

Profile: NATHAN EAST

For Contemporary Musicians

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MARCUS MILLER

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In The
Studio*

Charlie Watts

*Stones' Drummer
Fronts Dream
Band*


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*An Electric
New Attitude*

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For Contemporary Musicians

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The CHARLIE WATTS Interview

By Bill Beuttler

Charlie Watts has drummed for the Rolling Stones for going on a quarter-century—a dream gig for most drummers. But it wasn't until recently that Watts began living out his own dream gig. The 45-year-old rhythmic heartbeat of "the world's greatest rock & roll band," you see, grew up wanting to play jazz, inspired by such heroes as Chico Hamilton,

Max Roach, Buddy Rich, and Dave Tough. And now, having put together his own 32-piece extra-big big band, he's getting a chance to do just that.



ANDY FREEBERG

Watts' big band—three drums (including Charlie), seven trumpets, four trombones, 10 saxophones, a clarinet, a piano, two vibes, two basses, a cello, and two vocalists—features many of the biggest stars of British jazz, including players whose styles range from the traditional to the avant garde, among them free-jazz tenorist Evan Parker, ex-Cream bassist Jack Bruce (on cello), Watts' boyhood buddy Dave Green on bass, and fellow drummers Bill Eyden and John Stevens. The band debuted at Ronnie Scott's, London's preeminent jazz spot (which Watts had rented for the week), in November 1985, then reassembled the following March to shoot a video (produced by fellow Rolling Stone Bill Wyman) at the Fulham Town Hall. The just-released album *Live At Fulham Town Hall* (featuring six standards recorded that night—*Stomping At The Savoy*, *Lester Leaps In*, *Moonglow*, *Robbins Nest*, *Scrapple From The Apple*, and *Flying Home*) followed, as did invitations to jazz festivals in England and Berlin.



ANDY FREEBERG

Since then, Watts has brought his big band to New York for its American debut. While in town laying plans for that debut, Watts discussed his big band and his own jazz roots with **down beat**, having granted us one of his very rare interviews. The interview took place in a large, cluttered conference room at Columbia Records, in which posters of CBS artists like Bruce Springsteen and Paul Young covered the walls. Watts arrived wearing a stylish blue suit and tie, the jacket of which he removed before sitting with his interviewer at one corner of a long conference table. A gracious and unaffected man, Watts spoke in a pleasant blend of cockney and King's English, pausing occasionally to sip from a bottle of Heineken or to puff a Kool cigarette.



ANDY FREEBERG



ANDY FREEBERG

"I want my band to roar like Mingus' Carnegie Hall band."

Bill Beuttler: *What is your history as a drummer? I've read that you started out drumming on a banjo with its neck twisted off.*

Charlie Watts: Yeah, I bought a banjo, and I saw all these dots in a book—did you ever see a banjo book or a guitar book? I couldn't have done that. Oh dear, all these little dot things. So I took the neck off, and about the same time I heard a drummer called Chico Hamilton. It was a record called *Walking Shoes* by Gerry Mulligan, and I fell in love with the sound of the brushes. So I bought a pair of wire brushes and used the banjo, the skin of it—now it's probably worth more than a snare drum—as a drum. Luckily it wasn't double-backed—you know some banjos have got backs on, wooden backs or metal backs; this was just an open one. So I made a sort of wire stand—I was 12 or 13, I think.

BB: *How long before you actually had a set?*

CW: My dad bought me one off a friend of his. I suppose a few years, a couple of years—and then the noise started in proper. I mean, they're the worst thing you can get a kid. They're an awful lot of fun, but they're the worst instrument to actually learn to play, noise-wise. They've got all these practice pad-type things, but there's no point in playing them, because half the fun when you first start is the *sound* of the drums. And the noise is unbelievable, it just shakes an apartment. That's part of the horror of playing them—controlling the volume.

BB: *How were you trained as a drummer? Did you play along with records? Did you have lessons?*

CW: No, I never had lessons. Used to try to play to records, which I hated doing. Still can't play to them. I know guys who can, kids as well—they put on a record, sit down and play with it, every lick. I could never do that. Even at the age of 14 or so it seemed synthetic—it wasn't the same as playing the thing. And I hate playing with cans [earphones] on, too—I always play with one on and one off.

BB: *Do you read music at all?*

CW: Very badly.

BB: *How do you manage to get through your big band's charts?*

CW: Well, you don't have to read if you've got someone to hit the shots for you. That's Bill Eyden. He's someone I used to see at the bar a lot when I was very young. He's played with everybody. He's a great reader, the ultimate pro. You need a good reader in that band, because it takes John [Stevens] a long while to read the charts and it takes me a lifetime. This way I can do them—the only thing is remembering them all. Readers don't have to remember all this stuff. It must be great for them. You know, when you go onstage and your adrenaline gets going you always—well *I* always do—*forget* arrangements. Those guys don't even have to think about it. They can have a few beers and they're covered, because they can read it. That doesn't mean to say they're going to play it exceptionally well, but they will know where they are. You need to read with that many people, the discipline of it all.

BB: *You've got what, 30-some people?*

CW: Thirty-two.

BB: *Three drummers, including yourself. What's the idea of having such a large . . .*

CW: I just wanted a band with them in it.

BB: *How did you pick the players?*

CW: All my favorite players. I mean, if I'd have been living in America I'd have had a whole different set of players. These are people I've admired for years. I've always wanted to play with them.

BB: *Do you spend a lot of time in the clubs in London?*

CW: Not really. I go to them occasionally. I saw Chet Baker recently. If I'm in London for a week I'll go to Ronnie Scott's once. He gets the best players—Buddy Rich was just there. I usually go to clubs here, to see Tony Williams play for example.

BB: *Have you seen his new quintet?*

CW: No, I haven't seen Tony for I don't know how long. He said hello to me once at the Village Vanguard, I think. It was when he played with Ron Carter and Hank Jones, just a trio. The next day he introduced me to an English guitarist, Allan Holdsworth—he had a band with Allan then.

I saw Tony when he was 19, in England with Miles, and he was incredible. I immediately asked Gretsch to send me a kit like his.

That's the kit he had at the Vanguard; the next night he had these two bass drums, and he was into something else. A marvelous player, one of the best actually. Still so young—it must be very difficult for Tony Williams to know what to do next. With Miles Davis at 17, taking the drumming world as well as the musical world by storm at 19—and there you are, you've got to make your living from that level up. You know what I mean? It's very difficult. His Lifetime band was great. I saw them.

BB: I've read about the Stones going to check that out.

CW: Mick Taylor took us; this was when John McLaughlin and Larry Young were with Tony. He was fantastic then. And then I saw some things that he did with Jack Bruce. Hopefully, Jack's coming over with the big band. I haven't even spoken to Jack—he's one of those guys who you ring up and if he can make it, he'll make it. Lovely bloke, Jack.

BB: Who are some other drummers that you listen to?

CW: I listen to them all. I don't know why, but David Tough is someone whom I've always loved—the recordings of him with the Herman First Herd, *Northwest Passage* and *Countdown*. He did some great stuff with Benny Goodman. I try to listen to a lot. There's so many—especially young players. There always has been.

BB: Do you listen to rock as well?

CW: Rock & roll? Sure.

BB: Do you have any favorite rock drummers?

CW: Not really, because I don't really know a lot of the guys' names.

BB: How about bands?

CW: I don't really know. I know Max [Weinberg]. He did the best book on drummers written. I love it because he didn't give it to somebody else to write; he actually wrote it, which really knocked me out. He wrote some very nice things about me as well. He actually had me, all his influences—the one on Ringo's very good. They're actually little articles written by someone who knows drummers.

BB: How about yourself? I've heard you've written a book about Charlie Parker.

CW: It's a kids' book. I did it when I was 20.

BB: Is it available anymore?

CW: Anymore? It was only available for a year, and no one would stock it at the time. It came out when the [John] Lennon book, *In His Own Write*, did—the same publisher that did Lennon's book did my book. But the stores wouldn't take mine because of what it was. A lot of people ask me about it. It's got all of Parker's life in it, all wrapped around this fictitious bird. It's written for kids, you'd get through it in a minute; it's not like Max's book.

BB: When you were growing up, who were the main people that made you want to play jazz?

CW: Well, on records it would be—there's so many aren't there? I suppose Charlie Parker, which would be Max Roach, wouldn't it? Buddy Rich, but Buddy Rich's greatest achievement is the actual amount of people he's played with. Some of his best recordings—*Ella & Louis*, the control that he has on that record is beautiful. He did two, I think, with bands led by Count Basie. There's one of them where he does an intro, just on the hi-hat—amazing, it's all there in just eight bars.

One of the few drum solos I'd actually like would be *Skin Deep*, Louie Bellson's thing. He's an amazing player. He and Ed Shaughnessy were the first ones with two bass drums. Do you know that? Shaughnessy was the first one, I think, when he used to work with Jackie Cain and Roy Kral, two singers—that was in the Charlie Ventura band, 1947 or '48. But over the years, Kenny Clarke I suppose. Just finesse. And in that tradition, for touch, would be Billy Higgins. They're lovely players to hear. The guy who used to play with Dizzy Gillespie, whose name I've forgotten for the moment. All those people: Sid Catlett, Charli Persip, Art Tatum. . . .

BB: And it was your intention to become a jazz player yourself?

CW: I always imagined so. In England, really, the biggest hero was a man called Phil Seaman. There's a tradition of players that look and play like him—John Stevens is one. And the sad thing is that Seaman never got to America. But an amazing player, totally unique. First guy I ever saw play timp-style—he invented it. You know, instead of playing like that [demonstrates], which is chop-style, he played with his fingers, like you actually play a timpani drum. When you roll with



ANDY FREEBERG

CHARLIE WATTS' EQUIPMENT

Charlie Watts uses Gretsch drums, primarily because of advertisements he saw in *Down Beat* while a fledgling drummer. "I've always used really old ones," he explains, "and they're usually rented ones that I find—I say, 'These are nice, I like these.' I did that with a guy in L.A., I was doing an album with Ronnie Wood, and a guy I met had this pet drum kit—this is the old Gretsch—and I fell in love with it. I said, 'Can I have this?' And I think he was a bit choked to lose this one that'd he'd done up [laughs], but he sold it to me. But I've always used Gretsch, because of the adverts they used to have in *Down Beat*. I've still got all those *Down Beats*. I've got the drum issue of '56—Max Roach is on the cover. But they used to do marvelous adverts. I mean, obviously I took no note of the Conn or Selmer ads, but there used to be great photos of Lee Morgan or somebody sitting there. When I was a kid we used to dress like Shelly Manne, because of the adverts. He used to have those Ivy League jackets on, and we used to go out and try to get those at import shops in England, with button-down shirts—there was a whole style." Watts kits are standard four-piece setups, largely for the same reason. "I still use the same one that Max Roach advertised you should buy, which was the soft tom-tom, bass drum, deep tom-tom, and a snare drum." He isn't fussy about his cymbals. "I pick them up from anywhere," he says. "They're mostly Avedis [manufactured by Zildjian], and they're quite old ones."

Watts has yet to embrace electronic drums himself, but he recognizes certain advantages to them. "I'm not interested in it, inasmuch as I wouldn't particularly want to do it; but I'm interested in what others do with it. It saves a lot of mic-ing up if you're doing that rock & roll sort of thing—if you're in the middle of the Astrodome or New Orleans' Superdome you have to send somebody up with a walkie-talkie, and he'll say, 'Can you hit the bass drum a bit harder?' Well yeah, but only up to a point—then you begin losing balance and touch. The pads take all that [hassle] out, because they pick it up direct." But Watts is quick to point out that electronics, for him, will never replace the real thing. "For me, it's not the same as seeing Steve Gadd or Buddy Rich sit down and play. The real ability of playing a drum kit is the ability of playing with different instruments at different volumes—a tenor solo is different from a bass solo. You have to have volume under control, but it's a volume that you have from your wrists or your fingers." That, says Watts, is challenge enough for him. "It's been years and years and years I've been playing the drums, and they're still a challenge. I still enjoy using drumsticks and a snare drum."

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BIG HITS—THROUGH THE GLASS DARKLY, VOL. 2—London 820128-1

HOT ROCKS 1964-71—London 2PS-606-7

MORE HOT ROCKS—London 2PS-626-27

timps you fan, and he'd be playing like that.

Ginger Baker's another one that I wanted to play like. One of the first good bands I got in was Alexis Korner's band—Jack [Bruce] was in that band, he played upright bass and cello. Ginger used to play in a jazz octet, the best band in London at the time. Ginger had a kit that he actually made, the first plastic kit I'd ever seen. Those were the days when you had calf heads, but his were like real African drums—which are actually animal skins, shaved off—so they were about a quarter-of-an-inch thick. He's the only guy I've ever seen get any sound out of his tom-toms. I borrowed them off him one night—he was on the first act, the Stones were the next band on, and then Ginger with Alexis—and couldn't get anywhere. Broke about four sticks. I don't break drum sticks normally, but Ginger's chops are so strong. They still are. I tried to get him to play in this band actually, but I couldn't get a hold of him.

BB: How old were you when you joined Alexis Korner's band?

CW: I was 21, I think. I was working in Denmark, came back, and he asked me to join his band. That was the first time I ever played with a harmonica player, and that was Cyril Davies. He was a Chicago-style blues player, and that was what he wanted the band to be like—I'd have to play like Francis Clay or Freddie Below.

BB: How did you adjust to playing the blues?

CW: I listened to the records, and Alexis taught me. And Keith [Richards] and Brian [Jones] taught me, through constantly playing Jimmy Reed. Reed and his drummer, Earl Phillips, were as sensitive as Paul Motian with Bill Evans.

Motian, with Scott La Faro and Charlie Haden, was one of the most sensitive drummers—the rhythms would just go around and inside each other. In a different way from how the rhythms would turn inside each other for another great drummer, Dannie Richmond, under the direction of Charlie Mingus, who I saw an awful lot of. I don't mean in the same way as another brilliant player—who I suppose as a kid I always wanted to look like and play like—Joe Morello. Morello would play time sequences, whereas Dannie's time would be more out in the air. It'd turn around, because Mingus would make it do that. He'd build up the time and it wouldn't matter, because it would just lead into this amazing burst, or it'd stop—but it'd be stop shuffle and all those things. A lot of those Mingus albums on Atlantic are quite incredible.

BB: Like the Changes albums and Carnegie Hall?

CW: That is one of the great records. That's what I'd like my band to roar like. I mean, it would never sound as precisioned as Basie's band, but that takes 40 years of being on the road. But I'd like it to surge like Mingus'. Use it as a vehicle, and use every great player in it. It's that knowledge like Miles Davis has, that knowing when to stop the thing and when to start, who to point to. Duke Ellington had that, his bands were just his arms, like Mingus' band was just his arm. If he wanted it to sound like a boogie band, he'd just play those licks. Or he'd sit at the piano—on one of the great Mingus albums he played piano. It's an incredible record, a better fusion of boogie music and what you might call contemporary jazz than a lot of actual boogie piano players—that's what it's like having Pete Johnson do it with Albert Ammons. That's what Ian Stewart was his best at.

Anyway, when Mingus did shift a gear he knew who to have there. Miles Davis is the same. Miles Davis has never had a bad band in his life. The last one I saw was with Al Foster, and it was incredible. Art Blakey's another one who can pick players, can't he? Look at the people who have gone through his band.

BB: And he's in his mid-60s now, still playing great.

CW: The guy is something else. Buddy Rich is one of those people. I don't like drum solos, to be honest with you, but if anybody ever told me he didn't like Buddy Rich I'd right away say go and see him, at least the once—just to see him sit at the set of drums and play. That is remarkable just to see it. Blakey's the same way. One of the loveliest record that Blakey's made, I think, is with Cannonball Adderley and Miles Davis—I think *Autumn Leaves* is on it. Make you cry, that one.

BB: Let's get back to your big band. Is this a short-term project for you?

CW: I don't know. It was originally, and people have asked us to do this. I'll fit it in with my life and if we do anything with the Stones. My band—they're all bandleaders, so it's hard to get them

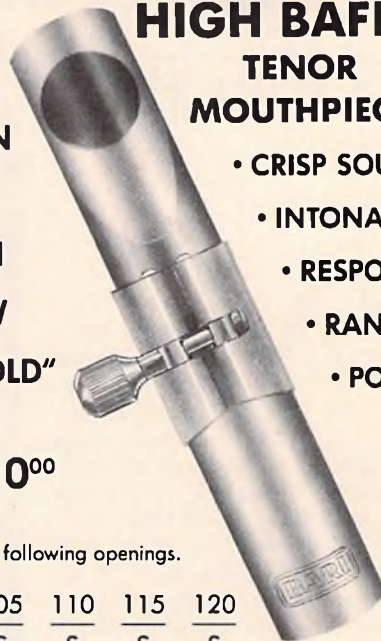
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Marcus Miller: Miles' Man In The Studio

BY BILL MILKOWSKI

“Y
o, Marcus. Who's that sax player on *Portia*? And that's Omar Hakim playing drums on the title cut, right? And what about that funky rhythm guitar on *Tomaas*? The credits must be wrong, man. Doesn't list any of this stuff.”

He gets this all the time. People can't believe that Marcus Miller played all (or nearly all) the instruments himself on Miles Davis' latest, *Tutu*. Fact is, what you hear is mostly Marcus. He conceived the tunes (with the exception of the George Duke piece, *Backyard Ritual*), arranged and put them together piece by piece in the studio. Like a painter at his canvas, he built the album up from scratch, then Miles added his definitive touch. It's a decidedly unique approach to a Miles Davis album, and Marcus admits that it may rub some people the wrong way.

“It's a different kind of an album,” he says during a break at RPM Studios in New York, where he was working on a Jennifer Holliday project. “I mean, it's not like a quartet playing, where everybody has his part and reacts to what's happening. It's more like a painting, where you look at what you have and you add more colors and more shadows as you go along. And that's the way I looked at it, more as a painting than something that was created in a continuum—something that caught a moment in time. 'Cause it didn't. It was *put together*. And that will offend some people, I know, because it's a totally different concept for Miles.”

Tutu has been compared, in concept, to *Sketches Of Spain*, another Miles album that has painterly qualities. Granted, Gil Evans used an orchestra to play all the parts on that 1959 album, whereas on *Tutu*, Marcus is the orchestra (thanks to the modern day conveniences of overdubbing and MIDI technology). But both sections were strictly pre-arranged and set up as showcase vehicles for Miles.

“I think *Sketches* was obviously a painting too,” says Marcus. “Gil Evans composed something, Miles came in and played on it. Same thing with *Tutu*. And I think there's room for that in jazz. I don't think that should take over, because then jazz would lose whatever it is that makes it jazz. *Tutu* was an interesting project in that it dealt with colors



MITCHELL SEIDEL

and sounds, though I don't think it would be cool if Miles did a whole bunch of albums like that, you know? Because you lose a lot of spontaneity. But then, what you lose in spontaneity you gain in other things. Like colors. Or the fact that Miles was able to hear something back the way he wanted to hear it. Like on *Tomaas*—he wanted to do his solo over and over again, even though he ended up using the first one he did. But he enjoyed having the chance to try something again."

Marcus admits, "I don't know if you can truly call that album jazz. There's no real definition for it, as far as I'm concerned. I know there's some real serious funk going on, so some people might object to calling it jazz because of that. It really doesn't matter to me what you call it, but I think there's room for it in Miles' repertoire. Again, it's not as pure as a quartet going in and everybody reacting to each other. But as far as Miles and the way he sounds and the things that he's been doing, I think this was a good move for him. I think it was a refreshing thing for him to do."

Miles' involvement with *Tutu* came about gradually, as he explains. "I heard that Miles was signing with Warner Bros., and I was talking to [WB producer] Tommy LiPuma about maybe submitting a couple of songs for consideration. And he said, 'Well, sure. Write something and send it to me. If we like it, we'd love to do it.' So I went home and began developing some ideas on my eight-track studio. I had a few things that I had been storing up for a while. No huge ideas, just little things that would pass by, all with Miles in mind."

The first tune he wrote was *Tutu*, a moody, spacious vehicle for Miles' horn. Then he put together the ballad *Portia*. "Tommy had sent me a tape of a thing that George Duke had already done for Miles (*Backyard Ritual*), so it did give me an idea of the direction that he was going. I knew that Miles wanted to get into a more modern thing, which was cool. I just wanted to make sure that it also swung, that it felt good as well as sounding modern."

He flew out to Los Angeles with the demo of those two cuts, walked into the studio and played the tape for LiPuma and Miles. "And they loved it," says Marcus. "They said, 'Great, let's cut it.' And I said, 'Well, where's the band?' But there was no band. Tommy said, 'Well, basically, you should start overdubbing the things by yourself and maybe we'll bring somebody in later.' But they didn't bring in anybody. I ended up playing the soprano on all the cuts myself, which I generally do on my demos. I played clarinet in junior high school and high school and all through college, so I've been playing for some time. And when I do demos I play the saxophone lines just so you can hear the horn playing the melody and understand what it's going to be like. I never intended to end up playing the sax on the album. I just did it for

the demos, but Miles said, 'Well, you gotta come in and at least play the melodies.'

"So the way we recorded the stuff was he had me in this real big room. Miles would be at the microphone, and I'd be next to him. And right before the take he'd tell me to play the melodies that I wanted him to play. I'd play the melodies, he'd play them back and I'd say, 'Yeah, that's cool.' Then we'd record it. And I'd be under him, supporting him, just playing a line under him or giving him something to bounce off of. As we got more and more comfortable with the situation, he started saying, 'Look, I want you to just copy my phrases. When I play something, I want you to play the same thing right behind me.' So he's playing, and I'm trying to play it back to him. And I was really at the edge of whatever I had as far as saxophone chops, because I never really practiced that thing. It was an instrument I played at the beach for fun, you know? So I had a hard time, but Miles seemed to like what was coming out. I would say to him, 'Miles, you know, you got a bad saxophone player in your band, you know what I mean? Get him in here.' And he would say, 'Not for this stuff. I like the way you play. You don't play like nobody else. And there's something about somebody who's playing something he wrote that's different than somebody who's playing something that somebody told him to play.' So that's the reason why I ended up playing saxophone on the date, and it got real comfortable after a while."

Marcus cut his two tunes with Miles, then flew back to New York, thinking his job was done. But a few weeks later he got a call from LiPuma asking him to write some more material. He put together five more pieces in the studio, utilizing the Linn Drum and relying heavily on the Emulator for sampled sounds (programmed by Jason Miles). Marcus' overall vision—the idea of having Miles react to *sounds* instead of notes, per se—gives *Tutu* a kind of coherence that might have been lost had LiPuma and Miles done what they were originally planning to do—which was to split up the producing chores

MARCUS MILLER'S EQUIPMENT

Marcus Miller works up demos at home on an Atari eight-track recorder. His drum machine is an Oberheim DMX. His main basses include a 1976 Fender Jazz Bass fretted and a Fodera fretless. He uses Dean Markley Super Bass strings. His guitar is a Strat-type custom-made model created for him by Roger Sadowsky. His soprano sax is a Yamaha, his bass clarinet a Selmer. He also has a Prophet synth.

In the studio he prefers the Linn Drum or the Roland TR-808. He works with Yamaha DX7 and DX1 synthesizers, in conjunction with the AMS and Emulator sampling units. Onstage he uses ElectroVoice speakers (two 15-inch and two 12-inch) with a QSC power amp and an Intersound pre-amp.

MARCUS MILLER SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

THE JAMAICA BOYS—Warner Bros. lba
MARCUS MILLER—Warner Bros. 25074-1
SUDDENLY—Warner Bros. 23806-1

with Miles Davis

TUTU—Warner Bros. 25490-4
WE WANT MILES—Columbia C2-38005
THE MAN WITH THE HORN—Columbia 36790

with David Sanborn

STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART—Warner Bros. 25150-1
BACKSTREET—Warner Bros. 23906-1
AS WE SPEAK—Warner Bros. 23650-1
VOYEUR—Warner Bros. 3546
HIDEAWAY—Warner Bros. 3379

with David Sanborn/Bob James

DOUBLE VISION—Warner Bros. 25393-1

with Scritti Politti

CUPID & PSYCHE '85—Warner Bros. 25302-1

with Kevin Eubanks

FACE TO FACE—GRP 1029

with Jackie McLean/McCoy Tyner

IT'S ABOUT TIME—Blue Note 85102

with Kazumi Watanabe

MOBO I—Gramavision 8404
MOBO II—Gramavision 8406

with Luther Vandross

THE NIGHT I FELL IN LOVE—Epic 39882
GIVE ME THE REASON—Epic 40415
NEVER TOO MUCH—Epic 37451

with Aretha Franklin

JUMP TO IT—Arista 9602

with Spyro Gyra

INCOGNITO—MCA 5368

with Grover Washington Jr.

COME MORNING—Elektra 5E-562
WINELIGHT—Elektra 6E-205
SKYLARKIN—Motown M7-933R1



MITCHELL SEIDEL

among several different people. Wisely, they gave Marcus the ball, and he ran with it.

Miller had honed his producing chops on a number of projects, beginning with his own debut album for Warner Bros., 1981's *Suddenly*. From there he went on to co-produce David Sanborn's *Backstreet* in 1983, followed by work with Luther Vandross on Aretha Franklin's *Jump To It* album. By the time his second album as a leader came out, Marcus was a seasoned vet in the studio (this time, on the other side of the glass). He brought that confidence and vision to bear on *Tutu*, an important project that will no doubt bring Marcus more visibility as a producer.

"I've been getting into sounds lately," he relates. "Just the way that things sound, realizing that if something has an interesting enough sound, you don't have to play as much on the instrument. If you get a keyboard that has an interesting sound, you don't have to play a lot of notes on it. The sound takes over. So on *Tutu*, there's a lot of sounds going on, and those things are impor-

tant to me. They're part of the composition, even though I think a lot of people—especially people who aren't used to that kind of thing—might see it as being kind of superfluous to the essence of the music. But in this music I think it's really important, and Miles thought so too. He was really interested in this stuff. It was very different for him, and I think he enjoyed it. I definitely enjoyed doing it."

Marcus recently did some producing on a few cuts for a Boz Scaggs project (coming after a six-year hiatus from the industry). But his most substantial post-*Tutu* project was The Jamaica Boys, featuring Marcus' bass and vocals, Lenny White on drums, Bernard Wright on keyboards, and Mark Stevens on lead vocals. The album is scheduled for release on Warner Bros.

"What I've been trying to do is combine a lot of my influences into one homogenized form," says Marcus. "I've been trying to find that balance between r&b, fusion, bebop, and Caribbean music. And with The Jamaica Boys I think that's happening."

Though he's listed as one of three co-producers of that session, Marcus actually

assumed the role of vote-breaker. "There were a lot of ideas flying around and ultimately somebody had to say, 'Okay, this is what it's gonna be.' That's what a producer has to do. When different opinions don't get resolved, the producer has to step in. That was my role, and I actually enjoy that. I enjoy having control over stuff like that. It helps me to hone in on what I'm about."

He adds, "I'm trying to focus now on a philosophy of music, and it's hard to settle down on something if you're working with eight different people who have eight different philosophies of music. That's why I won't be working as much as a session player on other people's records. For every session you have to adapt to a different musical philosophy, and I don't want to have to do that anymore. I don't mind producing because I have a say-so in that. But there's also a danger. A lot of people start producing and you never hear from them again, instrumentally speaking. I don't want that to happen. In fact, I won't let that happen. I plan to do more of my own albums in the future, with lots of bass playing going on. But for now, I'm concentrating on The Jamaica Boys." db

In The Grooves

Don't Lose Your Mind: "One of my favorites on the album. I used the bass clarinet again. I really like the feel of it and how Miles reacted to what was going on. And it features an electric violin solo by Michal Urbaniak. There's some really wild sampling on this tune. At one point, Miles was playing along in the studio with the headphones on and all of a sudden he hears—there's a break where there's like a fierce sampled car crash noise. He pulled the horn out of his mouth to get out of the way. He was really reacting, having a good time."

Full Nelson: "Originally, Miles and Prince were supposed to work together on this album. They even went ahead and did a cut. I heard it, and it didn't sound like anything else on the record. So I wrote this tune as a transition between what I had been doing with Miles and what Prince was doing with Miles. It kind of had elements of both, and that way you could shoot into what Prince and Miles were doing. But what happened was, they ended up not using the Prince tune. It was a r&b groove with a James Brown-type horn section, but I don't think either one of them was totally happy with the way it turned out. So now this tune is there by itself as a transition to nothing."

Tutu: "This came from a New Orleans beat that I knew Miles felt comfortable with—kind of a shuffle with a half-time backbeat. He had showed Al Foster this beat when I was in the band, and Al used to play it once in a while. I wanted this to sound modern and soulful at the same time, because the two don't usually come together. If it's a great-sounding

recording—if it sounds contemporary—usually a lot is lost as far as the feeling. So I kept the mood dark and programmed a swing kind of rhythm into the Linn Drum instead of having it be straight eighth notes, and that way his natural phrasing could come into play. People think that's Omar Hakim playing that shuffle—can't be a drum machine if it swings, right? But that's not true. You can get a serious swing thing happening on a Linn Drum. You just gotta know what you're doing. First of all, I don't use quantizing that much when I'm doing shuffles, because it has a straight eighth feel. So I just play into the machine in real time. You can get rolls on those drums, you can get all kinds of things that people don't really bother with. I mean, a shuffle is where the inefficiencies of a drum machine really comes out, and I didn't want that. Not on a Miles Davis album. This stuff would have to swing, you know? So I just took the time to work it out. I went over and added a couple of press rolls and a couple of cymbals afterwards, but it's basically the Linn Drum throughout."

Portia: "Miles played this once, then told me at the end he wanted to hear an ensemble part that repeats over and over; something to fade on. Then he left. I sat down at the piano and came up with that ensemble part at the end. He came back and said, 'Yeah, let's do it!' And that was that. I played soprano along with him, then overdubbed another one just to float in and out and give it just a little bit more depth. But Miles came in and played on the stuff as it was pretty close to being finished."

Tomaas: "Omar played on this, along with the drum machine. This is one Miles

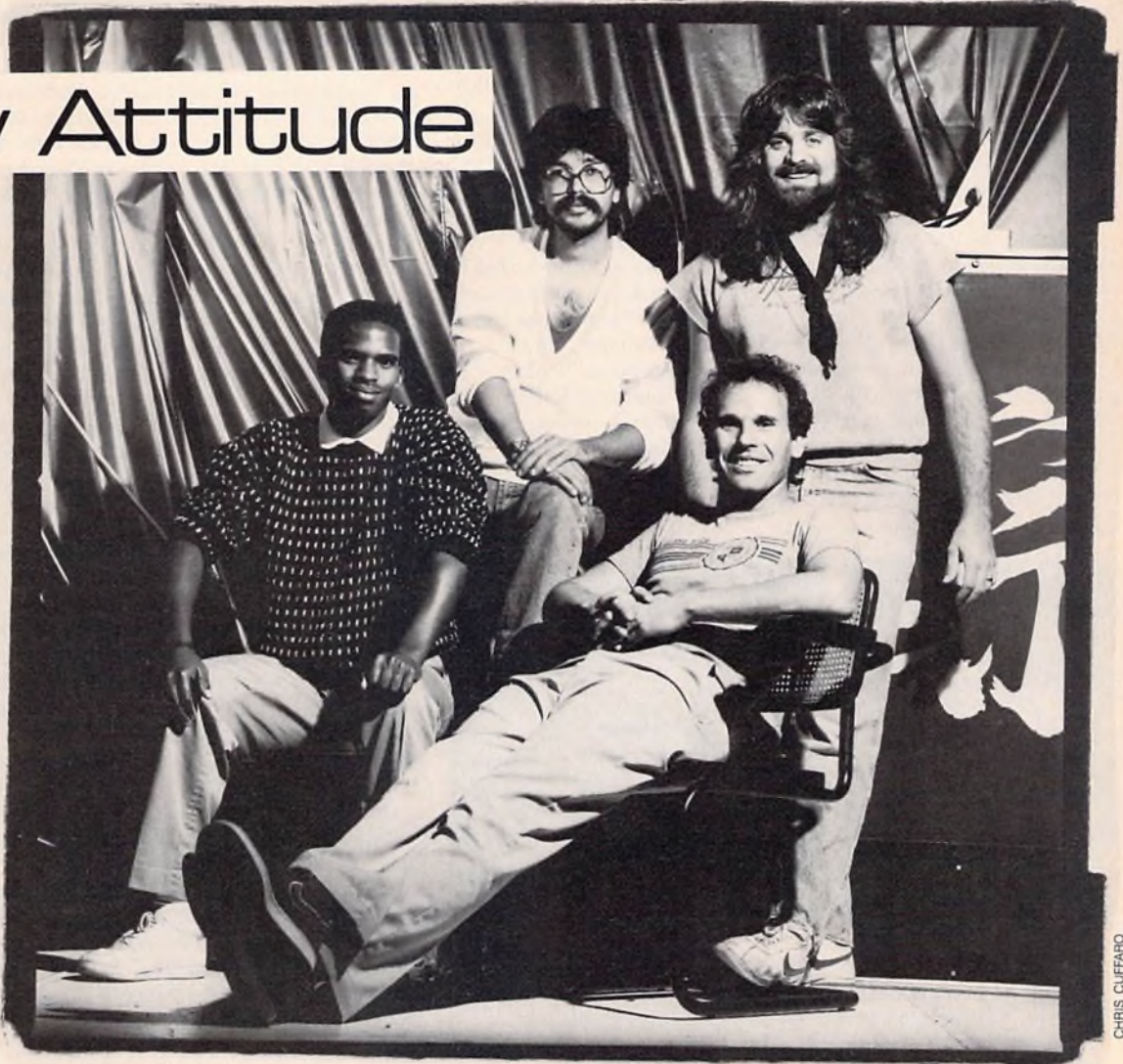
co-wrote. He does these tapes at home. He gave me a whole bunch of tapes, stuff that he's working on, melodies he's fooling around with at the piano. I just listened to the tapes and took some of the things that I really liked, then just tried to put a form to it. I tried to bring in that James Brown kind of guitar thing, just to add some soulfulness. And I worked in the bass clarinet on this one. I really love that instrument. You never hear it anymore, and I think it's beautiful. It's so sinister sounding, but warm at the same time. I mainly used it for doubling. If you're playing an octave below somebody it's like having this cushion of air beneath the melody. And Miles really loves that."

Splatch: "Adam Holzman, who was playing in Miles' band at the time, came in and played a solo on this that was from another place. He basically put all these synthesizers together and MIDI-ed it all up to an Emulator and played. He'd be playing and you'd hear the sound of breaking glass and guns going off and stuff—and Miles would react to that."

Perfect Way: "This is our cover of a tune by Scritti Politti. What happened was, Miles called me up and said, 'I wanna do some Spitty Politti.' He played me this song, and I had no idea how we were gonna do it because, basically, the song is the arrangement. The way the synths and the drums work together is what makes the song. I don't think the melody by itself would make it identifiable. Since I was locked into the arrangement, I basically recreated it and stretched it out in a couple of places, just to let Miles take it somewhere else. I just tried to get it to feel like the record, while giving Miles room to play at the same time."

The Yellowjackets'

New Attitude



CHRIS CUFFARO

by Scott Yanow

1 986 was a very significant year for the Yellowjackets. The popular quartet's fourth album and first for MCA, *Shades*, was their biggest seller to date and their most successful, particularly in displaying the group's musical personality. The Yellowjackets changed drummers, with Will Kennedy replacing Ricky Lawson (who as of this writing is on tour with Lionel Richie). And now, after nearly six years of on-and-off activity, the individual members of the Yellowjackets are treating the band as their main priority, rather than as a part-time project. "We're all growing as musicians," states altoist Marc Russo, "and we want to push ourselves to the limit."

The band also fulfilled a long-time goal by adding to the soundtrack of the film *Star Trek IV*. "Leonard Rosenman, the film's composer, had an idea for us to play for one scene where the crew of the Enterprise lands in San Francisco in 1986. It's a one-minute piece that accompanies Spock and the others hitting the streets; we named it *Market Street*. We also recorded an additional piece, *Ballad Of The Whale*, that will be on the soundtrack album. Previously I'd scored a film by myself, *Wired To Kill*—a tender love story," laughs keyboardist Russell Ferrante.

The Yellowjackets are one of the most popular groups playing a style of music that could be called rhythm-and-jazz (r&j)—essentially r&b-influenced jazz. The unit features the impressive high-note work of altoist Russo, Ferrante's diverse keyboards and electronics, Jimmy Haslip's funky electric bass, and now the colorful drumming of Will Kennedy. Each of the bandmembers spoke of their individual beginnings in music, the evolution of the Yellowjackets, and their renewed commitment to the group.

Jimmy Haslip (born Dec. 31, 1951) started music early in life: "My father played guitar, piano, ukulele, harmonica, and sang. Just from having guitars around the house, I used to pluck on them when I was a little tot. In the fourth grade I started playing trumpet and stayed with it for seven years. My brother listened to a lot of classical music and jazz, while my father put on a lot of salsa records, so I heard a lot of different styles."

Eventually giving up on trumpet, Jimmy was attracted to the electric bass after hearing latin music at school dances. "I was amazed by the potential of the instrument, both rhythmically and melodically. At 16 I bought a \$40 bass and taught myself how to

play. I actually wanted to be a professional athlete in basketball or football, but after busting my leg in my senior year I had second thoughts. I floundered around after I graduated from high school, going to a semester of college as a theater arts major. Then I hooked up with some guys who played jazz, rock, and r&b in local bars."

Soon Haslip was leading the life of a steadily gigging musician, improving his musical abilities during a wide variety of engagements all across the East Coast and in Puerto Rico. Unlike most bassists, Haslip did not start with the acoustic stand-up bass and has rarely played it: "I had a plywood acoustic bass for about two years, but unfortunately the instrument had no tone and it was very frustrating. I might have played it live three times."

During the 1970's Haslip's reputation as a flexible electric bassist began to lead to more lucrative jobs. "I eventually ended up in L.A. in 1975, doing a lot of gigs and recordings, sometimes with well-known people. I was on the road with Flora Purim and Airto in '77, and I enjoyed playing with their drummer, Ricky Lawson. The road manager for the gig was [guitarist] Robben Ford's roommate. He told Robben about us, and when Robben heard us in Los Angeles he really liked the rhythm section. Since Robben was just about to do his first solo record (*The Inside Story*), he asked me to play on it, and I recommended Ricky as the drummer. Robben brought a keyboard player down from San Jose, Russell Ferrante."



CHRIS CUFFARO

Ferrante (born Jan. 18, 1952) had never seriously planned to become a musician. He originally started classical piano lessons at age nine because "My parents were both active in church music and hoped I would be the church pianist. I took lessons for about eight years, but didn't get interested in improvising until I was 16. Earlier I couldn't have cared less about music; I was much more interested in sports. In my late teens I discovered a few jazz albums that excited me. I remember especially the Eddie Harris/Les McCann record *Swiss Movement*, and I was soon stockpiling John Coltrane albums and those by the Miles Davis quintet with Herbie Hancock.

"Possibly I might have ended up as a schoolteacher if I hadn't become a musician. I was playing music around town with r&b-oriented bands, and I ran into Robben Ford in Cupertino where he had a blues band with his brother. Slightly later he was getting ready to go on the road but his pianist didn't want to travel, so Robben called me out of the blue to join his band. We later toured with Jimmy Witherspoon for a couple of years (1973-5) which was a great education. After that I relocated to San Francisco, worked in different bands, and in 1978 moved to Los Angeles to work with Robben again. That's when it finally dawned on me that I was a professional musician. It had sort of snuck up on me."

Haslip, Ferrante and Ricky Lawson first worked together as Ford's rhythm section. A year after *The Inside Story* was cut, the trio persuaded Ford to record some instrumentals with them on a demo. "We made the tape in a day, almost for the fun of it," says Ferrante. "Robben was heading off in a more pop-oriented direction for his solo career but was happy to play with us. Of the four songs we cut, *Imperial Strut* was on our first album but the

other three have never been released. They have a nice live spontaneous feel."

Haslip continues, "Tommy LiPuma signed us immediately to Warner Bros. I was so surprised. About a year later we recorded the first Yellowjackets album." The name "Yellowjackets" was on a long list of possible band titles that the bassist brought to an early recording session. "It seemed to express where the music was at, a lot of energy and colors, and it stuck."

Yellowjackets, released in 1981, launched the new group and was a change from *The Inside Story* in that the focus was now on the group itself rather than Robben Ford, with most of the writing coming from Ferrante. Ford was a key member of the band for two years, although he was simultaneously pursuing a solo career. Haslip remembers, "Since Robben was already signed to Elektra, he couldn't be an official member with us at Warners, but we treated him exactly as if he was. He's on about half of our second album, *Mirage A Trois*. That was actually his last performance with us before he went completely on his own. We're still good friends. Robben worked very well with us, which is why the Yellowjackets changed direction after he left."

Mirage A Trois was a transitional album for the group. "Some tracks featured Richard Elliot on lyricon, which allowed us to bring out the melodies a little more," recalls Ferrante. "Sequencers were just starting to appear, and *Claire's Song* incorporated some of that new technology. Overall there was a stronger emphasis on our melodic side."

Following the release of their second album in 1983, the Yellowjackets went their separate ways for a year. Russell explains the group's predicament: "At that point we didn't have a band. We'd tried out Richard Elliot and guitarist Mike Miller, but although they're very good players, the chemistry was not there. We were at a point where we really needed to work and make some money; both Ricky and I had growing families. So I spent a year with Joni Mitchell, Ricky worked with Stevie Wonder, and Jimmy joined Al Jarreau. Toward the end of the year we found out, to our great surprise, that *Mirage A Trois* was nominated for a Grammy Award, and we started to get offered gigs again."

"When we were nominated for the Grammy," remembers Jimmy, "that pushed us into thinking about the next record. We thought about doing an album as a trio without guitar. Rather than replacing Robben with another guitarist, we hoped to find someone equally talented with a different sound. As a trio we played some gigs around L.A. in early '85. While working opposite Marilyn Scott, who was using the Tower of Power horn section, Marc Russo sat in with us. That's when we heard how good he was."

Marc Russo (born March 17, 1957), unlike Haslip and Ferrante, had always planned to be a musician. "I've never seen myself doing anything else, ever since I played at a dance in the seventh grade and got paid five bucks. My dad was a jazz fan and had a pretty extensive record collection. In third grade my parents gave me a saxophone, telling me to have fun. I listened to whatever was being played on the radio and really loved Chicago, Hendrix, Blood, Sweat and Tears, and Tower of Power. As I grew older and more mature—well maybe not the latter [*laughs*]—I became more educated and learned about Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Miles, and Cannonball Adderley, who is still a great favorite of mine. I also became aware of r&b players such as Junior Walker and King Curtis, and I was influenced by singers like Aretha Franklin. I try to play a melody the way a superior soul vocalist would sing it."

When hearing the Yellowjackets, one is quickly struck by Russo's seemingly effortless high-note solos. "Michael Brecker, when asked why he hits high notes so often, said that it was the only way he could hear himself above the guitar player! For me it stemmed from a time when I was playing six nights a week, five sets a night in a lousy disco band. I was experimenting constantly, screaming away. I always wanted to play melodies completely in the upper register, so I spent many hours in my room, driving my parents nuts, searching for the high notes. I worked with a Ted

Nash book that was a study of high harmonics. Most of it is practical application and then simply going for it. You have to hear the notes in your mind before playing them.

"I got very lucky and hooked up with Narada Michael Walden in 1978. I toured and recorded with him and my career snowballed from there. In 1981 I went out to see Tower of Power, and the timing was perfect because they needed a saxophone soloist. I spent four years with that band, including going out on tour with Huey Lewis. I met Russell and Jimmy when we were gigging with Marilyn Scott. I sat in with them, enjoyed it, and a few months later when they asked me to do some gigs with them, I jumped at the chance."

The resulting album, *Samurai Samba*, introduced Russo to the Yellowjackets' followers and became a steady seller. "Samurai was an attempt to play music with dance grooves," Haslip recalls. "It was a bit experimental for us because we were utilizing a lot of new technology for the first time. Compositionally it was very dance-oriented, although with advanced harmonies. We had a pop vocal tune on the album (*One More Lonely Weekend*) because of pressure from the label. Warners treated us well, but after three albums of music that would never sell on the level of Prince or Madonna, the label was losing interest in us. So we switched to MCA, a company that was planning a major push in the jazz world.

"*Shades*, our debut for MCA, is a lot more of a jazz album than *Samurai*. It was recorded mostly live and we only used the sequencer and drum machine sparingly. Although it often doesn't sound like it, there is quite a bit of improvisation on that album. *Regular Folks*, which sounds a bit like a classical piece, is all improv. *Oasis* sounds very arranged, but we cut it live in the studio and it was completely spontaneous except for the melody. Overall it's a matter of balancing the concept of a song with spontaneity. The two songs that are on the CD but not on the LP, *Wildcats And Cougars* and *Shades*, also have plenty of improvisation. It was silly to release the title track only on the CD and not the record; we won't do that again. We want to put a lot of music on our albums—not just four songs—so that forces us to keep the solos shorter."

The parting of Ricky Lawson from the Yellowjackets was quite amicable and due more to conflicting commitments than any musical differences. Russo recommended Will Kennedy for the drum position. "I had played with Will quite a bit in the Bay Area on lots of latin-jazz gigs and casuals. He has a very nice sound, big ears, and really compliments the soloist well. He's more of a jazz drummer but can also pound out backbeats if we need it."

"I come from a very musical environment" says Kennedy (born May 9, 1960), "and my father was a drummer. I was raised in Oakland, CA and grew up listening to records by Basie, Ellington, and Kenton, so I didn't have a choice; I fell right into music. I guess I had an attraction to beating on things so at four I started playing drums. Although I had some lessons, a lot of my technique comes from listening all of the time. After the usual high school talent shows and garage bands, I played Top 40 and r&b in local clubs and eventually evolved to jazz gigs with trios. I'd been listening to the Yellowjackets since their first album and have known Marc Russo for a number of years, so I was pleased to get the call. It's been challenging, because there's a lot of space to fill up, really depending on my creativity. I thoroughly enjoy it."

Do the terms "rhythm & jazz" or "fusion" fit the music of the Yellowjackets? Russo replied, "When I hear 'fusion', I think of the 1970's and groups such as the Mahavishnu Orchestra and Chick Corea. I don't have any words that adequately describe our music. We fuse together many different styles. Essentially we take popular styles of today, improvise, and write harmonically advanced melodies. That's what jazz basically always has been."

"I suppose 'fusion' could apply, but that's really music of the early '70s, a mixture of jazz and rock," says Haslip. "We're always looking for new ways to express ourselves with new technology. We're all looking to keep jazz music alive and progressing rather than allowing it to stand still."

CHRIS CLIFFARO



"That description of rhythm & jazz that you mentioned," adds Ferrante, "fit our past music. Now I see us on one hand incorporating more African polyrhythms, and on the other hand utilizing simple folk melodies. We're going backwards rhythmically and melodically to our roots, but then also drawing on the new technology. Our upcoming record relies less on drum machines and sequencers and leaves more space. It has less of an r&b feel and a much stronger jazz content with more improvising."

"For example," says Haslip, "we have one straightahead tune that is a variation on *I Got Rhythm* changes. It started out being a reharmonized version of *Oleo* and we call it *Out Of Town*."

In the past, outside musical projects took up much of the Yellowjackets' time and energy. Although this has not completely stopped, the focus has shifted. "Before we hooked up with Marc," explains Ferrante, "we did a lot more freelancing than we do now, but in the last year I've been able to devote all of my thoughts to the Yellowjackets. I think we all benefited from working with other people, but this year we made the Yellowjackets our top priority. We've all turned down many jobs. Our whole band could have been on the road with Lionel Richie, but only Ricky chose to."

"Even when we happen to be working on something else," adds Russo, "we're always thinking of the Jackets. We're all serious about keeping this band alive. The Yellowjackets come first."

"We're dead serious about what we're doing," concludes Haslip. "We're not just studio players getting together and jamming. We believe in this group. I feel we've broken some ground with *Shades*, and we want to keep growing as a unit. As long as we are not completely satisfied with what we do, we'll continue to improve and make viable music." db

THE YELLOWJACKETS' EQUIPMENT

Russell Ferrante says, "I bought a Fender Rhodes electric piano after they first came out. A year later I added an Arp Odyssey, and gradually I've tried to keep up with the new electric keyboards. It's not my area of expertise, but I can create some nice orchestral colors. Live today I use a Yamaha KX88 keyboard controller, a QX1 sequencer, a Linn Drum machine, an old Oberheim modular for bass, a 4TX7, a DX7, an ART digital reverb, a Yamaha DDL, a Roland MKF 20 digital piano, and a Mirage. In the studio I might augment all of this with a new Roland JX and an Oberheim OB8."

"I have several electric basses," says Jimmy Haslip. "Live I've been using two instruments—a Mike Tobias live-string and a Yamaha BB5000 live-string. In the studios I've been using those two, plus a Yamaha BB1200S, a four-string with a parametric equalizer, a Valley Arts Fender, and a Mark Tobias classic four-stringer."

Marc Russo plays a Selmer Mark VI alto sax from 1967, with a Myer mouthpiece. Rico plastic-coated reeds size #4 or #4½, and on stage prefers to use Yamaha power amps and monitors and Audix microphones, which he endorses.

Will Kennedy plays Remo drums, Paiste cymbals, and Martin drumsticks. "I try to have my studio sound be as close as possible to my live sound, so I do not augment my drum set in the studio."

THE YELLOWJACKETS SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

SHADES—MCA 5752
SAMURAI SAMBA—Warner Bros. 25204-1
MIRAGE A TROIS—Warner Bros. 23813-1
YELLOWJACKETS—Warner Bros. 3573

with Robben Ford
THE INSIDE STORY—Elektra 6E-169

with Angela Bofill
SOMETHING ABOUT YOU—Arista 9576

Russell Ferrante
with Joni Mitchell
WILD THINGS RUN FAST—Geffen 2019

Will Kennedy
with Andy Narell
SLOW MOTION—Hip Pocket 105

29th STREET SAXOPHONE QUARTET

by Pamela Bloom

Underneath the picture of a long-legged blonde wearing a saucy coat, a flowerpot, and an insouciant look reads the punchline of a recent New York billboard: "To excite enthusiasm a design must suggest pace and

gesture, evoke a moving body; it must be alive."

If anyone personifies the sassy, elegant, down-home-mobility of that New York City style, it must be the 29th Street Saxophone Quartet. Only four years old, this reed collective is riding the crest of a bebop vision that not only honors the past but delivers a future, at the same undermining a schizy industry given over to youth cults. No flash-in-the-pans, these guys are almost all over 30, conservatory-trained and street-rehearsed, but their savvy isn't limited to the music alone. Ambitious and self-determining, they financed their first two-and-a-half-month European tour themselves, broke even, returned for 38 weeks and self-produced two albums that have been discovered by happy critics without the help of high-tech promotion. Tough-sinewed but exceedingly lyrical, their sound is classical enough for Ellington fans yet hip enough for the avant garde, with harmonies so clean they almost reflect light. But even more than changes, this group is *rhythm* personified: four moving bodies of needlepoint pulses that whine,

whimper, whisper, and sing in a cooperative that is as much visual as it is audio. As altoist Bobby Watson says, "We've always been trying to make *complete* music. And it's the music that has brought us where we are today."

It's a cold, late Saturday afternoon outside James Hartog's 29th Street loft, but inside the air is hot; the band has been blowing for hours, one of only two scheduled rehearsals before their upcoming European tour. Just minutes before hurrying out the door on their way to weekend freelance gigs—a latin dance, a Brooklyn musical, an uptown swing job—the band is pressed back into action. Hartog in suit and tie dons his Mets cap and dives into the bass line of his original tune *T.P.T.* One by one, the others enter in, Watson in a London fog coat and leather cap, Ed Jackson in his overcoat, Rich Rothenberg in tennis shoes and tux. Suddenly a powerhouse of wind, color, and light breaks through to the fourth dimension: Ed rocking on his toes, Jim marching like a saint, Bobby joyously pumping out the melody, with Rich

Sax Rap



ROE DEBONA

offering vital support behind. They do a mini version of the theme, turn in to face each other as the steam rises, then beg off one by one as the number ends in a slow atonal burnout. Holding the last note till his eyes bug out, Hartog finally pulls the reed from his mouth and yells, "Hey, guys, remember, when we're out there, it's gotta end differently every time."

"To groove hard and swing" was the original concept of altoist Ed Jackson (a native New Yorker), who at the time had been a classmate of Hartog's at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. Back in New York, he and Hartog tried taking it to the streets.

"We sort of freely improvised—that is, playing without any music," Jackson remembers, laughing, "until we realized we weren't making any money and we went home to write." After a few incarnations they eventually settled with Rothenberg, who had studied with Joe Allard and co-led his own band in Florida, and Watson, who they accidentally ran into at their sax repairman's Christmas party. Already a well-known soloist with numerous recordings and a guiding light in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, Watson brought with him the leadership of a master composer as well as the tempered ego of an ensemble player. Hartog's stints with Ran Blake and George Russell and Jackson's work with Blake, Russell, and Gunther Schuller consolidated a group temperament that would extract unity from diversity. They managed Manhattan gigs at the Angry Squire and the Universal Jazz Coalition, but the city's cabaret law, which prohibits groups over three instruments in certain-sized venues, seriously dampened their visibility. ("What could we do?" Jackson laments. "Send one of us home?") In desperation, they turned to the European jazz circuit and unleashed a sound that merged bop, funk, gospel, and blues without ever losing sight of the groove.

"When you consider the whole history of American music and African jazz," explains Watson, "you discover so many different time signatures, feelings, and moods which converge right here in this country. From the beginning we decided that to play all free wasn't our way. We wanted to play music that basically has a pulse, a peak, and an ending, because we were still trying to use what's inherent in the jazz rhythm even though the bass and drums aren't there. So we use walking bass lines, waltzes, funk, and all the different modes and then approach it classically—by thinking in counterpoint, in order to highlight each individual. And that's the way we can make our chamber music."

Pointillistic Groove, recorded in the Netherlands during their first tour, put the quartet on the international map, in a region distinct from the brilliant World Sax Quartet and the more outlandish Rova Sax Quartet. Audible are four distinct voices that have learned how to surrender to the whole, yet retain a certain recognizable personality. The title cut by Jackson starts as a spacious, angular alto soliloquy that slowly magnetizes

the other three voices like iron shavings. In more of a mainstream vein, Hartog's *Love For Sale* arrangement projects Cole Porter's already superb melody around a cylinder of tightly controlled chordal shafts. Rothenberg's (not Charlie Parker's) *Bigfoot* is full of big brooding chords around which flutter angst-ridden, almost guilt-ridden solos. The most evocative, Watson's cuts range from the wild spunkiness of *The Curious Child* to the profound nostalgia of *One Chance At Life*, an Ellington-type ballad that pours out chord changes like liquid gold.

The creativity of the quartet seems to actually thrive on the different cross-streams of personalities and compositional techniques. Hartog, for example, leans toward a tight, painstakingly detailed chart, which gives less room to open up, but requires less rehearsal time. Jackson, in contrast, dredges up a string of ideas and leaves it to the collective unconscious to sort out. Rothenberg brings in semi-finished drafts with a beginning, middle, and end, listens to the rehearsals, then goes home to polish them. Watson's charts are like huge road maps that tax everybody's improvisational skills, particularly onstage. His version of Monk's *I Mean You* is already 20-minutes long, and getting longer with each performance.

"It's just like there's room in there," Watson explains. "The music is only a framework. Art Blakey taught me that. I'd come in with one beat, and he'd take it somewhere else. So the more I write, the less I write, in order to give everybody a chance to express himself. I've been in sections with good players, and sometimes we just didn't blend because one guy was unwilling to give up something. But we're lucky to have a good marriage, because when four guys come together you have to give up a part of yourself to make the sound of an ensemble."

Easy for an alto to say, who more often than not rides out the melody. Although solos, duets, and bridges are freely passed around, surrendering to the tenor's supportive function as tuner did not come without a struggle for the 32-year-old Rothenberg.

"I wanted to be something else at first," he admits honestly. "I wanted to come out stronger and play louder, then I realized that's not necessarily what the role of tenor is. It's the middle voice, and the idea is to blend and fulfill the music, actually fill in the music, instead of trying to make sure your voice is heard above everybody else's. I was used to playing in big bands where the whole sax section was supportive, but here, each of us is a section in and of ourselves, and you always have to be aware of how you're relating to the others—that is, thinking about the music and not about yourself. Except of course when you solo, which—do you hear this, guys?" he adds, laughing—"I still love to do."

In contrast, Hartog as baritone often feels the overwhelming burden of keeping the group together. In an ensemble that freely balances open and closed passages without the security of a rhythm section, the bass

line is often forced into double duty—rhythmically and harmonically speaking.

"What happens in terms of jazz improvisation," he explains, "is that the others use me as a springboard for their counterpoint. But frankly, the reality has been a shock to me. Beyond the schooling and playing in the streets, nobody could teach you the kind of stamina it takes to play an hour-and-a-half set nonstop, without cracking notes, and basically not getting winded. For instance, I can't change a reed in the middle of a set—and if it's a dump reed I'm gone. Of course, I can embellish as much as any bass player, but I always have to make perfectly clear where I am. And it's only once in a blue moon I'll forget a riff I've played 3,000 times and suddenly space-out."

What a group does with a space-out, however, is the true mark of their talent. Watson talks about "seeing with your ears and hearing with your eyes." Body language is learned and memorized; the slight angle of a toe tap can signal a new time field. Group huddles during solos sometimes change the course of history, but more often than not,



Jim Hartog



From left: Jim Hartog, Ed Jackson, Bobby Watson, and Rich Rothenberg.

ROE DEBONA

29TH STREET SAXOPHONE QUARTET'S EQUIPMENT

Bobby Watson plays a Selmer Balanced Action alto, with Vandoren A35 mouthpiece and ligature, plus Vandoren Java #4 reeds. Ed Jackson's alto is a Selmer Mark VI. He prefers a Beechler M7S mouthpiece and Rico Royal #3 reeds. Rich Rothenberg totes a Selmer Mark VI tenor, with an Otto Link #6 Star mouthpiece and La Voz medium-hard reeds. Jim Hartog holds the foundation together with his Selmer low B \flat Radio-improved baritone—a hybrid of a Super and Balanced Action horn. His mouthpiece is an old large-barrel Otto Link #6 which was worked on by Ralph Morgan. Reeds are Vandoren #3s, "or anything that plays. The quality of reeds has deteriorated so badly recently that it's hard to find anything decent to play. At least Vandoren uses decent cane." In addition, the quartet swears by their sax repairman, Saul Fromkin, in New York City.

29TH STREET SAXOPHONE QUARTET SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

WATCH YOUR STEP—New Note 1002

POINTILLISTIC GROOVE—Osmosis 602

Bobby Watson as a leader

APPOINTMENT IN MILANO—Red 184

PERPETUAL GROOVE—Red 173

BEATITUDES—New Note 11867

ADVANCE—Enja 4082

JEWEL—Amigo 846

Bobby Watson with Art Blakey & Jazz Messengers

ALBUM OF THE YEAR—Timeless 155

LIVE AT MONTREUX & NORTHSEA—Timeless 150

REFLECTIONS IN BLUE—Timeless 128

IN MY PRIME VOL. 1—Timeless 114

IN MY PRIME VOL. 2—Timeless 118

IN THIS KORNER—Concord Jazz 68

NIGHT IN TUNISIA—Philips 6385 943

Bobby Watson with Charli Persip's Superband

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT—Soul Note 1079

Bobby Watson/James Hartog with Carmen Lundy

GOOD MORNING KISS—BlackHawk 523-1

Ed Jackson with Fatback Band

IS THIS THE FUTURE—Spring 1-6738

Ed Jackson with Tom Varner

MOTION/STILLNESS—Soul Note 1067

TV—Soul Note 1017

Ed Jackson with Ran Blake

FILM NOIR—Arista 3019

spontaneous invention is the name of the game. Watson recalls one particular four-arm fire.

"Once we started this piece at a ridiculously fast tempo and there was just nowhere to go. Suddenly one of us found the peace of mind to slow down, and we all just followed and discovered this great metric modulation. But see, that's the fun of it, because people usually don't hear what's wrong. What gives it away is the look on our face—like, why is this guy's eyebrows up? So it's always a challenge, especially if you're playing every night. And when we've haven't been playing for a while and get back together, then we hear that sound again and we say, 'Oh, yeah, that's the sound,' and we lock in immediately."

Part of the 29th Streeters' lively appeal is their onstage dynamism. They've been known to hop around Temptations-style, change formations to emphasize harmonies, even wear sunglasses and hats for special narrative effects. Their second album, *Watch Your Step*, actually raises "pace" to the level of vivid gesture. You can clearly "see" the meaning of the title cut in the sarcastic little melody, the *Pink Panther*-like grooves, the snips from *Farmer In The Dell*, and the various squiggles and side-swipes of horns trying to squirm out of embarrassing situations (check the liner notes for further clarification) in *K.C.Q.*, Watson throws back his head in abandoned blowing, capturing the gluttonous lust one feels when faced with a plate of Kansas City barbecue—right down to the Charlie Parker licks. Drama reaches its apex, though, in Jackson's *Hotel De Funk*, which utilizes a

Don Pardo-like rapper who's stuck in the Twilight Zone of too many one-night gigs. Saxes turn into fungus-growing vegetables, suspicious furniture, tricky mirrors; harmonies rise and fall with queasy stomachs that finally erupt in a four-part vocal backbeat that gives chase to Run D.M.C. It's daring programming for a jazz album, but characteristic of the creative risks being run by New Note, the group's innovative record label.

"We're excited about New Note," Hartog explains, "because it gives creative control back to the artist. We have a producer, Dennis Sullivan, who is close to being a saint, but we choose the liner notes, the photos, the programming—and we own the tape. And what's more, we're seeing returns—that is, *money*—which is something you never do. Despite what musicians are told by the record companies, there's a capacity for very high volume sales in jazz. It's just a question of doing it right."

Watson, who counts 30 records in his discography alone, adds, "People are scared these days and there's too much pressure on investors to take a chance on unknowns. But the fact is, there's really not that many people out there with organized bands for a person to get some type of credentials. Horace Silver doesn't tour that often, and Art Blakey is 68, and it's a *hard* 68. In Herbie's and Wayne's generation, there doesn't seem to be the tendency to reach back and grab the younger players. So there's nowhere to go unless you have to take the bull by the horns and make your own statement."

"Again, it goes back to economics," Hartog continues. "In Europe most of the concert situations are by and large subsidized clubs where you can go sit, have two or three beers, enjoy the music, and not feel as if it's your entertainment for the rest of the month. Which, of course, is not the case in

New York. So in Europe people have the opportunity to enjoy and respect the music as part of their daily life. And that's what we'd like eventually to see happen here."

Four guys with four horns, who had to leave home to be heard. Fortunately they're rooted in New York and happily down on vinyl, with what is a major contribution to American music of any color, race, creed, or modality. Still, the heart of the group beats "live," and it's the quest for human contact that keeps the quartet moving on. Watson best sums up their New York state of mind.

"Sometimes we've been forced to be on a big p.a. all night, because of the size of the venue, and the audience thinks we're electronic. And then on the last piece we walk away from the mic into the audience and the sound is still there. And they think, 'God, they're not plugged into anything. This sound is for real.' And you know," he says, eyes shining, "that's a pretty powerful statement—when you can walk off the stage and you're right in their faces." db

within the tones—similar to the colors in a spectrum of light. But I did not see colors—I heard the sublimely delicate “sound colors” which exist in all of music—the pure and natural colors of the *sound* spectrum. They had always been there. But this was the first time I had ever really paused to listen.

Now I could name the pitches by ear! It was simple. An F# sounded one way—a Bb had a different “color sound.” It was as easy as seeing red and blue!

Instantly the realization hit me: THIS IS PERFECT PITCH! This is how Bach, Beethoven and Mozart were able to hear music mentally and sing and identify tones at will—by “color sound.” It’s simple!

I became convinced that every musician has Perfect Pitch in his or her own ear, but the vast majority have never really learned to *listen*.

I tried out my theory on my close friend, Ann. She is a flutist. I told her that Perfect Pitch is easy, and that she could do it herself.

“Oh, I could never have Perfect Pitch,” she laughed. “You can develop a good *Relative Pitch* [comparing one tone with another], but you have to be *born* with Perfect Pitch.”

“People feel that way because they don’t understand what Perfect Pitch is,” I explained. “It’s really easy—all you have to do is listen!” I sat down at the piano and showed her my discoveries.

She agreed with everything I showed her. She *had* to, because she heard everything for herself. But she still had a nagging doubt that this was really Perfect Pitch.

The next couple of weeks we dabbled a



bit more. Though hesitant at first, Ann gradually came to identify tones with incredible accuracy. Of course, this is the very definition of Perfect Pitch. It soon became clear she had fully acquired the skill which before was a mere fantasy.

Fame spread throughout our school that Ann and I had Perfect Pitch. We became instant celebrities. Students would often dare us to name pitches, sing tones, what chord is that, how high did she sing, give me an A, etc. Everyone was amazed.

Perfect Pitch allowed me to progress far faster than I ever thought possible. After all, hearing is the basis for all music. Not only did I receive A’s in ear-training (no problem!), but I completely skipped over

required college courses. Most important, I learned that no amount of practice, lessons, or equipment can ever replace the value of your ear.

Spreading the Knowledge

That’s how it all started. Little did I know that years later I would be teaching seminars on Perfect Pitch.

Actually, I rejected the idea of seminars at first. There were so many misconceptions about Perfect Pitch. People often *laughed* when I said they could have it. Some thought it would bother them if things were out of tune. I guess it’s easy to downplay something when one feels it is beyond reach.

But Perfect Pitch adds a dazzling new dimension to listening. It’s a total artistic sense which promotes tremendous levels of talent in every phase of musical activity—from performing and playing by ear, to improvising, listening and writing, singing, transposing, tuning, better memory—and much deeper *enjoyment* of music. Perfect Pitch means *increased powers of listening*.

I let musicians test me to prove my points, but it didn’t help. They usually felt that I had the knack, but for them it was unattainable.

How was I to calm this skepticism? Remember, at that time I did not have the thousands of students worldwide who are experiencing Color Hearing for themselves.

So I went back to the basics. I would prove my points in just one simple way: by having people *hear for themselves*.

It worked! No amount of lecturing could do it. No amount of testimonials. No amount of logic, persuasion or research would prove it to some. But even “old school” professors were gratefully changing their minds when they *experienced* their “first taste” of real Perfect Pitch. Rock musicians, classical, jazz—they heard for themselves! All talk became unnecessary.

The Experience

The experience is both subtle and awesome. It’s like switching from a black and white to a color TV. Without Perfect Pitch it’s like “black and white” hearing—all the tones sound pretty much the same, just different shades of “gray.”

Perfect Pitch gives you the *colors* of the tones. Color lets you recognize them—an A over there, a C# here, E major chord there, etc. Each tone has its own unique color sound. That’s why I like to refer to Perfect Pitch as “Color Hearing.”

Perfect Pitch is definitely something you can’t buy. Instead, you unfold it *from within yourself*. I feel fortunate that I’m able to offer the knowledge of how to develop it. It’s ridiculously simple. But you have to hear for *yourself* to gain it. It’s yours—inside you, waiting, free as the air you breathe. And it’s a priceless musical possession.

To start, you just need a few basic instructions. As your ear becomes cultured you begin to enjoy and use these delicate sound colors. You learn to hear beauty you may never have appreciated before. It’s a whole new awareness—once you uncover it you own all its possibilities.

This is Perfect Pitch.

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BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

LIVE/1975-85—Columbia 40558: *THUNDER ROAD*; *ADAM RAISED A CAIN*; *SPIRIT IN THE NIGHT*; *4TH OF JULY*, *ASBURY PARK (SANDY)*; *PARADISE BY THE "C"*; *FIRE*; *GROWIN' UP*; *IT'S HARD TO BE A SAINT IN THE CITY*; *BACKSTREETS*; *ROSALITA (COME OUT TONIGHT)*; *RAISE YOUR HAND*; *HUNGRY HEART*; *TWO HEARTS*; *CADILLAC RANCH*; *YOU CAN LOOK (BUT YOU BETTER NOT TOUCH)*; *INDEPENDENCE DAY*; *BADLANDS*; *BECAUSE THE NIGHT*; *CANDY'S ROOM*; *DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF TOWN*; *RACING IN THE STREET*; *THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND*; *NEBRASKA*; *JOHNNY 99*; *REASON TO BELIEVE*; *BORN IN THE U.S.A.*; *SEEDS*; *THE RIVER*; *WAR*; *DARLINGTON COUNTY*; *WORKING ON THE HIGHWAY*; *THE PROMISED LAND*; *COVER ME*; *I'M ON FIRE*; *BOBBY JEAN*; *MY HOMETOWN*; *BORN TO RUN*; *NO SURRENDER*; *TENTH AVENUE FREEZE-OUT*; *JERSEY GIRL*.

Personnel: Springsteen, vocals, electric guitar, harmonica, acoustic guitar (cut 38); Steve Van Zandt (1-22, 40), Nils Lofgren (23-39), electric, acoustic guitars, vocals; Gary Tallent, bass, vocals; Roy Bittan, piano, synthesizer, vocals; Danny Federici, organ, accordion, glockenspiel, piano, synthesizer, vocals; Clarence Clemons, saxophone, percussion, vocals; Max Weinberg, drums; Patti Scialfa, vocals (22-39), synthesizer (26).

★★★★★

Let's face it: this long-awaited set of live performances may well be the only record release ever that's made two out of three network TV newscasts. And with a scheduled initial shipment of 1.5 million LP sets and 300,000 CD versions sold out within 10 days of their appearance at record stores, it's safe to say that *Live/1975-85* has earned its newsworthy slot.

But that bald statement of facts doesn't begin to do justice to the huge and complex body of work, the prodigious explosion of talent, represented by these five discs. Nor is *Live* simply the beneficiary of a media blitz: the supple, sinewy music *delivers*. As anyone who knows anything about Springsteen knows, his shows are, well, legendary. From the start he took the band onstage looking to spill blood, putting out prodigious amounts of energy for the kind of time that only bar bands usually need to suffer through night after night. It paid off by winning him the rabid devotion of a cult of fans whose numbers became legion after he criss-crossed America for years to strut the stuff he and the E Street Band had developed.

And what stuff! Shot through with rich echoes of pop music from the last three decades—Elvis, rockabilly, Chuck Berry, country, doo-wop, raw-boned r&b, soul, electrified Dylan, even touches of punk—Springsteen's

muscular music seemed like the true rock & roll avatar when it first burst into the midst of the arid arena-rock that dominated the '70s. Lean and hungry, it ate ideas from anywhere it could find them, and digested them into an undeniably vibrant source of energy that fueled both the band and its audiences with the same giddy sense of power and release.

In fact, that sense of identification has been both the source of Springsteen's strength as a culture hero and the wellspring of his musical ideas—which is why right-wingers from Reagan on down have tried, without success, to co-opt his potency as a symbol and put it to their own political uses. To no avail; even *Born In The U.S.A.*, the track that titled his biggest-selling LP and spawned a massive tour that alerted the right to his possible value, screams its rock & roll rage about a mistreated Viet vet who was drafted out of jail "to kill the yellow man."

"If you grew up in the '60s you had war on tv every night . . . So this is a song for the teenagers out there, because next time they're gonna be lookin' at you. In 1985, blind faith in your leaders, or in anything, will get you killed." Bruce warns huskily to cheers and applause before launching into the bloodcurdling funk of the old Motown anti-Nam tune called *War*. And while there may have to be some questions about a working class hero who styles himself the Boss, one of the things this compilation makes clear—again—is Bruce's own tough-minded, irreducible vision of an America whose time in the sun has passed, leaving its sons and daughters in the grimy, post-industrial wake of decay's inevitable downward spiral. "Well Papa go to bed now it's getting late/ Nothing we can say can change anything now/ Because there's just different people coming down here now/ And they see things in different ways/ And soon everything we've known will just be swept away/ So say goodbye it's Independence Day/ Papa now I know the things you wanted that you could not say/ But won't you just say goodbye it's Independence Day/ I swear I never meant to take those things away." is how Bruce closes the dirge-like *Independence Day*, inextricably entwining personal pain with social loss. That exemplifies how he speaks from the heart of America's darkness for the real silent majority, and in the process unveils the reason for his vision's appeal.

Live/1975-85 depicts that vision structurally. Not a simple chronological sequencing of tracks, it uses a thematic ordering that often parallels the unfolding of Springsteen's career without being bound by it. The result is that not only do the rockers bash out with the fierce, raucous intensity of this top-of-the-line bar band at its best, not only do the ballads strike deep with a poignant sense of irremediable loss, but they do so in a context that orders the man's formidable output into more than just a list of collected hits. Instead, as even a scanning of the tunes' titles reveals, the songs resonate with the deep emotional overview that Springsteen articulates from his vantage point as a true son of the marginal landscapes inhabited by the beleaguered working class. It's no mere whim, for instance, that prompts his inclusion of Woody Guthrie's *This Land Is Your Land* in the most overtly political segment

of the set; as he says, "This song was originally written as an angry song; Irving Berlin had just written *God Bless America*, and this was an answer to that song." In a real sense, Springsteen is Guthrie's heir for the post-Viet Nam generation, writing and singing songs for the New—and ongoing—Depression. In fact, one of Springsteen's major strengths as both composer and culture hero—and one of the salient characteristics that sets him apart from such jingoistic disciples as John Cougar and yuppie nostalgia exercises as *The Big Chill*—is his clear-eyed depiction of what living in the darkness at the edge of town really means, whether it's a function of economics or the heart.

"Workin' in the field/ Till you get your back burned/ Workin' 'neath the wheels/ Till you get your facts learned/ Baby I got my facts/ Learned real good right now/ You better get it straight darling/ Poor man wanna be rich/ Rich man wanna be king/ And a king ain't satisfied/ Till he rules everything/ I wanna go out tonight/ I wanna find out what I got/ Now I believe in the love that you gave me/ I believe in the faith that could save me/ I believe in the hope and I pray that some day it will raise me above these/ Badlands you gotta live it every day/ Let the broken hearts stand/ As the price you gotta pay/ We'll keep pushin' till it's understood/ And these badlands start treating us good," sings Springsteen in the anthemic *Badlands*. It's a measure of his success as an artist and as a man that his fans believe in him, share his vision as it gives voice to their pains and triumphs and dogged determinations, with the same ferocious loyalty as when he was playing bars and high school gyms. —*gene santoro*



TONIGHT SHOW BAND

WORLD PREMIER PERFORMANCE—Amherst Records 3311: *BEGIN THE BEGUINE*; *KING PORTER STOMP*; *HOW LONG HAS THIS BEEN GOING ON*; *ONE O'CLOCK JUMP*; *TIPPIN' IN*; *SHAWNEE*; *TONIGHT THEME*; *SKYLINER*; *FLYING HOME*; *BYE BYE BLUES*; *SENTIMENTAL OVER YOU*; *SAX ALLEY*.

Personnel: Doc Severinsen, John Audino, Snooky Young, Conte Condoli, Maurey Harris, trumpet; Gil Falco, Bruce Paulson, Ernie Tack, trombone; Tommy Newsom, Bill Perkins, John Bambridge, Pete Christlieb, Ernie Watts, Don Ashworth, saxophones; Ross Tompkins, piano; Peter Woodford, Bob Bain, guitar; Joel DiBarolo, bass; Ed Shaughnessy, drums.

★★★★★

We who listen to music with intent to commit

criticism occasionally live to regret an ill-considered insight. Case in point: I once dismissed a performance by Count Basie and his Orchestra as sounding like the *Tonight Show* band. It was not intended to flatter Mr. Basie's efforts.

Through 32 years and four leaders (Skitch Henderson, Jose Mellis, Milton DeLugg, and Doc Severinsen), the *Tonight Show* orchestra has been the ultimate studio band. That's why I think for years we've viewed it as only a functional group, an elite pit band to back singers and play swatches of entrance and exit music. We've allowed it little credit as something that might exist solely on its own remarkable merits. Not that it's claimed much credit, of course. In the early '60s under Henderson there were a few jack-of-all-trades LPs in which a crisp Newsom original like *Titer Pipes* would be buried in a too-diverse program of more routine items. On this album, however—its first in Severinsen's 20-odd years of leadership—the band plays strictly for itself. It finds a sizzling focus, sticks with it to the end, and ends up with one of the best mainstream big band LPs of the year.

There are many familiar titles on the program from the books of Benny Goodman, Erskine Hawkins, Charlie Barnet, Count Basie, and Artie Shaw. But they're addressed, not as nos-

talgia, but as the tough and timeless proving grounds they are for what a big band can really do. All get fresh charts. Bill Holman's version of *Begin The Beguine* is a driving showcase for Barnet-alum Severinsen that borrows nothing from the far more relaxed Artie Shaw classic. John Bambridge sticks fairly close to the basic Fletcher Henderson design of *King Porter Stomp*. But the band puts its stamp on it clearly. Other principal arrangers are Newsom and Don Lieb, whose *Flying Home* would stop the *Tonight Show* cold if it were ever played on-air.

Of two high-speed originals, Lieb's *Sax Alley* is the best and contains some savage round-robins through the reed section. The solo strength in the band—Christlieb, Young, Tompkins, Candoli, Watts, and more—is remarkable, but never over-indulged. The trumpets get their big shot on *King Porter*. No soloists are identified anywhere, but I would venture a guess that the plunger trumpet work is from ex-Basie man Snooky Young.

This would be an outstanding album from any band. Coming as it does from an outfit we've learned to take for granted, though, it's a great surprise. Sometime when Carson takes a night off, he might consider turning an entire show over to the band. With material like this, no one would dose off.

—john mcdonough



BRANFORD MARSALIS

ROYAL GARDEN BLUES—Columbia 40363: *SWINGIN' AT THE HAVEN; DIENDA; STRIKE UP THE BAND; EMANON; ROYAL GARDEN BLUES; SHADOWS; THE WRATH OF TAIN.*

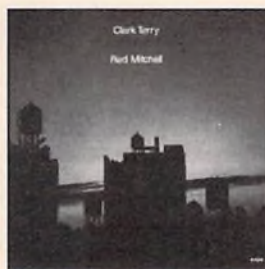
Personnel: Marsalis, tenor saxophone (cuts 1, 3, 4, 6, 7), soprano saxophone (2, 5, 7); Ellis Marsalis (1), Kenny Kirkland (2, 7), Larry Willis (3, 5, 6), Herbie Hancock (4), piano; Ron Carter (1, 4, 5), Charnett Moffett (2, 3, 7), Ira Coleman (6), bass; Ralph Peterson (1), Jeff "Tain" Watts (2, 3, 4, 7), Al Foster (5), Marvin "Smitty" Smith (6), drums.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

Unlike his younger brother with the trumpet—who guards the fortress of acoustic jazz with

enja

News



5011 To Duke & Basie

Clark Terry tp, flgh, voc
Red Mitchell b, p, voc

5027 Memories of Pannonia

Attila Zoller g
Michael Formanek b
Daniel Humair dr



4050 Soul Song

Archie Shepp ss, ts, voc
Ken Werner p
Santi W. DeBriano b
Marvin Smith dr

5013 What If?

(CD 501309)
Kenny Barron p
Wallace Roney tp
John Stubblefield ts
Cecil McBee b
Victor Lewis dr

5017 Shades of Change

David Friedmann marimba, vibes
Geri Allen p
Anthony Cox b
Ronnie Burrage dr

4090 The Upper Manhattan Jazz Society

Charlie Rouse ts
Benny Bailey tp
Albert Dailey p
Buster Williams b
Keith Copeland dr

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messianic zeal—Branford Marsalis sees no harm in roaming outside the walls. His first solo album, *Scenes In The City* (Columbia 38951), was a nicely done but fairly conservative jazz effort, an homage to his heritage. That came out in 1984, and since then he's played with Miles and Sting and Tina. So we might expect his latest album to include some more contemporary sounds, right?

Well . . . no. If anything, *Royal Garden Blues*

is even more cautious than *Scenes*. Consider the title tunes: Mingus' *Scenes* is a classic of '50s street-life jazz, but *Royal Garden Blues* is a standard from the '20s, a staple in the repertoire of every moldy trad band. Branford has apparently decided it's better to keep his jazz and funk identities completely separate. When he puts on his jazz hat, that's it—get that electric stuff out of here. So this album is dedicated to the late Thad Jones, a master of the

mainstream and the first bar of *Swingin' At The Haven* (by Ellis Marsalis) sets the tone: strictly straightahead.

Taken on its own terms, this is a fine jazz album. The sound is wonderfully clear and open, thanks to RCA's Studio A and the understated production of another Marsalis brother, Delfeayo. The musical-chairs rhythm section is consistently first-rate and occasionally inspired. Branford's elegant tenor evokes Dex

NEW WAVE FORMS

by John Diliberto

Through the market may be glutted by bland instrumentalists masquerading as "laidback" creative musicians, one beneficiary of the New Age boom has been electronic music. Simply replace the anachronistic "space music" with New Age and suddenly it's upscale. It is also the area where New Age boundaries are most elusive, and most courageously broken.

To anyone who's ever programmed a sequencer, the name **Klaus Schulze** is revered as a pioneer of electronic music, and thus, an unwitting avatar of the New Age. An original member of the German group Tangerine Dream, he's released over 25 solo albums in 16 years. Gramavision recently issued six of those recordings for the first time in the U.S.: *Cyborg*, *Picture Music*, *Dune*, *X*, *Trancefer*, and a compilation, *Mindphaser*.

X (Gramavision 18-7024-1), along with his 1975 recording *Timewind* (Caroline 2006), is Schulze's most influential work, and an album of homage. The sidelong excursion *Ludwig II Von Bayern* invokes the spirit of Wagner's patron and "Mad King" with its orchestral fugue and ethereal atmospheres. *Heinrich Von Kleist* is a haunted landscape, with odd timbres and shadings drifting past the barest hint of a melody. *Frank Herbert*, named for the author of *Dune*, is a catharsis of screaming synthesizer leads powered by pulsing sequencers and the possessed drumming of Harold Grosskopf.

Nearly nine years after its original release, the moody atmospheres and trance-like rhythms of Schulze's oeuvre still resonate, especially for groups like **The Nightcrawlers**. Their LP, *Spacewalk* (Atmosphere 200), is definitive "deep space" music, recalling the mid-'70s work of Schulze and Tangerine Dream. Synthesized designs emerge like elusive sonic sculptures, dissolving and shifting while a sparse sequencer pattern prowls underneath. *Digitalis* cuts loose with pounding rhythms and wailing solo lines that reveal the spontaneity the band's developed in concert. If this is New Age, it's the darker side. (Available from NMDS, 500 Broadway, NYC 10012.)

Innovative Communication, a label founded and recently sold by Schulze, continues in his spirit with the first IC records released in the U.S. by Suite Beat Music. **Software** is a duo that also records under its members' names, Mergener and Weisser. *Chip-Meditation*

(Innovative Communication 80 050), first released in Germany in 1985, is typical of their work with sequencers locked in relentless synchronization and sparse, insistent melodies framing an array of swirling sounds.

Double Fantasy is another duo that varies little from that formula on *Universal Ave.* (Innovative Communication 80 054). Keyboardist Dreamstar (cut me a break) uses rhythm machines and static electronic structures to frame the guitar soloing of Charly McLion. His post-'60s blues style of soloing becomes repetitious, since he has little melodic or harmonic material to draw upon.

Jem Records recently launched their own entry into the New Age market with the Audion label. Their initial release is drawn largely from a hyperactive electronic music scene in northern New Jersey. **Don Slepian's** previous recordings, like *Rhythm Of Life* (FOR 009), employed computers to compose mesmerizing minimalist patterns constantly refracted in deepening mirror imagery. Slepian could've used them on *Reflections* (Audion 106). A noodling piano drifts through a stagnant field of pseudo-acoustic sound effects on *Distance*, while *Grace* sounds like a honky-tonk harpsichord on its last legs. His *Mirage* samples sound clumsy and ill-formed—samples for the sake of samples—and are tough to endure over the course of a side.

Neil Nappo is another north Jersey artist, whose debut, *July* (Audion 103) is dominated by his guitar-synthesizer. Like *Double Fantasy*, his compositions are centered around rhythm machines, but instead of meandering solos he stacks up full-bodied arrangements via MIDI interaction with other synthesizers. Sometimes locked into overly flanged blocked chording (*Casselberry*), he also takes some propulsive sweeping excursions on *Valley Of Indecision*.

Barry Cleveland's *Mythos* (Audion 101) reveals an obvious affection for Brian Eno and his ambient aesthetic. Each piece develops its own environment: the drifting xylophone and synth-strings of *Aeon*, the Robert Fripp-like guitar cycles of *Abrasax*, and the sidelong title track, which uses tape loops and acoustic instruments to generate a warm, sometimes threadbare tapestry in collaboration with the group Emerald Web, a longtime New Age duo that also records for Audion.

Combining acoustic and electronic textures has been the forte of **Deuter**, a German musician among the first New Age artists. *Call Of The Unknown* (Kuckuck

076/077) is collection of his works from 1972-86. His recent output is typified by arpeggiated synthesizer patterns providing backdrops for his folk-like recorder and flute melodies. *Silence Is The Answer* and *Haleakala Mystery* delve into meditative states with Tibetan monk-like drones, bells, and natural sounds creating an ever deepening, enveloping landscape. Deuter is an unassuming composer who recorded most of his music as a follower of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, a fact that is disingenuously omitted from his LP biography. Don't let that stop you from enjoying this beautiful, airy music that taps Peruvian flutes and electronic drones with simple elegance and innocence (Celestial Harmonies, Box 673, Wilton, CT 06897).

Michael Stearns' early records were intense, electronic symphonies that challenged and immersed the listener in a awe-inspiring world of sound. *Plunge* (Sonic Atmospheres 115) is a departure, with short pieces and moods ranging from ominous to frivolous. However, he brings the same sense of craft to these little vignettes, whether playing Mark Knopfler-like guitar, Blaster Beam, or the probing, majestic synthesizers of *Dark Passage*. (Available from Sonic Atmospheres, 14755 Ventura Blvd. Suite 1776, Sherman Oaks, CA 91403.)

The New Age has not gone unnoticed by the major labels. One artist getting widespread attention is **Andreas Vollenweider**. On *Down To The Moon* (Columbia 42255), Vollenweider continues electrifying his harp and formulating exotic landscapes. His intricate, lush arrangements place his harp in three-dimensional orchestrations. Subtle African polyrhythms churn beneath whispering digital and acoustic flutes and twinkling bells. *Down To The Moon* breaks no new ground for Vollenweider, it just turns some interesting corners in the landscape.

Finally we come to **Tom Newman**, a veteran British producer and engineer responsible for many of Virgin Records' early successes, like Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells* and the pan-ethnic synthesis of Jade Warrior. *Aspects* (Coda 7), is a quiet gem of a recording, where synthesizer technology becomes nostalgic with the warm feeling of reminiscence, like mystical tales spoken in the glow of a video display terminal. There are no words, but each tone poem has a story to tell, an environment to establish with electronic shenais, nightmare interludes, and pastoral tunes whistled in the distance. It is, in fact, everything to which New Age music should aspire. db

and Sonny and Trane, and his muscular soprano on the title cut is a spectacular update of Bechet. He pushes the old melody to some very untraditional places, as Al Foster and Ron Carter create a fire-and-ice backdrop.

Even better is the bebop reworking of Gershwin's *Strike Up The Band*, which fades in on a furious walk by Charnett Moffett. Marsalis starts out cool, playing angular runs and alluding to the melody. He builds a swirling line around Larry Willis' piano punctuations, then abruptly downshifts into half-time. The rhythm section stretches behind him, then they snap out of it together and swing to the end. It's a neat trick, one that shows just how bold Branford Marsalis the *player* can be. It would be nice if Branford Marsalis the *leader* showed the same kind of audacity. He's proven here he can bridge jazz styles from 1920 to 1960—why stop there? I don't think a fusion album is necessarily the answer, but let's hope for something a little more daring next time.

—jim roberts



DENNY ZEITLIN

HOMECOMING—Living Music 0011: *FIRST LIGHT; HOMECOMING; WALTZ FOR JOSEPHINE; MORNING TOUCH; HYMN; JUST PASSING BY; BRAZILIAN STREET DANCE; MILLPOND; MAYFLY; QUIET NOW.*

Personnel: Zeitlin, piano.

★ ★ ★ ★

PAUL HALLEY

PIANOSONG—Living Music 0009: *PIANOSONG; KITES IN THE WIND; SEPTEMBER NOCTURNE; MEADOWS OF LOOSE HORSES; MOONS OF JUPITER; FISHERMAN; ST. LEONID; THE ROAD TAKEN; WITHIN THE MIND OF THOMAS; ANTHEM.*

Personnel: Halley, piano, pipe organ.

★ ★

Both of these releases by this pair of solo keyboardists were co-produced by Paul Winter for Living Music. There their similarities end. Denny Zeitlin, as we've come to expect, gives us an ongoing, fluid dialog between mind and instrument, done with more than a usual helping of wistful, reflective moods, held in a delicate balance of thought and feeling. It's a measure of Zeitlin's subtle skill as an improviser that repeated listenings are required to delineate where Zeitlin's thematic material ends and his improvisations begin, so organic is his conception. This quality gives an aura of freshness to Zeitlin's music—with the exception of

his tranquil *Quiet Now* there is seemingly nothing premeditated in his work. On *Waltz For Josephine*—and throughout—Zeitlin's poised intensity makes lines seem to grow out of themselves as his music follows the fine thread of his invention. This music invites the listener into a freely associative conversation with its substance, both logical and intuitive as he openly allows his lines to weave where they will. And if the vision of the fiery pianist of *Cathexis* has mellowed into comfortable maturity, it's the listener's gain, for the pleasures of Zeitlin's reflective moods are many.

Paul Halley, organist and choirmaster at New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine and member of the Paul Winter Consort, apparently begins with quite different premises regarding keyboard improvisation than does Zeitlin. In this collection of totally spontaneous pieces he opts for repose over tension, similarity over diversity, and the intelligible over the tangential. At first, as on *Pianosong*, his role as "a balladeer of songs without words" seems poised, open, and fresh, but his vision soon turns monochromatic as the listener waits for something—anything—to transpire. Worse, as on *Kites In The Wind*, Halley hands us melodic and harmonic commonplaces as though they were profundities, naively portioning out his themes in too palatable little morsels, continuously playing down to his listeners. Never were consonances quite so cloying. As we wait for a catharsis that never comes, we may well conclude that there is less here, far less, than meets the ear.

—jon balleras



ART FARMER/BENNY GOLSON JAZZTET

BACK TO THE CITY—Contemporary 14020: *BACK TO THE CITY; FROM DREAM TO DREAM; WRITE SOON; VAS SIMEON; SPEAK LOW; WITHOUT DELAY/TIME SPEAKS.*

Personnel: Farmer, flugelhorn; Golson, tenor saxophone; Curtis Fuller, trombone; Mickey Tucker, piano; Ray Drummond, bass; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

On tv these days, reunions of classic teams are depressing affairs: Old Masters appear awfully decrepit. But the reborn Jazztet combines the best of old and new. In a front line first yoked together almost three decades ago, three horns blend in seamless phrasing and harmony. A new rhythm section keeps them hopping.

You may not have noticed, but for several years now Benny Golson has been hitting new peaks as a player. His sound has both ripened

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Photo by Rob Fraser

and gotten more various—now betraying an exaggerated pre-bop vibrato, now a tone as rich as a bassoon's or thick as backwoods coffee. He catches the elegance and poise of the classic Hawkins, but there's also a guttural, gutbucket element in his playing—and in Curtis Fuller's. (Beats me why Fuller gets inferior billing in this band.) When Curtis spreads on

that buttery tone, his burnish and Art Farmer's are splendidly matched. But Farmer, like Fuller, can play either discreet colorist or brassy declaimer.

The oldest guy in the rhythm section—Mickey Tucker, who's found a home here—is seven years younger than Fuller, the Jazztet's youngest vet. The snap of that rhythm team

spurs on the horns. Marvin Smith is as animated as he can be without rising above a low conversational level. Ray Drummond remains one of the most restlessly probing and authoritative bass walkers around.

Appropriately, given the Jazztet's assured blend of old virtues and fresh blood, the program gives classics a facelift. The incantatory

BACK TO THE FUTURE

by Kevin Whitehead

It figures that George Russell and Gil Evans would receive belated recognition in an era of stylistic rediscoveries; they are the most comprehensive of jazz orchestrators. Russell's best music incorporates everything from drum choirs' sonic webs to funk bass, feeding equally on modes, altered chords, and polytonal dissonance. Evans continues to deploy electronics with a subtlety and textural sense that makes even the revered Zawinul sound downright cheesy. Indeed, without being tagged as funksters, these veterans put electricity and dance rhythms to better use than anyone writing for large ensembles.

Still, they're not getting any younger, and one may be forgiven the indiscretion of wondering whom among younger arrangers will carry the torch. Often building on Russell's and Evans' contributions, a few writers offer hope for the era—far in the future, we hope—after these giants have left the field.

George Russell's inclusive spirit invigorated Blue Note's fine *African Game* (BN 85103) of a couple of years back, despite the players' greenness. The looser ends of the same 1983 Boston concert appear on *So What* (Blue Note 85132). The conductor/composer's electro-acoustic band—22 players—is given room to stretch out in less-restrictive environments than *The African Game's*. But the modal planes of *So What* (including an orchestrated Miles solo) and Carla Bley's *Rhymes* put particular pressure on soloists, and this young squad isn't imposing enough to dominate the terrain. On a previous Soul Note recording of the elaborate, sidelong suite *Time Spiral*, George's New York Band was less tightly drilled but had more personality. Russell's best work is more texturally and thematically complex, more stimulating to soloists than are these relatively uncomplicated settings. *So What* is minor George.

Gil Evans' repertoire on the two-fer *Live At Sweet Basil* (Gramavision 18-8610-1) hints at the breadth of his tastes: there are two tunes each by Mingus and Hendrix. Though we think of Evans as a master of airy textures—conservator and inheritor of Claude Thornhill's chords that hang like clouds—his band here roars. *Voodoo Chile* pivots on a thunderous synth/guitar/bass/tuba bottom, seemingly inspired by the sheer mass of Hendrix' amplified sound,

and the way Mingus dominated his bands from below. Gil appears to be writing not so much for the individual players who float through his Monday Night Orchestra (14 strong here) as for the New York school from which they're drawn; the music has a curious Manhattan-provincial air. Altoist Chris Hunter captures David Sanborn's sound and sense of pacing with striking fidelity on *Goodbye Pork-Pie Hat* (reminding us by proxy that no one showcases Sanborn better than Evans does). This casual blowing band doesn't achieve Mingus' momentum, however, not even on *Orange Was The Color Of Her Dress*, where tenorist George Adams' heated sentiment over sweet sax cascades evokes Chas' spirit. A spontaneously conducted freewheeling workshop isn't the perfect vehicle for conveying Evans' mastery of chord voicings and harmonic nuance. In this electrified context—with Hiram Bullock on guitar, Pete Levin on synth, and Mark Egan on bass—fine detail gets lost.

Unlike these elder statesmen, Italian composer/arranger/conductor **Dino Betti van der Noot** forsakes electronics on *Here Comes Springtime* (Soul Note 1149), for the most part without loss of visceral wallop. Virtuoso command of voicings suggests earlier Gil as an inspiration; Dino's Evanescent feel for varied, disembodied harmony makes his charts coloristically richer if less startling than Willem Breuker's or Mathias Ruegg's. Betti van der Noot's band swings more lightly than Breuker's *Kollektief* or Ruegg's *VAO*, and his charts are more apt to be delicate—waltzes, ballads, pastorales. Soft or hard, they're spearheaded by guest sax soloist Donald Harrison, whose unforced inclusiveness marks him as perhaps the most impressive of '80s Messengers modernists—he appreciates both Johnny Hodges' lyricism and Jimmy Lyons' motility. Dino and Donald remind us that big bands may never sound better than when a splendid soloist comes to the fore.

The **David Murray** Big Band looks back, too. *Live At Sweet Basil, Volume 2* (Black Saint 0095) offers a cogent defense of New York's kaleidoscopic neo-classicism. This high-spirited 11tet combines Kansas City's unfettered swing and spontaneous riffs, a Ducal wealth of quirky, earthy players (like jungle brassmen Olu Dara, Baikida Carroll, and Craig Harris—not to mention Steve Coleman, Bob Stewart, and Fred Hopkins), and a Mingus talent for making a big band sound as pleasantly unruly as a hamfat combo. *David's Tune* pointedly suggests the first two bars from Mingus' *Pork-Pie Hat*; on *Roses*, the band plays a dirge to the cemetery and then blues-marches home.

More clearly, I think, than on the somewhat ragged *Volume 1*, one hears the fruits of conductor Butch Morris' impromptu arranging: horns ground-swell to blue crescendos, then vanish to make room for a soloist. This band's as nimble as it is rambunctious; Billy Higgins—no surprise—can steer an orchestra as easily as he does a trio. But next time, David, don't hog so much of the solo space.

The New Orchestra of **Charles Austin** and **Joe Gallivan** aims for a diverse unity/unified diversity not unlike Russell's, on *Ailana* (Hannibal 1314)—surely no other band boasts three bata drummers and two lyricon blowers. Synthesist Gallivan and reedman Austin layer George Bishop's snarling bass clarinet over synthesizer washes and tribal drums (*Archipelago*), and assign a traditional walking bass line to a plugged-in keyboard (*Space Monkeys*). The gratifying ethnic/electronic mix may remind you of Weather Report or Jon Hassell; like them, the Orchestra sometimes gets overly mellow, but such lapses are few and relatively minor. As in the Afro-percussion ensembles this unit often emulates, parts fit together so snugly that the group may sound smaller than the sum of its parts—a reminder that big bands don't have to sound big to be effective.

Most puzzling of these LPs is the **Vladimir Chekasin** Big Band's *New Vitality—Live in Vilnius* (Leo 142). While the Soviet's allegedly reject Western models, here the Ganelin Trio's altoist revels in them, excerpting from more jazz standards in 51 minutes than Johnny Griffin, Willem Breuker, and Dexter Gordon combined quote from in a week. *New Vitality* is a 360° music experience, interweaving sweet and hot, inside and outside, pre- and post-bop, original and found material; its tone wavers between broad comedy and straight seriousness. Chekasin seems to celebrate the diversity of the jazz tradition even as he subtly mocks it; what are we to make of a segue from *C Jam Blues* directly into *Rock Around The Clock*? Elevation of the latter? Denigration of the former? There are no answers here, only questions. But there's nothing ambiguous about the fervid saxophony of Chekasin and/or the young Lithuanians Vitas Labutis and Pyatar Vishnyauskas. Like the rest of this well-rehearsed big band, they display formidable chops and a remarkable feel for disparate material. Still, the suite's fascination lies more in its defiance of rational analysis than in the playing; it's as elusive as it is allusive. Unlike the other sessions surveyed here, however, this brain-teaser contains no apparent clues to big bands' future progress. Entertaining as it is, it leads to a dead end. **db**

Vas Simeon is Golson's pass at *So What's* impressionable changes. His *Back To The City* is a deftly constructed modal blower, escalating excitement is built in, via a shapely, upward-modulating riff.

Like the members of the MJQ, Farmer, Fuller, and Golson seem to have developed a new appreciation for one another by parting company for a while. Returning, they mesh better than ever. These horn men aren't learning many new tricks, but they keep well ahead of the pups at their heels. They thrive on the stimulation. —kevin whitehead



DIANE SCHUUR

TIMELESS—GRP 1030: *HOW LONG HAS THIS BEEN GOING ON; EASY TO LOVE; COME RAIN OR COME SHINE; HOW ABOUT ME; DO NOTHING TIL YOU HEAR FROM ME; A TIME FOR LOVE; I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH ME; PLEASE SEND ME SOMEONE TO LOVE; IMPOSSIBLE; DON'T LIKE GOODBYES.*

Personnel: Schuur, vocals; Chuck Findley, Jerry Hey, Gary Grant, Warren Luening, trumpets; Charlie Loper, Bill Reichenbach, Bill Watrous, Tommy Johnson, trombone; Bill Perkins, Tom Scott, Pete Christlieb, Gary Herbig, Jack Nimitz, Stan Getz, reeds; Randy Kerber, Mike Lang, Dave Grusin, keyboards; Chuck Domanico, Chuck Berghoffer, bass; Lee Ritenour, guitar; Ann Stockton, harp; Steve Schaeffer, drums; unidentified string section.

★ ★ ★ ★

LINDA RONSTADT

FOR SENTIMENTAL REASONS—Asylum 9-60474-1-E: *WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR; BEWITCHED; YOU GO TO MY HEAD; BUT NOT FOR ME; MY FUNNY VALENTINE; I GET ALONG WITHOUT YOU; AM I BLUE; FOR SENTIMENTAL REASONS; STRAIGHTEN UP AND FLY RIGHT; LITTLE GIRL BLUE; ROUND MIDNIGHT.*

Personnel: Ronstadt, vocals; Warren Luening, trumpet; Chauncey Welsch, trombone; Plas Johnson, Bud Shank, tenor saxophone; Don Grolnick, piano; Bob Mann, Dennis Budimir, guitar; Bob Magnasson, Ray Brown, bass; John Guerin, Louie Bellson, drums; unidentified orchestra.

★ ★ ★ ★

Although Linda Ronstadt's collaborations with Nelson Riddle have received their share of high marks, I still hear a surprising amount of snideness from some critics who roll their eyes at any suggestion that her treatment of classic pop standards be taken seriously. "Her phras-

ing . . ." they say, as if they've just taken a slow drag on a lemon.

I can't agree. Here's why. The 20th century American Songbook represents in equal parts the arts of composition and interpretation. It's the golden mean between rock and blues, which is, say, five percent content and 95 percent performance; and classical, where the performer is the servant of the composer. Its literature is endowed with an inherent openness that allows it to be reinvented and reevaluated by succeeding generations without swallowing up the integrity of the composition. There's nothing immutable about phrasing in the halls of American pre-rock popular music. It's what the singer says it is. And artists from Billie Holiday to Judy Garland have made their statements stick on their own terms. Sure, you can have a favorite version of a certain song, but you're sticking your neck out if you dare pronounce it definitive—another definition is always lurking just around the next decade. The history of the America song is a history of shifting interpretations of constantly revisited classics. To deny Ronstadt or Carly Simon (whose *Torch* LP was promptly snuffed, despite some exquisite work) their shot is to deny the user-friendly nature of our greatest music.

For Sentimental Reasons is excellent Ronstadt, notwithstanding a couple of invasive ringers. It works best when Riddle's Impressionistic pastels outline the text, which Ronstadt renders more or less verbatim. A

contrapuntal piano or guitar line or a brief, marking-time trombone or tenor solo reminds us that the spirit of jazz hovers just beneath the surface here. But the orchestrations take some unexpected turns as well. The last track on side one, for instance—*My Funny Valentine*—has 19th century string quartet implications, reminiscent of the Riddle/Sinatra *Close To You* album of 1957. The only disappointments are the title track, which incorporates a male vocal quartet that instantly pollutes the mood with a dated doo-wah kitsch, and *Straighten Up And Fly Right*, a '40s novelty tune that recalls the last gasps of the big band era at its worst. Yet, when Ronstadt sings *'Round Midnight* or *Bewitched* or *But Not For Me*, she sets the songs aglow. One can feel chills of pride simply being in the presence of such extraordinary works of American music.

The jazz feel that lurks in the shadows in Ronstadt's carefully sculptured performances comes into the full light of day in an otherwise comparable album from Diane Schuur called *Timeless*. If Ronstadt's literalism sets the composers on a pedestal, Schuur asserts a respectful interpretative license that loosens up the material a bit, but without violating the guidelines set by arrangers Johnny Mandel, Billy May, Pat Williams, and Jerry Lubbock.

The difference in approach comes down to this, I think: Ronstadt approaches the song as an actress. Schuur as a musician. Her voice is full of subtle, sometimes pointed nuances of intonation. Hints of Sarah Vaughan are peering

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through all the time on the uptempo pieces, which Schuur tickles, jostles, and bends without twisting into all-out jazz abstractions. Mostly, the songs are absolutely top-drawer, from Irving Berlin to Steve Allen, and the tempos are varied and true. The weakest title is *Please Send Me Someone To Love*. The background singers and gospel touches are out of balance with the otherwise sophisticated material. I would like to have heard *I'll Always Always Be In Love With You* instead. The melody has a similar shape, but is far, far better. And one of these days, someone will think of doing the last eight bars of the already overdone *Do Nothing 'Til You Hear From Me* as an ethereal lullaby, rather than an up-to-the-gallery aria.

—john mcdonough



STEPHANE GRAPPELLI

LIVE IN SAN FRANCISCO—BlackHawk 51601: *I'VE GOT RHYTHM*; *FASCINATING RHYTHM*; *LET'S FALL IN LOVE*; *SWING '42*; *HONEYSUCKLE ROSE*; *YOU ARE THE SUNSHINE OF MY LIFE*; *MINOR SWING*; *HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE*; *ST. LOUIS BLUES*; *THEM THERE EYES*; *AFTER YOU'VE GONE*.

Personnel: Grappelli, violin; Martin Taylor, electric guitar; Diz Disley, acoustic guitar; Jack Sewing, bass.

★ ★ ★ ★

The great groups cast long shadows. It's been more than 50 years since Stephane Grappelli and Django Reinhardt formed the Quintet of the Hot Club of France, but Grappelli's music today is still faithful to the sound of that band. Significantly, Grappelli's working group in recent years has been a quartet, not a quintet—Reinhardt's chair will always remain unfilled. His spirit is much in evidence on this record, though, in the choice of material, the sound of Diz Disley's Maccacferri guitar, and the unrelenting swing of the music.

The tunes were recorded at two concerts in July 1982, and the sound is bright and clear. Although the album has few surprises, it's a fine documentation of the contemporary Grappelli sound. Always an engaging melodist, the violinist has become increasingly subtle in his use of rhythm. Just listen to *Honeysuckle Rose*, a tune Grappelli has undoubtedly played thousands of times. His rubato intro is elusive (what tune is this?) yet powerful, and the band seems to fall in almost magically behind the violin. After several choruses of warm, relaxed swing, the quartet breaks into the original Hot Club tempo, with the guitars chunking out rapid upbeats behind Grappelli's intricate improvisations. There's no wasted effort—the song is over in three-and-a-half minutes—and it's an excellent example of Grappelli's masterful abil-

ity to build a new house from old bricks.

Grappelli sounds very comfortable reworking his old favorites (the Gershwin tunes, *Minor Swing*, *After You've Gone*), but the contemporary songs cramp his style. His reading of the Lennon/McCartney ballad *Here, There And Everywhere* is soupy, and he leaves most of the soloing on *You Are The Sunshine Of My Life* to electric guitarist Martin Taylor. The problem with the pop tunes, of course, is that they don't swing. Given a pure eight-to-the-bar cushion, Grappelli is uncanny, swooping up and down the fingerboard and carving out long, fluid, floating-in-air runs. He was 74 when these tunes were recorded, but his energy frequently leaves his younger accompanists in the dust.

Guitarist Taylor, the "modernist" in the group, is a low-key contrast to Grappelli's exuberance. That's a neat reversal, since Grappelli once played Hal to Reinhardt's Hotspur. Taylor's post-bop chording is quietly effective, but his solos are scattered and unfocused. Diz Disley, whose mellow acoustic tone belies his wild-and-woolly approach, is much more captivating. On *After You've Gone*, he builds from daring single-note runs to a tantalizing chord-melody section that gradually *decelerates* back into the melody and then rockets off again as the crowd goes nuts. Somehow, I think Django would have approved.

—jim roberts



TALKING HEADS

TRUE STORIES—Sire 25512-1: *LOVE FOR SALE*; *PUZZLIN' EVIDENCE*; *HEY NOW*; *PAPA LEGBA*; *WILD WILD LIFE*; *RADIO HEAD*; *DREAM OPERATOR*; *PEOPLE LIKE US*; *CITY OF DREAMS*.

Personnel: David Byrne, guitar, vocals; Jerry Harrison, keyboards, guitar, vocals; Tina Weymouth, bass, vocals; Chris Frantz, drums; Paulinho da Costa, percussion (cuts 3, 4, 6, 8); Tommy Morrell, pedal steel (8, 9); Bert Cross Choir (2); St. Thomas Aquinas Elementary School Choir (3), vocals; Steve Jordan, accordion (6); Tommy Camfield, fiddle (8).

★ ★ ★

SOUNDS FROM TRUE STORIES—Sire 25515-1: *COCKTAIL DESPERADO*; *ROAD SONG*; *FREEWAY SON*; *BROWNIE'S THEME*; *MALL MUZAK*; *DINNER MUSIC*; *DISCO HITS!*; *CITY OF STEEL*; *LOVE THEME FROM TRUE STORIES*; *FESTA PARA UM REI NEGRO*; *BUSTER'S THEME*; *SOY DE TEJAS*; *I ♥ METAL BUILDINGS*; *GLASS OPERATOR*.

Personnel: Byrne, guitar, bass (7, 12); Terry Allen and The Panhandle Mystery Band (1); Greg Barber, bassoon (2); Robin May, oboe (2); Jim Pukey, clarinet, bass clarinet (2); Charlie McCarthy, flute, alto flute, piccolo (2); Dick Bright, violins (3, 13); Joe Goldmark, pedal steel (3, 12);

Phil Aalberg, piano (3, 4); Steve Erquiaga, guitar (3, 4); Rich Girard, bass (3, 4); Steve Mitchell, drums (3, 4); Michael Spiro, percussion (3, 7); Carl Finch, accordion (5, 11); David Harrington, John Sherba, violin (5); Hank Dutt, viola (5); John Jeanrenoud, cello (5); Marcella De Cray, harp (5, 9); Charles Judge, keyboards (7); piano (12); Emulator cello (13); Prairie Prince, drums (7, 12); Tommy Morrell, pedal steel (8); Jerry Harrison, piano (8); Tina Weymouth, bass (8); Chris Frantz, drums (8); Paul Groff, concertina (9); Fernando Torres, pan flute (9); Banda Eclipse (10); Steve Jordan, accordion, guitar, bass (11); Steve Jordan Jr., drums (11); Michael McClain, keyboards (11); Terry Hinely, glasses (13).

★ ★ ★

No matter how many times I listen to it, I'm still not sure exactly what to make of it. Not the soundtrack or score to the movie of the same name, where these tunes are performed by actors, *True Stories* presents the Talking Heads takes on songwriter Byrne's latest efforts. But as they ramble and lurch from one musical attitude to the next, the overall effect recalls that strange creature, the novelization of a screenplay.

The problem is more with the material than with the performances. *Little Creatures* abandoned the punk/funk Africanisms the Heads had cultivated with such success from *Fear Of Music* to *Speaking In Tongues*, and turned instead to pop-song structures. But it didn't just regurgitate those forms; striking an engaging balance between well-crafted tunes and manic abandon, the Heads shot that LP through with catchy hooks and Byrne's loopy visionary lunacy. Now, Byrne's hiccupping, off-balance vocalizing is as weirdly charged on *True Stories* as ever, and the band lays down some fine grooves, but the lyrics substitute a confused identification with his movie's heart-land characters and their town for the schizoid land mapped and inhabited by *Little Creatures*. Byrne seems to want to have his cake and eat it too. On the one hand, his narrators are supposed to be somehow representative of their peer groups, as in *People Like Us*, where he sings, "People like us who will answer the telephone/People like us growing big as a house/Are gonna make it because/We don't want freedom/We don't want justice/We just want someone to love." Is this supposed to be taken at face value? And if it is, how do you reconcile the next verse: "I was called upon in my third-grade class/I gave my answer and it caused a fuss/I'm not the same as everyone else/And times are hard for people like us?" Like who?

Maybe the album's selling so well because of the movie; maybe it's the (ironic?) yuppified pic on the inner sleeve of the band in suits and ties and pearls; or maybe it's due to the easy recognizability of the many musical styles they appropriate here. There's punkish guitar bashing and nasal Rotten vocal (*Love For Sale*). Sir Douglas Quintet-type border rock leavened with gospel (*Puzzlin' Evidence*), modified second-line and Caribbean syncopations (*Hey Now*), lowdown percussive hoodoo (*Papa Legba*), Cars-y new wave (*Wild Wild Life*), c&w (*People Like Us*), and so on. What seems an enticing list of prospects, though, never really develops into more than a roving musical tour.

Which—perhaps ironically—brings us to the actual soundtrack for *True Stories*. Composed mainly by Byrne but performed by a multitude of others, this LP fits with Byrne's earlier work like *Music For The Knee Plays* or *The Catherine Wheel*, and within that context works more successfully than the Talking Heads' effort. Sporting a spacious tonal palette, *Sounds* offers an intriguing if not always successful mix of the playful and the exploratory. As his work with Eno on *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts* demonstrated, Byrne can, like the Impressionists with Japan and the Cubists with Africa, go into an alien culture and adapt it to his own uses without mindlessly plundering it.

And that's more or less what he does here with pieces of Americana. The ironic whimsy of a tune like *Cocktail Desperadoes* works precisely because it's not played by Talking Heads, but by folks who don't have to lug any self-conscious baggage with them to the studio when they sing lines about Yankees. A collaboration with Meredith Monk yields a minimalist bit (the sardonically titled *Road Song*) essayed by gentle woodwinds; a clave-flavored cocktail (*Freeway Son*) easily evokes the wide-open images of the film segment it supports; a touch of noir (*Brownie's Theme*) suggests suspense without dread; a tripartite blanding of Tex-Mex motifs (*Mall Muzak*) immediately renders its images with startling clarity; a collusion of gospel and Baroque (*Dinner Music*) is pursued by avant-faves the Kronos Quartet with some interesting results.

Thus ends side one, but you get the picture. It may not be a major breakthrough, but *Sounds* samples some that are new for Byrne.

—gene santoro

Blythe, alto saxophone; Chico Freeman, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, voice; Kirk Lightsey, piano; Cecil McBee, bass; Don Moye, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

If the LP is not replaced on a mass-market scale by the CD for reasons of superior sound reproduction, the longer playing times offered by the CD should trigger the change. The Leader's exceptional, though frustrating, debut is a case in point.

The 40-45 minute capacity of the LP accommodates, luckily, the bristling 13-minute reading of Arthur Blythe's *Miss Nancy*, a joyful strut with Monkish echoes. The synergy of performers, material, and the duration of performance required to transcend blowing-session platitudes is very much in evidence. *Miss Nancy* has the stuff of an enduring, classic jazz performance.

However, there are two other performances that have been truncated by the time constraints of the LP, pieces that, allowed greater



CHICO FREEMAN

THE PIED PIPER—BlackHawk 50801: *THE PIED PIPER*; *THE ROSE TATOO*; *BLUES ON THE BOTTOM*; *MONK 2000*; *SOFTLY AS IN A MORNING SUNRISE*; *AMOR SONA DOR*.

Personnel: Freeman, tenor, alto, soprano, soprano saxophone, bass clarinet, C flute, bass flute; John Purcell, alto, baritone saxophone, oboe, alto flute, piccolo; Kenny Kirkland (cuts 2, 3, 5, 6), Mark Thompson (1, 4), piano; Cecil McBee, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

THE LEADERS

MUDFOOT—BlackHawk 52001: *MISS NANCY*; *ELABORATIONS*; *MIDNITE TRAIN*; *FREEDOM SWING SONG*; *SONG OF HER*; *MUDFOOT*; *CUPID*.

Personnel: Lester Bowie, trumpet; Arthur

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playing time, may very well have equalled the power of *Miss Nancy*. Sam Cooke's *Cupid* is transformed into an in-the-pocket melting pot of reggae and funk, what Lester Bowie has coined avant-pop; yet, it is disfigured by a fade out that serves no musical purpose. *Midnite Train* is a pungent, pulsating collective improvisation with a Milesian aura, circa *Bitches Brew*, that, at under four minutes, has a nagging inconclusiveness when compared to the title piece, whose more visceral vamp-anchored groove is given almost twice the playing time to be developed.

Still, producers Chico Freeman and Herb Wong have made the best of the circumstances, accommodating spin-offs such as Blythe's *Elaborations*, a pensive duet for the altoist and Kirk Lightsey, and Cecil McBee's *Song Of Her*, which reiterates Freeman's creamy-smooth balladry in a quartet setting. Coincidentally, the most compacted, engrossing composition of the four—clocking in at under five minutes—is Freeman's *Freedom Swing Song*, which layers angular phrases and surging rhythms in an intriguing manner. Much of *The Pied Piper* also succeeds with the

approach employed on *Freedom* . . . , particularly the title piece, where Freeman and former Special Edition front-line partner John Purcell layer 11 wind instruments with richly textured, yet propulsive, results.

Freeman has also programmed a bright mix of standards and blowing vehicles on *The Pied Piper*. Especially with the ever-explosive Elvin Jones stoking the fires, *Softly As In A Morning Sunrise* is apt to evoke stock Coltrane-ish images, which Freeman nimbly sidesteps by relying more on the Rollins side of the tenor coin in this flagwaving reading. Freeman's knack of making sensual latinate pieces more sinewy than sunny is again in evidence on John Stubblefield's *Amar* . . . , a feature for the leader's soprano.

Second BlackHawk releases are anticipated by Freeman on his own, and with The Leaders, for different reasons; the structural shortcomings of *Mudfoot* need to be resolved, while the balance Freeman has struck on *The Pied Piper* should become even more impressive.

—bill shoemaker

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ATLANTIC: Big Joe Turner, *Rhythm & Blues Years*. Various Artists, *Atlantic Honkers*. Esther Phillips, *Set Me Free*. Hiram Bullock, *From All Sides*. Ahmad Jamal, *Live At The Montreal Jazz Festival 1985*. Nancy Reed, *Nancy Reed*.

VERVE: Glenn Miller, *In Hollywood*. Fred Astaire, *The Irving Berlin Songbook*. Dinah Washington, *The Bessie Smith Songbook*.

ENJA: Chet Baker, *Strollin'*. Mark Helias, *Split Image*. Conexion Latina, *Calorcito*. Bennie Wallace/The Blues Ensemble Of Biloxi/The Wings Of Song, *Sweeping Through The City*. John Stubblefield, *Bushman Song*.

WINDHAM HALL: Wim Mertens, *Close Cover*. Various Artists, *The Shape Of The Land*. Kelly McGillis/Michael Hedges, *Santabear's First Christmas*.

NARADA: Michael Jones/Gabriel Lee/David Lanz, *Narada Sampler #1*. David Lanz/Michael Jones, *Solstice*. Spencer Brewer/Nancy Rumbel/Eric Tingstad, *Emerald*.

FLYING FISH: Memphis Rockabilly Band, *Betty Jean*. Vassar Clements, *Hillbilly Jazz Rides Again*. Tom Chapin, *Let Me Back Into Your Life*. Robin Williamson, *Legacy Of The Scottish Harpers, Vol. 2*. Tom Ball/Kenny Sultan, *Bloodshot Eyes*. Kevin Roth, *Voyages*.

UPSCALE CDs

As the compact disc continues to hurtle toward being the music reproduction medium of choice, record companies are mining their catalogs for product that had wide consumer appeal the first time around and that technically would make a "sound" transfer to CD. After all, that's why the record buyer is willing to spend \$15-plus for a CD rather than half that for its analog counterpart—and make no mistake, today's consumer is discriminating.

Ideally, the music should have played well with the young, upwardly mobile crowd—people with lots of leisure dollars, who would waste no time in integrating a compact disc player into their hi-fi systems. Perhaps with this market in mind, MCA has released a CD batch from Spyro Gyra, The Crusaders, John Klemmer, and three new electric bands who have absorbed these accessible jazz/rock fusion influences from the late 1970s to the present; along with the latest developments in digital recording and electronic musical instruments.

Spyro Gyra's releases encompass much of the band's output since 1980, beginning with *Catching The Sun* (MCA D-1487 JVC-429). *Sun*, with its hit title tune, utilizes a multi-level musical backdrop including strings, latin percussion, and a horn section featuring solos by Randy Brecker. *Incognito* (MCA D-5368 JVC-487) was released in 1982, with Steve Gadd, Toots Thielemans, Will Lee, Hiram Bullock, and Tom Scott contributing to the musical visions of Spyro saxophonist Jay Beckenstein and keyboardist Tom Schuman. The music leans latin as the band continues to blend in more electronic instruments. Remember, the MIDI boom was still some 18 months in the future. *Alternating Currents* (MCA D-5606 DIDX-388), digitally mastered and recorded in 1985, is a lightly swinging, easy-listening edition of Spyro Gyra's finely tuned approach to its patented jazz-fusion formula. The focus is on Beckenstein's soprano sax virtuosity, with consistently fluid performances by keyboardist Schuman, guitarist Julio Fernandez, drummer Richie Morales, and Dave Samuels on vibraphone and marimba. Samuels, through all of the band's work, has always given the group a distinctive musical texture, and he contributes considerably to *Breakout* (MCA D-5753 JVC-507), Spyro's newest, also digitally recorded and mastered with the addition of the Synclavier. It features the band's core group (Beckenstein, Schuman, Morales, bassist Kim Stone, and percussionist Manolo Badrena) putting together a smooth, ever-so-controlled edition of its familiar jazz-rock-latin fusion. It continues to be a broadly appealing formula.

At the end of the 1970s **The Crusaders** launched a number of special projects on



The Crusaders



Spyro Gyra

their own label. Produced by Joe Sample, Stix Hooper, and Wilton Felder, these Crusader Productions were meticulously recorded and pressed on virgin vinyl. Four have been re-released on CD. Leading the list is *Royal Jam* (MCA D-8017 SAN-456), recorded live in 1982 with B. B. King and the London Philharmonic Orchestra at Festival Hall in London. It's 67 minutes mixing the Philharmonic, Sample on concert grand, The Crusaders with vocalist Josie James, and climaxing with the addition of B. B. King, in a truly royal jam.

Under his own name, **Joe Sample's** *Swing Street Cafe* (MCA CRDD-5785 JVC-475), with guitarist David T. Walker, is New Orleans r&b filtered through Memphis with a horn section—not unlike the Ray Charles/"Fathead" Newman band of the early '60s—with Sample on acoustic piano doing the likes of *Honky Tonk*, *C.C. Rider*, and *Hallelujah, I Love Her So*. Good time music at its happiest. Sample's *Carmel* (MCA 37210 DIDX-384), first released in 1979, is a pleasant menu of tunes that would play well in a Holiday Inn cocktail lounge. Meanwhile, The Crusader's *Street Life 300 S.* (MCA D-3694 DIDX-153), also originally released in 1979, adds voices, strings, and horns to the band's brand of Texas funk. Vocalist Randy Crawford performs the title hit to a beat that is decidedly disco-rock.

John Klemmer's *Barefoot Ballet* (MCA D-1583 JVC 518) and *Touch* (MCA D-37152 DIDX-379) are siblings. Perhaps

the forerunner of New Age—except the tenor saxophone has yet to break into that style—these recordings find Klemmer exploring highly melodic territory. His playing is relentlessly controlled and the setting is shimmering Mylar.

Perfect for compact disc are several new bands fusing jazz and rock and the latest in high-tech instruments and recording. **Skywalk's** *Silent Witness* (MCA ZEBD-5680) and *Bohemians* (MCA ZEBD 5715), a digital master, find the Spyro Gyra-influenced band blending jazz in a more-contemporary rock setting. *Witness* contains a most unusual version of John Coltrane's *Naima*. **Bohemians**, designed with your CD player in mind, lets you hear such exotic new sounds as those pulled from the Roland GR700 guitar-synth, the Emulator II and Akai 612 sampling systems, and digital keyboards like the DX7 and the Super Jupiter. The **Yellowjacket's** *Shades* (MCA D-5752 JVC-504), featuring Marc Russo's David Sanbornish alto sax, includes two additional cuts not on the LP, and plays for 56 minutes. **Cabo Frio's** *Right On The Money* (MCA ZEBD-5685), another digital master, features a talented young band consisting of Terrance Bruce on saxophones, Glen Cummings on guitar, Joey Santora's keyboards, bassist George Sessum, and Curtis Kendrick on drums, with an overdubbed horn section. The music is again out of the Spyro Gyra mold, though the compositions are mostly originals. —herb nolan

blindfold test

1 MULGREW MILLER.

POWELL'S PRANCES (from *WORK, Landmark*). Miller, piano; Charnett Moffett, bass; Terri Lynne Carrington, drums; Richie (or Bud) Powell, composer.

The first time I heard this tune it was played by Clifford Brown and Max Roach. The drummer could be Terri Lynne Carrington. In the solo I heard some things I've heard her play with Woody Shaw. The bass sounds like a bass; sound-wise and feel-wise I think it could be Charnett Moffett. I know that Mulgrew just did a trio record with them. The piano sounded good. It feels a little frantic. There are ways to play with drive and energy and spirit but still be relaxed. Intensity is not a reason for tension. Just for some young musicians to play this tune and try to do something else with it, and at this tempo, I'd give it four stars. I really admire Mulgrew. He's serious about music, and that's a vanishing commodity.

2 ELLINGTON/MINGUS/ROACH.

REM BLUES (from *MONEY JUNGLE, Blue Note*). Duke Ellington, piano, composer; Charles Mingus, bass; Max Roach, drums.

The drummer sounds like Philly Joe, but in a trio Philly Joe would play more breaks in the space the piano player is leaving, more call-and-response. Max Roach? The piano player sounds nice stylistically, but I can't really place him. The bassist has a nice bass-y sound that is increasingly rare these days. The drums are swinging and doing a lot of things coloristically and creatively. It could have been Max or Philly Joe. Four stars for the musicianship. It doesn't really strike me personality-wise. It sounds like a session; somebody brought some tunes. The playing is on a high level, but you've definitely stumped me. It sounds like these musicians haven't played together a lot, because the bass and drums weren't totally in-sync time-wise, although they were swinging. They were holding back a little, trying not to step on each other.

3 BARRY ALTSCHUL.

PAPA JO, KLOOK, AND PHILLY TOO (from *THAT'S NICE, Soul Note*). Glenn Ferris, trombone; Sean Bergin, saxophone; Andy McKee, bass; Altschul, drums, composer.

The drum solo up-front I didn't really care for. Some nice things were being played, but I didn't see a particular logic. It didn't really set up the tune. It just seemed an interspersing of quasi-bebop things, little Philly Joe things with the rims, a couple of little Elvin-ish rolls. When the tune came in, the composition was okay. As far as the blowing, it sounded like they were trying to get an Ornette type of ensemble. The drummer

JEFF WATTS

By Michael Bourne

When a drummer is swinging, the sound of a stick on a cymbal is something like "tain, tain, tain"—but that's not why drummer Jeff Watts is called Tain. "I don't know what it means," he said. "It was just dropped on me three or four years ago when I came to New York." Watts came to play with the Wynton Marsalis Quintet. "We started giving each other names. Mine is the only name that's been made public. Wynton's and Branford's and Kenny [Kirkland's] names have been kept relatively secret. We could have a sweepstakes for people to discover who's Steeplone and Skain and the Doctone."

Watts, 26, comes from Pittsburgh, where his original musical interests were orchestral. "I was more of a percussionist than a drummer," he said, "but I started to get more into the drum set. And naturally, whenever you try to pursue music on a high level as an American musician, that leads you to jazz." His interests led him to Berklee, where he encountered Branford Marsalis. And



MITCHELL SEIDEL

when Wynton wanted to form a band, Branford called Watts. "I feel very fortunate," he said, especially for the success he's enjoyed playing with the young superstars. Though his interplay with Wynton is extraordinary and essential to the excellence of Wynton's music, Watts feels quite modest. "I'm basically just trying to play the music," he said.

This was his first Blindfold Test. Watts was given no information about the recordings.

was trying to get an Ed Blackwell type of thing, but it wasn't really swinging like Ed Blackwell. When other people try to interpret what Ornette does, they usually just end up interspersing random ideas and arbitrary stuff with occasional little blues phrases. Ornette's stuff has more logic to it. The cat on drums sounded like he's a pretty good drummer and can function in a lot of different settings, but as far as this particular thing he sounded rushed. The solos and breaks bordered on being corny. When he was playing behind the solos it wasn't bad. I didn't really like the solos. It wasn't really swinging. The tune was cool, but I didn't really understand what they were trying to do. One-and-a-half stars.

4 BENNIE WALLACE.

FRESH OUT (from *TWILIGHT TIME, Blue Note*). Wallace, tenor saxophone, composer; John Scofield, guitar; Eddie Gomez, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

I guess they were trying to play some blues, but a lot of the blues feeling was left behind. I didn't really like the guitar player's tone, the things he was playing. It could be Mike Stern. I don't think it's John Scofield. He played a few more chords than Scofield would play.

The drummer started out okay. It was almost kind of swinging a little bit. I just feel a lot of drummers try to interact with the soloists and find themselves at a loss for

ideas comping-wise and resort to single-stroke rolls. That's cool for phrasing purposes. The roll is the only way a drummer can play a sustained note. But as a comping device, when it's used too much, when the drummer has both hands on the snare drum or going around the drums, a certain amount of swing is lost. It sounds like what they wanted him to play, so I guess it's appropriate. The drums didn't sound bad. The bass was from the cello-style of bass playing that's increasingly in abundance. I couldn't get with that at all. It's bass based on an amp sound as opposed to getting the wood to vibrate by pulling the strings. [A good bass sound comes] from the body of the instrument rather than the fingerboard and the strings—Ray Brown as opposed to Eddie Gomez, the leading proponent of the cello school these days.

The tenor player could be anybody, trying a David Murray type of avant garde thing. I don't really care for that. Whenever he wanted to play something that was out, he'd blow the same lick or same type of thing. As a blues, it fails. I'll give them two stars for coming to the date.

MB: What drummers would you give five stars?

JW: I'll always give Elvin Jones five stars, and Max Roach, Art Blakey, Roy Haynes, Billy Higgins, Ed Blackwell, Papa Jo, Philly Joe, always—basically anyone that can swing and have a dialog with the soloists and really make the music sound good. db

NATHAN EAST

THIS WEST COAST MVP STUDIO STAR TAKES PRIDE IN BEING ABLE TO COVER ALL BASSES.

by Robin Tolleson

“I love doing everything, and being all over,” says bassist Nathan East. “I’ve always wanted people to say, ‘Man, how did he get over here? Now he’s doing this.’”

East must be a happy man now because not even he can keep track of his tracks. For the last five years the bassist has filled his portfolio full of choice cuts, ranging from Chaka Khan’s *Through The Fire*, Whitney Houston’s *Saving All My Love For You*, and George Benson’s *Lady Love Me* to the Kenny Rogers/Sheena Easton duet *We’ve Got Tonight* and Philip Bailey/Phil Collins’ *Easy Lover*. He sails all the way through Jeff Lorber’s *It’s A Fact* album, adds some real subway notes to Sergio Mendes’ new Brasil 86 record, and when Lee Ritenour wanted a bassist for a live direct-to-half-inch analog instrumental album, *On The Line*, East got the call. The thumper may have some people scratching their heads over such a myriad of recording work, but his associates in the National Association of Recording Arts and Sciences are aware of what he’s doing—they’ve voted him MVP of bassists three years running.

East grew up in San Diego, CA, where he attended Crawford High School. He went on to earn a music performance degree on bass from the University of California in San Diego, and was getting ready to begin master’s degree work when a professor suggested he move to Los Angeles and start making some money from his craft. He met keyboardist Patrice Rushen when she played at The Baked Potato in Los Angeles, and she recommended him for a gig with Hubert Laws. He got a gig with Barry White in the late 1970s, and began working quite a bit with arranger Gene Page. Things snowballed from there.

“The hardest part is the attitude and the consistency—that means your instrument, your personality, your performance, your punctuality, getting along with people, your chemistry, your ability to interpret music in a very short time and get it onto tape with feeling—all of those things combined are the ingredients of a good studio musician,” says East. “And keeping all of those intact is a challenge.”

The bassist doesn’t feel that there is a “Nathan East sound”—at least he hopes there isn’t. “Certain players you hear and you can tell in one note, boom, that’s Abraham Laboriel, or that’s Anthony Jackson or Marcus Miller. I’ve noticed a development over the years of a sound, for instance when



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I pop or the way I attack the strings. I use basically two fingers when I play, and the thumb. And when I attack I usually like to put a little bit of fingernail in there too. I have a combination of fingernail and skin that I use to get a certain sound. I can notice my personality, but I’ve never tried to just corner a sound like Jaco, because I didn’t want to trap myself in a corner. In that situation, if you have a particular sound, everybody wants it, then they don’t want it anymore, then they don’t want *you* anymore. I’ve always tried to have the kind of sound that blends or fits into whatever the style of music. I’ve always tried to do what was good for the music,” East explains.

“I’ve done country & western dates—Dolly Parton—gone back and done the really funk r&b dates like the Isley Brothers, the Kenny Loggins pop-type things, and then I even did a Judas Priest date,” laughs the bassist. “The guys doing my cartage were cracking up, because I had three gigs that day. The first one was a Michelob jingle, the next one was Judas Priest, and the next was Jeffrey Osborne.” He had never played heavy metal before the Judas Priest gig, but was willing to give it a whirl. “It’s just a bunch of eighth notes, real simple,” he says.

East acknowledges the importance of being able to sight-read an intricate bass part on a studio date, and is glad he got his music degree. But in the real world he uses a couple of different tools. “I use my ears a lot, as a primary source of reference. I was a self-taught player—it was pretty much by ear, listening to records and radio and trying to copy Chuck Rainey or what James Jamerson was doing on an old Motown record. The reading came after playing in stage bands and jazz bands. So now it’s a combination of eyes and ears, and trying to vary the musical spectrum.

“I noticed when I first moved to Los Angeles that people have a tendency to try to stick you into one zone. I made a conscious decision, just based solely on wanting

to make a good living, that if I was going to be zoned, it would be more towards popular music—Top 40, pop, or r&b things that would keep me working. I wasn’t going for the jazz name, although I did play a lot of jazz. I love to play it, as I love to play all music. The number one thing is musicianship.”

The bassist plays a five-string electric instrument that he designed with the Yamaha engineers in Japan. It has a two-octave neck, and an extra low B string that he admits Anthony Jackson inspired. “Every time he would hit those low notes it would kill me,” he says. The bassist’s work load hasn’t been too seriously affected by the advent of synth bass, but the nature of his gig is sometimes different. “A lot of times people will want to double the synth bass, or have some pops in there, just to get a little more of a human feel, just to stray away from the machine. Chances are if there’s a synth bass there’s a drum machine and synthesizers, and people want to add some kind of human element to it. It’s usually beat-the-synth-bass time,” East laughs. “But I do feel fortunate to be working so much, because since I’ve heard so much synth bass lately I know there’s a lot of records being made with it and that’s money out of somebody’s pocket, work that could have been done.”

After doing so many sessions, it’s impossible for East to always follow a date through to its release. “I’ll hear something on the radio and say, ‘Man, that sounds familiar. Why do I know this song?’ Then I realize that I played on it,” he says. The sessions he seems to remember best are those where he’s gotten to write, help with an arrangement, or throw in some extra-funky bass part that kicks the rhythm section into high gear. He does just that on Lionel Richie’s *Love Will Find A Way*, composing a transition part while jamming in the studio. “I like to stick those things above the bass as kind of bass/guitar parts. I was in the studio playing around and listening to the track, and Greg Phillinganes and Lionel were in the control room listening. I started playing with that idea and they came running in, saying, ‘That has to go on the track.’ Those things just add another little flavor, and it’s a little fatter sound than the guitar.”

One of his biggest writing credits to date is a share of the Philip Bailey/Phil Collins hit *Easy Lover*. As the bassist recalls, “We were in the studio, and after eight songs it was like we were done, but Philip said, ‘We need an undeniable, recognizable hit. If I can just have that one undeniable one, it would be perfect.’ It was real spontaneous, and it was so easy. I just turned on the drum machine and sat down at the piano and sketched it out a little bit. There it was.”

Philip Bailey’s *Chinese Wall* and *Inside Out* LPs, and Eric Clapton’s *August*, are especially memorable to East because he worked with drummer/producer Phil Collins. “He just gets back there and plays,” East comments. “To play with him is a bass player’s

MARK
TREES?



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dream. I feel very fortunate to have been one of the guys that gets to record with him. It's just when you put your finger down there's the bass drum, and it's the fattest one you would ever want to hear. His approach to the drums is so easy to play with, it's almost like being on auto-pilot. It's so automatic."

East has begun trying his hand at the producer role on the demo level, a seemingly logical step for the bassist. "Hanging out with people like Quincy Jones and Arif Mardin, you keep the notebook out and take notes on these guys." The prolific 30-year-old admits to getting tired of the studio routine on occasion, and has found relief by

setting up temporary road residence with the Al Jarreau or Kenny Loggins bands. East enjoys the road for a while, but before long is itching to get back to Los Angeles and get working again. He could keep one cartage crew busy just picking up his awards. "The NARAS award is determined by your peers, so to get the respect from people who know what is going on is one of the highest honors," he says. "It's something you stick on the wall, and keep moving. Not to really dwell over."

East is a strong blend of seriousness and looseness, superb musicianship and great ears. He cares, but he can also let a project go. "I look at the whole business as pretty much a crap shoot," he says. "If you should hit the lucky number and get a hit, be thankful and keep steppin'. But I do get frustrated sometimes when special projects that you play on, that feel good and sound good, don't get the attention that other things do. Or when a masterpiece or work of art that could have been something big kind of gets lost in the shuffle. But you can't hold it against yourself if it doesn't fly, you've just got to keep going. It's a very interesting business to deal with mentally. Just not taking things too seriously helps keep me sane." **db**

DAVID TORN

STRADDLING JAZZ AND ROCK STYLES, THIS GUITAR INNOVATOR WANTS TO THROW A MONKEY WRENCH INTO HIS "ETHEREAL" REPUTATION.

by Bill Milkowski

There's a new breed of guitarist on the rise. They don't comp like Freddie Green and they don't solo like B. B. King. Drawing inspiration from such renegades as Pete Cosey, Sonny Sharrock, Fred Frith and, yes, Jimi Hendrix, they are taking a wholly different approach to the instrument. And in the process, they are discovering new techniques, new and decidedly unorthodox ways of realizing the otherworldly sounds in their heads. They are the "out" guitarists.

Bill Frisell, Vernon Reid, and Henry Kaiser can be included in this select circle of players. Their efforts have been well-documented on record and heralded in the press. But one "out" guitarist who has not received nearly as much attention as he deserves for his bold experiments is David Torn. The release of his latest album, *Cloud About Mercury* (ECM 831108), should change all that.

Torn's adventurous work with the Every-

man Band—1982's eponymously titled debut (ECM 1234) and their '85 followup, *Without Warning* (ECM 1290)—and on his own 1985 solo album, *Best Laid Plans* (ECM 1284), have been somehow lost in the shuffle of guitarists with larger reputations. But *Cloud About Mercury* will make people take notice—if only considering the big names involved in this project: Bill Bruford on drums, Tony Levin on bass and Stick, and Mark Isham on trumpet. It should knock critics and musicians for a loop. This record is frighteningly good. Perhaps now Torn will take his rightful place alongside his contemporaries.

A student of flamenco guitar at an early age, Torn gravitated toward rock and was eventually seduced by the psychedelic sounds of the '60s. "Cream, Hendrix, that sort of improvising format really attracted me," he recalls. "And I began jamming with a circle of friends who were into the same thing. Improvising just seemed like the thing to explore at the time."

He went through a period of not playing the guitar for a couple of years until he became re-inspired after hearing the Mahavishnu Orchestra for the first time. "Hearing John McLaughlin's group really made me want to pick up the guitar again. That idea of improvising within beautiful, complex compositions was very inspiring to me."

During a short stint at Berklee, while involved in some hard-rock bands, he became acquainted with bebop. "I played some gigs around Boston but I wasn't very good at

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it. I could never really phrase the way you're supposed to in bop. See, there's one school of thought in jazz that says you must be utterly familiar with the repertoire and the phrasing and everybody else's solos in order to play that music, and I couldn't do that. I tried like hell to study, but I could never really sit down and do it that way."

Hearing Sonny Sharrock and members of the avant garde loosened him up a bit, leaving him free to experiment more on the guitar. In 1979 he formed the Everyman Band with saxophonist Marty Fogel, drummer Michael Suchorsky, and bassist Bruce Yaw. The band was signed to ECM, which in retrospect may have actually hindered their efforts to "get over" in the States.

"There's a real stigma about ECM in America," he says. "They've picked up a reputation that is not real. The label has done a lot of different things, but it somehow still retains an image that it got in the '70s for being all airy and ethereal. And while I have some of that quality to me, it's a very small part of what I do. I don't think my two records with the Everyman Band or my solo record have that quality very much. That color is there in my playing, but it's also very spikey—like a monkey wrench in the works. I like that idea somehow—throw things into the works that kind of grind it up a bit."

Spikey indeed. Some of Torn's guitar sounds would be right at home in the punky ambience of New York's CBGB's, far from the mellow Metheny-esque stylings that some folks imagine all ECM guitarists clone. And the Everyman Band is anything but mellow. At times edgy, at times highly disciplined in executing odd, overlapping meters, the band often sounds like Arthur Blythe Meets King Crimson And Steve Reich At CBGB's.

"It's definitely rock in a way," says Torn. "But it's funny. I don't think most people see us as a rock band at all. But we're really kind of like an improvising rock band, you know?" Interestingly enough, in putting together the band to record his recent compositions for *Cloud About Mercury*, Torn ended up recruiting two members from the latest (and unfortunately now-defunct) edition of King Crimson.

"First, I was looking around for a drummer who had the capabilities and the mind for doing stuff with electronic drums and synthesizers. It's rough to find a drummer who has the equipment and is not scared of playing notes rather than just drum sounds. To find somebody who has a little bit of the jazz thing and a little bit of the stronger rock thing and some kind of pseudo-ethnic-African-Indonesian background rhythms hap-



LONA FOOTIE

pening—it's really hard to find. Then I saw a King Crimson live video and I saw Bill solo. I liked that group a lot, and when I saw Bill play I realized he really had the capability to do a lot with sounds, which he does all over this new record. I had never met him before, but I wrote him a letter asking him to play. And he said, 'Let's go.'"

On the album, Bruford plays a regular traps set and Simmons pads which trigger a Yamaha DX-21 to create the tonal percussive effect that Torn was looking for. The effect is similar to a sequencer, but Bruford plays with the nuance and breath and imagination that no machine can mimic. For bass, Torn originally recruited Mick Karn (of the group Japan). But when Karn bailed out of the project, Bruford suggested his Crimson-mate Tony Levin as a replacement. It was a perfect choice, as Torn explains.

"I really like bass players who sound different, who don't sound particularly like Jaco. I also like very low-end bass. I need that because my playing is just so all-over-the-place and kind of inconsistent and sloppy in the mid-range that it's really nice to have the contrast frequency-wise of somebody really *down there*, where you can feel it in your gut. And Tony plays down there, so it feels good."

After Levin came into the picture, Torn was afraid that the sound might become too heavy, too dense. So he recruited trumpeter Mark Isham to balance things out a bit. "Manfred Eicher really thought a lot of Mark's sound, so I listened to some of his records and liked his concept. I knew that he was into some of the same things I was into, like looping delays. Plus, he has an incredible

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tone and a jazz background, which means he can improvise. So I called him and he was into it."

Torn also wanted Isham to have another melodic voice to bounce off of. "I like that feeling of interaction. In a group setting I don't feel that strongly about being the only person to solo. I need another soloist that I can react to, which I had in the Everyman Band with [reedman] Marty Fogel, and in the work I did with Jan Garbarek (*It's OK To Listen To The Gray Voice*, ECM 25033-1). It's almost like soloing at the same time, except you're listening to the other voice, picking out some note that he's playing and putting that into a voice that serves the chords. And I do that very well with Mark on this album."

Torn currently plays a Steinberger guitar through a Lexicon PCM-70, a Lexicon PCM-42, and an Ibanez HB-1500 harmonizer into a Dan Pierce amplifier powered by a Carver amp. His PCM-42 has been modified by Gary Hall, who designed the unit for Lexicon, to include a 21-second digital delay loop. His PCM-70 has six delay lines, each of which can resonate at a frequency to create the effect of a note. He can control the parameters of the PCM-70 with some customized foot pedals. "It's something I've been working on for two or three months now," says Torn. "I put together the system myself because nobody was commercially marketing programmable MIDI-code generators for guitar players. I discovered that Yamaha makes this little box which is meant to add new MIDI codes to keyboards that don't have certain MIDI-code generating stuff. You can use it to add pitch bend, for instance, to one of the Yamaha MIDI pianos that doesn't have pitch bend, that kind of thing. And I discovered that you can attach a whole bunch of pedals and switches to it, so I hooked it up to my PCM-70. It's a pretty hip setup."

Besides that heap of hardware, Torn relies on several unorthodox right hand techniques to get his otherworldly sounds. "I've been doing the tapping thing for a long time, ever since I saw Harvey Mandel doing it, long before Eddie Van Halen or Stanley Jordan came along. And I do funny things with my pick, like playing notes above the top of the fretboard to get this whistling effect or scraping in the middle of the bridge pickup with a special serated-edge agate pick I got back in '78. I play a lot of really high harmonics below the fifth fret. And I do all the normal, nasty kind of skronking—banging the strings against the pick-ups, pulling the whammy bar back to see how high it'll go before all the strings snap, and the usual stuff like that."

While Torn is still dancing on his effects pedals and doing all kinds of nasty things to his Steinberger, he's also starting to flex his compositional muscles with *Cloud About Mercury*. It may not be long before "out" is in. db



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all together. They're booked so far in advance; it's not like me—I do a stint with the Stones, and then I won't do any more. With those guys, the phone's always ringing.

BB: Do you sit in very much at jazz clubs?

CW: Hardly. No, it'd scare the life out of me. I'm not very good at that.

BB: How do you keep your jazz chops up? Do you practice?

CW: No, not really. It's just in me I suppose. It's the same thing to me as playing rock & roll. You have different roles to fill, but it's the same sort of work. You've still got to be there all the time.

BB: Does the big band rehearse much?

CW: No. Berlin was the first time we'd played in three months. That's why it's good to play a set that you sort of know. It takes that sweat away. But we're going to rehearse



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to come over here. We'll be doing five original things that two of the guys have written, and we're going to have to rehearse them.

BB: Who's writing for you?

CW: Bobby Wellins, the tenor player, has written three things, and a trumpet player, Jimmy Deuchar, has written two—he's probably the best writer in the band.

BB: What sort of rapport do you have with London and American jazz players? Do they resent the amount of money you've made with the Stones?

CW: I have no idea. I suppose I would feel like that if I'd done something for 20 years, if it was my life's career, and I got \$10 for turning up, and someone else. . . . I don't know if it actually would affect my opinion of either their ability or what they're like as guys.

BB: Sonny Rollins played on one Stones album. Did you enjoy doing that? Was it recorded live?

CW: No, that was overdubbed. That's one of the things that's happened with the saxo-

phone, in rock & roll anyway. It's either just an eight-bar overdub, or it's just a section to play through onstage. I think Bruce [nods toward a Springsteen poster] has got a guy, hasn't he?

BB: Clarence Clemons.

CW: Yeah. He's probably more involved in the actual show than most rock horn players.

BB: There was one tune on the album with Rollins, called *Slave*, with a bass line just like a Miles thing, from around the Big Fun period. It goes [sings seven-note lick]. Was that deliberately lifted?

CW: God, I'd love to hear that. Yeah, I know the track—it is the same, isn't it? It might have come through in a different way, but it wasn't a conscious lift. I might consciously try lifting something that Tony Williams would do, but that's because I listen to him; Bill [Wyman] doesn't listen to Miles Davis, or I doubt he'd ever listened to that album.

BB: As far as the big band's concerned, most of the stuff you seem to be going toward is swing stuff. . . .

CW: Well, it *should* all swing. Chuck Berry swings, doesn't he?

BB: But the band also includes free players like Evan Parker. . . .

CW: Yeah, that was the idea. Half of the band [laughs], 10 out of 30, are free music players. Simon Phillips—he's not on the album, but he's coming over with us—Evan, Paul Rutherford, Dave De Fries. There's a whole crowd of people that John Stevens plays with. I always think of Evan Parker as being a bright new star; Evan's about my age, actually. He, like John, has been playing free music for 20 years. You'd think free music was this new sort of thing. It's got a hell of a lot of nuances, that—bloody amazingly complex things.

BB: Do you want these players to move the band away from swing and more toward free music?

CW: I want this band to do both [laughs]. I want a mixture of players. Somebody asked me who I'd want if I had an American band. I'd choose as diversely—I'd ask Anthony Braxton, and I would love Paul Quinichette, although I think he might have died a couple of years ago. But you know, that sort of thing. They all actually play. It's just that a lot of people won't listen to one and then listen to the other. If you lock the doors they've got to listen to them all. db

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