

Blindfold Test: Lew Soloff

For Contemporary Musicians

# downbeat

December, 1988 \$1.75 U.K. £ 2.00

**ART  
BLAKEY**  
*Class Action*

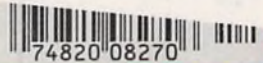
**WINNERS!**  
**53rd Annual  
Readers  
Poll**

**MICHAL URBANIAK**  
*Musical Mysteries*

**DAVID BENOIT**  
*Sure Steps*

**CAUGHT: 10th Annual  
Chicago Jazz Festival**

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Art Blakey



Jaco Pastorius



Michal Urbaniak



David Benoit

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Cover photograph of Art Blakey by Andy Freeberg.

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# down beat

For Contemporary Music Arts

DECEMBER 1988

VOLUME 55 NO. 12



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down beat (ISSN 0012-5768) 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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CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Please allow six weeks for your change to become effective. When notifying us of your new address, include current down beat label showing old address.

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

CABLE ADDRESS: down beat (on sale Nov. 12, 1988) Magazine Publishers Association





ANDY FREEBERG

# Art Blakey

By KEVIN WHITEHEAD

Writers say his band's name says it all: The Jazz Messengers. On one level, these Messengers are communicators. "You can't play *down* to the people," Art Blakey says. "You have to play to the people." On another level, the Messengers is a prime example of the oral tradition in action: a band where the tricks of the trade are passed down from master to apprentice.

That's the Jazz Messengers everyone knows: the hard-bop finishing school, the post-Kyser college of musical knowledge. Nobody in jazz, *nobody* in jazz, *nobody* in jazz has a more impressive list of alumni than Blakey—barely scratching the surface you get Silver, Russell, Donaldson, Brown, Doug Watkins, Spanky DeBrest, Hank Mobley, Ira Sullivan, Benny Golson, Jackie McLean, John Gilmore, Kenny Dorham, Donald Byrd, Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard, Woody Shaw, Curtis Fuller, Bobby Timmons, Jymie Merritt, Cedar Walton, John Hicks, Keith Jarrett, Walter Davis Jr., James Williams, Amina Claudine Myers (yep, early '77), Bobby Watson, two Marsalises, Donald Harrison, Terence Blanchard, Wallace Roney, Kenny Garrett, Mulgrew Miller, Benny Green . . . you get the idea.

But the stubborn fact you need to confront, pondering Art Blakey as Jazz Godfather, is that he doesn't currently endorse the view of his career we all harp on. He doesn't think the Messengers is a school. "Some people feel that way," Blakey says when the subject is raised, sounding less than convinced. "I don't think about it as a school, I just love to play. I don't try to set myself up as an example, 'cause I'm not a hypocrite. I make mistakes—I make mistakes on the bandstand, and the guys crack up. When I make a booboo I make a loud one," he laughs, "but that's the fun in playing music. You learn." Notice how Blakey turns the academic analogy around—it's a place where *he* gets educated, where *his* needs are fulfilled.

*"Yes sir, I'm gonna stay with the youngsters. When these get too old I'm gonna get some younger ones. Keeps the mind active."* —Art Blakey

after introducing Horace Silver, Curly Russell, Lou Donaldson, and Clifford Brown—Birdland, February 1954.

Still, the guys who come through the band learn—ask any of them. And Blakey does have a sense of *noblesse oblige*. “I wish more of the older guys from my generation would keep a group out there. That would help jazz so much. It would help the [younger] guys.” But ask Blakey the most important lesson he tries to impart, and his answer is typically modest: “Well, there’s no excuse for being late.”

The leader famous for giving young musicians a boost became a man early. Born in Pittsburgh in 1919, he was a husband and father by age 15—when he found out that one of the men he knew from the neighborhood was his absent dad. Art Buhaina Blakey is an intensely family-oriented man: he’s had seven natural children (including drummer Art Jr., who died of lung cancer in March, at 47) and has adopted seven more. “I look at a kid, he loves me and I fall in love with him, I’ll adopt him. Can’t afford it? Can’t afford not to, ‘cause he needs a parent. . . . I guess that’s something psychological, because I was an ‘orphan’; I was always by myself, I had nothing to reach back for. I had a good childhood though—everything that happened to me made my character much stronger.”

Are the Messengers somehow like children to him? “Hell no. I don’t even think of my sons as children—they talk to me like I’m one of the cats, because that’s the way I talk to them. I treat musicians like men, I don’t care how old they are. When you’re 13, you’re a man to me.” Which doesn’t, however, make the Messengers a band of equals. The leader who used to boast that he never fired anybody—that players knew when it was time to move on, or “fired themselves”—will now pull the plug on a musician who second-guesses him, or neglects his axe, or puts his social life before music. Blakey says the business is, finally, “very lucrative,” but among musicians the Messengers is known as one of the less high-paying gigs. And the boss flies first-class while the band flies coach—he says it gives them a chance to badmouth the leader, a healthy way to let off steam.

Even so, Blakey isn’t hurting for hired help. By a tradition dating back to the mid-’50s, fresh recruits are brought into the band by those moving out; one hears stories of musicians waiting to be referred to Blakey by players waiting to be referred by guys who aren’t even in the band yet. The traditional try-out is on a last club set. Blakey prefers to turn over his musicians one at a time. “The way I pick ‘em is, when [a new musician] comes in, I see if they can get along together—that the same thing’s going on with him that’s going on with the rest of the guys. If not, you can’t put them in *that* group. You have to wait till you get another group together, who can all work together.”

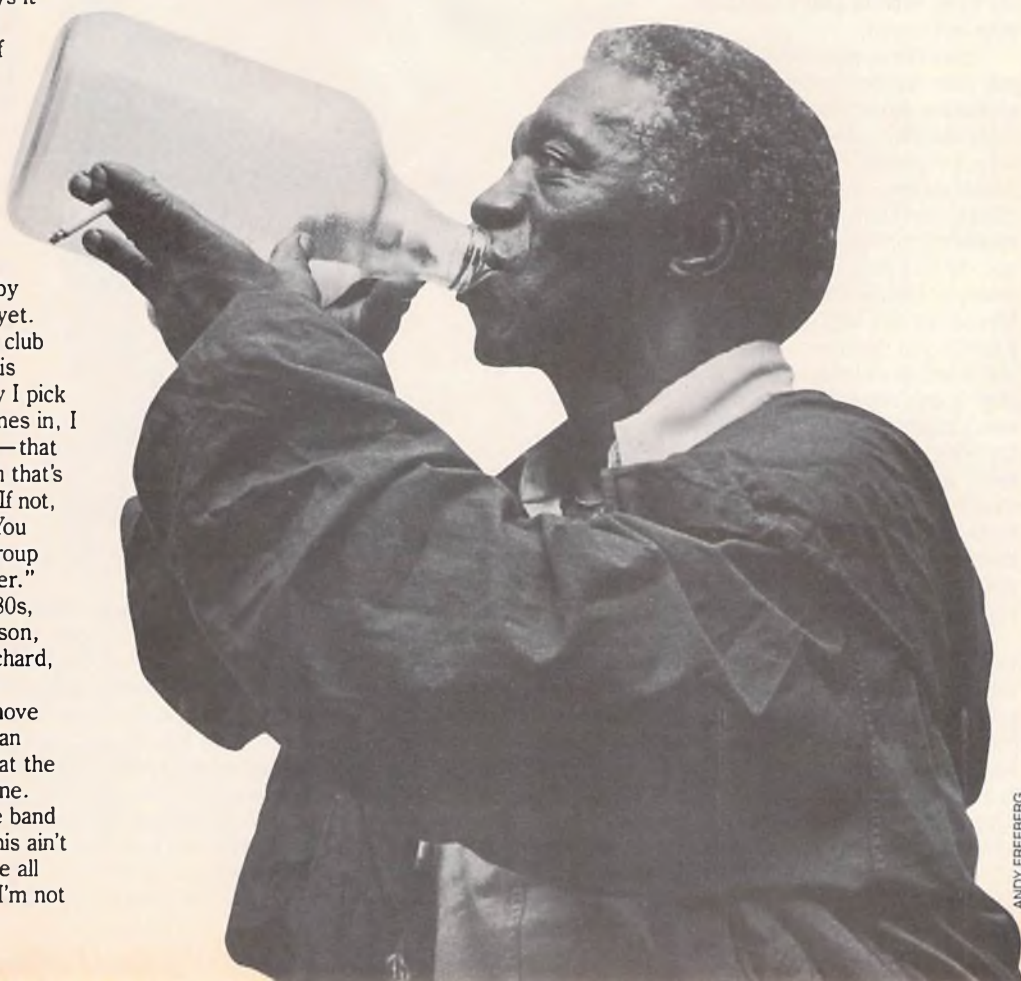
From the late ’70s till the mid-’80s, turnover was relatively slow: Watson, Wynton Marsalis, Harrison, Blanchard, and tenorist Jean Toussaint put in several-year stints. Now, things move faster. Blakey says when a musician joins on, there’s no expectation that the gig will last a certain amount of time. “People don’t like to see the same band going around [again and again]. This ain’t the Modern Jazz Quartet. I change all the time, ‘cause I’m a free spirit. I’m not

about to please anybody else. If the cats don’t produce, and they’re doing the best they can sometimes, then I have to change.”

By his own count, Art Blakey has been to Japan 58 times. It was there, he remembers, that the early ’60s Messengers (lionized now but neglected by the stateside press then) were received like royalty. It’s a sign of his appreciation that three of his sons are named Kenji, Akira, and Takashi. If Japanese culture has left a mark on Blakey the bandleader, it’s on his indirect methodology—the *Zen* of bandleading, maybe. “Art Blakey never told me what scales to play,” Wynton Marsalis told Mitch Seidel in 1981. “He’d tell me stories about Clifford Brown.” Art Blakey says if soloists try things that don’t work, he doesn’t have to mention it. “The audience will let them know.”

But non-verbal direction begins the first time a fledgling Messenger hits the bandstand. “With other groups,” Mulgrew Miller told Gene Kalbacher (*db* 3/88), “I always felt I needed to direct the rhythm section, pianistically. With my comping I thought I could pull the rhythm section along. . . . But I quickly found out that you can’t lead Art. I found that out *fast*.” As the drummer says, no matter who’s in the band, “It’s still going to sound like Art Blakey. All down the years, the Messengers sound like the Messengers. Got to sound that way because I’m back there directing the traffic.”

Blakey’s vision as a bandleader starts at the drums—it’s by learning to listen to *them* that a musician learns to listen to *him*. Branford Marsalis, 1986: “Art Blakey taught me how to play the drums when I play: rhythm as the incredible source of everything. . . . I understood how time worked when I left his band.”



ANDY FREEBERG



MITCHELL SEIDEL

Dizzy and the '79-vintage Jazz Messengers: (from left) James Williams, Bobby Watson, Valery Ponomarev, Dizzy Gillespie, Dennis Irwin, and Art Blakey at the Village Gate, New York.

Art Blakey: "By playing drums, I learned the only thing we have to use is dynamics. Use a lot of dynamics." (A pet Blakey peeve is that young drummers neglect their brushes.) Dynamics is the backbone of his celebrated style, with its forceful waves of sound—the long building press rolls, the outbursts of rim clatter, the raising and lowering of a drumhead's pitch with one stick while he strikes it with the other. That attention is making a fluid statement rubs off on his Messengers: the standard line from alumni is that working with the drummer taught them how to structure a solo. But the advice he gives is typically indirect: "I don't tell them what to play, I tell them what *not* to play.

"Don't try to play everything you know in one chorus; don't try to make a career out of one tune. I don't like long solos—long drum solos I especially don't like. When you're playing, and you get to a climax, you stop. You can't build to another climax after you've made one. So you stop, and maybe next tune you'll get another climax. Maybe not. It's only once or twice a month you really get to play, you really feel in your heart what you play. It isn't something you hit every night. So you just play, and try not to drop below a certain level, and maybe once or twice a month you'll go over that—you're feeling good, the audience is throwing them vibes back, there ain't nothing for you to do but blow your brains out, heh heh. It's beautiful.

"As a drummer, you can't be in competition with a soloist. If a soloist is thinking of something, trying to connect something together, and you make a lot of noise, he'll forget it. Now he's gotta think of something else in a split-second; that makes it very hard." If this seems to contradict Mulgrew Miller's observation about who steers who, Jef Langford got a handle on the paradox in a 1970 *Jazz Journal* piece on Monk: "[Blakey] can be considered a front-line partner of the pianist, and one of the best, while not deviating from the bop role of a drummer." He leads and supports simultaneously—a marvel easier to hear than to explain.

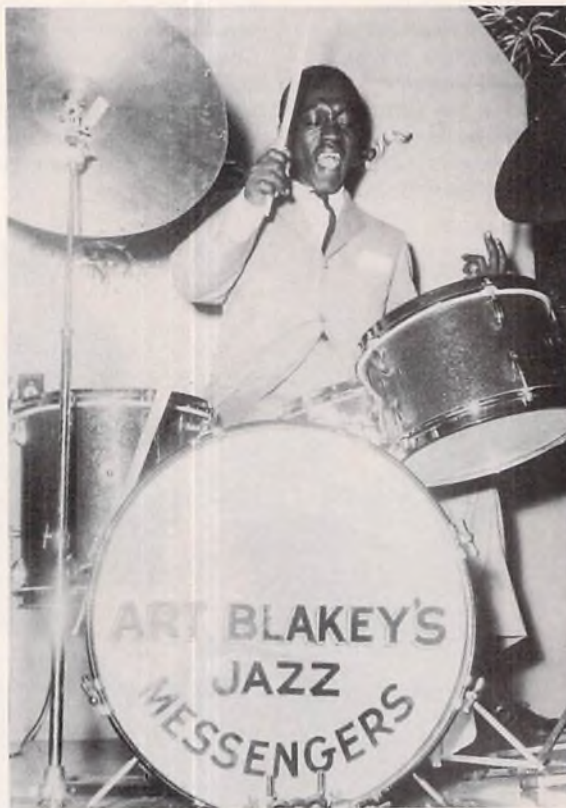
Despite Blakey's close friendship with Monk, and their obvious rapport as players, Monk's overt influence on the Messengers' ensemble sound is scant. What Monk taught Blakey has less to do with abstraction than with attitude. "The whole thing that Monk would teach me is identify: be different. so when people hear you, they know it's you. He always told me, 'Just stay back

there and keep knocking in that rhythm section, and sooner or later they'll get into what you're doing.' [So] I always wanted to be an innovator, play stuff that other drummers don't play."

A couple of recent Messengers have worked in more outward-bound settings as well as with Blakey—Donald Harrison with Don Pullen, Robin Eubanks with Dave Holland and Mark Helias. Traditionally, firebrands have trimmed back their excesses to accommodate Blakey's conservative tastes. True, he'd hired John Gilmore when he was on leave from Sun Ra in 1964, but there'd been dissatisfaction on both sides—even if Art still considers Gilmore a great and vastly underrated tenor saxophonist.

"Musicians know the Messengers has a certain standard," the drummer says—they know what he likes and doesn't like, and play accordingly. Still, I remember a spring 1983 Messengers concert for Baltimore's fervently mainstream

Left Bank Jazz Society, where altoist Harrison punctuated his phrases with clipped, honked notes, and played searingly vocal zigzaggy lines, all with the leader's evident approval. As Blakey's reference to a "certain standard" suggests, his distaste for the *out-side* likely stems from the boppers' conviction that the '60s avant-garde was merely a refuge for scoundrels. (That's certainly how alumnus Branford Marsalis sees it.) Harrison got away with it because he took care of business—his semi-abstractions burned and swung. He obviously wasn't shucking, and he had his own style. And now that he's out of the Messengers, he still takes chances. As Harrison has said, "He teaches you . . . that the important thing is to be true to yourself."



BERNIE THRASHER



TERI BLOOM

### ART BLAKEY'S EQUIPMENT

"I'm just changing companies," Art Blakey says. "I'm going with Sonor—I feel like it's the Rolls Royce of drums. And they appreciate me being there a little more." He'll stay with his standard setup, which currently includes a 20-inch bass drum, a 14 × 7-inch snare, and five toms. "I tune 'em to my ear, and the way they feel. I like a sound that's not irritating to the people. I don't like them tight and sharp, because that's not the way they're supposed to be." His cymbals are A. Zildjian's. "Is there any other kind?"

### ART BLAKEY SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

By his own estimate Art Blakey appears on some 475 albums. This list emphasizes releases and reissues since **db's** last Blakey feature and discography (7/85), but is not intended to be complete.

#### as a leader

NOT YET—Soul Note 121 105  
 HARD CHAMPION—ProJazz (CD) 657  
 DR. JECKYLE—ProJazz (CD) 651  
 NEW YEAR'S EVE AT SWEET BASIL—  
 ProJazz (CD) 624  
 THEORY OF ART—RCA/Bluebird 6286  
 1958-PARIS OLYMPIA—Fontana (CD) 832  
 659  
 LIVE IN STOCKHOLM 1959—Dragon 137  
 BAG OF BLUES—VeeJay 3066  
 ALBUM OF THE YEAR—MCA 33103  
 JAZZ MESSENGERS—MCA/Impulse! 5886  
 A JAZZ MESSAGE—MCA/Impulse! 5648  
 FEELING GOOD—Delos (CD) 4007  
 NIGHT IN TUNISIA—EmArcy (CD) 800 064  
 LIVE AT KIMBALL'S—Concord Jazz 307  
 KYOTO—OJC 145

MOANIN'—Blue Note 84003  
 A NIGHT AT BIRDLAND VOL. 1—Blue Note  
 81521  
 A NIGHT AT BIRDLAND VOL. 2—Blue Note  
 81522  
 LIVE AT SWEET BASIL—GNP Crescendo  
 2182  
 AIN'T LIFE GRAND—Affinity 106  
 BUHAINA-THE CONTINUING MESSAGE—  
 Affinity 113  
 JAZZ MESSENGERS WITH THELONIOUS  
 MONK—Atlantic 1278

#### with Thelonious Monk

THE COMPLETE BLACK LION AND  
 VOGUE RECORDINGS OF THELONIOUS  
 MONK—Mosaic 4-112  
 GIANTS OF JAZZ IN BERLIN '71—EmArcy  
 (CD) 834 567

As Art Blakey enters his 69th year, his hearing is not good. When we spoke at his home in downtown Greenwich Village, he apologized up front: the hearing aid he wore needed replacing. (He perspires a lot, and the little buggers get wet, and short out.) He has trouble hearing in conversation—though he talks much like he plays, acting out dialogue scenes, doing the participants' voices, modulating his pace and dynamics, and phrasing like the master of time that he is.

Art Blakey doesn't wear a hearing aid on the bandstand—"I play by vibrations, not a hearing aid." He says it worked for Beethoven—but Beethoven wasn't an improviser. I suspect he plays from the shape of a composition as much or more than he does from the shape of a soloist's line: knowing where the punctuations go, he can fly on automatic.

"In the future, I'll still be out there if I can play with the same kind of fire I have now. But I won't be working as hard because nature takes its course." Blakey and his wife Anne book the Messengers out of an office in the building where they live. He looks forward to a time when they can book other bands as well, getting the music out there and keeping musicians busy, even if he's not on the stand himself.

Blakey has been revered for decades, and so now, inevitably, has fallen due for critical reevaluation. Gene Santoro's potshots in his Miles Davis piece in November's **db** conveniently synopsized the anti-Blakey view, and its cause. The case against Blakey hinges on his constancy of vision: the Messengers now and the Messengers of 1955 have espoused the same values. Blakey contributes to the neo-con mindset that progress involves only a reinvestigation of the past—that bebop is the music of the future.

Which brings us to the proximate cause of backlash: the sins of the son have been visited upon the father; the "son" being most every critic's favorite target, Wynton Marsalis, the Messenger's most conspicuous grad. (Not to mention dynasty-maker: his tenure as a Messenger opened the floodgates for all the young Louisianans swamping the jazz scene. Who'd have guessed that Blakey would put New Orleans back on the jazz map?)

Blakey's good press wore off on Marsalis; now Wynton's bad press is rubbing off on Art. Wynton's vision of jazz is insistently narrow, so the insistently hard-boppin' Blakey must be to blame—if you believe parents should be liable for their children's actions after they've left the nest. (Art Blakey, by the way, doesn't monitor the records his alumni have put out: "I don't even listen to my own.") In discussing Marsalis' shortcomings, Gene knocks Blakey to praise Miles. Methinks he's got it all backwards. Marsalis' lack of tolerance for diversity, his imperfect view of history, and the nagging suspicion observers get—that he thinks his audience is somehow not quite good enough for his music—have less to do with boss Blakey than with idol Miles, whose (best) music he worships. (You know how abrasive Wynton's interviews are. Miles has shot his mouth off so for decades. Davis' 10/88 **db** interview—with his putdowns of McCoy Tyner, curt dismissal of the great Jimmy Garrison, and attribution of Jimmy Guiffre's *Four Brothers* to Ralph Burns—is merely the latest in a series.)

Hell yes, Art Blakey remains fiercely committed to hard bop, while his contemporary Max Roach explores a wide variety of playing situations—though you'll recall that Blakey experimented with percussion choirs in the '50s, only to find that other drummers weren't ready. Blakey long ago settled into a format in which he feels comfortable, and given that he's one of the originators of the soul-cookin', hard-boppin' genre, who's to complain? It's not like he says everyone has to play that way. The most productive graduates of the Blakey school, like Bobby Watson and Donald Harrison, have expanded their musical horizons after leaving the band, instead of acting like Blakey's esthetic was all there is. Branford Marsalis, despite his maddening reluctance to find his own style, shows much the same open-minded attitude toward playing situations.

The difference between Art Blakey and Wynton and Miles—who belittle alternative points of view—is that they tend to sound an awful lot like know-it-alls, which is not Art Blakey's problem. When Blakey says he doesn't see the Messengers as a school because he makes mistakes too, he's not being coy.

The key to understanding Art Blakey's contribution is to think of the Messengers not as a college, but as a classroom: a place where a musician might pick up three or 15 or 30 credits, but not all 120. A musician goes to Blakey to learn about dynamics, pace, and energy conservation, to learn how to discover something new in the same material—*Blues March* and *Moanin'*, every night—through repetition (much the way Steve Lacy does, come to think of it—Lacy being a Zen jazzman in a different way). A musician does not go to Blakey to study extended forms, polytonality, post-structuralism, or pointillism. But there are other classrooms—such as those run by drummers Tony Williams and Jack DeJohnette. Like, say, Wayne Shorter (who worked for Blakey and Miles Davis), modern Messengers apprentice with other masters too—like Kenny Garrett with Miles, or Lonnie Plaxico with DeJohnette, or Wallace Roney, Mulgrew Miller, and Billy Pierce with Tony Williams.

Art Blakey has shown generations of musicians so much—nobody in jazz, nobody in jazz, nobody in jazz has a more impressive list of alumni. But he's not presumptuous enough to think that what they learn from him is all they need to know. **db**

# THE 53rd ANNUAL **down beat** **READERS POLL**



ANDY FREEBERG



## JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 129 Wynton Marsalis, *Standard Time* (Columbia)\*
- 96 Ornette Coleman, *In All Languages* (Caravan of Dreams)
- 86 Branford Marsalis, *Renaissance* (Columbia)
- 84 Wynton Marsalis, *Live At Blues Alley* (Columbia)
- 82 Rob Wasserman, *Duets* (MCA)
- 65 Branford Marsalis, *Random Abstract* (Columbia)

\*190 readers voted for Michael Brecker's *Michael Brecker*, which was the winner of 1987's Jazz Album Of The Year. We realize that Michael didn't release another album in time for the Poll, thus perhaps causing some confusion as to the eligibility of his most recent album. We also recognize and appreciate the support for Michael that is reflected by the large vote. Also, Pat Metheny's *Still Life (Talking)* received 94 votes. Unfortunately, the same conditions regarding eligibility apply here as well. Pat's album qualified for the 1987 Poll, coming in fourth.

## HALL OF FAME

- 170 Jaco Pastorius
- 106 Red Rodney
- 98 Chet Baker
- 73 Lee Morgan
- 63 Dave Brubeck
- 56 J. J. Johnson



## JAZZ MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

- 207 Wynton Marsalis
- 159 Michael Brecker
- 147 Ornette Coleman
- 126 Henry Threadgill
- 104 Branford Marsalis
- 95 Miles Davis



## SOUL/R&B ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 109 Stevie Wonder, *Characters (Motown)\**
- 82 Prince, *Lovesexy* (Paisley Park)
- 74 Sade, *Stranger Than Pride* (Epic)
- 68 Michael Jackson, *Bad* (Epic)

\*191 readers voted for Robert Cray's *Strong Persuader*, which won Soul/R&B Album Of The Year in 1987. We realize the confusion that may have occurred due to Robert's most recent release, *Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark* not having appeared in the stores nationwide until August 8th. As with Messrs. Brecker and Metheny, we appreciate the support given for Robert Cray that is reflected by the large vote.



## POP/ROCK ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 311 Sting, *Nothing Like The Sun* (A&M)
- 111 Stevie Winwood, *Roll With It* (Virgin)
- 75 Tracy Chapman, *Tracy Chapman* (Elektra)
- 67 Talking Heads, *Naked* (Fly/Sire)
- 54 Brian Wilson, *Brian Wilson* (Sire)



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE INC.

## POP/ROCK MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

- 486 Sting
- 104 Stevie Winwood
- 103 Prince
- 72 Miles Davis
- 58 Paul Simon
- 50 Tracy Chapman
- 45 David Byrne



LAUREN DEUTSCH

## SOUL/R&B MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

- 246 Robert Cray
- 198 Ray Charles
- 146 Stevie Wonder
- 131 Prince
- 129 Aaron Neville
- 117 B. B. King
- 101 James Brown

## ACOUSTIC JAZZ GROUP

- 179 Phil Woods
- 166 Wynton Marsalis
- 166 Henry Threadgill Sextet
- 147 Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers
- 113 Red Rodney
- 96 World Saxophone Quartet
- 93 Don Pullen/George Adams
- 90 Blanchard/Harrison
- 57 Modern Jazz Quartet
- 52 Dave Holland
- 50 Sphere

## BIG BAND

- 242 Count Basie
- 189 Gil Evans
- 159 Mel Lewis
- 152 Sun Ra
- 124 Rob McConnell
- 100 Toshiko Akiyoshi
- 73 Illinois Jacquet
- 71 Unifour Jazz
- 70 Bob Mintzer
- 52 Woody Herman



## ELECTRIC JAZZ GROUP

- 297 Chick Corea Elektric Band
- 197 Miles Davis
- 176 Pat Metheny Group
- 146 Ornette Coleman/Prime Time
- 102 Bass Desires
- 102 Wayne Shorter
- 89 John Scofield
- 89 Yellowjackets
- 52 Spyro Gyra

## POP/ROCK GROUP

- 461 Sting
- 118 Talking Heads
- 106 Miles Davis
- 49 Los Lobos
- 47 U2
- 41 Prince

## SOUL/R&B GROUP

- 197 Robert Cray
- 164 Neville Bros.
- 160 Ray Charles
- 85 B. B. King
- 83 Prince
- 56 James Brown

# THE 53 RE

## COMPOSER

- 158 Henry Threadgill
- 115 Garry Dial
- 113 Toshiko Akiyoshi
- 110 Rob Wasserman
- 101 Carla Bley
- 94 Ornette Coleman
- 83 Wayne Shorter
- 80 John Zorn
- 55 Pat Metheny
- 50 Abdullah Ibrahim
- 50 Chick Corea

## ARRANGER

- 381 Gil Evans
- 144 Toshiko Akiyoshi
- 117 Rob McConnell
- 116 Carla Bley
- 80 Henry Threadgill
- 71 Benny Carter

## TRUMPET

- 375 Wynton Marsalis
- 260 Miles Davis
- 161 Red Rodney
- 101 Freddie Hubbard
- 90 Lester Bowie
- 71 Art Farmer
- 67 Dizzy Gillespie
- 65 Tom Harrell
- 56 Woody Shaw



ANDY FREEBERG



HYOU VIELZ

## TENOR SAX

- 285 Michael Brecker
- 276 Sonny Rollins
- 151 Stan Getz
- 113 Branford Marsalis
- 90 David Murray
- 75 Dexter Gordon
- 73 Joe Henderson
- 45 Courtney Pine

## CLARINET

- 618 Eddie Daniels
- 244 Buddy DeFranco
- 200 John Carter
- 53 Phil Woods
- 51 Alvin Batiste



MITCHELL SEIDEL

## TROMBONE

- 369 J. J. Johnson
- 208 Steve Turre
- 86 Bill Watrous
- 65 Ray Anderson
- 56 Carl Fontana
- 56 Tom Smith
- 52 Curtis Fuller
- 51 Craig Harris



H. L. LINDENMAIER

## SOPRANO SAX

- 336 Steve Lacy
- 324 Branford Marsalis
- 300 Wayne Shorter
- 66 Dave Liebman
- 65 Jane Ira Bloom



B. McMILLEN PHOTOS

## FLUTE

- 300 James Newton
- 251 James Moody
- 81 Frank Wess
- 75 Lew Tabackin
- 65 Herbie Mann
- 61 Dave Valentin
- 59 Hubert Laws
- 45 Henry Threadgill

## ALTO SAX

- 336 Phil Woods
- 207 Ornette Coleman
- 146 David Sanborn
- 89 Frank Morgan
- 76 Dick Oatts
- 59 Richie Cole
- 52 Steve Coleman



MITCHELL SEIDEL

## BARITONE SAX

- 578 Gerry Mulligan
- 209 Hamiet Bluiett
- 141 Nick Brignola
- 95 Ronnie Cuber

## ACOUSTIC PIANO

- 198 Oscar Peterson
- 174 McCoy Tyner
- 106 Tommy Flanagan
- 95 Cecil Taylor
- 74 Keith Jarrett
- 72 Herbie Hancock
- 61 Chick Corea
- 55 Mulgrew Miller
- 45 Kenny Kirkland
- 45 Michel Petrucciani
- 42 Kenny Barron



MITCHELL SEIDEL

## ELECTRIC PIANO

- 621 Chick Corea
- 200 Herbie Hancock
- 95 Lyle Mays
- 81 Sun Ra
- 44 Joe Zawinul

## ORGAN

- 492 Jimmy Smith
- 111 Jimmy McGriff
- 101 Carla Bley
- 73 Sun Ra
- 72 Amina Claudine Myers
- 67 Jack McDuff
- 62 Shirley Scott



## GUITAR

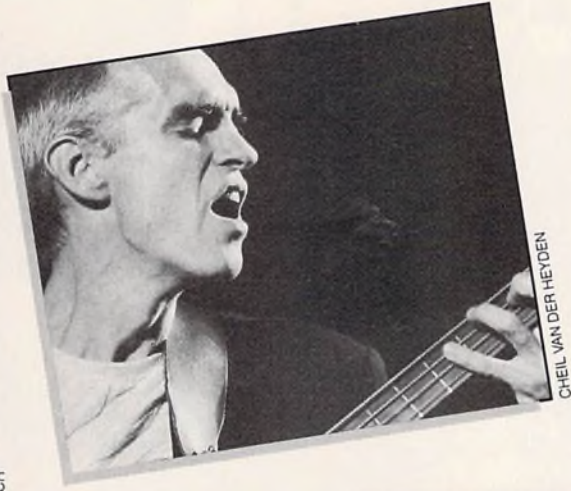
- 200 Pat Metheny
- 200 John Scofield
- 185 Joe Pass
- 126 Jim Hall
- 74 Bill Frisell
- 66 Kenny Burrell
- 64 Stanley Jordan
- 56 Mike Stern
- 47 Kevin Eubanks



HYOU VIELZ



# rd ANNUAL down beat ADERS POLL



## MISCELLANEOUS INSTRUMENT

- 282 Toots Thielemans (harmonica)
- 137 Howard Johnson (tuba)
- 106 Michael Brecker (EWI)
- 92 David Murray (bass clarinet)
- 72 Andy Narell (steel drums)
- 49 Astor Piazzolla (bandoneon)

LAUREN DEUTSCH

## ELECTRIC BASS

- 315 Steve Swallow
- 246 Marcus Miller
- 173 Stanley Clarke
- 126 John Palitucci
- 75 Jamaaladeen Tacuma

## ACOUSTIC BASS

- 303 Charlie Haden
- 196 Ron Carter
- 178 Ray Brown
- 131 Rob Wasserman
- 96 Eddie Gomez
- 72 Dave Holland
- 56 Charnett Moffett

JOSEPHINE SHIELDS



## MALE SINGER

- 680 Bobby McFerrin
- 227 Joe Williams
- 219 Mel Torme
- 99 Mark Murphy
- 67 Al Jarreau
- 59 Ray Charles



## DRUMS

- 274 Jack DeJohnette
- 152 Max Roach
- 129 Art Blakey
- 120 Billy Higgins
- 111 Tony Williams
- 98 Marvin "Smitty" Smith
- 89 Peter Erskine
- 86 Dave Weckl
- 86 Jeff Watts
- 74 Elvin Jones
- 65 Joey Baron

## SYNTHESIZER

- 351 Joe Zawinul
- 165 Herbie Hancock
- 162 Chick Corea
- 146 Lyle Mays
- 87 Sun Ra



HYOU VIELZ

## PERCUSSION

- 257 Airto Moreira
- 241 Nana Vasconcelos
- 171 Tito Puente
- 132 Mino Cinelu
- 73 Famoudou Don Moye

## VIBES

- 451 Milt Jackson
- 288 Bobby Hutcherson
- 265 Gary Burton
- 102 Dave Samuels
- 86 Lionel Hampton
- 57 Mike Mainieri
- 55 Terry Gibbs

## VIOLIN

- 511 Stephane Grappelli
- 214 John Blake
- 181 Jean-Luc Ponty
- 139 Billy Bang
- 59 Leroy Jenkins
- 50 L. Shankar

## FEMALE SINGER

- 274 Sarah Vaughan
- 203 Diane Schuur
- 167 Betty Carter
- 120 Ella Fitzgerald
- 114 Cassandra Wilson
- 104 Sheila Jordan
- 99 Carmen McRae
- 93 Dianne Reeves
- 70 Anita Baker
- 60 Nancy Wilson
- 60 Cheryl Bentine

## VOCAL GROUPS

- 707 Manhattan Transfer
- 101 Rare Silk
- 78 Hendricks Family
- 75 Ladysmith Black Mambazo
- 51 Singers Unlimited
- 41 Take 6

# Michal URBANIANK

## Michal's Musical Mysteries



**H**e's slumped over his computer, dealing with MIDI data, tweaking notes and injecting nuance into the floppy disc. Hours go by. He's forgotten to eat all day, and sleep is out of the question. He's glued to his seat, burning the midnight oil once again with eyes transfixed on the video screen.

Some call it a sickness, an affliction of the late '80s that is bound to reach epidemic proportions as we head into the '90s. Yes, Michal Urbaniak is a MIDI junkie.

## By Bill Milkowski

This modern-day malady has claimed many victims in the past few years. Dave Grusin, Lee Ritenour, Herbie Hancock, and countless others have become hooked on MIDI. Now Urbaniak has joined the ranks in a big way. His recent Rykodisc project, *Cinemode*, was a virtual one-man MIDI show, created entirely at home on his Atari computer. And for his upcoming East-West/Atlantic album (tentatively titled *Manhattan Man*), he's relying heavily on the computer once again, though the MIDI data is being augmented in the studio with real-time, in-the-flesh performances by drummer Lenny White and keyboardist Bernard Wright.

While some have become recent converts to such technology, Urbaniak has had an ongoing affair with electronics and gadgetry dating back to the '70s. A true sound pioneer during the heyday of fusion, he was one of the first musicians to experiment with the lyricon (check out the 1978 album *Future Talk* for an example of lyricon hooked up to a MINI-Moog).

When the Zeta MIDI violin was in the developmental stages, Urbaniak had a prototype model. And now he's using the updated Zeta violin to trigger synths and samples and assorted hardware on his ambitious MIDI projects. For the one-time classical violinist from Poland, it's a continual process of seeking out and adapting to the newest technology.

"I'm all the time searching for new sounds," he says with a trace of an accent. "I had very primitive synthesizers back in 1968 that looked like chessboards. And I've kept up with everything that came out since then. But then in 1983 I decided to make a break from electronics totally. I began playing acoustic duets with Larry Coryell, sort of getting back in touch with my straightahead roots. We toured together for two-and-a-half years and recorded three albums for European labels. And at the end of that period I felt lost, in terms of what was happening with technology. I had heard so many new things going on and I was itching to get back into it. My vacation from electronics was over by 1986, when I went out and bought my first sequencer. And from there I was basically catching up to what was happening, and quickly I got deep into it."

After obtaining his Atari computer, Urbaniak began working in earnest on MIDI music. He began with Steinberg 24-track software but soon switched to a program called Creator, manufactured in Germany by a company called Sea Lab. His piano playing partner Vladislav Sendecki, who resides in Switzerland, turned Urbaniak onto this new software which became the brains behind the *Cinemode* project.

"This Creator software has 62 MIDI channels," explains Michal. "It's fast, it's flexible, it really lets you create. It has several advantages over the Steinberg software; namely speed, clarity, and more features. You can pan, you can mix inside the program. It's probably the only true competition to the MacIntosh Performer software. But, of course, the MacIntosh computer costs four times as much as the Atari. So this Creator software gives you all the advantages of the Performer at a fraction of the cost. It's a real breakthrough for home studios."

Urbaniak did all the pre-production for *Manhattan Man* at home on the Atari, but he points out that this project is quite different in character from his more ethereal *Cinemode* MIDI project. "This one's got a lot more energy," he explains. "It takes more chances, it stretches but it also grooves, mainly because of the presence of Lenny White. The *Cinemode* project was closer to New Age in some ways, but I wasn't holding back on my playing. With a lot of New Age, you get nice textures and no playing. I was playing a lot on *Cinemode*. And on the new album, I'm also mixing in acoustic violin and talking violin with the electronic backing. It's more versatile, more rhythmic, more song-oriented. Basically, I could take a band out playing the material on this record. But with *Cinemode* there are some things I couldn't reproduce live with a band. That was strictly a MIDI project."

Last year, Urbaniak took time out from his MIDI obsession to record a special acoustic duet album with pianist Sendecki. The two have a special rapport that comes from their common roots—both being Polish-born musicians who studied arduously in classical conservatories before turning their interests toward jazz. As Michal explains, "We first met in 1982 for a festival. We actually met on stage. I was going to play a festival in Austria and I needed a rhythm section for the gig. Everyone was telling me about this guy Sendecki, who was living in Switzerland by then. They said he was fantastic and that I should check him out. So I sent him a couple of my records to study.

"We met at the festival, had no time for rehearsals and he was fantastic. Burning! And, of course, we struck up an immediate friendship. We began touring Europe as a duo and it sounded great. It's so natural, playing with him. And now we've come to realize that this is something we will continue to do for the rest of our lives. This project with Sendecki and me is on forever."

They released three duo albums on small European labels and last year had their stateside debut with *Folk Songs, Children's*

*Melodies, Jazz Tunes And Others*, an engaging album on the Island Records jazz subsidiary, New Directions. For this intimate project, both musicians reach back to their classical roots on tunes like *Menuet* while showing their jazz chops on the call-and-response of *Munchkins* or *Brilliant Beauty*.

A complicated man, Urbaniak seems to constantly shift musical personalities back and forth between MIDI purveyor and acoustic purist. The classical influence will always be there, the legitimate technique forever a part of his vocabulary, though it seems at odds with his ongoing interest in electronics, his love of funk, and his penchant for jazz improvisation. It's difficult for record companies, accustomed to pigeonholing their artists with specific labels, to deal with such versatility. And as if Urbaniak's eclectic nature weren't confusing enough, he further complicates matters by confessing: "The truth is, I'm a saxophone player who plays violin."

Saxophone?

"I've had two careers, in a sense," he continues. "After spending so much time studying classical music with violin, I picked up the saxophone and started playing jazz. I spent most of the '60s with saxophone. I was one of the top saxophone players in Europe during the late '60s. I had a band with a Hammond B-3 organ player and a grooving, swinging drummer and I played two saxophones, alto and tenor, at the same time. I came to the States in the late '60s and played saxophone at the Newport Jazz Festival. By the next time I came back here, when I finally moved to New York in 1973, I had switched back to violin and continued to play it almost exclusively. So I have had two careers—saxophone player in Europe and violin player in the United States."

He's been playing more sax lately and has gotten involved with the Yamaha WX7 wind-driven synth trigger, which he utilized on both *Cinemode* and *Manhattan Man*. "I still love playing sax so much," he says. "And I don't say which one I prefer, sax or violin. But if you say, 'Let's go and jam,' I will show up with my saxophone."

Urbaniak began studying violin at the age of six. He enrolled at the Academie of Music in Warsaw and for 12 years pursued a strictly legitimate technique on the instrument. At age 15 he won a scholarship to a Moscow conservatory and studied with the great virtuoso David Oistrakh, but fate intervened.

"That was the same year I first heard Willis Conover's *Voice of America* radio program," he fondly recalls. "It was the only way to hear jazz in Eastern Europe and for many years it opened out ears to much new music. We would sit around the radio and tape programs every night and if one of us missed a program, another one of us had it."

It was specifically Louis Armstrong's version of *Mack The Knife* that turned young Michal's head around.

"I remember hearing that and I began crying," he says. "I don't know why but when I heard it I knew this was *it!* Just the feeling of that music. . . strong enough to make me cry. I knew then that I wanted to play this music."

His parents were understandably shocked when Michal turned his back on the classical world and put down his violin in favor of sax. "It was very difficult for me to play jazz on violin but it was very easy to do it on saxophone because my heart was into it, and I really dug the music."

So from 1964 to 1970, he played saxes almost exclusively, until some physical problems forced him to put the sax down and return to the violin. "I had some kind of heart problems," he says. "I didn't know where it came from but suddenly I was fainting on stage. It got to a point where I couldn't play anything. There was a whole year where I wasn't working at all because of this problem. I don't know, maybe I was blowing too much night after night. But I had to quit. I went back to Poland to regroup. It took me a year before I started playing in public again, and then the focus was more on violin. I phased out the saxophone almost entirely when I first came to the States.

"But the lyricism was a big breakthrough because you don't have to blow as hard and you still can get expression. So I began playing

lyricon and then one day I started in with soprano and it felt fine. Now I'm finding the right balance between the two instruments. I'll take my tenor and soprano saxophones on gigs and play them occasionally and it hasn't bothered me that much. And one thing I've noticed is the more I play saxophone, the better is my violin playing. I've found that it really helps my jazz phrasing. And, on the other hand, playing violin gives me more freedom to my saxophone playing. So I'll continue to play both, even if it is confusing to record company people.

"Basically, they say, 'Don't ruin your image. Think about it. You're a violinist.' But sometimes I really need to play saxophone."

In spite of that secret desire, Urbaniak's reputation as world-class jazz violinist has increased somewhat in recent years due to a number of high-exposure gigs. He scored a West Coast hit with *Take Good Care Of My Heart*, a lyrical melody he recorded with the Horace Parlan trio in 1984 for Steeplechase. His talking violin on that tune registered with jazz radio programmers in Los Angeles, who put that cut in high rotation. The tune eventually caught the ears of Johnny Carson's talent coordinators and Urbaniak soon found himself playing his talking violin on *The Tonight Show*. Among the millions of viewers who happened to tune in that night was one Miles Dewey Davis. A few months later when Miles was in the studio with Tommy LiPuma, preparing material for the *Tutu* album, he recalled that *Tonight Show* performance by Urbaniak. Apparently impressed by the violinist's abilities, Miles reportedly remarked, "Get me that Polish f\*\*kin' fiddler!" Urbaniak's electric violin playing can be heard on the cut *Don't Lose Your Mind* from that 1986 album. He has since done sessions for albums by Earl Klugh

and George Benson.

Urbaniak continues to play around New York with his band Constellation, a funk outfit whose ranks in past years have included such illustrious sidemen as Marcus Miller, Buddy Williams, Victor Bailey, Lenny White, and Bernard Wright. Another ongoing association is with the acclaimed video director Zbigniew Rybczynski. Urbaniak's haunting score for the 1987 Rybczynski film *Steps*—a disturbing video which mixes clips from the "Odessa Steps" sequence of Sergei Eisenstein's classic film *Battleship Potemkin* with images of American tourists—was singled out in reviews by film critics. The piece premiered on the PBS series *Alive From Off-Center* and the two countrymen have since collaborated on a 27-minute film, *Fourth Dimension*, which will air in its entirety on French and Italian television. A shortened six-minute version was recently broadcast on *Alive From Off-Center*.

Urbaniak is intrigued by the challenge of scoring for film and plans to get more involved in this idiom in the future. "I think I'm very good at this," he says. "I react to emotions and basically, film is illusion and emotion. So I think my personality and my music is well-suited to this task."

*Cinemode* is a natural extension of his interest in soundtrack work. *Manhattan Man* is a continuation of his passion for funk rhythms and electronics. His duet sessions and tours with Vladislav Sendecki reach back to his classical roots, and he'll still play the occasional standards gig around New York.

He's hard to pin down, harder to figure out. A true musical chameleon, he'll no doubt continue to defy expectations and deflate stereotypes for years to come. db



#### MICHAL URBANIAK'S EQUIPMENT

Urbaniak keeps several violins on hand including a Zeta MIDI violin and a classical violin with a Barcus-Berry pickup. He has a customized Vocoder attachment to convert his acoustic violin into his so-called talking violin which allows him to phrase the notes with his mouth. He has two five-string acoustic violins and one six-string. His horns include a Yamaha soprano sax, a Selmer Mark VI tenor sax, a lyricon, and a Yamaha WX7 wind-driven synth trigger.

His violin rack includes an Alesis MIDiverb, a Digitech IVL 7000 Mark II Pitchrider MIDI interface, a Roland SBC350 Vocoder, and a ADA Pitchraq harmonizer. Urbaniak's sequencer is a Roland MC 500, his drum machine an Alesis, and the computer is an Atari ST 1040 with Sea Lab Creator software. He also has an Alesis MIDiverb II digital reverb, an ART digital reverb, a Korg SDD-1000 digital delay, and a DBX 163x compressor.

Urbaniak's keyboards include a Casio CZ-101, a Casio FZ-1 sampling keyboard, a Korg DW-8000 synthesizer, a Korg DW-6000 synthesizer, and an Oberheim DPX-1 sampler. Other hardware includes a Korg DDD-1 drum machine, Yamaha RX-5 drum machine, Korg DVP-1 Vocoder, an Oberheim Matrix-VI sound module, 360 Systems MIDI bass, Roland MT-32 multi-timbral sound module, Yamaha TX81Z multi-timbral sound module, PPS-1 JL Cooper synchronizer, Casio MIDI thru box TB1, Yamaha FB01 multi-timbral synthesizer module, and Simmons percussion effects.

His home studio mixing board is a Soundtracks 16-channel combined with a Tascam eight-channel to give him a full 24 tracks. He also has a Roland BX-16 sub-mixer for his synthesizers. The studio speakers are Yamaha NS-10s.

#### MICHAL URBANIAK SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

MANHATTAN MAN—East-West (to be released)  
 CINEMODE—Rykodisc RCD 10037  
 DAYBREAK—Pausa 7114  
 URBANIAK—Inner City 1036  
 MY ONE AND ONLY LOVE—Steeplechase 1159  
 FRIDAY NIGHT AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD—Storyville 4093  
 JAM AT SANDY'S—JAM 5004  
 THE NEW YORK FIVE—JAM 001  
 LOVE DON'T GROW ON TREES—Sonet 2285

with Urszula Dudziak

HERITAGE—Pausa 7047  
 FUTURE TALK—Inner City 1066

with Vladislav Sendecki

FOLK SONGS—Antilles/New Directions 7 90912-1

with Miles Davis

TUTU—Warner Bros. 25490-1

with Michael Franks

THE CAMERA NEVER LIES—Warner Bros. 2-25570

with Horace Parlan

TAKE GOOD CARE OF MY HEART—Steeplechase 1195

# DAVID BENOIT

## MAKING EVERY STEP COUNT

By Scott Yanow



**W**ith the release of his second GRP album, *Every Step Of The Way*, it may seem that keyboardist David Benoit, a virtual unknown outside the music industry three years ago, is an overnight success. But the truth is that Benoit has been a full-time musician since 1974, and after 10 years of near-anonymity as a studio player he found himself at a crossroads: "I didn't feel that the studio work was fulfilling. The music was often very difficult and I would come home so stressed-out. I consider the guys that can do it wonderful but I kept on thinking that I really want to get out and play; so I slipped out of it. Before my Spindletop album, *This Side Up*, was released, I was playing in a piano bar in Manhattan Beach. That was the turning point."

The now-popular Benoit describes his sound this way: "My style is very melodic, but I hate when someone calls me New Age because I'm definitely not New Age. I'm partly fusion but I especially like to play straightahead jazz too. I guess I'd consider myself a contemporary jazz pianist."

Born in Bakersfield, California, Benoit

remembers that "the first music I heard was a combination of Broadway shows like *My Fair Lady* and my father's jazz guitar albums, such as Tal Farlow, Barney Kessel, and Herb Ellis. My dad dabbled in jazz guitar and had a little band that played on weekends. My mom listened to Leonard Bernstein, and the combination had a lasting effect on me.

"At around six or seven I played the piano a little, picking out stuff I heard, but my parents sold it when we moved to Hermosa Beach (south of Los Angeles). I didn't have a piano at all until they bought me one when I was 13. The next year I started studying with a teacher who played cocktail-style piano. He taught me how to play standards like *Someone To Watch Over Me*, *More*, and *The Greatest Love*.

In high school the relatively inexperienced pianist wrote the music for his school's production of *Tom Jones*. "I led the pit band which was actually a small rhythm section. I wrote a lot of chord changes and faked my way through it [*laughs*]. There was a brilliant kid in high school who wrote orchestrations for symphony orchestras; he was the most likely to succeed. I was always number-

two behind him and he made fun of me for not being educated and being a street player. Funny, today he's a music teacher. He couldn't get out of the South Bay. Maybe when life is too comfortable and you get all those accolades in high school, one doesn't develop the desire and drive to move ahead."

Benoit drifted into his decision to make music his career. "It was like this is what I should be doing; it seemed so natural. I remember telling my dad that I was going to drop out of college after a year and be a professional musician. He was very angry because he felt I should just play music on the weekends until I got a real job.

"If I hadn't become a musician I think I would have ended up as an architect. I took one class in it and I especially liked the prairie style movement starting with Frank Lloyd Wright and going through his protégés."

**A**t 18, David Benoit moved to Studio City (near Hollywood) and took a few classes in orchestration and arranging at a local junior college. "I met a jazz musician and started listening closely to his records, really discovering straightahead jazz. Before that I had played in top 40 lounge bands. But then I went through a McCoy Tyner period and at 21 I really got into Bill Evans."

Benoit's first experience in the studios came purely by accident. "I got wind of a studio called Silvery Moon. I walked in and there was no one working at the time so I sat at the piano—it was a nice one—and started playing. Richard Baskin heard me and asked for my card. A few days later he called and said that he was writing the music for *Nashville* and wanted me to work on it. So I played on the soundtrack. I was just 20."

The following year Benoit appeared on his first jazz-oriented record date. "I was performing with a top 40 band again and the singer would let us open with some jazz, Herbie Hancock-type tunes. I invited Alphonse Mouzon to hear us play and he in turn invited me to be on his record date the following week. Then I heard that Dave Grusin, Lee Ritenour, and other players of that caliber were also going to be on that date; I was in awe for the whole session and quite nervous. It's kind of funny that years later I ended up on Dave

Grusin's label."

In the mid-'70s Benoit picked up some valuable jazz experience by hooking up with singer Gloria Lynne. "She had a last-minute cancellation for a New Year's Eve job, so I filled in. She was impressed that I could sight-read her book, so I was hired. That was a fun gig because we played regularly at the Parisian Room in L.A. and I met many traditional jazz musicians, including Red Holloway, Sonny Stitt, and Jimmy Smith. Gloria has a really nice voice and I played with her off and on for five or six years."

But Benoit's main goal at this time was to become a first-call studio musician. "The first television date I did was an episode of *Barnaby Jones* and I was very nervous. The first cue was tough and I got lost. The conductor stopped the orchestra and said, 'Uhh, a little problem with the piano over there.' It was a really nerve-wracking experience but I kept hanging in there. I worked with Gil Melle, a top jazz musician in the '50s, and I did a lot of TV movies with him. That was a wonderful experience because he wrote challenging parts. I also did a lot of demo work for A&M, occasional record dates, and quite a variety of stuff such as being the house pianist for the Easter Telethon."

David Benoit also performed in Las Vegas with Lainie Kazan and Connie Stevens. "Lainie badly needed a piano player the day before a tour with the Duke Ellington orchestra. The guitarist called me around midnight and asked me who my favorite piano player was. When I answered 'Bill Evans,' he said 'You got the gig' [laughs]. Later on she asked if I'd ever conducted and I said, 'Sure,' even though I never had. I didn't know what I was doing the first few times, but in time I learned and started conducting variety specials with her."

In 1978 Benoit cut his first album as a leader, *Heavier Than Yesterday*, and in the following five years he made three others for the AVI label. "Those four records I did for AVI are surprisingly similar to what I'm doing now. Sonically they're not even close but if you listened to them you would know it was David Benoit at the piano; my style comes through. There is a common thread although I play better now. AVI was a very small label. I still think my records for them are pretty good; that's where I got my early experience writing for strings. The problem was that they just couldn't get the records anywhere so they weren't very available. I learned a lot about the music business during those years."

Strangely enough Benoit's AVI albums were very well distributed in the Philippines and were so popular that a tour was arranged. "In Los Angeles my own career wasn't doing that well. I was still playing casuals, private parties, and wedding receptions. Then I went to the

Philippines and did this big tour, rode in a limo, and played with a full orchestra. I was treated so well that I was shocked and kept asking, 'Who am I opening for?' and, 'What club will I be playing at?' I had no idea what it was like to front a band, I was so used to being a sideman. I got to play at a 3,000-seat hall with an orchestra. It was a shock.

"The very day that I got back to Los Angeles I had a casual. I remember getting to the house and the hostess saying, 'Who do you think you are? You can't walk through the living room, you're a musician. You have to stay in the kitchen with the chefs!' Welcome back to reality."

The turning point came when Benoit recorded *This Side Up* for the slightly larger Spindletop label in 1985. "I was supposed to make a fifth record for AVI but the company was about to go under when Jeff Weber, who was to produce it, came up with an outside finance person, Barry Wilson, to rescue it. It was my first live-to-two-track album with a full orchestra. It sold pretty well and opened a lot of doors. It was really the beginning of me stepping out as a bandleader.

"I sent *This Side Up* to GRP but they sat on it for months. I remember that the very day *This Side Up* hit the top 10 on the jazz chart in Billboard I got a call on my answering machine and heard a voice saying, 'This is Larry Rosen from GRP. Call me up!' I was so excited and quickly signed with them."

So much for David Benoit's reputation as an "overnight success." His personal and often introspective piano style has quickly grown in popularity thanks to the exposure on his two GRP albums. He cites *Kei's Song* and *Morning Sojourn* from *Freedom At Midnight* and *Once Running Free* and *Remembering What You Said* from *Every Step Of The Way* as his favorite recordings to date. "*Freedom At Midnight* is a soft, mellow record while *Every Step Of The Way* is a lot more aggressive and involved a lot more people. It also took awhile to record because of the more complicated production and the vocals.

"My next album will be an acoustic trio record that will include a couple of my compositions, maybe *Giant Steps*, and some standards. It'll be a bit of a departure from my past stuff, more straightahead. I've been wanting to do this for sometime."

When asked about his recent activities, Benoit replied, "During the past year I've been touring with my own band a bit—which includes bassist Bob Feldman, drummer Tony Morales, and saxman Eric Marienthal. I recently was the musical conductor for the Beverly Sills television show in New York City; that was exciting. I did a Disney special called *Tickets Please* and a record with Patti Austin. I'm proud of my work on Patti's record. She does a selection of standards and I did some

## DAVID BENOIT'S EQUIPMENT

"I use a Steinway B or a Yamaha acoustic piano as my main voice. In performance I also use a Kawai 360 digital piano and I MIDI that into a rack of different synthesizers, including the Roland D50 and a Kawai K5. I also use a Yamaha DX7 which sits on top of the Kawai 360 for lead synth work."

## DAVID BENOIT SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

### as a leader

EVERY STEP OF THE WAY—GRP 1047

FREEDOM AT MIDNIGHT—GRP 1035

THIS SIDE UP—Spindletop 104

DIGITS—AVI 8549

STAGES—AVI 6114

CAN YOU IMAGINE—AVI 6074

HEAVIER THAN YESTERDAY—AVI 6025

CHRISTMASTIME—AVI 8620

WAVES OF WAVES—AVI 8712

### with Jimmy Stewart

THE TOUCH—Blackhawk 50301

### with Patti Austin

THE REAL ME—Quest 25696

### with Alphonse Mouzon

THE MAN IN COGNITO—Blue Note LA584-G

### with Ron Eschete

STUMP JUMPER—Bainbridge 6264

### with Full Swing

IN FULL SWING—Cypress 109

### with Kenny Rankin

HIDING IN MYSELF—Cypress 0114

orchestration and conducting; a lot of the arranging and the piano playing as well."

A special highpoint of the former piano bar musician's life was playing at the White House with Austin. "I got to meet Mr. and Mrs. Reagan. I really felt like I was welcome. I played the White House piano, the same one that all the presidents have played, including Harry Truman and Richard Nixon. It was an incredible experience."

In addition to the aforementioned records, Benoit contributes one song to the *GRP Christmas Sampler* (GRP 9574). "*Carol Of The Bells* is a fun, little inspirational piece that I did as a kid; so now I did a jazz version. I actually recorded it before on an AVI album that was only out for a year. Since it was the most popular song on that album, I did it again for the Christmas sampler."

Are there any particular musicians who Benoit would like to record with that he hasn't had a chance to thus far? "I'd like to work with David Sanborn, Michael Brecker, Eddie Gomez, and Steve Gadd. I'd love to work with Emily Remler; she's my guitar hero. I'm really a fan of hers."

How about future goals? "I'd like to do a book on architecture. It'd be fun to go around the country with a photographer and take pictures of ranch houses and private homes. Musically I want to write a full symphony in three movements—I'm currently working on that—and I want to do an hour in performance of Gershwin and Cole Porter songs. Other than that, I'd like to open up my own restaurant [laughs]." As long as his growing audience finds David Benoit's musical menu appetizing, all of his goals are within reach.

db

# record reviews

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



## FRANK MORGAN

**YARDBIRD SUITE**—Contemporary 14045: *YARDBIRD SUITE; NIGHT IN TUNISIA; BILLIE'S BOUNCE; STAR EYES; SCRAPPLE FROM THE APPLE; SKYLARK.*  
**Personnel:** Morgan, alto saxophone; Mulgrew Miller, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Al Foster, drums.

★★★★

Over 30 years after his death, Charlie Parker's music remains the ultimate existential alto challenge. His repertoire retains its fire and vitality, and his technical and emotional brilliance are touchstones to aspire to. That Frank Morgan should confront this specter for the record was, perhaps, inevitable. And the result is his best album to date.

An early Bird-watcher, Morgan had just hit the scene during Parker's haunted West Coast days, and he did his best to follow in his idol's footsteps—musically and recreationally. These experiences forged his creative aesthetic and ruined his life for some three decades. But today it is important to remember that despite all his recent notoriety, Morgan is anything but a newcomer, and his musical virtues are those of a veteran. His solos here teeter-totter between poise and firecracker exuberance (at his most energized he approaches the ear-opening abandon of Art Pepper), but always with a purpose, always under control.

Morgan's experience affords him a relaxed confidence, evident in his casual phrasing—fluent and fluid—never straining into aggression or obsession, as happens to so many younger musicians eager to impress on Bird's terms. Consider the tune selections, and the way they are handled—there's no scorching *Ornithology*, no cathartic *Confirmation*. Mostly mid-tempo, they allow Morgan to avoid mimicry and inject a soulfulness and suppleness into the otherwise sharp shape of his solos. And for a key to the altoist's attitude, note the unassuming ending to *Night In Tunisia* where, after a high-tension buildup to what promises to be an explosive coda, Morgan coolly defuses the situation with a few calm notes, refusing to call unnecessary attention to himself.

The album's recorded balance does not put the altoist in the spotlight either; this is a remarkably clear sound which gives all four participants equal play. Unfortunately, this means that Carter's bass and Foster's drums are, for my taste, too forward in the mix; so we hear each's fussy details which don't quite interrupt the flow, but do occasionally detract from the issue at hand. Mulgrew Miller, meanwhile, continues to impress, fashioning fresh lines (and more than a few Silver-ish quotes) which may not expand on the bebop

genre, but nevertheless carry substantial weight and wit. As for the leader, his convincing work is no surprise; after all, he's on his home turf. —art lange



## ELLIOT SHARP/ CARBON

**LARYNX**—SST 194: *LARYNX.*

**Personnel:** Sharp, guitarbass, bass clarinet, computer; Samm Bennett, drums; David Linton, drums; Robert Previte, drums, slab; Charles Noyes, drums; Laura Seaton, violin; David Soldier, violin; Mary Wooten, cello; Lesli Dalaba, trumpet, slab; David Fulton, slab; Ken Heer, trombone; Ron Lawrence, viola; Jim Staley, trombone, slab.

★★★★

## MOFUNGO

**BUGGED**—SST 191: #1 *FOR TAKEOFF; THE POPE IS A POTATO; HELLO, OLLIE; ALL I'VE GOT'S GONE; HOSTING A WAR; MY ALUMINUM PLATE; BACKWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS; THE WIT AND WISDOM OF JUDGE BORK; FORTY CENT MEAT; LONG HAIRD PREACHERS; SOLD AGAIN; SAVIOUR, IMPEDE ME NOT; GUIDED TOUR.*

**Personnel:** Willie Klein, guitar, vocals; Chris Nelson, drums, guitar, trombone; Elliot Sharp, guitar, saxophone, lap steel mandolin; Robert Sietsema, bass, vocals.

★★★★

Well, I could use *Larynx* as an excuse to talk about fractal geometry and Fibonacci sequences and equal temperament and all that good meaty kinda stuff, since those ingredients and a few others are prime ones in Elliot Sharp's provocative recipe for composition. But unlike uptown stuff—whose biggest flaw is often that its composers lose the forest of sound for the individual trees of this or that pet theoretical view—Sharp's music, like most of the downtown NY crowd's output, hits viscerally, for better or worse. Not that its intellectual constructs and justifications aren't real or important as tools, just that for the listener they can be blissfully relegated to irrelevance.

Especially while you're being buffeted, smashed, and tweaked out of shape by the spewed-out sounds on the disc. I don't mean to imply it's chaotic—far from it. Sharp's ingredients have been put to outstanding compositional use, and so his framework is strong, and audible, and holds up to the gale-force

sonic winds of realization that would explode a less well-crafted piece. It's just that, in the end, either the materials work or they don't. Here they do, and they'll shatter your head with how they do it.

Mofungo will take the pieces, toss them up into the wind, and watch them blow to the four corners of the universe. And why not?, since that's just what they do with almost any scrap of info, musical or non, that tumbles their way. *Bugged* is the third album from this evolving lineup, but the constant on all their discs could be summed up like this. A phenomenally wide-ranging grasp of pop-music history and its social context and political commitment drives them. Warped raunchy guitars (Sharp's ringing buzzsaw harmonics and twangy skids are everywhere), nasally sneering vocals, and cleverly barbed political lyrics assault a wide and telling range of topics—as even a cursory reading of the tunes' titles reveals—over an enticing assortment of driving rock beats. And the band's satiric concept is biting and pointed and fast, fast, fast.

Take as an example how they whimsically follow the French usage and dub the record sides Face 1 and Face 2, then illustrate each with an appropriate icon—Ronnie Reagan for one, Bobby Bork for the other. Or take how they pick up on a Spanish misprint to jab *The Pope Is A Potato*. But mostly just put *Bugged* on anytime in honor of this Election Year. Maybe it'll help you begin to figure out just what's wrong with the oh-so-carefully chosen images that pass for "news" or even "candidates" when they swarm into your home over your TV.

—gene santoro



## BRANFORD MARSALIS

**RANDOM ABSTRACT**—Columbia 44055: *YES AND NO; CRESCENT CITY; BROADWAY FOOLS; LONJELLIS; I THOUGHT ABOUT YOU; LONELY WOMAN; STEEP'S THEME.*

**Personnel:** Marsalis, tenor, soprano saxophone; Kenny Kirkland, piano; Delbert Felix, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.

★★★★

Branford's notes are neither random nor abstract. He's much too straightahead for this title to be accurate. In fact, this seems to be the role of the Marsalises: reinventing the modern mainstream. So much for titles.

Hello Wayne, Trane, Ornette, father Ellis, Ben, and Jan (Garbarek), and perhaps indirectly, Steve Lacy and Newk. As producer/brother Delfeayo accurately observes in his partly insightful, partly jive liner notes, Branford steps



**NEWS FOR LULU**—hot 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 boppish 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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knowledgeably and accurately into these players' styles on this record. It's a critical point that he won't be mistaken for any of the saxophonists in the list nor for any player who apes them.

I prefer the warmth of his lush-toned, slurring majesty on the standard, *I Thought About You*—a bow to Webster—to his squirming recapitulation of *Shorter* on *Yes And No*. Everybody is doing *Shorter* these days except the man himself, who has moved on. This record isn't about moving on, it's about moving inward. Thus we have a cantor-like version of Coleman's *Lonely Woman*: a haunting tenor rhapsody that moves to Kirkland's almost classically developed minor-key motif. Against this formal solemnity, there's *LonJellis*, the unstructured, free-change tribute to Ellis Marsalis with its burning soprano over strolling bass and drums.

The other soprano piece is *Broadway Fools*, by Branford, and ostensibly dedicated to Coleman but more reminiscent of Monk's sphere. From Branford's spastic slips and slides to Kirkland's combination of Monk and Wynton Kelly, to Felix's hefty bass walk to Nash's lightning reflexes, this is the most interesting track. *Crescent City* revisits the classic Coltrane Quartet sounds, and *Steep's* is a short set tag.

Throughout the record, Marsalis is a technical whiz. The amazing interplay among this band of prodigies reveals quick minds and high energy. One reservation is that some of the cuts last beyond inspiration. The rating reflects this (a half-star off) plus the feeling that Marsalis' concept is more re-creation than creation and dissection in an abstract sense (another half-star).

—owen cordle



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**THE COMPLETE COMMODORE JAZZ RECORDINGS—VOLUME I**—Mosaic MR23-123: (I) *COW COW DAVENPORT* (1); *FLETCHER HENDERSON AND HIS "CONNIE'S INN" ORCHESTRA* (2); *QUINTETTE OF THE HOT CLUB OF FRANCE* (2); *EDDIE CONDON AND HIS WINDY CITY SEVEN* (5/2); *BUD FREEMAN TRIO* (3/1). (II) *ALL STAR JAM BAND* (2); *THE KANSAS CITY FIVE* (4); *BUD FREEMAN TRIO* (4/4). (III) *TEDDY WILSON* (11/7). (IV) *JESS STACY* (2/1); *EDDIE CONDON AND HIS WINDY CITY SEVEN* (4/3); *BUD FREEMAN AND HIS GANG* (2/1). (V) *FREEMAN* (3/2); *THE KANSAS CITY SIX WITH LESTER YOUNG* (5/5). (VI) *CHU BERRY AND HIS LITTLE JAZZ ENSEMBLE* (4/

2); *MINERVA PIOUS AND BUD FREEMAN* (1); *EDDIE CONDON AND HIS BAND* (2/2); *BUD FREEMAN TRIO* (4). (VII) *WILLIE THE LION SMITH—JOE BUSHKIN—JESS STACY* (2/1); *WILLIE THE LION SMITH* (14). (VIII) *JESS STACY* (3/2); *BILLIE HOLIDAY* (4/3); *STUFF SMITH AND HIS ORCHESTRA* (2). (IX) *JESS STACY* (4); *JESS STACY ALL STARS* (4/1); *EDDIE CONDON AND HIS BAND* (4/4). (X) *JELLY ROLL MORTON* (13); *JELLY ROLL MORTON'S HOT SEVEN* (4). (XI) *JELLY ROLL MORTON'S HOT SIX* (4); *JACK TEAGARDEN* (1); *ART HODES* (2); *JOE MARSALA AND HIS DELTA FOUR* (4). (XII) *EDDIE CONDON AND HIS BAND* (4); *JOE BUSHKIN* (5/3). (XIII) *COLEMAN HAWKINS AND THE CHOCOLATE DANDIES* (4/11). (XIV) *LEE WILEY* (2); *EDDIE CONDON AND HIS BAND* (4/9). (XV) *PEE WEE RUSSELL'S THREE DEUCES* (4/3); *JOE SULLIVAN* (4/4). (XVI) *JOE BUSHKIN BLUE BOYS* (5/2); *CHU BERRY AND HIS JAZZ ENSEMBLE* (2/4). (XVII) *BERRY* (2/2); *EDDIE CONDON AND HIS BAND* (6/3). (XVIII) *BUNK JOHNSON* (12/3). (XIX) *MEL POWELL AND HIS ORCHESTRA* (4/2); *WILD BILL DAVISON AND HIS COMMODORES* (4/4). (XX) *GEORGE BRUNIES AND HIS JAZZ BAND* (4/5); *WILD BILL DAVISON AND HIS COMMODORES* (4/3). (XXI) *EDDIE CONDON AND HIS BAND* (4/4); *COLEMAN HAWKINS AND LEONARD FEATHER'S ALL STARS* (4/5). (XXII) *EDDIE CONDON AND HIS BAND* (6/9). (XXIII) *CONDON* (2/2); *EDMOND HALL SEXTET* (4/2); *MEL POWELL* (3/1).

**Note:** With the exception of the opening tracks by Davenport, Henderson, and the QHCF, which were recorded in 1929, 1931, and 1935, respectively, and which were purchased for re-release by Milt Gabler but never issued on Commodore, all of the subsequent recordings date from January 17, 1938 (Condon) through December 21, 1943 (Powell). Parenthesized Roman numerals indicate album numbers, while the enclosed Arabic numerals following artist or band names indicate, first, the number of titles from each session, and, second, if followed by a slash, the total number of completed alternate takes also included.

**Selected collective personnel:** Bobby Hackett, Buck Clayton, Billy Butterfield, Max Kaminsky, Red Allen, Muggsy Spanier, Roy Eldridge, Marty Marsala, Hot Lips Page, Bunk Johnson, Wild Bill Davison, Cootie Williams, trumpet or cornet; George Brunies, Jack Teagarden, Vernon Brown, Brad Gowans, Miff Mole, Lou McGarity, Benny Morton, trombone; Pee Wee Russell, Lester Young, Irving Fazola, Albert Nicholas, Joe Marsala, George Lewis, Benny Goodman, Edmond Hall, clarinet; Pete Brown, Dave Matthews, Joe Marsala, Benny Carter, alto saxophone; Bud Freeman, Lester Young, Chu Berry, Eddie Miller, Coleman Hawkins, tenor saxophone; Stephane Grappelli, Stuff Smith, violin; Jess Stacy, Joe Bushkin, Teddy Wilson, Clyde Hart, Willie The Lion Smith, Jelly Roll Morton, Fats Waller, Joe Sullivan, Mel Powell, Gene Schroeder, Art Tatum, piano; Eddie Condon, Django Reinhardt, Freddie Green, Eddie Durham, Danny Barker, Bernard Addison, Al Casey, guitar; Artie Shapiro, Walter Page, Wellman Braud, Al Morgan, Bob Casey, Oscar Pettiford, bass; George Wettling, Dave Tough, Jo Jones, Sid Catlett, Zutty Singleton, Kansas Fields, drums; Billie Holiday, Jelly Roll Morton, Hot Lips Page, Lee Wiley, Jack Teagarden, George Brunies, vocal.

★★★★★

Recent years have seen the release of such mammoth-sized boxed sets as those devoted



to Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, and the Complete Keynote Collection. As awesome as they are, they're dwarfed by Mosaic's latest project—the release of every completed performance ever recorded by, or purchased for release by Milt Gabler's Commodore label. Ultimately, this will take the form of three boxed sets, each of presumably the same proportions. And if the 23 discs that comprise Volume I are any indication, this promises to be the largest scale reissue program ever undertaken by a single company at a single time.

Included here are 344 recordings, 67 of which were previously unissued, and another 27 of which, though for a long time owned by Commodore, never appeared on that label in any form, i.e., the Teddy Wilson School For Pianists solos on Record III. In addition, there is an attractively printed 64-page booklet that contains an extensive interview with Gabler conducted by Dan Morgenstern and Mosaic's producers, Charlie Lourie and Michael Cuscuna, a painstakingly detailed, session-by-session, track-by-track analysis by Morgenstern, and finally, two lists of titles—the first according to each individual LP's contents, and the second a more formal, chronologically-sequenced discography, complete with all relevant information.

Generally speaking, the Commodore catalog represents the first serious attempt by a small independent label to record pure jazz for a growing fraternity of musicians, fans, and collectors already frustrated by the restrictions imposed upon improvisation by even the best of the large swing bands. But despite the absence of orchestration that characterized the typical Commodore date, there was never a lack of either musical direction, organization, or commonly shared goals. And for this—the secret of Commodore's artistic success—we must be forever grateful for not only Gabler's dedication and inherent good taste, but also for the inestimably important contribution made by Eddie Condon, perhaps the world's most underappreciated bandleader.

It is a demonstrable fact that the majority of Commodore's best sessions, at the very least those that came to symbolize that label's early image, were those under Condon's musical direction, whether as nominal leader or not. He had the knack, like some other leaders, of selecting the best men for the job; but, unlike them, Condon's approach depended more on his men's mutually shared frames of reference than it did on more conventional, directorial methods. In other words, though infallible in his memory of old, obscure tunes and their correct harmonic movements, he would not dictate parts to his players so much as rely on their own proven talents to come up with their own "right notes"—sooner or later. Some of the previously unissued alternate takes will reveal, on close listening, a few goofs on the part of one or more of his sidemen, but these were invariably corrected to result in relatively perfected takes down the road.

Now, of course, the classic oeuvre of the so-called "Condon Gang," though it represents a healthy and perhaps definite chunk of Commodore's output, isn't all there is to this mind-blowing package. There are also the following, equally compelling reasons to embrace this music as your own: the Bud Freeman Trio dates, which represent a high-water mark, not

## Ray Anderson



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## John Carter



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## Bobby Previte



"Claude's Late Morning", featuring: Bobby Previte—drums, marimba, keyboards, drum machine, vocals; Wayne Horvitz—hammond organ, piano, harmonica; Ray Anderson—tuba, trombone; Bill Frisell—electric guitar, banjo; Josh Dubin—pedal steel guitar; Joey Baron—drums; Carol Emanuel—harp; Guy Klucevsek—accordion; Jim Mussen—electronic drums, sampling...Previte deftly creates a modern chamber music that rips, roars, and stops to think.

Blues Bred In the Bone  
18-8813-1/4/2

Fields  
18-8809-1/4/2  
Castles of Ghana  
18-8603-1/4/2  
Dance of the Love Ghosts  
18-8704-1/4/2

Claude's Late Morning  
18-8811-1/4/2  
Pushing the Envelope  
18-8711-1/4/2

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Compilation and notes by Michael Cuscuna...sound, Jack Towers, Phil Schaap... cover photo: Savoy Jazz Archives.



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only in the tenorman's own career, but, because of the remarkable interplay between Bud, Jess Stacy, and George Wettling throughout, a landmark in the history of jazz trios in general; the Kansas City Six date, because it affords us the most extended opportunity anywhere to hear Lester Young's highly personal clarinet; both of Coleman Hawkins' sessions, not only for the unflaggingly inventive contributions of the greatest tenorman who ever lived, but also for the equally inspired work of Benny Carter, Roy Eldridge, Cootie Williams, and Art Tatum—this is "52nd Street Jazz" at its best!

Are there more reasons? Certainly, and among these are the piano solo recordings. Where else can you find in one package entire sessions by such uncontested giants as Jelly Roll Morton, Willie The Lion Smith, Teddy Wilson, Jess Stacy, Joe Sullivan, Joe Bushkin, and Mel Powell? Along with the rare Cow Cow Davenport and the two blues by Art Hodes, that adds up to almost 90 titles. Additionally, there are the two swinging dates by Chu Berry—one with Roy and the other with Hot Lips, the Pee Wee Russell Trio session that

produced two incontestable classics (*Jig Walk* and *The Last Time I Saw Chicago*), Billie Holiday's *Strange Fruit*, the wonderful solo work by Joe Marsala and Pete Brown on two rarely heard Leonard Feather sessions, Benny Goodman's relaxed but intensely heated solos with Mel Powell, the complete Bunk Johnson Jazz Information recordings (including three previously unissued alternate takes), and the extremely rare comedy talk record by Bud Freeman and radio actress Minerva Pious ("Mrs. Nussbaum" on the old Fred Allen Show).

Unfortunately, remaining space does not allow for more than an apology to the memories of all those other deserving stalwarts who contributed to the making of the Commodore legend in the late '30s and early '40s, but take comfort in the fact that the album notes truly give credit where credit is due.

Mosaic Records are not available in retail stores, but they can be purchased by writing 197 Strawberry Hill Avenue, Stamford, CT 06902, or by calling (203) 327-7111. Be advised that this is a Limited Edition release of 2500 copies.

—jack sohmer

## 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.)

### CAPITOL/BLUE NOTE/EMI-MANHATTAN/INTUITION:

101 North, 101 North. John Hassell, *The Surgeon Of The Night Sky Restores Dead Things By The Power Of Sound*. Charlie Mariano, *Mariano*. Steve Miller, *Born 2 B Blue*. Hermeto Pascoal & Grupo, *Only If You Don't Want It, You Can't Do It*. Freddie Hubbard & Woody Shaw, *The Eternal Triangle*. Stanley Jordan, *Flying Home*. Tania Maria, *Forbidden Colors*. Bobby Watson, *No Question About It*.

### FANTASY / MILESTONE / PABLO / CONTEMPORARY / LANDMARK:

Frank Morgan Quartet, *Yardbird Suite*. Bobby Hutcherson, *Cruisin' The Bird*. Cliff Habian Quintet, *Tonal Paintings*. Cobb/Gillespie/Brown, *Show Time*. Ruth Brown, *Have A Good Time*. Eddie Vinson and Cannonball Adderley, *Cleanhead & Cannonball*. Art Farmer Quintet, *Blame It On My Youth*. Harry Sweets Edison, *For My Pals*. Bill Evans, *You're Gonna Hear From Me*. Claudio Roditi, *Gemini Man*. Joe Pass, *Blues For Fred*.

### BLACK SAINT/SOUL NOTE:

Rova, *Beat Kennel*. Horace Parlan Quartet, *Little Esther*. Andrew Hill, *Verona Rag*. Anthony Braxton, *Six Monk's Compositions*. Kenny Wheeler Quintet, *Flutter By, Butterfly*.

### ATLANTIC/EAST-WEST/ISLAND/ANTILLES/MANGO:

Dear Mr. President, *Dear Mr. President*. Carmen McRae, *The Great American Songbook*.

The Wave, *Second Wave*. Milt Jackson, *Bebop*. Cornell Dupree & Who It Is, *Coast To Coast*. Jay Azzolina, *Never Too Late*. Buckwheat Zydeco, *Taking It Home*. Cultural Roots, *Running Back To Me*. Zani Diabate & The Super Djata Band, *Zani Diabate & The Super Djata Band*.

**GRP:** Daryl Stuermer, *Steppin' Out*. Mark Egan, *A Touch of Light*. Gary Burton, *Times Like These*. Lee Ritenour, *Festival*. Various Artists, *A GRP Christmas Collection*.

**WARNER/OPAL:** Brian Eno, *Music For Films III*. Ladysmith Black Mambazo, *Journey Of Dreams*. George Benson, *Twice The Love*. Roger Eno, *Between Tides*.

**ECM:** Dave Holland Trio, *Triplicate*. John Surman, *Private City*. Rabih Abou-Khalil, *Nafas*.

**COLUMBIA:** Kent Jordan, *Essence*. Billie Holiday, *The Quintessential Vol. 4*. Benny Goodman, *Slipped Disc*. Thelonious Monk, *The Composer*. Louis Armstrong, *The Hot Fives & Hot Sevens Vol. II*. Osamu, *California Roll*. Various Artists: *Bird* (Soundtrack); *A Vision Shared*, *A Tribute To Woody Guthrie And Leadbelly*.

### BLACK LION/FREEDOM/CANDID:

Miles Davis, *Bopping The Blues*. Thelonious Monk, *The London Collection Vol 1*. Cecil Taylor: *Silent Tongues*, *The World Of Jumpin' Pumpkins*. Abbey Lincoln, *Straight Ahead*. Miroslav Vitous, *Miroslav*. Ruby Braff, *Hustlin' And Bustlin'*. The United Jazz + Rock Ensemble, *Highlights*. Randy Weston, *Blues To Africa*.

**HEADFIRST:** Vinny Bianchi and Providence, *Sweet Innocence*. Sherry Winston, *Do It For Love*. Dave Peel Octet, *Live At Allonsés*.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

# cd reviews

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



## BILL EVANS

**THE COMPLETE RIVERSIDE RECORDINGS**—Riverside RCD-018-2; TUNES RECORDED IN 20 SESSIONS FROM SEPTEMBER 27, 1956 TO MAY 30 AND 31, 1963.

**Personnel:** Evans, piano; with (in alphabetical order) Cannonball Adderley, Larry Bunker, Ron Carter, Paul Chambers, Jim Hall, Percy Heath, Freddie Hubbard, Chuck Israels, Philly Joe Jones, Sam Jones, Connie Kay, Teddy Kotick, Scott LaFaro, Paul Motian, and Zoot Sims.

★★★★★

"Especially, I want my work—and the trios if possible—to sing . . . it must have that wonderful feeling of singing."

A quick look at the 112 titles listed in the 16-page booklet that accompanies this attractive 12-CD boxed set gives it away: pianist Bill Evans was all feeling, his mostly trio-based music being lush, romantic, and full of singing. His piano playing was intensely personal, sometimes to the point of being solipsistic. At its best, Evans' style was ever-searching, in a constant state of refinement.

The LP version of this set and a couple of the CDs have been reviewed in **db** over the past three years. But this most recent package puts it all together, with discs running anywhere from 65 on up to almost 73 minutes each (and well under the almost nine pounds its vinyl predecessor weighed!).

Martin Williams' sensitive "Homage To Bill Evans" provides a short bio along with a "play-by-play" of Evans' Riverside years—years crucial to his emerging talent and musical conception. Photos of Evans, of many of his associates, and a gallery of album covers—all of this and more grace the pages of the booklet. And Orrin Keepnews, a man of inestimable worth to recorded jazz, furnishes his producer notes, session by session.

Evans was not a prolific composer. Of the 112 songs here, only 22 were written or co-written by him. His *Waltz For Debby* gets the most attention with four different versions. There are 24 unaccompanied pieces, including three medleys. As with the LP version, there are 20 previously unreleased tunes, some being alternates, 14 coming from a recently discovered '63 solo session. And the most famous live recordings Evans ever made—with Paul Motian and Scott LaFaro, *the Evans trio*—are all here.

As a leader, Evans made his first recording for Riverside in late '56, with bassist Teddy Kotick and a Max Roach-inspired Motian. Stylistically, Evans the leader would continue to rework the formula he laid down here, mixing

his occasional compositions with jazz standards and pop tunes. Bud Powell's influence is most obvious on the early swinging Evans, his *Five* and Tadd Dameron's *Our Delight* being good examples. The sound is crisp and well-defined on these mono recordings. (A curiosity: Evans' second session, in '58 with Sam Jones and Philly Joe Jones, was recorded in stereo, while the third session—Paul Chambers replacing Sam Jones—in early '59 was recorded in *mono*.)

The excellent sound provided by Kirk Felton's digital remastering doesn't really kick in completely until LaFaro hits the scene on a late '59 session. A/B comparisons are revealing with every session, but something in the mix, chemistry, know-how, etc., has the Evans trio on this fourth outing of Evans as a leader suddenly in your living room. For example, *Witchcraft* performs its tricks, one being Motian's brushwork, giving the "appearance" of a ghost doing a sandy softshoe.

My least favorite Evans has tended to be his ensemble playing, with one exception: his stint with Miles in '58. And yet, many of the quartet and quintet performances here allow for the kind of interplay, melodic beauty, and sudden mood shifts that became Evans trademarks. In 1961 he appeared as a sideman for Cannonball Adderley, while in '62 he led two different bands into the studio—the first including guitarist Jim Hall and a young Freddie Hubbard, the other tenor saxist Zoot Sims and Hall. For the most part, Evans keeps pace with the horns on all three sessions playing in unison and laying out on occasion. Evans' *Know What I Mean?* shows that quiet-then-lively side to his playing as he follows in Adderley's stead. Evans' playful *Loose Bloose* (both takes) finds Evans, Sims, and Hall blending, swinging ever so subtly. In fact, the whole of this last session is made up entirely of Evans compositions. There is, however, a density to some of these performances that makes it necessary for Evans to suspend or subdue his rich harmonic musings until he solos. With Miles, there was that space necessary for Evans' "singing" to surface—that modal freedom here being exchanged for more pop-inspired structures. The sound is a

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shade flatter on these three sessions, with one exception: Cannonball's sterling alto.

Saving the best for last, the LaFaro/Motian music best demonstrates the three-way conversation that was possible within the Evans' repertoire. The Village Vanguard recordings' sound allows you to imagine being there, hearing each instrument clearly along with the sounds of the Vanguard's respectful yet appreciative audiences. Listen to LaFaro's *Gloria's Step*, Miles' *Solar*, or the standard, *My Foolish Heart*; you hear a variety of moods communicated sensitively, passionately, swinging and "singing." There is a presence to these performances that would be repeated with subsequent Evans trios, but not with the same kind of magic. LaFaro's intriguing bass conceptions were free to roam against the de-emphasized beat, thanks to Evans' left hand not doubling the bass; his approach to the piano being more in line with horn players rather than piano/rhythm instrument players.

Throughout his career, Bill Evans experimented with other forms and textures. His orchestra work with such notables as Oliver Nelson, Gunther Schuller, and George Russell showed another side, the side of a man with a zeal for growth, new ideas, new contexts. And yet, as Evans himself put it: "I always wanted a trio . . . that was my basic ambition." And it was within the context of a trio that his music became, as he stated, "an extension, not a break with tradition." His were impressionistic,

idiosyncratic renditions of love songs, twelve-tone-tunes architecturally and rhythmically constructed; haunting melodies that reflected a life that included melancholy and longing. Words like "I," "Me," "Love," and "You," can be found in most of the titles of the songs he played again and again.

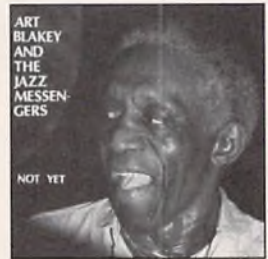
Bill Evans' influence on other musicians is well-documented. These Riverside recordings bring that original voice into full view. As Miles said on Evans' second album cover, "I've sure learned a lot from Bill Evans. He plays the piano the way it should be played." That he did, that he did.  
—john ephland

## BLAKEY'S ART

by Kevin Whitehead

All who doubt the continued vitality of **Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers** should hear *Why Not* (Soul Note 121 105-2, 53:34 minutes), recorded in March '88. Even those not afflicted with audiophilia will note how superbly captured Blakey's special effects are: the even pressure he keeps on unison cymbals and bass drum

and an accented snare (Javon Jackson's *Not Yet*), his finely detailed cymbal strokes (Walter Davis' slightly tricky *Uranus*), the crisp snare comments based on four-beat and four-bar time frames. If Blakey can't hear, he sure fakes well—though he chomp-chomp-chomps straight across Peter Washington's bass solo on *Kenji's Mood*.



The clear recording also underscores how open and breathing this band sounds. On *For Heaven's Sake*, the bass carries the brunt of comping duties, as pianist Benny Green keeps a low profile. (He's worked with Betty Carter, another leader with whom interaction is constant but ensemble density light.) Green shines (and strides) on *I'll Never Be The Same*, a nice tune which

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hasn't been done to death. Philip Harper has a warm peachfuzz trumpet tone; tenorist Jackson sports a rich, throaty timbre and dancing rhythm. Trombonist Robin Eubanks keeps his outward tendencies in check and his J.J. burnish up front. The trumpet-tenor-trombone front line is a stab from the past; these well-matched three stand comparison with their illustrious '60s predecessors.

Jackson, Green, Washington, altoist Kenny Garrett, and one J. Harper on trumpet appear on the abbreviated title track to the Messengers' *Hard Champion* (ProJazz 657, a skimpy 41:05 minutes) from 10 months earlier. The three other tunes are by a well-documented crew—Blanchard and Harrison, Jean Toussaint on tenor, Mulgrew Miller, and bassist Lonnie Plaxico—caught at Sweet Basil in May '85. The Blakey/Plaxico interplay is always close, and Wayne Shorter's *Witch Hunt* boasts a forceful Blanchard solo and an outward-reaching Harrison. But overall it's not the most sterling example of what these Messengers could do.

*Album Of The Year* (MCA 33103, 42:40 minutes) is a compact disc reissue of an April 1981 date for the Dutch Timeless label, with Wynton Marsalis, Bobby Watson, Billy Pierce, James Williams, and big-beat bassist Charles Fambrough—the edition of the band that refocused attention on Blakey's career and achievements. It's an exuberant set. On Watson's *In Case You Missed It*, the criminally underrated altoist lets loose with tumbling, doubled-up phrases that look forward to Steve Coleman and Greg Osby. Tenorist Pierce's booting spot suggests what won him Blakey's flavor: he phrases like a drummer. The seamless segue from Pierce's solo into Watson's on the same piece is a too-rare example of real thematic continuity in a string-of-solos format. Williams' intro to his *Souful Mister Timmons* is more evidence of the leader's stride-piano advocacy. Throughout, the trumpeter plays with agreeably reckless enthusiasm, a long way from his current repressive restraint. Indeed, it's a shock to recall how fiery Marsalis sounded back then—*Album Of The Year* reminds us what all the excitement had been about.

*Giants Of Jazz In Berlin '71* (EmArcy 834 567-2, 65:12 minutes) is a previously unissued recital by an aptly named unit assembled by (who else?) Norman Granz: Blakey, Dizzy, Monk, Sonny Stitt on alto and tenor, Kai Winding, and Al McKibbin (whose mic gives his bass the power and resonance of a uke). The tour came at near the tail of Monk's recording career, and during the one period in which bandleader Blakey seemed unsure of his direction. (Likely each headliner was sick of hearing he didn't play with his peers enough.) But as Dizzy observed in *To Be, Or Not . . . To Bop*, having six leaders in the band has its drawbacks: each paid such deference to the others, the band lacked direction, and Monk's often submerged. *Tin Tin Deo* clicks.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43

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with Dizzy's half-valving on the intro oddly Bowie-like, and Monk plays 'Round Midnight with a hard-edged disdain for sentimentality (as do too few who play it now). Elsewhere, in lieu of a leader, the giants fall back on JATP patterns: brass riffing behind honking tenor on *Blue n' Boogie*, as everyone floats on an ocean of Blakey cymbals.

Stitt sounds most stimulated by the fast company—*Everything Happens To Me* is lovely. Monk is stealthiest, laying back until he finds a hole to plug, then leaping in. It's one of the tricks he taught his friend, the great teacher Art Blakey. **db**

**A**h, Christmas—time to drag the tree into the house, stir up some eggnog, and dig out my collection of Christmas albums. I confess to having a hopeless weakness for jazzed-up Christmas songs, and the season would never seem complete without hearing the Ellington band's sublime version of *Jingle Bells* or Miles Davis' mournful *Blue Xmas*.



This year, I'll be popping *A GRP Christmas Collection* (GRD-9574, 57:42 minutes) into my CD player a lot, too. This new sampler features most of the prominent artists on the GRP Records roster, including Dave Grusin, Tom Scott, Gary Burton, and the Chick Corea Elektric Band. The sound quality is superb and most of the arrangements are ingenious, although a couple of the cuts had me reaching for the "next track" button after about 30 seconds.

The highlights, for me, are Diane Schuur's smooth, elegant version of *The Christmas Song* ("chestnuts roasting," etc.) and a quartet of refreshing Brazilian-influenced interpretations: Dave Valentin's *Santa Claus Is Coming To Town*, Eddie Daniels' *Sleigh Ride*, Kevin Eubanks' *Silver Bells*, and Mark Egan's *What Child Is This?* I have no idea why a tropical beat makes a Christmas song sound so irresistible—maybe it's the image of Santa trying to land all those reindeer in Rio—but these cuts are a gas.

Now, if I could only remember where I put my copy of Lambert, Hendricks & Ross singing *Deck The Halls With Boston Charlie*. . . .  
—jim roberts

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## SUI GENERIS

by Art Lange

**E**ach in his own way, of course, **Duke Ellington** and **Count Basie** created bodies of work unmatched in terms of depth and breadth. With over 50 years of recorded material to choose from, record companies are still only scratching the surface of their enormous output for CD reissue. Priorities and results vary. What follows is a survey of recently released discs, ostensibly (but not obsessively) in chronological order.

Taken primarily from Brunswick and Okeh recordings, the 16 cuts comprising *Duke Ellington: Great Original Performances 1927-34* (BBC CD 643, 50:57—distributed in the U.S. by Mobile Fidelity) document the earliest Ellington on CD, a period where the still-fledgling co-operative waxed titles



Duke Ellington: formative fun.

under such monikers as the Washingtonians, the Chicago Footwarmers, Mills' Ten Blackberries, the Jungle Band, and, ironically, by 1932, Duke Ellington & His *Famous Orchestra*. During these

formative years the band's distinctiveness came from the individuality of its soloists, and not the oftentimes stock or tacky period arrangements. Thus engineer Robert Parker's remastering of the muddy, inconclusive original 78s is as much the star here as the music itself. The sound of this CD is spectacular to these ears—clean, crisp, vibrant, substantial, and without distortion—and as a result we can thoroughly enjoy and understand the individual contributions fully for the first time. The exotic timbral exaggerations of Bubber Miley's trumpet and Tricky Sam Nanton's trombone were crucial to creating the band's identity for all time, and to hear Nanton's growl slice through the sugary sax vibrato, so typical of the period, in *The Blues With A Feelin'*, explains what all the early excitement was about. This version of *The Mooche*—which retained its haunting power and mystery through the years—is the Okeh performance featuring Baby Cox's scat; one measure of this tune's popularity is the fact that the band recorded it three times, for three different labels, in October 1928 alone. Other highlights tend to be individual moments—Cootie Williams' ferocious plunger work on *Creole Love Call*, the glib but impressive cutting-contest facility and speed of Ellington's piano on the aptly titled *Fast And Furious*, the resonance of Hodges' Bechet-like soprano sax contrasting the corny arrangement of *Live And Love Tonight*. Overall, Parker's selection of material is instructive—there's a real sense of growth evident from 1927's cheesy *What Can A Poor Fellow Do?* to the streamlined swing of *Stompy Jones* a mere seven years later. Still, with over 20 minutes of unused disc time, one feels the lack of such classics as the initial recordings of *Mood Indigo*, *Black & Tan Fantasy*, *Rockin' In Rhythm*, or *Creole Rhapsody*, not to mention lesser but still intriguing pieces like *Yellow Dog Blues*, *Tishomingo Blues*, *Rent Party Blues*, *Jazz Convulsions*, or *Doin' The Voom Voom*. The opportunity to hear them in Parker's stunning sound makes their absence all the more disappointing. Subsequent volumes, please?

Cut to 1940. The Duke Ellington Orchestra is confident, creative, and truly famous, and *The Blanton-Webster Band* (RCA/Bluebird 5659-2-RB, 69:38/73:38/66:20), squeezing four LPs of music onto three well-packed CDs and including Mark Tucker's perceptive and thorough notes, contains many of the classics of the Ducal canon. Yes, "A" *Train* (with its first notes still clipped off in some remastering mishap), *Perdido*, *Cottontail*, *I Got It Bad*, *In A Mellotone*, *Never No Lament*, *Concerto For Cootie*, *Ko-Ko*, and countless others of greater or lesser popularity are here. However, these hits were not created in an aesthetic vacuum, and so there are an equal number of "sweet" tunes that reveal the continual and unfortunate exigencies of the big band business. This bulging collection (and, even more, the subsequent set *Black, Brown & Beige*) knowingly contrasts the corn and the caviar—but one of the blessings of the CD format is the

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ability to reprogram or reject cuts you don't want to hear. So the lesser material is valuable to have, as it allows us to discover angelic details otherwise buried in a throwaway cut, to hear Hodges swoop, Cootie growl, Stewart snake, or Webster roar out of an otherwise mundane arrangement of a pop vocal. These moments are the most surprising—the ensemble's drive fueled by a feverish Basie-styled (!) rhythm section on *Me And You*, the great "jungle" effects on the lyrically forgettable *Chocolate Shake*, hearing Hodges grunt in an effort to sustain a solo at the unwise whirlybird tempo of *The Giddybug Gallop*.

Ellington's early '40s recordings remind us that much of his greatness resided in his compositional ambition—his desire to expand on the musical and dramatic conventions of jazz. Both *The Blanton-Webster Band* and *Black, Brown & Beige* (RCA/Bluebird 6641-2-RB, 59:30/61:45/58:59) practically overflow with his successes, separated chronologically, as they are, by the recording ban of 1942-44. (Though the January 1943 Carnegie Hall concert, which premiered the complete score of *Black, Brown & Beige*, and the December 1944 one which debuted the four excerpts which, in studio waxings, are included here, were recorded and eventually issued on Prestige LPs.) Most damaging to this period were the band's personnel losses: Jimmy Blanton, Barney Bigard, Ben Webster, and Cootie Williams, irreplaceable voices all (though Cat Anderson and Jimmy Hamilton added their own talents during this time). This, and other factors, led to an increase in "pop" vocals (more than half of the 54 cuts here are vocals, while less than one-third of the previous set's 66 cuts were). So such hits as *In A Sentimental Mood*, *Prelude To A Kiss*, *It Don't Mean A Thing*, *Sophisticated Lady*, and *Things Ain't What They Used To Be*—along with successes like a truly modernistic *Caravan*, and muscular items like *Swamp Fire* and *Suddenly It Jumped*—share space with nearly an entire year's worth (1946) of non-Ellington compositions. If any single cut can exemplify the dichotomy facing the Ellington band at this point in time, it would be *Rockabye River*, where the powerful *Mooche*-ish jungle arrangement looks to a lost past even while Johnny Hodges' magnificent solo presages ever more sophisticated directions. In fact, you can trace a growing dependency upon Hodges as featured soloist throughout this set, due perhaps to the loss of valued soloists and Hodges' ever-increasing public visibility. But who's complaining?

An interesting divertissement during this same '46-47 period can be heard on 22 *Original Big Band Recordings* (Hindsight HCD 410, 69:48), radio transcriptions of varying sound quality—forthright and solid at best, dark and muddy at worst. In amongst the hits (nearly identical versions of *Just Squeeze Me*, *Perdido*, and "A" Train) and filler (a sketchy *Who Struck John?*) are some standards (*How High The Moon*, *Tea For Two*) and a sample of hits from other

bands (*Blue Lou*, 9:20 *Special*, *On The Alamo*). It's a kick to hear Duke mimic Basie's spare piano on *One O'Clock Jump*, though the arrangement is borrowed lock, stock, and riff. Other gems include *Moon Mist*, *Passion Flower*, and a delightful *Happy Go Lucky Local* that's nearly surrealistic in its Dali-esque distortion.

The aforementioned rise in sideman visibility allowed not only Hodges but also Rex Stewart and Barney Bigard to continue the time-honored tradition of small group Ellingtonia. *The Great Ellington Units* (RCA/

Bluebird 6751-2-RB, 69:01), separate sessions from '40-41 which made use of the same basic rhythm section: Duke, Jimmy Blanton, and Sonny Greer, are mostly relaxed—though never complacent—outings of musical and historical import. The clean, close CD sound is a definite plus, and there are many felicitous moments—the underrated Stewart's dedications to fellow Ellington brassmen Bubber Miley and Cootie Williams, Ben Webster's work, Bigard's casual mastery,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 59

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The two degrees East are Lewis and Percy Heath, the three from the West are Jim Hall, Chico Hamilton, and tenor saxophonist Bill Perkins. This is one of those rare record dates where the intimacy and imagination of each performer was in high gear and the chemistry worked...a classic!

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# blindfold test

**1 TOM HARRELL.** *RAPTURE*  
(from *MOON ALLEY, Criss Cross*) Harrell,  
trumpet, composer; Kenny Garrett, alto sax;  
Kenny Barron, piano; Ray Drummond, bass;  
Ralph Peterson, drums.

I don't know who it is. I know it's not Randy Brecker but I hear a lot of what Randy plays in this player. When he plays the unison line it's reminiscent of Blue Mitchell. I don't know who the saxophonist is but I like him a lot. He's fiery. I like the trumpet player but his chops sound a little hot and cold. I think he's very good and that he probably plays better than he's playing on this at times. The tune is alright. It didn't knock me out. The rhythm section is excellent. It's spirited. Stars? I'm very fussy. Let me say 3¼.

**2 FREDDIE HUBBARD.** *BODY AND SOUL* (from *REEVALUATIONS, Impulse*) Hubbard, trumpet; Wayne Shorter, arranger.

This record knocks me out. Even before the improvising I could hear the fantastic control of this trumpet player. It's very reminiscent of Clifford. It's got to be Freddie—like that last lick, nobody else can do that. This is one of the best records I've ever heard by a trumpet player. Gorgeous arrangement. Not only is this Freddie Hubbard, this is some of the best Freddie Hubbard I've ever heard. It's humbling. He was really on when he did this. Strong five stars.

**3 CLAUDIO RODITI.** *GEMINI MAN* (from *GEMINI MAN, Milestone*) Roditi, trumpet, composer.

You wouldn't play me the same guy on two different records, would you? I think it might be Claudio Roditi because Claudio has a fabulous technique and is a beautiful player; but if you hadn't played me Freddie before, I might think it was Freddie—his technique, like that last lick, and harmonically. The tone is different. It sounds like Lee Morgan and Freddie, but it's neither of them. I think it's Claudio, and he probably wrote the tune, too. If you're fooling me and this is Freddie again, I'll give it five stars. If it's not Freddie I can't give it five stars because it's too derivative of Freddie. I'm giving these records stars against each other, not against an absolute. Alright, whoever it is he's really playing his ass off, especially on the fours. I'll give it five stars anyway. I'll have to give Freddie 10.

**4 KENNY WHEELER.** *SMATTER*  
(from *Gnu High, ECM*) Wheeler,  
trumpet, composer; Keith Jarrett, piano; Dave Holland, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

I can't tell from the tone who this is. I like

**LEW SOLOFF**  
by Michael Bourne

**W**hatever he plays, trumpeter Lew Soloff plays with great spirit and great chops. One of the pioneers of fusion with Blood, Sweat and Tears, he's become a regular around the New York jazz scene, working most often through the years with the Gil Evans big band. He was one of those who gathered for a Duke Ellington tribute at this summer's "Classical Jazz" festival at Lincoln Center, joining Willie Cook, Marcus Belgrave, and Wynton Marsalis in the stellar trumpet section. He stole the show with every solo, and soon thereafter was featured on another favorite gig, playing New Orleans funk with Dr. John for a Music Cruise around Manhattan. He's also a favorite soloist of pianist Hilton Ruiz, and singer Janis Siegel of the Manhattan Transfer, among musical others.

Nowadays he's recording more and more up front, especially on best-selling CDs in Japan. The Manhattan Jazz Quintet—ironically named inasmuch as they've never played together in Manhattan—is the most popular American jazz band in Japan. *My Favorite Things* (Pro-Jazz CDJ 648) is the quintet's fifth session released in the U.S. featuring Soloff's trumpet with pianist Dave Mat-



MITCHELL SEIDEL

thews, bassist Eddie Gomez, drummer Steve Gadd, and saxophonist George Young. *The Manhattan Jazz Quintet Plays the Blue Note* is forthcoming. *Speak Low* (Pro-Jazz CDJ 656) is Soloff's third release as a leader, joined by pianist Kenny Kirkland, bassist Richard Davis, and drummer Elvin Jones. He's just finished a new recording with the Gil Evans rhythm section and Janis Siegel guesting.

This was Soloff's first Blindfold Test. He was given no information about the music played.

the song. I love the drummer and the concept. The only thing I didn't like is that it didn't seem to build. I like everything but there's a sameness that goes on throughout, without an emotional building. The trumpet player is certainly virtuosic. I can hear that right away. At first I was going to give it a strong four stars but I'll have to go down to three because in listening to the total track it doesn't grab me. The first three or four minutes is nice and pleasant, and then the same thing basically happens the next three or four minutes. I love the tune. It's an interesting vehicle. I just wish more had happened. It takes more than a soloist to get it off for me.

**5 WYNTON MARSALIS.**  
*SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE A MOTHERLESS CHILD*  
(from *CARNAVAL, Columbia*) Marsalis, cornet;  
the Eastman Wind Ensemble.

It's the Eastman Wind Ensemble with Wynton Marsalis. I love it. This is really more of an example of his classical trumpet playing with a little jazz inflection at the end, a jazz

flavor; but basically he's towing the line, playing what's on the paper. I think he's fabulous. This is one of the most phenomenal trumpet records that anybody ever recorded. He gets so much PR and public play that people tend to be super-critical of him, but I loved him before all that was going on, and I still do. I give him an unequivocal five stars.

**6 DIZZY GILLESPIE.** *I SHOULD CARE* (from *ENDLESSLY, Impulse*) Gillespie, trumpet; Barry Eastmond, strings.

Dizzy sounds great on this. What can you say about one of your musical fathers? So much of what he plays is stuff I've tried to do that he's done already. He sounds together. He sounds beautiful. I could live without the strings. His tone is big and full. He sounds relaxed and in control. He's one of the giant creators of the trumpet, but I don't like the strings. It conflicts. It brings the record down to a 3½. Take the strings out and you've got a five-star record. Unlimited stars for the trumpet player. db

## ROBERT IRVING III

A MILES KEYBOARDIST STEPS OUT ON HIS OWN WITH A DEBUT ALBUM AND TALKS ABOUT HIS CAREER AND WORKING WITH THE LEGENDARY TRUMPETER.

by Scott Yanow

**R**obert Irving III, best known as Miles Davis' musical director and keyboardist since 1983, recently recorded *Midnight Dream*, his first album as a leader for the newly-reformed Verve Forecast label. "It's very diverse, almost to the point of causing some concern about the various directions," states Irving. "I did three tunes with John Scofield, Darryl Jones, and Buddy Williams and we could have cut a whole album together but I wanted to display my more diverse talents as a producer. Also I didn't want this to sound like a Miles Davis album without Miles."

After many years of functioning as part of the ensemble with Davis (sharing keyboard duties with Adam Holzman) and playing in anonymity as a studio musician, Irving finally steps to the forefront on *Midnight Dream*. The album is full of variety with the three Scofield pieces balanced out by a trio of pop vocal features for Phil Perry and three others focusing on Irving's keyboards. "The album is cohesive stylistically with my sound, the production and the textures holding the date together. I add social commentary on two of the vocal pieces. *Time Will Tell* deals with the urgency to do something about the nuclear problem while *Let's Not Wait* is an anti-apartheid tune. *Midnight Dream* deals with dreams and hope. The instrumentals include *Nikki*, a danceable song with acoustic piano in the front; it's for my daughter. *All Is Well* is my motto in life that I kept through all of the hard times to remind myself that there is a sun hanging above the clouds."

The 35-year-old Irving was born in Chicago. "At a young age I heard a lot of jazz in general and concert band music. I started on the trombone, later picked up guitar, and eventually switched to piano which I started at 14. Miles tries to get me to play trombone with the band now and then but I've lost interest in it. I most enjoyed listening to the Young-Holt Unlimited, Ramsey Lewis, George Duke, and later Earth, Wind & Fire."

Shortly before he moved with his family to North Carolina, Irving learned some important musical lessons from his high school band director. "Working with George Hunter in Chicago was very impressionable. He took a special interest in me, gave me private lessons in theory, and encouraged



me to switch from trombone to piano. He turned me on to the standards and let me go with him on some of his big band gigs, setting up music stands and sometimes sitting in on piano and organ."

Moving to North Carolina both helped and hindered the young pianist's musical development. "When I first moved we lived in a small country town and there was little exposure to any music other than country & western and the current pop music. It forced me to turn within and practice what I'd learned. If I'd stayed in Chicago I would probably have developed faster as a player but I would not have met the people in North Carolina that eventually led to me meeting Miles Davis."

Irving played organ in a church choir and performed in quite a variety of local bands. In college he majored in business and worked in the insurance business for three years after graduation, playing music on the side.

With his return to Chicago in 1978, Robert Irving switched to music full-time and made an important contact. "In one of the bands I'd played with earlier we'd performed cover tunes of Earth, Wind & Fire. At a party in Chicago I ended up playing their tunes on piano with Vince Wilburn—Miles Davis' nephew—and Randy Hall. Since we got along well we started working together, at first playing fusion and then switching to pop-oriented material.

"I was only familiar with Miles Davis through *Bitches Brew* and his standards that are in the fake books. Miles would call Vince periodically to talk and then Vince would put us on the phone so we could 'rap with Miles.' After about a year of this kind of thing, Vince played some demos that we had cut over the phone and Miles was really wiped out by them, especially a song called *Space*. He wanted us to come to New York to record with him!

"When I first walked in his brownstone in Manhattan I was a bit nervous but he embraced me and told me that I reminded

him a lot of himself at my age. I played a few things for him and he started showing me progressions and almost immediately he expanded my harmonic concept by showing me how to use tension and space.

"We rehearsed at his brownstone and after we had played and recorded all the tunes we already knew, Miles kept after us, asking us to write new tunes. *Shout* and *The Man With The Horn* came from this period."

Although those two songs became part of Davis' comeback album, *The Man With The Horn*, Irving only performed on the title cut and was not asked to join Miles' group. "I really didn't have that much confidence in my playing, not having studied piano that much formally. I felt I was there because of my work as a composer and that my playing was incidental; I was far from ready to play with him."

Back in Chicago, Irving worked with Ramsey Lewis (arranging and playing keyboards on *Three Piece Suite*, *Chance Encounter*, and later participating on *Live At The Savoy*), acted as musical director for Sister Sledge on a tour, and worked on the play *The Little Dreamer: A Night In The Life Of Bessie Smith*. "I'd never played in that style before but I had played gospel, which was close. I studied with Little Brother Montgomery for several weeks and then wrote the score for clarinet, piano, tuba, and drums. The show lasted for six months in 1982."

Miles Davis kept in contact with Irving during this period and enlisted his assistance for *Decoy*. "The title cut is my favorite selection. It was a pretty spontaneous album with very little rehearsing. Miles' solo on *Decoy* was a first-take as were many of the pieces." After the recording, the trumpeter asked Irving to join the group. "Before me, Miles was playing the keyboards himself. He wanted to do the *Decoy* material live and asked me if it was possible to use a drum machine on stage—which wasn't done much back in 1983—along with Al Foster. I commented that I'd never seen it done before but if Al wore a headset it'd probably work. Al wasn't too happy about this headphone business so Miles said to me that maybe I shouldn't join the band at this time. I was disappointed, so he partly relented and suggested I sit in with the band rather than officially joining. He said 'Do it at your own risk. If you screw up, it's curtains.' All I had to go on was a cassette of a previous concert, hearing the comping that Miles did; no rehearsal. I sat in, it worked out, and soon I was going to Europe with the band.

"After all that, Al and I understood each other and became good friends. Miles pretty much put me in charge of the musical direction which always struck me as a bit weird because how can you be the musical director for Miles Davis?"

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Irving also was a major part of Miles' *You're Under Arrest*, which he co-produced with Davis. "The original idea for that record was for Miles to do an album of pop ballads, including a Kenny Loggins tune *This Is It*, a Chaka Khan melody, and a few others in that vein. I put down some basic tracks under the supervision of Gil Evans but it didn't work out that way; a few ballads were mixed in with more uptempo material."

In addition to performing with Miles Davis during the past five years, Irving has been busy writing film and television scores, including an episode of the new *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and the film *Street Smart*, both of which utilized Miles as a trumpet soloist. He has also done radio commercials (his wife is a production manager for an ad company) and has been interested in producing other artists' recordings.

What musical aspects make Robert Irving most valuable to Miles Davis as a musical director? "The fact that I'm a composer/arranger and know enough not to overcrowd the music, working on adding the proper textures and coloring. Miles delegates to us a great deal of responsibility. He doesn't often attend rehearsals and never sound-checks. He gives me a chance to express myself even if later on he decides it isn't really what he wants. At least I have the chance to fail and to prove myself."

For equipment Irving uses "a Yamaha MRDX7, a Roland BSO, and a Yamaha KX1 keyboard; anyone of those can be utilized as a MIDI controller. I also use a Yamaha TX 416 rack, a Korg DX 8000 modular, an Aka 5900 sampler, an Akai 5612 sampler—in addition to many samplers of my own—and two Yamaha mixers."

On stage how do the musicians know when to switch grooves? "Miles directs us abstractly, telling us what he wants on a particular piece. Sometimes we're not always sure what he means, but having worked with him quite awhile I can read between the lines. Switching from one song to another in concert, he gives us very subtle cues, mostly melodic lines that he plays. There are a lot of tunes that he no longer plays but we keep certain melodic excerpts from them as cues."

Although Irving has no plans to leave Miles Davis in the near future, the release of *Midnight Dream* is an important first step in getting his name known independent of Davis. "I'd like to lead my own group eventually. I've given a lot of thought to the possible personnel. I have a lot of ideas for updating standards, writing fusion-oriented arrangements of older tunes. I'd like to develop music for albums and work them out on tour before making the record." On evidence of *Midnight Dream*, particularly the wide variety of colors that he creates on the groovin' *All Is Well*, Robert Irving III's motto may very well be fitting of his life during his eventual solo career. db

## LES DeMERLE

HEIR TO BUDDY RICH AND SONNY PAYNE WITH HARRY JAMES AND FOUNDER OF THE TRANSFUSION BAND, LES DEMERLE CONTINUES "AS THE EYE IN THE STORM."

by John McDonough

**A** drummer is also a dancer. More than any other musician, his art is movement and choreography. The very nature of the instrument ordains it. The drums visualize music and rhythm in a way no other instrument can. Gene Kelly often says "dance follows music." If true, then the drummer leads the way. Rock drummers today know this as surely as swing drummers knew it in the '30s. The culture of an era marches to the pace of a drummer, which is why Gene Simmons is to Michael Jackson as Jo Jones was to Fred Astaire.

Les DeMerle knows this too. At 42, he's been on the national scene since 1970 when he joined Harry James and became the final heir to predecessors Louis Bellson, Buddy Rich, and Sonny Payne. Some dismiss the



SHARON WHITE

"look" of a drummer as so much "showmanship." They assume attention to visual detail compromises musical detail. Not so fast, though. A great drummer with a good look is actually a musician who understands the mutuality between music and motion, the ear and the eye. And DeMerle is a fear-somely good drummer.

DeMerle on the stand is the eye in a

storm. He deploys his entire body in his work. In a climactic solo—even a break—his arms pump up and down like a plane trying to take off by flapping its wings. It is a signature gesture. Or he will hurl himself on an 18-inch crash cymbal, grab it under his left arm, and bend its pitch until it seems about to snap. His face fills with intensity—a clinched, toothy, 500-watt grimace that comes straight out of Buddy Rich. (DeMerle's peer and contemporary, Butch Miles, has it too.) His fast solo work is a blur of bold, precise, superbly choreographed cross-overs and stick work. If there is a certain visual pomp and circumstance to his performances, however, the pomp is purely circumstantial. Fast or slow, DeMerle is the epitome of visual and musical grace, a combination in which he finds no dilemma.

"I know some drummers try to be acrobats," says DeMerle, "but I don't. When I play, I think of my rhythms as diagrams, coming mostly off the snare. If I want to do a line of eighth-note triplets from snare to small to large tom-tom, I may have to cross my right hand over to make it happen. The visual factor is a by-product of what the music makes necessary. But this doesn't mean I ignore presentation details. In other words, if I can do a lick I really dig with or without a crossover, I figure 'What the hell, do it.' People are watching me.

The Long Island-bred DeMerle was born in 1946 and cut his teeth in the rich New York scene of the mid '60s. It was the best of times for a young jazz drummer. He consorted with the best of his own generation (Randy Brecker and Norman Simmons were in his 1967 group at the old Riverboat on 34th St.). Yet, it wasn't too late for him to learn first-hand from the old masters. Gene Krupa, Jo Jones, Joe Morello, Zutty Singleton, Shadow Wilson, and Cozy Cole were all around, and Les drank them in. (He sat in with Lionel Hampton at the Metropole when he was 16.)

A record producer heard DeMerle's Riverboat group and offered him a record date. DeMerle and Simmons used the opportunity to put together a top-notch big band that included Frank Foster, Lew Tabackin, Marvin Stamm, and Joe Beck. Entitled *Spectrum*, United Artists released it as the Les DeMerle Spectrum Band (1969).

The Riverboat was also where DeMerle met Harry James, who told him to keep in touch. He did. In 1970, after a year with Wayne Newton, Les finally got the call. The James band was still a great orchestra with veterans like Corky Corcoran and Nick Buono still on board and a busy 45-week schedule of lucrative bookings, including cushy six-week stands in Vegas. DeMerle could hardly have found a finer big band showcase—or a more poignant perspective on the demise of big band era.

"I sat on the drummer's perch for 13

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years and watched it all slowly fade away," he says. "When I started, we had a kind of circuit of top places we'd play through the year. Then when Harry lost the Vegas gig, that had to be made up with one-nighters. But the venues were disappearing. As we'd come back to certain spots year after year, I could see the audiences shrink. Then some of the places would fold or change hands and that would be it. We'd start to have open months. Forty-week guarantees dropped to 35, then 25 or 20.

James was partly responsible. He failed to reinvigorate his book with new material. "He felt he had the formula down," Les says, "especially when he got into doing country clubs." So DeMerle found himself aboard a sleek and legendary ship whose hull was rusting from the inside.

Through the band's declining years, though, DeMerle initiated a steady stream of musical options for himself. Using members of the James band, he became a skilled teacher and clinician. (His rapport with students today—not to mention his breadth of knowledge—is so complete, he could easily fill an academic post.) More important, he started his own band, Transfusion. It began in 1970 at Shelly's Manne Hole in L.A. "I was really into Miles' *Bitches Brew* and that whole fusion movement then," Les recalls. "In the early days Transfusion was pretty avant garde. It was a very experimental period. And during the years with James, it kept me in touch with what was happening." Transfusion worked often when the James band was on down time, and released two LPs for Howard Rumsey in 1978, *Live Concert By The Sea* and *Transcendental Watusi*, and one for Herb Wong's Palo Alto label in 1982, *On Fire*.

Today Transfusion is still going strong. Reviewing the eight-piece group recently in Chicago, a local critic, Neal Tesser, said DeMerle's full-throttle power might be better suited to a big band. But then Transfusion plays like a big band—with tight, punchy, often explosive ensembles supporting superior solo work. Anyone who's heard the band knows that DeMerle's powerful front line of John Kaplan and Bobby Fredricks on reeds and Nick Drozdoff on trumpet (a veteran of Maynard Ferguson, circa 1978-81) is more-than-equal ballast for anything DeMerle can dish out. In the rhythm section is Jim Cerceo, bass; Carter Luke, piano, and Greg Pasenko. On vocals is Bonnie Eisele, also DeMerle's wife.

DeMerle, like most professional musicians, subsidizes the more serious musical business of Transfusion with steady bread-and-butter work in lounges and studio dates. As a veteran of Wayne Newton and the Vegas scene, DeMerle approaches this side of the business with as much professionalism as he does Transfusion. "Sure, making a living playing music today requires compro-

mises," DeMerle says. "I tell this to students constantly. Musicians may look like an eccentric bunch, but appearances are deceiving. This is a tremendously professionalized business that demands versatility and breadth with pockets of strategic depth. Nail that down, then do your thing. Kids think all they have to know is what's hot and they'll get right into recording and studio work. At least this is my impression from some of the L.A. clinics I've done. On the East Coast, though, students strike me as more interested in knowing more about where the

important styles come from. It depends."

DeMerle is currently based in Chicago—"I feel like I'm in the middle trying to reach both coasts now." He's planning an album of Transfusion alums, i.e., David Benoit (1974-76) and Eric Marienthal (1979-81). He has three drum method books in print and another due out in January (*How To Beat The System*). And he just signed a contract to do an educational video for M&K Productions, for which he recently completed a video with Paul Wertico. All told, Les DeMerle intends to remain in that storm. db

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and Hodges' oozing *Passion Flower* (a lyricism as difficult to grasp as liquid mercury). Historically, the disc contains the premiere waxing of Mercer's irrepressible *Things Ain't What They Used To Be*, Hodges' last recording on soprano, Cootie's final appearance with Duke prior to a 23-year hiatus, and Jimmy Blanton's final recordings.

Ellington never forgot the late bassist's enormous, albeit painfully brief, contribution, and in 1972 teamed with Ray Brown for a duet tribute. *This One's For Blanton* (Pablo 2310 721-2, 39:40) finds the great Ray conscientiously filling a role more show-offy than his usual comfortable supportive style, which doesn't often jive with Duke's noodling. The CD's sound heightens the contrast between the curiously metallic piano tone (emphasizing the leanness of Duke's attack) and Brown's luscious, malted-milk tone. Details are a little slapdash—endings are abrupt, interaction on *Things Ain't . . .* is a bit loose, the *First Movement of the Fragmented Suite For Piano And Bass* wants to slide into *Caravan* in the worst way, but doesn't—but Duke's skeletal invention provides the most interesting music of the uneven session. The *Fourth Movement* is the most "fragmented," with Duke discursively probing and prodding with no discernible sense of plot or goal. The tentative and sketchy quality suggest that this might be a totally spontaneous duo improvisation—and if so, it's a side of Ellington he seldom, if ever, exposed, a chink in his arranger's armor.

The loose ends are tied together on *Duke's Big 4* (Pablo 2310 703-2, 38:44). The addition of Louie Bellson prevents the music from dragging, and Joe Pass is obviously energized by the opportunity to play beside Duke, who reacts with spicy comping and attentive solos. You can hear them talking their way through the unfamiliar chords of Bellson's *The Hawk Talks*, but the heady music flows from a wellspring of effortless experience. A joyful celebration of shared attitudes and mutual respect.

Ellington's vocalists through the '40s ranged from the crooning Herb Jeffries to the straightforward Joya Sherrill, with the infectious Ray Nance and the dark Al Hibbler the best of the bunch. Thus, in 1956, the idea of having Rosemary Clooney's accomplished singing and fresh voice join the Duke was a natural. The result, *Blue Rose* (Mobile Fidelity MFCD 850, 39:10) unfortunately focused on elegance instead of spontaneity. The youthful Clooney's vocals—recorded outfront of the band in an artificial ambiance—are in control and overly cautious; the studied *I Got It Bad* works best. Ditto the arrangements; only *I'm Checking Out-Goombye* builds up a head of steam. Hear, however, Hodges on *Passion Flower* once more—typically supple and juicy of tone with a stretched-out downward slide that is technically remarkable and audaciously plotted.

Another, more recent Mobile Fidelity release finds Caterina Valente backed by the Count Basie Orchestra shortly after the

Count's death ('86, Mobile Fidelity 889, 55:14). The arrangements, by Thad Jones, are brassy or sensitive, as the song warrants, and it's a good band, with power and precision and polish—perhaps too much polish, since when they're not playing recognizable Basie material, they sound anonymous. There's an especially nice, uncredited, plunger trumpet episode on *When In Paris Shadows Fall*. The songs are well chosen, too, but my problem with Ms. Valente is that I hear no sense of emotional involvement and she don't swing.

As has been well documented by now, Count Basie's return to the big band battlefield in 1952 led to a tactical diversion. The decision to allow arrangements to concoct the identity of the band—in place of the personality of the soloist—provided him with a design that would sustain the band for the next 30 years—and blueprint a model for big bands everywhere. This required a more flexible ensemble, a precision machine capable of changing its character according to the dictates of the score. The danger here—which the band occasionally succumbed to—was an antiseptic, emasculated swing, a smooth, frictionless perfection, anonymity. It was all in the hands of the arranger.

On the other hand, Joe Williams was tailor-made for the mid-'50s edition of the Basie band, just as jumpmeister Jimmy Rushing epitomized the looser pre-War aggregation. Though a sophisticated stylist, Williams' baritone took on added bite on r&b-flavored tunes—*Everyday I Have The Blues*, *Roll 'Em Pete*, *All Right OK*, *Smack Dab In The Middle*, and *Please Send Me Someone To Love*—all of which appear on *Count Basie & Joe Williams* (Verve 835 329-2, 56:26). When Williams' yowl was straight-laced on straightforward Tin Pan Alley standards the results were often competent but lackluster. Fortunately hot tunes are in the majority, including two duets with Ella—one where Williams unaccustomably takes on the Queen of Scat on her own turf.

The music captured on *Count Basie 1954 Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2* (Tax CD 3701-2, 47:58, and 3702-2, 49:18), from the band's inaugural overseas tour (this stop was Sweden), skirts these problems but sidesteps most of them. After all, the novelty of the approach was still new—most of the band's book, as heard here, was from the *Dance Session* recordings of the previous year—though the somewhat reserved response from the Swedish audience suggests they might have expected a return to the earlier freewheeling sound. The arrangements, most notably by Neal Hefti, and bandmates Ernie Wilkins, Frank Wess, and Frank Foster, may have been the primary focus, but the music explodes from the soloists—especially altoist Marshall Royal, trumpeter Joe Newman, and tenorman Foster. The latter's ability and energetic abandon have long been underrated, and the sparks here are mostly his. The band is a sleek, turbo-charged vehicle clicking on all cylinders, capable of negotiating the most curvaceous road and stopping on a dime.

The same can be said for the '83 edition of the band, though only the Count and trombonist Bill Hughes remained over the three decades, perennial sideman Freddie Green appears to be missing from this particular date. And the music—as heard on *88 Basie Street* (Pablo 2310 901-2, 41:12)—though now arranged by longtime scribe Sammy Nestico, hasn't changed much either. It's all formula—though undeniably successful—refined, readjusted, but basically intact. The soloists are competent at maintaining the illusion of a tradition, though they're faceless, and everything is mellow, meticulous, and a bit dull. Best of all is the sound: full-bodied, natural, refreshing. Nice.

The difference between formula and fervor, illusion and inspiration, can be heard on a date recorded a month later. *Mostly Blues . . . And Some Others* (Pablo 2310 919-2, 44:35) is an intimate, casual jam between Basie, Snooky Young (whose trumpet could charm Ed Meese to be nice), Lockjaw Davis, Joe Pass, and a sturdy rhythm section. Some blues, riff tunes, and a couple of glorious songs, played by experienced instrumentalists with character. Basie as pianist is no longer the Leader, he's just one-of-the-boys, and the humor and warmth of his playing is everywhere apparent. The sound is close, loose, not perfect—like at a jam. Good feelings abound.

The previous CD's final cut, *Brio*, is for rhythm section sans horns, and recalls the thrilling '74 session *For The First Time* (Pablo 2310 712-2, 55:40), where à la Duke, Basie sat in with Ray Brown and Louie Bellson. As if to dispel any doubts about him as a demure miniaturist of the keyboard, Basie splashes stride clusters with vehemence on the opener, *Baby Lawrence*, at an absurdly uptempo. Brown seems more in his element, and Bellson flatters the others without clutter. But it's really Basie's show, as he tosses off example after example of perfect tact, delicious timing and use of space and dynamics in his phrasing, a sly wit, and harmonic tang. Unlike annotator Benny Green, I'm not nuts about the use of an organ on two cuts, but the rest is bloody marvelous.

If ever an album were built on creative contrasts, *Satch And Josh* (Pablo 2310 722-2, 52:08) would seem to be it. Oscar Peterson's oftentimes overwhelming ornamentation versus the Count's economically implied lines, classic big band romps (*Jumpin' At The Woodside*, *Lester Leaps In*) versus small group insight, two-keyboard competitiveness versus ensemble complementary sacrifice—all melt away in the warm vibes and healthy respect this truly odd couple create. The degree of intuitive interaction, of casual keyboard banter, of give-and-take is astonishing, and the implied challenges—to OP's restraint and CB's expansiveness—force both to stretch. Basie especially is engaged to explosive doses of all-out pianism, and the fireworks rival the Fourth of July. db