have."

"My two amps are Roland JC-120s—I've used one on everything from 1977 on. Right now, my floor situation looks something like this—I have the GR-700, the Roland SDE-3000 delay, an Ibanez harmonizer, a Big Muff fuzztone, a Fox-tone fuzztone, the Electro-Harmonix echo-flanger—which makes the wonderful metallic insect sounds on *Desire*—the new Roland compressor—I always use lots of compression—a Roland pitch-shifter, and the Electro-Harmonix 16-second delay, which I've had converted to do backwards tape loops."

## ADRIAN BELEW SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

### as a leader

*DESIRE CAUGHT BY THE TAIL*—Island 90551-1  
*TWANG BAR KING*—Island 90108-1  
*LONE RHINO*—Island 9751

### with King Crimson

*THREE OF A PERFECT PAIR*—Warner Bros./EG 25071-1  
*BEAT*—Warner Bros./EG 3629  
*DISCIPLINE*—Warner Bros./EG 1-23692

### with Talking Heads

*THE NAME OF THIS BAND IS TALKING HEADS*—Sire 3590  
*REMAIN IN LIGHT*—Sire 6095

### with David Byrne

*SONGS FROM THE BROADWAY PRODUCTION OF THE CATHERINE WHEEL*—Sire 3645

### with Jerry Harrison

*THE RED AND THE BLACK*—Sire 3631

### with Tom Tom Club

*TOM TOM CLUB*—Sire 3628

### with David Bowie

*STAGE*—RCA 2-2913  
*LODGER*—RCA 3254

### with Frank Zappa

*SHEIK YERBOUTI*—Zappa 2-1501

### with Paul Simon

*GRACELAND*—Warner Bros. 25447-1

### with Herbie Hancock

*MAGIC WINDOW*—Columbia 37327

### Instructional videotape

*ADRIAN BELEW: ELECTRIC GUITAR*—DCI Video

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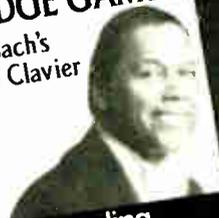
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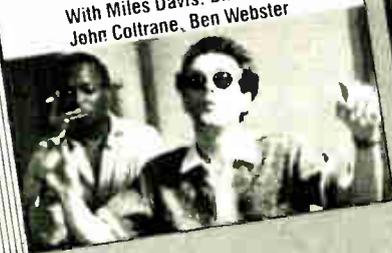
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## JOHN McLAUGHLIN/ MAHAVISHNU

**ADVENTURES IN RADIOLAND**—Relativity 88561-8081-1: *THE WAIT; JUST IDEAS; JOZY; HALF MAN-HALF COOKIE; FLORIANAPOLIS; GOTTA DANCE; THE WALL WILL FALL; REINCARNATION; MITCH MATCH; 20TH CENTURY LTD.*

**Personnel:** McLaughlin, guitars; Bill Evans, saxophones, keyboards (cut 4); Mitchel Forman, keyboards; Jonas Hellborg, bass; Danny Gottlieb, drums.

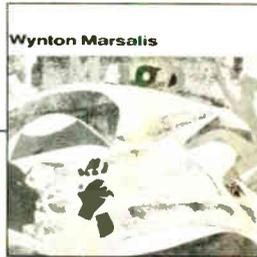
★ ★ ★ ★

The prevalence of sequencers, computerized rhythms, sampling effects, and the all-important Big Drum Sound (a la Phil Collins) makes this perhaps the most commercially viable Mahavishnu album yet. Hell, tunes like Mitchel Forman's exuberant *Mitch Match* or McLaughlin's own houserocking opus *Gotta Dance* may even have radioplay potential (hence the album's title?). And while McLaughlin may be making some concessions to current industry trends with all this technological Art Of Noise hardware, he doesn't compromise on the compositions. Overall, it's a successful blend of chops, harmonic sophistication, and the sonic seasoning needed to get over with young ears today.

John's rock-tinged solo on *The Wall Will Fall* should give Eddie Van Halen fans something to chatter about. And his Synclavier-guitar work on the menacing funk of *Jozy* (dedicated to Joe Zawinul) is his coolest use of that tool to date. On the other end of the spectrum is *Florianapolis*, a genteel, liting affair on acoustic guitar that recalls his more romantic *Belo Horizonte* (Warner Bros 3619) period, while his bravado acoustic strumming on *20th Century Ltd* is reminiscent of his propulsive flamenco playing with The Trio (with Al Di Meola and Paco de Lucia, on *Passion, Grace & Fire* [Columbia 38645] and *Friday Night In San Francisco* [Columbia 37152]).

Swedish phenom Jonas Hellborg gets to stretch out with his showtime slap bass technique on *Gotta Dance* and shows his sensitive side on a singing fretless cali-and-respense exchange with John on the haunting *Reincarnation*. In fact, everybody gets a taste on this album—Evans' wicked *Night In Tunisia*-inspired break on his own composition, *Half Man-Half Cookie*; Forman's swinging organ licks on the Metheny-esque *Mitch Match*; Gottlieb's powerhouse Simmons workout on the dynamic *Gotta Dance*. It's a more cooperative effort in many ways than *Mahavishnu* (the group's swan song on Warner Bros. 25190-1). The tunes are shorter and they rock harder. Now if only John could get Madonna to appear

as guest vocalist on his next album, he'll definitely be in radioland. —bill milkowski



## WYNTON MARSALIS

**J MOOD**—Columbia 40308: *J MOOD; PRESENCE THAT LAMENT BRINGS; INSANE ASYLUM; SKAIN'S DOMAIN; MELODIQUE; AFTER; MUCH LATER.*

**Personnel:** Marsalis, trumpet; Marcus Roberts, piano; Robert Leslie Hurst III, bass; Jeff Watts, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

**TOMASI/JOLIVET**—Columbia 42096: *TOMASI: CONCERTO FOR TRUMPET AND ORCHESTRA; JOLIVET: CONCERTO No. 2 FOR TRUMPET; CONCERTINO FOR TRUMPET, STRING ORCHESTRA AND PIANO.*

**Personnel:** Marsalis, trumpet; Philharmonia Orchestra; Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor; Craig Sheppard, piano (cut 3).

★ ★ ★ ★

## BRANFORD MARSALIS

**ROMANCES FOR SAXOPHONE**—Columbia 42122: *Debussy: L'ISLE JOYEUSE; Faure: PAVANE; Rachmaninoff: VOCALISE; Debussy: ARABESQUE No. 1; Stravinsky: PASTORALE; Colomblie: EMMANUEL; Villa-Lobos: BACHIANAS BRASILEIRAS No. 5; Satie: GYMNOPEDIE No. 3; Ravel: PRELUDE (FROM LE TOMBEAU DE COUPERIN); Ravel: PIECE EN FORME DE HABANERA; Foure: SICILIENNE (FROM PELLEAS ET MELISANDE); Stravinsky: SERENATA; Moussorgsky: THE OLD CASTLE (FROM PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION).*

**Personnel:** Marsalis, soprano saxophone; The English Chamber Orchestra (and Chorus, cut 2); Andrew Litton, conductor.

★ ★ ½

The Brothers Marsalis continue their assault on the more mundane aspects of the musical world with three recent releases, as Wynton attacks a trio of peppy post-war trumpet concerti and debuts his working quartet on vinyl, while Branford echos "light classics" with Romantic melodies played both somber and mellow. This is no new act for Wynton, who with Grammy winners in both leagues and steady concertizing has carved the double career as surely as any musician since Benny Goodman, but it's yet another wrinkle for Branford, who seems as protean as Ariel in both his choice of ensembles (Sting, Herbie Hancock, Andy Jaffe, etc.) and the sounds he gets from his

soprano saxophone, used exclusively on this greenhouse (steamy conservatory) date. *Les Freres Terribles* choose classical music that is quintessentially French: Wynton's perky, quirky pops concerti with a few dues to Papa Stravinsky and Milhaud from composers Henri Tomasi and Andre Jolivet, and Branford's potpourri of mostly Impressionist favorites. Perhaps there's an affinity for the French form and finesse in their New Orleans blood.

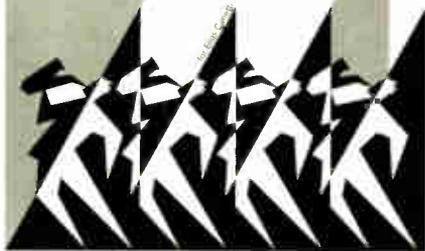
Wynton brings all the right stuff to the "serious" concerti: proper technique (like flawless flutter-tonguing), brilliant crisp tone, and textbook bluesy hues, as on the *Willow Weep For Me* theme Tomasi makes central to his cause. The young trumpeter's peppery attack and smart, spit-polish readings spiff up the surface glossiness of these concerti to a high sheen. Wynton's ease and relaxation with this demanding, stylish music is more evident than on his earlier baroque dates; he has a natural flair for the witty exuberance, jazzy metrics, and peripatetic lines these concerti offer. Salonen's translucent readings let him shine.

Branford's kaleidoscopic survey of pretty and pastel themes of the two generations before Jolivet and Tomasi features two each from Debussy, early Stravinsky, Faure, and Ravel. These pretty themes are arranged sometimes incongruously by Michel Colombier (whose one original tune sounds corny and out-of-place) to showcase the leader's straight-horn, which magically metamorphizes into an oboe-y duckhorn here, a French-horny moosehorn there, sporting like some Fragonard woodsprite around and through all the woodwinds. The whole thing sounds so pat and sweet that I wish somewhere Branford had whipped out his tenor and blown eight bars ad lib. Yet, despite the drear and bleak chorale on its one early track and occasionally soupy ensembles, this album is a pleasant and effective light classics album, and serves to show yet another facet of the Marsalis family's musical breadth. It's no drag to play pretty, especially if you've already played "baad."

It took several listenings to get past what I mistook for executive cool and cerebral bloodlessness in Wynton's new quartet album. It was just Wynton playing pretty (how about half an album of cryptic ballads?) while editing himself mercilessly of all manner of excesses. Eventually parallels with the "French" albums unfolded: an intimate revelling in sensuous sounds, the sense of quirky unpredictability in the original melodies and the solo lines (no cliches here), an unexpected quietude and austerity on many tracks. Add to these the subtle, almost subliminal, controls exercised by the rhythm section and the regard for extending tradition (illuminating some early shades of Miles Davis), it seemed that here were embodied many of the characteristics of American jazz that have appealed so greatly to French sensibilities from the earliest days.

These are not safe and stodgy recordings from corporate-controlled worldbeaters, nor are they the heavy-handed or flamboyant flag-wavers of firebrands. These are gifted players subjecting themselves to new rules and contexts, experimenting with new material, finding their way. —fred bouchard

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# RECORD REVIEWS

## Boppin' Hard

The trumpet players had the chops. The saxophonists had the ideas. The rhythm sections had a ball. It was the hard-bop era, which began in the 1950s. The latest batch of Blue Note reissues brings it back, including its beginning, maturity, and transitions.

**Horace Silver** was a major hard-bop figure, both in the formation of the Jazz Messengers and, later, his own quintet. *At The Cafe Bohemia, Volume 2* (BST 81508), from 1955, is the earliest of these reissues and catches the Messengers in definitive form. Subsequent use of the solo lines of Silver, Kenny Dorham, and Hank Mobley make them appear classic in retrospect. Silver's propulsive comping, Doug Watkins' booming bass, and Art Blakey's well-oiled drums stoke rhythm fires all around. A fine beginning.

*Finger Poppin' With The Horace Silver Quintet* (BST 84008), recorded four years later, is another solid entry, this one featuring eight of Silver's catchy originals and more of his driving accompaniment, funky intervals, gospelish progressions, and humorous interpolations. The front line of Blue Mitchell and Junior Cook, though less mature-sounding than the Messengers' Dorham/Mobley tandem, cooks knowledgeably.

**Kenny Dorham's** *'Round About Midnight At The Cafe Bohemia* (BST 81524), from 1956, shows the trumpeter's preference for minor keys. His fluid middle-register phrases, judicious flare-ups, and controlled double-time passages lie somewhere between Dizzy (or Howard McGhee, whom Dorham sometimes suggests) and early Miles. Tenor saxophonist J. R. Monterose is very personal, with a light tone, an almost prissy articulation, and unpredictable rhythms. Kenny Burrell and a 19-year-old Bobby Timmons are in the rhythm section, each already a strong soloist. But overall, this session isn't quite as galvanizing as the Messengers' Bohemia date.

Burrell, Timmons (sharing duties with Roland Hanna), and Blakey teamed up in '59 *On View At The Five Spot Cafe* (BST 84021). **Kenny Burrell**, the leader, was the same then as he is today, a sturdy blues-tinged guitarist with a distinctive tone. Tina Brooks' seldom-heard tenor added a Mobley-ish cast, complementing the relaxed—if not particularly invigorating—mainstream quality of this album.

**Donald Byrd's** quintet, recorded in 1960 *At The Half Note Cafe, Volume 1* (BST 84060), fell into the established hard-bop format—the trumpet/saxophone horn section, the aggressive (but not obliterative) rhythm section, the neo-gospel originals. Byrd and baritone saxophonist Pepper Adams untie long strings of even eighth notes, with Adams getting a more robust tonal edge. Byrd certainly had more chops than he has demonstrated lately. Duke Pearson swings like a hard-bop Count Basie here, and alto-

gether this is a thoughtful, warm, flowing LP.

If the Jazz Messengers gave hard-bop its ensemble style, **Sonny Rollins** lent his name to its saxophone style, although the term "Rollins" is more definitive than the term "hard-bop." Teeming with brilliance, his 1957 album, *A Night At The Village Vanguard* (BST 81581), is a classic. It's all here—the majestically eccentric improvisations every jazz lover has tried to cajole out of Rollins ever since, the no-frills trio perched on the brink of harmonic freedom, the stamp of authority that grips all the great jazz innovators. Bassist Wilbur Ware and drummer Elvin Jones are no less challenging and fulfilling than Rollins. Get this record. It's the cream of the crop.

Rollins was one harbinger of certain changes that affected Blue Note artists in the '60s. **Jackie McLean's** *Let Freedom Ring* (BST 84106), from 1962, shows the sometimes painful transition from inside to outside. McLean's consistently hard-blowing, sour-toned, blunt-lined alto is no fun to listen to—nor is it especially instructive—after the first few minutes, although his compositions—Monk's influence is noted—partly redeem the LP. Walter Davis, Herbie Lewis, and the always dependable Billy Higgins try hard beside McLean.

**Dexter Gordon** wasn't breaking any new ground in the early '60s, but he was solidifying the old ground, of which he had once been a primary component. His 1963 *Our Man In Paris* (BST 84146) has fleeting moments of strangeness, though, among the old Dex declarations. Why is Dex out-of-tune? What are these avant garde squawks and squeals? True, these are only minor irritants, but then they aren't typical, either. Bud Powell's spikey runs and clumpy chords, Pierre Michelot's bass, and Kenny Clarke's swing-bop drums support Dex admirably. Not the best Dex, but not bad, either.

Dex, less strangely, had participated in **Herbie Hancock's** maiden leadership voyage in 1962 called *Takin' Off* (BST 84109). Hancock contributed six tunes and a budding piano style which can be described as "funk progressing into impressionism." This was a typical transition session, with the neo-bop and -funk of the '60s meeting the old hard-bop. Hancock and Freddie Hubbard represented the new generation. Dexter represented the original stuff, and Butch Warren and Billy Higgins represented the agelessness of good time. Good Herbie, but better things were on the way.

Hancock's tune, *Watermelon Man* (from *Takin' Off*), inspired what became a Blue Note formula in the middle '60s—the commercially oriented funk tune amid more straight-ahead material. **Lee Morgan** had some success with *The Sidewinder*, and *The Rumprouler* (BST 84199) was its sequel. Lee was sarcastic, funny, incisive, burning, slightly ragged, and ever-soulful. It's odd that no one has imitated him much, either before or since his death, although Tom Harrell

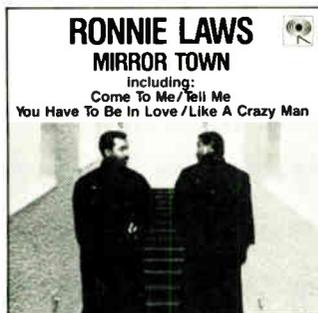
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# COLUMBLA

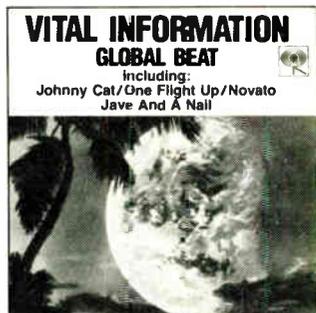


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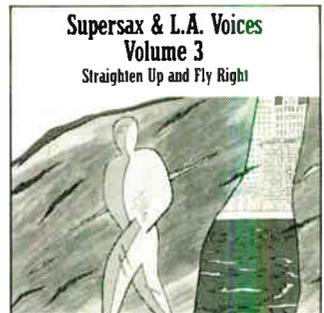
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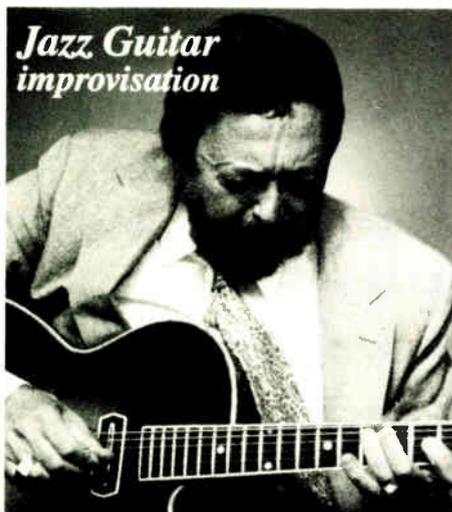


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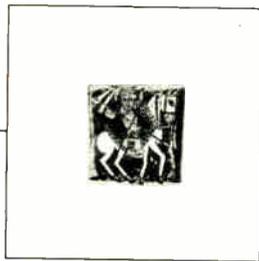
started out that way. Anyway, this record has a little bit of everything for the time (1965). Tenor titan Joe Henderson was in a convoluted, bullying mood to match Lee's fire. Ronnie Matthews, Victor Sproles, and Billy Higgins kept it rolling behind the horns.

Later in the year, Henderson joined Woody Shaw and Elvin Jones on **Larry Young's Unity** (BST 84221). Young was hailed as the savior of the jazz organ. He translated Trane and McCoy Tyner to the organ, and the interaction between organ and drums is particularly exciting here. Henderson flits and Shaw plays Hubbard, both digging deep into

the mood and style of Young's playing and spirituality. This album looked forward.

*Time For Tyner* (BST 84307) marked the end of an era. It was 1968. Trane was dead. **McCoy Tyner** had built his own reputation as the Tatum of the '60s with pounding rhythms and chromatic modality. This LP features hypnotic turns by Tyner, vibist Bobby Hutcherson, Herbie Lewis, and Freddie Waits. It's one of Tyner's better albums. In the '70s, he was trying to hold the acoustic ground against a rising electronic mentality. By then, there was hardly a Blue Note in sight to help him.

—owen cordle



## PAUL SIMON

**GRACELAND**—Warner Bros. 25447-1: *THE BOY IN THE BUBBLE; GRACELAND; I KNOW WHAT I KNOW; GUMBOOTS; DIAMONDS ON THE SOLES OF HER SHOES; YOU CAN CALL ME AL; UNDER AFRICAN SKIES; HOMELESS; CRAZY LOVE VOL. 2; THAT WAS YOUR MOTHER; ALL AROUND THE WORLD OR THE MYTH OF FINGERPRINTS.*

**Personnel:** Simon, guitar, Synclavier, six-string electric bass, vocals; Chikapa "Ray" Phiri (cuts 1, 5-7, 9), Daniel Xilakazi (4), guitar; Adrian Belew (1, 6, 7, 9), guitar, guitar-synth; Baghiti Khumalo (1, 2, 5-7), Lloyd Lelose (9), bass; Vasi Khumalo (1, 2), Petrus Manile (4), Isaac Mtshali (5-7, 9), Steve Gadd (11), drums; Makhaya Mahlangu (1, 2), Ralph McDonald (4, 6, 7, 11), Lulu Masilela (4), Youssou N'dour (5), Babacar Faye (5), Assane Thiam (5), percussion; Forere Motloheloa (1), Johnjon Mkhali (4), accordion; Rob Mounsey (1, 6), synthesizer; Demola Adepoju (3), pedal steel guitar; Barney Rachabane (4), Mike Makhalemele (4), Teaspoon Ndele (4), Lenny Pickett (5), Alex Foster (5), Ronnie Cuber (6), Morris Goldberg (9), saxophones; Earl Gardner (5), Jon Faddis (6), Randy Brecker (6), Lou Soloff (6), Alan Rubin (6), trumpet; Dave Bergeron (6), Kim Cissel (6), trombones; Everly Bros. (2), Gaza Sisters (3), Diane Garisto (4), Michele Cobbs (4), Ladysmith Black Mambazo (5, 8), Linda Ronstadt (7), Joseph Shabalala (8), vocals; Good Rockin' Dopsie & The Twisters (10); Los Lobos (11).

★★★★

Toward the end of Simon and Garfunkel's long career, Paul Simon began dabbling in different sounds to color that rather monochromatic duo's music: *El Condor Pasa* drew on Andean panpiping, while *Bridge Over Troubled Waters* elaborated on gospel changes and a key religious image. On his own over the years, Simon extended his attempts to refract his

ideas through a prism of styles: jubilee spirituals (*Loves Me Like A Rock*), salsa (*Me And Julio Down By The Schoolyard*), second-line soul (*Take Me To The Mardi Gras*).

But none of these previous dips into generic crosscurrents matches the total immersion on *Graceland*, a release that's as catchy and danceable as its implications are provocative. Deftly juggling a variety of South African styles, American r&b and c&w, zydeco (courtesy of Rockin' Dopsie on *That Was Your Mother*), Tex-Mex-flavored rock & roll (via Los Lobos on *All Around The World Or The Myth Of Fingerprints*), and Tin Pan Alley tunesmithing, Simon hasn't so much fused his elements as he has created a musical space they all inhabit as neighbors. And they interact, just like in the real world, where latin polyrhythms collide with American r&b to produce zydeco, or with eastern European polkas to spawn Texas two-steps, where congas and talking drums nestle next to c&w in Sunny Ade's juju, where funk gives birth to Afrobeat. It's a process as old as the hills.

The various ironic tensions Simon sets up, however, are very much of our time. "These are the days of miracle and wonder/This is the long-distance call," he sings over the loping lead bass of *The Boy In The Bubble*, but the miracles include lasers in the jungle, babies with baboon hearts, and modern terrorism ("The bomb in the baby carriage/was wired to the radio"). For the title track, the Nashville-via-Nigeria pedal steel of Sunny Ade's Demola Adepoju entwines with the Everly Brothers' harmonies to float behind lyrics that first metaphorically relate the bottleneck Delta blues and the Civil War—the opening struggle against American apartheid—and then seek to transcend the glitzy reality of Elvis' residence under the pressure of loss: "Losing love is like a window in your heart/Everybody sees you're blown apart/Everybody sees the wind blow."

That dialog—or lack of it—between the historical and the introspective powers the lyrics over a collection of dance grooves that chatter with guitar crosstalk while the lead vocal spouts inconclusive cocktail party exchanges (*I Know What I Know*), stride to a skakish Zulu walking beat tickled by accordion (*Gumboots*, which are the shoes worn by South African miners), or sway to a gentle guitar lick stung on the chorus by the stuttering Tower of Power horns (*Diamonds On The Soles Of Her Shoes*), as New York City street scenes

commingle with reminders of one of South Africa's prime money-making industries.

And so on. Without ever making any direct political statements, without ever abandoning the infectious musicality that first drew him into this project, Simon demonstrates that apartheid—apartness—is not only racist and stupid but ultimately untenable in a shrinking world whose confluent cultures create cross-currents as rich as these. And by returning home for the last two cuts with Dopsie and Los Lobos, he brings us face to face with the implications of the music—and ourselves.

—gene santoro

backbeat-orientation complements Abdullah's, you might think Panama-born Ward is South African, too. His urgent, squawky alto lyricism recalls Dudu Pukwana's; his big flute sound, on the theme *Thaba Bosigo*, has a hardy simplicity. On the rolling *River* especially, Don Mumford has an astonishing way of suggesting a drum choir with a kit—just as Abdullah can suggest one with his piano.

Like Monk or Lacy, Abdullah has a limited live repertoire, something you can overlook when he's cooking. *South Africa* is one of his

hottest records: jubilant roots music.

On *Water From An Ancient Well*, the strains of kwela—South Africa's unique hybrid of jazz, choral music, and highlife-y pop—sing through in fetchingly pure parallel harmony, on the joyous *Mandela*. Still, after decades in exile, and with an American band, Ibrahim's feeling the effects of the melting pot. Here, he caresses the keys. The subtly beautiful reed harmonizing—*Sathima*, *Mountain*, the hauntingly melancholy *Wedding*—is closer to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38



## ABDULLAH IBRAHIM

**WATER FROM AN ANCIENT WELL**—Black-Hawk 50207-1: *MANDELA*; *SONG FOR SATHIMA* (DAUGHTER OF CAPE TOWN); *MANENBERG REVISITED* (CAPE TOWN FRINGE); *TUANG GURU*; *WATER FROM AN ANCIENT WELL*; *THE WEDDING*; *THE MOUNTAIN*; *SAMEEDA*.

**Personnel:** Ibrahim, piano; Carlos Ward, alto saxophone, flute; Ricky Ford, tenor saxophone; Charles Davis, baritone saxophone; Dick Griffin, trombone; David Williams, bass; Ben Riley, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

**SOUTH AFRICA**—Enja 5007: *THABA BOSIGO* (THE MOUNTAIN OF THE NIGHT); *SIYA HAMBA NAMHLANJE* (WE ARE LEAVING TODAY); *IZA-NE ZEMBE GAWUALE* (BRING THE AXE); *BLACK AND BROWN CHERRIES*; *OUR LOVING FAMILY*; *ELSIE'S RIVER*; *PANCAKES*; *CAPETOWN CARNIVAL*; *THABA BOSIGO*.

**Personnel:** Ibrahim, piano, soprano saxophone, vocal; Johnny Classens, vocal; Carlos Ward, alto saxophone, flute; Essiet Okun Essiet, bass; Dan Mumford, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Sometimes it seems there are two Abdullah Ibrahims—one immersed in the folk and kwela musics of his native South Africa, the other in the intricacies of small-group orchestration. These two albums offer looks at each.

*South Africa* reveals the earthier Ibrahim, tearing it up at Montreux '83. As often before, Abdullah's folksy, repetitive structures build on the bassist's hypnotic ostinati. But there are traditional melodies as well: two saxes join Johnny Classens' chant of *Iza-Ne Zembe Gawuale*; on *Siya Hamba*, Classens' tribal shouts soar above the somber quartet.

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—Keith Jarrett

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# RECORD REVIEWS

## Electric jam

Despite monumental advances in recent musical technology, inspiration and originality is always at a premium. Even among a well-known brigade of sax and synth bands as those below, the sounds are almost interchangeable, the musicianship on an even (solid, not trailblazing) level all around. Keyboards sound like Harry James or Andreas Vollenweider, saxes like Jimi Hendrix—and yet these groups still sound the same. Each of these records will probably enjoy a nice stay on the jazz popularity charts, but there is a sometimes-startling lack of feeling that suggests little spontaneous playing was done in the studio. If one of the five albums is the exception, it is—as usual—Weather Report.

**Steps Ahead** started as a mostly acoustic jazz group in 1979, a refreshing change from all the electronics of the day. But *Magnetic* (Elektra 9 60441-1) sees the group temporing an increasingly electronic arsenal with acoustic flavoring. No more Eddie Gomez (Victor Bailey takes over) and not much Warren Bernhardt in favor of several new programmers. Everyone who shows up gets to write, or so it appears, and the result is a global roadmap. Guitarist Hiram Bullock

pumps life into *Trains* (why his only appearance?) with a heady and strong blues wail and throttling power-chord barrage. Chuck Loeb's acoustic guitar rides the tune out, after propelling a streaking Michael Brecker tenor solo. Mike Mainieri's synth-vibes make me a little seasick at one point in *Beirut*, but I like the Scofield-type groove. Jimmy Bralower works with drummer Peter Erskine to create a massive drum track on the heavily syncopated *Sumo*. The individual personalities of the bandmembers come through more on Erskine's two compositions that end the record, simple because there is less structure and more breathing-room for the players and listeners alike. They are only scratching the surface now of what they are capable of musically, and that's too bad, because this group might have gotten a little more experimental.

The Windham Hill label has made its fortune largely through introspective acoustic solo and small combo albums. **Shadowfax** is the label's leading electric band, and *Too Far To Whisper* (WH 1051) shows their strong taste for grand thematic writing a la (Dixie) Dregs and Euro-pop-jazz such as Passport likes to spin out. Other times they throw South American and Eastern spices into the stew, or get moody in more typical Windham Hill fashion. Some of these approaches hit, and

some miss. *China Blue* only nods to the East with tired cliches, but *Road To Hanna* sounds as if it had roots there—like a holistic Jean-Luc Ponty piece. *Slim Limbs Akimbo* is an interesting percussion symphony featuring Emil Richards and drummer Stuart Nevitt, who does everything on the tune but play the trap set in a normal fashion. Woodwind player Chuck Greenberg manages to combine the group's strengths on *Streetnoise*, still leaving room to see through the music and feel the spaces. *Tsunami* creates a nice background, but the wave never hits. On *Ritual* the combination of wooden flutes, mallet percussion, and singing bass guitar weaves a circular web. Shadowfax is talented enough to fall into the mainstream of jazz-rock bands, but they sound best when taking a more unusual approach to instrumentation or arrangement.

They're a step toward jazz, certainly—jazz with training wheels, perhaps. **Spyro Gyra**, on the other hand, has honed its act to a fine degree—in fact some might say too much. Saxman Jay Beckenstein and keyboardist Tom Schuman remain the group's core, and they have augmented themselves well on *Breakout* (MCA 5753). Dave Samuels contributes greatly—his marimba break in *Freefall* is an excellent buildup for Beckenstein's

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36

## STEVE REICH

The release of "the dancing, hypnotically involving" (*N.Y. Times*) *Sextet* and *Six Marimbas* marks Steve Reich's first compositions for percussion ensemble since the classic *Music for 18 Musicians*.

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## JOHN ZORN

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# Bird told Miles and Dizzy, "You better watch out, there's a little cat on the West Coast who's gonna eat you up."

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# RECORD REVIEWS

tart melody, and the vibes steal the show on Jeremy Wall's ballad *Swept Away*. Richie Morales drives this band well from the drums, but percussionist Manolo Badrena plays a much more restrained role than he did in *Weather Report*. Schuman's synth solo on *Doubletake* covers a lot of ground, but he shines brighter on acoustic during *Breakout*, a high-speed shuffle on which everyone gets to wail. Guitarist Julio Fernandez adds some rough edges. The 7/4 romp *Guiltless* flows so well that the odd time is hardly noticeable. Spyro Gyra keeps from indulging in any half-hearted vocal pop attempts—a commendable posture. They were one of the first bands to popularize the jazz-rock fusion of the 1970s with rhythm & blues and samba grooves, but now it's so formula-ized they seem to be losing some emotion.

**Yellowjackets** can sting, and these do on occasion, but they also just hover a lot. Robben Ford gave this group a lot of bite in its early days with his ripping blues guitar leads. On *Shades* (MCA 5752) that job is left up to saxophonist Marc Russo. The fact that Russo sounds so much like David Sanborn probably doesn't bother his bandmates or the folks at MCA much at all. There doesn't seem to be much pretense with the Yellowjackets. Their foundation is in r&b, and they'd like nothing better than to snag Sanborn's market, I would

guess. In fairness to Russo, he's a fine player capable of holding a listener and whipping up a melodic frenzy all in the same solo. Tone-wise, he can get quite snarly. As he squeals through *New Shoes*, the quickwitted, quick-fingered bassist Jimmy Haslip slaps out eager replies which add to the charging funk. On the more reverential *One Family*, Haslip solos with all the ease, clarity of phrasing, and melody that the saxman demonstrates. *Revelation* is unabashed gospel, another genre the group seems quite comfortable with, as they float above the fat organ sounds of their principal composer, Russell Ferrante. Drummer Rickey Lawson can handle any rhythmic situation with equal parts daring and taste, and gets to show off in the less-structured parts of *Oasis*. He makes a crisp, solid latin feel sound easy to play on *Sonja's Santona*, while Haslip doubles Russo on the melody line like Jaco did so often with Wayne. Dilute *Weather Report* about 50 percent with Booker T. and the MGs and you'll be in the musical vicinity of Yellowjackets.

Amid speculation that this is **Weather Report's** last gasp, it's funny to see Joe and Wayne on the back cover of *This Is This* (Columbia 40280) locked in a left-handed handshake. Evidently Zawinul wanted some real blues on this one, because he brought in Carlos Santana to jam over and under much

of the first side. *This Is This* is reminiscent of some of Miles' mid-'70s music with Reggie Lucas or John McLaughlin on guitar. Miles' bands could keep the jams going well over seven minutes, but this one should have been cut a bit shorter. Speaking of Shorter, Wayne doesn't make an appearance until the last cut on the opening side, *Jungle Stuff, Part I*, written by percussionist Mino Cinelu. It's mostly drums and vocals, really. With Victor Bailey punching out the bass and Zawinul staying effectively behind the action, the missing saxman blows a sweet but short journey that makes the wait worthwhile. *Man With The Copper Fingers* sounds like it was written for Santana—the guitarist's rich sustain holding each note to its maximum. *Update* gives a taste of what might be coming up from Zawinul, as drummer Peter Erskine becomes a blur of bop energy opening a wide playground for the keyboardist's developing textures and environments. Joe's backdrops of haunting voices, horns, and calls are often as fascinating as his solos. But then it's all supposed to work as one anyway. To a fan of Shorter this album is a little disappointing, but the rest of the band is in good form and they take some wild rides. Zawinul proves again that he is neither reliant on or tied to the past; he is in his own musical world.

—robin tolleson

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Greenwich Village than Capetown, as surely as Ricky Ford and Charles Davis embody East Coast swagger.

But under the gloss, Ibrahim's chords still tend to be gospel-simple, something bassist Williams wisely doesn't disguise. Carlos Ward again betrays Pukwana sizzle; on the title track, even Ford and Davis latch with ease onto the rhythm section's lope. And who's to say if Griffin's smeary trombone sound is African or American, when black ethnic musics and jazz share so many traits? The longer one listens to *Ancient Well*, the more clearly its African roots emerge—even if it lacks *South Africa's* infectious excitement.

Given mass media fascination with the Ganelin Trio's expressive music from a repressive land, it's curious that *South Africa's* exiles haven't reaped similar publicity. But Abdullah won't sit still while awaiting his due. *Ancient Well* shows his music will flow its own way, even if it's most bracing when closest to the source.

—kevin whitehead



## AL HIBBLER/ HANK JONES

**FOR SENTIMENTAL REASONS**—Open Sky 3126: *GEE BABY, AIN'T I GOOD TO YOU*; *SHE'S FUNNY THAT WAY*; *S'POSIN'*; *AIN'T MISBEHAVIN'*; *I'M GONNA SIT RIGHT DOWN AND WRITE MYSELF A LETTER*; *TAIN'T WHAT YOU DO (It's THE WAY THAT CHA DO IT)*; *YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME*; *I CRIED FOR YOU*; *I WAS TELLING HER ABOUT YOU*; *FOR SENTIMENTAL REASONS*.

**Personnel:** Hibbler, vocals; Jones, piano; Buddy Tate, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Milt Hinton, bass; Oliver Jackson, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

For those like me who treasure Al Hibbler's 1972 collaboration with Rahsaan Roland Kirk, *A Meeting Of The Times* (Atlantic 1630), the favorite cuts from *For Sentimental Reasons* will be the last two: *I Was Telling Her About You* and the title song. In these ballads we hear once again the magisterial, almost aloof sensitivity that characterized what must be counted among the most thoroughly satisfying jazz vocal albums ever made.

It is not that the other seven cuts from *For Sentimental Reasons* fall short. In fact, the album is a singular delight. But it's not the minor miracle of *A Meeting Of The Times*. Missing, for the most part, is the intensity of stylization that marked Hibbler at his best. And missing, too, is the straightahead steamrolling of Kirk.

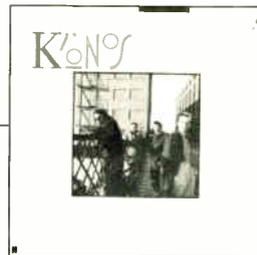
That's what's missing. What we do get is

open-hearted joy. *Gee Baby, Ain't I Good To You*, which Jimmy Witherspoon would render in phrases of plaintive seduction, Hibbler and the Hank Jones All-Stars turn into an innocent celebration. The same goes for the self-effacing *She's Funny That Way*. While both songs invite depth of interpretation, Hibbler chooses instead to skate along the surface. And that's just fine, when the skating is so exuberant.

Jones, Tate, Hinton, and Jackson are in every way equal to Hibbler's radiance here. And when "Al Remembers 'Fats'" in homage renditions of *Ain't Misbehavin'* and *I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter*, the ensemble reveals a protean ease in the evocation of Waller's stride-inflected period style. *Taint What You Do (It's The Way That Cha Do It)* and *You Should Have Told Me* are likewise homages, to Jimmy Lunceford and Nat King Cole, respectively—the former complete with answer-back shouts from the band, the producer, technicians, and studio secretaries.

On the face of it, *For Sentimental Reasons* is a pleasing 40 minutes. Those with a love of Hibbler and the traditions of which he is a part will find the album a simple but enduring joy.

—alan axelrod



## KRONOS QUARTET

**KRONOS QUARTET**—Nonesuch 79111-1F: Sculthorpe: *STRING QUARTET No. 8*; Sallinen: *STRING QUARTET No. 3*; Glass: *COMPANY*; Nançoffow: *STRING QUARTET*; Hendrix: *PURPLE HAZE*.

**Personnel:** David Harrington, John Sherba, violin; Hank Dutt, viola; Joan Jeanrenaud, cello.

★ ★ ★ ★

**MUSIC OF BILL EVANS**—Landmark 1510: *WALTZ FOR DEBBY*; *VERY EARLY*; *NARDIS*; *RE: PERSON I KNEW*; *TIME REMEMBERED*; *WALKING UP*; *TURN OUT THE STARS*; *FIVE*; *PEACE PIECE*.

**Personnel:** David Harrington, John Sherba, violin; Hank Dutt, viola; Joan Jeanrenaud, cello; Eddie Gomez, bass; Jim Hall, guitar.

★ ★ ★

Over the course of several years The Kronos Quartet hasn't quite revolutionized the string quartet, as many critics have claimed. They've simply woken it up to the second half of the 20th century.

They've managed to succeed without condescension or smugness, which is why they could get away with recording the music of jazz icon Thelonious Monk a few years back. With that success, they've selected another jazz figure, though with a completely different

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disposition—pianist Bill Evans.

*Monk Suite* (Landmark 1505) opened up the stateliness and nobility of Monk's music, but this Bill Evans recording is a little too genteel. When longtime Evans bassist Eddie Gomez heads out on *Waltz For Debby*, he virtually pummels the quartet with his spontaneous, fingerboard-slapping solo. It's the difference between interpreting the mood of the moment and playing a composed solo, which is what David Harrington does, acting as Evan's right hand. Likewise, Jim Hall's improvised solo at the end of *Turn Out The Stars* has an emotional resonance that comes out of his mood at the moment.

Where the quartet's approach works is on *Peace Piece*, a languid work of melancholy sadness to which Harrington gives just the right twist of tortured passion. His violin arcs and cries into the open spaces provided by the drone of cello and viola.

*Kronos Quartet*, their album on the classical Nonesuch label, finds them taking even greater chances, performing works by Peter Sculthorpe and Aulis Sallinen, hitherto obscure, post-modern composers. Sculthorpe's *String Quartet No. 8* is a modern-romantic work full of drama, rhythmic shifts, and rapid staccato sections that are supposedly derived from the Balinese *ketungan*, or rice-pounding music. They seem closer to the Ramayana Monkey Chant, but in Kronos' hands, it sounds non-derivative and inventive. The same can be said for Aulis Sallinen's *String Quartet No. 3*, sub-titled *Some Aspects Of Peltoniemi Hinrik's Funeral March*. It's a subtle transformation of a Finnish folk song through different voicings, tempos, and atmospheres full of sharp dissonances and clashes.

Philip Glass' *Company* is just the opposite, a starkly minimalist work. Stripped of his usual synthesizers, orchestras, and reeds, Glass' music takes on an elegant simplicity with carefully etched lines that carve the air with the directness of a Bartok quartet—a formerly unlikely comparison. By contrast, Conlon Nan-carrow comes on like gangbusters. The reclusive composer—whose best-known works are composed with player pianos—orchestrates vigorous thrusts and jabs, notes slashing and grinding on each other in this 1942 *String Quartet*.

Speaking of slashing and grinding, the album closes with *Purple Haze*, by Jimi Hendrix. Kronos just barely avoids being cute with this one. I recently heard it out-of-context on the radio and realized what a witty performance this is. Although the distorted, fuzzed-out crunch of the rhythm doesn't quite come through, the wailing of Hendrix's feedback guitar are well-suited to the sustain of the string quartet. No doubt he would've loved it.

—John Diliberto



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## Big Band Bonanza

A big band is an ensemble above all. So when push comes to punch, it should ultimately be judged as an ensemble. I should say this because I have something of a prejudice against bands in which 17 or 18 players sit around looking like a big band but spend too much of their time just listening to each other take long solos. When one or two players play four-fifths of an arrangement with nothing but rhythm accompaniment, what we really have is a quartet, not an orchestra. When a chart is opened up this wide to solos, it loses focus. This thought struck me over and over as I listened to many of these recent big band albums.

There is another related tendency reflected in these albums. The big band has, during its many years of emeritus status in American popular music, been inclined to turn inward a bit. Without the partnership of a large, responsive audience, it has become a musician's forum, through which musicians address other musicians on matters of craft. They write and play to challenge one another. This is good.

But it's also taken some of the fun out of listening to a band. Many of these orchestras are part-time or "rehearsal" bands. By and large they come together to play others' charts or their own work, to try out this and that. The experiments are not—in this group of records, at least—avant garde. The music is highly accessible, sometimes exciting, generally inside the standard big band traditions. The experimentation isn't conceptual. It's about craft and technique, mixing and matching various devices pulled together from other forms and fitted into a big band jazz format. The musicians who make up these bands are often studio players of one kind or another. They're awfully good. So are the writers. But my impression is that they see music as a series of subtle exercises in the mastery of greater craftsmanship. With these observations duly noted, here are some specifics on 20 recent big band albums.

The **Buddy Rich** band doesn't rehearse; it works. In an awkwardly packaged three-LP set recorded in 1985—*Live On King Street* (Cafe 3-732)—Rich takes a retrospective look over two decades on the road. All but four numbers have appeared on previous Rich LPs. Charts like *Machine*, *Norwegian Wood*, *Love For Sale*, *Mexicali Rose*, and others all get fresh treatments crackling with unremitting, knock-'em-sock-'em drive. The band remains a blaster and swings with an incisive jolt on *Red Snapper* and *Cottontail*. Rich fills his two big show numbers, *West Side Story* and *Channel One Suite*, with glass-top drum rolls and deft percussion swirls. It's a good album, but the originals, especially the Pacific Jazz albums, sound a lot crisper. The liner notes talk exclusively about how the sound here represents the "cutting edge" of recording science. But the band's most powerful moments tend to get swallowed up in a hollow bassiness.

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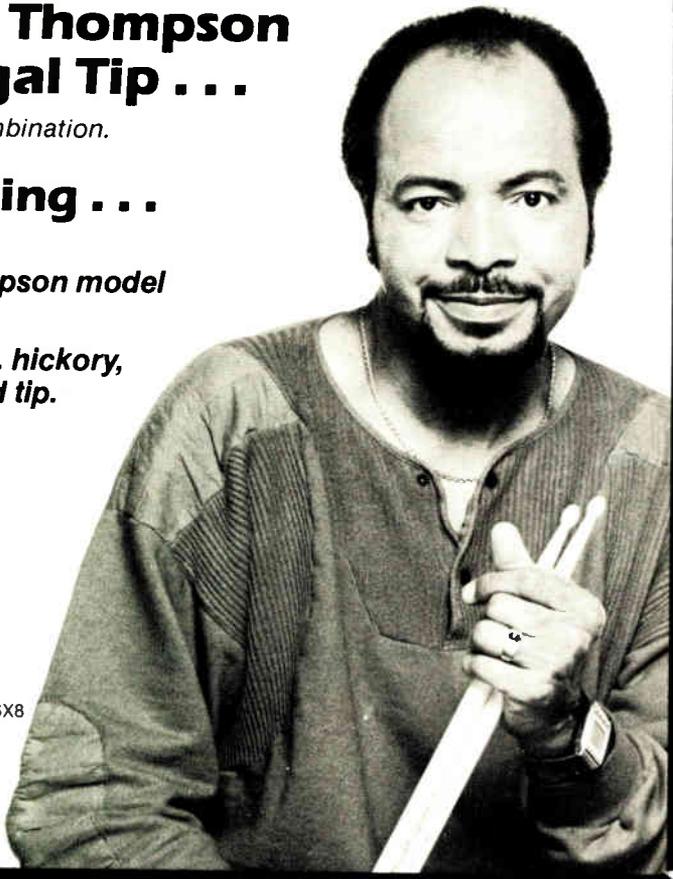
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# RECORD REVIEWS

The **Mel Lewis Orchestra**, even after 20 *Years At The Village Vanguard* (Atlantic 81655-1), remains one of the great ones. The open, natural sound the Rich LP tries for is achieved more effectively here. Drums more than most instruments require the charm of distance in recording. They bloom and billow when given the dimension of space. And Lewis is caught here in his lightest, most musical form. This is not a reunion of the band's various alums; it's the band of today. But there's no hiding its roots. The compositions of Jerry Dodgion (*Butter*) and Thad Jones (*Interloper*) are trademarks. Bill Finigan's treatment of *C-Jam Blues* walks on air. Bob Brookmeyer's *American Express* is a giant economy-size package of voicings, ideas, and tempos.

Of two recent **Rob McConnell/Boss Brass** LPs, *Boss Brass & Woods* (Innovation 0011) is the best. For a band that calls itself Boss Brass, this happens to be a very sexy set. Phil Woods is guest player and galvanizes the proceedings with strong, assertive playing on four of the eight cuts. *Quintessence* is a glistening showcase for his eternally Parkerish alto. Here and on other tracks there is a healthy synergy between soloist and band. Listen to guitarist Ed Bickert and *Jive At Five*. The writing is consistently imaginative. The opening chart, *Just One Of Those Things*, is a kind of impressionistic sketch of the familiar tune at

alternating tempos. At one point the beat accelerates from slow to fast in one continuous glissando.

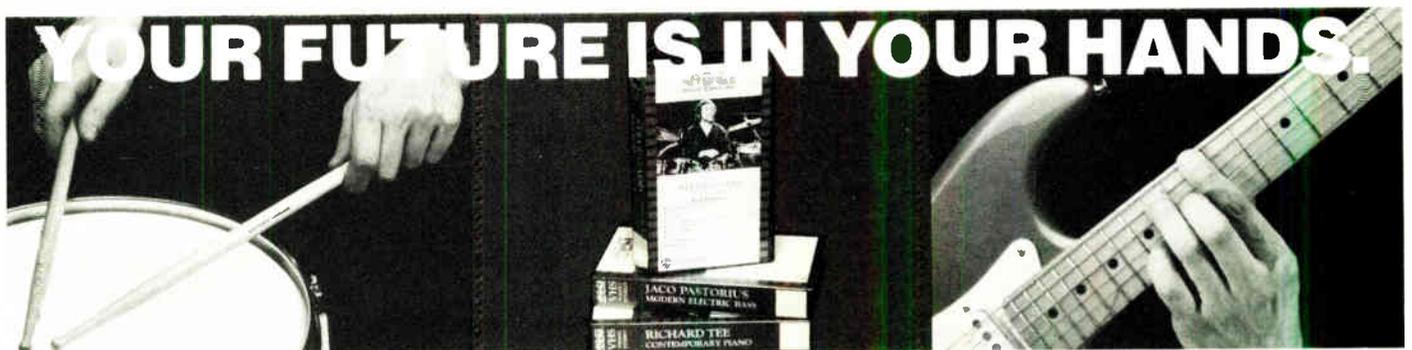
Another McConnell LP (*Atras Da Porta*, Innovation 0010) is softly percussive with a strong emphasis on latin material. This despite an opening chart on *Easy To Love* that sets a hard-swinging pace. But the tone turns to seriousness—a kind of studied as-tringency that sometimes becomes an identifying quality of the McConnell band. In a time when high-tech big bands have made collective virtuosity as commonplace as union membership, the McConnell band remains a unit of unusually high precision and polish. So if it might sound a bit empty at times, it certainly never sounds bad.

The **Jazz Members Big Band**, *Live At Fitzgeralds* (SeaBreeze 2028), gives over its first three tracks to vocalist Gloria Morgan—always a suspicious sign for a big band LP. If her material was better, things would be off to a better start, because she's a good singer with wisps of Sarah Vaughan in her sound. But only *Falling In Love With Love* is first-rate. After that Horace Silver's *Peace* nods off into a pretty but sleepy lyricism. *Piano Fortress* by Phil Wilson sounds at first like a terse, jabbing late-Ellington figure. It's intriguing but stillborn. John Campbell takes over for a long piano solo and the band disappears. *I Got It Bad* was overplayed when Ellington was alive, and things have gotten worse since he

died. The album closes with *Moontrane*. After a powerful tenor turn, the piece seems to fade away in a long bass solo. The chart loses its focus, but is slowly reborn in Campbell's piano. It's an outstanding band, but seems to fall short of its best on this outing.

Another drummer/leader is **Bob Stone**, whose album, *Breaking Out* (Fantasia 1001), is a good, exhilarating display of contemporary swing. All six cuts appear to be the work of composer/arranger/tenorman Mike Pendowski, who uses the opportunity to demonstrate his versatility. An a capella brass passage on *Don't Feed The Animals* is seasoned with some snapping sax section interjections. The chart isn't afraid to stomp a bit either, and that's fun to hear. A Basie-inspired number is pure Sammy Nestico. Solos by Art Hoyle are consistently fine, and Pendowski's glancing, rapid-fire tenor on *Win, Place And Show* is strongly influenced by Sal Nestico, whose tonguing and attack at fast tempos galvanized the Woody Herman band in the '60s.

The work of arranger Frank Mantooth, a prolific free-lancer, is the primary musical business of the **Ashley Alexander Big Band** (Pausa 7178). Four titles are originals; four are standards. Mantooth writes with a sleek, contemporary craftsmanship, but without a bold personal signature. One has the impression that the beauty and surprise of his work derives more from sheer skill than feeling.



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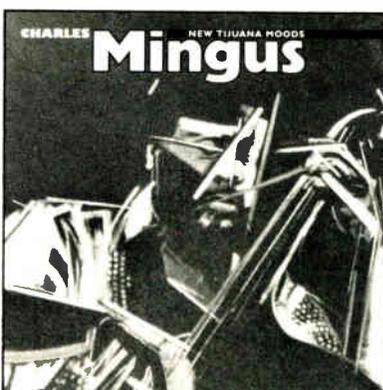
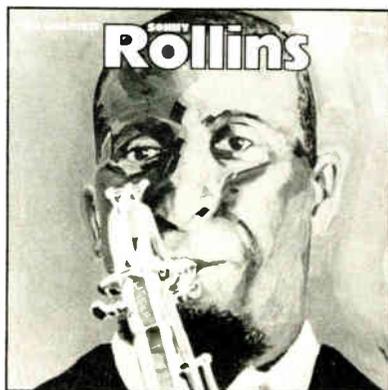


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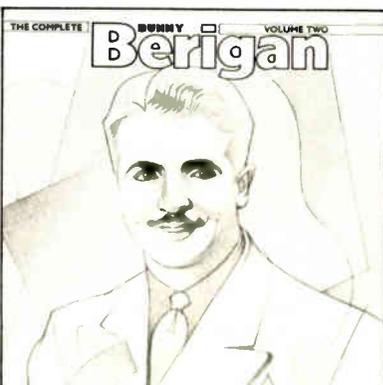
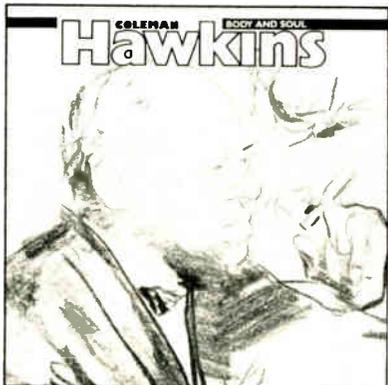


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# RECORD REVIEWS

The standardization and interchangeability of the big band scene these days makes it hard to imagine that it could be any other way. The same Mantooth chart of *Peace* heard on the *Jazz Members* LP is played here, although with Jim Linahon's flugelhorn blunting the sharpness of Danny Barber's trumpet. Excellence has come at the expense of eccentricity, it seems. Alexander's band is a fine but faceless one. Writers without individual voices to write for, I suppose, are not likely to find a singular voice themselves.

Drummer **Charli Persip's Superband II** is out with *In Case You Missed It* (Soul Note 1079), an album that finds its pace in a fast, through-the-roof treatment of *'Round Midnight* with a series of chase tenor choruses by two unspecified players. Along the way the range of music moves from some of the most gutsy plunger trombone since Tricky Sam Nanton (*Marching*) to an off-beat, semi-

atonal blend of orchestra and piano appropriately named *Plutonian Images* (far out, get it?). Despite a crew of enthusiastic players, however, the overall results remain curiously bland.

**Jaki Byard's Apollo Stompers** take on a variety of material in *Phantasies* (Soul Note 1075), and wrap it in a solid mixture of traditional and contemporary sensibilities. The album starts out conservative and easy-going with a beautiful but short *I May Be Wrong*. Then it moves through three moody Ellington classics. Byard's dark piano solo on *Black And Tan Fantasy* is flecked with dissonances and leads into his own *Prelude No. 29*, an Ellingtonian transition piece full of snarling trumpets and rich chords. *Prelude To A Kiss* concludes this little suite. A third Ellington number, *Do Nothing 'Til You Hear From Me*, is only routine. Another sequence based on post-bebop compositions by Ornette Coleman (*Lonely Woman*), Miles (So

## CRITICS' CHOICE

### Art Lange

**NEW RELEASE:** Paris Reunion Band, *French Cooking* (Gazell). A new domestic issue of the original Swedish Sonet release, this LP reaffirms the immediacy of swinging hard-bop, performed by an octet of one-time expatriates whose reunion was the jazz Event of 1986.

**OLD FAVORITE:** Muddy Waters, *Fathers And Sons* (Chess). A dangerous concept—combining blues patriarchs (Muddy, Otis Spann) with their Chicago disciples (Mike Bloomfield, Paul Butterfield)—that resulted in inspired performances. One LP of concise, tightrope-taut studio takes, and one recorded live in '69 before an astonished, adoring crowd—including yours truly.

**RARA AVIS:** ICP Orchestra, *Extension Red, White & BBlue* (ICP). Expanding on their valuable Soul Note LPs, Misha Mengelberg and Han Bennink's extended ensemble affords added breadth to a program of Herbie Nichols tunes, on this cassette-only release from Holland.

**SCENE:** One of the most underrated, exuberant, and ear-opening saxophonists the music has to offer, Windy City vet Bunky Green galvanized the opening night of the 1986 Chicago Jazz Festival.

### Bill Milkowski

**NEW RELEASE:** Don Pullen/George Adams Quartet, *Breakthrough* (Blue Note). Uplifting, energized music from the finest acoustic jazz group playing today. Pullen's solo on *Just Foolin' Around* is a riot, inspiring Adams to peaks of passion. What a team!

**OLD FAVORITE:** The Swan Silvertones, *I'll Keep On Loving Him* (HOB). Gospel groovers with a downhome feel, featuring the sensational, soulful lead vocals of Claude Jeter. Sanctified r&b.

**RARA AVIS:** Henry Kaiser, *Marrying For Money* (Minor Music). Mix-and-match polytempos and rock improvisation with tons of guitar technique by the amazing Mr. Kaiser. Special guest guitarists include John Abercrombie and Amos Garrett.

**SCENE:** Arto Lindsay's new quartet laying down some edgy funk at the Cat Club, anchored by Melvin Gibbs' bass, Dougie Bowne's drums, and colored by Bill Frisell's wacko guitar fantasia, with the inimitable Arto scream-and-skronk on top of it all.

### Jim Roberts

**NEW RELEASE:** Roy Buchanan, *Dancing On The Edge* (Alligator). Five scorching instrumentals plus three heartfelt vocals from guest Delbert McClinton add up to the best album ever by a revitalized guitar hero. The version of *Peter Gunn* is a killer.

**OLD FAVORITE:** James Cotton, *Pure Cotton* (Verve). Hearing Mr. Superharp's latest album made me nostalgic for his classic discs from the '60s. Cotton's still great, but his old band with Luther Tucker and Alberto Gianquinto had terrific blues chemistry.

**RARA AVIS:** *The Wild Magnolias* (Polydor). Mardi Gras Indians on the loose, backed up by Willie Tee and a crack New Orleans studio band. Made in 1974, this obscure LP no doubt inspired the classic *Wild Tchoupitoulas* album (1976) that spawned the Neville Brothers band.

**SCENE:** Carla Bley leading her "lounge band" through an inspired set of old and new tunes at the Iron Horse in Northampton, MA. Steve Swallow supplied melodies, solos, and grooves for Bley's hornless sextet—proving that a bass player can "have it all," just like they say in that beer commercial.

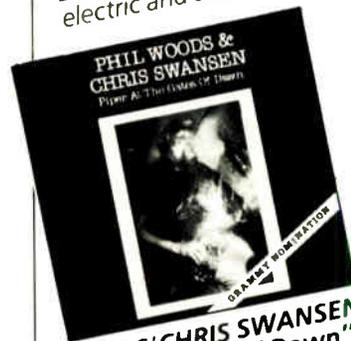
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# RECORD REVIEWS

*What*), and Coltrane (*Impressions*) is less interesting, save for *So What*, which really sails. Ralph Hamperian on bass brings *Tricotism* alive. And throughout, Byard's reed section is a light, airy delight (*Tricotism* and *Note To My Wife*, especially). A real pleasure most of the way.

Gerald Wilson's *Orchestra of the '80s* has come out with *Calafia* (Discovery 537), a well-crafted program of the leader's compositions that is only occasionally compelling.

The title track begins with a flow of shadowy Evanish brass chords that recall *Sketches Of Spain*, but with guitarist Anthony Wilson in place of Miles. Nothing seems to emerge from the promise though, and that's the way the album continues. While I appreciate a leader's desire to record his own work, the listener without a predisposition to Wilson is left without a doorway of familiarity through which to approach the material—especially when the compositions fail to blossom after a

third or fourth hearing.

*Just Buddy's* (Discovery 539) is a **Buddy Childers' Big Band** LP full of snap, crackle, and bop. The band is smooth, well-balanced, and delivers some of the best reed section work of the bunch. Drummer Joel Spencer sparks a rousing performance of the title track, a fast chart full of neatly placed percussion accents. Basie buffs will have no trouble recognizing Teddy McRae's riff number *Broadway* peeking through the curtains of Childers' *Off Broadway*. It springs to life after a deceptive brass cadenza and delivers the kind of big band sound that can still bring audiences to their feet.

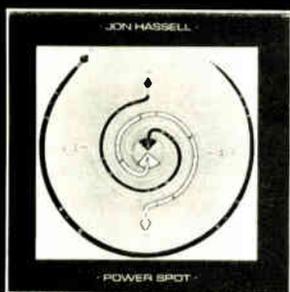
Richard Iacona conducts **The Bad Little Big Band** on *Painter Of Dreams* (Morning-side Music, 2 Charleston Dr., Amityville, NY 11701), a pleasant self-produced LP in which the leader contributes five original songs and all the charts. The most prominent soloist is vocalist Madeline Kole, who has a lovely sound but tends to overphrase on gentle lyrics ("It's a quiiiiiii-yit thing") where she would do better to underplay. The band itself is tight and together, but otherwise derivative and un-outstanding. Like a beauty queen, it illustrates the boredom of mere perfection.

According to the brief notes on **Roger Hamilton Spots/Big Band** (Sea Pea 5004), the leader has arranged for Basie, Gillespie, Lionel Hampton, and now his own band on this record. Some familiar names appear in the personnel, including trombonist Buster Cooper (with Goodman and Ellington in the '50s and '60s) and alto Curtis Peagler. Two of the LP's best cuts are Spots' own. *Strange Journey* is unforced and easy, like vintage Claude Thornhill; *Morning Mist* is a relaxed, brightly scored medium piece. A flagwaving climax doesn't work up quite the hullabaloo it's intended to. Made up mostly of cycles of trumpet choruses, Virgil Rogers is almost inept, constantly getting tangled in sloppy phrasing and weak control. Spots would do well to listen to the 1939 record of *Tootin' Through The Roof* and discover what Ellington achieved in this format.

**The Nashville Jazz Machine's** *Where's Eli* (AM-PM 14, a division of Discovery Records) turns in a lively opener (although the cymbals are far too hot in the mix), but then bogs down in a string of tracks with busy, unswinging time meters. The exception is *Palookaville*, an original which demonstrates what an enduring framework *Sweet Georgia Brown* remains for good improvisation.

**Matt Catingub's** *Hi-Tech Big Band* (Sea-Breeze 2025) delivers some first-string Basie-ish writing, headed off at the pass by an irritating artificiality that seems out to impress us with stereo's powers of separation. But aside from the manufactured tone of the sound, you can't slight the quality of this outfit. It's a hard-swinging crew with a very good book. *Donna Lee* is a standout, as are *More Blues* and *Indian Riffs*. There is also an astounding marriage of virtuosity and technical magic here too, and certainly the most aggressive assertion of musical vanity I've ever heard on record. On five "band" cuts, it seems, all the instruments are actually

## ECM



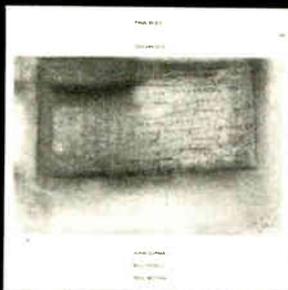
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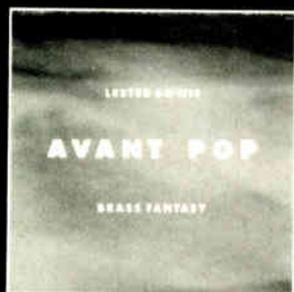
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played by Catingub, who retracked 16 times and with each pass added another part on another instrument. A stunt? Sure. But it could fool anyone in a Blindfold Test.

*Rollin' With Von Ohlen* (Mopro 112) is the third LP from the **Blue Wisp Big Band**, based in Cincinnati. Although it contains some repetitious vamps and other bric-a-brac, there isn't enough to completely smother the tight, taut, and occasionally charismatic qualities of the title track, for example, written by Tim Hagens. On Al Cohn's *Taint No Use*, Paul Piller demonstrates a colorful command of the plunger trombone. And another Hagens original called *Duncan's Dance* has a wonderfully soft, whispered swing about it.

Denny Christianson is a trumpet player with a huge tone and a field-artillery attack. Sometimes he gets a bit show-offy, but not enough to do too much damage. His playing is displayed on the **Denny Christianson Big Band's** *Doomsday Machine* (Justin Time 8). The Montreal unit covers a lot of musical ground here. Some of the writing is pleasantly quirky, particularly *Doomsday*, which calls to mind *Lightning Bugs And Frogs* from Ellington's *Queen's Suite* at first, but soon abandons any programmatic intentions for a straight four-four groove. About halfway through, the tempo begins to run away under Dick Beaudette's tenor, like a car with a jammed gas pedal that's heading for a crackup. It's loud and hot, not your ordinary easy-going chart.

By comparison, **Nils Lindberg's Big Band Galore** (Bluebell of Sweden 176) is relatively conservative. It's a medium-cool band that sings its music, rarely shouts it. Gene Roland's *Birdland* is an irresistible swinger, with smooth lines and a relaxed open ambience. Solos are concise and to the point. Four tracks feature excellent alto work by guest soloist Herb Geller.

The most conservative of all the bands is **Pete Peterson and the Collection Jazz Orchestra** (*Playing In The Park*, Pausa 7191), house band at the Sheraton Park Hotel in Dallas. It's the sort of band that's always great to hear in person because they play good charts of great standards. But on record there's not much to set it apart from muzak. *Sentimental Over You*, *Seems Like Old Times*, "A" *Train*, *Speak Low*, and *After You've Gone* are among the tunes heard.

When I first put **Terry Gibbs' Dream Band** (Contemporary 7647) album on the turntable and listened, the power, drive, and enthusiasm of the music was astounding. I didn't have to look for its qualities; they jumped out at me. The repertoire was familiar (*Cottontail*, *Let's Dance*, *Stardust*), but exploded with freshness. How could this band—essentially a rehearsal group—manage to stand head-and-shoulders above most of the bands I'd been hearing? Then I took a closer look at the cover: it was recorded in 1959. Twenty-six years old, yet still as fresh as any big band of its type playing today. Most of the albums reviewed above have excellent moments. The Gibbs band delivers sustained excellence.  
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# RECORD REVIEWS

## NEW RELEASES

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### DISCOVERY

**Tommy Tedesco**, the epitome of the studio guitarist ventures into leadership with this two-guitar/bass trio, **HOLLYWOOD GYPSY**. **Gordon Brisker**, straightahead saxist waxes w/ cream—Tom Harrell, Cedar

Walton, etc, **ABOUT CHARLIE**. **Charlie Shoemake**, vibist w/ guests Phil Woods, Tom Harrell, Billy Hart . . . 'nuff said? **INCANDESCENT**.

### GRAMAVISION

**Harvie Swartz**, bassist backs premium cast in mostly original program, **SMART MOVES**. **Robert Wyatt**, compilation of sincere, sophisticated political and social-oriented pop songs, **NOTHING CAN STOP US**. **Gil Evans**, domestic release of originally Japanese-only '84 two-LP blast, **LIVE AT SWEET BASIL**.

### PAUSA

**Yana Purlim**, Flora's sister debuts w/ a vocal outing acc. by some of Brazil and the U.S.' best, **FOR A DISTANT LOVE**. **Dan Siegel**, electric keyboardist's quartet waxes **SHORT STORIES**. **Mighty Flyers**, West Coast bar band featuring Rod Piazza's harp, **FROM THE START TO THE FINNISH**. **Joe LoCascio**, keyboardist's quartet includes nomad trumpeter Chet Baker, **SLEEPLESS**.

### BLUE NOTE

**Hank Mobley**, the late, underrated tenor man's last unissued material from mid-'60s all-star sessions, **STRAIGHT NO FILTER**. **George Russell**, composer (a live '83 version of *Time Spiral*) and arranger (songs by Miles, Carla Bley, and David Baker) fronts his big band, **SO WHAT**. **Duke Ellington/Charlie Mingus/Max Roach**, classic '62 trio sides remixed and including four new perms, **MONEY JUNGLE**. **Big John Patton**, soulful organist's previously unissued '63 date features the reed tandem of George Braith, **BLUE JOHN**. **Stanley Turrentine**, "macho tenor" circa '62, previously only available via two-fer, **JUBILEE SHOUT**. **Leo Parker**, bop baritonist and lesser-known '50-60s swingers, reissued with original cover, **ROLLIN' WITH LEO**. **Lou Donaldson**, bright alto ballads backed by mellow octet, from '67, **LUSH LIFE**. **Sam Rivers**, two-fered '67 adventurous sextet LP isolated for the first time, **DIMENSIONS AND EXTENSIONS**.

### BLACKHAWK

**The Leaders**, Arthur Blythe, Chico Freeman, Lester Bowie, Kirk Lightsey, Cecil McBee, Don Moye, **MUDFOOT**. **Dan Moretti**, Rhode Island reedman's major label debut holds promise, **SOME TIME INSIDE**. **Dizzy Gillespie/Mitchell-Ruff Duo**, potpourri of tracks from 1970-85 documenting this occasional partnership, **ENDURING MAGIC**. **Trpts.**, octet led by Mike Vax, Warren Gale, Steve Campos, and Bob Doll, trumpets all, **TRANSFORMING TRADITIONS**. **Stephane Grappelli**, French fiddler nonpareil in an acoustic '82 quartet concert, **LIVE IN SAN FRANCISCO**. **Jimmy Knepper**, curious quartet—trombone, guitar, bass, drums—plays the perennial poll-winner's pieces, **1ST PLACE**.

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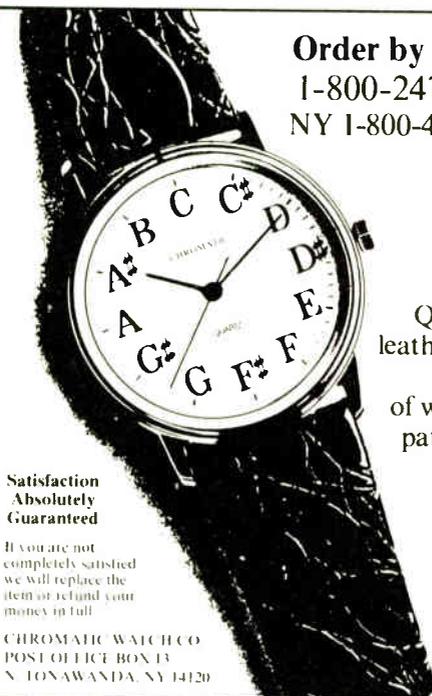
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## ATLANTIC

**Chris Hunter**, English lead altoist in Gil Evans' big band showcases his pop-jazz chops, CHRIS HUNTER. **Mike Stern**, former Miles guitarist plus associates (Mitchel Forman, Mark Egan, Dave Weckl, Bob Berg) provide plenty of electricity, UPSIDE DOWNSIDE. **Steve Slagle**, altoist from Carla Bley's band journeys to Rio for an LP w/ a latin lilt, RIO HIGHLIFE. **Mel Lewis**, big band drummer marks a milestone with 20 YEARS AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD.

## BLACK SAINT/SOUL NOTE

**Barry Altschul**, evocatively textured drummer fronts quartet and quintet originals, THAT'S NICE. **David Murray**, second volume of '84 extended ensemble pieces LIVE AT SWEET BASIL VOL. 2. **George Adams/Don Pullen**, more from the '83 club date, LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD VOL. 2. **Guido Manusardi**, Milanese pianist in straightahead trio outing, DOWN TOWN. **Jemeel Moondoc**, Lower East Side saxist's quintet includes Ornette guitarist Bern Nix, NOSTALGIA IN TIMES SQUARE. **Paul Bley**, iconoclastic pianist's quartet includes John Scofield, Steve Swallow, and Barry Altschul, THE PAUL BLEY GROUP. **Monty Alexander/Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen/Grady Tate**, hard-driving piano trio hailing from Jamaica, Holland, and North Carolina, THREESOME. **Archie Shepp**, '85 quintet date divided between standards and originals, LITTLE RED MOON. **Steve Lacy**, soprano saxist's sextet plumbs poems by Bob Kaufman, Anna Akhmatova, Nanni Balestrini, THE CONDOR. **Dino Betti Van Der Noot**, Italian composer/arranger/bandleader's atmospheric charts played by a 22-piece orchestra inc. altoist Donald Harrison and pianist Mitchel Forman, HERE COMES SPRINGTIME.

## INDEPENDENTS

**Ben Sidran**, concert recording w/ Phil Woods, guitarist Steve Miller, and the pianist/singer, from Magenta (dist. by Windham Hill), ON THE LIVE SIDE. **Pierre Bensusan**, cuts compiled from the acoustic guitarist's first two LPs, from Lost Lake Arts via Windham Hill, EARLY PIERRE BENSUSAN. **Paul Horn**, various flute cuts recorded in atmospheric settings around the globe, from Lost Lake Arts/Windham Hill, SKETCHES: A COLLECTION. **Paul Winter**, saxist and friends offer "folk" music from around the world, from Living Music/Windham Hill, WINTERSONG. **Denny Zeitlin**, accomplished pianist in a melodic solo program, from Living Music/Windham Hill, HOMECOMING. **Paul Halley**, keyboardist from Paul Winter's group plays piano and pipe organ, from Living Music/Windham Hill, PIANOSONG. **David Onderdonk**, usually acoustic guitarist adds Fred Simon's keyboards on three of his original tunes, from Quaver Records, LOOKOUT. **Steven Halpern**, one of the New Age founders joins Susan Mazer's electric harp and Dallas Smith's lyri-

con, from Halpern Sounds, LIFETIDE.

**Terry Riley**, 10 solo compositions for just-intonation-piano, from Celestial Harmonies Records, THE HARP OF NEW ALBION. **Eric Dolphy**, first-time-issued quartet and large ensemble performances from 1962-63, from GM Records, VINTAGE DOLPHY. **Robert Dick**, virtuoso solo flute pieces from a variety of sources, from GM Records, THE OTHER FLUTE. **Glen Velez**, Paul Winter's percussionist in a mostly solo recital, from CMP Records,

INTERNAL COMBUSTION. **Christoph Haberer**, dazzling, sometime dizzying solo percussion pieces, from JazzHaus Musik, DRUMMELE MAA. **Samm Bennett**, solo percussion of a "rigorous and traditional technique," from Igloo Records, METAFUNCTIONAL. **Skeleton Crew**, trio of Fred Frith, Tom Cora, and Zeena Parkins tackle topics and textures, from Rift Records, THE COUNTRY OF BLINDS. **Various Artists**, three-LP set inc.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 65

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## Beat The Clock

Since the compact disc format can easily contain up to 74 minutes of music with no loss of quality sound reproduction, it seems unconscionable that some manufacturers insist on using this expensive format to simply replicate LPs that, even upon their own initial release, were considered short-players by existing industry standards. A case in point is a trio of recent reissues by MCA/Impulse. Certainly, the quality of the music itself offers no problem, and its availability on CD can only be considered a boon. But pondering the price one must currently pay for the improved product, the added luxuries of increased fidelity of sound and resistance to wear scarcely justify a short-changing of quantity. Admittedly, it is a problem. Manufacturers have to pay almost as much to produce a 30-minute CD as one that would contain 70 minutes of music; and, of course, they have to pass that expense on to the consumer, who, in most cases, finds himself forced to bite the bullet—that is, if he wants the music badly enough.

We start with a classic 1961 session by **Benny Carter** that features an all-star sax section composed of the leader, Coleman Hawkins, Phil Woods, and Charlie Rouse. Entitled *Further Definitions* (MCAD-5651 JVC-460), musically it is a high-water mark for all concerned, but it logs in at just under 34 minutes—quite good for a 10-inch LP, but hardly sufficient for an expensive CD. Even skimpier is **Quincy Jones' Quintessence** (MCAD-5728 JVC 465), which lasts a mere 31 minutes. Of course, the music is high-grade big band swing throughout, with Quincy's 1961 charts and solos by Thad Jones, Joe Newman, Freddie Hubbard, Curtis Fuller, Phil Woods, Oliver Nelson, and Eric Dixon. The third CD in this set, **Gil Evans' Out Of The Cool** (MCAD-5653 JVC-459) dates from the same year, but does slightly better at 37 minutes. Musically, it represents a significant touchstone in Evans' ongoing development as a writer and leader; his use of modern-thinking traditionalist Budd Johnson as a featured soloist changed a lot of boppers' prejudices against Swing Era players. In all fairness, it must be said that, despite the paucity of playing time on these three MCAs, it is good to have this long-treasured music in a form that not only enhances the original sound, but will also withstand the ravages of repeated playing.

Denon, however, has solved the problem of short-shrifted reissue programming by mixing-and-matching cuts from



Lionel Hampton and Buddy Rich in a '60s jam.

BOSTON W. MOODY

previously released LPs of related artists, so that their CDs provide competitive value for the dollar. Two of their more recent offerings are **Lionel Hampton's Hamp's Blues** (33C38-7973) and **Buddy Rich's Tuff Dude** (33C38-7972). Both were originally recorded in 1974 with Buddy's regular combo of the time. The Hampton has one added virtue in that it also contains three titles from a date with Zoot Sims and Teddy Wilson, but the tracks with Buddy's group are a tad more boogaloo-ish than the more purely jazz-oriented selections on *Tuff Dude*, which features saxmen Sal Nistico and Sonny Fortune in blistering hard-bop solos. The Hamp clocks at 64 minutes, and Buddy's at 62, both being good buys for the money.

Lovers of Buddy's current big band cannot afford to miss the two-CD boxed package entitled *Mr. Drums Live* (Cafe CD-2-732). Although no particular dates are given in the notes for the recording sessions involved, it is assumed that they are of recent vintage. The sound quality is so attention-grabbing that it is necessary to play the entire 109 minutes over and over again to be able to focus in on the music—which is as close to a firsthand experience of the real thing as one could hope to get, short of hiring the band to play in one's living room. Compared to the several thousand dollars it would cost to sponsor a live show at home, the CD set is not a bad deal at all.

Along the same lines of consumer-wise purchase is *Long Live The Chief* (Denon 33CY-1018) by **The Count Basie Orchestra**. Recorded just last June by the now-Frank Foster-led organization, the 13 standards and new charts included on this CD easily justify the 64 minutes. All of the band's regulars—Foster, Kenny Hing, Danny Turner, Bill Hughes,

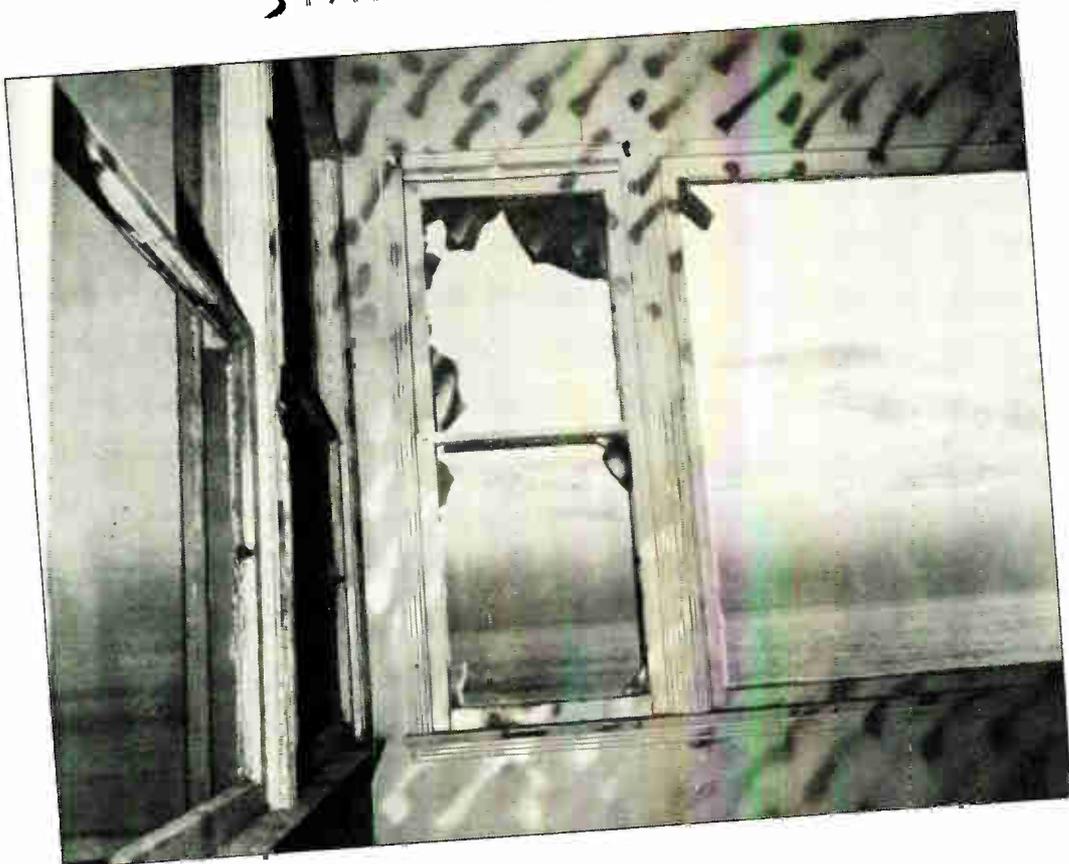
Sonny Cohn, and Tee Carson—are heard in solo, as are such enterprising newcomers to the field as altoman Danny House, trombonist Clarence Banks, and trumpeter Melton Mustafa.

Another bargain is the 66-minute *Lightnin'* by the **Klaus Weiss Big Band** (Jeton CD 119/1). Recorded in 1984 by a highly professional, internationally manned orchestra, this Basie/Herman/Evans/Mulligan-oriented group features swinging arrangements by such well-known writers as Francy Boland, Don Mintzer, and Bill Holman, and outstanding solos by trumpeters Benny Bailey and Don Rader, trombonists Jiggs Whigham and Joe Gallardo, saxmen Herb Geller, Wolfgang Engstfeld, and Andy Scherrer, and guitarist John Schröder. Don't pass this one up simply because you are not familiar with drummer/leader Weiss' name.

Actually, there is only one item out of this entire batch that cannot be recommended on musical grounds and, quite by accident, this is also the one that provides the most playing time of all. Stretching the limits of both the medium and one's patience at 71 minutes, *Sticks 'N' Skins* by the **George Kawaguchi Big Band** is, to put it simply, a bore. Produced by Pro Jazz (CDJ 603), this release will hold little interest for the jazz-informed listener. The music is primarily conventional school band-styled jazz-tinged rock, with the occasional, but unconvincing, attempt at classic swing also thrown in, probably to insure some sort of mass appeal as a dance record for all ages. Pass on by, save your coins, and buy any one of the above-mentioned short-playing MCAs instead. In the end, it is always quality, and not quantity, that guarantees lasting value—but someday we may have both.

—jack sohmer

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THE MOST IMPORTANT LETTERS IN JAZZ

**1 SAM PRICE.** *AIN'T NO STRAIN* (from *RIB JOINT*, Savoy). Price, piano; Mickey Baker, guitar.

Yeah, that's Sammy Price on Savoy from 1956 with one of my heavy favorites and all-time influences, Mickey Baker, captured right at the peak of his power as a guitar player. And you happened to pick the most "out there" solo on this two-record set. There's an example of flash, soul, innovation, and a thorough knowledge of the blues. Any note he plays I can hear it a mile away, like Django. And he does it with such finesse and authority and raw soul. Five stars, no problem.

**2 KENNY BURRELL.** *36-23-36* (from *AT THE FIVE SPOT CAFE*, Blue Note). Burrell, guitar.

I believe this is Kenny Burrell at the Half Note. This is when I was first getting into jazz seriously, around 1964. I focused right in on him. Of the ones with any real facility, he was the bluesiest when he wanted to be. This is a perfect example. Grant Green was bluesy and funky, but I always preferred Kenny Burrell because of the great sustain and tone he gets. I haven't heard this record for 20 years. Another classic Burrell record is the one he did with Milt Jackson and Ray Charles, for pure bluesy playing. It's nice to hear this tune again. I'd give it five stars right away.

**3 EVERYMAN BAND.** *MULTIBLUE TONIC BLUES* (from *WITHOUT WARNING*, ECM). David Torn, guitar.

I have no idea who that was. Overall, as far as the arrangement goes, I didn't care for it. It straddled an uncomfortable middle ground between avant garde and straight blues. It sounded abrasive to me, not pleasing, even though I do like noise on a certain level. The guitar player is very good. He's got the rock thing completely down and is comfortable with jazz also. I was impressed but I don't know who it is.

**4 BENNIE WALLACE.** *TROUBLE IN MIND* (from *TWILIGHT TIME*, Blue Note). Wallace, tenor saxophone; Stevie Ray Vaughan, guitar.

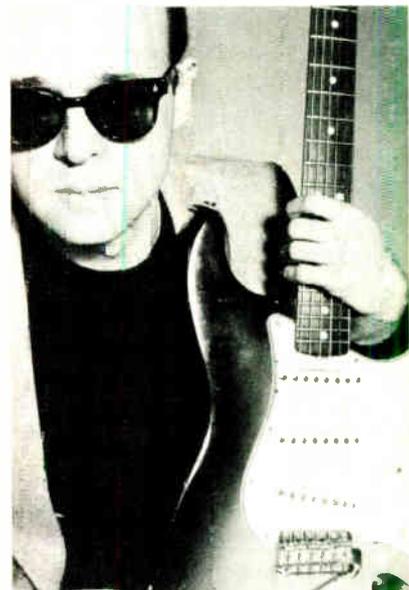
Three stars for the overall performance. It was pleasant enough, the horn player was nice. The guitar player was superb. He obviously listened to B.B. and Albert King, leaning a little more toward the Albert side. He's got a little more of an edge, and he has superb hand vibrato control. I have no idea who it is. It could be one of these people I've been reading about lately, like Robert Cray. But it was somebody who, within that form and style, has his own definitive touch. It was nice.

## Robert Quine

By BILL MILKOWSKI

**G**uitarist Robert Quine achieved cult status in the mid-'70s with Richard Hell's seminal punk band, The Voidoids. His edgy approach on that band's now-classic debut, *Blank Generation* (Sire 6037), set the standard for noise guitarists who followed in their wake. And though he does like dissonance, Quine is hardly a noisemaker. He's assimilated everything from rockabilly to bop to modal to free jazz into a distinctive voice.

Quine went on to play with Lydia Lunch, James White & The Blacks, and Material before gaining international recognition with Lou Reed, with whom he recorded and toured for three years. Quine's more personal projects—*Escape* (Infidelity 236) with Jody Harris, *Basic* (Editions EG 36) with Fred Maher—have been heralded by critics for their inventiveness and overall vision. More recently, he has appeared as guest guitarist on albums by Tom Waits and the New York



MARCIA RESNICK

punk band Scraping Foetus Off The Wheel.

Quine was featured in the Jan. '86 issue of *db*. This was his first Blindfold Test.

**5 SONNY SHARROCK.** *BLACK BOTTOM* (from *GUITAR*, Enemy). Sharrock, guitar.

That's the kind of approach I've taken on the few records I've done: taking a traditional form like the blues and somehow maintaining its essence and its purity, and putting some elements in there that will widen it—in this case, the sick droning guitar that's going on back there. As far as the lead guitar player, I have no idea who it is, but it's an obvious tribute to Guitar Slim. *The Things I Used To Do*. The whole style of the solo is a deliberate tribute to Guitar Slim. I'm guessing that the guitar player has much more facility than that if he cared to. It's probably the new Sonny Sharrock album that I haven't heard yet. Five stars, absolutely. And two of those stars should go to Bill Laswell, on whatever level he helped make a record like this happen. Some of Sonny's solo records from the mid-'70s were muddled in conception. But it's good to hear that he's lost none of the ferocity and inspiration he showed when he first started emerging 20 years ago.

**6 ALBERT LEE.** *CANNONBALL* (from *SPEECHLESS*, MCA). Lee, guitar.

That was excellent guitar playing. It's somebody who obviously has listened to his share of James Burton. It might be Albert Lee, because it's like James Burton

but it's too impeccable and it's too fast. I would buy this record, it's really good. My only objection with this tune is the nature of the piano solo, that kind of post-modern approach. It was good, but in the context of a Duane Eddy cover it was pointless to have it there. I give it five stars for the guitar playing and three for the overall conception of the piece.

**7 HENRY KAISER.** *RED HARVEST* (from *MARRYING FOR MONEY*, Minor Music). Kaiser, guitar.

Whoever that was, five stars. He's coming from Jimi Hendrix, with the intelligent use of the wah bar and the overtones, but he's taken it to a different place. I guess more than anything else you've played this guy does not sound like me, but I relate more to what he's doing with strange chords and overtones and the overall approach. Who is it?

BM: Henry Kaiser.

Oh! I've never heard him play like that. I heard him doing those duet improv things with Fred Frith, which I didn't care for much. But I like this. I guess he's someone else I should investigate. I spend a lot of time listening to 30-year-old blues records and rockabilly records, and things like this make me realize that perhaps I should make a little more effort to investigate what else is going on out there. **db**



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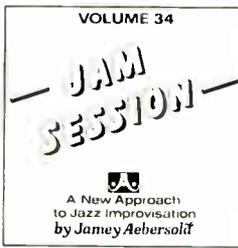
JAZZ PLAY-ALONGS



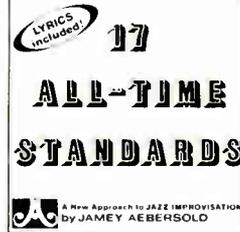
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"Swamp rock has a lot of basis in the fiddle," Leady continues. "Back in the early '60s they had this stuff out of Louisiana called swamp pop—people like Al Ferrier, Warren Storm, Johnny Allan, Fats Domino. It was kind of a combination of r&b with laidback drum beats, kind of a Cajun-y influence. I wrote a bunch of songs that had that Cajun influence in 'em, but I didn't want 'em to be like that stuff; I wanted 'em closer to being hard rock—swamp rock instead of swamp pop."

To a man, the Tail Gators are having the time of their professional lives with the band's trio format. "I wouldn't have anybody else in the band," says Leady. "It took us two-and-a-half years to get a tight, nasty sound of our own; somebody else would get in the way." The bulk of what's heard on their albums is straight trio playing, with few overdubs saving Leady's fills on secondary instruments. "We've got one song on this new record that's got fiddle, an extra guitar, a steel part, and an accordion part," says Leady. "It sounds like a big Cajun orchestra, but none of the parts get in our way because they're all comin' out of the three of us. I know how they fit together, so I can keep 'em from cluttering up the other parts—mostly because I make 'em so simple. When we get people to sit in with us sometimes they'll want to show what virtuosos they are; I want to hear single-note riffs."

The trio is providing its members with other rarely seen benefits as well: the total absence of rehearsals and a "sane" touring schedule (comprised mostly of short stopovers traveled to by plane, the band flying with a minimal amount of equipment: Leady's Fender Telecaster, Ferguson's '56 Fender Precision with its see-through Plexiglas pickguard fastened atop a piece of genuine cowhide, Smith's Zildjian cymbals and Rogers snare—everything else is provided at the gig) have allowed them to indulge in social lives away from the band, and no greedy outsiders have yet managed to crack the tight-knit trio and start snatching its money away. "Most other bands generate money for people besides themselves," observes Ferguson. "Like the Thunderbirds, bands like that—there's people in their organizations make more money than they do. That's stupid."

Most importantly, the guys are having a good time playing together. "That's what life's all about," says Smith. "You're not supposed to be bored and pissed off." To which Ferguson, remembering the countless miles he logged touring with the T-Birds, quickly adds, "And if I have

to be bored and pissed off I want to do it at home, not with two guys in a car." **db**



## Jon Hassell

*Spirituality and technology combine in the ethereal textures of this trumpeter/composer's sound environment.*

BY JOHN DILIBERTO

It sounds nothing like a trumpet. It's more like a primordial human wail, a cry of anguish and passion, triumph and sensuality, that leaves a vapor trail across the emotional landscape. "I developed a technique to connect the dots," claims Jon Hassell, the source of this sound. "The sound quality of being like a voice is simply a by-product of trying to make these connections."

Hassell, approaching 50 years of age, is forging a pan-ethnic, technological reconciliation of ancient thought and 20th century process. His spiritual and musical search has placed him on Terry Riley's epochal recording *In C*, with La Monte Young's Theatre of Eternal Music, on several solo recordings beginning with 1977's *Vernal Equinox*, and more unlikely places such as the Talking Head's *Remain In Light* (Sire 6095) and Peter Gabriel's *Birdy* soundtrack.

His trumpet sound is immediately recognizable, with its bending slurs, transmuted through harmonizers and digital delays into gliding parallel lines. Unlike his fluid trumpet work, however, Hassell speaks hesitantly, stopping and restarting sentences, trying to find a pathway from his music to words. Fourth World Music, Technological-Primitive, Primitive-Future, and Glamorous-Spiritual are a few of the catch phrases he's coined to explain his merger of technology and non-Western music.

On his fifth album, *Aka/Darbaril/Java* (Editions EG 31), he used "coffee-colored" music to describe his approach. "Let's say there was a computer profile of

an average man or woman," he explains. "Put all the physiognomy, all the skin color and everything else together, what would you come out with? A citizen of the world. One of the ideas I have is to make a kind of music that has that kind of universal appeal."

It sounds like a blueprint for mediocrity, but Hassell makes it work without patchwork grafting and ethnological forgeries. On *Aka/Darbaril/Java* he used one- and two-second digital samples to create a larger shifting background structure of melodic, rhythmic, and textural counterpoints. "That was made of three or four or five one-second digital



samples of the pygmy voice, the gamelan, and Hollywood orchestration, which was a little snatch of Yma Sumac's voice with the orchestration underneath," Hassell reveals. "I always loved that atmosphere, that big exotic lush string sound. So there are three or four of those snatches that make up one of the backgrounds and they continually change. Pygmy voices mix with Yma Sumac's voice."

Hassell has arrived at this concept via a process that's become familiar through his contemporaries Philip Glass and Steve Reich. He followed the standard classical route, getting his Masters in composition at the Eastman School of Music while also studying trumpet. After a stint in the Army Field Band in 1961, he went to Europe and studied with Karlheinz Stockhausen.

Now he looks back on his entire Western education as a mild annoyance. "I see most of my Western education as something that could've been compressed into

CONTINUED ON PAGE 71



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## MAHAVISHNU/ WEATHER UPDATE

THE RITZ

**NEW YORK**—This dynamic double-bill drew just about every young fusion musician in town. As it turned out, they suffered through the low points (mostly Weather Update's) to get to the high points (mostly Mahavishnu's).

Of course, Joe Zawinul was operating with something of a handicap. His latest touring band—drummer Peter Erskine, bassist Victor Bailey, percussionist Robert Thomas Jr., and guitarist Steve Khan—had not been together nearly long enough to coalesce into a unit the way Mahavishnu has over the past two-and-a-half years. Erskine and Bailey had it down alright, but try as he might, Khan just couldn't fill the shoes of Wayne Shorter. Well, no one really asked him to. It's an impossible task.

The inclusion of a guitar into the Weather Report domain is enough to raise the eyebrows of devotees. Strangely, Khan took a wholly different approach to his instrument than he had with his own group Eyewitness or on any of his fine fusion albums for Columbia during the late '70s. This time out he laid heavily on the wang-bar, went for fluid legato runs, and reached over with his strumming hand for some trendy two-handed trilling schtick à la Allan Holdsworth and Eddie Van Halen. It all seemed somehow more for show than for any musical considerations.

Zawinul's gnome-like robot vocals (on Vocoder or whatever gizmo he's operating) were tolerable at best, annoying at worst. His best moments were his one call-and-response jam with percussionist Thomas and his soulful comping behind the others' solos. Khan added some rhythmic propulsion to the band with his own funky brand of comping, and his dissonant Holdsworthian excursions were daring, if that's your bag. And while Victor Bailey is no Jaco, either in terms of fully realized musicianship or stage presence, he is an unparalleled groove-master.

But the backbone of Weather Update is Peter Erskine. I'd endure a whole night of Zawinul's Kraftwerkian vocals just to hear Erskine power this band. Few drummers (besides Billy Cobham) combine power and swing the way Peter does. And his quick-wristed fills are just too cool.

Mahavishnu, on the other hand, is smokin' so hard now it's frightening. The core of Danny Gottlieb on drums, Bill



Joe Zawinul

Evans on saxes, and Jonas Hellborg on bass has been together long enough (nearly three years) to reach that level where they're playing instinctively, almost telepathically, just like the Mahavishnu Orchestra of old.

McLaughlin remains amazing. No other guitarist around (including all the Yngwie Malmsteen clones out there) plays with such pure passion and sheer conviction. Evans is quickly becoming his alter-ego. And Hellborg, one of the most astounding bass players on the scene today, is strictly showtime. His solo showcase, in which he slapped, kicked, and thrashed his double-neck before quoting from an early Mahavishnu tune (*Dance Of Maya*) nearly brought the house down.

One interesting note was the addition of keyboardist Jim Beard, who replaced Mitch Forman. His Zawinul-esque approach to chordal voicings and meters gives Mahavishnu yet another weapon in its arsenal. This band is now a very formidable force. —bill milkowski

## HENRY KAISER

WOLFGANG'S

**SAN FRANCISCO**—The fact that *Ghosts* was grooving as loose and free as Albert Ayler had recorded it many years ago was shocking to anyone looking at the stage, where guitarist Henry Kaiser was hopping around like a boy scout in gym shorts, white socks, and sneakers; bassist Andy West was shedding a reputation for not improvising; and a wild Swedish drummer was opening gashes on his hands, playing as unhindered as Ayler's Milford Graves.

Ornette was bringing his harmolodic funk band Prime Time to Wolfgang's the next night. Was it mere coincidence that tonight the stage belonged to Kaiser's new trio, Crazy Backwards Alphabet, an unusual harmolodic rock blend? Are they crazy? Yes. Backwards? That's too easy an explanation. Alphabet? Bring your own. Theirs is a strange language.

Kaiser mixes a somewhat stubborn early King Crimson-type drive with a sense of humor that Andy Kaufman might have enjoyed. Work with Fred Frith, Material, and The Golden Palominos has done little to get him over to a wide audience, but has strengthened his taste for the unusual. That might explain his choice of bassist West, top-rated since his work with the (Dixie) Dregs, and Michael Maksymenko, who took up drums after an injury forced him out of ice hockey, and who has performed in such European cult metal bands as Kraldijurstanalten and Kropparna.

Maksymenko was pacing around the front of the stage as the curtain opened on the trio, so pumped up he couldn't sit still. When the music began he became a blur of graceful motion, not playing beats as we're used to hearing them as much as leaning into his kit and letting go to any whim he had. Often no apparent meter could be heard, and he appeared to be almost completely ambidextrous, spitting out tom rolls, hitting his mounted tambourine with the upswing of his left hand, then crashing and catching one of his odd cymbal combinations with the right.

West kept his eyes on the gangly drummer all the while, deciphering the rhythmic code and giving Kaiser a deep foundation on which to rip atonal cries from his Stratocaster. West has given up the ZZ Top beard (I'm not sure who had it first)

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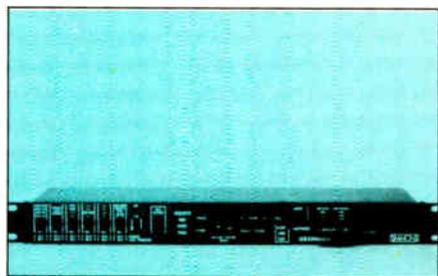
## GUITAR WORLD



**Rickenbacker's Bass Updates**

RICKENBACKER INTERNATIONAL CORP. (Santa Ana, CA) is re-introducing five- and eight-string basses first issued in the late '60s, now available in two fully revised editions. The five-string model, factory supplied with a low B string, allows the bassist to compete with synthesizers in terms of frequency range and produce a wider spectrum of low tonal possibilities. The eight-string model adds four additional octave strings to the traditional bass, vastly expanding top-end range possibilities. Both models are based on Rickenbacker's 4003S bass series and can use any type of flat- or round-wound string. Two pickups with traditional Rickenbacker bass circuitry come standard; both basses are available in eight colors.

## PERCUSSION SHOP

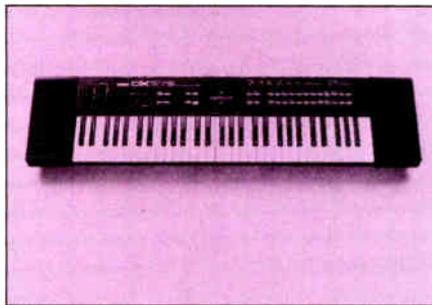


**Simmons' Percussion Expander**

SIMMONS GROUP CENTRE INC. (Calabasas, CA) is offering its new SDE, the Simmons Percussion Expander, for drummers wanting more than just drum sounds from drum pads. Via the SDE and MIDI, drummers can access tuned percussion sounds of vibes, glockenspiel, marimbas, gongs, and many other percussion sounds. Through use with either Simmons' MTM (MIDI Trigger Module) or TMI (Trigger to MIDI Interface, new from Simmons), these percussion sounds can be played independently from drum pads or mixed with other drum or per-

cussion sounds. The SDE is a fully programmable digital synthesizer that comes pre-programmed with 20 factory sounds and 20 user-programmable sounds, as well as cartridge capability for loading an additional 80 sounds.

## KEYBOARD COUNTRY



**Yamaha's DX27S**

YAMAHA INTERNATIONAL CORP. (Buena Park, CA) has added built-in stereo amplifier and speakers to its DX27 digital synthesizer to create the DX27S FM digital synthesizer. The 61-key DX27S features 192 outstanding preset ROM voices and the company's FM tone generation system for the creation of new voices. Two separate play modes—bank play and internal play—permit access to the complete set of presets, available in four banks of 24 voices, or to any edited presets and original voices located in the 24-voice internal RAM. Performance controllers include modulation, pitch wheels, and breath control; although the keyboard is not velocity sensitive, the tone generator is velocity sensitive via MIDI for use with other controllers and sequencers. The synthesizer's edit mode permits editing of presets and programming of completely new sounds; a data cassette storage system provides additional data storage.



**Roland's JX-10**

ROLAND CORP US (Los Angeles, CA) has introduced its JX-10 12-voice polyphonic, programmable synthesizer. Fea-

ture the same sound architecture as the company's JX-8P, the JX-10 is a digital/analog hybrid combining an on-board sequencer with three operating modes, including split, dual (layered), and the normal 12-voice polyphonic mode. In split mode, the JX-10 becomes two separate synthesizers, each providing six polyphonic voices and separate MIDI channel sends and receives; the layered mode allows different sounds to be played simultaneously, in multi-timbral fashion. Polyphonic mode features 12 full polyphonic voices with a total of 24 digital controlled oscillators, 12 voltage controlled filters/amplifiers, 12 low-frequency oscillators, 24 attack/decay/sustain/release envelopes, and chorus. Other features include a 76-key weighted-action keyboard with key velocity and aftertouch, making it an excellent MIDI system controller; an on-board real-time sequencer stores up to 650 steps on the M-64C RAM cartridge that comes standard with the JX-10; and performance controls including pitch bend, modulation, unison detune, hold, portamento, and chase play.

## ELECTRONIC GEAR



**Ross' Series II Multi-Track**

The new Ross Series II four-by-four multi-track cassette machine from INTERNATIONAL MUSIC COMPANY (Fort Worth, TX) features four-track simultaneous recording in one direction, full-function mixing console with trim control, high EQ, two-band EQ, pan pots, track selector switch, input selector switch, recording punch in and out, and fader mix. Other features include front-panel mic line in jack and rear-panel line-in and -out jacks for each track, as well as left and right master outputs; upgraded tape transport includes auto return zero and improved recording specs. The crosstalk spec on the Series II is 55dB at 1 KHz; the signal-to-noise ratio is 75 dB with Dolby C Noise Reduction on. A/C adapter, carrying case, and batteries are included. **db**

**BB:** You've been keeping very busy this past year. What's next? Will Weather Update be going into the studio soon?

**PE:** We hope to do a new recording in January; we'll all write some music, but most of it will be Joe's of course. I think we'll record it in New York, though it might be premature to mention what label it'll be on.

I'm also doing a solo recording for the Denon people, a digital recording that we'll release on CD. I'm not too sure of the exact lineup, but at this point I think it'll include Marc Johnson, Abercrombie on a couple of things, Bob Mintzer, Joe Lovano on tenor sax, Kenny Werner on keyboards; maybe I'll have Don Grolnick come in and play on a couple of tunes, too. Vince Mendoza, a terrific writer on the West Coast, is helping me write some of the music. Lyle Mays might play on one tune; he'll be on the road with Pat Metheny, so we're talking about having him lay something down on a sequencer and then ship us a computer disc. He literally could phone the part in over a modem. I like that.

I'm going to be using some of the incidental music I scored for a production of *Richard II* that a buddy of mine, Jack Fletcher, directed this past summer at the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts in Santa Maria, California. I've always wanted to do film scores, and this theater project was amazing. First off, it was Shakespeare, not some awful movie with chainsaws [laughs]. You can't do better than Shakespeare. I've been on the road since I was 18—I'm 32 now—and it's always pretty much been I play music, people listen to it, and that's it. Here the music was part of something much larger. You're collaborating with not only the sound people, but the lighting director, the actors, the director . . .

**BB:** And Mr. Shakespeare.

**PE:** And Mr. Shakespeare. Exactly. There's more of a perspective of what the world is about, whereas when it's pure music you tend to get too wrapped up in *that*. There was a hint—though not on the same scale, mind you—of what they used to do at the turn of the century in Paris, at the masters' level, guys like Stravinsky, Diaghilev. That's art, that's exciting.

Anyway, the music was synthesized, and I had real french horns and percussion. Gordon Gottlieb came in—he's the guy who played timpani on the *ABC News*. I didn't play much on it; I was on the other side of the glass.

**BB:** Would you want to get into producing?

**PE:** Yeah. I've got a good set of ears and good instincts. I know what sounds good and what lays a certain way, and I like being a catalyst. One of the greatest things I learned with Weather Report, watching Joe and Jaco in the studio, was to "go for it." They'd make some audacious decisions musically: like going in and throwing a bunch of firecrackers into an echo chamber during a mix of a tune [laughs]. "Hey, some reverb would sound good here." *Woosh*, crank it all the way up. I used to love to watch those guys. Their hands were all over the board; it drove the engineers crazy, but they got some good stuff.

**BB:** What about your composing? When you, as a drummer, start writing something are you thinking rhythmically or do you start with a melody?

**PE:** With synths a lot of it has to do with sound. Sound suggests the harmony or tonal direction. Obviously, if you get a striking sound it might not suggest a blues; it may suggest something that will require a more dramatic structure. I still would love to have an acoustic piano at my house someday, but for now that's the way I do it. I don't worry about loading up rhythms in the drum machine and getting inspiration from that; I'll tend to just improvise at the keyboard, and then approach it as a drummer, maybe add something to it to make it feel good. Because as far as drums go that's the whole bottom line—making something feel good. That's the business we're in. db

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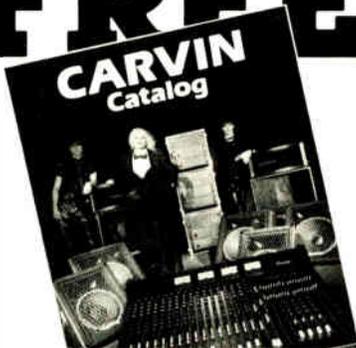
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a two- or three-year period with the right teachers and right situation," he laments.

He also rejects the musical ethos of that era. Though acknowledging the force of Stockhausen's vision, Hassell has little affinity for his "music for the post-apocalypse. It seems to be a passing state of consciousness and not one that needs to be lingered on," Hassell proclaims. "When I met Terry Riley in Buffalo he called that music 'neurotic music.' I was a bit taken aback at the time, but what else do you call it when you're going *boop-boop, bleep, bap, whirrrr?* It's fluttering around, it definitely has some kind of human association with a neurotic there. It might've had a historical perspective to exist at that time, but I felt it was more important to do things that related to tranquility and clarity and peace."

Searching for those ideals, he embarked on an Indian approach to music, but not before apprenticing with the grandfather and father of minimalism. While working at the Buffalo Center for the Creative and Performing Arts with Lukas Foss, he met Terry Riley. Hassell wound up playing trumpet on Riley's minimalist manifesto, *In C* (Columbia 7178), along with his wife at the time, who played the "pulse."

Through Riley he met LaMonte Young, performed in his Theatre of Eternal Music, and appeared on the recording *Dream House* (Shandar 83-510). Young and Riley were both studying with Indian vocal master Pandit Pranath, and Hassell eventually fell under his spell. "I went to a festival in Rome called Contemporary with LaMonte," he recalls. "When I was in Rome, I was warming up and doing exercises in a sort of jazz frame and Pranath was in the same space. He was also performing and he began singing the patterns I was playing, only better and faster and more interestingly. At that point a lightning bolt hit me and I realized that I had better settle down and do this one-to-one work—learning to play what I hear and hear what I play in the way that is demanded if you study raga."

Hassell immersed himself in Indian methodology and used it as a lens through which he viewed other non-Western musics. "The Indians approach music as music and something that comes out of someone's mouth, which you either imitate accurately or you don't imitate accurately," he explains. "That's the real nitty-gritty as far as music education is concerned, and that's the turning

point to a real vital approach to music and my formation."

Prior to this epiphany, Hassell had been performing in fusion groups inspired by Miles Davis' *On The Corner* (Columbia 31906), with its African and Eastern percussion backdrop. Hearing Davis and guitarist John McLaughlin using wah-wah pedals triggered Hassell's own use of the device to obtain a more vocal quality from his trumpet. Remnants of this sound can be heard on Hassell's 1978 recording, *Earthquake Island* (Tomato 7019).

It was while studying with Pranath that he really developed his vocal tone, but without electronics. "I consciously kept away from electronics while I studied with Pranath, which was until the first record, *Vernal Equinox*, from '72 to '76," says Hassell. "In that period I played nearly all one raga. I didn't want to confuse what I was doing with the electronics. I wanted to separate the sound of what I was doing from the electronic glaze.

"I know it's confusing," confesses Hassell, "because the sound of the trumpet itself is quite unusual, and when you add these things to it, it's difficult for a listener who doesn't know this process to separate what's going on. It's a very organic process of making your lips buzz as a vocal fold would. Your vocal folds make your voice, and I'm trying to use the lips in the same way that the vocal folds are used.

"I want to have complete glissando over the entire range and have shapes of phrases rather than discreet notes like on a piano," Hassell continues. "The only thing that's done with the electronics is the Harmonizer or digital pitch shifter, which means that you get the same instrument at another interval. So instead of drawing the curves with one pencil it's like I have two pencils in my hand drawing the curves."

His debut album, *Vernal Equinox* (Lovely Music 1021) is like a misty forest, with Hassell's trumpet twisting in slow motion across the percussion bed created by Nana Vasconcelos, among others. Tamboura-like drones were supplied by tapes of oceans, tropical birds, night creatures of Altamira, and the occasional synthesizer.

Rock artist and producer Brian Eno, who was embarking on his ambient music phase, was immediately attracted to Hassell's music. A meeting at the New Music New York Festival resulted in a collaboration on Hassell's best known recording, *Fourth World Volume 1, Possible Musics* (Editions EG 7). The womb-like rhythmic throb on the sidelong *Charm*

and *Chemistry*, was coupled with Hassell's ethereal, symmetrical lines and Eno playing "Starlight background" and "high-altitude Prophet."

But the two parted company shortly thereafter, due to the sometimes overpowering celebrity attached to Eno's name. "We have a very free-flowing relationship even to this day," says Hassell. "But when *Possible Musics* came out, it was decided over an herbal sandwich that both names should appear in equal size: Jon Hassell/Brian Eno." To Hassell's dismay, he found his album filed under Eno's name in record stores and radio stations, everyone thinking Hassell was just another Eno acolyte.

Eno's role conformed to Hassell's Indian model, which divides his music into background (the drone), foreground (his trumpet), and rhythm. "I thought that the background washes was a logical area for him to contribute to," Hassell remarks. His next two recordings, *Malay* (Editions EG 13) and *Aka/Darbari/Java*, were self-produced, but with assistance from Eno associate Daniel Lanois.

Throughout his career, live performance and improvisation have been crucial to Hassell's concept. Despite the digital delays, harmonizers, and Mirage samplers, he doesn't let the technology tie him down. "There's the same degree of improvisation as there would be in a raga," he claims. "In a raga, there's a pitch set and there are certain patterns within that pitch set which are chosen to be used more than others, so there's a pre-thought structure and there's room for moving around within itself. It's really beautiful, the raga form. It has the perfect combination of spontaneity and pre-structure, with extensions into these areas of orchestration that happen one night and don't happen another night."

Hassell's newest album, *Power Spot* (ECM 1327), finds him working with Eno again. It's of a piece with previous Hassell works, albeit with shorter pieces and some crunching percussion on the title track. He's still balancing Western and non-Western music, technology and ancient practices, and sensuality and spirituality. "I only have one thing to say basically," admits Hassell, "and I'm saying it in a lot of different forms—this 'glamorous-spiritual' convergence. The glamorous is in the sense of—what else is a raga but glamorous? A raga is full of sensual curves. What else is an Indian Temple or a Persian calligraphy but glamorous? Glamor that comes from a celebration of the basic facts of existence and all the cultural variations on that idea." db

# AUDITIONS

down beat spotlights young musicians deserving wider recognition.



**BRAD DETRICK**, 26, began playing trumpet at age 10 as a "compromise" between his own wish to play drums and his band director's desire to recruit a french horn player. Growing up in Lima, Ohio, he was playing trumpet, piano, and drums professionally by age 13, during which time he studied piano and jazz theory with local jazz guru Don Hurlless, also a mentor of Lima's Joe Henderson.

Detrick graduated from Bowling Green State University with a Music Education degree in 1982, then began extensive jazz studies at the U. of Miami, where he credits Whit Sidener and Ron Miller with "unlocking a new harmonic vocabulary" for him. The day he received his master's degree in jazz pedagogy in 1984, Detrick was called to fill an opening in the Glenn Miller Orchestra, with which he currently tours 50 weeks a year—having been in 49 states and six foreign countries to date—as featured soloist, arranger, and vocal group member. Since 1985, he has also been the band's road manager, the youngest person to handle that job. Detrick hopes to continue learning from "the road" while working to develop a personal trumpet voice.



**IAN NOBLE**, 23-year-old drummer from Vancouver, Canada, recently graduated from a year-long program at the Percussion Institute of Technology in Hollywood. Early next year, he will be touring the West Coast with the Vancouver band Go Four 3, with whom he has recorded an EP, a LP (just out on Zulu Records), and the video *Just*

*Another Day*, which is getting airplay on the Canadian MTV equivalent *Much Music*.

Noble began drumming at age nine, forming a rock band shortly thereafter that debuted before 10,000 people at the Pacific National Exhibition's "Kid's Day" in summer 1973. From 1979-81, he played with the Metros, who placed two songs on the *Vancouver Independence* compilation album and opened shows for the Romantics and the Vapors. From 1982-83, he was a member of the Modernettes, which recorded the album *View From The Bottom* and toured extensively with such acts as David Johansen, X, and Rank And File. In 1983-84, he performed and recorded with the Actionauts, which released the independent single *Hash Assassin/Vagabond* after winning a local "Battle of the Bands," and did shows with the Ramones and Mental As Anything. Noble's influences include drummers Keith Moon, Ian Paice, Stewart Copeland, Pete de Freitas, and Casey Scheuerell, and the bands the Who, U2, Echo & The Bunnymen, Deep Purple, and early Alice Cooper.



**DONALD McCASLIN**, 20-year-old saxophonist from Aptos, CA, was honored with the 1986 Boston Jazz Society Scholarship Award, presented annually to a Boston-area collegiate jazz student for outstanding academic and musical achievement. A Berklee College of Music junior, McCaslin was also the recipient of that school's Ernie Watts Jazz Masters Award, given each year to the top student saxophonist in Berklee's Concert Series.

McCaslin toured for two weeks this fall with a student group led by vibraphonist Gary Burton on the S.S. Norway luxury liner's "Jazz Festival at Sea" cruise. A graduate of Aptos High School, McCaslin was a prominent member of the jazz and symphonic bands there, earning selection to the California Music Educators and Monterey Jazz Festival honors jazz bands.



**KENNY BENBOW BLANK** is a multi-talented nine-year-old from Hoboken, NJ. While a student this year at the International Summer Arts Camp at Appel Farm Arts & Music Center in Elmer, NJ, Blank worked as Musical Director of the children's production of *Alice In Wonderland*, performed background music for camp outings to nursing homes, and composed music on the Synclavier, the state-of-the-art synthesizer that Appel Farm is unique in offering for use by children. Blank also used the Synclavier to compose music for a screenplay he has written.

Despite his age, Blank is no stranger to music or the Synclavier. His father is drummer Warren Benbow, and his stepfather, Bob Blank, owns a recording studio in New York City, where the nine-year-old often uses the studio Synclavier to compose and record. Blank's teacher at Appel Farm, Maria Lattimore, calls him a modern-day Mozart, "great and very talented. One thing that is interesting about Kenny is that he uses rests. You don't have to be playing notes all the time, and Kenny realizes that. That's pretty unique considering his age."



**TERREN FRENZ**, 21-year-old scholarship student at the Ohio State University School of Music, is in his fourth year as lead trumpet with the OSU Jazz Ensemble, which toured European jazz festivals this past summer. Frenz' other accomplishments include performing for Doc Severinsen three times, performing with the OSU Concert Band at Carnegie Hall, and performing with the Co-

lumbus Pro Musica and the Columbus Symphony Orchestra on several occasions, including a concert with Ella Fitzgerald. He also played lead trumpet in the 1985 All-Ohio Collegiate Jazz Ensemble.

Frenz began studying trumpet at age nine, taught by his father, a prominent Ohio educator and trumpeter. Since then he has studied with such teachers as Robert Hill, Robert Doll, and Tom Battenberg. While in high school, Frenz was a member of the 1982-83 McDonalds All-American Band and Jazz Band, and received such awards as the John Phillip Sousa award and the Louis Armstrong jazz award. Since enrolling at OSU in 1983, Frenz has performed in numerous settings as well as serving as guest soloist, clinician, and teacher for several high school bands.



**TERJE GEWELT**, 26-year-old Norway-born bassist, is a member of the jazz group Forward Motion, with whom he has done several European tours, recorded two albums for the British label Hep Records, and won a 1984 *db* Student Musician Outstanding Performance award. Gewelt spent last summer touring with the European Jazz Orchestra and the Boston-based group Full Circle, which won first prize as "Best New Jazz Group" at the San Sebastian Jazz Festival in Spain.

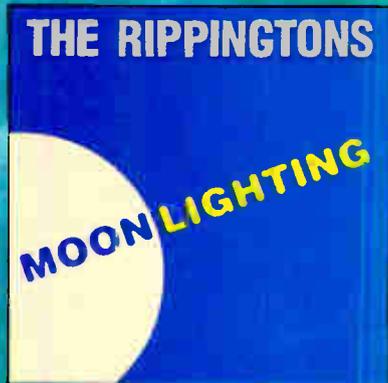
Gewelt graduated from the Bass Institute of Technology in Hollywood in 1982 and is currently enrolled at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. He has performed with John Abercrombie, Bill Pierce, Richie Cole, and Albert Mangelsdorff, and studied privately with Jaco Pastorius, Jeff Berlin, and Miroslav Vitous. Gewelt will be touring Europe with Forward Motion in January to promote their new album. **db**

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