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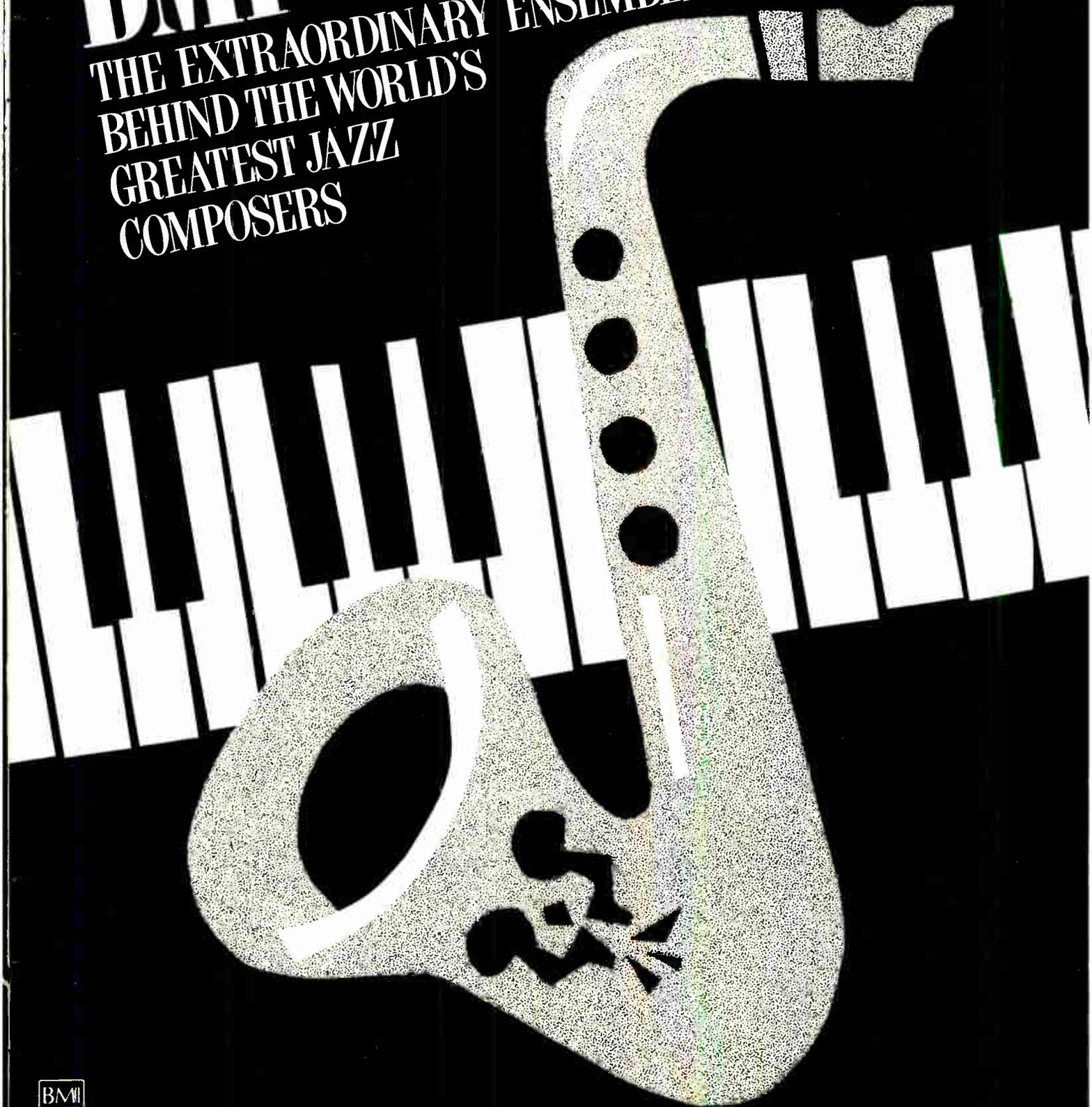


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George Benson



Free Flight



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The Microscopic Septet

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Take a former first-chair flutist with the L.A. Philharmonic, add an electric bassist with extensive c&w studio experience, an ex-Frank Zappa and Don Ellis drummer, and a pianist with all-purpose chops and some 700 compositions to his credit, stir well—and you have the world's top classical/jazz/pop combo, as **Scott Yanow** relates.

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## down beat

For Contemporary Musicians

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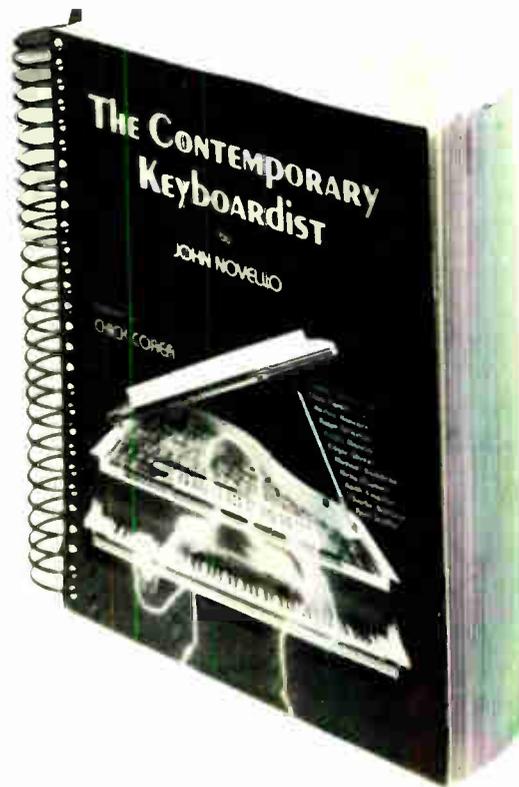
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## NASMD AT 25

by Bob O'Donnell

The worlds of commerce and education do not form easy alliances. If educators or administrators need the goods or services of a particular business, they usually only agree to work with the supplying company on a very limited basis.

In some instances this method of business works and is accepted as standard practice. In others, however, it may cause problems which can affect the quality of educational programs. School music programs, which have produced—or at the very least had a powerful effect upon—players like Pat Metheny, Wynton and Branford Marsalis, Steve Smith, and many others, are particularly prone to its side effects. Band directors and school administrators need a source for the instruments, music, accessories, and other services they require to run a successful program, yet often shy away from developing relationships with the music dealers who can supply these goods and services.

Part of the problem seems to be that

educators and administrators are not completely aware of the total services that school music dealers are capable of providing. Many of them are also unaware that a national organization of dealers exists which spends a great deal of time and money promoting the value and importance of music education. This organization, the National Association of School Music Dealers (NASMD), which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, prides itself on the fact that all 200 of its members work diligently to support and ensure the futures of the music education programs in their area. "NASMD dealers have a vested interest in school instrumental music," says current NASMD president Dan Palen of Palen Music in Springfield, MO, "and they view their role as a partnership with educators and administrators in providing students with quality music education."

The organization's beginnings were quite humble. "NASMD was formed by six school music dealers the day before a NAMM trade show in June of 1962," according to Jim Kleeman, former co-owner of Karnes Music, Elk Grove Village, IL, and a member since 1964. "They got together and decided to form an association because they wanted to have a group that would spend time just

discussing the business of school music dealers and not the music industry as a whole.

"The basic intent and purpose of the group, which is still the same today," Kleeman continued, "was to exchange ideas and try to improve their businesses. They would discuss what they did in the way of promotions, and also what they could do to better assist the band director."

Founding member and second president Ziggy Coyle of Coyle Music Centers, Columbus, OH, admitted that he had no idea that the organization would outgrow its meager beginnings and live to see its 25th anniversary. "Never in our wildest dreams did we ever imagine that NASMD would grow to be as significant as it is within our industry."

The organization *has* grown, though, and its members have continued to address the expanding needs of school music programs. Of course, as business owners, NASMD members believe they have a right to profit from their efforts. "Supporting music education is the business of the school music dealer," Palen said, "and as with any other business, a dealer's objective is to convert goods and services into profitable dollars."

Nevertheless, the primary goal of NASMD dealers is the same as that of educators: to have a successful music program. Only with a successful program can a band director claim to be adequately fulfilling his role as an educator and can a music dealer share in the pride and funding available to support that program.

To attain a successful program, Palen claims that four different elements must come together to create the proper environment. "First, you need quality teaching; second, a supportive administration; third, a supportive community; and fourth, the support of a full-service school music dealer. If any one of these elements is unavailable, then the program will suffer."

The services that NASMD members provide, of course, vary in specifics from store to store, but nearly all members help directors with recruiting efforts: they test students for musical aptitude, help organize student/parent orientation meetings, provide instruments for beginning students to rent or buy, and generally, share the knowledge they have acquired from overseeing 70 or 80 recruiting meetings a year. Most members also offer extensive repair facilities, free loaner services, and a large inventory of instruments and music for both directors and students to choose from.

As computers and electronic instruments start to play a larger role in school music programs, NASMD dealers are responding by offering yet another service to their dealers—product knowledge. "The really progressive school music dealer today is spending a lot of time getting in touch with electronics," according to Kleeman. "That

CONTINUED ON PAGE 55

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## WATTS KUDOS

The Charlie Watts interview (Feb. '87) was marvelous—very down to earth. Unlike so many of the untalented rock drummers, Charlie Watts leaves all the gimmicks to others and just swings along—the way it's supposed to be. My congratulations to down beat and Charlie Watts.

Kenny Harris  
Hamilton, Bermuda

## BRANFORD DEBATERS

Branford Marsalis' comment about "the anemic, 'generic' brand of bebop [he] associates with the West Coast" (Mar. '87), reflects a number of relevant afterthoughts on the part of those of us who have spent a lot of time fighting such childish misconceptions. Marsalis talks as though he's the only one who made it into the '80s with any passion for, or insight into, the music. His comment about jazz musicians who live in California illustrates his almost total ignorance of the scene here. It's sadly obvious that Marsalis knows less than zero about such aggressive, modern players as pianists Theo Saunders and Biff Hannon, acoustic bassists Tom Warrington and Bob Harrison, and drummers Billy Mintz and Mike Stephans, and two saxophonists who are simply astounding: Bill Perkins, who never stops growing, and Bob Sheppard, who, to many peoples' ears, is one of the hottest there is. And this is only a sample of the burners who live here in Southern California. We get sick and tired of hearing that the West Coast is a haven for affluent studio musicians. That's about as true as the notion that only dixieland players come out of New Orleans.

Next time Marsalis comes out to L.A., let him bring his crash helmet and play with some of these people. He'll need it.

Steve Lee  
Los Angeles

Can't say as I go along with Branford Marsalis' reasoning when he talks about Sidney Bechet in your most recent issue ("The Many Sides of Branford Marsalis," Mar. '87)—". . . Not that it's not great music, but it's great music for its time. To play it now—if you have technicolor, why shoot it in black and white?" This is a poor analogy. One might as well say, "Now that we have photography, why bother with oil paints?" Photography may be newer, and there's nothing wrong with it—but it doesn't render oils obsolete. (If one wants to stick even closer to the original analogy, it should be noted that there are some very hip directors around who still like to shoot in black and white. But if it's any comfort to Branford, he should note that his sensitivity to the black & white/color issue is shared by that distinguished patron of the arts, Ted Turner.)

The "newer is better" notion is an easy one to get fooled by, and Branford falls into the trap earlier in the interview. While discussing studio technology, he says, "We're trying to develop a new microphone for the bass, so it'll sound like wood, not like an amplifier." Really. If you want a bass to sound like wood on the record, it has to sound like wood when it's played. Over the past few years, the obsession with dexterity has resulted in many bassists using lower and lower action on their instruments, which makes the bass easier to play, but results in a thinner tone, and less volume—an amplifier, and its sound, has become a fact of life, live and in the

studio. If Branford wants to hear some bass sounds that sound like wood, he doesn't have to go back too many years—he could start with any record that Paul Chambers played on, especially the ones that Rudy Van Gelder recorded. (Other examples abound, of course, but this one will do.) The microphone technology that Van Gelder had 20 and 30 years ago was less sophisticated than what's available now, but the bass sounds he got were undeniably more "woody." How soon they forget! But if you have technicolor. . .

Bill Morrison  
North Cambridge, MA  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 54

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## RAINBOW COMES TO LATIN AMERICA

**BOSTON**—The Berklee College of Music's five-man Rainbow Band is back from a trip to nine countries in the Caribbean and Central and South America, where it toured recently on behalf of the United States Information Agency. The band, led by Berklee College teacher and internationally acclaimed trombonist Phil Wilson, included four Berklee students—trumpeter Greg Gisbert (recently featured with the Buddy Rich band), pianist Cyrus Chestnut (accompanist to Jon Hendricks), bassist Carl Carter (recently with Clark Terry), and drummer Marty Richards (now with Gary Burton and Makoto Ozone).

The Rainbow Band, besides being technically proficient, displayed a sincerity and a sense of humor that people everywhere picked up on and appreciated. A hunger for music was evident—people came to band-led workshops and jam sessions with talent and ambition, alert for new sounds, techniques, and exercises. Workshop attendees ranged in age from 15 to 65, and the experience levels were nearly as broad. In St. Lucia, only 15 people showed up for the workshop; but when Wilson invited them onstage to play, a dozen of them got up and roared out "A Train like you wouldn't believe—then kept the band busy talking

jazz for over an hour after the session. The most sophisticated (and appreciative) jazz listeners and musicians were probably those from the Dominican Republic, where an overflow crowd at a Santo Domingo auditorium gave the band two standing ovations.

The band's first stop was the Cecil Cyrus Squash Courts on the island of St. Vincent, where it became clear that performing conditions on the tour would sometimes be less than perfect—tin-roofed all-purpose cinderblock shelters were the norm in most of the countries visited, hardly ideal acoustics. But music and attitude were what counted—and what got the band through a couple of tough spots on the tour. There were nights when three of the five instrumentalists were ill, but as Gisbert said, "Being a serious musician means getting up there and giving 100 percent no matter how you feel. And sometimes you start feeling better just because you're doing something you love." Attitude got the band through some technical adversity, too: during a power blackout in Antigua, the band went ahead with an hourlong concert in the dark for 50 people (Wilson's imitating the sounds of animals that night became the tune *Antiguan Nightlife* on the band's new album, *Phil Wilson's Rainbow Band—Latin American Tour*



**BERKLEE BUNCH:** Phil Wilson's Rainbow Band on its Latin American tour. Pictured (left to right) are cultural affairs officer Pat McArdle, Phil Wilson, Greg Gisbert, St. Vincent Minister of Culture John Horne, Carl Carter, Marty Richards, and Cyrus Chestnut.

[Shiah 118]]; in Guyana, a concert was saved when an engineer doctored shattered fuse casings in the power amp with copper wire and masking tape; in Guatemala, a couple of Indians dispatched to borrow a Fender Rhodes stage piano pedal (something they knew full well no one would have in those remote mountain villages) returned a half-hour later with a pedal fashioned out of two blocks of wood and a couple of nails—which worked like a dream.

There were also many beautiful and exotic experiences: walking to a restaurant by way of the beach and having to wade back to the hotel during high tide; watching women carry 50-pound baskets to market on their heads; seeing men leaving their thatch-roofed huts

with long machetes, headed to work at sugar cane plantations; eating mangoes right off the tree; hearing the band advertised in Dutch on Suriname television; attending the calypso-infused carnival celebration in St. Vincent, which inspired Chestnut's composition *A Night At St. Vincent* (also on the new album).

Given the talent in the Berklee Rainbow Band, there should be plenty of tours in store for the future. The band's already been featured on the S.S. Norway floating jazz festival, as well as the New York Brass Conference. But the success of the Latin-American tour, it would seem, establishes it as this rainbow's cultural pot of gold.

—jean robbins

## Notpourri

Faithful followers: singer **Marianne Faithfull** has assembled a stellar cast for her next album on Island Records, due in September; the as-yet-untitled collection of blues standards will feature guitarists **Robert Quine** and **Bill Frisell**, pianist **Mac Rebennack (Dr. John)**, bassist **Fernando Saunders**, and drummer **J. T. Lewis** . . . Gottlieb debut: drummer **Danny Gottlieb** has finished recording material for a prospective debut album as leader; joining him on the project were such kindred spirits as bassist **Mark Egan** and guitarist **John Abercrombie** . . . in demand: drummer **Dennis Chambers** is a busy man these days; currently splitting time between gigs with **David Sanborn** and **John Scofield**, the former Funkadelic has taken calls from **Miles Davis** and **Joe Zawinul** recently asking he join their respective bands . . . speaking of Zawinul, the synth-

wiz leader of Weather Update is reportedly planning to collaborate on a project with Police drummer **Stewart Copeland** sometime this year . . . jazzy Oscar nominees: **Round Midnight** is getting jazz some serious recognition in this year's Oscar nominations; **Herbie Hancock** is up for best original score and **Dexter Gordon** for best actor (Gordon is perhaps the first *instrumentalist* in Oscar history to be so honored) . . . foreign affairs: **Billy Joel**, **Stevie Wonder**, **Roy Clark**, and **Dave Brubeck** are the Americans on a roster of international artists now being booked for performances in the Soviet Union this year. And after a two-year hiatus, British guitarist **Derek Bailey** has announced a revival of *Company Week*; scheduled to take place 5/11-17 at Arts Theatre in London, the improvisatory meeting will feature **Lee Konitz** on alto, synthesist **Richard Teitelbaum**, cellist

**Tristan Honsinger**, violinist **Carlos Zingaro**, bassist **Barre Phillips**, percussionists **Han Bennink** and **Steve Noble**, and dancer **Katie Duck** . . . Hinton honored: **Milt Hinton** will be presented with an honorary doctorate in music at the 5/17 William Paterson College commencement exercises in Wayne, NJ; WPC students **Sue Williams** and **Doug Welss**, 1986-87 recipients of Milton J. Hinton National Scholarships for jazz study, will perform at a pre-commencement luncheon . . . composers' competition: 6/1 is the deadline to enter the **International New Music Composers Competition—New York 1987**, which will award \$2,000 to the winner; for more info, write Carrie Manfrino, 15 Jones St., Suite 6H, New York, NY 10014 . . . coming attractions: this year's **New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival** will run 4/24-26 and 5/1-3, featuring **Fats Domino**, the

**Neville Brothers**, **Wynton Marsalis**, the **Fabulous Thunderbirds**, **Wilson Pickett**, **Allen Toussaint**, the **Dirty Dozen Brass Band**, et al (write PO Box 2530, New Orleans, LA 70176 for a brochure); the **Otter Crest '87 Jazz Weekend** runs 4/30-5/3 in Salem, OR, featuring **Ira Sullivan**, **Tommy Flanagan**, **Al Grey**, **Makoto Ozone**, **Snooky Young**, et al (call 503/363-0372); **Space Fest '87**, the First International Festival of Space Music and Art, runs 5/5-9 in Palo Alto, CA, featuring **Michael Stearns**, **Emerald Web**, **Constance Demby**, **Steve Roach**, and **Michael Shrieve** (call 415/329-2526); the **1987 Sacramento Dixieland Jubilee** runs Labor Day Weekend, 5/22-25 (call 916/372-JASS); the second annual **New Directions Festival** will be held 5/30, with 35 internationally renowned artists gathering at the Piermont Village, Rockland County, NY (call 914/358-6372) . . .



**FAB FOUR CD'S:** The Beatles have entered the CD market with the recent release of the British versions of their first four albums—*Please Please Me*, *With The Beatles*, *A Hard Day's Night*, and *Beatles For Sale*. The discs are the first installment of the planned release of the entire Beatles catalog on CD by EMI Music Worldwide. The discs will be issued chronologically, with *Rubber Soul*, *Revolver*, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and *Abbey Road* all due out by October. That's producer George Martin, who'll be advising EMI on the project, pictured above with the Fab Four in a 1963 photo.

## HOWARD UNIVERSITY HONORS DEXTER GORDON

**WASHINGTON, DC**—Dexter Gordon, riding a new crest of popularity generated by his stellar performance in Bernard Tavernier's film *Round Midnight*, was the subject of a major tribute by Howard University's Department of Fine Arts in Washington, DC, recently. Over 2,000 Gordon fans packed Howard's Cramton Auditorium to hear musical homage paid by the Howard University Jazz Ensemble with special guest Jon Faddis, solo guitarist Stanley Jordan, the Terence Blanchard/Donald Harrison Quintet, and Nancy Wilson with trio. The evening was hosted by "The Jazz Congressman," John Conyers of Detroit, and WPFW's Art Cromwell.

After intermission, a brief segment of *Round Midnight* was screened to a thunderous reception, and the evening's honoree was summoned from backstage for a succession of special presentations. George Butler of CBS Records, one of the evening's main organizers, read a celebratory missive from President Reagan that caused Gordon to feign shock. The National Endowment for the Arts Director of Music, Ed Birdwell, congratulated Gordon on his selection for a Jazz Masters Award. The city's Dexter Gordon Day Proclamation was presented, as were roses from the Duke Ellington School of the Arts.

—w.a. brower



**WRANGLER WORKOUT:** Willie Nelson, Dicky Betts, and Edgar Winter (left to right) performed at the recent Wrangler/Willie Nelson Music Invitational in Austin, TX. Three winning bands competed against nine other regional winners at the finals, hosted by Nelson and Leon Russell. Winners of the year-long contest were Rodiont, from Baltimore, MD, in r&b; the Headlites, from Tampa, FL, in rock; and The Montana Band, from Seattle, WA, in country. Their prizes included equipment from Korg, Marshall Amps, and Stand Innovations.

## Final Bar

**Freddie Green**, guitarist with the Count Basie Orchestra for half a century, died March 1 in Las Vegas of an apparent heart attack. He was 75. Green was the last surviving member of Basie's "All-American Rhythm Section," which included Basie on piano, Walter Page on bass, and Jo Jones on drums. Born in Charleston, SC, Green was introduced to Basie by record producer John Hammond, who had discovered the guitarist playing in a Greenwich Village nightclub. Green was not the Basie band's first guitarist, but he remained with the orchestra far longer than anyone else after joining it in March 1937. He rarely took solos, concentrating instead on rhythmic accompaniment; his playing, in the words of music critic George T. Simon, was "wonderfully light yet propulsive." Green also recorded several albums under his own name, as well as with Billie Holiday, Benny Goodman, Benny Carter, Lionel Hampton, and many others.



Freddie Green

• • •  
**Bola Sete**, guitarist introduced to the U.S. by Dizzy Gillespie at the 1962 Monterey Jazz Festival, died Feb. 14 of pneumonia and respiratory complications at age 63. Sete was born in Brazil, and had been one of the premier recording artists in South America prior to moving to the U.S. in 1959. He went on to perform and record with Gillespie, Vince Guaraldi, Cal Tjader, John Handy, Ali Akbar Khan, the Carlos Santana rhythm section, and members of the Los Angeles Symphony and Philharmonic orchestras. In the early '70s, Sete turned to solo guitar work, introduced on record with the album *Ocean* in 1975. His last album, *Jungle Suite*, was released by Dancing Cat Records in 1985, and that label plans issuing two more Sete albums posthumously, *Ocean/Volume 2* and *Windspell*.

• • •  
**Alfred Lion**, founder of Blue Note Records, died Feb. 2 in San Diego of congestive heart failure at age 78. Lion founded Blue Note in 1939, shortly after moving to New York from his native Berlin; his first recordings featured pianists Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis. A few months later, Lion was joined by partner Francis Wolff, a childhood friend, and the pair began recording traditional jazz artists like Sidney Bechet and Earl

Hines. When bebop became popular in the '40s, Blue Note began signing such artists as Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, and Art Blakey; this ability to stay on top of developments in jazz would lead the label to record such artists as Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Herbie Hancock, Freddie Hubbard, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, and Eric Dolphy over the years. In 1967, Lion and Wolff sold Blue Note to Liberty Records (Lion retiring shortly thereafter), under whose stewardship the label turned toward more pop-oriented artists. Blue Note was dormant through the early '80s, until its much-publicized resurrection by parent company Capitol-EMI in 1985.

• • •  
**Anthony (Big T) Lovano**, Cleveland tenor saxophonist, died Jan. 8 at age 61. Though respected by fellow jazz musicians, Lovano chose not to spend time on the road away from his family; instead, he worked as a barber by day and played in local clubs at night, often with big-name musicians like Lionel Hampton. He did travel occasionally, including a tour with Nat King Cole's brother Ike, and three years ago he sat in the Mel Lewis big band at the Village Vanguard in New York, where he traded solos with his saxophonist son, Joseph S. Lovano, a regular with the Lewis band as well as Paul Motian's Trio and Quintet.

• • •  
**Red Maddock**, the drummer for the Butch Thompson Trio and the Hall Brothers Jazz Band in Minneapolis, died of liver cancer Jan. 12 at age 70. Maddock gained attention in the 1940s with the Al Trace band in New York City. Since then, he had become known nationally as a wise-cracking member of the Thompson Trio on National Public Radio's "A Prairie Home Companion," hosted by Garrison Keillor. □

## YOUSOU N'DOUR

To the panoply of contemporary African pop styles recently arrived on these shores—Nigerian juju, Congolese soukous, South African mbaqanga—Americans can now add Senegalese mbalax, a brightly eclectic blend whose originator and leading exponent, 27-year-old singer Youssou N'Dour, is his country's biggest celebrity and a growing force on the international scene. N'Dour can be heard on Paul Simon's *Graceland* and Peter Gabriel's *So* LPs, and on his own album, *Nelson Mandela* (Polydor 831 294-1); last year he and his band, Le Super Etoile de Dakar, toured the U.S. twice—once on their own and again as Gabriel's opening act.

N'Dour's music is derived from the mbalax rhythms of traditional Wolof percussion ensembles; in his pop-fusion adaptation the intermeshing beats are distributed among electric guitars and keyboards, Western horns, and trap drums, in addition to African instruments. Besides these rhythms and the kora (harp-lute) music of his native region, N'Dour draws from soukous, highlife, Afrobeat, reggae, salsa, soul, and disco music to create a highly accessible, distinctively syncopated hybrid.

But N'Dour is more than a bandleader and stylistic innovator, he is one of Africa's finest



vocalists. His soaring, pliant tenor, with its bittersweet Islamic inflections, has a universal appeal, suggesting a cross between Brazil's falsetto-master Milton Nascimento and the legendary Egyptian contralto Om Kalsoum. N'Dour's Wolof-language singing gives Le Super Etoile much

of its characteristically Sahelian flavor and, paradoxically, transforms it from a commercialized local novelty to a world-class attraction.

Born into a family of griots—troubadors and tribal historians—N'Dour absorbed the music and lore of his people at an early age, but his parents discouraged him from pursuing a musical career. Undeterred, he was singing at circumcision ceremonies when he was asked to join the Star Band, cutting his earliest hits while still in his mid-teens. Dissatisfied with the borrowed pop styles then in vogue, he formed his own band, drawing on his Senegalese folk roots to forge his mbalax sound. By the early '80s his music had penetrated even the remotest parts of the country and was spreading throughout West Africa, thanks in part to a thriving market in bootleg cassettes.

Produced in Paris, *Nelson Mandela* makes a curious bid for crossover success with a stilted version of the Spinners' *Rubberband Man*, sung in phonetic English, as well as the stirring pan-African theme of the title track. The rest of the album, however, is mbalax in "pure" form, crisply played and cleanly recorded. Still, N'Dour is best appreciated in live performance, where the tunes unfold into long percussive jams that spotlight the talking drum of Assane Thiam, and a quartet of dancers led by Ablaye Seck completes the high-energy spectacle that frames N'Dour's aerodynamic vocals.

—Larry Birnbaum

## THE ORDINAIRES

Talk about fusion! This eccentric nine-piece ensemble melds the seemingly disparate elements of free jazz, rigid classical, raucous rock, appealing pop, and exotic ethnic musics into one coherent sound. And, miraculously, it works, thanks to great foresight and painstaking efforts in arranging all the pieces into one puzzle.

Throw in the seemingly incongruous influences of Thelonious Monk, Spike Jones, Jimi Hendrix, Igor Stravinsky, Gustav Mahler, and Led Zeppelin and you've got one truly weird and wonderful outfit. This band is, contrary to the name, anything but ordinary. And judging by their fervent following in Manhattan at venues like CBGB's, the Cat Club, The Kitchen, and Dance Theatre Workshop (where they recently sold out four nights) it's safe to say The Ordinaires are *happening*. The Dutch know that. The band has been invited to perform this summer at the Holland Festival in Amsterdam. They've also performed at the Steirischer Herbst autumn festival in Graz, Austria, and their debut album was released on the West German Dossier label (distributed in the States by New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, NYC, NY 10012). Too bad no

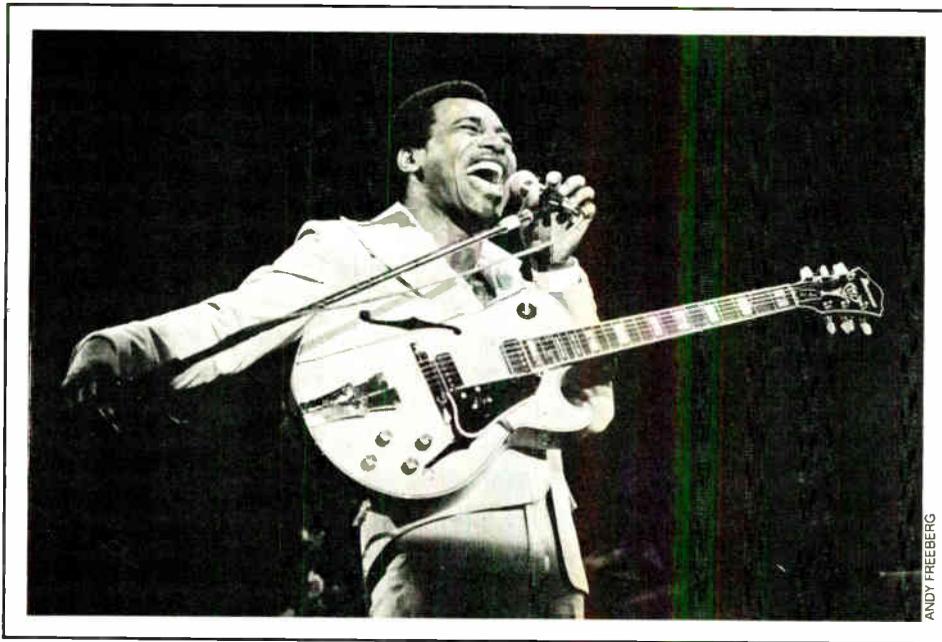


(Left to right) Fritz Von Orden, Kurt Hoffman, Angelo Babin, Peter Moffitt.

American label has gotten hip to this extraordinary band.

Tenor saxist Kurt Hoffman and altoist Fritz Von Orden, the two principal composers, represent the avant garde/jazz side of the group. Guitarists Joe Disney and Angela Babin, with drummer Jim Thomas, bring in a

rock edge. Violinists Barbara Schloss and Robin Casey, with cellist Peter Moffitt, add a classical touch. And Swedish bassist Sven Furberg can go in any direction, from the noise-disco of *Industry* to the zen-like trance music of *Ramayana* to the upbeat rock of *Grace*, the ominous funk of *Slow Boys*, or the



ANDY FREEBERG

## By Howard Mandel

**G**eorge Benson wants to *play*. The energy and volubility he exhibits pattering about the Synclavier-equipped, 24-track digital recording studio in his New Jersey home (built into wooded hills so a brook runs under its wraparound porch), is that of a star not content to rest on his worldwide reputation as a jazz guitarist, hugely popular vocalist (he's issued, in Great Britain, a compilation called *Love Songs* on K-Tel that's achieved UK triple-platinum status), hardworking bandleader, and budding producer.

Benson seeks *engagement*—with his audience, with his record label Warner Bros. (he's just signed a favorable new contract), with himself—and to find it, he's returning to his roots. He's been slipping into New York in his Mercedes, undercover, to jam at Duke's Place in Harlem with his old boss organist, Jack McDuff; to join fellow vocalists Jon Hendricks, Al Jarreau, and Bobby McFerrin in a late night scat session at the Blue Note, to sit in at Salt Peanuts in the Bronx. He's put the finishing touches to an album of relatively straightahead guitar playing with his former protege Earl Klugh (produced by Tommy LiPuma). He speaks of reviving his Pittsburgh trio from long ago with organist Lonnie Smith and drummer Art Gore.

But Benson's not obsessed with the past—he intends to conquer new realms. His current project is an album showcasing his guitar in big band and orchestral settings. Benson's friend Angel Rangelov, the Bulgarian-born composer/arranger (who sat in on our interview), has created a finely nuanced chart for 86 pieces of *'Round Midnight*, and is shopping in Europe for an ensemble to record it. George laid rhythm tracks for this piece with Herbie Hancock on piano, Buster Williams on bass, and Grady Tate drumming. Sitting in his basement, in a swivel chair in front of his gleaming control board, he picks up his Ibanez guitar, plugs it in, hits "Play" and begins improvising over Hancock's sophisticated voicings. Ideas stream from Benson's fingers; concentrating, he's utterly un-self-conscious. And then he turns to talk.

**HOWARD MANDEL:** George, you have music in your repertoire to please everybody. How did that start?

**GEORGE BENSON:** I'm a guy who's versatile; all my life I've had to be in two places at once. As a commercial artist I've been expected to do things, like, "We want you to sing, George." At first I said, "I did that when I was a kid, and I never made any money singing. I had a big name, and people thought I had money, but I never made any money." This fellow had said to me, "You sing for me and I'll give you \$55 a week." \$55 a week—I'll do anything for \$55 a week! So I left school in my last semester. My teacher told me, "George, you've got to make up your mind: you either want to play music or go to school." I said, "No contest. I'm gone, man. Are you asking me to give up a job that pays \$55 a week?"

So I left school and started working with this band. I believe I was really hired to play the guitar, because there were very few guitar players in Pittsburgh at the time. But I couldn't play enough guitar to last a whole night; I didn't know enough songs, and I had hardly any improvisation at all. This was when I was 17 years old. But by the time I was 19, and went on the road with Jack McDuff, nobody outside of Pittsburgh knew I sang at all.

**HM:** Did you do so much woodshedding in two years that you gained enough guitar to last a night?

**GB:** Not really. When I was 18 I met this young saxophone player, Larry Smith. We were playing r&b songs, and he was playing all these bebop lines, like Charlie Parker and Sonny Stitt. I said, "Man, what's this stuff you're playing? It doesn't fit what we're playing"—we were playing some raunchy stuff. He said, "I listen to Bird." Bird? He said, "You don't know who Charlie Parker is? You better come in my house." I had just driven him home, see—he lived way out of town. I came in and he put on *Charlie Parker With Strings*. And that was it. On that record I heard a musician who sounded like someone talking to me in a beautiful language.

That's the first time music ever came over me like that. Music's always been music. But it has never communicated like that, unless the person was actually saying the words, and I could understand what they were saying. Charlie Parker, man—it was like an incredible story he was telling. So I learned to sing that solo from *Just Friends* note for note. And I started going to jam sessions. But in my town the jazz people hated me, because I was very popular and I was known for something else. When I started coming to the jams, they didn't like it at all, because I couldn't play any jazz music; I came there to learn.

Well, one night Don Gardner, who made a lot of hit records

himself, said to me. "Jack McDuff is in town, at a club on the other side of town. Jack's looking for a guitar player." I said, "I can't play with Jack, what he's doing is much too advanced for me." He said, "George—you never know 'til you try." I didn't have a dime, but my father scrapped up the streetcar fare, and I went out to Homewood and sat in with Jack McDuff. What Jack was impressed with—and it's a knack I've always had—is how I made *him* sound.

See, a lot of improvisers, when they stop improvising, that's it. What Jack liked is when I was playing behind him *he* sounded good. So he didn't really hear me improvise. I wasn't playing nothing—I had no chops, no ideas. But he said to come to his hotel room the next day, and I did. He called his manager and said, "I found this kid, he's incredible, he's only 19." And he took me on the road with him. And he fired me the first night.

I couldn't play with him, not even the melodies, they were so unorthodox and different from what I knew. In Jack's arrangements, the guitar played the second or third parts, never the melody—the horn played that. I didn't know what chord changes were or anything. He said, "I don't think you're going to be able to make it with the band, brother; I'll try to find you another gig." But he couldn't find anybody else to take my place, and as the weeks went on, I learned. I stayed up all night. How do you become a man with facilities overnight? You can't. I had to circumvent; I had to devise a way of playing the guitar that made it sound like I *could* play. Jack would show me the song one note at a time; it took hours, and then I'd go home and figure out how to play it fast. And every night he played faster and faster. Well, I did it—I learned all his charts.

When his managers heard me, they said, "I like what this kid does to your band. He gives you a commercial quality." Because I was bending strings. No jazz guitar player was bending strings in those days; everybody was trying to be like Miles Davis—it was the Birth of the Cool—or Jim Hall, or Wes Montgomery. Not like Charlie Christian, none of that. Well, they took me into the studio, and we

recorded. Jack had a smash album. Every record I was on as a sideman was a hit, I don't care who it was with. That's what made me in New York. Hank Mobley's *Reach Out*, that was a hit. I cut hit records with Freddie Hubbard, with Stanley Turrentine, with Lou Donaldson.

**HM:** Do you do something special to make people sound better?

**GB:** I feel that all the musicians should find a spot, someplace that is ours, take over that spot and say, "Look, I'll handle this. You got that? Okay, I'll handle this." The other guys say, "Okay, yeah, I'll handle *this*." So you got *that* going on [*sings a rhythm-lick*] and some excitement [*sings a wild guitar line*] and Freddie's gonna go [*imitates a Hubbard-like glissando*]. I want to make *that* sound like the greatest thing Freddie ever did.

Yeah, I like that. How do we make this song special? For me, that's what's happening. The improvisation thing—it's a privilege to have a spot in a song that is cooking, with some great musicians. To have a solo in a band like that is a privilege for me. But it's not everything. I don't have to be the soloist in order for the song to be great. If I'm playing behind Benny Carter or Miles Davis, man, that's already greatness.

**HM:** In your pop music, you've had to be the soloist, the frontman; it must be quite a responsibility.

**GB:** Well, I feel that each project is demanding. But I like to take a song, play it—if it has something to it, let's stick with it; if it doesn't, let's get on to the next song. When we did *On Broadway*, the second time we ever did that song live it fell into a nice place, so we laid with it for 14 or 16 minutes, hoping we could get four or five minutes out of it. And it turned out that 11 of those 14 or 16 minutes were great. So we took the bad out, chopped it off at the end, and kept the 11 or nine minutes, whatever it was. For me, that makes it. It doesn't have to be precise—I'm not a man of precision. I work with producers who are, and I leave that up to them. But something that's missing, that I really want to get back into our projects, is *me*. My



**KEEPIN' SCORE:** Angel Rangelov shows Benson his arrangement of "Round Midnight."

decision as to what is great, as opposed to someone else's.

**HM:** Do you feel your guitar is your most powerful tool?

**GB:** The guitar's popularity has helped make me what I am today; it's done more for my career than my voice would ever have done. Singers come and go—there are very few Nat Coles and Billy Eckstines and Frank Sinatras. The voice is something that's current—you put out a record, if people like what's on the record they buy it, and then it's forgotten, unless it's a great song. And I've been fortunate in that respect. But the guitar, it's given me a solid place in history. It's given me a great identity, a place in the musical world. For that reason, I feel an obligation to guitar lovers.

And that's the reason I built this [a gesture encompasses his three-chamber studio], so I can get back to putting my ideas down. This is the way it started, before I did the *Breezin'* album, back when I was making all those other guitar albums. I had a little studio where I could go and try things. I'd listen to myself, and criticize myself and find ways to improve what I was doing. I'm getting back to that now in a more sophisticated milieu.

**HM:** So the LP with Klugh, and your big band project with Angel, re-emphasize . . .

**GB:** Some wonderful things. The guitar makes me feel good. If I play something on the guitar, it will be a while before anyone can really capture it, figure it out. Musicians are really into what they do, they examine each other, so we can benefit by what each other is doing. When I hear someone play something good, I get my axe, and finally—"Hey, man, that's really an incredible way of approaching that particular sequence of things." I'm sure other players do that with me.

**HM:** Tell me more about the big band project.

**GB:** For months, I was asking Angel . . .

**ANGEL RANGELOV:** We were asking each other, actually . . .

**GB:** Yeah: "What song?"

**AR:** It was between *Lush Life* and *Just Friends*. Then one night we hung out at the Village Vanguard, hearing Joe Henderson, Ron Carter, and Al Foster, and Joe started to play *'Round Midnight* without the rhythm, just improvising. But we both knew what it was. And George said . . .

**GB:** "That's the tune. That's it."

**AR:** Both of us felt the same.

**GB:** I've found I've had great success with songs that come to me like that. *Beyond The Sea*—one day I called Frank Foster and asked if he knew this song. He said, "I think so." He doesn't remember, but he used to play it behind Bobby Darin. I said, "Write me an arrangement on that, man. I want to do that. And write me up a blues, something in the range of *Everyday [I Have The Blues]*. So he did. Russ Teitelman produced that album. He said, "What's this?" I said, "I want to do a big band thing." So we hired a studio in New Jersey, brought some of the baddest cats in the music business over here, and we laid it down. It was off-the-cuff, and it went down like clockwork. It was the first time I heard myself with a big band, and I heard the potential. Now I understand that there's an area for me in big band that I should be exploring.

So that's what we're doing now. We're going into the studio with the Basie band, hopefully, and do some on-the-spot, no-nonsense guitar playing; maybe a vocal or two, to enhance the album; Angel's orchestral arrangement, and maybe one or two others. I might go to England, to speak to Robert Farnon; his writing might remind you of Nelson Riddle—excellent, masterful arrangements, music that defies categorization, just beautiful music. Neshui Ertegun is going to produce this album, we hope—he's so enthusiastic, and that's the kind of cat I like to work with, somebody who's into it.

The inflections I intend to put on the album will connect the band to what's going on now, but I want to capture some of the sweetness and greatness of the big band era. Of course, any era is the big band era as long as you have a big band. I feel I'll be able to enhance the big band with something original that will get it airplay. Big band is not necessarily on top of the in-vogue list now, but it could come back overnight—it only takes the right song, just one, to make it. It's different than what we've been doing—and CDs are coming on so strong, they help give us this opportunity to get into another kind of music.

There aren't many cats doing this; I realized a lot of cats who were



ANDY FREEBERG

## GEORGE BENSON'S EQUIPMENT

"The guitar I play on gigs is the Ibanez GB-10 or GB-20," says George Benson. "The GB-10 was voted the number one guitar made in Japan a few years ago. It really put Ibanez out-front. I signed with them around 1977 or '78—that's when *On Broadway* was big. Now we've brought out a new model—the GB-30, which I designed. It's hollow-bodied but very thin, built like a Gibson 335 with the look of a Les Paul. It's got a solid core for sustain—resonance is the key. It's built for blues and rock and is very easy to play—it has an easy-to-handle sound."

In his year-old home studio, Benson uses a 24-track Neve board. The studio is further equipped with a Sony 3324 tape recorder, a Sony 3302 two-track digital tape recorder, and a Studer A-820 half-inch mastering machine. He's also got a Synclavier, Kurzweil keyboards, and a Yamaha Professional drum kit, as well as an EMT 140 plate echo chamber unit.

## GEORGE BENSON SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

**as a leader**

WHEN THE CITY SLEEPS—Warner Bros. 1-25475  
20/20—Warner Bros. 25178-1  
IN YOUR EYES—Warner Bros. 23744-1  
LIVIN' INSIDE YOUR LOVE—Warner Bros. 2-3277  
WEEKEND IN L.A.—Warner Bros. 2-3339  
BREEZIN'—Warner Bros. 3111  
GIVE ME THE NIGHT—Warner Bros. 3453  
COLLECTION—Warner Bros. 2-3577  
BLUE BENSON—Polydor 6084  
QUARTET—Affinity 140  
BEST OF . . . —A&M 3203  
PACIFIC FIRE—CTI 9010  
CAST YOUR FATE TO THE WIND—CTI 8030  
SUMMERTIME: IN CONCERT—CTI 8031  
TAKE FIVE—CTI 8014  
WHITE RABBIT—CTI 8003

OTHER SIDE OF ABBEY ROAD—A&M 3028  
SHAPES OF THINGS TO COME—A&M 3104  
TELL IT LIKE IT IS—A&M 3020  
COOKBOOK—Columbia 9413  
IT'S UPTOWN—Columbia 9325  
NEW BOSS GUITAR—Prestige 7310

**with Jack McDuff**  
BENSON & McDUFF—Prestige 24072

**with Stanley Turrentine**  
STRAIGHT AHEAD—Blue Note 85105

**with Jimmy Smith**  
KEEP ON COMIN'—Elektra/Music an 60301-1  
OFF THE TOP—Elektra/Musician 60176-1

**with Miles Davis**  
CIRCLE IN THE ROUND—Columbia 36278  
MILES IN THE SKY—Columbia 9626

doing big band stuff are gone. So I'm thinking, maybe there's a spot for me. I'd like to go on tour with a big band. I got a chance to play with the Basie Band and Thad Jones, before he died—what a wonderful experience. We did a date with Ella Fitzgerald, in Kansas City; we played *Strike Up The Band*. I was so busy listening to the band I forgot I was supposed to be playing. And that gave me a taste of something I'd missed. I mean, missed out on. I hadn't taken big bands as seriously as I should have, years ago, when I had real energy—in my 20s, when my fingers were so fast I couldn't keep up with them, I'd just stand back and watch them fly.

**HM:** Do you have to work up to that?

**GB:** The biggest enemy I have is not playing every night. You *have* to play; when I was playing every night, there wasn't enough room in one night for me to play all the ideas in my head. But along with ideas you have to have the facility to play them—you've got to keep your chops up. I play a lot around here, but there's nothing like bouncing off the drum licks, live, bouncing off the whole band. After I've played live for three days, I scare myself—because I don't know where those ideas come from. I say, "Now, why did I play that? That's not what I meant to play, but it sounds okay. Why?" I have to play for about three days solid, before my flow comes back. And that's what I'm going to have to do if I'm going to do a big band album. I have to play. After that, I'm raring to go. Run some chord changes by me!

db

was technically brilliant, a good composer, and able to play all of our styles. Mike was ideal. We tried out one other guy who lasted about an hour. Our material at that time was so idealistic and difficult that we were very lucky we could get him."

Mike Garson was well-equipped to handle the difficult book. "I started piano lessons at seven, playing classical music for 10 years. I played in the Catskills each summer starting at 14 in a group with Dave Liebman, backing singers and dancers. A few years later I started three years of lessons with Lennie Tristano. I consider him a genius, although his lessons were very strange—sometimes lasting only 10 minutes. He was blind, but because his ear was so great, he knew immediately if I played the wrong fingering. They were very structured lessons. I would have to memorize hundreds of chords and different inversions. For the first year I had to play just melody in the right hand for standards with no improvisation, while in the second year I played melody in the left hand. We'd take solos off records, singing along with the album. He had very fixed tastes in music, thinking highly of Billie Holiday, Lester Young, and Bud Powell, but not Miles, Coltrane, or Oscar Peterson—people I also like. I got a lot out of his highly disciplined lessons. I also studied for two years with Hall Overton, and had one memorable lesson with Bill Evans which lasted four hours. We just worked on the tune *What Is This Thing Called Love*, and he showed me different ways to voice the song. He had such a brilliant mind, it made me realize how serious music could be."

Garson played organ with the rock group Brethren in the early '70s, and then struggled around New York City doing an occasional jazz club date for meager pay. A recording session with the avant garde singer Annette Peacock led to an unusual gig: "The engineer liked my playing and told David Bowie—who had never been in the U.S. before—about me. I had just decided that I wanted to go on the road and on the same night I got calls from Woody Herman, Bill Chase, and Bowie, whom I'd never heard of. I played a few chords for the people in his group, each of whom had a different weird hairdo, and they hired me. I took the gig just to see what it would be like, and three days later I was in Cleveland playing for 5,000 people." Garson remained with Bowie for two years, later toured with Stanley Clarke's fusion band, and recorded two acoustic albums as a leader, *Avant Garson* and *Jazzical*, the latter one an appropriate prelude to Free Flight.

"At the time I joined the group," relates Garson, "I had to fulfill what their previous pianist was able to do and fit into his role. I had never played odd-metered music before, and since the band often specialized in it, I had to really work hard. But as the years went on, we developed more of a group sound, things relaxed, and we grew together as a unit."

Walker agrees. "When Mike joined us, we threw our book at him and, although he could handle it, we eventually decided to work on new material that would fit him. Since Mike had written over 700 compositions, we had plenty to choose from."



The incorporation of more sophisticated electronic equipment, particularly for the keyboards and electronic drums, has altered the group sound a bit in recent times without the unit losing its identity. "Stanley Clarke produced our last two records," says Lacefield, "and he'll probably be producing our next one. He's been a big help to us and a major friend to the band. Mike, who played in his *School Days* group, brought him into the picture. His input has been very valuable. Stanley brings a pop consciousness to the group without changing our music."

"We are very fortunate and happy to be on CBS Masterworks," continues Walker. "We've had tremendous support from them."

In addition to Free Flight's fifth album, *Illumination*, both Walker and Garson have worked on solo projects recently. Garson's *Serendipity* is an acoustic jazz album featuring the pianist in a variety of settings ranging from solo to trios and quintets, with Walker, Lacefield, Clarke, and saxophonist Gary Herbig among the participants. "My date was done by an audiophile label, Reference, in two three-hour sessions. We recorded it in a hall direct to two-track. It was a fun session, very relaxed and unpretentious. It's quite eclectic even though it's purely acoustic. My favorite cut is only on CD, a burning version of John Coltrane's *The Promise*."

Walker's record was recorded in the summer of '86. "My first solo album for Columbia, *Private Flight*, was also produced by Stanley Clarke. It's a contemporary crossover jazz album with a

## FREE FLIGHT'S EQUIPMENT

Jim Walker plays a gold-plated Yamaha flute, plus a Yamaha bass flute and piccolo. Mike Garson's collection of keyboards includes a Yamaha DX7 synth, TX 816 tone generator, Yamaha CF-111 concert grand piano, Yamaha KX-88 keyboard controller, Yamaha QX1 sequencer, an Emulator 2, EMU SP12, and a Jupiter JX8 synthesizer. Jim Lacefield alternates between Yamaha BB500 five-string fretless and Yamaha BB300S four-string fretted basses through a Yamaha D1500 digital delay unit; acoustically he plucks an Oregon upright, Yamaha tenor and piccolo basses. Ralph Humphrey, too, is primarily a Yamaha man, including 900 Recording Series drums and an RX11 drum machine, plus Roland digital drums and an Oberheim DMX drum machine.

## FREE FLIGHT SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

ILLUMINATION—Columbia Masterworks 42143  
BEYOND THE CLOUDS—Palo Alto 8075  
SOARING—Palo Alto 8050  
JAZZ/CLASSICAL UNION—Palo Alto 8024  
FREE FLIGHT—Arabesque 8130

### Jim Walker

PRIVATE FLIGHT—Columbia Masterworks 42384

### Jim Walker with Wayne Shorter

ATLANTIS—Columbia 40055

### Jim Walker with Mike Garson

REFLECTIONS—Reference 18

### Mike Garson

SERENDIPITY—Reference 20

JAZZICAL—Jazz Hounds 0005

AVANT GARSON—Contemporary 14003

### Mike Garson with David Bowie

ALLADIN SANE—RCA 1-4852

### Jim Lacefield with Stu Goldberg

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER—Pausa 7123

### Ralph Humphrey with Don Ellis

AT THE FILLMORE—Columbia 30243

AUTUMN—Columbia 9721

### Ralph Humphrey with Frank Zappa

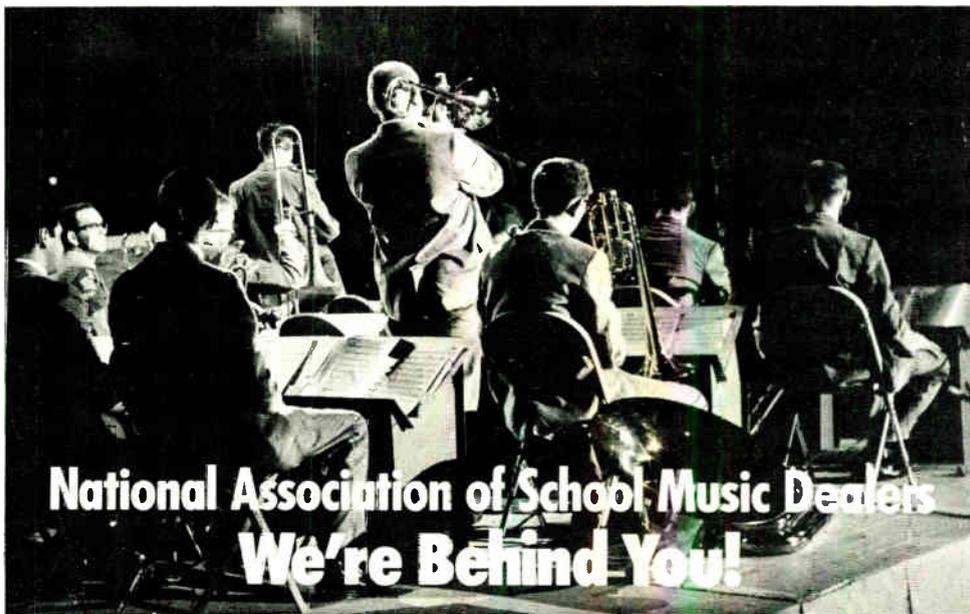
OVERNIGHT SENSATION—DiscReet 2149

APOSTROPHE—DiscReet 2289

lot of different players including Ralph and Jim, Branford Marsalis, George Duke, and others. It features the acoustic flute in many different settings—it's not really classical at all."

Free Flight's next recording, which will also be on CBS Masterworks, is expected to be out early in 1988. Jim Walker is optimistic about the group's future. "After seven years together with only one major personnel change, there is a definite cohesiveness in our personalities that gives this group an original sound. I feel that our music is very accessible to all sorts of people. Our demographics seem to be limitless. Some of our greatest compliments come from 80-year-old women who say, 'I never thought I'd like jazz but I really enjoyed this concert!' We've also had good luck with teenagers. We expect to do a lot more touring in the near future. I don't have rock & roll dreams, but I think we can gain international acceptance. I hope that this group will stay together another 20-30 years. We have a great time when we play. We don't play music strictly for musicians—trying to impress people with our technique. I'd prefer that every listener who walks out of a Free Flight concert have a smile on their face." db

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# GEORGE HOWARD

## IN THE GROOVE

By Zan Stewart

**N**ot long ago, soprano saxophonist George Howard, dressed casually in black t-shirt, baggy white pants, and white tennis shoes, sat perched on a stool in the S.I.R. rehearsal studios on Santa Monica Blvd. in Hollywood, leading his band on a run-through for his now-in-progress tour.

*Sweetest Taboo*, which the lean, muscular musician was playing, is the sort of music which has been called snappy jazz/funk/pop fusion by some, easy listening r&b instrumental background music by others, and bland, repetitive bunk by still others. And while there are certainly some who are desperately seeking solace from the kind of contemporary music that Howard delivers, there are scores who lay down hard-earned cash to surround themselves with his sounds.

Howard, 30, has released four records to date and, as of this writing, the current *A Nice Place To Be* sits atop the *Billboard* jazz



CHRIS CUFFARO/ISAGES

charts, as did his previous effort, *Dancing In The Sun*. For a guy who made his recording debut in 1982, he's *more* than doing all right.

Successive number one discs and very solid sales indicate that Howard's success isn't just luck. He says that a personal, intimate quality in his music is responsible for his sizable following. "People feel that they know me, that my music sounds familiar to them," he said in a post-rehearsal chat. "I think it's wonderful that people accept me and allow me into their lives."

Of his tour, he said, "My listeners have been responding to me on record and now I'm going to go out there and let them see and hear what they've been responding to."

This is Howard's first major tour. But even with a top-selling LP out, it may not be as financially rewarding as he'd like. "I may make money, I may not," he said. "There will a lot of one-nighters and we'll be playing places where I've established followings, like Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Dallas, Houston—and other venues that are riskier. Like New York. There I'll be playing a major room, but the money isn't that good. So that could turn out to be, say, a \$5,000 investment, or a \$5,000 loss, depending on how I look at it. But it will give me a chance to play for the New York audience, which is really growing. The new album has sold 20,000 copies there, and I've never done that well in New York before."

It was in Manhattan that Howard got a major break in another lose-money-or-make-investment situation in December, 1985. "I had to pay to play Carnegie Hall," he said. "That was an investment, and I got my deal [with MCA] because of that. The promoter, Ron Delsner, said he didn't have room for me on the bill, which starred Whitney Houston, and he asked me to pay some union fees. I figured, 'I'll play ball because a promoter like that can do something for my career.'"

Howard, ever the career strategist, played his cards correctly. "I got a great response, and after the show Delsner came up and apologized to me. He said, 'Man I didn't know who you were.' It made me feel really good. I thought, 'This is Carnegie Hall . . . Thanks.'"

Soon thereafter, Howard found himself on the schedules of several jazz festivals, as a result of some calls from Delsner. "I really appreciated that guy," he said. "When you're getting out there and working with the big boys and earning their respect, it's a lot different than begging for a favor."

The Carnegie show also brought more than one record company to his door, looking to sign him. "Yeah, I got paroled from [former label] Palo Alto," is the way Howard explains his arrival at MCA, where he "deals with Jheryl Busby, and Irving Azoff participated in my signing." Again, Howard made the right move. "The chemistry between the people I work with and me is great," he enthused. "There's a genuine commitment on their part, and that's made all the difference in the world."

Howard's today-sounding tunes—which he describes as "sincere, positive, and strongly subtle, not flaunting their strength," but which he doesn't like to further categorize—aren't labored after, he says. "To sit down and write a tune—I can't do that," he said. "Either it comes or it doesn't. Usually, *poof*, it just comes. Sometimes I get the tune, sometimes I get the whole song, including the arrangement. Then I break it down like I'm running the record around in my head. When a tune sounds really good and is already intact, I sometimes think, 'Wait a minute, have I heard this before? Am I ripping somebody off?' But that's how most of them come."

The composer, who says that "every song reflects some aspect of my personality or character—they definitely come from the inside," wrote *Jade Girl* in this now-you-see-it fashion. The song, written for his 16-month-old daughter, ". . . came into my head the moment she was born," he said. "So I named it after her, and it will always be my favorite tune, because of that moment. I don't know, the method seems to work—and if it works, don't fix it."

Howard, who likes to infuse his songs with a variety of rhythms, including Brazilian, Afro-Cuban, African, and just plain funk, sees his music growing, with a little help from his friends—his bandmates. "One reason my music has evolved and sounds hipper is that I'm older; another is that I definitely have hipper players," he said. "[Drummer] Rayford Griffin, [guitarist] Kevin Chokan, [bassist]

## GEORGE HOWARD'S EQUIPMENT

George Howard does not currently endorse any saxophone; while he favors a number of different brand and models, he is at present using a Selmer Mark VI soprano, with Rico Royal reeds.

## GEORGE HOWARD SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

A NICE PLACE TO BE—MCA 5855  
DANCING IN THE SUN—TBA 205  
STEPPING OUT—TBA 201  
ASPHALT GARDENS—Palo Alto 8035

Sekou Bunch, [percussionist] Munyungo Darryl Jackson, and [keyboardist] Mark Stephens—we have great vibes. They give me the support I'm looking for. These guys are just as strong musically and personally as I am, so they know why they're there. I like working *with* people—I hate to have people working *for* me. People who work for you whine."

One way to make sure his men stay happy is to let them take their share of solos. "They get plenty of room," Howard indicated. "They're going to earn their keep. I love for the cats to take their solos and kill the crowd. That's a three-pointer every night. They can only make me look good. I know it's my stage, but it's their stage, too. They're helping me. It's a challenge, not a battle. We're really friends and we respect each other."

**I**f Howard speaks with some authority about the music business, it's because he's been in it for 17 years as a professional, and 24 years as a player. The native Philadelphian, whose father was a postal worker and whose mother was a music teacher, enrolled in the Settlement School, a school for advanced musical learning, at age six. His first instrument was the bassoon, and his first teacher, Shirley Curtis, was a member of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Howard remembers her fondly. "We had a special relationship," he said. "She exposed me to a lot of music and taught me discipline. She taught me how to play over my head, how to get the most out of my ability. She was strict. She could tell if I hadn't practiced, because my vibrato was weak or I was still using an elementary fingering. She made me work." The prodigy ultimately performed works such as Handel's *Water Music* and Vivaldi's *Bassoon Concerto* with full orchestras.

At Overbrook High School, Howard was a music major, taking 22 units of music courses, which didn't give him a very balanced education, he says. And during high school, he became interested in jazz, which infuriated Curtis. "I was trying to emulate these people I had been hearing—from Nat King Cole to Thad Jones and John Coltrane—on the bassoon, but she was totally against it. 'You'll end up playing in bars,' she warned me, 'and besides, jazz isn't even music.' That attitude pervades the classical community."

Eventually, the instrument the school system had been providing was taken away from Howard because he was playing jazz on it. So when he went to purchase another horn, he chose a \$175 soprano sax over the \$4,500 bassoon. It was more than a matter of finances. "I really didn't have to make a decision," he said. "I mean, how many black bassoonists do you see in classical circles?"

After taking a test to earn his high school diploma, Howard left school and soon became the junior member of some of top local ensembles, playing all the saxes. "I had good fortune, working with Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes, First Choice, Blue Magic, and other bands. I was between 15-19, and most of the guys were in their late 20s or early 30s. I learned a lot playing 40-minutes-on, 20-minutes-off. One thing I learned was that making 15 bucks a night—if you could catch the club owner—was no way to own your own house."

Being on the road with First Choice taught him more lessons. "We traveled everywhere from Detroit to Florida," he said, "but after all the expenses were paid, I'd end up with about \$40 for a week's work. I realized that this was pretty dumb, and that the only way to get around this was to 'have my own thing.'"

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Howard started making demo records, which he shopped around to one record company after another, with no luck. Then, in 1979, he joined Grover Washington Jr. as back-up hornman for a tour. "It was humbling," he recalled, "because playing behind Grover, I discovered my stuff wasn't as hot as I thought it was. That just made me work harder. But I did find out that I had my own sound. I went into that job sounding like myself, and I left sounding like myself."

After leaving Washington, Howard worked all over, even traveling to Europe, where, because a job fell through, he had to sell his horns in order to get home to the States. He also continued making demos, and the rejection notices continued to arrive in the mail. "One major label rep said he didn't like the tape because it had vocals on it," he said. "Well, I knew he hadn't listened to the tape because there weren't any vocals."

Finally, an exec at Warner Bros. liked what he heard, but received some opposition to signing Howard. So, he sent Howard's tape to other, smaller labels. "That's how I heard from [then Palo Alto chief] Herb Wong," Howard stated. "Though he wanted a straightahead blowing date, he took my tape, and we only recut a few of the tunes." That became *Asphalt Gardens*, released in 1982. *Stepping Out* followed in 1983, and Howard was on his way.

In 1986, in between occasional concert (he's opened for people like Bill Cosby and Herbie Hancock) and club dates, Howard recorded his first film soundtrack. His lyrical soprano is prominently featured in Paul Chihara's score for *The Morning After*, starring Jane Fonda and Jeff Bridges and directed by Sidney Lumet.

"Chihara wrote the score around my sound," the saxophonist said. "A lot of people involved with me were wondering whether I could handle this, but I told them that I really did play the Vivaldi *Bassoon Concerto* with an orchestra when I was 11. Then I started to wonder, 'Can I do this? I mean, when was the last time you sat down in front of 75-80 people all staring at you, wondering who are you?' But I did it, sure. It was very classical. I had to sit on the edge of my stool, just like my teacher used to make me do, be alert, watch the chart, the conductor, the monitor. I was prepared, and it turned out great."

Like all players of contemporary instrumental music, Howard gets his share of both raves and pans. It used to be "that if I couldn't read a bad review, I wouldn't read a good one either," he said. But now he reads both the yea's and the nay's, though certainly not with equal gusto.

"The people that don't like me obviously don't understand what I'm saying," he noted. "One critic said basically that while the 17,000 people attending the Playboy Jazz Festival last year loved my music, and gave me a standing ovation, *he* hated it. What I don't understand is why are some critics covering music that they don't like before they've heard it, when they've already made up their minds? It's like they're slandering art. Why not let somebody who appreciates the art judge it, if we have to have judges at all?"

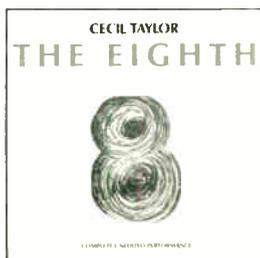
"But you can't reach everybody's ears, and so what if somebody happens to like Hank Mobley more than they do me? The people who do like me should be enough to soothe my ego."

Howard listens to lots of different kinds of music—and then, often, to nothing at all. "I don't have a radio in my car," he said. "I can hear the engine running and hear myself think. After I have been playing music all night, the last thing I want to do is hear more music. I really love music, and it's the one thing I want to make sure I never get tired of, so I give myself rest periods, away from all kinds of music, including my own, including my own instrument."

Howard says he has no idea what the future holds for him, except that being number one isn't something he takes for granted. "I appreciate it, but I try to keep a healthy perspective. I could drop right down [off the charts] in a minute," he said. "So I'll just keep being myself and keep working hard, and if I do that, the music will take care of itself."

db

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



## CECIL TAYLOR

**THE EIGHTH**—hat Art 2036: *CALLING IT THE 8TH I-III*; *CALLING IT THE 9TH*.

**Personnel:** Taylor, Bösendorfer piano; Jimmy Lyons, alto saxophone; William Parker, bass; Rashid Bakr, drums.

★★★★★

*The Eighth* is the complete 1982 Freiburger Jazztage performance from which an edited version, *Calling It The 8th* (hat Mucis 3508), was released in 1983. Since this is the only recording issued to date of a particularly striking edition of Taylor's Unit, the release of *The Eighth* reconfirms the shamefully inadequate documentation of a national musical treasure.

It is understandable that Gary Giddins should, in his *Village Voice* review, suggest that producer Werner Uehlinger be questioned for his handling of this material; few of Taylor's listeners can afford to indulge in the redundancy of both sets. But what, then, would Giddins prescribe for American producers, whose reissue programs he consistently praises, for failing to record new Taylor material for almost a decade? The handling of this excellent concert recording, apparently a mixture of marketing convenience and an archival urge, is somewhat beside the point. The point is that we only had to wait three years for the original, a mere wink of the eye in the reissue racket.

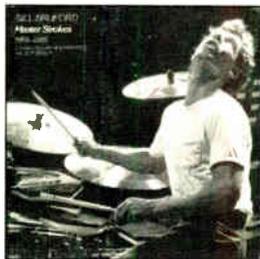
The edited version of *Calling It The 8th* proves to be less of a cut-and-paste proposition than expected, the only excision being approximately 25 minutes following the opening vocal chant. Taylor's extended trio passage, which details his rigorous rapport with William Parker and Rashid Bakr, actually succeeds another, more lightning-paced exposition, that is sandwiched by two arguably definitive Jimmy Lyons solos. Still, the editing radically altered the piece's structure, and truncated Lyons' central role.

Both albums have the uncredited performance of *Calling It The 9th*, which now seems like a tentative afterthought. Despite its appreciable qualities (including fits-and-starts cadences, plaintive melodic contours, and ruminative pacing), its 11-minute duration is barely time for the Unit to bring the material to the boiling point. As demonstrated by *Calling It The 8th*, it is somewhere beyond this boiling point that Taylor's most potent magic takes hold.

With the untimely death of Jimmy Lyons—a loss that becomes greater with time—*The Eighth* assumes larger proportions. His energy and invention is boundless on this recording, and the restoration of his aforementioned solos

is reason enough to seek this album out. Hopefully, hat Art will reissue the remainder of its sizable portion of Lyons' work as a leader, as well.

—bill shoemaker



## BILL BRUFORD

**MASTER STROKES**—Editions EG 67: *HELL'S BELLS*; *GOthic 17*; *TRAVELS WITH MYSELF—AND SOMEONE ELSE*; *FAINTING IN COILS*; *BEELZEBUB*; *ONE OF A KIND*; *THE DRUM ALSO WALTZES*; *JOE FRAZIER*; *THE SAHARA OF SNOW—PART TWO*.

**Personnel:** Bruford, drums, percussion; Allan Holdsworth (cuts 1, 3-7, 10), John Clark (2, 9), guitar; Jeff Berlin, bass, vocals; Dave Stewart, keyboards.

★★★

**EARTHWORKS**—Editions EG 48: *THUD*; *MAKING A SONG AND DANCE*; *UP NORTH*; *PRESSURE*; *MY HEART DECLARES A HOLIDAY*; *EMOTIONAL SHIRT*; *IT NEEDN'T END IN TEARS*; *THE SHEPHERD IS ETERNAL*; *BRIDGE OF INHIBITION*.

**Personnel:** Bruford, acoustic, electronic drums, percussion; Iain Ballamy, soprano, alto, tenor saxophone; Django Bates, keyboards, tenor saxophone; trumpet; Mick Hutton, acoustic bass.

★★★★½

*Master Strokes* is a greatest hits compilation drawn from Bruford's late-'70s fusion band. The signature snap-crackle-pop of his snare drum and those crisp, panned tom fills (a la Billy Cobham) are very much in evidence throughout. Drummers would probably give *Master Strokes* five stars, though I'm sure Holdsworth and Berlin fans wouldn't. Some of the material (*Hell's Bells*, *Beelzebub*) sounds dated, partly due to synth sounds that have become archaic in this age of digital sampling. Other pieces (*Gothic 17*, *Fainting In Coils*) suffer from the same symptom that plagued other British progressive rock bands from the '70s like Yes, Genesis, King Crimson (all bands that Bruford played in)—that is, a tendency toward grandiosity that often strikes American ears as melodramatic, pompous, sterile.

Nevertheless Bruford plays brilliantly throughout, particularly on his solo drum monolog, *The Drum Also Waltzes*. Nothing else especially fresh or surprising here. *Master Strokes* merely represents a phase in Bruford's ongoing search.

Which brings us to *Earthworks*, a startling new recording that unveils two surprises in the persons of saxist Iain Ballamy and multi-instru-

mentalist Django Bates, two shining stars on the British jazz scene. These young cats are uncommonly talented and can hold their own with their American counterparts. Yes, they swing. Yes, they can improvise. Check out their fireworks on *Emotional Shirt*, a complex suite which shifts moods from techno-dirge to a furiously swinging bop romp.

Again, Bruford shines—no surprise there. But his ingenious use of technology, combined with a more seasoned approach toward composing and arranging, gives *Earthworks* a freshness and conviction I haven't heard since last year's *Song X* by the Metheny/Ornette band. It's that daring, that different, that exciting.

Bruford pulls out his Max Roach chops on the swinging *Pressure* and *Emotional Shirt*. He resorts to the ol' hypnotic gamelan groove from King Crimson days on *My Heart* and *Making A Song And Dance*, but the approach here is warmer, gentler than the electro-metallic approach that Robert Fripp preferred. *Tears* is a beautiful, melancholy ballad (eerily reminiscent of Pat Metheny's evocative *Farmer's Trust* from his *Travels* album or *If I Could* from *First Circle*) carried by Ballamy's full-bodied tenor and Django's bluesy synth lines. Ballamy and Bates team up for some cool alto/trumpet unison lines on *Up North*. And on the bombastic *Bridge Of Inhibition* they transcribe sinewy Middle Eastern snake charming lines before Ballamy takes off on a Coltraneish (circa *My Favorite Things*) soprano flight.

This band will knock the Yanks for a loop when they come stateside this summer. Bruford's at the peak of his powers, he's one with technology, and he's got a band of inspired, blowing fools. Like *Song X*, this album takes jazz into the 21st century.

—bill milkowski



## DAVID BAKER'S 21ST CENTURY BEBOP BAND

**STRUTTIN'**—Laurel 605: *ALMACO*; *THE AEBERSOLD STRUT*; *PADOSPE*; *LOBOS*.

**Personnel:** Baker, cello; Pat Harbison, trumpet; Harvey Phillips, tuba; David Kay, alto, tenor saxophone; Jim Beard, piano; Bob Hurst, bass; Shawn Pelton, drums.

★★★★½

The 21st Century Bebop Band is more bebopish than futuristic. The ensemble colors fre-

## UP A LACY RIVER

by Peter Kostakis

Steve Lacy knows the water is deep; he has been taking his time working upstream. To cap off his hard-won stature as composer, group leader, and master soprano saxophonist, Lacy is an instrumentalist for all settings. His tone and phraseology invite instant recognition. Yet, with Lacy you otherwise learn to expect the unexpected. Last year, in Chicago alone, he appeared in the front line of a European quartet, at the helm of a local rhythm section playing jazz standards, in the reed section of a big band paying tribute to Thelonious Monk, and as the no-holds barred duo partner—and solo performer—with Roscoe Mitchell.

On record, his working sextet (comprised of Irène Aebi on strings and vocals, saxophonist Steve Potts, pianist Bobby Few, bassist Jean-Jacques Avenel, and drummer Oliver Johnson) seems Lacy's first priority. He also uses solo and duo formats in the following new releases and one reissue.

Lacy conceived *Hocus-Pocus* (Les Disques du Crépuscule 683), a solo set from 1985, as a series of six portraits, or *homages*, based on such figures as Harry Houdini and Karl Wallenda. And these works do allude to their subjects musically. The theme for Paganini, from first splatter of high notes to winding descent, epitomizes the virtuoso. The salute to Sonny Stitt and bebop uses smaller note values to sweep in fluid motion. Lacy dubs these pieces "exercises and studies for the saxophone" that contain "many characteristic licks which comprise the language that I use." The admission validates the impression that Lacy really is "playing Lacy" in this intimate program. I was struck by how naturally he relates the notated passages to improvisation, never straining for effect. The results transcend a collection of his quirks or mannerisms; they are one of the most satisfying documents of Lacy playing alone.

The title of *Outings* (Ismez 25001) gives the listener partial clue to its contents. The 1986 studio date takes Lacy "out" of his usual style of solo performance. The saxophonist overdubs up to six additional horns on two sidelong compositions with otherworldly reverb much thicker than on *Hocus-Pocus*. These commissioned works are so centered in ancient Mediterranean myth and archetype that Lacy runs the risk of indulging in atmospheric and programmatic sound. He makes them musical by carefully timing the entry and exit of the sparingly used extra "voices," and by building close-reined solos around large, starkly attractive intervals. His constructions are quiet, unhurried, labyrinthine, and rich in images, but they have a tragic flaw. The black disc booms with both-ersome pops and audio ghosts that undercut involvement in this intriguing presentation. Beseech the gods for a compact disc.



W. PATRICK HANEY

The 1985 live set *Chirps* (SAJ 53) teams Lacy with Evan Parker, and—pleasant surprise!—tries hard not to evoke *High Noon*. Their meeting is better for being cooperative, not competitive. Parker, himself one of the world's most accomplished and personalized soprano saxophonists, has a reputation for superhuman solo concerts where circular breathing *in extremis* produces endlessly fascinating structural detail, delicate and different as snowflakes. There are only hints of that here; Parker's trademark phrase-loops appear rarely. The longest of three selections, the 21-minute *Full Scale*, extends a three-note fillip into natural-sounding colloquy of growing complexity. *Chirps* become birdsong, as simple figures are transformed in the process of being exchanged between the horns. Polite notes, whistling overtones, guttural croaks, and fleet runs twitter back and forth in the European avant-tradition equivalent of call-and-response. Playful *Chirps* is *High Noon* according to Marcel Duchamp, a landmark and lovely celebration when a soprano meets a soprano.

A new duo interpretation of *Let's Call This* (hat Art 2038) echoes the vers. or of the title song by a quartet including Lacy and Ma' Waldron which was issued on *Reflections* (Fantasy/OJC 063), a 1957 all-Monk program. Here the selections are about evenly split between originals and Monk, but the latter pieces are the ones I find myself running back to. The 13-minutes of Thelonian splendor on *'Round Midnight* provide an essential showcase for Lacy's "straight" ("inside") horn. His solo sounds Rollinseque in its persistent reinvention of the melody without leaving the changes. The straight horn even disarms with a passing resemblance in low register to Sidney Bechet, though Lacy's raspy growl in out-statement of

the theme asserts who he is now as much as where he came from. The 1981 Parisian club date finds Waldron playing an upright piano so beat-up that it could be mistaken for "prepared." His chromatic solos of Bartokian folkdance-like repetition and hypnotic pedal points overcome limitation: their unblinking concentration and rising intensity sneak up on you. Trumpeter Enrico Rava, Lacy's 1966 bandmate from *The Forest And The Zoo* (ESP 1060), guests on *Epistrophy*, where Waldron's hard comping inspires a charged solo of expressive valve effects and puckishly twisting lines. *Let's Call This* and *Herbe De L'Oubli & Snake Out* (hat Art 2015), another double-set drawn from the same date, as well as the other hat Art boxes, are available through New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

*The Way* (hat Art 2029), a two-record set recorded live in 1979, deserves the handsome show box in which it is being reissued (see the **db**, May '81 review). This is my favorite album from the "hat" period groups of the mid-'70s onward, rivaled only by *Futurities* (hat Art 2022). *The Way* is Lacy's *Das Lied Von Der Erde*, featuring a reflective and melancholy pianoless quintet whose specialty is unearthing deep emotional resonances in melody, counterline, and texture. (Like Mahler, Lacy uses Chinese-inspired texts—in this case, meditations on life borrowed from Lao-Tzu.) *Dreams*, for example, may be familiar as a spiral structure that Lacy has developed elsewhere—similar to *Labyrinth* on *Outings* or the older *Worms*. Still, this performance has a pulseless middle section of tranquil beauty that stands out, in which sparse free commentary from the ensemble decorates Aebi's plaintive violin solo—a delicate *tour de force*. Aebi's strings have not been better featured, from the plucked cello rhythms of *Raps* to her statements as soloist. In all of the Lacy discography, his own soprano seldom has received a feature of greater cohesion than the delicious rubato, Near Eastern-flavored solo on *Name*. *The Way* is special and will remain so.

*The Condor* (Soul Note 1135) can be viewed as the European companion piece to *Futurities*, Lacy's setting for ensemble of the "American grain" poems of Robert Creeley. This 1985 work for sextet falls short of the mountain-high standards of the earlier set, but the bright recording offers a lot. Solos are vigorous and witty. Arranger's touches—such as the *stretto* theme statement by two soprano saxophones on *Morning Joy* and *Volando Via*'s abrupt break into the blues—endear with their goofy off-centeredness. Few's dark left hand and Johnson's mincing cymbal work lilt the rhythm section forward like the classic mid-'60s quartet of John Coltrane. Aebi's theatrical daguerreotype voice suits these songs and increases in appeal with successive listenings. By including printed lyrics, *The Condor* does *The Way* one better, though only one text—a Bob Kaufman poem—is in English. The rest are French and Italian versions of Russian writer Anna Akhmatova, Nanni Balestrini, and Franco Beltrametti. **db**

ing on creativity, letting crafty producers pile on studio gimmickry, as everyone dances to the bank. Instead, Sanborn maintains his forceful r&b personality and production dandies Michael Colina (on four numbers), Marcus Miller (two), and Ronnie Foster (one) work up sensible-and-entertaining pomp. Happily, too, Sanborn and these three all contributed tunes to the album that are rich in melodic scope. While some of us would prefer to hear Sanborn in less commercial settings, he needn't apologize for the popularity of *A Change Of Heart*. He done good, again. —frank-john hadley



## JOACHIM KÜHN

**WANDLUNGEN-TRANSFORMATION**—CMP 29: *No*; *Snow*; *First*; *Machine*; *Source*; *Wandlungen*.  
**Personnel:** Kühn, piano; Walter Quintus, piano sound-effects.

★ ★ ★

**EASY TO READ**—Owl 043: *Guylene*; *Easy To Read*; *Habits*; *Sensitive Details*; *Open De Trio*; *Monday*.  
**Personnel:** Kühn, piano; J. F. Jenny-Clark, boss; Daniel Humair, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

Joachim Kühn has two great things going for him: a lyricism that gives his newly composed ballads the sentimental appeal of old standards, and an ear for timbre that gives his solos an orchestral texture. With no drummer and bassist to support him on *Wandlungen-Transformation*, it becomes obvious just how many ideas are brewing in this imaginative player's mind. Whether he has arranged them in ways that show them to their best advantage is another question.

*Wandlungen-Transformation* is the antithesis of New Age music. If New Age can be said to skate on the surface, Kühn's ruminations burrow deep underground. On a tune like the dark-hued *Machine*, the booming bass lines keep trudging resolutely lower and lower while the melody cavorts—Nero fiddling while Rome burns. This apocalyptic mood also hangs over the title tune, where the music eventually loses its shape because Kühn rambles on for so long.

Ballads like *Source* go a long way toward smoothing out the tension built by the piano-as-percussion-instrument approach Kühn takes in *First*. He goes a step further to develop his percussive style by adding piano sound effects (by Walter Quintus) and altered tuning

(by George Berretz). In one such tune, *No*, where chords are captured and delayed, echoing slightly off-key, the result is chilling.

Collaborating with bassist Jenny-Clark and drummer Humair on *Easy To Read* shows another side of Kühn: the team player. His brittle tone and aggressive approach on the solo uptempo tunes can begin to grate, but playing with sidemen, he mellows and maintains a consistently high level.

At its best, on the modal *Guylene* or the loose, reflective title ballad, this trio has everything you could ask for in a group. Humair has a light touch that keeps everything together without getting in the way, and Jenny-Clark's ballooning lines ground the group and keep it moving all at the same time. Kühn has found able partners to play his challenging music; let's hope they're cooking up some new concoctions already. —elaine guregian

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# “Music Is Emotion. And You Can Express Any Number Of Emotions Through The Right Instrument.”

**From Bach to jazz-pop-rock: Jim Walker talks about Yamaha flutes and his musical journey from principal flute of the L.A. Philharmonic to the sizzling lead of Free Flight.**

“Dad had a flute around and . . .” With Dad playing sax and Mom on piano, music came early and easily to Jim Walker. “I was never really pushed,” Jim says, “but there was always an easy encouragement, and it still goes to this day.”

Jim got serious right after his high school band days, and earned a degree in music education. He thought he’d teach music, but instead, “After I got into increasingly more sophisticated atmospheres, I really wanted to play . . . to be a professional player. I realized I wasn’t just playing something that was in front of me, but something that was inside of me.”

After college, the West Point Band was Jim’s first big chance. Here he found big talents from big name schools. “I realized it wasn’t going to be easy to just walk into some symphony job, so I started practicing diligently.” Jim landed a symphony spot as associate principal flute with the Pittsburgh Symphony. Then eight years later, he auditioned and won the principal spot with the L.A. Philharmonic.

That’s career enough for some, but after 7 years in L.A., Jim hit a turning point. “I was missing a certain element of

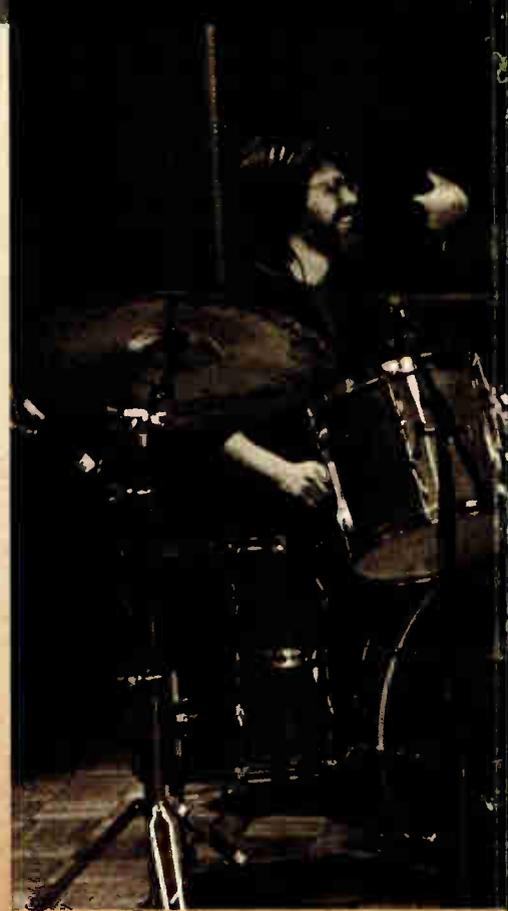
musical expression that I really wanted,” he says. His remarkable evolution from classical to jazz began. And Jim believes every moment of his classical training was critical. “Every thirty seconds of time I’ve spent in music until this minute adds up,” Jim says.

Something else stayed with Jim every note of the way. It was his search for an instrument as versatile and unlimited as he is. This quest led him towards his Yamaha flute. “Now I feel real comfortable going between real heavy, hard rock or jazz-pop-fusion; music that’s just as loud as you could imagine, and as soon as it’s finished going right into a slow movement of a Bach sonata.”

“When you’re playing for a microphone, you need a little more focus and a little more finesse in the sound. I get out exactly what I need with a Yamaha flute,” Jim says. “The scale on this flute is the best one I’ve ever had. The key system has very good balance. It’s held up to every test I’ve ever given it.”

“A Yamaha flute has absolutely no limitations for me. I can sit in the orchestra and get all the qualities out of the instrument . . . and I can turn around and play for a microphone in a totally amplified band. I can express any number of emotions through this instrument.”

And yet, Jim says, “Yamaha hasn’t closed the books on research and development.



They’re constantly listening and improving all their products. Not just flutes.”

What technical features does Jim look for in a flute?

First, “Does the head joint really respond well, does it allow you to do what you want to do?” The Yamaha’s double-tapered design head joint, says Jim, “along with other lip plate cutting innovations make the head joints very responsive; able to give the player a lot more flexibility with intonation, dynamics and tone color.”

And Jim says the student model (which also features the professional head joint design) is “phenomenal” and “an unbe-

Jim Walker and Free Flight record for CBS Masterworks FM.



lievable improvement". "It's unheard of for a student to be able to get a professional type head joint."

Another key feature according to Jim is consistent quality padding. "It's an important and often overlooked aspect of an instrument. But not with Yamaha. Yamaha is really leading the pack on that one."

**T**oday, Jim and his Yamaha plug their sound into the electric rock of Free Flight, an innovative four-piece band making contemporary music history. Free Flight uses all Yamaha instruments. "The percussion

and electronics are the best available." Jim says.

But there is more to making good music than excellent instruments, and the master teacher in him has some advice for aspiring students:

"Study with as many teachers as you can . . . because you really want to develop your own synthesis of ideas." He advises getting loose now and then. "Improvise with your rock records, because "you can be expressive and have fun on an instrument from the first day you play it."

Lucky for all of us, that thrill comes often to such an unlimited, free thinking musician. Especially when he's playing on

such an unlimited, superior musical instrument.

For information about the complete line of Yamaha flutes, write Yamaha International Corporation, Musical Instrument Division, 3050 Breton Road, S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49510. In Canada, Yamaha Canada Music Ltd., 135 Milner Avenue, Scarborough, Ontario M1S3R1. Yamaha flutes available only at authorized dealers.



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# Waxing On

## NEW BLUES

- ROBERT CRAY:** *STRONG PERSUADER* (Mercury/Hightone 830 568) ★★★★★
- JOE LOUIS WALKER:** *COLD IS THE NIGHT* (Hightone 8006) ★★★★★
- WALTER "WOLFMAN" WASHINGTON:** *WOLF TRACKS* (Rouder 2048) ★★★★★
- LONNIE BROOKS:** *WOUND UP TIGHT* (Alligator 4751) ★★★★★
- STEVE FREUND:** *ROMANCE WITHOUT FINANCE* (Red Beans Oil) ★★★½
- LIL' ED AND THE BLUES IMPERIALS:** *ROUGHHOUSIN'* (Alligator 4749) ★★★
- THE KINGSNAKES:** *HARD LIFE BOOGIE* (Blue Wave 104) ★★★
- EARL KING AND ROOMFUL OF BLUES:** *GLAZED* (Black Top 1035) ★★★★★
- RON LEVY'S WILD KINGDOM (Black Top 1034) ★★★★★**
- STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN AND DOUBLE TROUBLE:** *LIVE ALIVE* (Epic 40511) ★★★
- LONNIE MACK:** *SECOND SIGHT* (Alligator 4750) ★★
- ROY BUCHANAN:** *DANCING ON THE EDGE* (Alligator 4747) ★★★★★
- JOHNNY WINTER:** *THIRD DEGREE* (Alligator 4748) ★★★★★
- ALBERT COLLINS:** *COLD SNAP* (Alligator 4752) ★★★★★
- CLARENCE "GATEMOUTH" BROWN:** *REAL LIFE* (Rouder 2054) ★★★
- JOHN LEE HOOKER:** *JEALOUS* (Pouss 7197) ★★
- OTIS RUSH:** *RIGHT PLACE, WRONG TIME* (Hightone 8007) ★★★★★

The blues tradition flows through American music like a great river, but it has been increasingly split into two distinct channels. One stream is committed to preserving the traditional styles, up to and including the Chicago blues of the 1950s. Most of the musicians who play the "natural blues" are older, and most of them are black. They play to a small but fiercely loyal audience of blues purists, both black and white. The second stream is a newer one, born of Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, and the "blues revival" of the 1960s. There are many musicians, black and white, working in the newer blues styles, and their music reflects the influence of everything from Delta blues to Motown to New Wave rock. The audience for their music is predominately young and white.

In the last decade, the rift between the streams has widened. As many of the younger bluesmen moved closer to rock, the blues purists decried the dilution of the music. This has presented a problem to the small record labels that put out most of the blues records: How do you retain the loyalty of the blues purists while still selling enough records to a younger, rock-oriented audience to stay in business?

This was a question without a satisfactory answer—and then **Robert Cray** came on the scene. His music is eclectic and modern, but definitely in the blues tradition. Although

Cray insists he is not the messiah of the blues, his work has done much to bring the blues purists and the younger blues audience together. Albert King and John Lee Hooker have praised his work, and he has won 10 W. C. Handy National Blues Awards in the last three years. At the same time, his records have moved up the *Billboard* Top Album chart.

*Strong Persuader* draws on soul and rock as well as classic blues, but its content is as seamlessly integrated as Cray's band. (It's worth noting that Cray has said two of his most important influences are Jimi Hendrix, a black rock musician, and Steve Cropper, a white r&b musician.) Technically, Cray's singing and playing are as fine as any in contemporary blues. His songs, written collaboratively by the band and producers Dennis Walker and Bruce Bromberg, are clever and intelligent, with lyrics that speak to the confusions of the '80s. But it's not technical prowess that makes *Strong Persuader* such an impressive album. It's so good because all the elements work together to create a consistent mood. The emotional impact of the album, which grows on repeated listening, establishes it as a classic of the blues—and it's this impact which both blues purists and the wider audience have recognized.

It's too early to say whether Cray's success marks the beginning of a full-blown blues renaissance. The split in the blues audience still exists—but it seems clear after listening to all of these albums that there are quite a few other artists with potential for reaching a large audience without offending the watchdogs of the tradition. Consider, for instance, **Joe Louis Walker**, a 37-year-old singer/guitarist recently signed by Cray's producers to their Hightone label. Walker's early influences include Mike Bloomfield as well as Freddie King and Earl Hooker, and he also spent several years backing a gospel group. Drawing on these sources, Walker has forged his own version of the modern blues, one that leans more heavily on Chicago blues than Cray's. His debut album, *Cold Is The Night*, is a little rough but very promising, with Walker's tense vocals and frantic, Buddy Guy-style guitar riding high on the funky grooves laid down by his working band, the Boss Talkers.

Another inconsistent-but-fascinating debut is *Wolf Tracks* by New Orleans bluesman **Walter "Wolfman" Washington**. Like many Crescent City musicians, Washington has worked in a lot of different contexts, and his music is an intriguing blend of "fonk," soul, jazz, and Chicago blues. His slurred, guttural vocals are an acquired taste, but his stinging guitar is very effective evoking B. B. King on *One Way Or Another* and roaring against a backdrop of rifting horns on *You Got Me Worried*. Washington's album is shaky in spots, but it's sensational when it clicks.

Although both Walker and Washington could break through in the near future, **Lonnie Brooks** seems ready to make his move now. The Louisiana-born bluesman has a unique history, having played zydeco, soul, and rock before forming his first blues band in the '60s. He's never been able to pull all his influences together convincingly, but *Wound Up Tight* is a step in the right direction. Brooks is backed by a solid young rhythm section, his vocals are outstanding, and there's lots of energy, especially on two blues-rock cuts where Brooks

trades licks with Johnny Winter. The only piece that's missing is stronger and more compelling material.

Another emerging blues star is Chicago guitarist **Steve Freund**, a veteran sideman who has recently stepped forward to record as a leader. He's an adequate vocalist but a virtuoso guitarist who mixes sophisticated jazz chording with sharp, single-note lines. Freund's concept of the blues is wide enough to encompass Big Bill Broonzy, Magic Sam, and Thelonious Monk, and *Romance Without Finance* is remarkably free of blues clichés. The musicians backing Freund are a mixed bag, with several younger players as well as ageless veterans like pianist Sunnyland Slim. Unfortunately, they don't always mesh (especially on the slower tunes), but Freund's fluid guitar is consistently good.

The flip side of Freund's cool, jazzy approach can be heard on the raucous debut album by Chicago's **Lil' Ed and the Blues Imperials**. *Roughhousin'* was recorded live in one three-hour session, and there are plenty of rough edges: ragged intros, out-of-tune guitars, missed changes, and excuse-me endings. It's raw, but it's also one of the most energetic albums I've heard in years. The tunes rework familiar Chicago blues materials (especially those favored by J. B. Hutto, Lil' Ed's uncle), and it will be interesting to see if the band can develop a more original style while retaining their enthusiasm.

Another barroom blues band that seems to have a promising future is the **Kingsnakes**, a four-man group from upstate New York. Like the Fabulous Thunderbirds, they're a basic quartet with a no-frills, hard-rockin' approach to the blues. *Hard Life Boogie*, their second album, has a nice, punchy sound, and the material includes blues standards, some well-crafted originals, and a healthy dose of classic New Orleans r&b: Fats Domino's *Blue Monday*, the Meters' *Cissy Strut*, and Professor Longhair's version of *Red Beans*.

**Earl King**, one of the pioneers of New Orleans r&b, has never gotten the recognition he deserves—largely because he's never had a good, nationally distributed album. *Glazed*, with strong backing by Roomful of Blues, should change that. King is an engaging vocalist with a casual, off-hand manner, and he also plays incisive, less-is-more guitar. But he's a genius as a songwriter, always finding ways to cleverly rework old ideas and coming up with wild, unpredictable lyrics. *Glazed* includes a fresh version of King's 1955 hit, *Those Lonely, Lonely Nights*, but wisely avoids *Trick Bag* and *Come On* in favor of newer songs like *It All Went Down The Drain* and *Love Rent*. The album's masterpiece is *Iron Cupid*, a droll commentary on the perils of computer matchmaking: "Oh there's a registration fee / That you got to pay before you see / To get a husband or a wife / Or some nut for the rest of your life." An excellent album, long overdue.

Roomful's pianist, **Ron Levy**, is the leader of *Ron Levy's Wild Kingdom*, a good-time r&b jam session. Two different lineups alternate: one features Jimmie Vaughan, Kim Wilson, and Fran Christina of the Fabulous Thunderbirds; the other has five Room-mates. The arrangements are structured loosely around Levy's keyboard, and he displays an excellent command of different r&b styles, from basic bar-

rehouse to Otis Spann and Professor Longhair. The album doesn't pretend to be anything other than a bunch of guys banging out some tunes they like—and it works beautifully.

Jimmie Vaughan is also a guest artist on the latest album by his kid brother, **Stevie Ray Vaughan**. Blues purists are horrified by Stevie Ray's high-volume Hendrixisms and showy stage act, but he's a sincere and hard-working musician who has brought the message of the blues to another generation of listeners. For that reason alone, I'm inclined to forgive his excesses, but I have to report that his new album is a disappointment. Like too many live double-albums, this one should have been edited down to one record. As it is, it's mostly a rehash of familiar tunes (*Cold Shot*, *Texas Flood*, *Voodoo Chile*, etc.) padded out with some forgettable filler. The version of Stevie Wonder's *Superstition* is a knockout, though, and so is *Love Struck Baby*, with Jimmie adding some wonderfully weird sounds on his Fender six-string bass.

One of Stevie Ray's most illustrious blues-rock predecessors, **Lonnie Mack**, made a strong comeback with his 1985 album *Strike Like Lightning* (which Stevie Ray produced). Unfortunately, Mack's new album, *Second Sight*, is a letdown. There are some echoes of Memphis here, but not much wham. Mack's chainsaw guitar is largely wasted in a series of vapid songs about fast cars and fat girls. He gets down to some basic blues on *Cincinnati Jail* and plays a wicked guitar cadenza at the end of the tune—but that's about it.

**Roy Buchanan's** *Dancing On The Edge*, on the other hand, is terrific. Buchanan's screaming, full-tilt guitar extravaganzas aren't for everybody, certainly, but guitarists will go crazy listening to this album. I don't think Buchanan has ever sounded better—or more concise—than he does here. Bringing in Texas soul-shouter Delbert McClinton as guest vocalist was a great idea, too. These two ought to stick together.

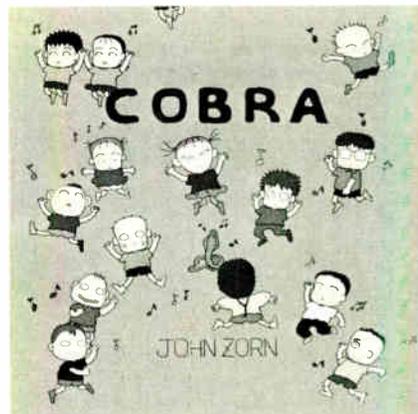
Speaking of flamboyant blues-rock guitarists—let's not forget **Johnny Winter**. His latest album, *Third Degree*, could be the best thing he's ever done. As Winter says in the liner notes, the album has "a lot of different kinds of blues." There are a couple of solo acoustic cuts (with Johnny on National steel); three tunes feature Johnny's original Texas rhythm section of Tommy Shannon and Red Turner; and Dr.

John adds some superb New Orleans piano. Winter still sprays notes all over the place, but this time his flash doesn't overwhelm the material. Little Willie John's *Love, Life And Money* is especially rich—when Johnny sings, "Life has made me pay an awful price," he really sounds like he means it.

If Johnny Winter sounds rejuvenated these days, so does **Albert Collins**. His last couple of albums were only so-so—but Albert sounded fine mixing it up with Johnny Copeland and Robert Cray on *Showdown!* (Alligator 4743), and the energy that he put into that project has apparently carried over to *Cold Snap*. The album follows the usual formula for a Collins record—some funky stuff, a shuffle, a slow blues, and a little tongue-in-cheek social commentary—but everything cooks. Albert's rhythm section, anchored by bassist Johnny B. Gayden, is the best in the blues, and they sound great here. The backing of the Uptown Horns and guest organist Jimmy McGriff brings out the jump in the music, and the swinging instrumental *Fake I.D.* has some of the most invigorating Collins guitar work ever recorded—and that's saying something.

One great bluesman who does seem to be slowing down is **Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown**. Gate's "American and world music, Texas-style" can be incredibly exciting, but a recent concert that I saw was surprisingly lackluster. *Real Life* (recorded live in Ft. Worth) suffers from many of the same problems. Gate's vocals sound half-hearted, and his guitar solos are little more than strings of tried-and-true cliches. His big band can still kick ass, but many of the arrangements here are sloppy and disjointed. (Worst offender: *Frankie And Johnnie*, which lumbers along like a dumptruck with a flat tire.) *Boogie Woogie On The St. Louis Blues* is excellent, though—but you have to wade through a lot of stagnant stuff to get to it. Skip this one and play *Alright Again!* (Rounder 2028) a few more times.

Even worse, I'm afraid, is **John Lee Hooker's** *Jealous*, his first album in eight years. The Hook shows flashes of hypnotic power, but mostly he sounds very tired. The musicians backing him can't decide if they want to play it straight or get funky, and they don't seem to understand that dynamics are the only way to add drama to long one-chord vamps like *Ninety Days*. Maybe I missed something, since *Jealous* won a 1986 Handy



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Award as "Best Traditional Blues Album," but I suspect the award was voted more for lifetime achievement than for the disappointing music on this album.

It's been a long time since there was a new album by **Otis Rush**, but at least his classic 1971 LP *Right Place, Wrong Time* is available again. A few things on the album sound dated (notably the clunky version of *Rainy Night In Georgia*) and the rhythm section isn't always tight, but this is still a superb blues album. Rush's throaty vocals are powerful and seductive, and his guitar playing is simply extraordinary. Rush has amazing control of bends, vibrato, and tone colors, and each note is precisely shaded to have just the right meaning. The instrumentals *Easy Go* and *I Wonder Why* are a virtual textbook on advanced blues guitar playing: the quivering high notes, the casual call-and-response across the guitar, the stretched and compressed phrasing. I hope that Rush can use this re-release as the platform for a comeback, because his music should be heard. If there is going to be a new blues renaissance, he should be one of the leaders.

—jim roberts

let alone an entire album; his consistent energy and exuberant vocals offset boredom, though, not to mention the fact that his archaic string-band sound is virtually unique today. Guitarist and producer Peter Roller has done an excellent job of getting the maximum from Rachell's redundant resources. There's a good variety of tunes and tempos, including one-chord vamps, straight blues, an anti-smoking message song, and a swing tune where everyone steps out. The backup band—guitar, bass, drums, and harmonica—stays right in the groove throughout, adapting effortlessly to Rachell's quirky sense of chord progressions. The result is a fun, effective presentation of old-timey music in a fresh, contemporary setting.

Unfortunately the same can't be said for **Otis "Smokey" Smothers' *Got My Eyes On You***, which finds another group of young enthusiasts trying to showcase an older artist. Smothers is a painfully feeble vocalist, and this poses a major obstacle for his fine band. As a guitarist Smothers works in a Chicago '50s style with plenty of Delta influence, and he does have some pleasing instrumental moments, especially on the unaccompanied *I Got Love* and *You're My Bird*. He also takes some effective solos on *Everybody's Talkin'* (which recalls Jimmy Rogers' *Sloppy Drunk*) and *I'll Be Your King*. Pianist Barrelhouse Chuck, harmonicist Dave Waldman, bassist Rich Yescalis, and—most notably—drummer Steve Cushing all show mastery of the '50s Chicago idiom, playing with imagination, sparse strength, and a consistent groove. But none of this can compensate for the fact that Smothers' slurred, mumbled vocals make for extremely laborious listening.

The classic Chicago sound is heard to much better advantage on *Harmonica Blues Kings: Big Walter/Alfred Harris*. Side one of this mid-'50s reissue is devoted to harp genius **Big Walter Horton**, both as a sideman and leader; it starts with a sensual minor rumba gem called *Southern Women*, with a haunting vocal by Tommy Brown. This cut alone is worth the price of the album. Brown's three other vocals are rather routine, although Horton is in fine, lyrical, pure-toned form throughout. Horton also fronts on two cuts, again in great instrumental form though his vocals are not remarkable. The second of these, *Hard Hearted Woman*, also shows off bassist Willie Dixon and drummer Fred Below as a superbly understated rhythm section. While these six tracks are not indispensable Horton material, they definitely make good listening, and highlight his skills as an accompanist. Side two is devoted to **Alfred Harris**, who was a competent down-home harp blower but nothing special, and certainly not a "king" on a par with Horton, Little Walter, or Sonny Boy Williamson.

Speaking of harp players, that instrument has found a powerful modern exponent in Washington D.C. native **Phil Wiggins**. Wiggins performs with acoustic guitarist and singer **John Cephas**, and the two have emerged as a fixture on the national folk festival circuit. General comparisons to Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry are in order here, since Cephas and Wiggins play in a similar relaxed, melodic Piedmont style. Also, like McGhee and Terry, their sound is polished, accessible, and contemporary, but full of soulful authenticity. *Dog Days Of August* is the

duo's debut album; despite some flaws it's very impressive, and at times quite gripping. Cephas has a striking, clear-toned voice, which is best showcased here on the original title track and two eerie Skip James tunes, *Cherry Ball* and *Hard Time Killing Floor*. He is also a solid guitarist who gives firm support to Wiggins' constantly fluid, inventive playing. The recording quality could be better, and a few stiff songs don't groove too well; the album leans heavily on slow material, giving it an unsettling stark quality that's very effective, but at odds with the duo's spirited live sets. Such problems aside, though, *The Dog Days Of August* establishes Cephas and Wiggins as important new blues artists.

Another impressive, though somewhat flawed, debut is guitarist **Chris Thomas' *The Beginning***. Chris is the son of Baton Rouge guitarist and songwriter Tabby Thomas, who has emerged as a grassroots cultural preservationist through his nightclub, Tabby's Blues Box. Thomas the younger absorbed a number of traditional styles growing up in such an environment, and has gone on to incorporate a distinct Jimi Hendrix influence, plus his own modern ideas. He's a fleet-fingered, rhythmically precise player who balances tasteful restraint with bursts of wild excess. For the most part Thomas played every instrument and note on the album, through overdubbing; in the process, unfortunately, a lot of potentially good grooves were lost, replaced instead by technological rigidity. There are also some great moments, though, including *Me And The Blues*, a Robert Johnson/Hendrix hybrid with fine harmony vocals; *Take Yo Time*, an up-tempo one-chord vamp; and *South Side Shuffle*, a frantic workout with some unexpected rhythmic twists. The album's slow blues showcase, *You'll Be Sorry Baby*, suffers from a plodding rhythm track. As a vocalist, Thomas is menacing and understated; as a lyricist he ranges from dull and derivative to sharp and original, as on *Going Home To Louisiana* and *Don't Work Too Hard*, which incidentally includes a guitar quotation from the rock classic *Gloria*. Thomas is clearly a talent to watch, but next time he should record with a real band.

Continuing with guitarists we come next to **Tom McFarland's *Just Got In From Portland***. McFarland is a confidently relaxed, tasteful, in-the-pocket player whose penchant for single-string runs suggests an understated Freddie King. His voice is limited but effective, while his original songs are crisp and concise, if a bit derivative. The combination of these solid skills, plus McFarland's collaborative horn arrangements with Jan Celt and David Mills, is a pleasing, consistent contemporary sound. *Worried About My Baby*, a gospel-tinged slow blues, and *Rainy Day Blues* are the highlights of this well-crafted set, which remarkably was recorded in a single day. It blurs together eventually, but pleasantly so, thanks to a steady groove.

The groove drops out occasionally on guitarist **Paul Geremia's *My Kinda Place***, but there are plenty of inspired moments as well. Geremia is an accomplished folk-circuit veteran whose specialty is pre-War acoustic blues styles. He sings with limited range and tone but comes across nonetheless, thanks to plenty of emotion and a flair for phrasing. The program here consists of originals—such as

**YANK RACHELL: *Blues Mandolin Man* (Blind Pig 1986) ★★★★★**

**OTIS "SMOKEY" SMOTHERS AND HIS ICE CREAM MEN: *Got My Eyes On You* (Red Beans 009) ★★½**

**BIG WALTER HORTON/ALFRED HARRIS: *Harmonica Blues Kings* (Delmark/Pearl 12) ★★★★★½**

**BOWLING GREEN JOHN CEPHAS AND HARMONICA PHIL WIGGINS: *Dog Days Of August* (Flying Fish 394) ★★★★★**

**CHRIS THOMAS: *The Beginning* (Arhoolie 1096) ★★★★★½**

**TOM MCFARLAND: *Just Got In From Portland* (Flying Heart 332) ★★★★★½**

**PAUL GEREMIA: *My Kinda Place* (Flying Fish 395) ★★★★★½**

**ROY BLOCK: *I've Got A Rock In My Sock* (Rounder 3097) ★★★★★**

**MR. B: *Shining The Pearls* (Blind Pig 1886) ★★★★★**

**WILLIE MURPHY: *Piano Hits* (Atomic Theory 1001) ★★★★★**

**JEANNIE AND JIMMY CHEATHAM: *Midnight Mama* (Concord Jazz 297) ★★★★★**

Every six months or so, a package arrives from **down beat** with a stack of recent blues records. This latest bunch is a mixed bag indeed, from guitar-and-harmonica accompaniment to suave brass-and-piano backing. There aren't any future classics here, but the bulk of them are well worthwhile. In the absence of earth-shaking originality, the make-or-break factor, as usual, is the Almighty Groove.

Let's start with *Blues Mandolin Man* **Yank Rachell**, who first recorded back in the '20s and '30s with Tennessee guitarist Sleepy John Estes. Rachell is now based in Indianapolis, and though well up in years he's still a vibrant, enthusiastic performer. Rachell's rudimentary playing can grow repetitious within one song,

the title track, *Artificial Heart*, and *Big Walter* (three of the best cuts)—a variety of old-timey roots material, and contemporary "folky" pieces like the instrumental *Holly*. Blues classics like Blind Willie McTell's *Broke Down Engine* showcase Geremia's considerable chops. A few cuts here don't jell—*Nuts About That Gal*, *Silver City Bound*, and *Money Is King* (unfortunately these three follow each other)—and Geremia's voice can wear thin, but his skill and sincerity make the album work.

Like Geremia, guitarist and singer **Rory Block** began her career working in pre-War acoustic blues styles, especially those from the Mississippi Delta. She did so quite effectively, too, without hindrance from the wide cultural gaps that limit many white Northern artists. Block's efforts at contemporary material were far less successful, though, so *I've Got A Rock In My Sock* is a breakthrough of sorts. This mixed-bag, somewhat slick production includes country blues, a comedy/novelty title track, a '60s soul "message" song (*Send The Man Back Home*), and an extremely powerful ballad (*Lovin' Whiskey*). Block's strong, sensual voice (somewhat reminiscent of Bonnie Raitt's) is in good form throughout, and most of the songs work well, with the exception of *Goin' Back To The Country* and *Foreign Lander*, a frustratingly brief a capella number that isn't given time to happen. On the whole, though, this album should help establish Block as an '80s artist as opposed to a revivalist.

Pianist **Mr. B** (Mark Braun) falls more in the revivalist category, but this is not to say that his

renditions of blues and boogie classics on *Shining The Pearls* are mere carbon copies. Braun is a solid player, with a penchant for refreshingly unexpected rhythmic twists and turns. Occasionally, on fast numbers like *Chicago Breakdown*, he could stand to push harder. In addition to covering tunes by Blind John Davis, Big Maceo Merriweather, and Mercy Dee, Braun also includes some fine originals. He sings in a rich, pleasing understated baritone; Angela Brown's guest vocals, by contrast, are full of blues histrionics, but short on real feeling. There's plenty of soul, however, on solo numbers like *Joybox Rumble*, *Jimmy's Stuff*, and *One Room Country Shack*. The album's strongest cut, though, is *8 To 12 Blues*, a brilliant improvised duet with Chicago guitarist Steve Freund.

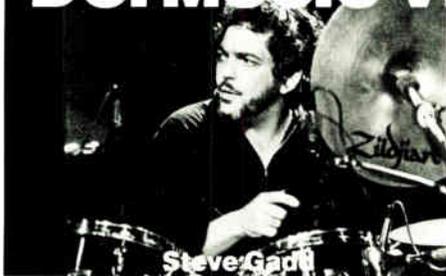
From Mr. B's relatively light touch we move to the down-in-the-alley sound of **Willie Murphy**. Murphy, a longtime fixture on the Twin Cities scene, is a funky rhythmic pianist whose raw style suggests a scaled-down blend of Dr. John and Leon Russell. This analogy also applies to Murphy's gruff, on-a-bender vocals. The first two cuts on *Piano Hits*, a solo album, capture Murphy at his best. *Pocket Full Of Money* and *Sweet Blood Call* are both menacing slow blues which climax in scat singing with piano unison. The latter's lyrics, by Kent Cooper and Louisiana Red, are a disturbing bit of violent misogyny. Murphy's efforts on better-known tunes like *The Danger Zone*, *Bring It To Me*, and Howlin' Wolf's *Riding In The Moonlight* are less successful, but the poignant ballad *Fairytale* ends this strange, moody album on a

distinctly emotional note.

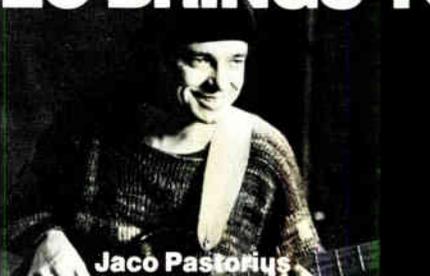
Saving the best for the last, let's close with *Midnight Mama* by **Jeannie and Jimmy Cheatham** and the Sweet Baby Blues Band. The group's sound could be described as Swing Era blues with a modern sensibility, or as Helen and Stanley Dance state in the liner notes, "a little big band." Specifically the accompaniment consists of three saxophones, trumpet, bass trombone, occasional clarinet, bass, and drums. The group is fronted by singing pianist Jeannie Cheatham, who shines in both departments. Cheatham's witty, vivacious vocal style is declamatory, being spoken more than sung, though a big voice allows easy, sudden access to emphatic gravel tones and other funky dynamics. As a pianist Cheatham plays with a classic/contemporary sensibility, solid rhythm, well-timed dynamics, and an apt sense of phrasing. Just for fun she likes to throw in 88-key flourishes, which always seem to fit. The program is a mixture of originals and standards; all the performances are effective, though the best bursts of inspiration occur on *Worried Life Blues*, *Big Fat Daddy*, the title track, and *Finance Company Blues*. Cheatham is aided by a snappy rhythm section, a bevy of fine soloists including the late Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, and thoughtful arrangements by her husband Jimmy, who also steps out on *Worried Life*. A few of the songs end raggedly, but this actually enhances the fresh, spontaneous feeling which pervades this fun, funky set. As the Dances' liner notes say, "They don't make records like that anymore!"

—ben sandmel

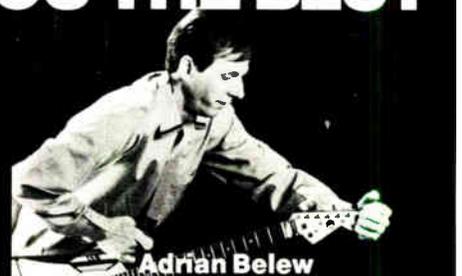
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**CHABADA:** The Melody Four, *Si Señor!* Lol Coxhill, *The Inimitable*. . . . Steve Beresford, *Eleven Songs For Doris Day*. Tony Coe, *Mainly Mancini*.

**BLACK SAINT/SOUL NOTE:** Sonny Clark Memorial Quartet, *Voodoo*. Various Artists, *To Hear The World In A Grain Of Sand*. The Saxophone Choir, *The Saxophone Shop*. Lee Konitz Quartet, *Ideal Scene*. Michael Cochrane, *Elements*.

**INDEPENDENTS:** Ganelin Trio, *Taango*. . . . In *Nickelsdorf* (Leo). Sergey Kuryokhin/Boris Grebenshchikov, *Subway Culture* (Leo). Alfred 23 Harth, *Red Art* (Creative Works). Jean Chaine, *Distant Suns* (Keta Music). Kim Kristensen/Klaus Hovman/Marilyn Mazur/Jens Winther, *Ocean Fables* (Stunt). Paul Schwarz/Bernd Konrad, *Sali* (Creative Works). Trio Kokoko, *Good Night* (Creative Works). Space Jazz Trio, Vol. 1 (Yvp Music). Gijs Hendriks/Beaver Harris Quartet, *Sound Compound* (Yvp Music). Thierry Maucci Quartet, *Elogio Dell'Ombra* (Grim Musiques). Siron/Massy/Autini/Cerf, *SMAC* (Unit).

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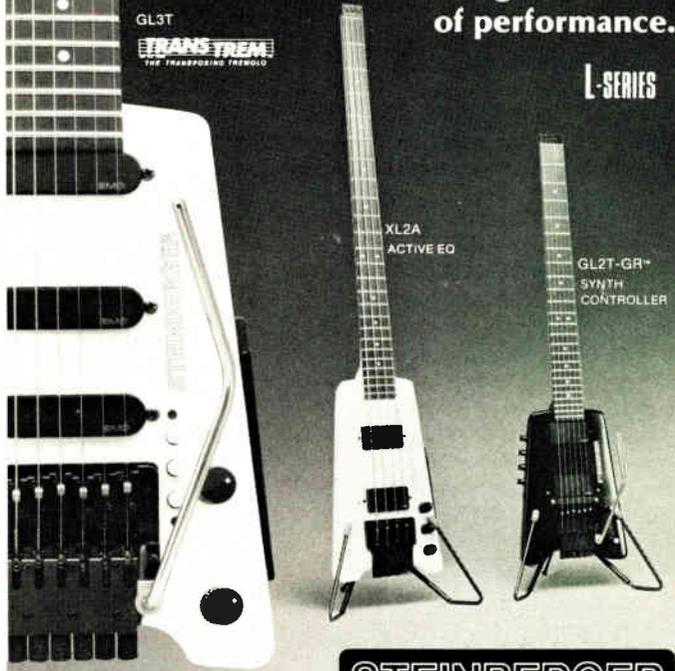
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**1 CHICO FREEMAN. YOU ARE THE ONE** (from *TANGENTS, Elektra/Musician*). Freeman, composer, tenor saxophone; Steve Coleman, alto saxophone; Bobby McFerrin, vocal.

The composition was Steve Coleman's, with Steve playing saxophone. I love and admire the hell out of him; I love the way he plays, I love his approach to the music, particularly in composition, but also performance. Bobby McFerrin, I would presume, was singing.

The tenor player I don't know; the only person who came to my mind was Chico Freeman. One of the major problems I had with this record is recording technique, because you can't tell what kind of relationship the drummer and bass player have, because the drummer is in an isolation booth. You can tell he's separated.

It sounds so bad, it never really swings; there's no air, no interaction, no group sound. Those kind of records always upset me, so that it's very hard to get to the music. I think that subconsciously that happens to a lot of other people as well. I would use this to make a pitch to get musicians to study more about the acoustics of music, and why things work and why they don't.

I liked that composition, though I didn't particularly like the arrangement. It sounds like it isn't Steve's record, because Steve's stuff is a lot more structured than the way that turned out. It was a whole lot of ifs. Three stars; it would probably have gotten a four if I could have distinguished it better.

**2 WORLD SAXOPHONE QUARTET. LUSH LIFE** (from *WORLD SAXOPHONE QUARTET PLAYS DUKE ELLINGTON, Nonesuch*). Julius Hemphill, alto saxophone, arranger; Oliver Lake, alto saxophone; David Murray, tenor saxophone; Hamiet Bluiett, baritone saxophone.

Where I went to school, there was a lot of emphasis on arranging, so this reminds me of a lot of students who came in and had to reharmonize old standards. What the cats would do was, whenever they would want to do something that sounded new and inventive, they would get all these chords, and figure out the chords that work with the melody line. They really *don't* work with the melody line—because if they had worked that good with the melody line, Strayhorn would have written it that way. But they would reharmonize all of these chords, and most of them would run into a brick wall.

The alto saxophone solo was really happening, though; real nice. It must be the World Saxophone Quartet, because that's the only saxophone group I've ever heard that has that full-bodied sound. The only group that comes close is the 125th Street

**BRANFORD MARSALIS**

by Leonard Feather

The past two years have been unprecedentedly eventful for Branford Marsalis. After leaving his brother Wynton's group for what was first envisioned as a leave of absence to work with Sting, the absence turned out to be permanent.

In addition to completing two albums, a feature movie (*Bring On The Night*), and an eight-month tour with Sting, Marsalis, 26, has now his own quartet. He has also racked up credits on albums with Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, and others, has recorded a classical album (*Romances For Saxophone*, Columbia 42122) and is becoming more active as a composer. His latest jazz LP, *Royal Garden Blues* (Columbia 40363), is climbing up the charts.

Like his brother, Branford has very strong views, though in some areas they

Saxophone Quartet. In all the other groups, each one sounds like he's trying to play louder than the next guy, or they've been in the studios too long.

Four stars for the sound and performance; two on that arrangement.

**3 MILES DAVIS. AIREGIN** (from *BAGS' GROOVE, Prestige*).

Davis, trumpet; Sonny Rollins, tenor saxophone; Percy Heath, bass; Kenny Clarke, drums.

Certain records need no rating. One time I was reading down beat, and this idiot was reviewing Miles' *Live At The Plugged Nickel*—probably one of the greatest albums Dewey ever recorded. But he gave it like three stars or two stars—I don't remember who it was, but whoever it was should be shot. He was saying it was, like, a ho-hum record, really wasn't nothing exciting. He'd probably gotten it a week before he reviewed it. He said, "Wayne sounded good; sounded like Wayne's band. . . ."—somebody who didn't have any idea of creativity.

That's when I realized that certain records, man, they shouldn't even be rated—yeah, five stars for Miles automatically. Same with Sonny Rollins playing "Nigeria" spelled backwards. And was that Max? I don't remember that well. It didn't really sound like him. And Percy Heath.

Oh, Kenny Clarke, the Klook. And Percy—now man, I love the way he plays the bass. The lines are so lyrical and smooth. I'd



MITCHELL SEIDEL

differ considerably from Wynton's—particularly in the area of pop music, which Branford still enjoys listening to.

Branford's previous Blindfold Test was in *db*, Mar. '85. He was given no information about the records played.

love to do a record with him one day.

**4 MILES DAVIS. SPLATCH** (from *Tutu, Warner Bros.*). Davis, trumpet; Marcus Miller, all other instruments, producer.

You can turn it off; I knew what that was from the first beat, and I can sing it all note for note. I really like listening to this stuff, though I wouldn't want my own music to be that trite.

This track was *Splatch*, right? The last track on the first side. This shows Marcus Miller's emergence as a first-rate producer. This is finally what Miles always wanted, which was to be successful in the pop format. I don't know just how successful he'll be, but that's what he wanted. The record companies could do themselves a favor by not showing him in the jazz section. This is a very marketable album—the first side has some great tunes; I think the second side is dreadful.

Miles knows very little about the way these records are done: it's a sort of downer that such an incredible musical presence as Miles has been reduced to being a spectator on his own records. I know from playing with Miles that the only thing he did was come in and play the overdubs, when the rhythm track was finished. Still, the record is happening, and I'd give five stars to side one—judging it as pop, not jazz at all. The production was much better than all those other instrumental records like *Shadowfax* and the rest. Miles sounds better than on any of the other records since he came back. But two stars for side two. *db*



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## SCOTT HENDERSON

AFTER PLAYING SIDEMAN TO FUSION'S FINEST, THIS GUITARIST'S READY TO BLOW ON HIS OWN BEHALF.

by Bill Milkowski

**J**eff Berlin fans know him from his sizzling lines on *Champion* (Passport Jazz 88004). Jean-Luc Ponty fans heard him on *Fables* (Atlantic 81276-1). Chick Corea fans caught him in concert during the Elektric Band tour last year. What they saw and heard was one fiery young guitarist with blazing speed, impeccable technique, uncanny facility, and the versatility to play both rock and jazz convincingly.

But that's only scratching the surface of Scott Henderson. To really understand what this talented newcomer is all about, you'd have to listen to *Spears*, his debut as a leader, released last year (Passport Jazz 88010). This impressive album not only showcases Henderson's guitar chops, but also reveals a seasoned composer and arranger. From the buoyant *Caribbean* (with an obvious nod to Weather Report, circa Jaco-Erskine-Shorter-Zawinul-Manolo) to the swinging *Punkin Head* (with a big tip of the hat to Jaco), to the ethereal *Tribal*, the cleverly arranged title cut, and the outrageously funky *Big Fun*, this album contained some of the best writing in the fusion category from last year.

Henderson says he paid particular attention to composition on this debut project. "That's what I'm really hoping will set that record apart from all the other product out there. Most of those records do tend to sound alike—a lot of great blowing, but lacking in the compositions. And I love blowing as much as anybody, but I know too that the albums that really inspire me, the albums I really love, are the ones where the writing is the best. That's why I've listened to and been influenced by early Weather Report, Chick Corea, Jaco's *Word Of Mouth* album, which is one of my very favorites. These are albums where the blowing is great and the tunes are great, too. So I'm just trying to emulate what I listen to, really."

The 32-year-old guitarist grew up in West Palm Beach, Florida, and attended Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, where he studied composition and big band arranging. In 1980, he moved to Los Angeles to attend the Guitar Institute of Technology, where he studied with guitar great Joe Diorio. After graduating a year later he became a member of the GIT faculty and has been teaching there ever since.



"I love my gig at GIT," says Scott. "It's good to reinforce things that you forget—the basics. And I learn so many things from all these young cats who come in with Michael Brecker transcriptions. There's a lot of real hip students at that place—a lot of young guys who know what to do. They come in and they're *already* good, and you see them progress so fast."

Because he says a majority of the students at GIT are there to rock, Henderson actually only has contact with a small percentage of the student body. "There's not a big percentage of students that are really into jazz. There's about 300 guys I never even say hello to. My gig is pretty much to sit in a room and play with the students, and the guys who come in my room are interested in jazz."

"And it's funny. If I'm in my room playing *All The Things You Are* with a clean tone and doing my Joe Pass impersonation, the rock guys are very turned off to the notes. Their attitude is, 'This is music my Dad likes.' But as soon as I plug into a big amp with a little distortion, playing the same exact notes, they love it. As soon as you do one wang bar thing, they love it. Play the melody of *All The Things You Are* and use the wang bar—it's a whole different world to them. It's funny how those rock guys are turned off when they hear me giving lessons, and then at the end of the year when I give a concert with my band and bring in my whole rack and play, they say, 'Hey, what's goin' on here? I always thought this guy was just another would-be bebop player.' But the school wouldn't hire me for that. They've got bebop players who are light years beyond anything I can play as far as jazz—people like Joe Diorio. He's a real jazz guitarist. They hire me and other guys like Frank Gambale and Robben Ford because we can also do the fusion thing."

Though Henderson was greatly influenced

in his formative years by such jazz guitarists as Diorio, Pat Martino, and Wes Montgomery, he still thinks of himself as primarily a rock player who can also play jazz. "I'm not one of my biggest fans, but there are few players who play convincingly in both styles," he says. "Most players tend to lean very much in one direction. But I'm able to play rock and really sound like a rock guitarist because I've played rock all my life. Rock, not fusion. I mean the Rolling Stones, Deep Purple, and that stuff. Deep Purple was my favorite band for five years when I first started playing. In fact, most people hear a real strong Ritchie Blackmore influence in my playing. I started out playing rock & roll all my young life, in bars. *Then* I went to jazz. So when I play rock, it's more convincing than some jazz guy who tries to play rock."

He adds, "For a good two years I was really into playing jazz-jazz on a hollow body. I was trying to become a jazz player like Joe Diorio. But I became frustrated because I couldn't do all the things that I wanted to do. So I just went back to the rock guitar and kept trying to play the bop licks and lines with that rock sound. And I guess it just evolved into whatever I'm doing today."

While comping behind somebody's solo, he can swing ferociously a la Pat Martino. With Chick Corea's Elektric Band he frequently pulled out his Allan Holdsworth legato chops. And on *Spears*, particularly on the title cut, he throws down some nasty Albert King blues licks. Very versatile indeed.

"Most young players today don't swing," he maintains. "They couldn't swing on a rope. They try to copy Eddie Van Halen and Allan Holdsworth but they pick the wrong points to copy—usually the most obvious things. Holdsworth is an incredibly melodic player, and most guys who cop Holdsworth tend to just copy the fast stuff, but they leave out the musicality of what makes Holdsworth so great. I hate to see that happen. When I see my students doing that I call them on it. I always try to get them to play melodies before they start going out to lunch with the wang bar or the two-handed thing. Usually, anybody who copies anybody will just take it off the surface without getting to the heart of the musician. They don't get the valid points of what makes the guy so great."

"It's a thrill for a younger guitarist to cop a line from Holdsworth that's really, really fast. But it's often a trap. That's the worst thing that can happen to you—to be accused of sounding like somebody else, only not as good. So with my students, I emphasize melody and time. The basics."

Apart from his teaching duties at GIT, Henderson is currently working on compositions for his next album on Passport, due out sometime this spring. And he was also recently a featured player on the *Players* album (PJ 88014), a sort of Passport Jazz All-

Stars date including bassist Jeff Berlin, keyboardist T Lavitz, and drummer Steve Smith. This year he hopes to tour with his Tribal Tech band—bassist Gary Willis, drummer Steve Houghton, keyboardist Pat Coil, saxist Bob Sheppard, and percussionist Brad Dutz. “These are guys I really like to play with the most,” he says. “They all appeared on my first album and they’ll be on the next one as well, as soon as I finish writing it. See, I’m not a prolific writer. I’m not the kind who can just sit down and turn something out in a day. Those compositions on the first album took me weeks and weeks of working on them. And the only thing that gives me the desire to sit down and labor over them for so long is the knowledge or satisfaction that ultimately they won’t sound like anything else out there in fusionland.” db

## THE MICROSCOPIC SEPTET

A SOPHISTICATED, YET SOMETIMES OFF-THE-WALL APPROACH TO MUSIC GIVES THIS COMBO THEIR UNIQUE FLAVOR.

by Ashley Kahn

**R**eserved. Traditional. Reverent. The Microscopic Septet are none of these. “Break all the rules but respect all the saints” is the zen-like credo offered by saxophonist Phillip Johnston, co-leader of the “Micros,” a refreshingly original little big band that swings, bops, and blows free, vaulting stylistic barriers while making it all sound new and integrated.

Fronted by four saxophones (soprano through baritone) plus piano, bass, and drums, the Micros are New York-based and have been winning over audiences from trendy Manhattan danceterias to European jazz halls for over six years. Their music can simultaneously conjure Jimmie Lunceford, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, and the Bonzo Dog Band, and captivated—if befuddled—critics have proffered such labels as “surrealistic swing,” “a fractured overview of jazz,” and even “Lawrence Welk on acid.” “We want to pull out the rug from under our listeners,” affirms pianist and co-leader Joel Forrester, “we want a new kind of surprise.”

The roots of the Micros trace back to a “very chaotic and very enjoyable trio” in 1975 that included Johnston, Forrester, and saxophonist/composer John Zorn, when Johnston’s passion for arranged music began to ferment. “In the beginning it seemed like it was a common project,” Forrester recalls,

“but then Zorn and I realized to our gratification that it was actually Phillip’s baby.”

Johnston officially founded and named the Microscopic Septet in 1981 with the “idea of taking a big band and reducing everything—arrangements, a tight ensemble sound, riff choruses, interludes, and so on—all for minimal instrumentation. Later on, after I got the rhythm section and reeds together, I was going to add brass, but it seemed to work so well as it was.”

Johnston and Forrester share the responsibility of writing for the band, and with three albums under the Micros’ belt—1983’s *Take The Z Train* (Press 4003), ’85’s live *Let’s Flip!* (Osmosis 6003), and the recent *Offbeat Glory* (Osmosis 6006)—they have developed a mature, distinctive flair for arranging. “I’ve always loved the humor and complexity in music where the arrangement has been a big focus—early big bands, Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson—Mingus was also a big

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influence," Johnston admits, adding that "the other music I was influenced by was music like the Art Ensemble of Chicago, which also, to me, involved a lot of arranging, even though there was free improvisation involved."

Ironically, free jazz and New Wave rock are the musics most common to all of the current members of the Micros, which includes Johnston (soprano), Forrester (piano), Don Davis (alto), Paul Shapiro (tenor), Dave Sewelson (baritone), Dave Hofstra (bass and occasional tuba), and Richard Dworkin (drums). Names like the Waitresses, Public Servants, and Swollen Monkeys pop up on their various resumes, and as Forrester explains, "everybody in the band has played free music or gone through a period of playing almost exclusively free music, so that we've always wanted as much discipline as we could muster. I had a lot of experience both in playing bop and writing longer compositions, so I was able to add that."

Their East Village connections and the timing of the Micros' debut unfortunately found them lumped in a "fake jazz" category with John Lurie's Lounge Lizards, though there's hardly a false or insincere note in the Micros' repertoire. "When we were first starting out it was hard for us to be accepted by the jazz community because we didn't fit into the background you're supposed to come from," states Johnston matter-of-factly. "The Micros didn't play 30 choruses of *Rhythm* changes, though we've all done that a million times."

As well, the titles of their tunes (*Chinese Twilight Zone*, *Lobster Parade*) and their somewhat antic onstage manner (mis-choreographed horn movements, for example) bespoke a droll attitude uncommon to New York's dress-up jazz circles. "Jazz is supposed to be something very serious, and our irreverence was hard for people to accept at first. To me, our humor falls into the category of irony as opposed to sarcasm—it's a sense of compassionate mockery. People just find it hard to conceive of us being totally serious and totally humorous at the same time, and that's something that's very central to our vision—once we had been around for a while, people understood that our music was musically sophisticated, respected us as soloists, and started taking us seriously.

"But the thing that I'm happiest about is that all types of different people respond to our music—people in their 50s and 60s and children really like the band. When we go to a rock club and play, the people don't know they're hearing a jazz band. They respond immediately to the music for what it is, because they haven't had a chance to define it as something they don't like."

Compositionally, Johnston's *Take The Z Train* is one example of the musical depth,



plus tongue-in-cheekness of the band, typical in its use of musical trap-doors and juxtapositional surprises. "It starts out with a beautiful eerie ballad with minor and dominant 7 chords, then moves into a dixieland sound, then a rock & roll beat. Then there's finally a big ending—only it's false, followed by a series of false endings and then back to the mysterious ballad. A lot of it parodies a kind of show biz style, but there's always that invisible thread connecting it all. Like in the tune *By You, Do You Mean You Or Me?*, there's a similar thing where it progresses through three different styles of music, but in each style it uses the same harmony, expressing it three different ways."

Johnston was born in Chicago in 1955 and grew up in New York, where he received his first piano lessons from "an 80-year old polka and club-date musician who taught me *Just A Spoonful Of Sugar*, *Georgy Girl*—that's how I started out. Soon after that I got a saxophone and just started blowing into it, but I really didn't start playing music till I dropped out of college when I was 18 and moved to Manhattan." The next 10 years found Johnston playing in a variety of contexts, and as he recalls, "I sorta learned jazz backwards, starting with free music, then hearing dixieland and bebop later on. . . ."

Johnston journeyed to San Francisco in the early '70s, where he "played on the street a lot," and where a catalytic concert provided him a career's worth of inspiration. "I would say the thing that influenced me the most was the first time I saw Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band. They gave a presentation that had an incredibly unique theatrical personality to it, and that was completely their own vision with no attempt to commercialize or adapt it—at the same time it was musically complex and totally heartfelt, soulful and kickass rock & roll. It was '72, so it was right when *Lick My Decals Off Baby* came out. Even though what I do is jazz and what they did was rock, that influ-

enced me more than anything else."

Upon his return to New York in the late '70s, "the whole New Wave thing was happening, so I started my own New Wave band and worked as a sideman with such groups as Peter Stampfel and the Bottlecaps, the dBs, Bobby Radcliff & The Illusions, and in various groups of Joel [Forrester]'s. Ultimately, jazz is where I'm coming from, and a lot of Joel's early groups were models of the Microscopic Septet."

Johnston continues to perform with Forrester's small units on the side, and though that and leading a mini-big band demands much time, his musical efforts continue to overflow the Micros. "I'm also working right now with a singer in a group called 'Nora York and Combo Cocktail'—it's sort of contemporary cabaret style and we just recorded the music for [Men . . . filmmaker] Doris Dorrie's new movie, *Paradise*. I also free-lance as a composer—I just did a piece for the New York Composers' Orchestra."

As to how he first met Johnston, Forrester laughs, "There's a whiff of destiny here, in a cheap way. I was visiting a friend of mine on St. Mark's Place, and I heard someone playing *Well You Needn't* during a time when there was little enough thought about Monk going around, so without actually knocking I went right into the apartment. As it turned out, it was his last day in New York, and he was about to leave for San Francisco. So he came over to my place at eight the next morning and we played for enough time so we had the feeling we were going to know each other very well."

Forrester's own career is an involved and interesting one, which has produced an abundance of jazz compositions ("565 and counting . . ."). Born in 1946, his musical upbringing began in his hometown of Pittsburgh, with a "crackpot composer named Henry J. Volz—he taught the great classical pianist Earl Wild—but all he taught me were his own compositions and 19th century mu-

sic, so I grew up playing flashy runs and being able to *interpret* whatever I played."

Forrester's father introduced him to jazz by way of an album "that had Art Tatum, Erroll Garner, Mary Lou Williams, and Lennie Tristano all on the same record. That was followed when I was 13 by *Monk At The Blackhawk*. I never looked back after that."

He started playing professionally at 15 and during his college years was introduced to both ragtime composition and Ornette Coleman's avant garde explorations. By the early '70s, Forrester had moved to New York and developed a lengthy, solo improvisatory style not unlike Steve Reich or Philip Glass. "I started writing really long compositions, and had an eight-hour piece called *Industrial Arts* that I played at [the New Music performing space] The Kitchen. I meant that to be a watershed in my career, and it was—by about the sixth hour I was playing stuff I hadn't heard before, and that was the point, I guess."

An extended bebop residency at a Lower East Side club called Princess Pamela's followed, as did years of piano bar gigs playing original music and standards. Currently, the Micros remain Forrester's primary focus, which he calls "the major extrapersonal force in my life for the past five years."

"As for our latest album [*Offbeat Glory*]"

adds Forrester, "I'm very proud of it. I think Phillip's composition *Baghdad Blues* is definitely one of the best things the band has at the moment. But we're doing new stuff right now—in fact, the Micros have more than 100 tunes in the book, and we could undoubtedly record four or five albums right now... who knows? Someday we will." **db**

## VINNY GOLIA

WITH A PAINTER'S EYE AND A MUSICIAN'S EAR, THIS MULTI-REEDMAN/COMPOSER KEEPS EXPLORING NEW DIRECTIONS.

by Titus Levi

**L**ike a herdsman branding cattle, Vinny Golia keeps several irons in the fire. He has left his mark in many places: painting, mastering enough instruments to overburden a full-grown steer, composition (for large and small ensembles), and album production.

Golia's involvement in painting and drawing led directly to his involvement with music. In the late '60s, after periods of listening to blues, r&b, and Carnatic (Indian) music, Vinny discovered jazz. More specifically, experimental jazz, which expressed a concept which began to influence his art: swift, free improvisation. Vinny's love for jazz inspired him to sketch and paint musicians and bands in performance. One of these canvases appeared on the cover of Chick Corea's album *The Song Of Singing* (Blue Note 84353).

About the same time, Golia had begun hanging out with bands and fooling around with saxophones, in particular an old Buscher. Using the money from the canvas sold to Corea, he purchased a new Selmer soprano. "I was possessed! I'd take it to work and practice in the garden at the Museum of Modern Art, and go home to practice and paint until four a.m."

His early training was primarily guided by a perspicacious ear and a passionate dedication to his horn. "I listened to classical music to learn how the horn was supposed to sound. I practiced all the time to get the tone—usually in the basement." This diligence, in conjunction with a remarkable gift for quick facility, soon began to show results. In '77 he toured Europe with Anthony Brax-

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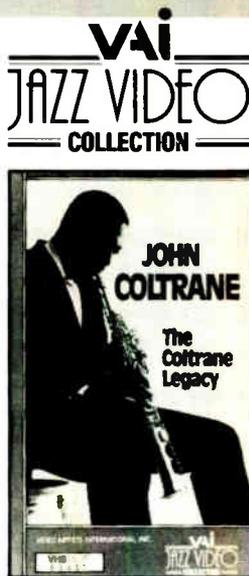
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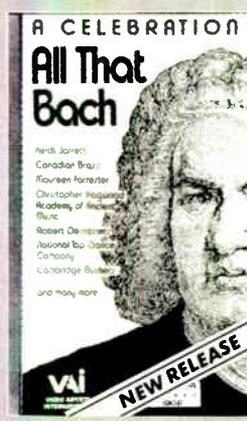
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ton's Creative Music Orchestra, an experience which greatly broadened his horizons. "Anthony's band was like a giant symphony. One minute we'd be playing something like Varese, and the next minute we'd be swinging!"

Golia further extended himself by taking up more instruments. Not just a tenor, maybe a flute, or a clarinet, but a fair chunk of the woodwind family: shenias, kenis, clarinets, saxes, bassoon, and flutes. "I pick all those different instruments for color and texture. I'll hear something and say, 'What's that? A bass flute? Ooooo. I gotta have that.'" But playing so many instruments has its obvious drawbacks. Vinny copes by rotating his practice schedule. "If I need an instrument in a piece, I really have to get it out and work on it. For example, the bassoon is so hard—but now I can get a tone out of it. Same thing with the shakuhachi. That's the main thing with these instruments. Once you get a tone, you know what you can do with it. So many players around now can't even sustain their tone—and if they can get a tone, it's the same one on each instrument. A bass clarinet is a different instrument from a baritone sax. You have to think about it differently and approach it differently."

Though Vinny has stretched himself out with so many instruments, it is the soprano which is his first and best love. "When I tour, I just take a soprano, a tenor, a flute, and maybe the bass clarinet. Sometimes, though, I think I should go back to the soprano and just do that." And on the soprano he really stretches out. The lines are long and arching. The notes are poured out in surging streams of thought. Golia's playing can be heard to best advantage on *Solo* (9 Winds 0104), and a pair of trio LPs, *Slice Of Life* (9 Winds 0108) and . . . *In The Right Order* (9 Winds 0103). "I really think that what makes wind instruments great are the fluid lines you can play—that great linear abandon you hear in Sonny Stitt. But lately Wayne [Peet] has been telling me to change it up and not drown in that one direction."

The aforementioned Wayne Peet plays an ever-growing role in Vinny's music. In addition



tion to their duet album, *No Reverse* (9 Winds 0114), and his role in Golia's quintet (heard on *The Gift Of Fury*, 9 Winds 0109), the pianist serves as arranger and trouble-shooter for Vinny's compositions. His assistance has been especially helpful in arranging the charts for the large ensemble. Wayne's sensitive ear can be heard through his piano playing, though much of his work with Vinny goes on behind the scenes. "Wayne's a lot better than I am at hearing harmonies. When I wrote *Soundtrack For Pepe LaMoca*, I made it as a study in sevenths. When Wayne heard it, he said, 'This is all sevenths.' And I said, 'So?' And he says, 'Listen to this: blink, plunk. . . .' And he also helps me with timing. He'll say, 'You can't have them come in there. It'll sound like a mistake.' He's really dedicated to the music, but a lot of fun. I remember one time we were working on a piece with a dancer, and I kept trying to show him the moves to get the timing and he kept saying, 'Golia, I wish I had a camera.'" Vinny recreates the scene by flapping his arms with all the grace of an iceskating albatross.

Golia's music, however, has a great sense of power and grace. Very often it is a tasty oleo of different ingredients. Even though

his compositions make use of several styles, they maintain a clarity and unity of thought which saves them from becoming cut-and-paste music making. Dating back to his time with Braxton, Vinny has been deeply committed to bringing different musical elements together in a piece. He says, "There's different things going on and you have to acknowledge that and maybe use it. I mean, all the guys who played bebop at the beginning were really inspired—the music had such feeling. But guys now, some of them are just rehashing, and all they can do is pack more notes into a piece. It doesn't make sense. Can you paint a better Rembrandt than Rembrandt?"

While he doesn't try to tackle any neo-Rembrandt, Golia's music does have a very painterly approach; he pays great attention to color, texture, and shape. The pieces are constructed in sections, often without a central theme. This de-emphasis of subject matter is very reminiscent of modern visual artists' attempt to make every part of a canvas equally important and thus to move the eye around the entire canvas. Vinny's compositions have much the same approach; portions of pieces refer to other portions of the piece, moving the ear *through* a composition—never allowing it to rest. As Vinny puts it, "[Writing] music is the closest I've come to painting."

He also takes special care to personalize his music and to consider the players available to him. Much the way different soloists were called on for different purposes in traditional big bands, Golia uses his players to function in special musical roles. For instance, each trombone player in his large ensemble has a distinctly different tone and a distinctly different approach to improvising. Golia arranges the parts and solos to take best advantage of each player's abilities. This approach gives the Large Ensemble a vitality and propulsiveness that is often lacking in big bands. "Frankly, I never liked playing in big bands because the music would go into this stuff like 'be-bow-boom-ba-da-da-crash,' and I'd say, 'Whoa! Where's the musical statement in that?'"

The latest configuration of the Large Ensemble, set to tour Europe this spring, is making even more cogent statements than those heard on the latest release, *Compositions For Large Ensemble* (9 Winds 0110). The new band includes a few more players and lot more experience together. The effects are truly devastating in concert.

9 Winds, Vinny's own label, may be releasing another big band record in coming months. However, his own records may appear on other labels in the near future. "I'm starting to shop my stuff around. I want 9 Winds to be a vehicle for lesser-known people to get going. But if I really had my way about what to release, I'd put out a good Bobby Bradford record. That's what the world really needs." db

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## TRIBUTE TO JOHN COLTRANE

TRANE STOP RESOURCE INSTITUTE/PHILADELPHIA

In 1981, the Trane Stop Resource Institute presented the first of what is now an annual tribute to John Coltrane. In past years, these tributes have included free day-long outdoor concerts which were broadcast live in the area, and a rare East Coast performance by the late saxophonist's wife, Alice Coltrane. This year the Trane Stop took a great leap by mounting its most ambitious and most impressive production ever, "Giant Steps." The event was co-sponsored by WHY-FM, which taped the performances for possible distribution over National Public Radio.

This sixth tribute revolved around the Change of the Century Orchestra, a group of mostly Philadelphia musicians first gathered more than a decade ago by the late Philly Joe Jones, Khan Jamal, and Sunny Murray. Along with New York guest stars such as Archie Shepp, the Orchestra played a limited number of concerts on the East Coast. Its current successor modified the original model, combining 22 of the best musicians from both cities and featuring special guests Leon Thomas and Amiri Baraka in a program of largely Coltrane-related music arranged and conducted by Romulus Franceschini.

Each half of the program was divided into orchestral and guest sections. In the orchestral segments, Franceschini's arrangements (or adaptations of the original arrangements) shared the spotlight equally with the individual musician's playing. The concert began with orchestral settings of Cal Massey's *Bakai* and Duke Ellington's *In A Sentimental Mood* (both of which were recorded by Coltrane). This arrangement of *Mood* employed John Stubblefield on flute, Henry Threadgill and Joseph Jarman on clarinets, and David Murray on bass clarinet. Preceded by a statement by pianist Dave Burrell and followed by commentaries by trombonist Grachan Moncur III and violinist John Blake, Stubblefield's tenor sax solo was Websteresque.

The highlight of the evening, *Africa*, was introduced by bassist Reggie Workman, reprising his role from Coltrane's *African/Brass* sessions. In the orchestral arrangement, Stubblefield, Jarman, and Threadgill twittered on flutes while David Murray roared on tenor sax. Murray led off a kaleidoscope of overlapping featured spots by almost all of the Orchestra's members, the next phase of which was a duet by tenor saxophonist Odean Pope and guitarist Monette Sudler. Threadgill, on alto sax, joined Blake and vibraphonist Jamal in an impassioned trio which segued into a duet by Khan and

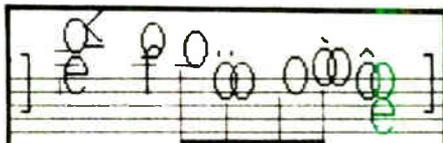
trumpeter Ted Daniels. Murray resurfaced, still on tenor, for a swaggering, squealing solo which was punctuated by blasts of brass. A combo of Sudler, Jamal, and Jarman (on flute) melded into a sequence featuring Sonny Fortune. First, the alto saxophonist was paired with Jarman, then he joined Frank Lacy (trombone) and Jon Sass (tuba). Fortune continued with a solo that began in the horn's upper register and ended in a restatement of the theme. After his own brief feature on congas, Rashied Ali supported trap drummer Sunny Murray, Workman (who played a high-pitched, bowed solo), and the Cecil Taylor-sounding Burrell. Fred Houn's baritone sax spot, coupled with Middy Middleton's tenor sax counterpoint, led to a bass-and-tuba duet by Workman and Soss. The concluding theme statement inspired the audience to a wildly enthusiastic ovation.

Sets by poet Baraka and vocalist Thomas followed. Backed by the two Murrays (David and Sunny), Moncur, and Workman, Baraka delivered two Coltrane-inspired works: *Amtrak* (recited over Monk's *Misterioso*) and *I Love Music* (accompanied by a Coltrane tune). Both were received warmly.

Leon Thomas used the full orchestra as a backdrop for his unique vocal gymnastics. He started with *Cousin Mary*, allowing solo space for Burrell, Daniels, and Stubblefield. A gorgeous and haunting arrangement of *After The Rain* used a combination of clarinets, tuba, and flute in its chart and spotlighted David Murray and the yodeling vocalist. Thomas concluded his segment with *One*, an original composition inspired by the coda to Coltrane's *Countdown*. The musicians featured on this were trumpeter Rasual Siddik, Fortune, Lacy, Stubblefield (who quoted *A Love Supreme*), and Ali.

The second set began with an interpretation of Coltrane's *Equinox* by former Sun Ra dancer Carla Washington. Baraka returned to chant a poem written for the occasion, *Giant Steps*. The rest of the set repeated the music from the first set, with the addition of Charles Mingus' *Prayer For A Passive Resistance*. The arrangement Franceschini used was remarkably evocative of Mingus' 1960 original. It utilized Threadgill and Jarman on clarinets, David Murray on bass clarinet, and Stubblefield on soprano sax. Solos were by trumpeter James Zoller, Jamal, and David Murray, whose elegant bass clarinet work was complemented by muted trumpets.

Except for the criminally wasteful misuse of drummer Ed Blackwell, who sat idle at his trap set for most of the evening, and the occasional uncertain tempo, the concert was a remarkable success. It was certainly a wonderful celebration of Coltrane's 60th birthday. The Trane Stop and the Change of the Century Orchestra can be proud of having provided Philadelphia with the year's most outstanding jazz event. —*russell woessner*



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# book reviews

**AMERICAN MUSICIANS: 50 PORTRAITS IN JAZZ** by Whitney Balliett  
(London: Oxford University Press, 1986, 415 pp., \$22.95, hardcover).

The best of vintage jazz records are regularly reissued. So why not the best of vintage jazz journalism?

Readers of Whitney Balliett's various hard- and soft-cover collections of *New Yorker* writings over the years will recognize many familiar pieces here—in some cases, up for their third hardcover reissue. Profiles on Red Allen, Pee Wee Russell, and Earl Hines, for instance, first appeared in book form in *Such Sweet Thunder* (1967), then *Improvising* (1977), and now *American Musicians*. Others have been seen in at least one previous Balliett volume. For the reader more or less new to the body of Balliett's work, this is the most comprehensive collection of his individual profiles yet published.

Probably Balliett's single most valuable bequest to contemporary jazz journalism over the years has been his historical perspective. He has his heroes, and many of them are far away in time. All the more reason, however, that the world not be permitted to forget their originality and contributions. Balliett chooses his heroes wisely and without regard to popularity or prevailing critical trends. He speaks to the country's most thoughtful readership, through the pages of the best-edited magazine in America, of such figures as King Oliver, Sidney Bechet, Sid Catlett, and Dave Tough. The irony is that he can write at length about such musicians and their work in a general interest publication, while such presumably "music" publications as *Musician*, *Rolling Stone*—even *Jazz Times* and *down beat*—rarely assume their readerships would sit still for major pieces on such long-dead historic figures.

Balliett's strength, of course, is that he gives his subjects literary dimension. The author is well known for his descriptive skills. Without retreating into the camouflage of musicology, he manages to convey a sense of the musician's style, the shape of a characteristic phrase, or the emotional coloration of an individual sound with an imaginative image or unexpected but analogous association. This, perhaps more than his specific opinions or critical perspective, has made him a writer's writer as well as a reader's. I suspect many music writers (myself included) aspire to Balliett's gift for imagery. And some of us even manage to achieve it on occasion. Writing in the *Wall Street Journal* recently, for instance, Nat Hentoff caught the essence of the late alto saxophonist Pete Brown when he compared his playing to a small boat bobbing about on a very choppy sea. Perfect, I thought; a pure Ballietism! But few are as consistently on



Sid Catlett, circa 1951.

target as Whitney Balliett.

Moreover, good description—especially of something as abstract as music—is a good deal more than clever writing. It must not only be informed by insight, it must deliver that insight whole and unspoiled on a vehicle of poetry. It must jump off the page at the reader as a flash of perfect revelation. In order to do this, Balliett often writes lengthy bar-by-bar, note-for-note accounts of what he deems a typical solo by his subject. Encountering these roadmaps in chapter after chapter here reveals a kind of by-rote formula at work, which occasionally comes uncomfortably close to self-satire. Yet, there is hardly a passage that doesn't contain at least one image that ties the string of details together in a striking bow. When he compares Roy Eldridge's rapid release of notes in the 1941 Gene Krupa record of *After You've Gone* to "the way a dog shakes off water," he tells us everything we need to know about an aspect of Eldridge's style.

Balliett approaches his occasional avant garde subjects—Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor here—with compassion but bewilderment. One senses he would like to love their work, but his heart really belongs to the world of Coleman Hawkins, Duke, and the masters of the middle period. He's too friendly an observer to invite himself into the sanctuary of free jazz and then crab about the strange furniture and weird wallpaper. It's bad form for an outsider. Although he's dealt with such figures as Sun Ra, Albert Ayler, Anthony Braxton, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, and other post-bop musics in concert reviews, he apparently is disinclined to move in for a close profile view.

For the most part, Balliett's subjects include legends (Hines, Catlett, Teagarden, Norvo, Tatum, Ellington, Lester Young, et al), and the rank-and-file (Doc Cheatham, Mary Lou Williams, Zoot Sims, Bob Wilber).

Virtually all profiles are of jazz establishment figures, and most, save for the long dead, were based on lengthy interview material. Those conspicuous by their absence—Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, Miles Davis, Monk—Balliett (according to his brief introduction) found either unwilling or incoherent as interviews. Those who do talk at length do so almost to distraction. Too often they tell their stories in a flat-footed drone of detail. What often begins as a lively third-person profile bogs down in first-person oral history, which is certainly valuable, but not necessarily for its literary qualities. All this, of course, is precisely what Balliett intends—to allow his subjects to speak for themselves just as they would if they were playing. The author is merely the orchestrator, the subject the soloist. Trouble is, Balliett is such a marvelous orchestrator, the reader is left wanting more of his writing, not less.

—john mcdonough

**THE BLUESMAN: THE MUSICAL HERITAGE OF BLACK MEN AND WOMEN IN THE AMERICAS** by Julio Finn (London/Melbourne/New York: Quartet Books, 1986, 256 pp., £13.95, hardcover).

Julio Finn, the brother of blues-harpist Billy Boy Arnold and a musician and bandleader in his own right, is singularly qualified to write about the blues from an insider's point of view. Besides possessing musical credentials, he is well-versed in African and Afro-American culture, and his prose is both forceful and articulate. Nevertheless, Finn's

CONTINUED ON PAGE 59

# BlueNote

## JAZZ. WHERE IT'S BEEN AND WHERE IT'S GOING

**Stanley Turrentine *Wonderland* BT 85140** With *Wonderland*, the reigning king of the soulful jazz tenor sax has undertaken an ambitious and joyful examination of the music of Stevie Wonder. Produced by Ronnie Foster, Turrentine explores eight of Wonder's most interesting pieces rather than a hodge-podge of cover versions of Stevie's hit singles. From a poignant reading of "You And I" to Wonder's tribute to Ellington "Sir Duke" to a hot version of "Boogie On, Reggae Woman," which features Stevie on harmonica, Stanley Turrentine has come up with his most satisfying album in years.

**Tony Williams *Civilization* BT 85138** Behind the success of 1985's *Foreign Intrigue*, master drummer-composer Tony Williams formed an impeccable and distinctive quintet. After a five-month tour, Williams brought this tightly knit working band into the studio to make its first album, featuring eight delightfully varied and intriguing new works by the leader. The strength and artistry of *Civilization* will insure the existence of this ensemble for years to come.

**Kenny Burrell *Generation* BT 85137** This album, recorded live at The Village Vanguard, is really about two generations. Master guitarist Kenny Burrell has enlisted the artistry of two of this generation's most impressive guitarists Rodney Jones and Bobby Broom for a unique three-guitar, bass and drums ensemble. But you'll not find endless, mindless virtuoso guitar picking or any oneupmanship here. Burrell has taken several jazz classics and some new compositions and orchestrated them beautifully and musically for this unique instrumentation.

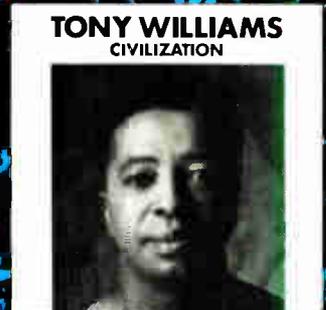
**Herbie Hancock *The Prisoner* BST 84321** Although Herbie Hancock's last Blue Note album, *The Prisoner* was his first with the unique, impressionistic sextet that he formed in 1969 after leaving Miles Davis. Augmented by an ensemble of flute, bass clarinet and two bass trombones, Hancock achieves masterful colors without sacrificing the intimacy and the fire that his sextet generated. Joe Henderson, Johnny Coles and Hancock are the primary featured soloists.

**Lee Morgan *Search For The New Land* BST 84169** Lee Morgan never made a bad record. But there is a special, lyrical rarified beauty about *Search For The New Land* that sets it apart from most of his other recordings. Each tune is engaging and unique and the solos by Lee, Wayne Shorter, Grant Green and Herbie Hancock are consistently creative, almost possessed with aesthetic passion.

**The Three Sounds *Babe's Blues* BST 84434** The Three Sounds featuring pianist Gene Harris were a Blue Note mainstay for more than a decade. They brought a special fire to the soul piano trio genre of the late fifties and early sixties. This album contains a set of previously unreleased gems that include Randy Weston's title tune and Frank Rosolino's "Blue Daniel." Another find from the Blue Note vaults.



Stanley Turrentine *Wonderland* BT 85140



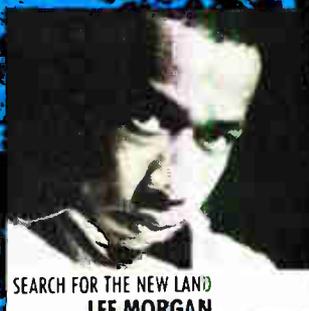
Tony Williams *Civilization* BT 85138



Kenny Burrell *Generation* BT 85137



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# pro session

## MILES DAVIS' SOLO ON TUTU— A TRUMPET TRANSCRIPTION

by Barry Bergstein

Composer **Barry Bergstein** resides in New York City, where he writes and performs his original compositions. He records and tours with his own new music consortium and as a solo performer on piano and synthesizers.

**M**iles Davis wrested top jazz instrumental soloist honors from Wynton Marsalis in the 1987 Grammy Awards, ending Marsalis' three-year domination of the category. Miles won the Grammy for his Warner Bros. debut album, *Tutu*, the title cut solo of which is transcribed below.

Points of interest:

- 1) Miles' use of syncopation in the opening descending blues riff creates immediate interest.
- 2) The short blues motifs interact with the funk-oriented rhythm section in a way that long bop phrases could not.
- 3) The spacing of Miles' phrases allows Marcus Miller's bass lines to give a forward drive to the music in spite of their static harmonic contours.
- 4) The descending fourths after the dub mix effects are later condensed into a repeating ascending and descending minor third riff.
- 5) The playful development of this thematic alteration disguises the "behind-the-beat" technique that Miles often incorporates.



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## NIGHTCLUB NIGHTMARES: A MUSICIAN'S VIEW

by Joel Forrester

Joel Forrester is pianist/composer with the Microscopic Septet, and a veteran of the highly competitive New York City nightclub scene.

In mid-May, 1986, jazz musicians playing weekly gigs at The Slick Lounge (the name has been changed in this article) in New York City declared that they had organized for collective bargaining. All 32 musicians were fired within a week. A strike was waged that led to restored jobs and a union contract. The author was one of the strike leaders.

The Slick Lounge is a beat gig. Musicians reading this won't need to be told what that implies. But my father used to read down beat over my shoulder, when I was a high school bop nut in the 'Burgh (wishing, perhaps, to marshal evidence on how weird Thelonious really was). So I'd better rein in the special lingo.

The pay is scant on a beat gig. You may only get a meal out of it, plus a couple bucks from the bar—or maybe not. You

may get paid less than you were promised and have to hear the club owner say: "When I don't make money, you don't either." You may be told to do your own publicity, and then be paid out of a tallied cover charge or some percentage thereof. You may be asked to accept ridiculously small wages on the premise that the room is struggling in the sacred "now," while promising a fat future. (Somehow, of course, it always remains "now.") Here goes a noxious term I hope to use but once: You may be informed that the room is, in reality, a "showcase"—inviting you to balance your flyweight pay against an imagined Heavy Exposure.

Why would any musician in his right mind (heart in hand; skills in place) take work of this sort? Let me speak personally. I work an endless succession of beat gigs because I like to play in public—every night if possible—and in New York.

Other musicians swoop into the city twice a year and knock off a top engagement; I want to *live* here—and that locates me on the Chump Scene.

Chump gigs are regular or periodical. Keeping up my chops is part of the story. Also, I'm forever working on new tunes; if they don't get to breathe in public, they lose their chance to change into whatever they really are.

Of all the varied strategies for survival in the New York music world—e.g. chasing the art buck, *aka* grant-hounding; learning to play everything anyone wants; withdrawing services until one is paid commensurate with ability—mine is surely the most disreputable. I've been told—at bull sessions held under the aegis of Local 802's jazz committee—that I let club owners get away with much too much by agreeing to play for as little as I do. And I certainly don't recommend my lifestyle to others. I won't do standards, and only a nut would call me for a studio gig (there are a few nice nuts out there).

But my music sounds good in clubs, even though I never play anything anyone has ever heard before. And the people I play with are wonderful, although I don't mean to bag them with my point of view. So I'll likely keep on doing what I do.

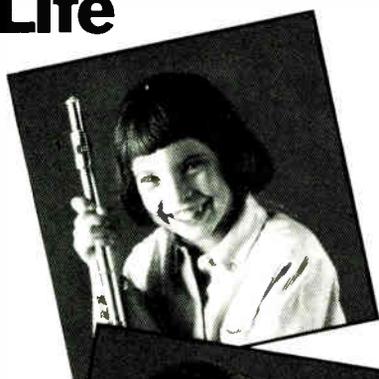
For the sake of soul and friends, I will admit that in my parallel life as pianist for the Microscopic Septet, I've been led blindfolded into a few European capitals, and I've been known to haunt a concert hall or two; I even support a small child, although how *that* continues to happen, I'll never know or hope to know.

But the Chump Scene is what I keep coming back to. "Welcome home," it says, "the Owner's on the other line now, so why don't you stop by the club, pay the cover charge, and drop off a cassette? The Owner promises to lose it before he gets a chance to listen to it. But he's an ultra-busy man, and the music in his room is the least of his concerns."

The only way I can gig in the present is by constantly lining up gigs for the future. No problem—but it keeps me chasing down clubowners from banker's hours to after hours, and dealing everyday with your basic strangers to the human community. They are all strange.

Recently I did a solo gig at one of Gotham's ever-so-momentarily hot new spots. Salivating, I tried to follow up and cop a regular night. (A chump gig with happening bread!) Several breezy phone calls to a big-wig I'd met at the gig encouraged me to that end. So I showed at the club one afternoon, assuming to deal. I'd picked up my five-year-old from kindergarten, so he was with me. We forewent the buzzing-in rite; a delivery was in progress, so we strolled on in. I asked for the boss by name and a series of his assistants pointed the twisty way to an

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office with an open door. We walked in. The guy's head was buried in some papers on his desk. We sat down, quietly, and waited.

He finally looked up and saw us sitting there—Mount St. Helens! Actually, his first words were: "This had damned well better be good!"; i.e., he'd forgotten who I was. I prompted him and his fury overflowed. "How did you get through my SECURITY?" he bellowed. Obviously, his life was at risk. He yelled for his nearest factotum, to dress the guy down for letting us in. As luck would have it, the flunky was out of earshot—so the owner started insulting me instead, concluding with: "It doesn't look like you're gonna work here, does it?"

No, it didn't. You can't do anything with these guys on your own, by yourself. Simple moxie won't cut it. You're dealing with an adept in Tantrum Yoga. And you can forget about presenting yourself as an artist. Try that and observe the jaundice crystallize in your opponent's eye.

That's why what went down around The Slick Lounge is important—and has even grown a set of ramifications. I worked there Tuesday nights for three years, doing my tunes with David Hofstra on bass; we played for Mexican food, Tecate, and \$20 each. The room is a chromed-over neon-and-mirror bandbox offering pseudo-Tropical ambience and waitresses in jet black. It lies along New York's Quiche Belt, 8th Avenue in the 'teens.

One of The Slick's owners fancies himself a cultured dude and a sensitive man in the bargain. It must have really hurt the guy to have to threaten me with my job, each time I asked for a pay raise. But somehow, he found the words. He and the other owners also found the stomach to can the lot of us after we wised-up and organized. They even vowed publicly that they would never have live music again. But the strike that ensued, guided by organizer Dave Sheldon of a rejuvenated Local 802, cost the owners in key ways and they capitulated inside three weeks.

Musicians in a jazz club had actually won their jobs back. Plus a bit more scratch, a re-negotiable contract, and the union's health plan. And a chump club was restored to its proper orbit. It can be done.

In closing, let me tell of a scene that was such a gas to play that it *almost* transcended its destiny as a chump gig. It was called the West Boondock. Its bar was beautiful, its food was the bending end, its piano was soulful, and its clientele included real listeners on occasion. Even its owners were actually human, I believe. I could play what I wanted to play and I did. The West Boondock burned down just before Christmas, and beat circuit guys like me went into mourning.

But not for long. If you *need* to find a place to play, you will.

db

## THE SECRETS OF ANALOG AND DIGITAL SYNTHESIS

by Steve DeFuria (New York: DCI Music Video, 1986, 2-hour videotape plus 130-page paperback, \$69.95).

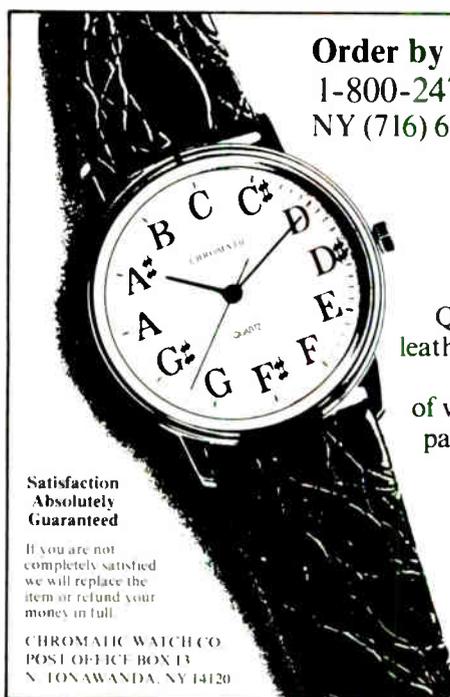
DCI Music Video, which has produced instructional videotapes on guitar playing (by John Scofield), bass (Jaco Pastorius), and drums (Steve Gadd, Louie Bellson, Max Roach, and others), now trains its cameras on the synthesizer. Steve DeFuria, who has programmed for Frank Zappa, Stevie Wonder, and Lee Ritenour, brings us a clear, to-the-point, and entertaining exposition of contemporary synthesis with a goal of providing "a set of meaningful tools and knowledge which can be applied to any electronic musical instrument"—an objective easily met by this program. There's something to be said for presenting this information in a video format, for much can be gained by watching and hearing a skilled synthesist (and DeFuria does have a deft hand with a mod wheel) gradually build up a complex sound while seeing, via split-screen, the oscilloscope traces which reveal its sonic architecture.

There's a real need for a program like this—even with the plethora of ready-to-load DX and CZ patches in circulation—for it's sadly true that one person's prize bit of electronic patchwork may wax limpid under another's fingers. Indeed, even to effectively edit a factory preset requires considerable insight into the way a synthesizer produces and shapes sound. Wisely, then, DeFuria first gives the viewer a lucid explanation of the physics of sound: loudness,

pitch, and timbre—or, as they are translated into the realm of electronic music, amplitude, frequency, and waveshape. It's by conceptualizing sound in these terms and discussing synths in view of basic sound sources, modifiers, and controllers that DeFuria is able to sidestep the idiosyncrasies of any one specific type of synthesizer and effectively discuss what is common in all of them. One section of the program, though, does go into the special features of some machines: there are 46 mini demos of sub-oscillators, left-hand mute functions, voice stacking, and the like, a helpful catalog to keep in mind when shopping for one's first—or next—keyboard. A concluding portion of the show introduces frequency modulation synthesis via the Yamaha DX7, and DeFuria is helpful in untangling the carriers, operators, algorithms, and sidebands of this arcane instrument. But throughout DeFuria affirms the basic similarity of electronic instruments, regardless of price range, and wisely refrains from plugging any one brand of instrument, or one system of synthesis, be it analog, digital, or FM.

In spite of the program's title, DeFuria reveals no hidden knowledge and presents only mainstream information regarding synthesizers; what he offers is hardly clandestine or the exclusive property of any one synthesist. Nevertheless, this is a clear, comprehensive, and welcome package, one that will give the beginning synthesist a head start and suggest to the experienced one many useful techniques to implement. Watch for a second volume covering MIDI, sequencers, and drum machines.

—jon balleras



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### PONCE CONDOLENCES

The Final Bar item on Tommy Ponce in the February '87 issue struck a responsive chord and a blue note with me. Though I hadn't seen Tommy for many years, the many memories of his playing and enthusiasm still remain with me. Tommy lived and played here in Winnipeg in 1971-72, turned a zillion heads, and influenced a lot of local jazz fans. His encouragement of younger players and his boundless energy were amazing. I know he was a big help to me, a not-so-confident singer. I was very sorry to hear of his passing.

P.S. As a 28-year reader of *db* (geez—that long?), my compliments. Still a great magazine!

Maurice Hogue  
Winnipeg, Canada

### STABLE SEARCH

Your magazine has always been a great source of info for me and I'm sure for all your readers as well. I wonder if you or your readers can help me out with some much-needed information. I have searched all over for information on an alto sax player named Dick Stabile. From what I have found out, he had a unique style which covered the late '30s and '40s big

band Swing Era. I'm very interested in obtaining copies of any of his recordings, either as a leader or with others such as the Dorseys. Also any articles which may have been written on him. But more so, I would like to know what type of axe he used and if any instruments were produced with his name stamp on them, possibly distributed by Sorkin. Any information at all would be greatly appreciated. Please send any correspondence to me at 420 Highland Ave., Apt. 3C, Wood Ridge, NJ 07075.

Joe Pickerelli  
Wood Ridge, NJ

### MILES—STILL AFLAME

A recent concert at Clowes Hall in Indianapolis afforded me the rare opportunity to catch a glimpse of the true character of one Miles Dewey Davis III. Like countless others, I have been exposed to a steady stream of articles and reviews that have accused Miles of both insensitivity and arrogance. My own perceptions, after watching the man play his heart out for over two hours, are quite different.

Throughout the concert, Miles utilized a variety of gestures to encourage the youthful members of his band to stretch out and test the limits of their considerable

musical talents. Miles is first and foremost a gifted teacher. In addition to providing encouragement, whenever a member of his ensemble gave a spirited solo Miles would offer an embrace that never failed to spark an appreciative response from the capacity crowd. The man cares.

Miles' own playing was the most impressive aspect of the concert. Every note from his trumpet was packed with emotion—from pain and loneliness to fury and exultation. The fire still burns.

Send one very loud and special thank you to Miles Davis.

Gerald Long  
Columbus, IN

### WONDERFUL FRIEND

I have always said that when I discovered jazz, I discovered music. Now I have something to add—when I discovered *down beat*, I found the most wonderful friend me and my favorite music could have. I just couldn't believe it when I saw John Scofield on the cover of *db's* January ['87] issue—he's magnificent, just as the article was. Congratulations, your magazine is a blessing for every music lover down here.

Guillermo Mueses  
Dominican Republic

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

way the average band director, who might feel uncomfortable in a rock & roll store, can approach his school music dealer, speak to the people on the store's staff who are familiar with all the latest developments, and find out how he or she could use these new products in his or her existing programs."

By offering these kinds of services, school music dealers have gained the respect of many music educators and organizations from all over the country interested in school music programs. In fact, a few years ago *down beat* sponsored an entire series of ads that espoused the value and importance of services offered by school music dealers.

Not everyone is convinced of the value of service, though. Many music teachers and school administrators look no further than the bottom line and argue that the prices charged by school music dealers are higher than those charged by mail-order operations. As Jim Kleeman explained, however, the facts are not always as simple as they first appear. "Even though band directors might be able to save a few dollars by purchasing their products from mail-order houses, when they need an instrument repaired overnight or they need band folders, they won't get those from a mail-order person. He's there for one reason, and that is for the dollars. He can sell horns more inexpensively because he doesn't have a staff member servicing your program every week, or buying space at your state educator meetings. These things cost money, and in the long run they form the basis for the dealer saying to a director, 'I'll do this to have your business so that when you need a tuba and you can buy it for \$50 cheaper someplace else, you'll remember all the things I've done that exceed that \$50.'"

Palen added that this type of loyalty is particularly important when it comes time to choose a supplier for the school's beginners program. "The one and only method by which schools create the incentive for school music dealers to provide the services that their instrumental programs need is the selection of one music dealer to service their beginner rental programs."

Having completed 25 years of successful existence and having surpassed its founders' initial goals, NASMD is now looking forward with confidence. As founding member and first NASMD president Harold Winkler noted, "The untamed growth of NASMD is evidence of the large number of school music dealers willing to devote time, energy, and money to the improvement of their services." Current president Palen stated that the organization's plans for the future, however, are being guided by its most basic goal from the past—promoting school music. "We are firm believers that music is not a frill. We will strive politically and any other way possible to see that music education remains a vital part of a student's overall education." **db**

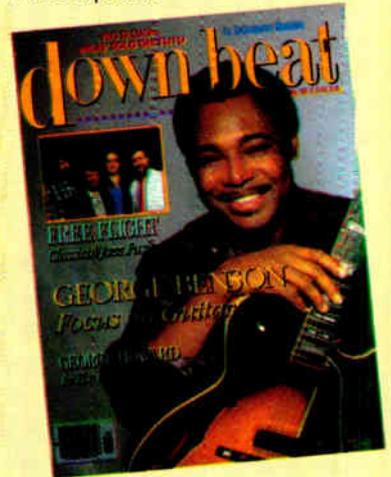
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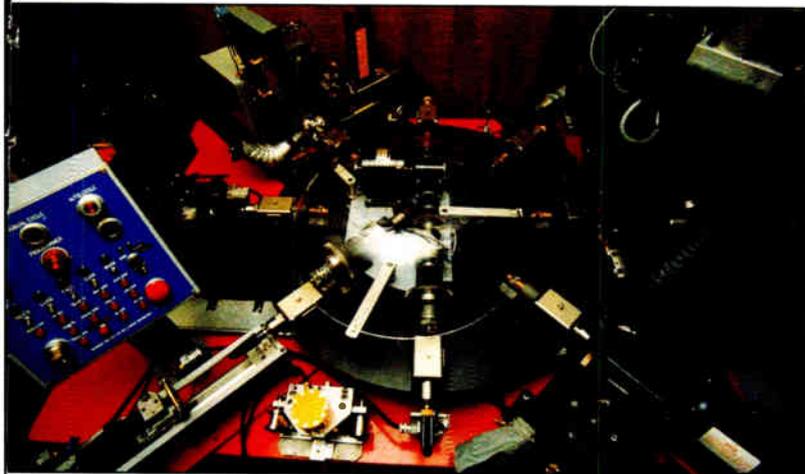
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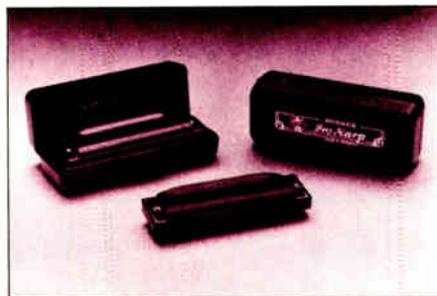
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**ZILDJIAN/BARCUS BERRY'S ZMC-1**

The AVEDIS ZILDJIAN Co. (Norwell, MA) and BARCUS-BERRY INC. (Huntington Beach, CA) have combined forces to produce the first mic-ing system created specifically for cymbals, the ZMC-1. The ZMC-1 provides the drummer with acoustic cymbal sound amplification while giving him complete control of the sound and balance of his cymbal setup; he can also combine acoustic sounds with built-in effects loops for echo, reverb, and flanging on individual cymbals. The system includes the ZMC-1 powered mixer, five patented electret mics for cymbals (two are pictured above), and a special mic for hi-hats.

### WIND WAREHOUSE



**HOHNER'S PRO HARP HH-562**

HOHNER INC. (Ashland, VA) has introduced the Pro Harp HH-562, a new harmonica for professionals that has the same body and reedplates as the Hohner Special 20, but features sleek black satin-finished covers and a black body—giving it a hi-tech look. The Pro Harp is a 10-hole diatonic harmonica constructed of top-quality plastic that won't expand or recede with excessive humidity or dryness. The reeds are of genuine brass, and the brass reedplates are set in a recessed body, making the Pro Harp airtight. The covers are attached with a nut and bolt for easy removal. The Pro Harp is available in all 12 keys.

### KEYBOARD COUNTRY



**ROLAND'S DIGITAL PIANOS**

ROLANDCORP US (Los Angeles, CA) is offering a complete line of digital pianos, with three new instruments—the HP-4500, HP-3000, and HP-2000—having been added to their predecessors, the HP-5500 and HP-5600. All of these keyboards use Roland's proprietary Structured/Adaptive Synthesis technology (S/A Synthesis) to reproduce the sound of concert grand pianos over the entire keyboard range more realistically than other electronic pianos. All models feature 16 voices and offer eight distinctive preset keyboard sounds—two acoustic grands, an electric grand, vibraphone, clavinet, harpsichord, and two electric pianos. A full 88-key, weighted-action keyboard comes with all but the HP-2000 model, which has 76 keys. The pianos require no tuning, and each provides easy access to controls for sound brilliance and volume, key transpose and sound program change, and chorus and tremolo. The HP-5600 features a polished walnut finish; the HP-5500 and HP-4500 are rosewood; and the HP-3000 and HP-2000 are oak. All feature built-in stereo speaker systems, but can also be hooked up to home stereo systems or headphones through jacks provided on the rear panel.

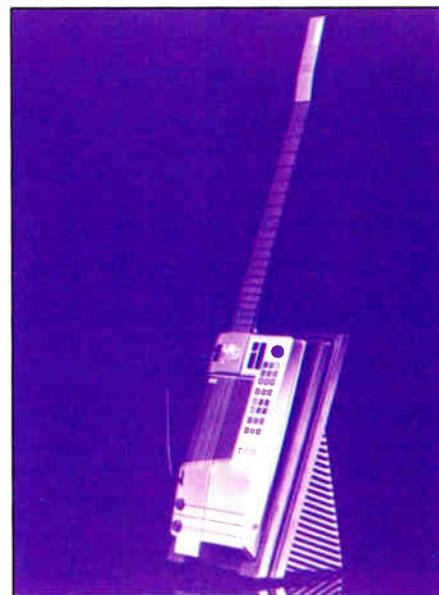
### GUITAR WORLD



**WESTONE'S GENESIS GUITARS**

WESTONE (Div. of St. Louis Music, St. Louis, MO) has introduced the Genesis guitar line, featuring carved, contoured solid poplar bodies and Canadian hard-rock maple necks—enhancing "hammer-on" technique

by getting the body out of the player's way. Standard equipment includes a Bendmaster Deluxe locking tremolo, foil-shielded and waxed pickups, and Gotoh die-cast TSA machine heads. The necks are oil-finished for drag-free playing, fingerboards are flat-radiused and equipped with 2.7 millimeter jumbo frets, and standard scale length is 25-and-a-half inches with a 43 millimeter nut width. The Genesis II models have ALNICO 5 pickups, a PEQ mid-range boost, and pearl metallic finishes.



**STEPP'S ELECTRONIC GUITAR**

STEPP ELECTRONICS (London; distributed by Group Centre, Inc., Calabasas, CA) has introduced the DG1, a totally electronic guitar that is the first instrument made by the company. The DG1 has its own on-board sounds, so it requires no external MIDI slave unit for sound generation. The DG1 consists of the guitar itself and a LSU (Life Support Unit) that contains the synth voice boards, power supply, and communications interface. All LSU functions are contained within the DG1 guitar stand. The guitar uses electronic facsimile frets; no metal frets are needed because the strings aren't tuned conventionally—a non-interrupt auto-tune and calibration facility constantly checks tuning. Eight octaves are available, and tunings can be stored and recalled from any of 100 memories. Chords can be played, stored, and then strummed without using the left hand. The electronic facsimile frets prevent delays commonly associated with MIDI guitars. A variety of acoustic and electronic guitar sounds, plus piano, brass, and violin, can be created. Other features include 10 factory presets, 70 user presets, and 20 split-mode presets. db

bitterness toward the white race and Christian religion has so distorted his perception that his book *The Bluesman* is of interest only as an adjunct to more objective studies. Although he imparts much useful information, few of his conclusions can be taken at face value.

Finn's thesis, that the blues embodies the animist religious beliefs first transported to the New World in the holds of slave ships, contains at least a grain of truth. Traditional West African culture was and is centered around religion, and to the extent that the blues retains musical and lyrical elements of that culture, it can be regarded, like most Western music, as liturgically derived.



Muddy Waters: "... a devotee of hoodoo"?

Such retentions, however, are even more common in black gospel music, which has preserved African rhythm and melody patterns while suppressing the identity of the tribal deities that originally inspired them. Blues lyrics constitute a virtual encyclopedia of black folklore, but references to hoodoos and fetishes are no more prevalent than descriptions of railroad lines or varieties of moonshine whiskey.

Quoting liberally from period sources, Finn gives a brief account of Haitian voodoo, Jamaican obeah, Cuban santería, and Brazilian candomblé—all cults in which African practices are preserved in much purer form than in the United States. He emphasizes white attempts to repress African religion, asserting that the blacks' ancestral gods did indeed protect and guide them—a notion apparently not shared by the Haitian mobs who recently lynched voodoo priests and priestesses following the abdication of President-for-life Jean-Claude Duvalier.

Finn's discussion of hoodoo in Louisiana is more to the point, if no less tendentious. His amply attested depiction of root doctors and conjure men—including recipes for gris-gris and goofer dust, and for the proper prepara-

tion of black-cat bones—is of particular value. But his portrait of the famous New Orleans voodoo queen Marie Laveau is sheer hagiography, omitting such details as the extensive network of household servants she used to help divine the secrets of her rich white patrons.

When at last he turns to the blues, Finn can muster little hard evidence to clinch his case, resorting instead to emotional arguments and tenuous speculation—supposing, for example, that Robert Johnson consorted with a root doctor while sojourning in the Mississippi swamps. He cites Muddy Waters as a devotee of hoodoo, and yet Muddy told Robert Palmer, "It's just a con game on people's heads, you know, gettin' the fools."

Surprisingly, Finn acknowledges that whites can play the blues, but insists they can never really live the bluesman's life. In this he has a point, for the blues remains the most profound expression of the black American experience in its totality, and not merely a relic of a dimly remembered African past.

—Larry Birnbaum

#### SITTING IN: SELECTED WRITINGS ON JAZZ, BLUES AND RELATED TOPICS

by Hayden Carruth (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1987, 192 pp., \$17.95, hardcover).

Hayden Carruth, poet/novelist/anthologist/philosopher/farmer/teacher/clarinetist, has herein collected over 40 years worth of his prose and much of the poetry he has written whose main focus is jazz. Carruth is not a critic but an enthusiast, and this is a book not of criticism but of enthusiasm for the music that has been central to his development and practice as a writer. The essays are ruminative, personal, familiar, laced with anecdote and wide of reference. He can skip from Sidney Bechet to Steve Lacy to Alexander Pope as deftly as a good double-play combination. Some of the essays have been arranged in numbered paragraphs, and this gives the effect of bursts of thought. What ties these separate pieces together—even the "related topics" which have to do with literature—is Carruth's conviction that "The great contribution of the 20th century to art is the idea of spontaneous improvisation within a determined style."

Now, Carruth does not advance and argue this as a thesis. He accepts the proposition as true. His essays and poems attest to this, as they manifest the inspiration jazz has been, and continues to be, to him. In essence, this is a book driven by the sort of inspiration and courage it takes to "sit in." I know of no book quite like it in the literature of jazz.

Carruth was raised in what he calls a "lower middle-class village about 30 miles north of Manhattan" and he wanted to get out. He had a radio (the time is the early- to mid-'30s) on which he picked up the big bands. He had only to hear jazz to love it. He got into New York infrequently to hear live music. Catching Pee Wee Russell at Nick's in the late-'30s is one moment he has never forgotten. He writes of this in what I feel is the best essay in his book, "A Possibly Momentary Declaration in Favor of William Butler Yeats and Charles Ellsworth Russell."

In this essay, Carruth makes his statement about the central role of improvisation and follows with "Structure has become a function of feeling." This may not be new, but it is news as it emerges, and is sustained, in the work of a writer whose range is as wide and whose ear is as deep as Carruth's. He is on good terms with philosophy from Schopenhauer to the present; his taste in poetry seems uncorrupted by fashion; he can respond to Louis Armstrong and Archie Shepp, to Bessie Smith and Maxine Sullivan, to Dixieland and Free Jazz. Suffice it to say the net of his attention is wide. And what he culls from this net makes evident jazz is not folk-art or some other backwater, but a music at whose core is feeling realized, given form in a way consistent with, and equal to, say, the Cubism of Picasso and the last poems of Yeats.

But this does the book something of a disservice by implying Carruth is a high-brow—all Parker, Joyce, and Sartre. Not so. He's a fan first and last, whose poems are often anthems to his heroes. To "sweet Billy Kyle." To Specs Powell, Ben Webster, Mary Lou Williams, "and oh incomparable James P. Johnson." Growing up, Carruth says he and his friends were drawn to the "romantic but hard-bitten idealism we felt in jazz at that time." He has stayed true to this idealism. True enough so he can proclaim "Jazz is love."

I greatly enjoyed this book, so perhaps my quarrel with this last assertion is more a statement about my generation and its relationship with the music than it is a negative response to Carruth, but quibble I must. Growing up in the '50s, I first listened to rock & roll, and it was Allen Freed introducing Ray Charles as a "jazz arranger" that led me to the music—and then I heard Monk, and that was that! I was close enough to New York to hear Ornette Coleman when he first came East, and hear Mingus put his various "workshops" through their paces. My point is that someone my age hears anger, fear (I must write *even* fear), and outrage as well as humor in jazz. So, Carruth's book speaks to me but not for me. Another book by someone of my generation will have to do that. I hope *Sitting In* starts something, and doesn't stay too long alone on its shelf.

—William Corbett

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## THE COMMON LAW OF COUNT BASIE

by John McDonough

As this is written, the hottest topic of conversation among the New York literati is the changing of the editorial guard at the *New Yorker* magazine, and the palace revolt it has provoked. Keep in mind that in its 62-year history, it has had only two editors: founder Harold Ross (1925-52) and William Shawn (1952-present). Shawn had not only been with the magazine for many years prior to becoming editor, he was Ross' protege and designated heir. Thus the succession seemed almost apostolic in its legitimacy. The present squabble involves the editorial appointment of Robert Gottlieb, not by Shawn, but by outsiders—specifically, management of Newhouse Publications, which owns the magazine. Whatever may come of this passing brouhaha, no one doubts that the *New Yorker* will continue to flourish according to its own accumulated common law of intellectual and literary tradition.

The *New Yorker* case offers a useful perspective and a number of obvious parallels to the present Count Basie orchestra, which continues to thrive—and perhaps even evolve—some three years after the death of its founder and leader of nearly 50 years. By the time Basie died, he had long since completed a job that neither Ross nor Shawn ever quite managed. He had weened his band off its original cult of personality, replacing its dependency on a few irreplaceable individuals with a larger, more broadly based tradition that rested instead on a vast body of work that would imply its own constitutional first principles to anyone in whose stewardship it might fall.

The process by which all this came about is detailed in *Count Basie: A Bio-Discography* (Greenwood Press, \$75.00, hardcover), by Chris Sheridan—an extraordinary 1,350-page log of evolution from sideman to American legend, with a lot of luck along the way. The form is the standard one for a discography—chronological listings of all commercial recordings, recorded broadcasts, and known private recordings. Between the main strands of recorded history Sheridan weaves itineraries and enough colorful narrative meat to raise the latent personal drama implied by the music to the surface. It is, of course, an obvious companion piece to *Good Morning Blues*, Basie's 1986 autobiography. That book was a disappointment, perhaps because we expected so much from it. This one's a treasure, maybe because we expect so little from a reference listing.

The book is loaded with fascinating nuggets of trivia. The Daisy Chain, for instance,



Count Basie, circa 1959.

in *Swingin' At The Daisy Chain* (1937), was a Kansas City club that purveyed sex shows; *Shorty George* was a narrow-gauge Texas railroad used to transport slaves before the Civil War. And Sheridan finally settles the dispute over when Basie's first session as leader took place. The famous 1936 Columbia *Lady Be Good* session was originally dated a month earlier by John Hammond, perhaps by mistake, but more likely to cover up a potential contract dispute with Decca, which had just signed Basie.

I spotted few minor inaccuracies, most not applying directly to Basie. For example, on page 20, Sheridan seems to assume that Decca was owned by MCA in the '30s—which would explain why Basie began recording for Decca. Actually, that merger didn't occur until 1961. Decca had no association with MCA in the '30s. One occasionally encounters the gap between English and American idioms in the text (Sheridan is British), such as when he says that in 1955 "an instrumental hit was on the cards" (p. 401); or "Herschel Evans . . . became unwell with a known heart condition" (p. 64). Also, because the author is based in England, he labors under the burden of distance. His listings, for instance, provide no details on a nationally televised PBS Basie/Ella special produced in 1979 by Norman Granz. Both telecast and rehearsal tapes are common among American collectors.

Of much larger and more positive significance, though, is the way Sheridan's lists of titles and personnel trace the drift from the "old testament" of head arrangements to the "new testament" of institutionalization. It began as far back as 1940 with Lester Young's departure, says Sheridan. "The creeping reliance on formal, written material now gathered pace." The "last glory year" was 1946. Within a mere 36 months (and 34 pages) the Basie band bottomed out to 20th

place in the 1949 down beat Readers Poll with only 15 votes. Woody Herman, who had debuted in New York opposite Basie in 1936, garnered 1,042! But the worm would turn.

The "new testament" years tend to come as phases bracketed by extended associations with knowing record companies—first Norman Granz' Clef and Verve labels, then Roulette, and finally Granz again with Pablo. One shudders to think what Basie's last 10 years might have been like without the remarkable patronage of Granz: an aimless, disconnected series of "concept" LPs of bad musicals and fusion material perhaps? Instead, the Pablo canon stands as one of the most fully realized periods of his recording career. Of the minor affiliations in between (Dot, Daybreak, Command), only Bob Thiele's Impulse/Flying Dutchman LPs stand out, principally on the strength of *Afrique*, an interesting but dead-end path Basie briefly took in pursuit of modernism.

The documentation is now here on paper. And the band keeps rolling on. It may be the first of the ghost bands to achieve genuinely respectful hearings from critics normally suspicious of such things—as *New Yorker* loyalists are to the succession rituals to the editor's throne. Certainly the legitimacy of the current Basie band is enhanced by overlapping generations of Basie veterans in its ranks—pieces of the true cross—not to mention the successive leadership of Thad Jones and Frank Foster, both contributing architects to the larger Basie tradition. (To maintain continuity and style, Eddie Durham and Buck Clayton should still be doing charts.)

But I suspect that long after those who have served under The Founder himself are gone, the band may continue to exist on the basis of its long tradition. This is the Common Law of custom, temperament, and standards that reach out from the past to govern descendants of an idea in the proper attitudes and disciplines of custody. Like a network of intellectual gyroscopes, they hold an artistic organism in balance once it's fled the grip of its originator. They don't freeze the institution in its tracks; instead, they guide its evolution into the future, keeping it true to first principles but free to determine their applications.

The Basie band is in a position to seize this sort of perpetuity in a way few other bands have ever been. Its sources of inspiration have long been defined and spread across the work of many arrangers. In the case of the Ellington band, this critical function died with its leader. The Basie idea depends on no single virtuoso talent for its identity, as Goodman's bands always did. And it's had nearly 50 years to find its directions and established its character. Moreover, evolution seems still to be a prime concern of those in charge. As long as there's evolution, there's life. db

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## THE NEW VOICE JAZZ SEXTET

is a Boston-based modern jazz ensemble comprised of students from the Berklee College of Music and the New England Conservatory. Organized in 1985, the group has served as a forum for the continual exploration of all styles of jazz. New Voice boasts a library of over 80 charts, including both original material and classic works by Benny Golson, Horace Silver, Charles Mingus, and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. The sextet performs regularly in New England at jazz clubs, festivals, schools, and concert halls, and garnered rave reviews for an appearance in "Jazz Celebrations," a memorial benefit concert hosted by WRBB radio.

The individual members of the New Voice Sextet are trumpeter/flugelhornist Dmitri Matheny, tenor saxist Jack Wright, alto saxist Mark Gross, pianist Mitch Hampton (a 1985 **db** Student Musician Awards "Outstanding Performance" winner), bassist Volker Nahrman, and drummer Hans Schuman.



## SAM RODRIGUEZ,

27-year-old drummer/percussionist, is also a free-lance producer of Hispanic music, who has worked for Joyart, Latino Production, Herchel Commercial, Fryer, and others. He is staff drummer on the weekly tv program *Faith Tabernacle*, and he has served as a drum and percussion instructor at the Ruiz Beliz Cultural Center and Urban Gateway in Chicago. Rodriguez is an experienced jingles sessionist, whose credits include commercials for Dial, Coke, the U.S. Army, McDonalds, Ford, et al. He is also active on the

local music scene, performing with such bands as Tipica 78 (a salsa band), Willy G. (jazz), and Lifetime Friends (latin-jazz).

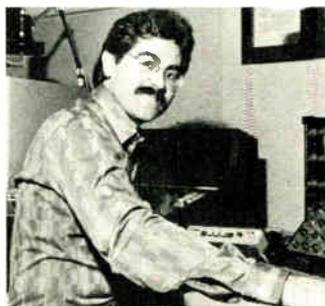
Rodriguez's professional experience includes jingles work with Aretha Franklin and Al Jarreau, a Midwest tour with Jesse Dixon, and tv work on WGN and the Chicago NBC affiliate. He has studied at Wright Junior College, the American Conservatory of Music, and Columbia College, and has had lessons from Paul Wertico, Peter Erskine, Alex Acuna, Airtio, Tito Puente, and others. Rodriguez asks that anyone interested in contacting him write him at 2135 N. Kilpatrick, Chicago, IL 60639.



## PAUL MACDONALD,

27-year-old guitarist, has been living in Montreal for the past year, where he has performed in a wide range of settings, including The Murray Street Band, a large improvising ensemble that performed at the 1986 Montreal Jazz Festival; Live Rhythms, a quartet led by poet Marcus Jeffers; and the town's Celtic music scene. MacDonald grew up in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia; at 22, he began listening to jazz and enrolled in a Jazz Studies program at St. Francis Xavier University. In 1984, he lived in Cambridge, MA, he became involved with the local jazz scene; he then moved to Halifax, where he performed with guitarist Reg Schwager in Plectrum Spectrum, a group consisting of four guitars, two drums, and a synthesizer.

Future projects in store for MacDonald include further performances with The Murray Street Band, helping create a Montreal edition of Plectrum Spectrum, and a duo performance with drummer Mike Devison. MacDonald's teachers have included Fred Hamilton, Brian Harman, Don Palmer, and Mike Metheny; his influences include Jimi Hendrix, Pat Metheny, Bill Frisell, Scottish guitarist Tony Cuffe, and Derek Bailey.



## RAYMOND TORRES-SANTOS,

a 28-year-old keyboardist, was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He attended the Free School of Music, and by age 15 was arranging and performing with some of the country's best pop orchestras and singers. From 1977-80 he was keyboardist with the Caribe Hilton Hotel Orchestra. In 1980, after completing a degree at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music, he began graduate work in composition at U.C.L.A., where he directed the university's Jazz Ensemble II as a teaching assistant.

Torres-Santos received his Ph.D. from U.C.L.A. last year, and is now an assistant professor at Cal State/San Bernardino, where he directs the Commercial Music program. He has worked extensively in L.A. as a keyboardist, composer, and arranger, including work on the soundtrack for the movie *Brewster's Millions*. His work has been commissioned by both the Puerto Rico Symphony and the Philharmonic Orchestra, and he has won the Henry Mancini Scholarship for Motion Pictures and Television Composition, the BMI Award for Student Composers, and the Frank Sinatra Award for jazz composition and arranging.



## BERNIE KENERSON,

30-year-old Army saxophonist, is staff arranger and a founding member of the Shape International Band in Shape, Belgium, which includes the Shape Ambassadors (a 13-piece

show band), Protocol (a five-piece dance combo), and Just Friends (a four-piece jazz combo). The Shape bands have performed at the Nivelles and Bracquagnies jazz festivals. Kenerson is also currently active in the Jack Gondry Big Band, Chama's Latin Way, and the Caribbean Connection as well as his own Bernie Kenerson Quartet. Kenerson is also a past winner of a pair of college division **db** Student Musician Awards.

Kenerson earned a bachelors degree in Performance in 1982 from Appalachian State University in Boone, NC; before that he had earned a two-year Professional Diploma from the Berklee College of Music, and a Certificate of Completion from a U.S. Army music school in Norfolk, VA.



## JOHN MCCAIN,

23-year-old guitarist, began playing guitar at age 14, quickly falling under the spell of jazz through the music of Django Reinhardt. A transplanted Hawaiian now living in Ft. Worth, TX, McCain made the finals of the state talent championships while in high school. Since then, he's attended guitar seminars taught by Howard Roberts and Herb Ellis and studied with Philip Catherine and Bill Connors. Being "fairly bold about phoning people" has led him to such experts as Tal Farlow, John Abercrombie, Freddie Green, Jimmy Raney, and Tiny Grimes.

McCain has performed with big bands, rock groups, and improv combos. He is currently in a sextet led by former Wes Montgomery sideman James Clay. McCain plays a Roland guitar-synthesizer as well as acoustic and electric guitars. His favorite guitarists are currently Mike Stern, Bill Connors, and George Van Eps. McCain asks that fellow musicians contact him at 1717 Ashland Ave., Ft. Worth, TX 76107 **db**

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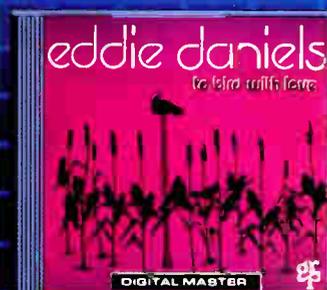
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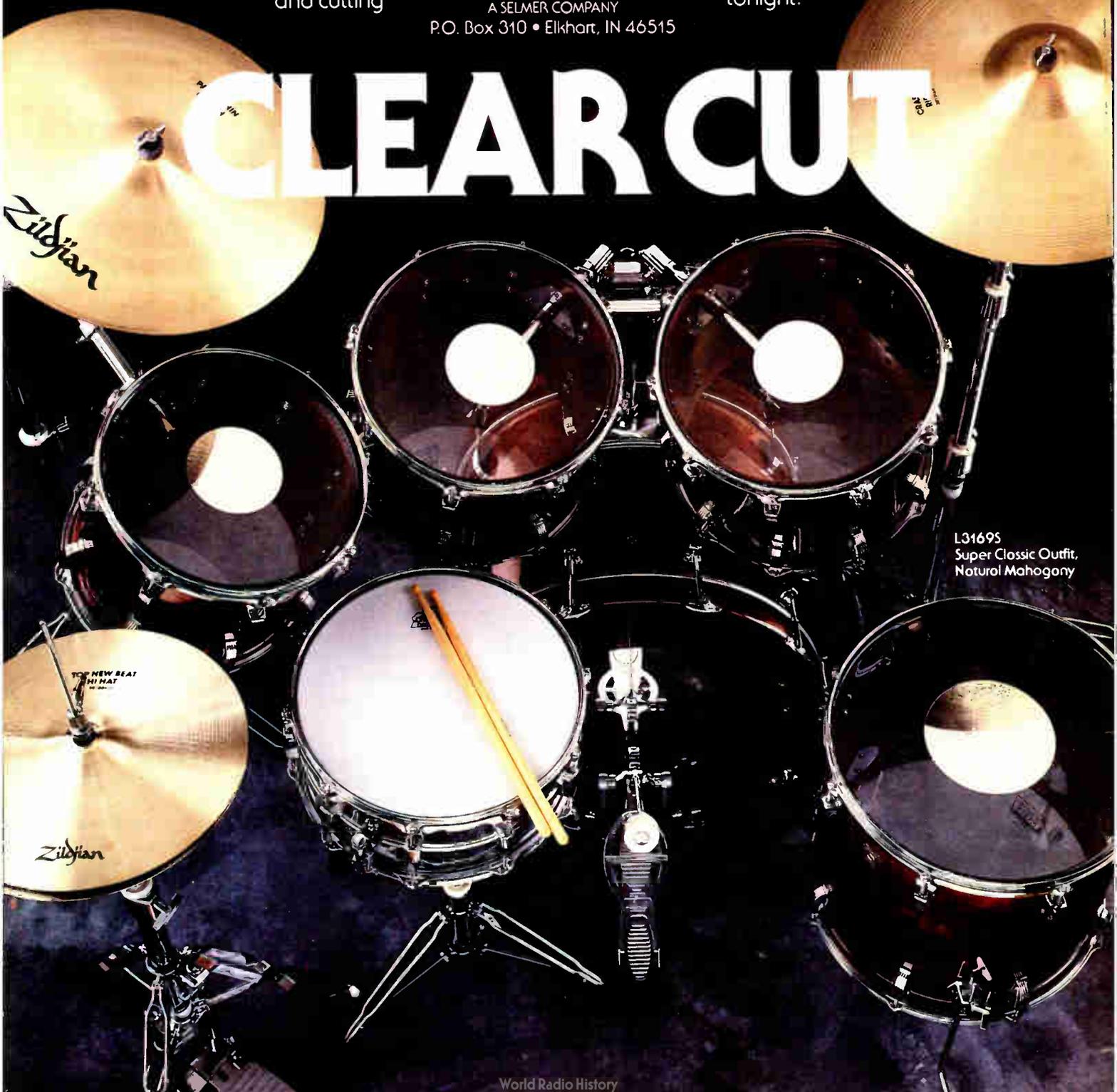
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