

For Contemporary Musicians

# down beat

November, 1988 \$1.75 U.K. £ 2.00

# MILES

# PART II



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COLUMBIA RECORDS

Miles Davis



TOM ZIMMERMANN

Phil Woods Quintet minus one



MITCHELL SEIDEL

Stanley Jordan



COLLIS H. DAVIS, JR.

Joanne Brackeen

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# down beat

For Contemporary Musicians

NOVEMBER 1988  
VOLUME 55 NO. 11

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**down beat** (ISSN 0012-6768) is published monthly by Maher Publications, 180 West Park Ave., Elmhurst IL 60126. Copyright 1988 Maher Publications. All rights reserved. Trademark

registered U.S. Patent Office. Great Britain registered trademark No. 719,407. Second Class postage paid at Elmhurst, IL and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates: \$18.00 for one year, \$31.00 for two years. Foreign subscriptions add \$5.00 per year.

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**MAHER PUBLICATIONS: down beat** magazine, **Up Beat** magazine, **Up Beat NAMM Show Dailies**.

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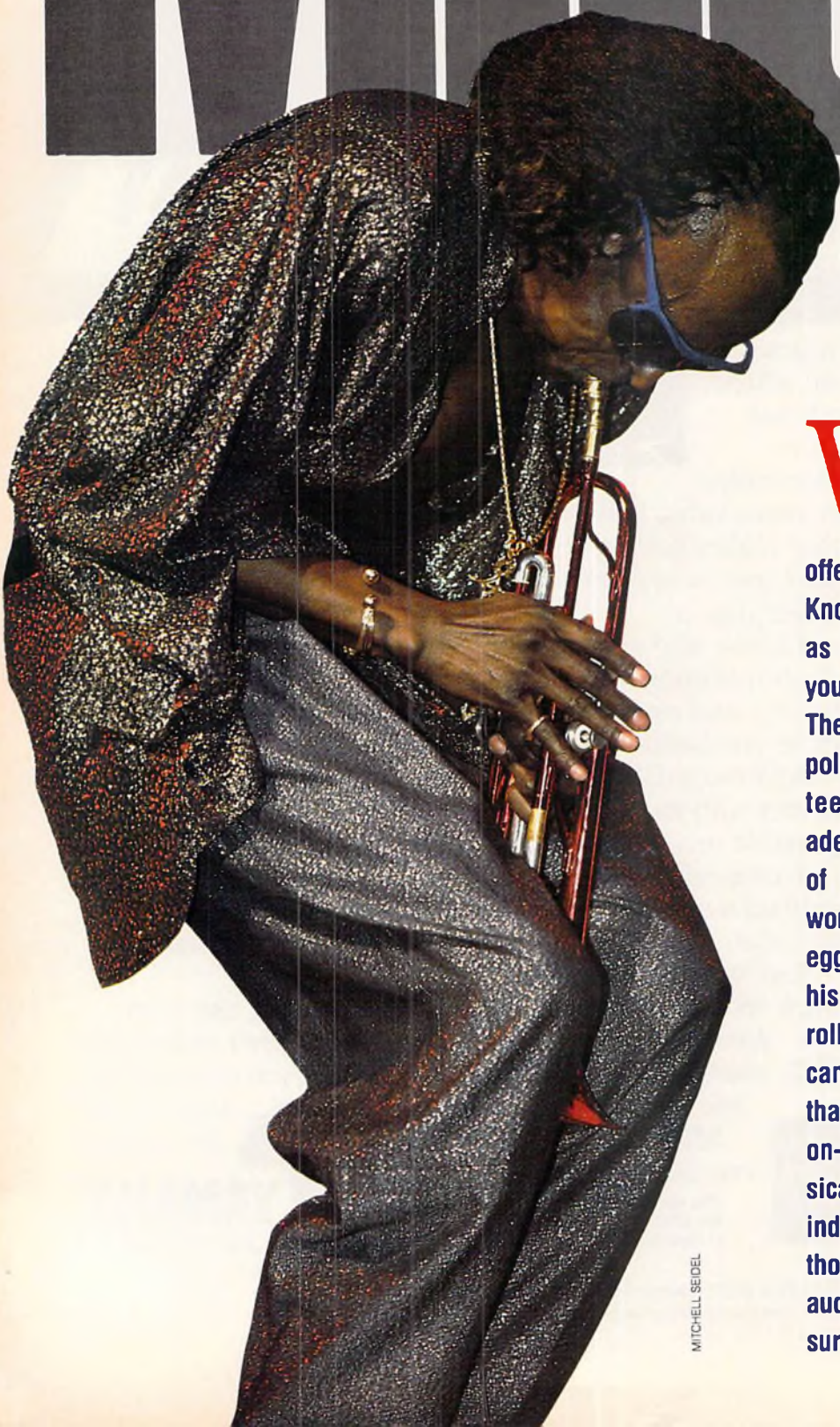
**POSTMASTER: SEND CHANGE OF ADDRESS TO down beat,** 180 W. Park, Elmhurst, IL 60126

**CABLE ADDRESS: downbeat** (on sale Oct. 8, 1988)  
 Magazine Publishers Association



# Miles

## THE EN



**W**hen a musician has gone through the rigorous training offered by the College of Hard-Bop Knowledge that's otherwise known as Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, you can tell it almost immediately. There's a certain minimal level of polished sophistication, a guaranteed technical and emotional adeptness with the musical syntax of the stylistic language they've worked through while the Dean egged them on to their limits with his chomping hi-hat and press rolls. This is one way the music can be taught: as an oral tradition that deals with each player one-on-one, taking off from basic musical skills and working out an individual voice that extends from those skills in front of peers and audiences on the spot, under pressure, in the glare.

# Davis

## ABLER: PART II

*By Gene Santoro*

It's a pedagogy that reaches back to the historical method of apprenticeship, of teaching by a master. Schools, on the other hand, are based on the supermarket premise that you can buy training in a prepackaged format of courses and workshops and catalogs. As a result, they generally manage to produce competent players who can make fine studio musicians precisely because, in the end, they haven't undergone the two-step process of the oral tradition: first comes being weeded out, then follows the searching individuation that almost inevitably results from repeated scorings on jam sessions and bandstands. Look at it this way: you can continue in most any music school as long as you come up with the tuition and pass the tests; you can continue playing gigs with Blakey only if you start from basic competence and grow—and when you've grown to the point when he deems you're ready, he throws you out of the nest and into the real, live, musical world to scramble for yourself. At that point, your chops become your weapons, your tools for survival.

But one reason for the apparent consistency among Blakey's graduates also points up a key weakness amid so much strength. From Bobby Watson to Wynton Marsalis, their achievements tend to result from their focussed—some would say narrowed—vision of the possibilities for the music, a concentration on a small musical segment sliced from the heterogeneous collection of genres bundled uncomfortably together under the much-hated and misleading rubric called jazz. Marsalis' constant preaching about the notion of jazz purity, so inherently misguided and weird about sounds that have been mongrelized from birth, derives as directly from his time with Blakey as does predilection for suits and ties on stage; if he sounds like a latter-day moldy fig, it's because he is.

And to a great extent, what he is is what Blakey helped make him. Where the master drummer's deep and fierce commitment to the sounds of his youth is not only understandable but typical—folks tend to cling to what they came up with—that same commitment sits oddly indeed on players often nearly a half-century his junior. And yet that commitment, in his case, seems to produce players in the mold.

In a way, it's an educational conundrum that turns on an unresolvable problem—the definition of jazz. On the one hand,



KEITH MAJOR

the schools paint a false picture of musical ability and training with their freeze-dried concepts offered as a smorgasbord that—so the theory goes—anybody can sample from and then develop something to say; on the other hand, Blakey's educational method, though it more realistically weeds out wanna-bes from the real players and grounds the survivors in battle-tested techniques, seems from its results to be necessarily circumscribed by the syntactical and structural limits set down by his style. You learn them rigorously and well, but rarely do they get pushed passed the generic scope of hard bop into something truly different. So the point becomes nuance, finessing the accomplishments of the past, dotting Bird's i's and crossing Dizzy's t's.

Or, most ironically in Marsalis' case, endlessly reworking Miles Davis. Ironically because, in order to remake the chameleonic Miles into the figurehead image required by his neocon ideology, Marsalis and his cohorts have had to fit the ceaselessly changing contours of Miles' musical output onto their own hard-bopper's procrustean bed and lop most of the limbs off with wanton abandon. What makes the undertaking especially odd is, of course, the neocons' crude but insistent homiletic pieties about the Value Of History and such.

**F**or Miles Davis, history and musical education form a double-edged sword. His own background stressed bandstand learning over school training: remember that he came to the Big Apple ostensibly to study at Juilliard but actually to enroll in beboppers' classes with Bird and Diz, and that even in St. Louis formal learning always attracted him less than jamming with players like Clark Terry. But remember, too, that even at his greenest he never mimed Dizzy's trumpet; instead, he deliberately sought a voice as utterly unlike his elder's as he could find while still remaining musical. That drive alone distinguishes him from Blakey grads like Marsalis, who are more than content to bask in the sounds that made the septuagenarian Blakey a rebel when he was younger.

Miles himself nailed the problem, in these excerpts from an interview with Howard Mandel in the December 1984 **down beat**:

"Wynton's a brilliant musician, but that whole school—they don't know anything about *theory*, 'cause if they did, they wouldn't be sayin' what they say, and doin' what they do.

"The only thing that makes Art Blakey's band sound good is Art. They're energetic musicians, yeah, but it's the same structure that we used to play years ago, and it's too demanding on you. You have to play the same thing . . . if you play a pattern of fourths, or parallel fifths, or half-step chords and all that stuff, nobody's gonna sound different on that—everybody sounds the same. Why do you think Herbie don't want to play that anymore? He'd rather hear scratch music. I'd rather hear somebody fall on the piano than to play that. That newness will give you something—more so than all the clichés you've heard from this record, that tape.

"The way you change and help music is by tryin' to invent new ways to play, if you're gonna ad lib and be what they call a jazz musician . . . I thought everybody in the world, all the good trumpet players, played like Dizzy; when I got to New York, I found out things are different—you have to go your own way; you can't copy anybody. You know, just because you play a flatted fifth doesn't mean somebody's gonna hire you."

The fierce—and for him, unresolvable—dialectic between past and present is at the heart of Miles' music; in fact, it pushes it relentlessly into the new. For Miles, anything new is what's important. Which isn't to say the new is always and automatically more valid than what came before—any notion of progress in art is problematic, and any notion of progress in art as an automatic evolution unfolding through time is simply ludicrous. Was Miles "better" than Dizzy? Was Mozart "better" than Bach? Was Jimi Hendrix "better" than Robert Johnson? And how many angels can dance on the head of a pin? These are questions not worth asking, at least not in that form.

For Miles they're questions that are simply irrelevant. Some

Hegelian notion of progress has nothing to do with it; the iron law of change that runs through life itself is all that counts. Motion is life, stasis is death—it's as simple and as basic and as relentless as that. But change is not merely caprice or whim for Miles any more than it was for Darwin. Rather, it's a strategic interplay of forces—in Miles' case, the literal interplay on stage, and conceptually between himself and the musicians he picks for his band—that allows the chance of adaptation, and hence survival.

That's not just a conceit. The assumptions underlying all his musical moves are that nothing worth making comes without risk, and that you can't risk something you don't believe in or truly need. For Miles that something is his music. His vehemence toward critics comes at least partly from his constant awareness that what for him is life at its most fundamental is for them just another texture in a universe of sound.

Or actually, another set of textures—Miles in motion. And here is where we come back to Bu and the schools. Miles doesn't teach; he functions more like an agent provocateur within the context of what his musicians already know. Armed with the dynamite of his own history, knowledge, and personality, he blasts them loose from what they've done before and perhaps try to repeat in his band. When the treatment takes—and, as with any pedagogy that's based around oral training and an apprenticeship system, it can't and isn't meant to take every time just with the folks who can catch on to the particular master's technique and concepts—it opens up each musician's past for future explorations by forcing it to be reconsidered in a completely different light. In other words, it empowers them to discover their own voices.

It's a methodology that, like life, produces both successes and failures. But unlike the "success" imposed by the school-style training, its range is expansive: it sets no upper or lower limits by virtue of its alienated, fragmentary nature. And unlike the Jazz Messengers, it hoists no overarching musical credo as a banner to live for. How could it, since Miles' music at any given point is the product of a particular set of musicians and viewpoints colliding, firing, coalescing?



In that sense, it's Herbie Hancock who represents Miles' triumph as a teacher. Herbie can—and does—do it all, from his gently swinging acoustic piano music to movie soundtracks to the techno-funk hits that have drawn Marsalis' misdirected wrath. And yet, before he started with Miles, he was a Blue Note bopper dyed-in-the-keys. But he also embodies the outreach so valued by Miles that it's one of his few recurrent ground rules: "When you get through playin' what you know, *then* play somethin'."

Miles sees it this way: "You know, when I had Herbie, I'd say to him, 'Herbie, sometime don't use your left hand.' If he do that he'd be much freer, like Ornette Coleman used to do; it's much freer not to have anyone shovin' you, you know? Those chords can be a cage. So when Herbie played without his left hand, goddamn, it was somethin' else."

"Now, I try to make my musicians avoid clichés by the way I write and arrange. I write all the clichés to this already, so once they've played all those things, the musicians got to find somethin' else to play [*laughs*]. Gil did me like that. I'd say, Gil, man, you got every chord, every note that I was gonna play, you got it. Now what the f\*\*k am I gonna play? [*laughs*] So I played the melody."

Another triumph of Miles' pedagogy found ways to play every melody but the one that was written, proving again that one mark of a truly successful teacher is how well his best pupils can discard him. When John Coltrane signed on to Miles' outfit, he was an interesting post-bopper with a debt to Dexter Gordon. His rapid progression with Miles' fabled mid-'50s groups needs no rehash here. But, as he told Ralph Gleason at one of his own turning points in 1961, "I've been going to the piano and working things out, but now I think I'm going to move away from that. When I was working on those sequences which I ran across on the piano, I was trying to give all the instruments the sequences to play and I was playing them too. I was advised to try to keep the rhythm section as free and uncluttered as possible and if I wanted to play the sequences or run a whole string of chords, do it myself but leave them free. So I thought about that and I've

tried that some, and I think that's about the way we're going to have to do it. I won't go to the piano any more. I think I'm going to try to write for the horn from now on, just play around the horn and see what I can hear. All the time I was with Miles I didn't have anything to think about but myself so I stayed at the piano and chords, chords, chords! I ended up playing them on my horn."

While Miles usually has kind words for graduates like Herbie and Chick Corea and Keith Jarrett, his highest accolade so far has been bestowed on Marcus Miller—he not only plays Miller's tunes, but has let Miller produce him and play nearly all the accompanying instruments. For a kid from south Jamaica who started playing bass because he dug the funk of Mandrill and Graham Central Station, it's a long way to come.

The way Miller tells it, "At that time I still didn't feel like I had an identity. Miles was the one who made me nail something down as far as style. See, the music he was playing really didn't have any predetermined bass style to it—I had to come up with something, and that forced me to come up with something of my own. The tape would just be rolling all the time, so sometimes it wouldn't be so hip, but sometimes it would be *serious*."

As serious as the next lesson in the book of Miles: "I learned to feel good about what I do, because it's a basic representation of myself; your playing is gonna get criticized or praised, so you better make sure it's *you*. If you start playing stuff you think people will like and then nobody likes it, you'll *really* feel like a jerk [*laughs*]."

And yet that "you" is not an exclusionary concept, but one that allows you to choose which other voices you'll accept as mentors based on your own needs. Sometimes it creates an awareness that extends past the musician's own literal knowledge simply because he's become a thread running through the vast and tangled history that is Miles Davis' music.

Listen, for instance, to the way Miller talks of how *Tutu* and *Siesta* were generated. "I saw it developing as a conversation between me and Miles. You know how jazz musicians used to do albums with the big bands: they'd play the melody, then solo for 16 bars, then play the melody again. That's how I envisioned these albums. Gil Evans was a big influence; I knew him, and I've really been influenced by him as a person. But I never really checked out *Sketches [Of Spain]* until a couple of years ago.

"What I *did* check out, though, was one of my main influences—Herbie Hancock's writing, especially around his *Speak Like A Child* period. He was writing really interesting stuff, using chords he didn't even have names for—they just worked. Then one day I pulled out *Speak Like A Child* and I read on the back that Herbie during that period was inspired by Gil Evans [*laughs*]. So now I understand why people tell me that *Tutu* sounds like *Sketches* for the '80s." db



DONNA PAUL



ANDREW SWAINE/DANVERS CAMERA

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from far left: Miles with Marcus Miller, Boston, 1981; with (from left) John Scofield, Darryl Jones, and Al Foster, Newport, 1984; with Paul Chambers and John Coltrane, early '60s.

# PHIL WOODS QUINTET

## Woodshedding With Phil



**P**hil Woods carries his workingman's ethic like a badge of honor. It's a steely stance, proud and defiant, forged by years of plying a craft that, until recently, few people recognized as art.

By Jeff Levenson

The Massachusetts-born saxman may be the most accomplished, bop-inspired altoist in jazz. Born in 1931, he matured during Charlie Parker's ascendancy and established himself as a fiery disciple who flaunted urgency and staunch emotionalism in his play. After stints with Quincy Jones, Benny Goodman, Dizzy Gillespie, and other noteworthy leaders, Woods emerged as his own man, ready to commandeer his own group.

His consistently high placement in **down beat** polls, along with his Grammy honors—awards and nominations—affirm his preeminence not just as an instrumentalist, but as a group leader. This year Woods once again topped **db's** Critics Poll, heading the categories for Alto *and* best Acoustic Jazz Group.

The Phil Woods Quintet is more the anomaly than the rule in jazz circles. Led by Woods' unerring devotion to the sound of *acoustic* music, the band eschews the use of microphones (save for occasional piano amplification) in performance, preferring instead a natural, unaltered blend of instruments.

The passion for clarity and focus



extends beyond the bandstand, serving as a schematic for the interpersonal relationships among group members. They are bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin, both of whom served in the original quartet, which came together nearly 15 years ago; pianist Hal Galper, who replaced Mike Melillo in 1981; and trumpeter Tom Harrell, who joined the front-line in 1984.

The musicians were interviewed separately, their responses edited and formatted below.

**Jeff Levenson:** *What are the basic ingredients for having a good band?*

**Phil Woods:** The most important ingredient is having a common purpose.

You have to have a stylistic agreement about the music that you play. We're all into the same period of music. It covers the best music from Bill Evans to Tadd Dameron to Cole Porter. We like song form. We love the acoustic thing. Everyone is tuned into that. We like to sound on stage like we used to sound in Al Cohn's living room.

The other thing is to run [the band] as if it were a business. If there's a fat plum everyone gets a share. We share—lean or fat—thanks to Jill Goodwin, my wife, who handles the business. I think that is very important—sharing the pie.

I'm the boss, and everybody knows that, but I don't *demand* respect. I *earn* it by

**Woods** was asked to consider the various approaches to band leadership he has witnessed while serving in other bands. He offered comments on a few celebrated associates.

*"Mr. Gillespie has such a command in front of a big band, that you better keep your act together because every night is going to be school night. Dizzy gets the best out of you without being an evil motherf\*\*ker. He does it with a sense of humor. But if he ever jumped on you, he'd do it with both feet. Dizzy gets respect."*

*"[Benny] Goodman was a taskmaster, to a certain degree. He wanted the music played the way he wanted it. He was a rather dense man, not really brilliant—and pretty tough in rehearsal. I don't want to sell him short. He did a great deal for the music business."*

*"Buddy Rich was a great leader. So was Neal Hefti. I did a few nights with Claude Thornhill, who, by not leading at all, was a great leader. Charlie Barnet was the ultimate leader; it was hard to tell who was higher, him or the band. And I always admired Artie Shaw and what he stood for—anyone who can give the music business the finger is someone I respect."*  
—Jeff Levenson



Phil and the band: (from left) Steve Gilmore, Woods, Hal Galper, Tom Harrell, Bill Goodwin.



being in the trenches with the cats. Everybody trusts the machine we've set up to run the business part of things. And the music speaks for itself.

**JL:** Why has this group fared so well for so long?

**Bill Goodwin:** The original group—the Phil Woods Quartet—was formed in 1974 as a cooperative. At first, we thought of using a group name. But Phil's was well-known, and he is the oldest and best musician in the group. So we decided to use his name. We run the group as a musical cooperative. We share the money on a percentage basis, and we each have our jobs within the business of the band. We all have a vote—Phil has two votes. We all have a say in what goes on. It's not just Phil's band, it is our band.

**Steve Gilmore:** There are very few leaders who want to do things that way.

**Tom Harrell:** Phil creates an energy that makes the band work. He sets such a high standard that it brings the group together. He sets the tone for the group, combining energy with creativity. I think the band reflects that.

**Hal Galper:** We all come from a certain era, and we relate together through our affinity for bop. We play *acoustic jazz*. We're dedicated to that.

**JL:** Has this democratic approach directly affected the music-making process?

**BG:** Most certainly. For one thing, anybody is free to bring in material, to make suggestions for changes in the arrangements. Everybody has complete input into the musical fabric. We try to keep bringing in new music so we don't get stale.

**SG:** Anybody can say anything that they want to about the music. The way the band is, we don't rehearse that much. Phil brings us lead sheets, and we play them and we play them again the next night; after several weeks the pieces develop. We all do our homework. I take stuff home and work on it on the piano. Then I transfer it to the bass and prepare myself for the next night.

**JL:** Do you talk the new material through?

**PW:** We do travel a lot, and we get to discuss tunes and approaches in the van or on a plane. I think there are times we can leave a lot of Berklee graduates in the dust because we're smart and experienced.

Sometimes I will hit a wrong note—keep that one between us [*laughs*—and before I can correct it [Hal] will reharmonize it. He's the ultimate comping machine, which is a rare commodity in a piano player. He's *listening*. That's what we do best. That's the communication we're all involved in when we play.

**BG:** When you watch us on the bandstand, you might see Hal and I looking at each other a lot and laughing. We have an extraordinary rapport with one another. We have a spontaneous free displacement of classic rhythms. And we still gas each

other with new things. Phil is the king of quotes, and he quotes really funny and obscure things. And we'll answer him. It's like a musical conversation.

**JL:** Are there extra-musical cues, born from familiarity, that you use?

**PW:** Sure. Sometimes, in some all-star groups, there is almost no contact [among players]. The egos get in the way. We stay in touch. I will always look at the cat when I think he's getting near his last chorus. You don't want to miss any cues. In fact, sometimes we just know to go on the downbeat. Its unique for a jazz group and I think it makes a nice presentation. We fool musicians.

**HG:** Since we have a lot of common experience, signalling operates on a very high level. Signalling is communication. We've been playing together so long that we know each others' signals. In fact, they keep expanding. That allows us to sound really together. That is why pick-up groups often sound like separate individuals. We make one group sound, not separate sounds. Hearing, memory, sympathy are all involved. We are always learning.

**BG:** It could be a sudden dynamic change, or a look, or a note, or a space between two notes. You can get to know a lot about each other when you have been on the bandstand together a lot.

**JL:** In that sense there must be bonds between you that transcend music?

**BG:** We are like family. In fact, Phil is married to my sister Jill. I met Phil because he and Jill came to live with me when they came back from L.A. That's how the band started. I then introduced him to Steve and Mike and we started playing together. Before Phil, Steve Gilmore and I were together in about five bands. And I've known Hal since about '65. I've known Tom and played with him for about 12 years. There is a lot of history.

**SG:** I spend as much time with this band as I do with my family. Here, the music always comes first. We're like family and there is sometimes a conflict that has to be worked out; sometimes you have to worry that you don't carry resentments too far, and if you have something to say, you should say it. There are a lot of great bands that have been playing together a long time, but a lot of those guys, so I'm told, actually hate each other. Even if the music is fine. We're not like that. The way the band is set up, there are a lot of long van rides together; if we all hated each other, things just wouldn't work out. It would be terrible. The truth is we don't make a hell of a lot of money all the time—we could all probably make a little more money in some other part of the business—but we all want to do this.

**JL:** How do you balance your individuality against your responsibility to the group concept?

**HG:** It's not all that difficult. We are trained in a philosophy that develops from



TOM COPI

### PHIL WOODS EQUIPMENT

Woods plays a Selmer 82000 alto, with a Meyer 5M mouthpiece. "I picked it up in Paris when I was with Quincy [Jones] in '959," he says. "I paid \$75 for it." His clarinet is a Selmer BT with a stock mouthpiece, medium opening. "It was made around 1937. It's the one Benny preferred and Bob Wilber prefers. Its got a big sound." He uses La Voz medium-hard reeds for both horns.

### PHIL WOODS QUINTET/QUARTET SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

QUARTET VOL. 1—Clean Cut 702  
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 AT THE VANGUARD—Island/Antilles 1013  
 LIVE FROM NEW YORK—Palo Alto 8084  
 BOP STEW—Concord Jazz 345  
 EUROPEAN TOUR LIVE—Red 163  
 INTEGRITY—Red 177  
 GRATITUDE—Denon 1316  
 HEAVEN—Blackhawk 50401

#### Phil Woods with others

Jaki Byard: *MUSIQUE DUBOIS*—Muse 5037  
 Harry Leahay: *LIVE FROM THE SHOWBOAT*—RCA BGL2-2202  
 Dizzy Gillespie: *DIZZY GILLESPIE MEETS PHIL WOODS*—Timeless 250

the bandstand. In technical terms, syncopation allows you to be yourself and a part of the group at the same time. The principle of syncopation allows you to be an individual and part of a whole. Syncopation is a particular way of doing rhythms, and the beauty of it is that it allows everyone to be in the same place at the same time without doing the same thing. You don't have duplication, you have individuality. It comes from what is going on inside the music, which affects our way of looking at things, including life.

**TH:** When your thoughts and opinions are respected, as they are by everyone in this group, the music benefits. Everyone trusts one another, and the commitment to the music allows you to be yourself within the group. Everyone has their own voice. But the music is a product of everyone's contributions together.

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# STANLEY JORDAN

## Guitar Wizard

By Stephanie Stein

**T**he last three years have been eventful for guitarist Stanley Jordan. The wunderkind with a dazzling technique seemed to pop out of nowhere when *Magic Touch* (his first Blue Note album in 1985) immediately jumped to the top of Billboard's jazz and pop charts and remained there for almost a year. Awards, honors, and a frenetic performance schedule ensued, opening up a wealth of possibility for the young soloist who EMI-Manhattan/Blue Note president Bruce Lundvall first heard in less-than-auspicious circumstances in various New York clubs.

In this past year, Jordan's pace has hardly slackened. In addition to forming a band (a real departure for the soloist), performing, and recording his latest album, Jordan has been involved with the Casio company, which has been utilizing his electronics expertise in developing their MIDI guitar.

In the course of several conversations, interrupted by recording sessions, a trip to Japan for Casio, and the onslaught of



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summer touring activity, Jordan seemed a relatively calm juggler. Still a surprisingly young 29, Jordan is moving ahead on all fronts with diligence, and understandably, a lot of anticipation and enjoyment.

Jordan's pianistic approach to the guitar is hardly revolutionary if one thinks of the genius of Segovia or the orchestral brilliance of Brazilian guitarist Luis Bonfá. But Jordan has applied his "touch" technique to the *electric* guitar, as well as to music from jazz and pop repertoire that was ripe for the improviser's touch. His agility as a soloist—simultaneously covering bass lines, harmonies, and long rippling improvisations—is coupled with a highly individualistic sound, just bordering on eccentric.

"I started out as a piano player—I studied classical piano as a kid, but I always loved guitar. Even after I had this identity as a guitar player, I always liked piano music and counterpoint. I had a lot of ideas that I wanted to be able to transfer to the guitar that couldn't be done with conventional technique. So I had a feeling that within my guitar, something else was there and that if I could only figure it out, I could play more contrapuntally. It wasn't an accident—it was definitely something I was searching for and there were a lot of different methods that I tried. The one I'm using now seems to be the best. After I'd been developing it for awhile, I started to find out about other people that used the same basic approach, so it reconfirmed what I'd been working on. The idea is that you can play the guitar with just one hand, or just one finger, and that way you can use more of your fingers for doing different things.

"In developing the touch technique, my original goal was more of a textural thing; I wanted to be able to play more independent lines and more of a variety of chord voicings. The difference is sound happened as a result of that—I wasn't really looking for it. I feel that the whole emphasis on my technique and so forth was a nice period, but I've got to get on to other things, because the touch technique does have its limitations. What I'd really like to do now is just approach the guitar as an instrument of sound and have a variety of ways to play it depending on what the music is. I don't want to get locked into the technique or have people feel that I'm the guy that *only* plays a certain way."



Jordan's choice of material on *Magic Touch* and *Standards Vol. 1* reflect his panoramic musical tastes. His strong classical background emerges in these collections of pop and jazz songs through his use of intricate counterpoint. But his harmonic sophistication and improvisations spring from the jazz guitar tradition—even when imposed on a song like *Eleanor Rigby*.

"I really align myself with the jazz tradition—I feel that my jazz influences are the strongest and I wouldn't have it any other way. Jazz is really the foundation and from there you can really go in any direction. Because jazz really incorporates everything I know about what's important in music—it's all there in jazz. The European classical tradition has great repertoire but some aspects of the music have gotten lost, like the improvisational aspects. I like pop and I like rock but there's not that much going on instrumentally. And it's not that those styles *have* to be that way. With jazz, you've got that and the spontaneity and the naturalness of blues. You also have the seriousness of classical music and a virtuosic tradition.

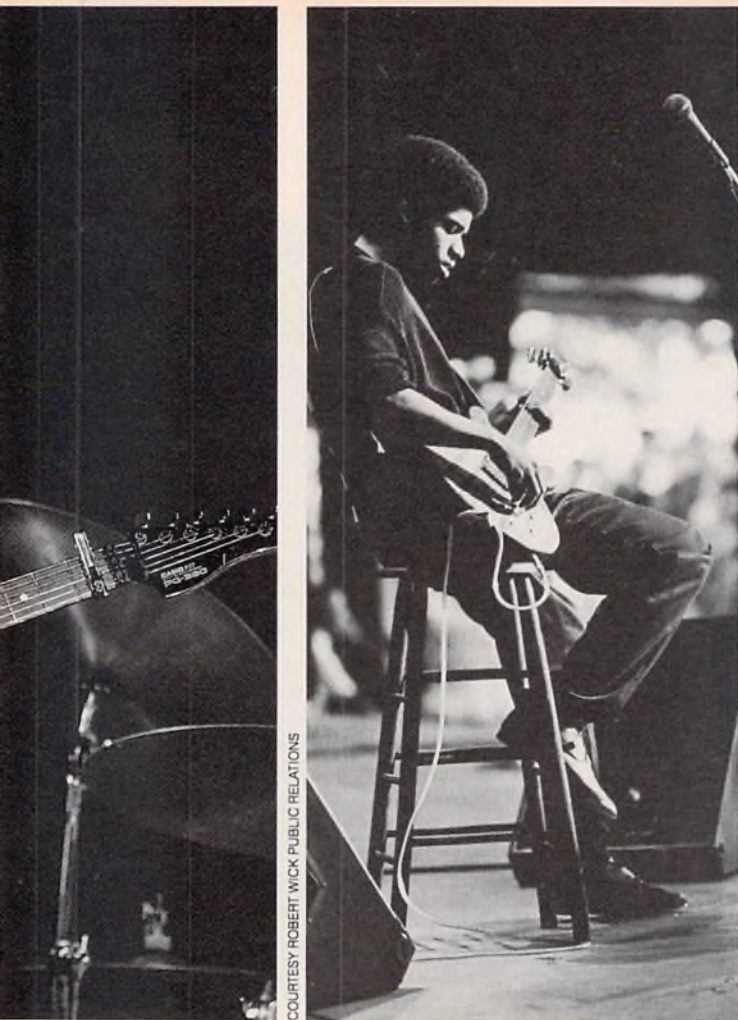
"I heard Charlie Christian after I had seriously been getting into jazz guitar. At that point I thought I was really hot and was doing things I never heard anybody else do. I had also really started getting a huge ego. Then the first time I heard old Christian records, I heard him do all the things I thought I had invented and more, way back in 1940. In a way, I kind of came back to the roots without even knowing it. I thought I was going ahead, beyond Joe Pass, but actually I was going back to Charlie Christian.

"Jimi Hendrix and George Benson have also been huge influences. I always loved Bach and my interest in counterpoint comes from him and Mozart. It's funny because when you listen to Mozart now, the music is beautiful but doesn't sound

particularly groundbreaking. But there's a spark there, something extra, even in very standard resolutions that he may have used 10 million times. To me, Mozart was the ultimate pop composer. Because his music was so simple and so accessible, yet it's so deep. You can anticipate where Mozart's lines will go, but you can hear the difference in his music in your heart and in your brain too."

A self-described tinkerer, Jordan became actively involved with electronics and computer music while a music major at Princeton. His affinity for synthesizers, computers, and electronics (as well as his reputation as a guitarist) prompted an invitation from Casio to endorse their new MIDI guitar synthesizer (Casio PG-380), an electric guitar that has built-in digital synthesizer sounds. Jordan is currently working with the company in a consultant's capacity as well, refining this guitar to be adapted later as a mass-market instrument.

"I think I'll be able to be really useful to them in developing their MIDI guitar," said Jordan. "Not only am I really into guitars, but they consider me an authority on the touch technique and want to improve this guitar with that in mind. Also, since I've studied electronics—hardware and software—for a long time, when I think of something, I know how hard it might be to do, or what's possible, or what kind of circuitry you would need to get this or that effect. So I think I can really help them in that area. The advantage for me is that I have a lot of ideas that I've never had the means to implement. When systems come out on the market—well I guess I'm kind of opinionated—I always say they did this right or that wrong, and I get really frustrated. So this is a dream come true for me. It gives me the opportunity to influence the development of these things in ways that I really feel strongly about. I feel that of all the companies that are



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## STANLEY JORDAN'S EQUIPMENT

"My main guitar is a Bigjier [Arpège] from France. It's a customized instrument that will never be mass produced, you just couldn't build it cheap enough. It has an exceptionally clear and accurate sound and it's really well made. The Engl amp is programmable. You can store eight different settings on the controls, so you can change your sound really quickly on a date. Soon, I'll probably end up using a rack with just a power amp. Guitar amps were designed to bring out certain frequencies that people wanted to hear on a guitar, but things have changed and now people tend to use general purpose audio amps because they're a much higher quality than guitar amps."

The balance of Jordan's guitar-related equipment includes a Casio MG-510 and PG-380 Guitar Synthesizer, an Ibanez MCI, and a Travis Bean Standard. Other amps include a Roland JC120, a Sundown, and a Pearce G1. Jordan's synthesizer arsenal is comprised of a Kurzweil 250, a Casio B21, a Yamaha TX816, and an Oberheim Expander. For effects: a Lexicon PCM70 and a Yamaha XPX90. On hand for recording purposes are an Akai MG1212, a Sony 1000ES (DAT), and a Casio DA1 (DAT).

## STANLEY JORDAN SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

### as a leader

*FLYING HOME*—EMI-Manhattan 148682  
*STANDARDS, VOLUME I*—Blue Note 85130  
*MAGIC TOUCH*—Blue Note 85101  
*TOUCH SENSITIVE*—Tangent Records 1001

### as a sideman

*MUSIC FROM THE BILL COSBY SHOW*—Columbia 40270  
*ARTISTS UNITED AGAINST APARTHEID—SUN CITY*—EMI-Manhattan 53019  
*HIDEAWAY*, with Stanley Clarke (on *Overjoyed*)—Epic 40275  
*R U TUFF ENOUGH*, with Rebee Jackson (*The Friendship Song*)—Columbia 40896  
*MORNING DESIRE*, with Kenny Rogers—RCA 17023

the first time in years. He easily admits *Flying Home*, his new quartet album, is his favorite to date. Listeners may be surprised by the variety of guitar sounds Jordan uses here—a couple of tracks have the rasp of rock, others are decidedly "Bensonesque." Produced by veteran Preston Glass (Whitney Houston, Aretha Franklin, George Benson, *Pieces of a Dream*), Jordan's group effort is destined for pop appeal. Yet Jordan's individuality and lyricism come through quite strongly, as the multiple parts he usually performs as a soloist are given over to the other musicians.

"A group situation is the perfect place for me to be right now. I love it—it's like having a new life. I spent a lot of time playing alone—one reason I got into trying to work out my counterpoint ideas was to get as much sound as I could out of the guitar. And even though I had been in bands all through junior high, high school, and college, I usually had an area, a little corner of my music, it was hard to find people that I could really share it with. That part I always developed on my own. It's easier to work with the band because I don't have to play so many parts. So when I'm just playing one melody line, I can put more into it instead of splitting my consciousness off into so many directions. In terms of all the subtleties—the nuances and the phrasing, dynamics, the articulation and attack on every single note—I can get just so much more into it.

"Making this album was also a terrific experience because I had six weeks to concentrate on nothing but the album. It really became my whole life during that time and I really think I was able to put my best playing into it. The *Standards* album was like that too, but I had a lot of deadline pressure . . . it kind of forced me into situations that weren't completely optimum. I felt it came out well, but I remember that during that time I had to keep calming myself down because of all the things that were going on. I didn't really feel as free as I might have been. On this album I had more time to really see if a part was right or expressed what I wanted it to. I wrote all the songs except one and I had time to make the approach to the guitar more varied than I had in the past.

"On other occasions I often felt like I had to just get in the studio and do something that I knew was going to work and get out. Whereas on this one, I had more time to play around and I felt that I was playing more freely because I wasn't thinking about being the whole band. I really had a very special time rediscovering the range of expression in the guitar."

db

developing MIDI equipment, especially MIDI guitars, Casio has a great potential, because their expertise in electronics is already proven and because they have tremendous marketing. They have the ability to perfect a version of a MIDI guitar which could be put in the hands of millions of guitar players and would still have the kind of professional quality to really be musically useful.

I have other projects that I'm developing on my own, creating ways of synthesizing sounds where I use a lot of MIDI equipment. I've been working on some new softwear, and I'm really psyched about that too. I just now have the means to do a lot of things I've been imagining for a long time. For example, one of the things that I've been working on lately is creating sounds by mixing hundreds of thousands of sounds to create a complex sound. What you hear is one sound, but it's generated with the kind of control that most people haven't experienced in synthetic sound. Usually when you generate a sound by either additive or subtractive synthesis, you use parameters to control it a certain way, but this gives you a more flexible way to deal with that. Because, if necessary, you could just change one grain or one element or you could make sounds evolve over time continuously. So it's not just a question of new sounds that you could sample. What's new about this is the way you can build the sound and how it can be changed. The theory of sound that most people use for designing instruments or synthesizers is the wave theory—I'm using the particle theory, just like with light. Well, the particle theory hasn't been explored that much in this way. I'm really excited about it."

Jordan has also been excited by his recent recording and performing experiences, generated by working with a group for

# JOANNE BRACKEEN



JAMES A. JONES, JR.

## Swinging Dissonance

By Leslie Gourse

**T**here's a tall, striking woman, with chiselled features and a clear, rather dreamy voice, who lives in a large Manhattan loft with a Kawai grand piano. And she's one of the most distinctive, exciting jazz pianists in the world. In the past decade, Joanne Brackeen is one of the few free jazz pianists who has built an impressive, continuing performance career rather than a reputation for playing "different" music as a media event. Actually, it seems as if a miracle has happened to free jazz piano at the hands of Joanne Brackeen. It has developed popular appeal.

In 1988, Joanne has traveled abroad constantly—more than ever before—playing clubs, festivals, and concert halls, especially in Europe. She has also been performing a great deal in the U.S. and Canada. Last

year, at the Chicago Jazz Festival, Joanne gave people the surprise of their lives. They may not have been familiar with her work, but they cheered for her and her musicians—saxophonist Gary Bartz, bassist Ce-

cil McBee, and drummer Al Foster. Later some of the group got calls from people saying Brackeen's quartet had been the best group at the festival.

"That job led to many others in the United States," she says with satisfaction. She loves the growing acceptance for her playing, which includes jazz standards along with a great many of her own compositions. They're so artfully composed, with such organized tonal themes, that her intense, overridingly rhythmic and articulate performances imbue them with the aura of the most modern possible manifestation of bebop. Free jazz has been in existence for over 30 years, but Joanne's understanding of its musical purpose—to communicate, entertain, and extend the jazz idiom—puts her on the cutting edge of the music as it continues to develop.

Returning in mid-summer from a week in Chicago, after a date at the Pori, Finland jazz festival, she faced the job of composing and arranging music for her next record.

"To me, living is music, I never know what I'm going to do. I wake up and start, and there it is, in everything you do; music is incredible. For example," she says, "you're writing with a pen. And if we turn that into sound, we hear how you write."

Some mornings when she wakes up, all is adventure and danger, musically speaking. She has been working on a dramatic, fleet, extended composition with a striking, four-note theme. It's so amusing and has such clarity that it could pass for the *Salt Peanuts* of the free jazz movement. Throughout Brackeen's piece, tentatively called *Dr. Chu Chow*, Chinese motifs mix with riffs with Mother Goose simplicity and feeling. The effect is continuous surprise. Joanne taped herself recently playing the song with a quartet in Pennsylvania. Gary Bartz sang the lyrics she wrote, and each member took a solo simultaneously; the group coming up with a dynamic, cacophonous story.

Joanne sent the tape of the brief composition to Dr. Chu Chow, "one of the rare masters of *chi kung*," says Joanne. Her relationship with Dr. Chu Chow is a tale in itself. For the moment, suffice to say that he has inspired her to try many broadening pursuits; she is even studying the Chinese language. However, Dr. Chu Chow was puzzled at the brevity of her composition for him.

"But that is such a little piece of music," Joanne imitates his mild accent. "What is that? It's so little."

She was amused at how a man who fascinated her musical spirit and fired her with energy could draw such a blank about the nature of her work. So from the founding theme for *Dr. Chu Chow* she composed a long, complex piece on the piano, taped it and sent it to him. He liked it. To soften its stridency and to heighten its melodic qualities, she'll add a string quartet and include it on her next album, on the Pathfinder label. To her everlasting delight, "Pathfinder is only interested in my original music," she says.

For many years, Joanne's original music has brought controversy into her life. She rarely leads groups playing her own music in New York City's largest jazz clubs, though she has played at several JVC Jazz Festivals as a soloist and group leader. Manhattan club owners have given her and several friends a variety of reasons for not taking the opportunity to see the electric effect she can have on audiences. The owners of Bradley's, the Knickerbocker, and a few other piano/bass duo

rooms hire Joanne gladly as a leader. And then, for bebop-conditioned and dinnertime audiences, she sticks to the standards.

From her album, *Having Fun*, her only album of standards, everyone can have a taste of her mastery of contemporary jazz. *Just One Of Those Things* is a tautly-told story of a powerful love affair. And at the end, the music just fades away. Her interpretation makes *Manha de Carnaval* a song with everything—arpeggios in the higher registers, dramatic passages in the lower octaves—as she engages the whole piano, intimating at free jazz dissonances. Above all, Joanne seems to have voyaged around within the song, gaining insight, until she can elucidate and saturate it with its own inherent excitement. How much her ability to interpret a song's core comes from her having experimented outside the boundaries of jazz traditions, it's difficult to say. But she liberates songs and makes them as clear and fresh as a sunny morning. Many pianists muse about the instrument's capacities for orchestrating, but Joanne can actually approximate the sound of a full orchestra.

She plays the standards with such joyful sympathy and surprising melodic and harmonic insights, as if she had concentrated on these familiar songs continually to unlock their last remaining mysteries, that no one would guess her heart lies in another realm. And inside her head are brewing sounds that blend elements of European modern classical music, Ornette Coleman, and Bird.

Her last album, *Fifi Goes To Heaven*, gives good examples of her own musical language. *Dr. Chang*, named for a San Francisco herb and tea company, has an almost spring-like delicacy. The swing of the saxophone is as refreshing as tea, while the piano's light, fast, upper-register passages tame the freedom of the music. In part, it's the intensely focused writing of her compositions as well as her bravura performances that communicate with audiences and turn them into fans of her style. *Cosmonaut*, another composition on the same record, showcases Joanne's work at its most intense. At times it sounds as if someone has tracked the brain waves of a nervous race horse waiting to take off at the gate—or, more to the point, the anxiety level of a man about to catapult into space. And the whirling atonal texture of the tumultuous piece (a texture which can be achieved primarily when members of a free jazz ensemble improvise different solos at one time), pleases Joanne enormously.

It also delights her when another musician—Sir Roland Hanna, for one—drops in on one of her duo room gigs and, after the dinner crowd has gone, calls out: "Play one of your own songs!" And everyone applauds wildly for the few tunes she obliges with.

"I think I always had the sound of my music in my ears," she says. "You learn to play standards so you can work. I like the melodies in standard songs, but they allow only so much life to come out. So I write my own nature, and more life comes out. I like music that sounds like nature and languages. And I think the universe is the most amazing thing. I want the music to relay the fantasy and wonder which I've experienced just from living, and could experience more. Music can take you into what is and what can be."

Perhaps it's her insistence upon composing her own "nature," supported by her intuitive understanding of the chords, that makes her work communicate even with audiences unaccustomed to the free jazz idiom. Certainly the relentless momentum of the rhythmic underpinning of whatever she is playing, standards or originals, acts as an exciting, kinetic unifier. Nowadays Joanne concludes that her rhythms are actually "the vibrations" she feels from the act of living. And the vibrations are a large part of the message.

However she chooses to analyze or define her principles, she has achieved a degree of popular acceptance that has eluded other free jazz pianists, most of whom rarely play in public. Contemporary pianist Marian McPartland, who is rooted in the Swing Era, has played in concerts and on her own radio show with Joanne. And McPartland has said admiringly that she and Joanne can communicate musically and enthusiastically because Joanne is always in touch with "the root tone of the chord." That is, Joanne respectfully acknowledges and encompasses the feeling of jazz's history and conventions.

And so, in her 50th year, at the helm of her increasingly dynamic career, she finds herself frequently answering the telephone to accept invitations to perform—for dates as far ahead as Spring, 1989, when she'll play in a concert with Dorothy Donegan.

In past years, some opportunities to travel and play arose. "And I always took what I could," she recalls. She was married to Charles Brackeen, a jazz saxophonist, for about 23 years, until 1983. They have four children, all in their 20s, and all of whom are musicians. She can recall periods, as she was raising her family, when she stayed in the house for a week, playing, composing, and meditating. With her family grown and dispersed, though in touch, "there's more time to concentrate on the music, and I seem to work more often," she says. Her income doesn't match her celebrity yet, and her expenses are high. But she's certainly not poor, she says, because



Joanne with (from left) Joe Henderson, Adam Nussbaum, and Eddie Gomez.

MITCHELL SEIDEL

of her freedom to concentrate on her career. And she has filled her life with so many new ventures that she has little time—or inclination—to do more than cursory rumination about the past.

Born Joanne Grogan on July 26, 1938, her greatest interests seem to stem from her maternal grandparents. Stanley Langdon, her mother's father, played with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra; he played the cello, the bass clarinet, and possibly a few other instruments, Joanne remembers. She liked him very much. She also recalls her grandmother, Mabel Langdon, a metaphysician, with special admiration.

Joanne noticed the chords, or harmony, of popular music by the time she was nine and had her own instincts about where the tunes should go. She also has a memory of a grand piano, replaced by an upright several years later. She took some lessons, but, confined to a teacher's living room and asked to play music which didn't interest her, she refused to practice. The lessons ended. But when she was 11, her parents bought Frankie Carle records. They intrigued her so much that she wrote the songs down and played them note for note, teaching herself to play in six months. And right away she began performing in public at talent shows, without considering a career as a musician. "It was just something I liked to do. I really liked the sound of the piano."

By her late teens, she was moving in jazz circles in Los Angeles. She played in clubs with Dexter Gordon, Don Cherry, Charles Lloyd, and Ornette Coleman, among others.

Above all, she established a musical communion with Ornette Coleman. And the sound of his music has had an abiding influence on her.

In 1965, the Brackeens moved to New York. "It was easier to get a group together in New York. You had a big pool of musicians to choose from," Joanne recalls. She worked in a few clubs and occasionally enjoyed the loft scene, "because it gave talented young musicians a chance to play, even if they didn't have credits two miles long," she says.

Then, inspired by her overwhelming immersion in jazz and ineffable self-esteem about her ability to face musical challenges, she wended her way into the mainstream. Specifically, she went to hear Art Blakey's group playing at Slug's, an East Village club, one night in 1970. "The band sounded so good. But the young piano player, who had just been hired, was laying out. He couldn't play the music. And it was so intense. I could hear a piano part. So I walked in and started to play. Art Blakey looked up and saw a different face at the piano. After that, we went to Japan."

Blakey was "incredible. He plays so much of the drums, so he allows you to play far out or in. He calls me his daughter." Hence, he gave her a lot of freedom with long solos. After two years with the Jazz Messengers, she went on to Joe Henderson's group. He forced her to play "out," she recalls. "He walked off the bandstand and encouraged you to stretch out as far as you could." They continue to play together when they can coordinate their schedules. In 1975 and '76,

she worked for Stan Getz. The late pianist Albert Dailey was leaving Getz's group and "Stan kept calling and leaving messages for me to come to rehearsals. I was out of town, on a tour. But the tour got cancelled. So I made a Halloween night gig with Getz, my first night with him." He liked shorter solos, she recalls. She used to listen to him carefully, then take her music as far out as she could but "still make him sound good. His feeling and intonation were incredible."

By the late 1970's, the late pianist Bill Evans, with whom she was acquainted from the clubs and who let her know he admired her work, recommended that his manager, Helen Keane, take Joanne as a client. The Keane-Brackeen relationship lasted a couple of years. Around that same time, Joanne's transformation—a thoroughgoing metamorphosis—into her own best entrepreneur became apparent. She started to delight in new hairstyles and attention-getting clothes. And her appearance has acquired some of the wit of her playing and her conversation. "The more I dress up," she says with a laugh, "the more people pay me."

Her mystical relationship with Dr. Chu Chow continues and parallels, in some ways, her involvement in music. "Music goes by so fast. It's faster than your breath. . . . Jazz musicians can get together, play some music, and we don't have to have anything that's been written; we can play from the innermost part of our souls and communicate, very much deeper than language, with ourselves. [The communication] comes out in this form of music or sound. . . ." And because their music emanates from the mysterious spirit, Joanne feels, along with most musicians, that music is the highest art on earth. db

### JOANNE BRACKEEN'S EQUIPMENT

For the last decade, Joanne Brackeen has owned a Kawai Grand Piano

To record and listen to what she's playing, she uses Aiwa tape recording machines. Brackeen also owns a four-track Fostex, which can record up to seven tracks and play them all at once.

### JOANNE BRACKEEN SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

#### as a leader

*DR. CHU CHOW*—(planned for Pathfinder, 1989)  
*FIFI GOES TO HEAVEN*—Concord Jazz 316  
*HAVIN' FUN*—Concord Jazz 280  
*TRINKETS AND THINGS*—Timeless 123  
*PRISM*—Choice\* 1024  
*TRING A LING*—Choice\* 1016  
*SNOOZE*—Choice\* 1009  
*AFT*—Timeless 302  
*ANCIENT DYNASTY*—Columbia Tappan Zee 36593  
*KEYED IN*—Columbia Tappan Zee 36075  
*MYTHICAL MAGIC*—Pausa 7045  
*INVITATION*—Black Saint 41044  
*NEW TRUE ILLUSION*—Timeless 103  
*SPECIAL IDENTITY*—Antilles 1001

\*Choice rights have since been sold to other labels.

#### with others

Toots Thielemans: *CAPTURED ALIVE*—Choice 1007  
 Stan Getz: *LIVE AT MONTMARTE*—Steeplechase 1073/  
 74  
 Art Blakey: *JAZZ MESSENGERS '80*—CBS/Sony 7902  
 Freddie Hubbard: *SWEET RETURN*—Atlantic 80108-1

# record reviews

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



## HERBIE HANCOCK

**PERFECT MACHINE**—Columbia 40025: *PERFECT MACHINE; OBSESSION; VIBE ALIVE; BEAT WISE; MAIDEN VOYAGE/P. BOP; CHEMICAL RESIDUE.*

**Personnel:** Hancock, Apple computer, synthesizers, piano, Vocoder; Jeff Bova, synthesizer programming; William "Bootsy" Collins, bass, Vocoder; Sugarfoot, vocals; Nicky Skopelitis, Fairlight drums, DST, turntables; Mico Wave, keyboards, bass, talk box, Vocoder.

★ ★ ★ ★

*Perfect Machine* may not be that different from Herbie's *Man-Child* if you think about it. Fourteen years ago he had Blackbyrd McKnight scratching rhythms, now he has DST. Then he had Wah Wah Watson on Voice Bag, now he uses "Bootsy" Collins and Sugarfoot on Vocoders and Talk Boxes. Then Herbie was prying sounds out of Arp Odysseys and Hohner Clavinets, today he's calling them up on a Mac Plus and digital keyboards. Mike Clark, Harvey Mason, and James Gadson banged out the funk on *Man-Child*, whereas on *Machine* the beats are sparser, etched out on Fairlight computer with huge sampled sounds. But let me tell you, the groove is undeniable here in '88, like it was back in '75.

There's a pulse running all the way through the title track, *Perfect Machine*, that never lets it rest, as DST revs the fun up on his turntable breaks. Herbie has some great ideas in there, and some of the sounds will stop you in your tracks, but this track goes on about two minutes too long; especially excruciating when it's Herbie's vinyl being wasted.

The two best cuts are *Obsessions* and *Beat Wise*, uncompromising but subtly-played dance grooves that feature the familiar voices of the Ohio Players' Sugarfoot, and "Bootsy" Collins of Parliament/Funkadelic. *Obsession* has only a sly trot, without much trace of a traditional drum part at all. It's a wide-open track, a nice change from the more traditional percussion part on *Vibe Alive*. By the end of *Alive* I'm looking at Herbie's equipment list, wondering why none of it sounds good. But he turns around on *Beat Wise* to lay down a sophisticated, edgy groove, with interesting bell-like chords, robot-in-distress turntable breakdowns, and some great "Owww"s by Sugar. *Beat-wise* is right.

Herbie plays it low-key on *Maiden Voyage* (post-bop), standing out only when playing his own voices on a synthesizer, or jamming on acoustic grand while the Grand Mixer does his best to get the groove right. But *Chemical Residue* makes use of some interesting industrial sounds, as well as a sampled choir, and a bed of rustling keyboards that sound plucked,

like harpsichords. It's one of prettiest things Herbie's done in his new setting with producer Bill Laswell.

The Laswell/Hancock partnership shows signs of growth here, sound-wise, past their initial successes of several years ago. Maybe Laswell will want to add a few more acoustic instruments in future collaborations, as he did on his last solo record. Many jazz purists will scoff at this record, but Herbie is right on top of the dance groove, taking that music up a notch, playing in the style and jamming the stuffings out of it.

—robin tolleson



## MILES DAVIS AND JOHN COLTRANE

**MILES AND COLTRANE**—Columbia 44052: *AH-LEU-CHA; STRAIGHT, NO CHASER; FRAN-DANCE (PUT YOUR LITTLE FOOT RIGHT OUT); TWO BASS HIT; BYE BYE BLACKBIRD; LITTLE MELONAE; BUDO.*

**Personnel:** Davis, trumpet; Coltrane, tenor saxophone; Julian "Cannonball" Adderley, alto saxophone (cuts 1-5); Bill Evans, piano (1-5); Red Garland, piano (6, 7); Paul Chambers, bass; Jimmy Cobb, drums (1-5); Philly Joe Jones, drums (6, 7).

★ ★ ★ ½

Just to try to clear things up in front: this is a collection of tracks previously released on various LPs over the last 30-odd years. It's a discographical mess—like all too much of Miles' vast and often unfindable catalog—but the basics go like this. Four of the first five cuts (*Blackbird* was omitted) appeared on the now-out-of-print *Miles and Monk At Newport* (Columbia 8978); and *Budo*, which has surfaced occasionally on anthologies and compilations since the late '50s. The actual four takes from that 1955 date have never been released in one package, so you have to scratch your head and wonder a bit. Why not take this opportunity, when CBS is going back through the vaults and refurbishing the sound digitally for the Jazz Masterpieces series, to release intact what should have been Miles' first CBS album? Are there more cuts from Newport 1958? Why splice together these two snapshots of the

frenetically evolving Miles Davis Sextet/Quintet instead of releasing each separately? And if you have to, why put the earliest tunes at the end of the disc?

Now that I've gotten that out of the way, I've gotta add that the music is hard to argue with. Heaven, bebop-style, is surely washed over by something like the sounds these powerhouse units pumped out. That's especially true of the last two tracks, cut when the group was finding its own driving bebopper voice—a quest that would climax a year later, when they recorded Prestige albums like *Cookin'* and *Relaxin'*. The 1958 cuts reveal a band with its own moving-beyond-bebop idiom thoroughly under control. *Ah-Leu-Cha* finds Miles sprinting uncharacteristically but without losing his spatial sense of phrasing to the rush, while Trane's solo on the whimsical *Fran Dance* bends rhythms and scales in a way that points clearly, if retrospectively, to his near future. *Blackbird* is deft and witty, and *Straight, No Chaser* is a twisted bluesy delight.

So if the album gets three-and-a-half stars instead of five, it's not because of the music, it's because of the package. —gene santoro



## CURLEW

**LIVE IN BERLIN**—Cunneiform Rune 12: *MOONLAKE; RAY; SHOATS; BARKING (I WANT A DOG); MINK'S DREAM; AGITAR/THE VICTIM/IMPROVISATION/OKLAHOMA.*

**Personnel:** George Cartwright, soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones; Tom Cora, cello; Davey Williams, guitar; Wayne Horvitz, keyboard bass, keyboards; Pippin Barnett, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

## HANK ROBERTS

**BLACK PASTELS**—JMT 834 416 1: *BLACK PASTELS; JAMIL; MOUNTAIN SPEAKS; RAIN VILLAGE; CHOQUENO; THIS QUIETNESS; GRANDPAPPY'S BARN DANCE DEATH DANCE; SCARECROW SHAKEDOWN; LUCKY'S LAMENT.*

**Personnel:** Roberts, cello, voice, guitar, jazz-a-phone fiddle; Tim Berne, alto saxophone; Ray Anderson, Robin Eubanks, trombones; David Taylor, bass trombone; Bill Frisell, guitar, banjo; Mark Dresser, bass; Joey Brown, drums, percussion.

★ ★ ★

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## ALTOLOGY

by Jim Roberts

If jazz is equal parts head and heart, then the instrument where the two coexist most naturally is the alto saxophone. Consider the great altoists: passionate blowers like Johnny Hodges, Cannonball Adderley, Paquito D'Rivera; intellectuals like Lee Konitz, Eric Dolphy, Anthony Braxton. Or just listen, for a few minutes, to the contrasting sounds of Paul Desmond and Ornette Coleman. Have such disparate musical personalities ever played the same ax?

The one musician who combined head and heart most perfectly was, of course, Charlie Parker. And he did it with an alto saxophone. Parker forged a revolution so complete that it's still nearly impossible to listen to anybody play an alto solo and not hear echoes of Bird. (Charles Mingus once wrote a tune called *If Charlie Parker Were A Gunslinger, There'd Be A Lot Of Dead Copycats*.)

Of all the altoists who came along in Parker's wake, the one who has done the most to preserve and extend his alto legacy is **Phil Woods**. Today, at the age of 56, Woods still has a pure, liquid tone and a resourceful imagination. If he has slowed down just a bit, he's also sharpened his wit—something that's particularly evident on his latest album, *Bop Stew* (Concord Jazz 345). Recorded live at last year's Fujitsu-Concord Jazz Festival in Tokyo, *Bop Stew* is a relatively minor work in the Woods opus, but it's one with many subtle pleasures.

As always, there's the estimable quintet, with Hal Galper (piano), Steve Gilmore (bass), Bill Goodwin (drums), and Tom Harrell (trumpet and flugelhorn). There are few working bands in jazz with as much empathy—and even fewer with such a wonderful collective sense of humor. On the title cut, written by Galper, and on Woods' *HUK2E* (no, that's not a typo), they dissect any number of bop clichés. It's as if they're sharing a little joke with the audience, poking fun at their dedication to bebop—while, at the same time, proving their mastery of it.

Woods plays with droll humor on the bop sendups, switches effortlessly to clarinet for *Poor Butterfly* (a sentimental tune given an unsentimental reading), then wraps things up with three stirring choruses over the *Rhythm* changes of *Yes, There Is A C.O.T.A.* The man can still blow.

With the sound of Woods' horn still lingering in my ears, I recently turned to several releases featuring younger, lesser-known altoists. The best of the bunch was an album by **George Robert**, a Woods disciple from Geneva, Switzerland. Robert co-leads a quintet with Tom Harrell (who else?), and their recording debut is called *Sun Dance* (Contemporary 14037).

Robert has a strong, even tone and the instincts of a true bebopper. He confesses to being a traditionalist ("We always play acoustic jazz"), but he's no moldy fig. The original compositions on *Sun Dance* (four by Robert, two by Harrell) include some intriguing modal settings and latin-tinged grooves—good, substantial stuff that's played with fire and conviction.

**Jim Snidero** is another up-and-coming altoist. His credits include a stint with the Toshiko Akiyoshi Orchestra, and Snidero plays with the kind of full-tilt abandon you'd expect from a guy who's been blowing over a big band. Compared to George Robert, Snidero's tone on the alto is a bit more hard-edged and reedy. His conception is a bit more raw, too, and he has the kind of swagger to his playing that makes you sit up and listen a little more closely.

Unfortunately, Snidero's recent album *Mixed Bag* (Criss Cross 1032) lives up to its title. It's an uneven blowing session. There's one gem, though: a haunting version of Billy Strayhorn's *Blood Count*. It begins with a stunning saxophone cadenza, and Snidero works and reworks his ideas beautifully from there, crafting a truly memorable performance.

As mixed bags go, Snidero's album doesn't even come close to *Sakura* (GSR CD-87, distributed by Rounder; CD only), a fascinating—if bizarre—release from New Orleans altoist **Christopher Mason**. Like many of his Crescent City colleagues, Mason has eclectic musical instincts. He thinks nothing of mixing traditional Japanese melodies with standards, sambas, and schlock. So he does. He also likes to keep everything short (there isn't a cut over four minutes), and his 36-minute CD is more of a sampler than a unified work. The one common denominator is the sound of Mason's horn: thick, robust, and drenched in the blues. He plays with a lot of heart, and his tone is so huge that you'd swear he was playing a tenor sometimes.

**Kerry Campbell** is another alto saxophonist with a big, gutsy sound. His debut album, *Phoenix Rising* (Contemporary 14041) doesn't always show it off, though. Campbell is originally from Detroit, but he's working out of Los Angeles now, and his brand of electric jazz leans a little too far toward that funky-but-mellow L.A. groove that's guaranteed to induce heavy eyelids anywhere east of Burbank. The tunes (most of them written by members of the session band) are eminently forgettable, so when Campbell finally latches onto something substantial—in this case, *When Sunny Gets Blue*—it's almost startling. He's obviously a strong player, but this record is too slick to be satisfying.

db

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gent new music phlange. It has produced musics that amalgamate everything its proponents have ever heard, and liked, be it John Cage, King Curtis, or Ali Akbar Khan. Curlew and Hank Roberts subscribe wholeheartedly to recombinant methodologies; *Live in Berlin* and *Black Pastels* attest to the varietal diversity of such genre splicing. There is an essential temperamental difference between the two albums, as Curlew is in the throes of its metabolism, while Roberts radiates repose.

Curlew taps common sense as well as essence from American roots musics. Galvanized by Pippin Barnett, their close-order precision and incisive attack gives them a bar band's kick-ass authority that leavens the deadpan insights of George Cartwright's compositions. Even their noise elements are crackin'. Tightness is to be expected from a group whose core—Cartwright, Tom Cora, and Barnett—has been together for nine years; yet, Curlew's quick cuts and snap zooms are consistently surprise-filled. Central to Curlew's continued vitality is Davey Williams' transformation from backwater, ingrown free improviser to in-the-post-modern-pocket chopsmeister.

It is this accomodation of road-band tenacity and artful conceit that makes propositions such as the elliptical funk of *Moonlake*, the burlesque riff bracketing Cartwright's gut-busting tenor solo on *Mink's Dream*, and garage-rock charge opening *Agitar*, work. Yet, Curlew is not merely clever. They have a formidable deconstructivist tendency, especially in Williams' noise barrages, and Cora's fingernails-across-the-blackboard textures. Curlew neither mugs it nor plays it straight.

Hank Roberts has an overtly global reach for source materials: his cello frequently takes on aspects of a sarod, kora, or guitar; his falsetto and voice overdubs have a Nascimento-like gleam. His American roots are objectified by his jazz-a-phone fiddle, inherited from the namesake of *Grandpappy's Barn Dance*; originally a one-stringed fiddle with an amplifying horn—which, as replaced with a tube, he uses vocally to produce a wah-wah effect—the retooled fiddle adds to the John Fahey-Orchestra-on-acid ambiance in sections of *Grandpappy's . . .* and *Scarecrow Shakedown*.

The smaller scale Brazilian-influenced pieces featuring Roberts' voice and guitar in tandem with his cello are not as durable as the more panoramic ensemble pieces. The aforementioned pieces also feature strutting and tailgating from Ray Anderson, Robin Eubanks, and David Taylor, coaxed on by a moaning and hollering Tim Berne. The trombones take on a burnished tone for the Mexican-tinged *Choqueno*. Roberts and Bill Frisell hold forth cogently on the title piece, a Third World-infused post-psychedelic work-out. In short, *Black Pastels* is an earnest, often endearing effort.

—bill shoemaker

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**NEWS FOR LULU**—hat Art CD 6005: K.D.'s MOTION; FUNK IN DEEP FREEZE; MELANIE; MELODY FOR C; LOTUS BLOSSOM; EASTERN INCIDENT; PECKIN' TIME; BLUES BLUES BLUES; BLUE MINOR (Take 1); THIS I DIG OF YOU; VENITA'S DANCE; NEWS FOR LULU; OLE; SONNY'S CRIB; HANK'S OTHER TUNE; BLUE MINOR (Take 2); WINDMILL; NEWS FOR LULU (Live Alternate Take); FUNK IN DEEP FREEZE (Live Alternate Take); WINDMILL (Live Alternate Take). (73:48 minutes)

Personnel: Zorn, alto saxophone; George Lewis, trombone; Bill Frisell, guitar.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

As a saxist, Zorn's love of bebop was first displayed on the admirable Sonny Clark Memorial Quartet's *Voodoo* (Black Saint 0109). On *News For Lulu*, he and his cohorts take the concept another step beyond. Though the compositions—chosen with a devoted and discriminating eye from the rich, if unjustly neglected songbooks of Clark, Freddy Redd, Hank Mobley and Kenny Dorham—retain their popish flavor, they are of necessity redefined by the striking instrumentation: alto sax, trombone, and guitar. Airy and eloquent, the trio can play it close-to-the-vest (when Lewis' trombone "walks" a bassline and Frisell's guitar comps chords) or break free into contrapuntal abandon, energized every step of the way by bebop's enthusiastic buoyancy and an added jolt of '80s adventurism.

Together, Frisell, Lewis, and Zorn create a pleasing variety of tone, texture, and temperament; the trombonist's blustery assurance and technical mastery matching the urgent optimism of Zorn's piping alto (reminiscent, at times, of the late Ernie Henry's exuberant, ricochet phrasing). If Frisell's occasional reticence is problematic, his function is primarily to blend the three instrumental colors into harmony and, rhythmically, prevent his cohorts from flying off into space.

*News For Lulu* is an entertaining disc, and an important one. It reminds us that the ranks of post-bop players produced a number of great blowing tunes with witty or lyrical turns of phrase; it rescues these tunes from oblivion while communicating the joy and exhilaration at their essence, and shows that a fresh, imaginative, and fearless attitude can revitalize such material without mimicking older performance styles. It also provides yet another view of John Zorn, one of the '80s most important artists, who with each recording continues to surprise and delight.

—art lange

down beat, July 1988

(reprint by permission of down beat magazine)

This recording has been made possible by a generous financial assistance of Swiss Bank Corporation.

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## HARRISON/ BLANCHARD

**BLACK PEARL**—Columbia 44216: *SELIM SIVAD*; *BLACK PEARL*; *NINTH WARD STRUT*; *INFINITE HEART*; *THE CENTER PIECE*; *SOMEWHERE*; *DIZZY GILLESPIE'S HANDS*; *TONI*; *BIRTH OF THE ABSTRACT*.

**Personnel:** Terence Blanchard, trumpet; Donald Harrison, alto, C-melody, soprano saxophones; Cyrus Chestnut, piano; Reginald Veal, bass; Carl Allen, drums; Monte Croft, vibraphone (cuts 2,4); Steve Thornton, percussion (2,4); Mark Whitfield, electric guitar (4).

★ ★ ★ ★

Last year's *Crystal Stair* was slavishly Wyntonian; *Black Pearl* throws off the shackles. It's as if Harrison/Blanchard realize, growing new music from old seeds, that inbreeding leads to sterility. They keep the stock strong by drawing on various healthy strains instead of exhausting one. Miles' '60s quintet is of course their departure point, the polyrhythmic pull of interwoven lines on Blanchard's *Black Pearl* reminds us why emulating them seemed a good idea in the first place.

Still, Veal's imperturbable walking on Harrison's *Selim Sivad* and Chestnut's between-the-cracks chord harping on *Birth Of The Abstract* seemed as indebted to Tristano as Miles. Behind *Abstract's* horn solos, Veal and Carl Allen regularly make miniscule adjustments to the beat. One will slow his pulse while the other holds steady, but they never sound lost. They masterfully understate a New Orleans parade rhythm on *Ninth Ward Strut*.

Harrison and Blanchard have paid tribute to Dolphy and Booker Little. But given Harrison's low opinion of the best record he's on, Don Pullen's *Sixth Sense*, he's a reluctant progressive. Yet when he's hot, he's the most riveting of the high profile neo-cons, if only for the ways he mixes disparate sensibilities. His astringent, discreetly vocalized soprano on Leonard Bernstein's *Somewhere* reflects Dolphy's conception, not sound. On C-melody for *Toni*, his 2/4 staccato links Braxton and Rollini; his singsong soundsheets on *Center Piece* combine Coltrane fingers with Lacy lips.

Harrison's raucous backwoods cry makes him an effective foil for Blanchard, who hits the pretty notes like they were bells. But trading phrases with Donald on the stop-time tumble *Dizzy Gillespie's*, Terence shows off both superior chops and his own dizzily outward-bound approach.

*Birth Of The Abstract*, the title and song, point up that Harrison/Blanchard, like Marsalis or Courtney Pine, seem hellbent on reinventing the wheel. But this 1949-1965 music still sounds fresh, because Harrison/Blanchard explore roads less tramelled. —*kevin whitehead*

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## THE PIANO TRIO

by Bill Shoemaker

Joachim Berendt has long argued that the piano has historically suffered from something of a bi-polar disorder in jazz: the more the orchestral and polyphonic capabilities of the instrument are exploited, the less likely the instrument can obtain the intensity he identifies with horns; conversely, the pianist taps less of the instru-

ment's Euro-virtuosic potential when approximating the idealized horn-like intensity. The strengths and weaknesses of his position come into sharp focus when examining the traditional piano trio configuration. In a narrow regard, the trio is the most taxing context for a pianist in jazz, as the commodious intimacy it affords can easily give way to music stuffed with clichés and platitudes. How the pianist avoids such pitfalls goes hand in hand with how his or her work supports or disputes Berendt's thesis.

As an accompanist for a variety of vocalists,

**Alan Broadbent** has demonstrated taste and tact; with Charlie Haden's Quartet West, he has cautiously used the available elbow room. On *Another Time* (Trend 546), Broadbent nudges his parameters, mixing even-keeled, simmering readings of infrequently interpreted compositions by Parker, Rollins, and Tristano—his energized *317 E. 32nd St.* has a brooding counterpart in his own *E. 32nd Elegy*—with tepid takes of garden variety standards, and placid original ballads and waltzes. In his open letter/liner comments, David Frishberg refers to Broadbent's "literate music," a phrase that pinpoints Broadcast's assets and shortcomings; Broadbent's crisp, serpentine lines, subtle harmonic underpinnings, and Tristanolike dynamic understatement amount to a narrative style that details rather than evokes. Receiving sensitive support from bassist Putter Smith and drummer Frank Gibson, Broadbent updates the pianistic paradigms of the cool school with a contemporary West Coast sensibility.

On *Trio Today* (Emarcy 832 589 1), **Ray Bryant** basks in a variety of settings, ranging from two-fisted blues (his own *Slow Freight*) to a pristine *Chelsea Bridge*, replete with shimmering arpeggios and hushed voicings. Though well-versed in such maximalist styles as stride, Bryant consistently delivers streamlined performances; even the barrages on his fast and furious *Rhythm-a-ning*—which features incisive interplay with bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Freddie Waits—have a well-crafted economy. This is especially evident in lightly swinging, mid-tempo vehicles such as Benny Carter's *When Lights Are Low* and John Lewis' *Afternoon In Paris*, where Bryant punctuates boppish nimbleness with chunks of beefy blues. With the exception of Nat Adderley's *The Old Country*, whose Eastern European tinge borders on the mawkish, *Trio Today* confirms Bryant's ability to create inviting music without excess baggage.

Avant gardist **Marilyn Crispell's** work with bassist Reggie Workman and percussionist Doug James on her provocative suite, *Gaia* (Leo 152) disregards the conventions of the jazz piano trio. From the ritualistic prelude of percussion and plucked and scraped piano strings, through pummeled passages and reflective ripostes, Crispell, Workman, and James typify the urgency of expression that is the avant garde's *raison d'être*. While much of Crispell's work is rooted in Cecil Taylor's, the most bracing section of *Gaia* is the third, where she makes the most noticeable break with his methodology. Propelled by the quicksilver pacing of Workman and James' brush work, Crispell connects three disparate thematic elements: a triplet-riveted vamp, an ascending splay of clusters, and dramatic arpeggios marching up a major scale. The keystone of the suite is nimble and powerful. Crispell's command of the keyboard and her empathetic rapport with her cohorts stands with the best that jazz presently offers.

**Erroll Garner's** rubato mastery and cascading flourishes are traits that, on the surface, would neatly fit into Berendt's mold; but it is these very traits, galvanized by an ebullient attack, that give Garner's work its singing quality. On *Easy To Love* (Emarcy 832 994 1), Garner croons and scats his way through a program of perpetually roasted chestnuts.

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While Garner was occasionally slipping into self-caricature by the early '60s, as on a goopy *As Time Goes By*, his arsenal of rapid runs and jangly chords still packed a punch. *Lover Come Back To Me* has the brisk two-beat pulse that arose whenever Garner went into overdrive, a rhythmic calling card that gave an aura of definition and symmetry to even his most enjambed phrases. *Somebody Stole My Gal*, with its daredevil octaves, hammerbustin' stride touches, and abrupt tempo changes, epitomizes Garner's follow-the-leader approach to trio playing; his longtime associates, bassist Eddie Calhoun and drummer Kelly Martin, give Garner the necessary responsiveness throughout this spirited program.

Unlike his controversy-baiting book on jazz, *The Imperfect Art* (Oxford University Press), **Ted Gioia's** *The End Of The Open Road* (Quartet 1001) is devoid of abstrusive intellectual constructs, revealing instead a pianist with a penchant for relaxed, rhapsodic exposition in a self-acclaimed West Coast framework. In his steadfast "refusal to accept frenetic intensity as an end in itself," Gioia offers solo and trio (with bassist Jeff Carney and a subdued Eddie Moore) interpretations of standards that glint charmingly, and originals that border on the soporific. With the exception of the hook-filled modified blues structure on *The Open Road*—"For those who are interested in such things, it is: C7/C#7/Gmin7/F#7/F7/D7(#9) C#7/Emin7/A7(flat 5)/D7(flat 9)/G7aug/C7

G7aug/C7 G7aug//."—Gioia's formal complexities are unassuming to the point of being barely detectable upon a cursory listening, as on the pastoral *The End Of The Open Road*. Yet, for someone who rightly and righteously rails against the debasing of music via Muzak et al., Gioia presents a program that is, in large measure, sedate.



Keith Jarrett: firmly rooted

Only **Keith Jarrett's** most rabid bashers could muster any bile over *Still Live* (ECM 1360/61), an engaging two-disc concert re-

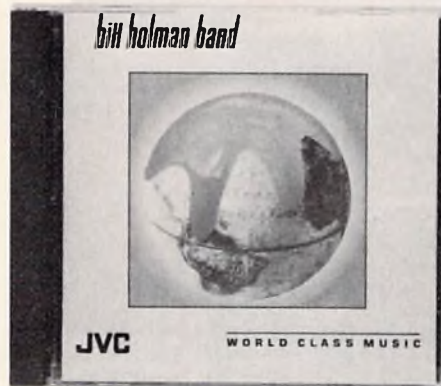
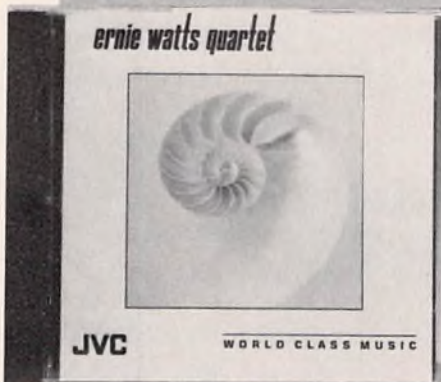
cording with Gary Peacock and Jack DeJohnette. Two elements are key to its success. He concisely and relevantly melds his classically-oriented solo improvisations with the standard at hand, as on the Copland-Hovhanness-Ben Johnston amalgam that segues into *My Funny Valentine*. Perhaps more importantly, the trademark ecstatic ambiance is firmly rooted in the idiom, the material, and the interplay of his colleagues; on *The Song Is You*, it is sustained for its entire 16:48. Not since the heyday of his "American quartet" has Jarrett found, as he has with Peacock and DeJohnette, a conventional jazz context that satisfies so much of his artistic agenda.

He grew up next door to Oscar Peterson, had the same piano teacher—Peterson's sister—and developed into a virtuoso of Peterson's caliber; but casting **Oliver Jones** in the mold of Peterson, as is often done, is misleading, at best. The common antecedent in Tatum is obvious, though Jones' *Cookin' At Sweet Basil* (Justin' Time 25-1) shows an affinity with Garner's joviality and Hines' ram-bunctiousness that Peterson has forgone in recent years in favor of a more formal bearing. With two of Canada's finest mainstream players, bassist Dave Young and drummer Terry Clarke, giving him judicious prodding at every turn, Jones romps through blowing vehicles ranging from blues to bossa nova, and milks ballads for facile flourishes. The play's the thing with Jones, and he plays it for all it's worth.

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Discussions of **Adam Makowicz** are usually long on praise for his virtuosity, but curiously short on his compositional skills and his overall sensibility. *Interface* (Gazell 1007) is a fine opportunity to hear Makowicz's music, in addition to his playing. This all-original program revises such second-generation bop endeavors as the examination of interval cycles (*Interface*, *Didibop*), and the melding of soul-jazz's buoyancy with an extended harmonic base (*Ninth Avenue*). For all his cross-pollinating fluency, Makowicz emerges as something of a stylistic chameleon; luckily, Palle Daniels-

son and Jon Christensen, by virtue of their past life as half of Jarrett's "European quartet," have the wherewithal to compliment Makowicz. Still, Makowicz's ultimate strength is his ability to infuse his virtuosity and encyclopedic knowledge with probity and sensitivity.

**Bobo Stenson** first gained exposure in North America with his recordings for ECM with Jan Garbarek, Danielsson, and Christensen; on *Very Early* (Dragon 148), he forgoes the Scandinavian pristine lyricism and spiritual exultations that characterized those dates, achieving a durable earthbound jazz crafts-

manship, instead. Stenson's snaking right hand lines and supple chording is a fine fit for Bill Evans' title tune, and standards like *Autumn In New York*. On more heated exchanges, such as Ornette's *Rambling*, Stenson's hard-nosed attack prompts jabbing counterpunches from bassist Anders Jormin and drummer Rune Carlsson. *Very Early* is an interesting re-introduction to Bobo Stenson.

Perhaps more than any American pianist under 40, **James Williams** seems destined for greatness. He has the necessary prerequisites: after an apprenticeship with one of the best editions of the Jazz Messengers of the past two decades, he has led several impressive recordings and contributed memorable supporting roles on definitive dates by senior statesmen—Art Farmer's *Something To Live For* springs immediately to mind. On *Magical Trio 1* (Emarcy 832 859 1), Williams leads a trio featuring two bona fide masters—Ray Brown and Art Blakey—and the resulting program is nothing less than invigorating. Williams jettisons on the opener, *Hammerin'*, with his solo gospel introduction priming chorus after chorus of hard-hitting blues. Another Williams original, *The Soulful Mr. Timmons*, has its namesake's simmering solidity, and the bluesiness that Brown and Blakey can patently exploit. The mold-breaker, however, is the cadence-based, collective *J's Jam Song*, a case-in-point of how a rhythmic kernel, or a single phrase, can, in the hands of improvisors, be transformed into a rich musical landscape.

The author of *Mechanics Of Modern Music* (Edizioni Berben, available in North America through Theodore Presser Company) and the recipient of a doctorate in composition from Forest Conservatory in England, **Tony Zano** is an unheralded pianist, basically in the Powell mode—modified by touches of Tristano and Evans—who has more than a quarter century's experience with the likes of Pepper Adams, Lee Konitz, and Toots Thielemans. *In Retrospect* (Mark 57624), a recently released 1983 set of first takes with the late bassist Teddy Kotick, and drummer Joe Hunt, finds Zano delivering sensitively articulated ballads and blowing vehicles that don't sacrifice construction to a fiery attack. The album is also something of a memorial to Kotick, whose cleanly lined solos and support were rarely as prominent on his other recordings as they are here.

Thoughtful and probing are adjectives frequently used in reference to **Denny Zeitlin**, and they remain applicable in regards to *Trio* (Windham Hill Jazz 0112). Throughout this varied program—which runs the gamut from spirited samba, through sensitive readings of *Goodbye Porkpie Hat* and J. J. Johnson's *Lament*, to contemporary West Coast originals—Zeitlin steadfastly refutes pat formulae, endowing each piece with unexpected pleasures. The roundabout harmonic resolutions of *And I Wondered If You Knew* or the determined rhythmic drive of *On The March* pinpoint how Zeitlin sidesteps the pitfalls of the limpid laid-backness contemporary West Coast jazz frequently languishes in; the work of drummer Peter Donald and bassist Joel DiBartolo are important assets to this end. Also, Zeitlin can turn on the afterburners, as he does on *Brazilian Street Dance* and Ornette's *Turnaround*. Zeitlin's *Trio* is a Windham Hill record that ain't Windham Hill music. **db**

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# Waxing On

## BLUEBEARDS

by James Brinsfield

- SONNY BOY WILLIAMSON:** *THE REAL FOLK BLUES* (MCA Chess 9272) ★★★★★
- DOWN AND OUT BLUES** (MCA Chess 9257) ★★★★★
- HOWLIN' WOLF:** *THE REAL FOLK BLUES* (MCA Chess 9273) ★★★★★½
- VARIOUS ARTISTS:** *BLUES PIANO ORGY* (Delmark 626) ★★★★★½
- MUDDY WATERS:** *THE REAL FOLK BLUES* (MCA Chess 9274) ★★★★★
- JOHN LEE HOOKER:** *THE REAL FOLK BLUES* (MCA Chess 9271) ★★★★★
- MEMPHIS SLIM:** *THE REAL FOLK BLUES* (MCA Chess 9270) ★★★★★
- BIG JOE WILLIAMS:** *PINEY WOODS BLUES* (Delmark 602) ★★★★★
- SLEEPY JOHN ESTES:** *IN EUROPE* (Delmark 611) ★★★★★
- ARTHUR "BIG BOY" CRUDUP:** *CRUDUP'S MOOD* (Delmark 621) ★★★★★
- ROOSEVELT SYKES:** *RAINING IN MY HEART* (Delmark 642) ★★★★★
- BUDDY GUY:** *LEFT MY BLUES IN SAN FRANCISCO* (MCA Chess 9262) ★★★★★½
- VARIOUS ARTISTS:** *SWEET HOME CHICAGO* (Delmark 618) ★★★★★½
- ROBERT JR. LOCKWOOD:** *STEADY ROLLIN' MAN* (Delmark 630) ★★★★★½
- CAREY BELL:** *CAREY BELL'S BLUES HARP* (Delmark 622) ★★★★★½
- YANK RACHELL:** *CHICAGO STYLE* (Delmark 649) ★★★★★½

Twenty years ago I wrote to John Litweiler c/o **db** asking him to recommend the best urban blues albums I could get. He replied, listing 20 albums he liked and 20 he thought were essential. Some of the same records made it onto both lists. And some didn't. Looking back, his letter was my first formal lesson in aesthetics; what you like, maybe even what touches you deeply, isn't always what's best—nor should it be.

The artists here are a valhalla of blues avatars from two great Chicago blues labels: MCA's third batch of Chess re-issues and Delmark's continuing policy of keeping all its records in print. Although only the Sonny Boy records are undeniably essential, there isn't a bad record in here, and one, the apocalyptic Wolf set, is just a notch below his evil best.

**Howlin' Wolf** was a dark personae created by Mississippi sharecropper Chester Burnett, complete with voice masking and eerie animal howls. *The Real Folk Blues* is hardly that. Outside of his reworking of the Mississippi Sheik's *Sittin' On Top Of The World*, these selections are a rough collection of Wolf's later hit records penned in the early '60s by songwriter Willie Dixon. Dixon tailored tunes specifically for Wolf, casting him as supernatural and shape-changing, (*Taildragger*), while disarming, at least on record, Wolf's aura of violence (*300 Pounds Of Joy*) into a declawed crossover package. However, there are a few cuts that

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voke the mythic beast; *Killing Floor's* conjuga-  
tion of vividly nihilistic lyrics and nearly hysterical  
kinetic motion, especially Hubert Sumlin's  
idiot savant solo, turn it into a chilling deadly  
cosmology from the master of blues angst.

Meanwhile Chess' other blues star had set-  
tled into formulaic derivations of Wolf's '50s  
hits. The **Muddy Waters** set is haphazard,  
from *Same Thing* which Muddy sleepwalks  
through to the spectacularly flawed *Gypsy  
Woman*, his first song cut for Chess in 1947  
with Sunnyland Slim on piano and Big Crawford  
on bass. *Gypsy Woman* showcases the concise  
thematic focus he could bring to his own lyrics,  
stringing together images of a supra-realm of  
sexual witchcraft. Muddy was trying to fit in with  
Chicago's burgeoning blues scene. His earliest  
efforts sought to shake his country roots by  
playing jazz lines in an idiosyncratic Delta time  
over Sunnyland's erudite urban boogie.

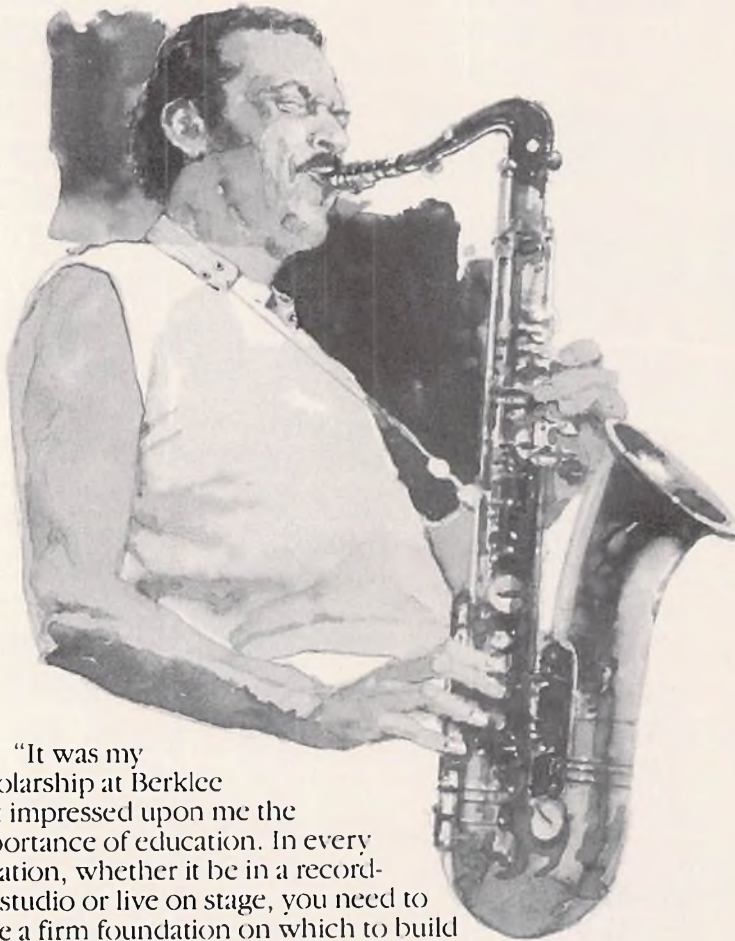
On his second session for Chess in 1949 he  
brought out the slide, inaugurating the begin-  
ning of electric Chicago blues played almost  
exclusively by musicians out of the Mississippi  
Delta. The two cuts here from the '49 session,  
*Little Geneva* and *Canary Bird*, are the least  
interesting of the four recorded that day. But  
what is apparent is that Muddy was the great-  
est of the modern Delta singers, modulating  
his breathy strong voice to the most perfect of  
nuances. In the next two years he gathered a  
band with Little Walter on harp, Jimmy Rogers  
on guitar, and Baby Face Leroy on guitar and  
drums. In 1951 they recorded a brooding body  
of work that constitutes the unequalled zenith  
of electric Chicago blues—*Louisiana Blues*,  
*Long Distance Call*, *She Moves Me*, *Honey  
Bee*, *Still A Fool*, *Too Young To Know* . . . these  
titles are spread across the Chess compila-  
tions with no rhyme or reason. MCA deserves  
thanks for re-releasing the Chess catalog but  
the need for a chronological setting for Wolf,  
Little Walter, Sonny Boy, and especially Muddy  
has gone begging.

**John Lee Hooker's** one chord boogies  
are the primal deconstruction of Delta blues.  
His music is first and foremost rhythmic, with  
repetitive guitar motifs wrapped around lyrics  
with more exhortation than narration. His maw-  
ling bass voice once heard is unforgettable.  
This LP contains the ultra-boogie, *Come Out  
Tonight*, but if you can find any of the earlier  
LP's he cut for VJ and Modern leased out in  
myriad forms, you've uncovered the real gems  
from this gifted and engaging, albeit limited,  
bluesman.

Hooker's visceral stomps are the sort of  
music played, in it's beginning's, in the back-  
country bucket of blood gin houses, where  
keeping the dancers going and the booze  
flowing were the main objectives. On the other  
hand, blues pianists were considered more  
upscale by the urban milieu of middle-class  
blacks who regarded their country roots with  
derision and scorn. **Memphis Slim's** blues  
recall the city blues of the 1940's played by  
artists such as Eddie Boyd, Big Maceo, and  
Amos Milburn. Bands such as these, often in  
a piano, electric guitar, bass, drums, reed, and  
brass configuration, were the precursors of  
'50s r&b and '60s soul. Pop, jazz, and blues  
influences abound in Slim's music as if his time  
and style were the summation of one age and  
the anticipation of the next. His playing is  
wonderfully interesting, incorporating strong



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left-hand power chords churning below cocktail trinkle-tinkles on the right. During the blues revival of the late '60s . . . i.e., the white rock audience's discovery of its roots, Slim found his fondest audiences in Europe where he took up residence, continuing to perform and record until his death this past spring.

Part of the second generation of Chicago bluesmen who emerged in the mid-'60s included **Buddy Guy** and his running mates Otis Rush and Magic Sam. Buddy served his apprenticeship for a decade as a free-lance studio guitarist gigging most frequently for Chess. That's him supplying a calypso line to Wolf's *Built For Comfort*. More guitarist than singer, his 1966 sides eschew Guitar Slim's frantic choked single note style. Guy's solos tend to be predictable, usually constructed out of repeated phrases culminating in a flurry of bell-like strangled high notes. His type of playing has come to represent the modern school of Chicago blues guitar and as such is the definition of that idiom. Currently he often teams up with harpist/singer Jr. Wells who, when they choose to, can be the hottest ensemble of all the contemporary Chicago blues bands.

**Sonny Boy Williamson.** Rice Miller. Hustler, trickster. These two albums are essential works by one of the most enduring of all post-war bluesmen. Sonny Boy's warm quavering voice glides over lyrics that celebrate deeply felt adult relationships that weren't always ideal. Light years away from the prototypical, "Oh, Poor Me" blues, his songs have the depth of a full lifetime behind them. The personal narrative lines catapult the most intimate experiences into universal truisms without being trite or mundane. He's accompanied here by Chess' crème de la crème sidemen—from Little Walter's Jukes, Robert Lockwood, Jr. on guitar, and for my money, the premier blues drummer, Fred Below. Filling out the group are members of Muddy's mid-'60s band, guitarists Luther Tucker and Matt Murphy with Otis Spann on piano. You can cull at least a half-dozen killer songs and another dozen a tad below from these two albums. The titles are a litany of blues classics: *One Way Out*, *Down Child*, *Don't Start Me Talkin'*, *Sad To Be Alone*, *Bring It On Home*. The *RFB* set might get the nod between the two; but, if this were written a week ago, I would have gone for the *Down And Out* album.

By the late '60s, Chess seemed to falter and lose its way. Muddy recorded an LP whose star was the fuzzed-out guitar of Phil Upchurch. Wolf recorded a similar psychedelic blues album, so bad he threatened to walk off the label. With trouble a-brewin' down at 2120, Bob Koester's shoestring operation out of the basement of the Jazz Record Mart in Chicago took on an importance far larger than its modest size. While Leonard Chess pandered to what he thought were the tastes of the times, Koester more accurately realized that there was a whole new generation of bluesmen waiting to be recorded; and, as a result of his day-to-day contact with blues fans who pilgrimaged to Chicago as if it were Mecca, he knew the audience for Chicago blues wanted the raw, real thing, free of gimmicks.

There was a world of difference between the way Koester and Chess conducted their recording sessions. Chess could be adamant,

occasionally strong-arming the musicians into making changes in their music. In the studio, he would spend hours to get the right take, sometimes switching the personnel around during the date with the goal being to score a hit record. Koester, on the other hand, took an approach more or less carved out by John Hammond, Sr. His method was to record in a very matter of fact, almost documentary fashion the people he thought to be musically important. The leader of the date chose their sidemen and, once rehearsed, the tapes rolled with little or no post-production other than mixing down. Koester hoped to catch art. And there was another difference. Chess owned his studio, working with the same engineers, particularly Ron Malo, for over 25 years. Koester had to book Delmark sessions around the city, sometimes using Chess' Ter Mar Studios but most often going to Universal in the Union Carbide Building on Michigan Avenue with Stu Black at the console.

The *Sweet Home* LP is a compilation of sides produced by Shakey Jake and Bill Lindeman in 1966 featuring Magic Sam, Luther Allison, Big Mojo, and Louis Myers. The cuts are rough, simple affairs intended to be 45 releases but sold in toto to Delmark. The Magic Sam material, his first recordings in 10 years after scuffling through day jobs and weekend gigs, are shattering emotional originals sung as if his life depended on it. In due course he signed with Delmark and in the following years busted out of ghetto obscurity, playing the college circuit, a European tour, and, back in Chicago—even though he still gigged in the same West Side dives—as the homeboy made good. (At the 1972 Ann Arbor Blues Festival after a long West Coast tour, he absolutely devastated the audience with intense guitar work that had matured into a fluid molten beam of electricity.) It was rumored Sam's contract was going to be bought out by a major label. And then, in the cruelest twist of fate, he was felled by a heart attack. Dead at 34.

**Carey Bell's** LP has the feeling of Blue Mondays: Monday night, early Tuesday morning jams in the juke joints on Chicago's South and West sides when the musicians kick back, relax, and approach their music in impromptu settings. Often people in the audience holding workaday jobs sit in on a number they know; and then there's the other side of the coin, where up-and-coming bloods cruise the clubs headhunting, getting up on the bandstand hoping to cut the neighborhood hero down. Carey's album has him paired with an inventive West Side guitarist, Jimmy Dawkins, and Homesick James, who is best known for his solid tasty work with Jimmy Reed. Both are perfect foils for Carey's raw simulations of his mentor, Little Walter.

When **Robert Lockwood Jr.** came out of retirement to show up at the Ann Arbor Blues Festival in 1972, Delmark rushed to record him. Perhaps they rushed too fast. The band is Little Walter's Jukes re-united in middle-age with Messrs. Myers, Myers, Below, and Lockwood. The session is laid-back and Lockwood's a bit rusty. The band sounds like they're trying to avoid stepping on Robert Jr.'s toes. Although I've never been crazy about Lockwood's pinched, nasal singing, he's relaxed on this set with the results being a pleasant, almost easy-listening jazz flavored set. You can



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catch the same band two years later in fine fettle on the *Advent/Live In Japan* album.

Delmark's entry into the blues world was via country blues singers in settings that recreated their original recordings from the '20s and '30s. **Big Joe Williams** belonged to the first generation of Delta bluesmen. Born in Crawford, Mississippi in 1903, he taught himself the guitar and began playing on streetcorners and at country dances. He's most closely associated with the first Sonny Boy Williamson, John Lee Williamson. Only 52 years-old when he cut the *Piney Woods LP*, he's in fine form here, singing with a virile bass voice and playing hard, slashing guitar that, as with all the great Delta artists from Robert Johnson to Otis Rush, fuses the vocal and instrumental lines into an eerie unity. Father of *Baby Please Don't Go*, he was an artist of the first order who remained true to his vision, keeping his music very close to its original inspiration.

As everyone knows, Elvis Presley covered **Arthur 'Big Boy' Crudup's** *That's Alright*, (recreated here as *Any Old Way You Do*) The Delmark LP, recorded in the '70s, isn't as vital as those Bluebird sessions. It's a very mellow set by an exquisite Delta singer/songwriter. His voice got higher as he aged and he had a tendency to shout the first line in the AAB stanza, then speak the next two, creating an instant, intimate effect. Willie Dixon and Ransom Knowling alternate the bass chair.

At the same time Delta blues were literally being invented, 500 miles to the north a different type of blues was being refined in Memphis, characterized by ensembles playing in a style that didn't preclude jazz and pop influences. Among those artists were Hambone Willie Newburn, Will Shade, Yank Rachell, and **Sleepy John Estes**. Sleepy John's Delmark album was recorded in 1966 during a European tour. Most of the material is a reprise of his 1930's repertoire recorded for Decca. Estes' high whinnying voice is offset by some of the crispest country guitar work you'll hear anywhere. **Yank Rachell** accompanied John on those early records. Rachell's LP on Delmark is a recent studio recording with Floyd Jones on piano, Odie Payne on drums, and Pete Crawford on guitar. Listening to blues played on a mandolin, with it taking most of the solos, focuses the instruments' sonic limitations. But Rachell is a master musician and his performances in the context of a contemporary blues band underline how timeless this artist is.

*The Blues Piano Orgy* album is assembled from past albums, unreleased takes, and newly-acquired small labels that Delmark has quietly purchased. The album is a gem anthology of blues piano styles, ranging from Little Brother Montgomery's high lonesome blues to a spectacular limbering up by Otis Spann before Jr. Wells' *South Side Blues Jam* album. Perhaps this isn't an essential album, but I found myself playing it again and again for my own enjoyment.

And last is the exuberant **Roosevelt Sykes** LP, recorded between '51 and '53 for United. It runs the gamut of blues, ballads, and jump jazz with sidemen, Remo Biondi on violin, J. T. Brown and Sax Mallard on reeds, and a host of other top-notch players. The set is first-class with Sykes able to meld convincingly into any setting. **db**

## New Releases

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

**POLYGRAM/SOUL NOTE/VERVE/EMARCY/MERCURY/BLACK SAINT:** Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, *Not Yet*. The Leaders, *Out Here Like This*. . . . Haden/Motian/Allen, *Etudes*. Robert Cray, *Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark*. Gillespie/Rollins/Stitt, *Duets*. Ben Webster, *And Associates*. Betty Carter, *The Audience With: The Betty Carter Album*. John Coltrane and Cannonball Adderley, *Cannonball & Coltrane*. Sarah Vaughan, *Sassy Swings The Tivoli*. Erroll Garner, *Mambo Moves*; *The Original Misty*. Chick Corea & Herbie Hancock, *An Evening With*. Masqualero, Aero. Gillespie, Monk, Blakey, et al., *Giants Of Jazz In Berlin '71*. Coleman Hawkins, *And His Confreres*.

**RCA/BLUEBIRD:** Illinois Jacquet, *The Black Velvet Band*. Duke Ellington, *The Far East Suite*. The Gil Evans Orchestra, *Plays The Music Of Jimi Hendrix*. Sidney Bechet, *The Legendary*. Joe Williams, *The Overwhelming*. Lonnie Liston Smith, *Golden Dreams*. Various Artists, *The Metronome All-Star Bands*.

**GAIA/GRAMAVISION:** Harvie Swartz & Urban Earth, *It's About Time*. Joakin Bello, *Beyond The Rainbow*. Kazumi Watanabe, *The Spice Of Life Too*.

**SST:** Henry Kaiser, *Those Who Know History Are Doomed To Repeat It*. Universal Congress, *Prosperous And Qualified*. Elliott Sharp/Carbon, *Larynx*.

**MCA/IMPULSE/ZEBRA/CHESS:** McCoy Tyner, David Murray, et al., *Blues For Coltrane*. Hoops McCann Band, *Plays The Music Of Steely Dan*. Jack DeJohnette's Special Edition, *Audio Visualscapes*. Perri, *The Flight*. Billy Joe Walker, Jr., *Universal Language*. Riders In The Sky, *Riders Radio Theater*. Sugar Pie DeSanto, *Down In The Basement*. Billy Stewart, *One More Time*. Various Artists, *The Best Of Chess Vocal Groups*.

**WARNER BROS:** Harold Budd, *The White Arcades*. Bob James, *Ivory Coast*. Jim Horn, *Neon Nights*. Various Artists, *Opal: Assembly 1*.

**COLUMBIA:** The Gadd Gang, *Here & Now*. The Keiser Twins, *The Keiser Twins*. Steve Smith and Vital Information, *Fialaga Celebration*. Buck Clayton, *Jam Sessions From The Vault*. Miles Davis, *At The Blackhawk Vol. 1*. Count Basie, *The Essential Vol. 3*. Bing Crosby, *The Crooner*. Various Artists, *Columbia Jazz Masterpieces Vol V*.

**ATLANTIC JAZZ:** Rahsaan Roland Kirk, *The Inflated Tear*. Yusuf Lateef, *Concerto For Yusuf Lateef*. John Coltrane, *Coltrane's Sound*. Coltrane Jazz.

**HAT ART:** Richard Teitelbaum, *Concerto Grosso*. Arnold Dreyblatt and the Orchestra of Excited Strings, *Propellers In Love*. Franz Koglmann, *About Yesterdays Ezzthetics*. Habarigani, *Habarigani*. Herbert Distel, *Die Reise*. Westbrook, *Rossini*. George Gruntz Concert Band '87, *Happening Now!*. Fritz Hauser, *Zwei*. Various Artists, *Kimus #1*.

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## CHICK COREA

**NOW HE SINGS, NOW HE SOBS**—Blue Note CDP 7 9055-2; *MATRIX*; *MY ONE AND ONLY LOVE*; *NOW HE BEATS THE DRUM*—*NOW HE STOPS*; *BOSSA*; *NOW HE SINGS*—*NOW HE SOBS*; *STEPS*—*WHAT WAS*; *FRAGMENTS*; *WINDOWS*; *PANNONICA*; *SAMBA YANTRA*; *I DON'T KNOW*; *THE LAW OF FALLING AND CATCHING UP*; *GEMINI*. (69:14 minutes)

**Personnel:** Corea, piano; Miroslav Vitous, bass; Roy Haynes, drums.

★★★★★

## KEITH JARRETT

**SOMEWHERE BEFORE**—Atlantic CD 8808-2; *MY BACK PAGES*; *PRETTY BALLAD*; *MOVING SOON*; *SOMEWHERE BEFORE*; *NEW RAG*; *A MOMENT FOR TEARS*; *POUT'S OVER (AND THE DAY'S NOT THROUGH)*; *DEDICATED TO YOU*; *OLD RAG*. (41:25 minutes)

**Personnel:** Jarrett, piano; Charlie Haden, bass; Paul Motian, drums.

★★★½

Over the past two decades, Jarrett and Corea have explored more than their share of musical territories, become among the most popular of contemporary keyboardists, and served to inspire and influence a generation of admirers. In 1968, however, when these two discs were recorded, both were in youthful transitional stages, testing various strategies for improvisation with varying degrees of success.

Jarrett's live date betrays his chameleonic talents. Caught just prior to his leaving the Charles Lloyd Quartet—an immensely popular group which included Ron McClure and Jack DeJohnette, and which held the paradoxical distinction of being simultaneously overrated and underrated—Jarrett displays an eclectic approach to the material which he would later construct into a personal voice, but here, in retrospect, merely sounds unconvincing. The ballads are heavily indebted to Bill Evans' delicate touch, impressionistic phrasing, and use of space; the characteristic gospel vamp on *Pout's Over* is reminiscent of Vince Guaraldi; *My Back Pages* has an early Ramsey Lewis flavor; even his closing "theme" *Old Rag* is based on a parody of stride styles. The most subtly effective moments occur when the pianist is phrasing *against* Haden and Motian's implied time, and yet despite the solidity of Haden's bass—or perhaps because of it—the hard-earned, telepathic flow which was to be the hallmark of the many later recordings by this group, with or without Dewey Redman, is not yet in evidence. The ensemble is like a triangle with the points turned inward.

By way of thrilling contrast, the Corea/Vitous/

Haynes trio is infinitely more flexible, whether fulfilling "traditional" roles of accompaniment or pulling the musical fabric into extended areas. These extended pieces—*Matrix*, *Now He Beats The Drum* . . . , *Now He Sings* . . . , *Steps* . . . , in essence the contents of the original LP—are sustained on an exciting fluidity and drive (and a bit of McCoy audible under the pianist's fingers). By his admirable reconstitution of the entire session—sparkling the eight somewhat casual, shorter songs subsequently reissued on a separate, short-lived Blue Note two-fer in among the more familiar, hard-driven material—producer Michael Cuscuna sacrifices the LP's conceptual tightness in favor of a more expansive, less intense view of the band. It's too bad Atlantic didn't look for additional material from the Jarrett date; it might have helped to show off that trio in a more favorable light. —*art lange*



## BENNIE WALLACE

**BORDERTOWN**—Blue Note CDP 7 48-14-2; *SKANCTIFIED*; *STORMY WEATHER*; *EAST 9*; *BORDER TOWN*; *BON-A-RUE*; *SEVEN SISTERS*; *CAROLINA MOON*; *DANCE WITH A DOLLY*; *IT'S ONLY A PAPER MOON*. (49:49 minutes)

**Personnel:** Wallace, tenor saxophone; Ray Anderson, trombone (cuts 1-3, 8); Dr. John (1-4, 6, 8, 9), piano, organ, vocal; John Scofield (1-6), Mitch Watkins (4, 7, 9), guitar; Eddie Gomez (1-3, 5, 6, 8), Will Lee (4), Jay Anderson (7, 9), bass; Herlin Riley (1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9), Chris Parker (2-4, 6), Alvin Queen (5), Jeff Hirshfield (7), drums, percussion.

★★★★

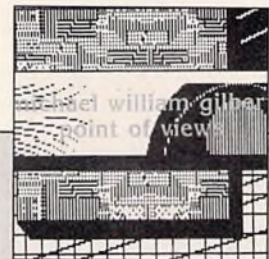
On this, his second recording for Blue Note, Wallace once more puts his sly, slippery-eel sax through a program with a bluesy Southern tinge. If the previous *Twilight Time* was a successful if unexpected exploration of Wallace's Tennessee roots music, *Bordertown* sounds like a follow-up—a little too staid and considered, lacking the earlier album's let-it-all-hang-out, anything-goes attitude. The personnel is basically the same—though part-time guests Jack DeJohnette and Stevie Ray Vaughan aren't around this time to lend their certain spark to the proceedings—so the essentially laidback spirit should be blamed on the material.

*Twilight Time* consisted of an assortment of stomps, shuffles, and swing tunes, served up with big dollops of raucous roadhouse energy. *Bordertown's* opening cut, *Skancified*, is symptomatic of the album, with a promising beginning, but at over eight minutes simply

vamps on for too long, waiting for something significant to happen. Similarly, *Bon-A-Rue* isn't the kicker it wants to be, and *Paper Moon* is too dependent upon its quirky stop-and-go, cha-cha rhythm. Fortunately the title tune stands out as a distinctive song—a bordello tango that oozes atmosphere. And *Carolina Moon*, a slightly out-of-step waltz, may be an unacknowledged homage to Monk's own idiosyncratic Blue Note version—Dr. John's piano credit is even cryptically omitted from the listing—with Wallace's most concentrated playing of the date.

The best moments are just that—brief personalized interludes. Trombonist extraordinaire Ray Anderson provides some bodacious plunger work on his few appearances, threatening at one point to yank at Tricky Sam Nanton's "ya-ya" mantle. Given more space, his exuberance could have goosed the ensemble into kicking out the jams just that much harder. Dr. John tickles some nice, low-key ivories on *Stormy Weather*, as Wallace goes the Webster/Hawkins route with authority. And Scofield plays well throughout, though nothing seems to inspire him to the spunky plunking he contributed to *Twilight Time*.

I'm not yet convinced that Wallace's acute, Rollins-esque sense of invention is heard to best advantage at a Saturday Night Function, but if he wishes to continue to explore his roadhouse roots, how about teaming him up with a really greasy jump band that will boot him into honking heaven? —*art lange*



## MICHAEL WILLIAM GILBERT

**POINT OF VIEWS**—Gibex 004; *SUNDIATA*; *OVER CRIMSON SKIES*; *ZAWINUL*; *MOTION/NO MOTION*; *IN HER EYES*; *BALKANS*; *SHEEP LOOK UP*; *RUPERT'S TRAVELS*; *WATERFLY*; *SHIPS THAT PASS*; *JAZZ FROM HECK*. (43:01 minutes)

**Personnel:** Gilbert, synthesizers, samplers, percussion; Tony Vacca, sampled percussion.

★★★★

**THE LIGHT IN THE CLOUDS**—Gibex 003; *KWAZIWAI*; *THE LIGHT IN THE CLOUDS*; *EDDIE'S NIGHT OUT*; *YEAR OF THE RIVER*; *KYOGAI*; *KOL NIDRE*; *EVENING NEWS*; *DANIEL DREAMS*; *ALLELULIA*. (57:09 minutes)

**Personnel:** Gilbert, synthesizers, samplers, winds, voice; Tony Vacca, percussion drums, winds, voice; Salvatore Macchia, bass, voice; Roy Finch, synthesizers.

★★★★½

CONTINUED ON PAGE 60

# blindfold test

## 1 ILLINOIS JACQUET BIG BAND. *THREE BUCKETS OF JIVE*

(from *JACQUET'S GOT IT*, Atlantic) Eddie Barefield, composer/arranger; Jacquet, tenor sax; solos by: Irv Stokes, trumpet; Marshall Royal and Joey Cavaseno, alto saxes; Milt Hinton, bass; Duffy Jackson, drums.

I'd swear that was Illinois Jacquet. I thought it was when I heard the tenor and that kind of sound. The only thing that was bad about this whole thing was that the drummer sounded like he was attached to a metronome. The tempo never wavered a drop, and it also didn't really swing that hard. The band was loose and the drums weren't. His foot was too heavy. I'd like to have heard more of the left hand playing the shuffle with less of that bass drum. He drowned out the bass. The tune reminded me of those good old days. I've always liked that kind of stuff. It was fun, a swinging blues chart. I'll give it three stars.

## 2 BOB MINTZER BIG BAND. *IN THE EIGHTIES* (from *SPECTRUM*, DMP)

Mintzer, composer/arranger, tenor sax; solos by: Roger Rosenberg, baritone sax; Peter Yellin, alto sax; Frankie Malabe, percussion; Peter Erskine, drums.

That sounds like Bob Mintzer's band. It has a recording quality I don't care for. I think he's a wonderful writer and a good saxophone player, and if that's Peter Erskine on drums, I've always liked his playing. I hate that recording sound. It's like plastic being beaten with plastic, those crashing cymbals obliterating the brass. That's not Peter's fault. That's the engineer's fault. They have the drums too far in front. There's a control the engineer has that he shouldn't have, that the band doesn't have. The music is fine, though the rhythm was very unauthentic latin. It's that fusion thing. Listen to the bass drum. You're putting a lot of tension on yourself having to keep such hard-to-do off-beats. It's very complicated drumming. I like it, but it creates a tension I don't like. I didn't think it swung like it could have if it had been simpler. It did have an excitement. I liked the tune and the chart. I'll give it four stars for the good writing and the good playing by the band.

## 3 LOUIE BELLSON QUARTET. *I HEAR A RHAPSODY*

(from *LIVE AT THE JAZZ SHOWCASE*, Concord Jazz) Don Menza, tenor sax; Larry Novak, piano; John Heard, bass; Bellson, drums.

I know that was Louie Bellson playing drums. Louie has such a distinctive style

## MEL LEWIS

by Michael Bourne

"I've had one of the greatest drum careers of anybody in the business," says Mel Lewis—no brag, just fact. "I've been lucky. I've played with everybody I liked—except a couple I didn't get the opportunity. I've played with Miles, Dizzy, Fats Navarro, Tadd Dameron, Erroll Garner, Oscar Peterson, Art Tatum, Teddy Wilson, Sinatra, Ella and Louis, Billie Holiday, so many people. I never played with Bird or Lester Young but I at least had conversations with them. I talked with them and got to know them." Lewis himself is best known as the leader of the big band he and Thad Jones first fronted at the Village Vanguard in the early 1960s. He's played there most Monday nights ever since. "When we played that first Monday night, we only had nine charts," said Lewis. "We stretched them out. That's when that whole style with long solos and riffs happened." Jones eventually moved to Europe but the Jazz Orchestra plays on.



JOHN W. CORBETT

This year Lewis signed a six-record deal with Musicmasters to record three albums with the big band and three albums with groups, plus some special projects. *Soft Lights*, *Hot Music*, with the big band, is the first release. "Monday night is the biggest pleasure of my life. I never say 'Oh, do I have to go?' I can't wait to get there. Monday night for me—52 times a year I'm thrilled."

and sound. I don't know who was playing with him. This was *I Hear A Rhapsody*, and it's nice, it's swinging, it's straightahead. You heard the melody, some good blowing. Everybody knows the changes and there's no doubt they were having fun. It's not perfect but it's good. I'd give it four stars. I'd have liked a little more stretching out, maybe a longer solo by Louie. Certain people can play long solos and others can't. Louie is a drum soloist, as Buddy Rich was. I'm not. I can solo but I know my limits. You learn when enough is enough. You can tell by the people around you. If they're looking bored, you're not saying anything, get out of it. Most of us are in that class.

## 4 BUDDY RICH BIG BAND. *READYMIX* (from *SWINGING*

*NEW BIG BAND*, Pacific Jazz) Bill Holman, composer/arranger; solos by: Gene Quill, alto sax; Jay Corre, tenor sax; John Bunch, piano; Rich, drums.

That was pretty obvious. That was Buddy's band. I don't know that tune but it was definitely a Bill Holman thing. I started out with Bill. I've played his music and still am after all these years. It was an interesting arrangement. It's fun for a drummer. Buddy always had fun playing. There was no drum soloing on that but in a way there was a solo all the way through. He knew the inside and the outside of the chart, everything that

was going on. He created all that excitement. That's why he was what he was, the master of the drums. He could make a big band shine. Buddy was always trying things, and anything he did, it came off. He never did anything that didn't work. He couldn't miss. Every time I heard him I heard something new. There was always a surprise. I'd mention it and he'd say "What?" It wasn't something he'd even thought about. It just happened. I have to give him five stars for the drumming.

## 5 GENE KRUPA. *GENE'S BLUES*

(from *COMPACT JAZZ*, Verve) Dizzy Gillespie, Roy Eldridge, trumpets; Illinois Jacquet, Flip Phillips, tenor saxes; Oscar Peterson, piano; Herb Ellis, guitar; Ray Brown, bass; Krupa, drums.

That swung more than anything I've heard today as far as feeling. That was Gene Krupa, Roy Eldridge, Dizzy, Lester Young, Flip Phillips. Is that one of the Jazz At The Philharmonic things? Ray Brown probably on the bass. I don't know who was on piano but it didn't matter. That was just so nice and relaxed, and it swung. It's something I wish we still had around today. There's something I think kids would love if they got to hear it. You can identify. It's simple, swinging, good blowing by great players. How can you go wrong? I'll give it five stars because it made me feed good. db

## PAUL SMOKER

THE NEW BIX? NIX. PAUL SMOKER ECHOES A DOZEN JAZZ TRUMPET KINGS BUT STILL SOUNDS LIKE HIMSELF. SO HOW COME YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF HIM?

by Kevin Whitehead

Living in Iowa, trumpeter Paul Smoker got so used to being ignored, he didn't realize it shouldn't be that way. Didn't realize it until 1983, when he was in Germany playing with Anthony Braxton, and played Braxton and record producer Pedro de Freitas a tape of his stuff. "All of a sudden Braxton got up out of his chair, came over and lifted me by my lapels, brought me up and he said, 'Smoker! Where have you been hiding all this stuff?!'" Paul Smoker lets out one of those affable/rueful *heh heh hehs* that punctuate his conversation. "He just ranted and raved at me—it was going to be a CRIME if I did not get this music out. Hell, I had no idea. . . ."

So Smoker put out his first album himself—*QB* (Alvas 101), with Braxton as his trio's guest. And then de Freitas' Sound Aspects put out the Smoker trio's *Mississippi River Rat* (Sound Aspects 006) and *Alone* (Sound Aspects 018). The rest should have been history. How could the guy miss? He was a press agent's dream: headline writers could pun on his name while feature writers told how he'd grown up in Davenport, Iowa, Bix Beiderbecke's home town.

It didn't happen. Because no matter how good his records were, he was still living in Cedar Rapids, with no interest in leaving his big airy house in a wooded neighborhood six blocks from his dream job teaching jazz at small, comfy Coe College. (He has the deceptive manner of a slow-talking Midwest country boy.) So nobody much noticed Paul had one of the most striking trumpet conceptions of the decade, one that dovetailed neatly with neo-trad (if not neo-con) preoccupations. He carries a history of the music in his horn. Imagine an amalgam of Armstrong's bravura, Dizzy's go-for-broke gumption, Cootie's plunger-talk, Cherry's/Bowie's raggedy-ass attack, and the exhibitionism of a high-note specialist. He seems to come from everywhere at the same time. That's the way he teaches jazz, too: jumping around the spectrum, mixing periods, emphasizing the continuum. A typical Smoker set with bassist Ron Rohovit and drummer Phil Haynes—his trio since 1981—might include tunes by W. C. Handy, Wayne Shorter, Scott Joplin, and Joseph Jarman. Playing *Cornet Chop Suey*, on *Alone*, he underscores its



ragtime origins more than Armstrong did. Smoker's style isn't a pastiche, it's a history lesson.

Now that he works with two bands—the trio plus the quartet Joint Venture, with an eponymous debut (Enja 5049)—the word is getting out. He placed fifth on the trumpet TDWR list in this year's **db** Critics Poll. His catholic style is winning converts.

Somewhere along the line, he's played about all that modern trumpeters get to play. Born in Muncie, Indiana in 1941, raised in Davenport by the Mississippi, Smoker was made to study piano as soon as he was out of kindergarten. He picked up the trumpet in fifth grade after Harry James caught his ear from the radio. A piano vet by now, he told the band teacher to show him how to get a sound and where the fingerings are, and let him figure out the rest. Two weeks after joining the school band he was sitting first chair trumpet.

"Louis Armstrong was my first idol other than Harry James; I'd buy these 78s and bring 'em home and try to play along, try to get that sound and phrasing. Some of the old guys in town who'd known Bix personally became aware I could play like that; they thought it was great, and that's how I became aware of Bix Beiderbecke. Louis was still more inspiration than Bix was, although as I got older I grew to appreciate Bix's harmonic advancements in comparison to the rest of what was going on. But then when I started playing swing and bebop music, these guys disowned me, *heh heh heh*. Let's not tear Bix's memory apart by playing anything in advance of 1928."

Smoker's first trial by fire came when he played a couple of months in Rock Island with bop pianist Dodo Marmarosa. ("This street was two blocks long and filled with clubs; you'd get a gig for two weeks in this place, then move next door and play for two weeks.") The second night on the gig Dodo started calling familiar tunes in weird keys—"Laura in B"—which is when Smoker realized the five keys he knew wouldn't do. Dodo told him not to worry, he was doing OK—at least he didn't chase Smoker out of

the club while wielding a broken bottle, the way he did the band's bassist.

Planning ahead, Smoker realized early—after seeing what newer heroes like Jack Sheldon and Conte Candoli had to do to pay the bills—that a teaching career would give him the security to do what he wanted on the side. His doctoral thesis at the University of Iowa was on extended classical trumpet techniques—multiphonics, quarter tones, growls, rips—most of which came from jazz in the first place. Throughout the '70s he played with the Iowa Brass Quintet; for a 1972 record with IBQ, he arranged a typically unlikely medley of *Motherless Child* and *Wade In The Water*.

While teaching in Wisconsin in the '60s, he'd drop down to Chicago on weekends—but didn't learn of the incipient black avant garde scene until much later, when he'd recognize his kinship with Lester Bowie, as hot humorist. For now he was playing shlock gigs, and working with Bobby Christian's big band and Dick Schory's Percussion Pops Orchestra. (He recorded with both, but those records are long gone: "water under the bridge and another life.")

Sometimes after gigs, Schory's band would jam. "I'd be trying to play like I'm playing now, and of course it was real green, I had no idea what I was doing. I was just trying to play something I was hearing. Guys would get mad—or they would laugh." Here and there, he'd cross paths with lead men Doc Severinsen and Bill Chase. "Doc taught me how to breathe correctly, and I taught him how to blow a double high C: 'Put the horn up there and blow as hard as you can and don't worry about the pain!'" He sat in with Chase's tour-de-shrill four-trumpet band for two nights in Oshkosh, Wisconsin: "The music's about 400 decibels, you can't hear yourself; it's like, 'Blow high, play fast, and it'll be OK,' *heh heh heh*. They asked me to go on the road, but I was tired of beating my brains out playing other people's music. But [Chase's] lead playing was a real influence on certain aspects of my tone, the physical approach to the trumpet." His willingness to hammer away at the limits of his technique owes more to Maynard than Louis.

Smoker had already been playing around Iowa City with bassist Rohovit by 1975, when Paul was hired by 1200-student Coe College to set up the jazz history/performance program he still runs. "In 1979 Phil Haynes came to the College as a student. He was like Oregon's state percussion champion, and recruited by some pretty big schools. But he heard something in a tape of the Coe College big band he didn't hear on other tapes—what he heard was that our band was a lot sloppier, but it was burning all the time. When he came to school he sounded like Buddy Rich but with no time—he'd rush, he'd drag, but he had all these

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chops. We got it straightened out in the first two weeks." The Smoker trio was formed as a one-shot for Haynes' sophomore recital. "After, we're sitting at dinner talking, and I said, 'Look guys, I think we got something here. Let's keep this together and see what we can do.'"

Mostly they scrounged for work. Their volume level and long continuous sets of tunes from everyplace alienated club owners even when the house was full. But when they played in Portland in '83, Smoker found out Braxton was in town the next night and went to hear him. He's always been partial to playing saxophone lines—these days he transcribes Dophy solos for fun. "For Alto had freaked me out good—here's a guy doing on saxophone what I've been trying to do on trumpet." Braxton asked for a tape; when Smoker finally sent him one, Braxton tapped him to go to Germany to perform his fiendish, notated *Composition 98*. That's when Braxton picked him up by the sports jacket and told him he had to start making records.



GEORGE T. HENRY

The trio still works together, though Haynes now lives in New York—it doesn't take them long to settle in together when they reunite, physically demanding as the music is. Haynes is also in the fledgling quartet Joint Venture; their tenorist Ellery Eskelin lives in New York and bassist Drew Gress in Baltimore. Not surprisingly, that group's more conservative identity is taking shape slowly—but Smoker's in it for the long haul.

Does Smoker think he'd have it easier living in New York? "I sometimes think to myself if I didn't live in Cedar Rapids I might be dead, either physically or artistically." Being ignored by critics who ignore the heartland doesn't faze him. "I'm not doing this to get written about, but because I love it. I have something to say musically—maybe something other people haven't thought of yet. Maybe as a result of hearing me some young guy out there is gonna pick up on this shit, codify it, and play it better than me.

"I like to teach—I had a lot of great teachers, and somebody has to pass this stuff on. I had grandparents who were missionaries in Bolivia, and I guess I almost feel like that." *Heh heh heh.* db

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43

Michael William Gilbert was part of the original electronic music underground in America, producing music on his own Gibex label that fell outside the mainstream with its ethereal environments and haunting melodies. *The Light In The Clouds* and *Point Of Views* find his command of synthesizers growing and his fusion of classical and jazz vocabularies deeply integrated into his mix, along with a new, world music element.

*The Light In The Clouds* is a riveting series of percussive dervishes with kalimbas, drums, and African percussion spinning in synchronization with toy pianos and other devices. Between the synthesizers, digital samplers, and percussionist Tony Vacca, I gave up trying to discern the origins of these sounds in the jubilant dance Gilbert orchestrates.

*Kwaziwai* opens this compact disc-only release like a surreal African ceremony. Skewed drums, whiplash sound effects, and gurgling synthesizers careen in a frenzy before trans-

forming into a gentle kalimba dance.

*Kol Nidre* offers a more languid, neo-classical feel, centered on Salvatore Macchia's arco bass swoons against a backdrop of orchestral percussion punches. *Evening News* is reprised from his overlooked *In The Dreamtime* album with a more aggressive jazz rhythm section thrusting the piece along. *Allelulia* is a particularly bleak farewell to *The Light In The Clouds*, with its tolling electronic bells, and water-dripping synthesizers. It's a frighteningly eerie, but beautifully crafted piece.

You can see why Gilbert's never been easy to pigeon-hole. But despite his raging eclecticism, he manages to hold it all together. *Point Of Views* may be his most focussed recording to date. Another CD-only release, it continues the world music percussion dances of *The Light In The Clouds*, but adds a headier melodic element.

Gilbert goes solo on all but one track and the locked, MIDI'd, and quantized percussive grooves often have the feel of an Escher

print in motion, constantly moving in endless symmetry, but never quite arriving. When it works, as on the barber pole scale spirals of *Balkans*, or *Waterfly*, where synthesizer glissandos cascade across a shifting dreamlike percussion ensemble, it's like being centered in a sonic gyroscope. Occasionally he locks in the quantized rhythms too tightly, and things become simply static, like on *Motion/No Motion*.

He pays tribute to some of his influences on *Zawinul*, a naively childlike theme that recalls the Weather Reporter's melodic inclinations. On *Jazz From Heck*, he takes off on Zappa's recent Synclavierizations, replete with rampant triplets and clangorous timbres.

But most of *Point Of Views* takes the lead of the opening track *Sundiata*, a swirl of electronic percussion centered by a metronomic pulse, but spinning out of tangents of sound. It's a celebratory piece that typifies the rhythmic, dancing sounds of Michael William Gilbert. —*john diliberto*

## A DIZZY WHIRLWIND

by John McDonough

**F**our recent CDs offer us a neat chronological trip through the life and times of Dizzy Gillespie: how he started, where he went, and where he is today.

The Musicraft compilation, *Shaw Nuff* (MVSCD-63, 52:12 minutes), must be considered a cornerstone item in any modern music collection. Here are 20 performances from the crucial 1945-46 period (previously available mostly on Phoenix LP-2) when bebop reached a critical artistic mass and briefly even captured the passing fancy of the mass audience. It is an essential mate to the Gillespie collection issued by the Smithsonian 10 years ago (*Development Of An American Artist*, P2 13455), duplicating nothing but filling in details the previous set only inferred. The versions of *Groovin' High* and *Salt Peanuts* (both with Charlie Parker) heard here, for instance, are not the "originals" but sides made shortly after the ones on the Smithsonian (without Parker). On the other hand, here are the originals of such essentials of the period as *Hot House*, *Blue n' Boogie*, and *Dizzy Atmosphere*.

The umbilical cord to small group swing is still evident in the rhythm sections, two of which even have rhythm guitars keeping the groove. Nevertheless, the ricocheting paths of the horns go their merry way, confirming a rather provocative notion that there really may be no such thing as a "bebop rhythm section" in the first place since the new music, like the old, continued to play to a steady pulse and not polyrhythms. In any case, Cozy Cole and Shelly Manne yield nothing to Kenny Clarke, especially Cole on *Dizzy Atmosphere*. And no bebop group ever had a finer, more musical foundation than the one Sid Catlett delivers.

The music itself is full of both the emotional savagery and technical arrogance of a brilliant revolution on the threshold of consummation. In a word, youth. Nearly half the cuts are by Gillespie's first big band. And none is more calculatedly iconoclastic than *Things To Come*, based on the chords of a Gillespie small-group classic called *Be-Bop*. Intended, one suspects, as a hip shocker, it winked at the initiated and served notice to the squares to get lost. It was undoubtedly a frightening orchestral manifesto of revolt. It still is. Bebop's answer to those who, even in 1946, were trying to set bop onto a commercial path makes it clear why the real thing never found a lasting mass audience. It gave the casual audience nothing it could take away in one or two easy listenings. This was when—and why—jazz stopped being a "popular" music.

*Duets* (Verve 835 253-2, 60:12 minutes) finds Gillespie about a decade later more settled, having already proven himself but still playing with a brash crackle and bite. Recorded in a single session in December 1957, it is also a snapshot of Sonny Rollins as he was emerging from the jazz rank and file into the front line of pacesetting innovators. He is a terror—immaculately articulate in his attack, even at the most intense tempos. He and Gillespie are well matched. When they trade fours on *Wheatleigh Hall*, they fit into one another like the teeth of a couple of gears. Overall, Rollins blows with more sheer horsepower, his playing packed with energy.

On a slow blues like *Sumthin'*, though, it's Dizzy who dominates. Catch his brief Armstrong-like vibrato shimmer. His solo has a cumulative force to it that builds tension before pulling back and flowing into a closing ensemble.

The tunes with Sonny Stitt (which include two previously unissued tracks) are overall less interesting as both players double-time their way through two *Con Almas*, whose cha-cha rhythms become grating after 20

minutes. On the other hand, producer Phil Schaap has turned up a "lost" blues (*Anythin'*) that has moments of monument. Stitt's alto is passionate, and Dizzy, mirroring Stitt's runs, builds obliquely until Stitt returns on tenor. *Haute Mon'*, another blues, has some intense Gillespie, but lacks the earthiness of *Anythin'*.

It would be easy to brush off *Endlessly* (Impulse/MCA 42153, 43:09 minutes) as a synthesized package of bland commercialism, especially if one took seriously the defensive tone of the album notes. Easy, but wrong. It's a pretty album in which Gillespie plays with a clean, smooth command. No fireworks; no risks. The electronics provide only string backgrounds to Diz's horn, no obtrusively layered rhythm tracks. They're all pleasantly convincing, and get in no one's way. Gillespie's open horn solos are particularly eloquent—relaxed, limpid, and never pushed. Listen to his work on Stevie Wonder's *Moments*, for instance, for a rich lyricism that has not usually been a Gillespie trademark. He is in such lyrical form, in fact, one wishes he would drop the mute on some of the stronger melodies, such as the title track.

Gillespie also does guest shots on recent dates by Benny Carter and Arnett Cobb.

The Carter session (of all Carter music), *I'm In The Mood For Swing*, (Musicmasters C1JD 60144T, 66:40 minutes), is a gem, so perfectly crafted in every detail it might appear almost sterile to some. Hardly No player manages to reconcile the rhythmic dilemmas inherent in a staccato climb up a ladder of quarter notes with legato surges of eighth notes in the same chorus as Carter does. His tongued notes and sensuous smears have become added trademarks of his later style.

Gillespie contributes only modestly impressive muted work on three tunes. He never hits his stride, and his embouchure seems in less than top form. Or perhaps he suffers only in comparison to Carter's

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## cd reviews

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unexpected structures and sheer drive on tracks like *The Romp*, *South Side Samba*, and *Not So Blue*. At mid and fast tempos especially, his lines are blindingly imaginative in their insouciant intricacy. Roland Hanna, Louie Bellson, and a hard swinging, Christian-inspired Howard Alden round out a fine group on an excellent date.

Gillespie cameos more effectively on Arnett Cobb's *Show Time* session (Fantasy F-9659, 40:43 minutes). *Sweet Mama* is a slow blues complete with a funky Gillespie vocal, and *Night In Tunisia*, in which Cobb takes the famous break pure-swing style in eight notes, is otherwise dominated by Dizzy. Cobb takes two short solos, but seems ill at ease. Some brief interplay between the two horns is oddly out of register. Cobb is on firmer ground on the blues (*Kathy's Blues*), standards (a sumptuous *Nearness Of You*), and a stem-winding *Closer Walk With Thee*. Jewel Brown, who succeeded Velma Middleton with the old Louis Armstrong All Stars, comes back after a 17-year retirement to take charge of two numbers. And Sammy Price tops things off with a typical eight-to-the-bar piano blues. Cobb's big-toned tenor is the centerpiece most of the way, however—a survivor from a time when jazz was a visceral romantic art. Not many young players choose this route today. Too bad. In the hands of a charter player like Cobb, it's a force of nature. db