

**WAYNE SHORTER:
Solo Transcription**

For Contemporary Musicians

downbeat

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**RAY
CHARLES**
Music Master

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Saxophone Savoir-Faire

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Ray Charles

JIM MARSHALL



Bill Evans

HYOU WIELZ



Gerry Mulligan

PATRICIA WILLARD



Robin Eubanks

MITCHELL SEIDEL

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For Contemporary Musicians

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RAY CHARLES



WHAT'D I SAY — A CONVERSATION WITH RAY CHARLES

Brother Ray Charles may have been born with a fundamental awareness of music and being. In that sense, his rise seems preordained, as if he understood from the start that gospel and the blues plumb the same emotions; that jazz and r&b and modern soul have always existed as essential instincts, held in abeyance until liberated by the life force of musicians who knew what to do with them; that music is God's voice filled with the power and glory to heal.

Yet, in no way should this hindsight observation regarding Charles' precocity alter the incontestable fact that this Georgia-born, Florida-bred music man has been hard at work for four decades; that he single-handedly fused stylistic genres and founded a modern hybrid sound that serves as a connecting link in the evolution of black music.

Charles has been called a "genius," a term probably less hyperbolic than it seems when measured against his contribution to culture, and the overall correctness of his sensibilities. At various stages in his life he has overcome the personal handicaps of color, blindness, and poverty.

A few years back it was jokingly suggested that we justly honor Charles by carving his visage at the peak of Mt. Rushmore, chiseling his features alongside those of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt. Wouldn't that be a kick? Brother Ray rubbing shoulders with the nation's heaviest political cats, peering out from behind those shades, canvassing the great plains. After a minute, the idea was scrapped, rendered totally dumb, a plan that didn't make any sense at all. Why should we go through all that? The man's already a monument.

Jeff Levenson: Let's start with the late '40s, before the string of hits with Atlantic Records, during the time you were in Seattle. The musician who is often mentioned as an early influence is Nat Cole. What about him interested you? His piano playing or his singing?

Ray Charles: It was both. What attracted me mostly was that he was doing exactly what I wanted to do. You know, when you are coming up you got to emulate somebody. You want to be a fireman or a policeman or somebody. Well, my thing was I wanted to do the kind of thing Nat Cole was doing. You know what I mean? He was a singer, but he was an instrumentalist as well. He would put these tasty things behind his own singing. And that's what I wanted to do. I loved his voice. I was crazy about him. I used to sleep and eat and drink Nat Cole. That was the thing that motivated me.

JL: Had you met Cole at that time?

RC: No, not at the time when I was starting out. I didn't meet him until I was much along in my own career.

JL: You then hooked up with Lowell Fulson's blues band. His music was a departure from the stuff that Cole was doing. Tell me about it.

RC: Well, what happened was strange—or maybe it wasn't so strange, Lowell Fulson and myself were on the same record label—Swingtime. And Lowell had a record called "Everyday I Have The Blues"; that's where Joe Williams got it. I know he got it from Lowell Fulson, because Lowell was the first one to do it. It was a big hit for him. And I had a record called "Baby Let Me Hold Your Hand." So I went out on the road with Lowell, and I was playing piano, and they billed me as "Ray Charles, Special Guest." That's the way they used to do it in those days. It was Lowell Fulson's show, not mine, because he was the star. I was just an extra added attraction.

JL: Ray, when you started recording with Atlantic, doing some of the very early jazz sides, did you have a sense that this music was the particular sound you were looking for?

RC: Let me be honest with you. My thoughts at the time were, "Man, all I want to do is play music." I mean, would you believe that's all I wanted to do? I'm not kidding. I didn't say I want to do this or this or this. I didn't figure anything, I didn't think about anything. All I wanted to do was have the opportunity to play music. Do you understand what I'm saying? I didn't know nothing about trying to analyze it, I really didn't. I was a youngster, a kid, and I was just so enthused about playing music. That's all.

I got news for you, just to show you where I was. I would write a song, and if you liked it, I would say, "You really like it? Here you can have it." I was just so engrossed in the music, and in having people like what I was doing. I didn't know about publishing. When I went with Atlantic, they said, "Hey look, we want you to record, and you just do whatever you want. You just play your music and we'll record it and put it out." Well, that was the greatest thing that ever happened to me, to get with a company that would say that. That was enough for me. I was not trying to analyze it or predict the future. I wasn't even thinking about no damn future. All I was thinking about was playing my music. I know that sounds very very small, man, but honest to God, that's where I was.

JL: When you started recording country tunes, was that a natural progression for you musically? Did it come straight from the heart?

RC: When we did the first country & western album over at ABC, I told Sam Clark, who was president of the company at the time, what I was looking to do. He was extremely surprised. In fact, I would almost say the man was in shock.

He said, "You want to do what . . .?"

I said, "Yea, I want to do a country & western album."

I mean, legitimately, the man was very concerned. He felt that I had a great reputation as an r&b artist. And to be truthful, he was saying, "That's why we signed you."

ABC took me from Atlantic and gave me a contract that was unheard of in those days. I made 75 cents on every dollar. It was ridiculous. Nobody ever heard of a deal like that. Never! Never! That's what [ABC] did in order to get me to leave Atlantic. I didn't want to leave. Check it out with [founders] Jerry Wexler or Ahmet Ertegun. They will tell you.



CHARLES WILLIAM BUSH

I took the contract and showed it to them and said, "I don't want to leave you guys, so if you can match this—you don't have to beat it, just match it—I'll stay here."

And they said, "Ray, if these people are sincere, if they're legitimate, then you go with them, because there is no way for us to match it. There is no way we can give any artist 75 cents of every dollar; we just can't do it." And Atlantic Records and Ray Charles remain friends until this day.

I can call Ahmet up right now and ask him for anything and I'll get it, because we left on good terms. There was no bad vibes or bad feelings. And they were so good to me, that when I got my own studio, they let me have Tommy Dowd, who was my engineer. He came out here and built the first board I ever had.

JL: Whose idea was it to have you playing organ on those ABC records? Up until that point you hadn't recorded on organ.

RC: Just my idea. I don't know why I want to do things in music. I just like to move around. I really do. At the time I said I'd like to do an album where I'm playing organ. I just wanted to do a jazz album, that's all. If you notice, on *Genius + Soul = Jazz* there's only about two songs where I'm actually singing; the rest is instrumental. I had half of Count Basie's band and half of Duke Ellington's band. Quincy Jones wrote one-half of the album and Ralph Burns wrote the other.

JL: That album, which is now issued on CD, has placed very high on the Billboard charts. Does it surprise you that after 25 years it continues to sell?

RC: I wouldn't say I'm surprised. . . . I'm one of these old fashioned guys who feels that good is good. I really mean that, sincerely. The best example of that was when I did "America The Beautiful" in 1971. It sold 35,000 copies; so, for all intents and

purposes, you would call that a flop. But in 1976, some kids in the Olympics wanted to skate to a song and they picked my version of the tune. Everybody thought the song was so great and it took off from there. Well, if the song was so great in '76, and people still think it's so great today, then it must have been alright in '71. You see what I'm saying? If it's good, it's good, and it's going to stay that way.

JL: Ray, let's talk about singers. Aside from Nat Cole, have other classic jazz singers influenced you?

RC: When I was a youngster, the people I heard were Blind Boy Fuller, Tampa Red, Lonnie Johnson, Joe Turner, and people like that. That was when I was a child—maybe nine, 10, 11 years old. These people were very big.

I remember Big Boy Crudup. I don't know if you are familiar with him, but I bet you Elvis Presley knew about him. You better believe he knew about him, because Elvis did some of his stuff—[sings "That's Alright, Mama"]. That's where he got that from. Elvis got a lot of stuff, my friend, from the old blues singers. People may not realize it because he never stopped to credit them. I'm not knocking the man and I'm not starting no racial shit or nothing like that. I'm just telling you where the stuff came from.

Elvis did "Hound Dog"—that was Big Mama Thornton's. Elvis did "Jailhouse Rock"—that belonged to a friend of mine, Shifty Henry; he wrote that song. As a matter of fact, if you listen closely you'll hear [Elvis] sing about Shifty—there's a verse in there about him. Shifty Henry was a real person. He got 20 bucks for that song. Twenty f**king dollars. The reason I know this is that Shifty Henry was a very, very good friend of mine. When I first came to L.A. he was one of the few people who took me by the hand and tried to take care of me. The only problem

was he was fooling around with drugs and he ended up selling his soul to the devil. You know what I mean?

Be that as it may, when I was coming up the people I listened to were a lot of the people that I later discovered Elvis was listening to. I don't mean no harm, but I'm telling you the truth. On the other hand, these people were my inspiration too.

And of course, I always remember the first song that I heard that really captured me, that really made me fall in love with Billie Holiday. She did a song called "Hush Now, Don't Explain." I have to tell you, I never heard anything like that, before or since. It was incredible.

JL: What was it about the song that got to you?



JAMES F. QUINN

RAY CHARLES' EQUIPMENT

Ray Charles prefers Steinway acoustic pianos and Fender electric pianos. He owns both.

RAY CHARLES' SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

JUST BETWEEN US—Columbia 40703
AIN'T IT SO—Atlantic 19251
BEST OF RAY CHARLES—Atlantic 1543
DO I EVER CROSS YOUR MIND—Columbia 38990
GENIUS + SOUL = JAZZ—Dunhill DZS038
GREATEST COUNTRY & WESTERN HITS—Dunhill DZS040
HIS GREATEST HITS, VOL. 1—Dunhill DZS036
HIS GREATEST HITS, VOL. 2—Dunhill DZS037
THE GENIUS AFTER HOURS—Atlantic 90464-1

THE GENIUS OF RAY CHARLES—Atlantic 1312
THE GREAT RAY CHARLES—Atlantic 1259
THE GREATEST RAY CHARLES—Atlantic 8054
LIVE—Atlantic 2-503
WISH YOU WERE HERE TONIGHT—Columbia 38293

with others

Milt Jackson: *SOUL BROTHERS*—Atlantic 1279
SOUL MEETING—Atlantic 1360
 Shorty Rogers: *COLLABORATION*—Fantasy OJC 122
 Betty Carter: *RAY CHARLES AND BETTY CARTER*—Dunhill DZS039

RC: Something about her voice. Something that was so haunting. Billie Holiday was one of these people—you've got to give them credit, these singers who came up in the early years—who were so unique they could say one word and you knew who they were. One word! You never had to ask who was singing when Ella Fitzgerald opened her mouth. You didn't have to ask nobody.

And that's the thing I miss today in our modern society, because I have trouble knowing who I'm listening to. The record companies want [youngsters] to sound like whoever had the last hit. I'm not knocking it, my friend, I just wish we could go back to a time when an artist or a band could play two chords and you knew who it was.

We're in a kind of lull, right now. I don't think it's the end of the line, but I think there comes a time in life when there's a pause to see which direction we are going to go—maybe that's what we're into right now. I'm very saddened because I don't see a lot of youngsters coming up where you can say, "Hey man, give this guy another three or four years and he's going to be a bitch." I'm talking about originality. I'm talking about somebody who has a sound of his or her own—they've got it, it belongs to them. That's what I'm looking for and that's what I'm not seeing.

JL: Why is it different today than when you were coming up?

RC: What we had then that we don't have today, is a lot of small record companies. In fact, Atlantic was very small. It wasn't as big as my studio is right now. Little, bitty small place. Now you say, "So what, Ray?" The "so what" is that when you had a lot of little companies, you had artists that would grow with them. Yea, Atlantic ultimately sold themselves for 60 or 70 million [dollars], or something like that. But when they started they were little guys. People like myself and Ruth Brown and The Clovers grew while [the label] was growing.

When I was coming up, I was blessed, man, because I was with a company that said, "Hey Ray, you play the music and we'll put it out." That was it. Now you got 15 producers and a guy tells you what song to record. I never had no guy telling me shit like that. I'm not saying it's wrong or right, I'm just saying that when I was coming up I was very fortunate; the companies I went to let me play the music and I let them do the marketing.

JL: What if you were coming up now?

RC: If I were coming up now, I'd have a hard time, especially being the kind of person I am, with my attitude, my personality. I'd be hard pressed if somebody was telling me to do shit that I didn't want to do.

When I went with Atlantic, they said, "We are going to show you some songs. If you like them, good, if you don't, don't worry about it." If I didn't like them, I wrote something else. That's why in those early years I wrote things like "I Got A Woman" and "What'd I Say" and "Hallelujah, I Love Her So" and "Fool For You," and all that stuff. When [the company] sent me songs I didn't like, I wrote more music. And people think I'm a writer because the stuff I wrote just turned out to be successful. But that was just a case of a company realizing that they had run into something good and they knew how to *not* stifle it. I give them a lot of credit for that. You have to know when to put your hands on, but you also have to know when to keep your hands off.

JL: Today, how do you feel about performing?

RC: Sir, believe me sincerely, my performing is my existence. I'm not putting you on about this. I'm deadly serious—like a heart attack. I really mean this. You have two kinds of people in entertainment. Those who do it on the side, and they can play piano and dab in medicine and do this and do that; it's a side thing and they enjoy it. And then you have another kind of person like myself, for whom music is like the bloodstream. It is their total existence. When their music dies, they die. That's me. That's the difference.

How can you get tired of breathing? Music is my breathing. That's my apparatus. I've been doing it for 40 years. And I'm going to do it until God himself says, "Brother Ray, you've been a nice horse, but now I'm going to put you out to pasture." **db**

Bill Evans

“You didn’t know this was going to be a fishing interview, did you?” asks Bill Evans as he holds forth from the living room sofa of his spartan Upper West Side Manhattan apartment, his saxophone case on one hand, a rod

and reel on the other. He’s just come back from a Miami engagement with vocalist Michael Franks, and the conversation quickly turns from music to fishing. “My brother Mark happens to be a fairly famous bass fisherman,” he says. “Right now he’s ranked number-one in Florida. So I go

down there with him, since I’m also an avid fisherman. I like to go bass fishing and also fishing for northern pike up in Canada. Actually, I’m the Eastern co-chairman of the Caster/Reeler Association, a very exclusive organization. There’s also a Midwest co-chairman in Illinois, so we go on these major excursions.

“Fishing is a large part of my makeup,” he continues. “But it’s a certain kind of fishing—we’re not sitting in a boat with a bobber, we’re talking about the art of using the right lure for the right situation, finding the right water temperature for the

The Art Of The Fisherman

By Larry Birnbaum



END FARBBER

density of the water. It's a great release, because you're taking your mind off music and anything else you're thinking about. I like to do things that take my total concentration, like golf, snorkeling, boxing, working out, stuff like that. I also love the buzz from gambling. Music is a gamble; the creative process is a gamble. You go for the initial buzz you receive."

Evans, now 30, was still a student at William Patterson College in New Jersey when Miles Davis called and asked him to join his band. After four years and several albums with Miles he moved on to the Mahavishnu Orchestra for three more years, meanwhile recording a pair of albums with his own bands for Elektra and Blue Note. But since then his public performances have been rare and his studio activity limited to a few sideman appearances with friends like Mark Egan and Danny Gottlieb of Elements, as well as a guest spot on Mick Jagger's solo album *Primitive Cool*. Now, however, he's organized a new group—with bassist Victor Bailey, drummer Billy Ward, keyboardist Jim Beard, guitarist Jon Herington, and singer Steve Augeri—and cut a hot new album he hopes to have out soon.

"I know I've been basically off the scene for the past couple of years," he says, "but that's why I want to come out real strong over the next year or two, because I've finally begun to realize exactly the way I want to play tenor and soprano, and I haven't been able to do that on other people's records. I have so much energy right now with my new band, I feel like I've been in a strait jacket. For the last couple of years my interests have been so different and varied, it's almost like I feel I'm coming out of semi-retirement.

"The reason I say that is, right after I left John McLaughlin in 1986, I started writing a novel. That took about three or four months. And then I started writing this music for the new band. I was working on a lot of lyrics, which is a whole other concept, and that took a long time. And it's a growing process—it's almost like you're starting over. But the last seven years was one phase; I'm beginning my next phase now. I'd like to begin my career again now, basically. It's kind of a thrilling thing—and a scary thing also—because I'm throwing things out there that don't fall into the format of anything or any record company."

Evans' first solo album, *Living In The Crest Of A Wave*, was relaxed and introspective, almost a respite from the high-energy funk and frenetic fusion he'd been playing with Davis and McLaughlin. His second, *The Alternative Man*, was a richly-textured blend of

eclectic influences ranging from Pat Metheny to Wayne Shorter, Steve Reich, and even Eddie Van Halen. The new one is more pop-oriented, with six vocal tunes out of its 10 tracks. "I want to put it on the right label," he says, "because I think it's a very strong record that's going to get a lot of airplay. It has something new to say; it's the best thing I've ever done on any record.

"I've been one of those guys who's tried to record his own thing and have a lot of fun doing it," he adds. "I've been very fortunate because I've been spoiled. I went right from college to great bands, one right after the other, and I figured when I went on to my third record everything would go fine. So when I get any slack, it's like 'Hey, wait a minute. I don't ever get any slack. Everything goes exactly the way I want it to go, period.' A lot of companies have asked me to do new age music, but I'm not someone who wants to put a cassette in every elevator in the country or write music for some record executive who could be working for a textile company in three months. So when somebody tells me, 'You can't do this kind of music,' that's like the end of our conversation.

"I've also been fortunate enough to have the respect from the players in my band, and I respect them for having the patience to wait this thing out and hang in there for two years so far. But they know that there's no other band out there playing music like this. I mean, I don't just stand there in front of a microphone and not communicate with the audience. I'm there to put on a hell of a show, play great music, have fun, and show that to them, so that these people will come back and see me play again. It's very important. I'm going to be here for a while, and I plan on always having a great band, always being out there. I like the way Billy plays, the way Jim plays, the way Jon plays, and the way Victor plays in our unique ensemble, and I hope we'll be able to stay together and play for people.

"Jim Beard really worked hard on this record. He wrote some of the tunes, I wrote some of the tunes, Jon Herington wrote some of the tunes, and Jim co-produced it with me. I introduced Jim to John McLaughlin, and we've been playing together ever since. And Jon has been playing and writing for me for a few years; he's originally from Indiana. Billy Ward has incredible energy for the band; he's got all the technique of the great drummers, but he's not Mr. Flash—he's got a lot of soul and heart in his playing. And Victor Bailey—what can I say about Victor? He's one of the best bass players in the world." Evans adds that John Albrink also co-wrote several songs for the album and that Darryl Jones plays bass on a number of cuts.

Despite his illustrious track record, Evans is not one to dwell on the past, particularly his tenure with Miles. "To me, that seems like it happened 25 years ago," he says. "But he's a good friend of mine; I still keep in touch with him. Actually, there's a possibility he'll play on my next record. He said, 'Why didn't you ask me to play on this one?' When we first got together it was like we'd known each other for years. I picked up a lot of his character traits, but I'd have to say that a lot of mine and his were the same. And I also influenced him in the members of his band. I got John Scofield in the band, Mike Stern, Marcus Miller. Marcus is producing Miles now, and I feel like I was a part of putting that together." As for John McLaughlin and the Mahavishnu Orchestra: "That was such an incredible experience for me. John is one of my favorite musicians; I learned a lot of things from John, one being class."

Evans' studio experience with Mick Jagger was somewhat less profound. "His idea was to have me play as wild and crazy as I possibly could over all his tunes," says Bill. "He obviously changed his mind when it came to putting out the record, although there is some soprano on this tune called 'War Baby.' I was a little disappointed that he didn't put my name on the record, but it was his album coordinator who screwed that up. But I had a great time working with him. I mean, I'm not just a jazz guy—I write all kinds of music, and I love playing all kinds of music—so for me it was a lot of fun. My background is jazz, but you have to grow. It's fine for people to stay in one form of music, but you can't be prejudiced against a kind of music that's just as innovative as jazz. Because it's all music; it's all part of the whole spectrum."

Evans admits to a fondness for the music of Bruce Hornsby and the group Mr. Mister, as well as Jan Garbarek and Van Halen. He even has kind words for pop-sax sensation Kenny G. "I think it's great that he's going out there and doing what he wants to do. He's not telling anybody that he's a jazz artist. He's not saying, 'Listen, I'm a great musician.' He's going out there and playing music he likes, and he's becoming very successful at it, so more power to him. We'd probably get along really well, believe it or not, because I'm into having a good time on stage and so is he."

Obviously, Evans does not see eye-to-eye with today's crop of back-to-bop neo-traditionalists. "Bebop is a kind of music you have to learn in order to become proficient at your instrument to a point where you can be considered one of the top performers of your craft," he says, "but you have to also grow. For me, playing standards is my roots; it's where I came from. I like to play with my own band and

do all kinds of music, but sometimes it's a great thing for me to sit in with somebody at a club and play standards. I love to do that, but I haven't done that in public in years. I'm going to do some with James Williams in January on the West Coast. He's an incredible keyboard player who I've known since I was 13 years old.

"But what I don't like is when people say that there's no other music but bebop. It reminds me of somebody who got locked into a phase, never got out of it, and is frustrated with himself. I mean, c'mon man, go out and relax, have a beer. I don't want to sound too negative about it, because I think it's a great thing that people are out playing that kind of music. That's where I came from, and I still like to do that on occasion. I'm only criticizing the people who criticize the people who are trying to be more innovative and take the music in some other direction. It's all just music, which we can't forget. It's *just* music—it's not life."

Another of Evans' pet peeves is the term "fusion." "I hate that name," he says. "Fusion, to me, is an electrical term that has to do with joining two pieces of metal together. And I hate the word 'electronic' music, because we're not putting outlets in new buildings either. Fusion was something that had really fast lines played in unison on the mini-Moog in the mid-'70s. But I don't think people should call it that now. I think 'new age' was a good thing to call some of the music, only because it was a new name and it was a great way to package it, but now new age is a drum machine playing a nice little rhythm and synthesizer playing a melody line that someone who goes to work every day filing papers can hum to. That's not what I learned from Miles; that's not what I learned from John. I'm not trying to be negative, I'm just trying to be green instead of blue."

Although he plays synthesizer on his albums, Evans doesn't much cotton to the idea of wind-driven electronic instruments. "I almost purchased all of them; two or three years ago I was going to buy them all and then I didn't. On the road I would've used them for background lines or maybe a guitar solo, but it's a lot of equipment to carry just to play on a couple of sections. And when you record with an electronic instrument, like the EWI, it sounds like a synthesizer. So at this point I'm just saxophone player, but that's not to say next year I won't be totally into it."

For all his openness to new ideas, Evans is the product of a solid musical education. Raised in the Chicago suburb of Clarendon Hills, Illinois, he studied classical piano and clarinet for seven years before taking up the saxophone. As a teenager he immersed himself in the music of Sonny Stitt, Sonny Rollins, Joe Henderson, and John Coltrane, and spent summers at the Jamey Aebersold Jazz Clinic in Illinois, where he recently taught. "When you have 85 kids who all want to take lessons it's a

lot of work, but you get a real feeling of accomplishment. It's a good-karma gig, and a great hang, too—great bunch of kids. I went to those clinics for five years, so I knew exactly what questions they were going to ask before they opened their mouths. And they would ask everything you could possibly imagine: technical questions, musical questions, bebop questions, rock questions, questions about what kind of socks Miles Davis wears, what was it like playing with John McLaughlin, what's your band up to these days. And you get some kids who sound great."

Evans is currently working on a symphony for the Boston Pops Orchestra and hopes to write a film score next year. "When I was six years old I used to turn the TV on and turn the volume off and just play piano. And I always wanted to do movie scores. But my whole thing for the last two years has been to write the new music I'm writing and start the new career off. After you've played with a bunch of different people, all you want to do is play your own stuff, play with your own band. That's why I've just been concentrating on my own band and not playing on anybody else's stuff—aside from Mark Egan and Danny Gottlieb, who I have total respect for.

"I'm constantly turning records down, because I only want to play on records that I think are important, quality records. I don't do jingles; I don't get called in to do a spot where I play an eight-bar solo. I'm not saying that to brag, I'm just saying that I've always wanted to have a discography that shows quality records. And if I'm going to try to create quality music myself, I'm not going to go out and play on everybody's record so that people can hear me everywhere. I want it to be so that when they hear me play it's a special thing. That's what I'm trying to accomplish.

"I always want people to think that my music has depth, and a little mystique, too; so that we're not going out there blatantly giving away everything. I think it's important to tell a little bit of the story but not all of it. Leave the last paragraph out, tell a little bit about it in the beginning, outline a little bit in the middle, and then leave the rest for the people to figure out. But have them know you're having a good time, and that music is something you enjoy doing. I mean, the music's got to be fun; if it's not fun, I don't want to do it. The people who get into just playing music and being real dark and negative about it . . . I mean, that's not the point, you know. Whenever I hear about someone who's totally into just music and is completely opinionated about their art, they need to find a hobby, they need to go on vacation, I need to take them fishing.

"You're only out here one time, you know, and somebody's got to go out and try to do something different. I'm sick and tired of people falling into formats. I don't like formats—I just want to be me. I just



MITCHELL SEIDEL

BILL EVANS' EQUIPMENT

A Selmer clinician, Bill Evans plays Selmer USA model tenor and soprano saxophones, with Shure wireless system microphones on both horns. His tenor mouthpiece is a Dave Guardala Studio model, and he uses medium Vandoren reeds.

BILL EVANS SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

THE ALTERNATIVE MAN—Blue Note P-7 463362 2
LIVING IN THE CREST OF A WAVE—Elektra/Musician 60349-1-E

with Mark Egan

A TOUCH OF LIGHT—GRP 9572

with Elements

ILLUMINATION—RCA/Novus 3331-1-N
FORWARD MOTION—Antilles 1021
ELEMENTS—Antilles 1017

with the Mahavishnu Orchestra

ADVENTURES IN RADIOLAND—Sound Service 2020

with Miles Davis

DECOY—Columbia 38991
STAR PEOPLE—Columbia 38657
WE WANT MILES—Columbia C238005
THE MAN WITH THE HORN—Columbia 36790

want to put out my records, I want to do my fishing trips during the year, play a little golf, buy my little house on the lake, and that's it. It's funny, because I finally figured out why I do these other things. It's because your concentration just gets so zoned in on what you're doing, it's a total release from other stuff. Plus you get a total buzz when you're going for that Big Daddy fish that weighs 35 pounds: he's in the shallow water, it's eight o'clock at night—the perfect time—and you're using a surface lure. What else is there in life?" db

SINGING A SONG OF MULLIGAN



JAMES F. QUINN

By
**Michael
Bourne**

Gerry Mulligan

“When I was a kid growing up, there was a lot of music on the radio,” states composer/arranger and baritone sax great Gerry Mulligan, “and I loved the bands. There was a lot of variety among the bands. They ran the gamut. And for a kid growing up it was an exciting time. The bands were important. The leaders were famous, respected. I liked the music from the time I was little; everything, classical, jazz, show music, whatever I could hear.”

Was there a moment when he'd known he'd become a musician himself? “It was conditioned in me from childhood to have a band, to write for bands, to play with bands. I have a feeling that no matter what era I lived in, a hundred years ago or a hundred years from now, I'd always be interested in orchestration. It's one of those things that's a mystery to anybody who doesn't have an ear or talent for orchestration: why does some kid come along and know how it's done? And when I was a kid I knew how it was done and I wanted to do it. I really wanted to go to music school and study composition but I never got the chance. My family thought I was crazy, that I was being cute and showing off. ‘He'll come to his senses and someday want to be something real!’ But, of course, I never did. I never came to my senses. To me the music was real.”

Gerald Joseph Mulligan, the kid born in New York in 1927, became the celebrated orchestrator the kid dreamed of being—and also, coincidentally, has become the greatest baritone saxist since Harry Carney. After travelling around for years, his family eventually settled in Philadelphia where Mulligan attended high school. “I started on clarinet, then bought an alto, later on a tenor. While I was still in school I bought a baritone but I never actually played it. I saved up and bought it because I liked it. It wasn't until after I was out of school and working professionally as an arranger that I started playing baritone, concentrating on it.”

Mulligan played alto with dance bands around Redding and Philadelphia but worked as often arranging, in particular for Johnny Warrington's band on the radio. “I came to New York with Tommy Tucker's band. He'd hired me for three months and after the three months my writing was getting more and more out, more jazz-oriented than he wanted.” Gene Krupa wanted what Mulligan was doing. “I wrote for Krupa in '46 and was with the band most of that year. I played with the band a couple of times, pressed into service to help out. Like a fool I always carried my horns with me, so if somebody got sick or got fired on the road I wound up playing. One time they fired an alto player, another time a tenor player. I learned a lot playing with those guys. I was out of my league as a saxophone player. They were really good.”

He's the skinny, almost baby-faced alto player pictured with Krupa on the album *Gerry Mulligan: The Arranger*, featuring charts he'd written for Krupa on “How High The Moon” and “Disc Jockey Jump” in 1947. It was soon thereafter that the part-time alto-or-tenor player became a full-time (and all-time) baritone player.

“It must have been early '47, at some point after I'd been working and playing with bands for a while. I don't really know what I was thinking but I wound up selling my other horns and just kept the baritone. I don't know why but I spent a lot of time going to sessions and playing only baritone.”

Because of Charlie Parker and Lester Young especially, the alto and tenor were more and more popular in the music evolving then. There wasn't so much competition on the baritone. “I don't know that I ever thought in terms of competition. I certainly picked the right instrument. We were up to our earlobes in alto and tenor players—and good ones.” Harry Carney was an obvious inspiration.

“At that time there were some good baritone players with bands. Carney was an influence because the relationship Carney had to the sound of the band was essential to Duke's music. That had an effect on me. I never tried to sound like Carney. I couldn't, impossible, but the fact was that any band that used the instrument well, the baritone had an effect on the sound. Ozzie Nelson had a wonderful band, very musical, and the basic style of writing was the full ensemble playing with the baritone playing obligatos. Deane Kincaide was the baritone player and wrote a lot of charts for that band. That had its effect on me. Ernie Caceres was a wonderful baritone player, then later Serge Chaloff came along. He was the first to incorporate the kinds of dynamic solos that came from Charlie Parker. Then other guys came along. I liked Leo Parker. I was out playing with my own group by the time I heard Pepper Adams and Cecil Payne.”

It was in the latter 1940s that Mulligan became a sensation as both a baritone player and a writer, working with Miles Davis on what was called *The Birth Of The Cool*. The Miles Davis Nonet—featuring Lee Konitz on alto, J.J. Johnson or Kai Winding on the trombone, John Lewis at the piano, among others—performed memorably at the Royal Roost in 1948, then recorded classic sessions in '49-'50, which included Mulligan's arrangements of “Godchild” and “Darn That Dream,” along with his “Venus de Milo,” “Rocker,” and “Jeru” and music by John Lewis, John Carisi, and Gil Evans.

“It was an arranger's band. I connected with Gil Evans because I loved the Claude Thornhill band [for whom Mulligan eventually worked]. I admired Gil and Claude and Bill Borden. The guys connected with that band were phenomenal. The sound of that band was so beautiful. Gil and I became good friends. He was always an inspiration to me. I was living in Philadelphia and Gil said, ‘Enough already! You've got to come to New York where everything is happening!’ So I did.

“Gil's place used to be a gathering place for arrangers. There was always a parade in and out of there: John Carisi, George Russell, Dave Lambert, John Benson Brooks, John Lewis. It was always a subject of discussion how to have the freedom and the dynamism you get from the little group, the soloist and rhythm section, the hot bebop groups we all liked, plus having the capabilities to orchestrate music that would be of interest to the

writers. That's how we wound up with that instrumentation [trumpet, trombone, french horn, tuba, alto sax, baritone sax, piano, bass, drums]. It gave us possibilities in both directions, for both the writer and the player.

"Miles used to come down and listen to the conversations. We were the arrangers, but Miles was the one who went out and made the phone calls and reserved the studios; and with Miles as the lead trumpet sound, that gave us a stylistic direction to everything we did. If it had been somebody else, Clifford Brown or Fats Navarro, the sound would have been different. We would have approached it differently. We put into effect the lessons we'd learned, the idea that a band—any band but especially a jazz band—reflects the players that are in it, what we learned from Duke. Miles was perfect. Given his lead sound and melodic approach, everything else followed naturally. I really enjoyed writing for that band."

Working with a nine-piece ensemble became, in retrospect, a natural evolution for Mulligan away from the bands and into the combos. "I'd evolved away from bands anyway, as soon as I started concentrating on playing. I still wrote for bands—Elliot Lawrence, among others—and was able to support myself writing arrangements so I could stay in New York and go to sessions. I evolved into a small band context more because all my friends were playing in small bands: Brew Moore, George Wallington, Kai Winding. It was logical. That was really the end of the big band era. Economically the bands were being strangled."

What with "entertainment" taxes, the Musicians Union strike, changes in clubs, changes in tastes, and all the other factors, Mulligan watched the bands he loved falling apart. "It made me so sad to see my heroes not being able to function anymore, especially to see what happened to Claude Thornhill. That band was so beautiful and was popular, and then next thing he's working with smaller and smaller bands trying to sound like a big band. It was heartbreaking."

Mulligan, struggling himself at the turn of the 1950s, ventured West and happened into what became a serendipitous success: the quartet he fronted with trumpeter Chet Baker. Mulligan's interplay with Baker was electrifying, all the moreso as they worked without a pianist. And though the quartet lasted only a year, from '52 into '53, they were so popular that this "West Coast" jazz also became a musical phenomenon—though Mulligan himself didn't stay in California.

"I went out there because it got to be that there was no work around New York. It just died off around the late 1940s. And there were the drug problems then too. I had to get away from all of it, so I went to California. The first six months I worked wherever I could and went to a lot of jam sessions. That's where I met Chet; and when I got the chance I put together the group. By the time that whole "West Coast" thing started, I suppose what happened was that, based on the success of groups like mine, everybody wanted to jump on the bandwagon and make records. Musicians are delighted to make records!"

That he was so successful so young, only in his mid-20s, didn't stagger Mulligan. "When you're young and successful you say, 'Okay, that's the way it's supposed to be.' It's easy to accept success and recognition when you get it. I was lucky I got it and assumed that was right and was my due. I always expected to be a success anyway. I didn't know in what way. I always expected I'd become a successful bandleader. How was I to know there wouldn't be the bands anymore?"

That he and Chet Baker didn't stay together, in spite of success, was inevitable. "Chet and I never were particularly friendly. It really is amazing that our musical affinity was remarkable. We were different types of people. Chet always liked to travel in a group. He'd always have this pack around—Californians, surfer types—and there'd always be five or six of them. I've always been a loner or I'd have one running buddy. Over the years in New York it was either Zoot Sims or Brew Moore. We'd share apartments or I'd live alone.

"Chet was also very physical. We'd get done and those guys would drive up to the mountains to ski. By the time they got there the sun was up. They'd ski through the morning, then go down to

the beach and sail. By then the day's gone by and Chet comes to the gig. He'd do that two, three days in a row, without sleeping, and his chops would dry out; he'd have trouble with chapped lips and he'd start missing notes. I'd say to him, 'Chet, have you ever heard of sleep? It's a wonderful thing for your chops.' It was funny except for what it was an indication of. Chet had a very misplaced set of standards, and this, more than anything, was why we ultimately didn't—I shouldn't say we didn't get along. We did. It's just that some people you like to hang out with and some people you don't."

Throughout the '50s, Mulligan worked more and more, fronting bands that featured Bob Brookmeyer or Art Farmer, among others; playing the festival circuit, especially Newport; performing on the legendary CBS telecast *The Sound Of Jazz* in 1957; winning all the jazz polls (including **db's**), and recording countless albums. "I have no idea how many records I've done," said Mulligan, amazed that two discographers (one French, one Scandinavian) have aspired to catalog his output.

Among his best albums were the "Mulligan Meets . . ." albums that Norman Granz produced, encounters with several of his fellow masters. "I was lucky to have made contact with Norman Granz. He knew the kinds of things I liked to do and he liked to do those things too. Norman came backstage at Newport a couple of years in a row and he'd hear the conversation between Paul Desmond and me. Paul was always saying, 'We've got to record, do it like the quartet, only with the alto sax instead of the trumpet. I'll play Chet's part.' I'd say it was a great idea. Norman said, 'You guys are ridiculous. You'll talk about this for 20 years and never do it. Are you serious about doing it?' I said we were, and next thing we knew Norman set up the studio. That was the first one, with Paul." Other sessions featured Mulligan with Johnny Hodges, Ben Webster, and Stan Getz—the latter with a twist: Mulligan and Getz switching horns on one side. "I forget whose idea that was." Mulligan also recorded classically with Thelonious Monk, the sessions re-released as *'Round Midnight*.

One sidelight of Mulligan's life happened about the same time in the latter '50s. He played and acted in several movies: *I Want To Live*, *The Subterraneans*, and *Bells Are Ringing*. "I've always loved the theatre but that doesn't mean I want to be an actor. I did just enough acting in the movies to know I'm not very good at it."

Even so, he's delightful in *Bells Are Ringing*, smiling through an awkward date with Judy Holliday, the wonderful comedienne Mulligan loved. "In some ways that was the hardest day's work I ever did. I had all the speaking lines. Judy was supposed to be tongue-tied, a nitwit around a man. So she sat there, trying to be nice; only she was clumsy, knocking glasses over." Judy Holliday died young and there was talk of doing a biopic, only "they couldn't find anybody to play Judy. Judy was widely imitated, but to do Judy in a film and just do an imitation wouldn't make it. There were so many things that she did that others picked up on—the voice, the mannerisms. So we never actually did it." *Holliday With Mulligan*, a recording of songs they enjoyed and several they wrote together, is still available.

Bells Are Ringing was released in 1960 and that same year Mulligan gathered a Concert Jazz Band in New York. Though he wanted to have a big band again, he didn't do all the writing himself. Bob Brookmeyer, John Carisi, Gary McFarland, and Al Cohn, among others, contributed. Mulligan's band became the forerunner of other bands that followed, especially the band Thad Jones and Mel Lewis started that's played on ever since. Mel Lewis was Mulligan's regular drummer and Thad Jones often composed for the band (sort of). "Thad was funny. Thad would always bring to rehearsal things to try with my band, but always just a chorus or fragments. He'd never bring a finished chart. I'd say it was nice and he'd thank me for saying so—and that so-and-so was trying out these charts for his band! I had no idea he was going to do that," Mulligan laughed. "I'd be flying Mel back and forth from L.A. for rehearsals. That's what I did with my money. Whenever I made any money, I'd spend it on music."

Mulligan once again gathered a Concert Jazz Band this past summer for a European tour. He's more often worked with a quartet through the years, memorably several years with Dave Brubeck. They played (and recorded) what was then the last set at Newport in 1971 when the festival was trashed by Woodstock nationals. Nowadays he's playing most often with piano-bass-drums. Why not another horn again? "I did that," Mulligan laughed. "It would be nice once in a while, but it becomes a thing that's dependent on the other horn and I wouldn't want that for playing every night."

He's also performing more as a soloist with classical orchestras and doing what he's always been doing: composing. Mulligan's newest recording, *Symphonic Dreams*, features two familiar Mulligan works, "K-4 Pacific" and "Song For Strayhorn," in addition to *The Sax Chronicles*, a suite of pieces inspired by classical composers, and *Entente For Baritone Sax And Orchestra*, all recorded with Erich Kunzel conducting the Houston Symphony.

"It started about 10-15 years ago when I was playing with Brubeck. Dave had written a couple of pieces for orchestra that I played. We recorded *Light In The Wilderness* in Cincinnati. Erich Kunzel liked the idea of doing more with the orchestra, so I started to get the music together. I commissioned a concerto that Frank Proto wrote for me, and then Harry Freedman was commissioned by the CBC to write a piece for me, a piece called *Celebration* for my 50th birthday. As we did the things with orchestras I started to get the urge to write something for myself. Both of those concertos were heavy, full-scale, putting together jazz elements and orchestral elements. I wanted to write something that would be a lot more my own, that I could play in opposition to and in complement with the orchestra, with elements that worked against each other and with each other." Hence, an entente . . .

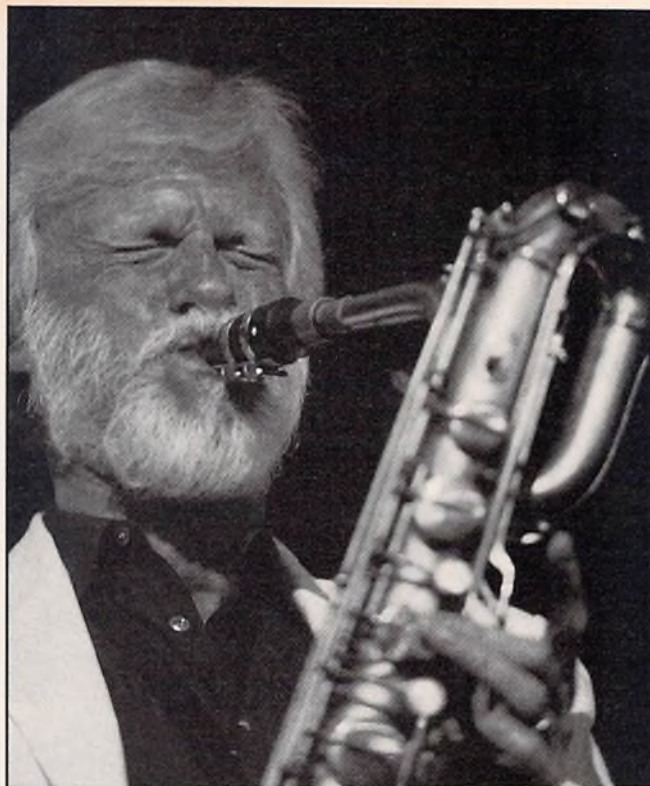
"I work two ways with a symphony now. I'll do concertos as a soloist where I'll play part of the *Chronicles* and that's it. But a good many concerts, like the one with Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic last year, I'll work as a soloist plus have other music the quartet plays with me."

And what next? "I'm working on new things for the quartet and the Concert Jazz Band, a world premiere for the Glasgow Arts Festival and some music I wrote for the Sea Cliff Chamber Players."

Hectic as all his projects and gigs often become, his wife Franca Mulligan keeps everything rolling, from the house they have in Connecticut to the apartment they have in Milan—and all along the road. "I've been very lucky in the women that I've known; fine, beautiful, interesting women. I've learned a great deal from them. I have no complaints. It's a great deal in life to have the kind of companionship that's inspiring as well. Otherwise it gets to be a lonely road out there." Franca often acts as his manager—though, Mulligan laughed, "not really voluntarily. Franca makes it possible for me to do a lot of things because she makes sure that the business responsibilities are in control. Sometimes it gets to be busy, but it all runs smoothly."

Gerry Mulligan is older now, 61 last April, yet what's most obvious when he's talking about music is that he's nonetheless that kid who listened to the radio and who dreamed of playing. "People don't always learn right away, and sometimes never learn, that to survive as a professional musician, or anything else for that matter, you have to maintain your enthusiasm. Without enthusiasm it really doesn't mean a damn thing. And don't be looking for things outside yourself to provide enthusiasm. It has to come from inside. You must be self-motivated to spend your life with music. Something as difficult, as stress-making as being a professional musician—if you don't have enthusiasm, if you can't keep it going inside yourself, look for something else."

"Another thing I try to get across to young musicians is: don't disregard your history. One of the things I liked about jazz, and this was 40-50 years ago, was that there was a tradition going on, and I liked the tradition. I admired very much the musicians who went before: Louis Armstrong, Jack Teagarden, the bandleaders, the writers, Sy Oliver, wonderful people like that. Everybody was putting in their best efforts. Everybody was trying to make his



MITCHELL SEIDEL

GERRY MULLIGAN'S EQUIPMENT

"I've used a Conn baritone always. I played a Selmer for a while but went back to my Conn. I have a Selmer soprano, but I'm thinking of getting another one, what kind I'm not sure. I use a Selmer mouthpiece on the soprano and a Gale on the baritone. I use Vandoren reeds."

GERRY MULLIGAN SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

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| <p>as a leader
 <i>SYMPHONIC DREAMS</i>—PAR CDP 703
 <i>THE AGE OF STEAM</i>—A&M 3036
 <i>A CONCERT IN JAZZ</i>—Verve 2652
 <i>THE CONCERT JAZZ BAND AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD</i>—Verve 2057
 <i>THE GENIUS OF GERRY MULLIGAN</i>—Pausa 9010
 <i>GERRY MULLIGAN: THE ARRANGER</i>—Columbia 34803
 <i>LITTLE BIG HORN</i>—GRP 9503
 <i>MULLIGAN AND DESMOND AND GETZ</i>—Verve 827 1661
 <i>MULLIGAN/DESMOND</i>—Fantasy OJC-273
 <i>MULLIGAN MEETS BEN WEBSTER</i>—Verve 3093
 <i>MULLIGAN PLAYS MULLIGAN</i>—Prestige OJC-003
 <i>NIGHTLIGHTS</i>—Philips 1037
 <i>WALK ON THE WATER</i>—DRG 5194
 <i>WHAT IS THERE TO SAY?</i>—Columbia 8116</p> | <p>with Dave Brubeck
 <i>THE LAST SET AT NEWPORT</i>—Atlantic 1607
 <i>LIVE AT THE BERLIN PHILHARMONIC</i>—Columbia 32143
 <i>WE'RE ALL TOGETHER AGAIN FOR THE FIRST TIME</i>—Atlantic 1641</p> <p>with Scott Hamilton
 <i>SOFT LIGHTS AND SWEET MUSIC</i>—Concord Jazz 300</p> <p>with Judy Holliday
 <i>HOLIDAY WITH MULLIGAN</i>—DRG 5191</p> <p>with Thelonious Monk
 <i>ROUND MIDNIGHT</i>—Milestone 47067</p> <p>with Chet Baker
 <i>CARNEGIE HALL CONCERT</i>—CTI/CBS 40689
 <i>GERRY MULLIGAN AND CHET BAKER</i>—Prestige 24016E</p> |
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own mark but there was the feeling of a concerted effort for an overall excellence. People were trying their best, and I think they did it.

"There is a mainstream and each succeeding generation becomes part of the mainstream. But don't lose sight that the mainstream goes a long way back. I think it's a good idea to explore it and be able to understand why the music had the attraction it did. What is the magnetism that made the music what it is?"

Through the years he's played around that mainstream, played with everyone: Ellington and Monk, Dizzy and Bird, Coleman Hawkins. Name them and he's played with them. "Louis Armstrong, Jack Teagarden, Pee Wee Russell, Pres, Billie Holiday. They were nice people. I was lucky. That's what I wanted—to have the opportunity to play with those people and be accepted by them as a musician and a friend."

He's known the greats—and Gerry Mulligan has become one himself.

db

ROBIN EUBANKS

A True Sense Of Perspective

By Dave Holland

At Brighton, the idle-class resort, in a giant disco watching a couple thousand young Brits dance to the Talking Heads, Nu Shoes, and Eurythmics, the young men of the Jazz Messengers wonder: is this our audience for the evening? Then the dj changes the groove, putting on Lee Morgan's "Sidewinder," followed by Groove Holmes and Willis "Gatortail" Jackson, and they keep dancing. The Messengers, young men in their early 20s, wonder what is going on. But one man watches with a particular gleam in his eye. A decade older than the others, with his debut recording date scheduled for a couple months hence, trombonist Robin Eubanks smiled. He saw his future dancing.

"And then we came out to play and people went crazy. I told the cats in the band that I didn't exactly know what was happening, but this is going to be our audience in 10 or 20 years," recalls Eubanks. "People buying albums now, or coming to see us aren't going to be the ones seeing us in 20 years. We've

got to develop the audience for this."

Eubanks first record as a leader, *Different Perspectives*, sets out to develop an audience for his music on a broad front. The tunes range from an arrangement of "Walkin'" for nine trombones that he originally wrote for Slide Hampton's World of Trombones (recorded by Eubanks, Hampton, Clifton Anderson, and Doug Purviance, each playing two tracks plus a Eubanks solo) to Stevie Wonder's "Overjoyed" for the quiet storm radio format. Eubanks' own compositions are by turns funky ("Midtown"), romantic ("The Night Before," both featuring his guitarist brother Kevin), and outside (the title track with alto saxman Steve Coleman).

But is it jazz?

"I don't know," he replies as we enjoy a vegetarian buffet. "I just want to play music based on my little 32 years here. My whole purpose behind the album's mix is to present myself as a composer, arranger, trombonist, musician, but from a lot of different angles. I figure if I come out in a multi-faceted manner, they will have to deal with me in a multi-faceted manner. They won't be able to say 'You play with Art Blakey so you

must play straightahead,' or, 'You play out stuff with Dave Holland,' or, 'You play funk with Steve Coleman's band.' All those are parts of my personality and I couldn't figure another way than to come out with all the different angles at once. "But," he chuckles, "probably they are going to say, 'He has no focus. He doesn't know what he wants to do, has no sense of direction.'"

Eubanks runs with a crowd of young, Brooklyn-based musicians who refer to their music as M-BASE. While he jokes about the origin of the term at an all-night rap session with Coleman and Greg Osby in Chicago when they were members of, respectively, Holland's and Jack DeJohnette's bands—they managed to make M-BASE mean "macro basic array of structured extemporization" by consulting a thesaurus—he is serious about what it means to himself. "It may sound kind of pretentious, like this is a brand-new music that came out of nowhere. Because I've played with people like Art, Philly Joe Jones, McCoy Tyner—people really within the tradition of the music, I have too much respect for what they did to play music that draws from so



MITCHELL SEIDEL

many sources outside the tradition and still call it jazz. If it isn't steeped in the tradition, if it doesn't have that swing beat, people get upset and I can understand that. To show respect for the people who laid down the tradition it makes sense to call what we play something else."

Robin Eubanks, music director of Blakey's band, second on the 1988 **down beat** Critics Poll trombone TDWR list, grew up in a middle-class black neighborhood in Philadelphia. His father, William, tinkered around at the piano; his mother, Vera, gave lessons. All day Saturday, a succession of students—that at one time included pianist Kenny Barron—filed through the house to trip, literally, through the classical repertoire. Eubanks heard mistakes, all day long, mistake after mistake. Years later at Temple University he could sing all the songs, but he hated the piano.

What he liked were the soul classics on the radio: "Soul Man," "Cold Sweat," "Shotgun." He saw them performed at the Uptown, Philadelphia's equivalent of the Apollo and helped Stevie Wonder celebrate his 18th birthday there. Sundays he beat the big bass drum at his grandmother's corner Holiness Church. Brother Kevin played tambourine.

What he didn't listen to was jazz or, in the parlance of the Eubanks household, "barber shop music. I heard jazz but I never really heard it. The cat at the barber shop had WRTI on and they played Blakey, Curtis Fuller—mid-'60s Blue Note stuff. I didn't want to hear that and the only time we did was at the barber shop. We wanted to hear Aretha, the Temptations."

Robin's interest in the trombone came at Christmastime when he was in the fourth grade. At his school, carolers accompanied by a brass section gave a performance and he was intrigued. "With other instruments, you see how the music is played. You see a trumpeter's fingering or the drummer beating the drum. But with a trombone you just see the arm going back and forth. It looked so mysterious."

He played in the school orchestra and band. His first teacher was Art Blatt, a bass trombone player who Eubanks credits as the source for his own preference for playing a big horn. But Eubanks was strictly a school-year musician. When summer vacation started the horn was put away and out came the mitt, the bats, and the baseball cards. Not till the 10th grade did he become seriously interested in playing, joining with Kevin in neighborhood funk groups—Pitch Black and Sun Down—that played the hits by Kool and the Gang, the Brecker Brothers, and Tower of Power for dancers. The first solo Robin learned was Fred Wesley's from James Brown's "Pop Corn." He also learned all of Chicago's James Pankow's solos. Then he heard J. J. Johnson.

"It sounded so fantastic, I thought it had to be a valve trombone. Then I looked at the album cover. It was *The Eminent J. J. Johnson* with Clifford Brown. I said you can't

play that on a slide trombone. I know, I play trombone. I took the record off, put it away and went back to my Chicago records. It intimidated me so much that I put it away for years."

At the same time the Eubanks brothers came to lead these funk bands they were listening to rock bands, attracted by the energy of Led Zeppelin and Grand Funk Railroad. Robin even started playing bass. Then he heard the Mahavishnu Orchestra and "that took me left. Basically, it was the musical challenge. I couldn't tap my foot on two and four. It also had that rawness and energy I was getting out of the rock bands."

Then he heard McCoy Tyner's band with Joe Ford and Ron Bridgewater on sax and fell in love. "He had all that energy I was into." By the time he graduated from high school the neighborhood funk scene had been wiped out by the disco craze. He enrolled at Temple, majoring in music education. But they didn't offer any courses that even mentioned jazz. "They had great trombone teachers, like Doug Edelman, and good theory teachers there, but I had no interest in their music history courses. I thought it was very racist, first of all, because they didn't recognize anything but Western European music, and out of that only the music of France, Italy, and Germany—like those were the only three countries in Europe. Then they give you all these rules telling you what you couldn't do. But the music I was hearing everyday broke all those rules. I just said, 'Forget this.'"

Transferring to what is now the Philadelphia College of Performing Arts just as it was adding a jazz curriculum, he found he could get course credit for doing what came naturally—listening to Coltrane. His studies with Roger DeLillo led to a degree with honors. After graduation he played with "every" jazz band in Philadelphia, the most memorable being the Change of the Century Orchestra, nominally led by Philly Joe Jones with Odean Pope, Archie Shepp, and Sunny Murray. He played briefly with Sun Ra, Ray

Charles, and Stevie Wonder.

In 1978 he met Slide Hampton at the Hot Club in Philly and got to sit in on "All The Things You Are." Hampton asked him to join his group, the World of Trombones, and Eubanks began commuting to New York City on a weekly basis, staying at Hampton's apartment and playing together practically all day long. Hampton introduced him to the works of Monk, Miles, and J.J. and helped him hook up with the Collective Black Artists. "Slide was doing everything I wanted to do. He is a great arranger and an amazing player, but he told me, 'Don't listen to none of my mess. Don't learn from the branches when you can learn from the trunk.' That's a valuable lesson I've maintained and passed on to this day."

Eubanks finally moved to New York City, sharing an apartment with his brother and tenor saxist Ralph Moore in Brooklyn. Robin worked with Jimmy McGriff and anyone else with a band that wanted to play straight-ahead jazz. He subbed a little in Mel Lewis' big band, played with Bobby Watson after he left the Messengers, and played in his brother's band. He and Steve Coleman even played in the street. "I would do anything to play. First thing I did before I took a piss in the morning, I played some notes. Last thing before I passed out at night, I'd play some notes. But there weren't any trombone gigs. The only people really working were Curtis Fuller and Steve Turre. I got to sit in with Woody Shaw's band a little when Steve was a member. This was a slight disillusionment period for me, but I always had faith that things would come through. I don't know what I was basing that upon, certainly not reality [*he chuckles*]."

At about this time Steve Turre introduced Eubanks to the practice of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism and the chanting of "Nam Myoho Renge Kyo." Meaning literally "dedication to the mystic law of cause and effect through sound and vibration," the practice is followed by, among others, Tina Turner, Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, and Buster Williams.



Drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith gives a listen to Eubanks and saxman Steve Coleman backstage.

MITCHELL SEIDEL

"The idea that making a good cause results in a good effect was something I already believed. When my father got done giving us a beating for something stupid he would say, 'I'm going to be the kind of father you guys make me.' Obviously he was saying I had some kind of effect over whether I got my ass kicked or not. I had some control over this. I already believed that at nine years old, so when I heard there was a whole religion and philosophy based on something I already believed in, I jumped on it."

Career-wise, things began to turn around for Eubanks. He got calls to play in the pit bands of *Tap Dance Kid* and *Dream Girls* on Broadway, appeared in Francis Ford Coppola's film, *Cotton Club*, as a member of the Ellington and Calloway bands, and played on the Motown television special from the Apollo. Within two years after he'd begun chanting, he'd carved a niche for himself in the world of show business.

The practice of Buddhism stresses that one should challenge oneself, so Eubanks began chanting to play in a jazz band. "Buddhism is a way to understand the essence of yourself. Just as no two people have the same fingerprints, in Buddhism we believe no two people have the same karma. By translating that essence into musical terms, there is no way you'd sound like somebody else. No matter what you do in life, you can find a unique way of expressing yourself."

At that time, 1986, Eubanks' roommate Smitty Smith was the drummer in Dave Holland's band, and Steve Coleman played sax; so when Julian Priester gave notice, they suggested Eubanks as a replacement. Holland, who hadn't heard him, called to set up an audition.

"Hearing Robin confirmed all the reports," says Holland. "The spirit of what he does; the way he jumps right into the music. He's very well-developed as a rhythmic player. A lot of what I do with the quintet deals with different kinds of rhythmic settings for the music. Another aspect is that the players have come through the tradition but are dealing with a contemporary version of that. Finally, the sound that he has on the trombone is very full-bodied, brassy. Those are the three factors that were of most interest to me."

Soon Eubanks was working with five bands. He recorded with Geri Allen and Smitty Smith as well as his brother. He worked with Abdullah Ibrahim and toured Europe with Steve Coleman's Five Elements. Their first date was in Innsbruck, Austria and Art Blakey was there. Eubanks had been quizzing him about a gig off and on for years, since he and Kevin had been part of his big band in 1980. By 1987, Robin was the only horn player in a band—which included the Brothers Marsalis, Bobby Watson, Billy Pierce, and Valery Ponomerov—who hadn't worked with the Messengers.

"When Art finally asked me, I immediately wanted to join him, but it was funny that he



MITCHELL SEIDEL

ROBIN EUBANKS' EQUIPMENT

Eubanks plays a Bach 42B tenor trombone with an F attachment. "Sometimes I call it a baritone trombone. The bigger piping and bigger bore make for a darker kind of sound that spreads more. It reminds me of [singer] Paul Robeson: richness and depth and power in the voice. I really like the dark trombone sound but in the upper register you can get it to really cut."

His computer setup is an Atari ST 1040 with built-in MIDI ports with Doctor T Keyboard Control Sequencer software. He also uses a Mirage sampler, Korg DDD-1 and Alesis drum machines, and a Casio synthesizer.

ROBIN EUBANKS SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES—JMT 834 424-1

with others

Art Blakey: *LIVE AT MONTREUX AND NORTHSEA*—Timeless 150

NOT YET—Soul Note 121 105-2

Kevin Eubanks: *GITARIST*—Elektra/Musician 60213-1

Steve Coleman: *WORLD EXPANSION*—JMT 870010

SINE DIE—Pangaea 42150

Marvin "Smitty" Smith: *KEEPER OF THE DRUMS*—Concord Jazz 325

Geri Allen: *OPEN ON ALL SIDES*—Minor Music 1013

Dave Holland: *THE RAZOR'S EDGE*—ECM 1353

Mark Helias: *THE CURRENT SET*—Enja 5041

Branford Marsalis: *SCENES IN THE CITY*—Columbia 38951

Herb Robertson: *SHADES OF BUD POWELL*—JMT 834 420-1

would ask me when I wasn't thinking about it. I used to call him up and ask him when he was going to hire me. He'd tell you everything you wanted to hear except where the gig is. I love him a lot, respect him musically more than anybody. The track record he has plus the notoriety you get from playing in his band was something I could definitely use. Also, he's not getting any younger and I wanted to play with him in the sextet setting. So I cut loose all these other bands to work for Art; and as much as he works, I didn't have time for those other bands."

In the 16 months he's been a Messenger,

Eubanks has been to Japan twice, Europe a dozen times, and crisscrossed the States. As music director, Eubanks sets the tempo of the set by calling the first couple tunes. The third tune features someone—like Eubanks himself on "You Don't Know What Love Is"—and the fourth is generally a hit like "Moanin'." Blakey calls the last tune himself. If someone wants to sit in, they talk to Eubanks.

"Since Robin has been with Art, he has really blossomed, come into his own as a soloist with something to say," says Steve Turre, who is putting together a duo LP with Eubanks. "I always felt he had his own style, even when he was 16 or 17 and coming up from Philly to play with Slide. I could hear influences, but he has something in there that is distinctly him. He's not scared to take chances and he knows his instrument. He knows his changes, the scales, really has command of the instrument so he can put it together any kind of way he wants to. He's my favorite younger cat, no question."

Eubanks and the Brooklyn M-BASE crew hang together, advise each other on business deals, and make use of the latest electronic technology—computers, drum machines, and the like—even while playing straight-ahead jazz. If Eubanks needs a drum part for a demo that he can't play himself, Smitty Smith will come over and program it into Eubanks' computer setup. In their small Brooklyn apartments, they can't have big rehearsals, so the drummer uses Eubanks' Roland Octa Pads to trigger his Alesis drum machine. What is this? Hi-tech, networking jazz musicians?

"You can do so much more with a disc than with a tape recorder. We're just using the technology available to do what we want to do; but more than that, we're trying to develop more cohesiveness within the music community by working directly within our own generation. We all realize we're next. We're on deck."

"So one of the things we're using this networking for is to elevate the level of input we have in controlling the music. By us being the next generation coming up and by banding together, people are going to have to deal with us. Ain't nobody else to deal with. We have certain standards we try to maintain. We know each others' business kind of intimately, so we know what people are getting for this, getting for that. Among young people, even outside our immediate little clique, everybody is trying to help each other out. Wynton and Branford have been very helpful."

"People going back to Louis Armstrong, Bird—they have given their lives to give us the chance to make a living at this. It would be ridiculous and totally disrespectful to them for us to maintain things at a low level. By us trying to raise the level of respect that the industry has for musicians, we will make it better for people who come after, so that things should continually progress instead of us just saying, 'That's the way it is.'" db

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



JACK DEJOHNETTE'S SPECIAL EDITION

AUDIO VISUALSCAPES—MCA/Impulse MCA2-8029: *PM's AM*; *DONJO*; *MASTER MIND*; *SLAM TANGO*; *THE SPHINX*; *ONE FOR ERIC*; *BROWN WARM & WINTRY*; *AUDIO-VISUALSCAPES*.

Personnel: DeJohnette, drums, electric keyboards, drum machine; Greg Osby, soprano, alto saxophones; Gary Thomas, flute, bass clarinet, tenor saxophone; Mick Goodrick, guitar; Lonnie Plaxico, bass.

★★★★

He's all right, Jack. No flies on him or his time. Or his tunes: he's the best writing (and piano-playing) drummer of this generation. This new Edition forges ahead with a few well-timed twists and turns, plenty of surprises and challenges. Five men sound like a dozen at times, their electronic toys spinning out horn holograms. A lot of it has to do with the leader's hip use of Korg products, I'm sure: I gave up trying to figure out whether one or two horns (with pedal) or the synthesizer were playing the unison lines, and just let the overripe, phantasmagoric ensembles lash at me.

DeJohnette's writing, layered and subtle, is elucidated both by impassioned blowing and group thinking. Effective repetition (vamps, ostinati, passages) balances tricky lines, acclimatizes the ears to tides of fresh rhythmic notions. Straight tunes get bent. "One For Eric" takes a sharp left with a tempo-drop to a trance-like modal excursion for horns (or is it the DW 8000?) and a dream sequence for Goodrick's transcendental ideas before getting back on the fast track with Dolphinian febrile alto and quixotic flute over crisp traps. Ornette's "Sphinx" is riddled with fleet dual improvs and brilliant whippersnapper notions. Bent pieces get texturized. The layering on the 15-minute title track seems impenetrable at first listen but proves endlessly fascinating: "Slam Tango" weaves slinky speed with soft staccato.

Special Edition hones the venerable dialectic of group over individual, sounding grand and expansive, but still lean and mean. The horns' equipment let them cut unison ensembles on their solo improvisations: this can sound like a manic Supersax ("Sphinx"), or a churning, heads-up jazz-rock band ("PM's AM," heard in the all-fusion context of WERS-FM's "Fuse Box," seemed to have all the nifty grit and sass of pop bands).

Goodrick, a sainted keening voice, infiltrates the ensemble with limpid power and breath-taking ethereality, like a slug of moonshine with barbecued ribs. Plaxico exerts phenomenal

staying power and elasticity on his bass, while the boss practices latter-day sleight of hand by playing nice brushes and hat-muted trumpet section, vibes, and strings on "Warm" under short, romantic statements of flute, guitar, alto. That's my key to this Edition: the subsuming of personalities into a fresh, total sound. As with the bands of King Oliver or early Louis Armstrong, the consistently explorative and exciting ensembles knock me out more than the soloing.

The one track I could live without is "Master Mind"—an intransigent monotony of sock backbeat, drone bass, and caterwauling horns. Elsewhere the electricity of this forging, thinking band captures the ear and the imagination.

—fred bouchard



THE LEADERS

OUT HERE LIKE THIS . . .—Black Saint 120 119: *ZERO*; *LUNA*; *COOL*; *DONKEY DUST*; *PORTRAITS*; *FELICITE*; *LOVES I ONCE KNEW*.

Personnel: Lester Bowie, trumpet; Arthur Blythe, alto saxophone; Chico Freeman, tenor, soprano saxophone, bass clarinet; Kirk Lightsey, piano; Cecil McBee, bass; Don Moya, percussion.

★★★★

At first glimpse, the Leaders seemed a band of commercial convenience: liberal ideologues going mainstream. But now that Blythe has recorded with strings and Bowie with drum machines, and now that Freeman's and the Art Ensemble's once prolific album outputs have slowed to a trickle, the Leaders sounds like just what its members and their fans need.

All-star front lines are dubious assemblies, but this one's rife with effective contrast: citric Bowie and Blythe for character, Freeman for body. Lester does comedy and Chico, high drama (hear his throaty work on McBee's "Portraits"). Flanking Blythe, whose big-vibrato bathos straddles both, they place him at the center of the horns: Arthur's first among equals, stealing the show. On McBee's love song/lament "Felicite," Blythe stings the blues, his lead alto dramatic and serpentine enough to make me wish he'd revive some Johnny Hodges numbers. Arthur reminds us his allure rests on improvisational heat as well as searing tone; he hasn't sounded so good in years.

Lightsey is probably considered the most conservative Leader, but his percussive vamping (locked in with trumpet and tenor) behind Blythe's slow burn on "Luna" is unorthodox,

simply effective and distinctive. Besides being one of our greatest bassists in general, McBee has always been an effective foil for Freeman in particular; like few others, he makes ostinati perpetually interesting, keeping the blowing patterns the Leaders like from getting stale. (Having a structuralist/colorist drummer like Moya in the band helps accomplish the same thing.) By picking fairly simple structures and loosely singing them, these old lions show not merely that traditionalism needn't be tame, but that today's non-tame trad needn't sound like a mildly wild 1965 Blue Note LP.

The Leaders may seem like a casual band, recycling old material as they do; Bowie's "Zero" is from the Art Ensemble's book, "Luna" from Freeman's. But they sound like the working group they are. A git-up-'n-blow session this good beats strings and drum machines any day.

—kevin whitehead



KEITH RICHARDS

TALK IS CHEAP—Virgin 1-90973: *BIG ENOUGH*; *TAKE IT SO HARD*; *STRUGGLE*; *I COULD HAVE STOOD YOU UP*; *MAKE NO MISTAKE*; *YOU DON'T MOVE ME*; *HOW I WISH*; *ROCKAWHILE*; *WHIP IT UP*; *LOCKED AWAY*; *IT MEANS A LOT*.

Personnel: Richards, vocals and guitars; Waddy Wachtel, guitars (cuts 2, 3, 6-8, 10-11); Steve Jordan, background vocals and percussion; Charley Drayton, background vocals and bass (2, 3, 5-7, 9-11); Joey Spampinato, bass (4, 8); Bootsy Collins, bass (1); Bernie Worrell, keyboards (1, 5, 6, 8); Ivan Neville, keyboards (2, 3, 7, 10, 11); Stanley "Buckwheat" Dural, accordion (6, 8, 10); Maceo Parker, alto sax (1); Mick Taylor, guitar (4); Johnnie Johnson, piano (4); Chuck Leavell, keyboards (4); Bobby Keys, tenor sax (5); Memphis Horns (5); Michael Doucet, violin (10); Sarah Dash, vocals (1, 4, 8); Patti Scialfa, vocals (7, 9).

★★★★ 1/2

In a weird but fulfilling way, this is just about the record everyone—every diehard Stones freak, that is—hoped Keith Richards would make, especially since Glimmer Twin alter ego Mick Jagger spent his two solo efforts mining the sterile sounds of MTV-type pop. This album is like Keith's face: lined and pitted and craggy and battered. Not airbrushed. Rock & roll with a vengeance and a brain, a raw-edged spontaneity that is carefully crafted to kick ass.

The lyrics of the Richards-Jordan writing team prove the title's point: snatches of phrases, outlines of situations, they're left at

the level of the broadly suggestive. But their appeal comes with how they set up and sustain a particular mood and rhythm; they work a refrain, burrow into it and let it twist over the constantly shifting musical landscapes. But what kaleidoscopic shifts! From the Stones' earliest days Richards has kept digging around the roots of rock, poking into everything from blues and r&b and stone country to gospel and reggae and second-line struts; and on *Talk Is Cheap*, as on the best Stones' stuff, he rolls it all together into one helluva spliff. Its familiarities and oddities collide with- out ever throwing you through the windshield. It's like overhearing him think it all out.

His characteristically ragged chordal work, trailing suspensions like hanging threads, and his trademark guitar hooks suture the wild variety put out by the astonishing supporting cast he's assembled. What results is a diverse musical self-portrait, stuffed with offhand references to past glories like "Street Fighting Man," but also venturing into unfamiliar territory like soul-style duet ballads. His torn and frayed vocals stretch with surprising suppleness: the flayed huskiness of "Make No Mistake," the rockabilly whoops on "I Could Have Stood You Up," the Bob Marley-ish phrasing on the gently rolling "Locked Away." The mix, stylistically indebted to reggae and dub and more open-ended than the patented Stones' wall-of-mud, lets the rich instrumentation unfurl. But like the title says. . . .

—gene santoro



DAVE HOLLAND TRIO

TRIPPLICATE—ECM 837 113: *GAMES; QUIET FIRE; TAKE THE COLTRANE; RIVERS RUN; FOUR WINDS; TRIPLE DANCE; BLUE; AFRICAN LULLABY; SEGMENT.*
Personnel: Holland, bass; Steve Coleman, alto saxophone; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

KENNY WHEELER QUINTET

FLUTTER BY, BUTTERFLY—Soul Note 121 146: *EVERYBODY'S SONG BUT MY OWN; WE SALUTE THE NIGHT; MILD MAN; FLUTTER BY, BUTTERFLY; GIGOLO; THE LITTLE FELLA.*
Personnel: Wheeler, flugelhorn, cornet; Stan Sulzman, soprano and tenor saxophones, flute;

John Taylor, piano; Dave Holland, bass; Billy Elgart, drums.

★ ★ ★

You can't judge a record by its cover, or its title, but the fact remains that such superfluous considerations are central to consumerism. So, why put the full-blooded music of Dave Holland and Kenny Wheeler in such misleading packages? Wheeler's preciously titled *Flutter By, Butterfly* has the look of an Age-of-Aquarius crossover travesty; the only touches lacking are a back cover photo of Wheeler in a Nehru jacket, and Leonard Feather ranting about "Luv" in the liner notes. Conversely, the clonal, bureaucratic connotations of a title such as Holland's *TriPLICATE* are reinforced by gray, sterile graphics that violate a cardinal law of album cover design—the artist's name(s) and album title are worked into the upper third of the cover design so the record can be easily found in a bin. Why make it tougher to market such artists than it is already?

As it is, Kenny Wheeler defies convenient definition. He is, in comparison to his colleagues in the avant garde, conservative. Yet, Wheeler, who is nearing his 60th birthday, is, stylistically, of a different generation than Art Farmer or Thad Jones. Wheeler tenaciously thrives in this sometimes contradictory interstice, as evidenced by the sequencing of the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 33

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FOUR TROMBONES

by Bill Shoemaker

J. Johnson is the Reigning Gray Eminence of the trombone, his shadow already extending into the next century. There is also a core of American trombonists who are adding whole wings to the house that J.J. built—through assertive leadership, bold compositions, and catalytic collaborations. Julian Priester, Steve Turre, Craig Harris, and Benny Powell are in the thick of it, leading or contributing to four of the year's more ambitious recordings.

On *Fire And Ice* (Stash 275), **Steve Turre** follows the conventional wisdom for second albums, confirming his known assets in short order, and presenting a substantive new aspect of his work. Turre gives his crack rhythm section of Cedar Walton, Buster Williams, and Billy Higgins a run for their money on his bracing blues-with-a-bridge title piece and a blistering take of Raahsan Roland Kirk's "E.D."; two thoroughly cogent cases-in-point for Turre's lauded virtuosity. His integration of a string quartet—Quartette Indigo, featuring John Blake—is a successful new facet for Turre, adding elegance to readings of "Mood Indigo" and "When Lights Are Low," and fleshing out Turre's sumptuous ballad, "Juanita." One has to question Turre's devoting almost 10 minutes of the program in a vigorous attempt to resuscitate "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life," one of the most frequently beaten dead horses in pop music. Otherwise, *Fire And Ice* is an impressive album.

Craig Harris is one of the most gifted trombonists to come of artistic age in this decade, but he has yet to deliver a recording of enduring merit. In *Tailgater's Tales* (trumpeter Eddie E.J. Allen, clarinetist Don Byron, bassist Anthony Cox, and drummer Ralph Peterson, Jr.), Harris has a band that creates incredible music. Yet, as was less the case with *Shelter* (JMT 870 008), Harris can't leave well enough alone on *Black Out In The Square Root Of Soul* (JMT 880 015), as he encumbers a striking program with underwhelming guest-artist contributions from keyboardist Clyde Criner and guitarist Jean Paul Bourelly. When the soporific synths and gurgling guitars are front and center, as they are for much of the album, the propulsive urgency of Harris' compositions becomes diffuse, their lyricism sugary. When *Tailgater's Tales* are given free reign, as on the structurally subtle, swaggering "Dingo," Harris' music comes vividly alive, full of nuances and allusions. If Harris records an entire album of straight-up *Tailgater's Tales*, it will be instant history.

The stature of **Julian Priester** is tough to derive from a discography with chronological gaps and minor efforts as a leader. Yet, *No Secrets* (New Albion 017

CD), the debut of Quartett, his co-op with bassist Gary Peacock, vocalist extraordinary Jay Clayton, and percussionist Jerry Grannelli, suggests Priester has a shot at future Reigning Gray Eminence status. His pure tone and supple phrasing are integral to Quartett's translation of such heady propositions as free improvisation and signal processing into inviting, palatable music. Quartett is particularly adept at keeping the interplay at a simmer, while maintaining a purposeful,

go-with-the-flow ambience. The terrain covered in *No Secrets* represents something of a composite of Priester's career, which spans the exotica of Sun Ra's Arkestra of the '50s, the electronic adventurism of Herbie Hancock's Sextet of the early '70s, and the melodic drive of Dave Holland's Quintet of the '80s, in addition to his own eclectic groups. And Julian Priester is only one-fourth of Quartett.

John Carter's five-suite cycle, *Roots And*

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

Folklore: Episodes In The Development Of American Folk Music, will prompt study and commentary for years to come, particularly his Ellington-like tailoring of the suites to the strengths of his ensemble. **Benny Powell** has been a principle beneficiary of this aspect of Carter's work, as reaffirmed on *Fields* (Gramavision 18 8809 1), the fourth suite of the cycle. Powell's voice-like flexibility is perfectly matched for Carter's stark and sacred soundscapes, whether he

is moaning over the errie ensemble passages of "Ballad To Po' Ben," underpinning the scampering dance rhythms of "Bootyreba At The Big House" with bullfrog croaks, or helping to unleash the furies of the fields during the climax of the 20-minute title piece. Carter adds new elements with each installment of the cycle—extensive use of taped voices in the case of *Fields*—but constants, like the contributions of Benny Powell, are essential to the epic scope of *Roots And Folklore*. **db**

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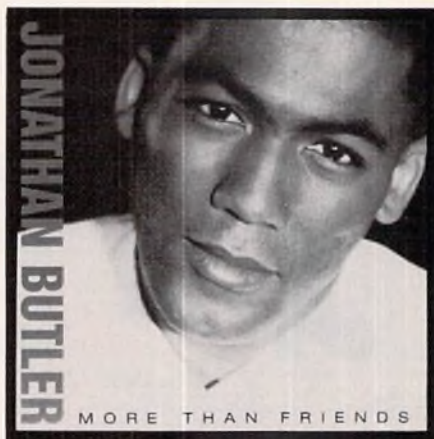
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LATER LESTER

by John McDonough

Here is an Italian *enselada mista* of **Lester Young**—four LPs that cover the second Basie period of 1944 through the end in 1959. Since just about anything of Young—even the spotty '50s broadcasts—continues to be of more than passing interest, this is a welcome series. Even though Young's essence had tended to settle into a somewhat self-conscious parade of devices, they remained so compelling and ingenious, they are eternally fascinating. But since the qualities of performance, sound, and album production range from poor to very good, caution is advised in ordering these from their American distributor.

Prez's Hat: Rare & Unissued, Volume 1 (Philology 214W6) is perhaps the most fragmented, though fascinating. All non-Basie items are scraps from Paris appearances, including his last in March 1959. A sequence of four titles, presumably from a JATP concert



Prez: compelling and ingenious.

of 1953, has long been identified in discographies as *Flashes Of Prez* but never issued on LP. It includes two ballads ("These Foolish Things" and "I Cover The Waterfront"), both slow, sensual, and full of saliva oozing through the notes. A switch in tempo produces perhaps the most abstract outline of "Lester Leaps In" ever. It's interrupted by an upcut "Blues In C," with horns joining in at the end. After good versions of "Pennies From Heaven" and "Waterfront" from other gigs, there is supposedly the only live recording from Young's famous (and final) appearance at the Paris Blue Note in 1959. The only complete title is "There'll Never Be Another You," and despite the whispish intonation, it's a far more filled out performance than the depressing 1959 version on Verve (*Lester Young In Paris*). The inclusion of the alternate take of "Lester Leaps In" from the original 1939 CBS date (previously issued on Columbia's *Lester Young Story*, among other labels), is a complete non-sequitor. The Basie material on side two (from April 7, not May 10 as indicated) is listenable and mostly unissued. Not a lot of Lester, except for a "Jumpin' At The Woodside" (previously on



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the obscure Carocol 431) which has a superbly worked out pacing that still makes it. As in other *Woodside*s from this period, a fairly set sequence of familiar licks is jostled around with just enough shading and variation to keep things interesting.

Side one of *Volume 2* (Philology 214W7) offers three long cuts, supposedly from the December 1956 Washington material issued definitively by Pablo. Actually, they are performances of unknown origin with trombonist Earl Swope, all previously issued on *Jazz Archives 34*, but all sounding considerably better here. Swope is especially strong, his loose, sloshing attack and unexpected turn of mind a mirror image of Young's solid lines. The Basie material on side two is a bit murky but has some fresh Young ("KC Stride," "Let's Jump") as well as four other gems issued only on the out-of-print Carocol LP ("Dance Of The Gremlins," "Blue Room Jump," "There'll Be Some Changes Made," and a short "Woodside").

The last two volumes (Philology 214W8 and 214W9) collect three NBC and ABC Birdland broadcasts. The sound is relatively stable and the textures consistent. Horace Silver is dashing and penetrating on "Up 'n Adam" from 1953. Young is alternately meek and mighty throughout, as his mood dictates, but always in apparent control. On both the 1953 and '56 broadcasts (one introduced by Paul Whiteman), his mid-range tenor intonation is thick, but with enough hollowness to suggest the prime of his playing. It's in the occasional reaches into the upper end where his pitch becomes suspect. Jesse Drakes, who was the other half of Lester's front line through the '50s, is consistently poised, fluid, appropriate but anonymous. Unfortunately, the six Basie titles miss the mark completely. Recorded in October, 1944 (not May 5), Lester had left the band by then. The tenor soloist is obviously Illinois Jacquet. And how a brief "One O'Clock Jump" gets listed as "Jumpin' At The Woodside" is anybody's guess.

On balance, *Volume Four* is probably the best of the lot. For example, there's a "Blues In G" from 1956 that summons up Young's old sweep and power in a way nothing else on these other LPs manages to match. And the Basie band material comes from a single broadcast with unissued helpings of Lester on "Broadway," "Jumpin' Jive," and "Harvard Blues." **db**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

second side of the album. The limpid, bucolic lyricism of the title piece is earnest, straight-faced, and two-dimensional. Prefaced by wry, free improvisation, "Gigolo" is an almost unctuous tango that would fit neatly into a Maarten Altena program—Wheeler was a member of the adventurous Dutch bassist's octet for several years. "The Little Fella" is a spritely splicing of traditional Irish dances, Methenyish vistas, and Coltrane sheets of sound.

The first half of the program is more cohesive, more in the mold of his burnished ECM dates, forwarding Wheeler's compositional subtleties, as well as his more obvious improvisational strengths. "Everybody's Song But My Own" is a tension-filled waltz that is particularly suited



Dave Holland

H.L. LINDENMAIER

for Wheeler's vaults into the flugelhorn's extreme high register, and Holland's penchant for harmonic extensions. A svelte, mid-tempo 32-bar tune, "We Salute The Night," is full of appealing thematic hooks, especially the use of minor thirds in the coda. In "Mould Man," Wheeler builds a theme on fourths in three minor keys, shifting improvisational gears from Holland's gleeful introductory solo, through Wheeler's seam-busting solo, to Stan Sulzman and Billy Elgart's probing, tactile cadenza.

Cohesion is the operative term for Holland's *Triplicate*. Steve Coleman is the lynchpin in the front line of Holland's acclaimed Quintet; Jack DeJohnette and the bassist have worked together on an occasional, yet emphatic, basis

for 20 years. This shared history translates into seamless interplay throughout a high-contrast program that includes a soothing "African Lullaby," Ellington's ebullient "Take The Coltrane," Parker's scorching "Segment," and a wide array of originals from all hands. Granted, an element of this aural consistency is courtesy of a digital recording that creates a level, if sometimes unrealistic, playing field; luckily, the decay and overtones of DeJohnette's forceful work are left adequately intact, while Holland and Coleman border on a dry sound. But, overall, what holds *Triplicate* together is responsive, creative musicianship.

"Four Winds" is perhaps Holland's most enduring composition, and its overdue updating treats the rich, intricate melodic fabric in a more tempered manner than on *Conference Of The Birds* (ECM 1027). Holland's opening solo is a paradigm of construction, Coleman's approach is incisive and thoughtful, typical of the simmering attack he employs throughout the program, and even DeJohnette's most explosive work adheres to the compositional structure. The other Holland compositions are of a comparable caliber. Coleman triggers a propulsive "Triple Dance," but it is DeJohnette, with a series of short sterling solos, who sends the piece into overdrive. "Rivers Run" is a multi-faceted dedication to Sam Rivers, and "Quiet Fire" has a smoldering lyricism. Again, Holland has delivered a solid, satisfying set.

—bill shoemaker

BIRELI LAGRENE

He stunned the European jazz world at the tender age of 13 with his brilliant interpretations of Django Reinhardt's feral, freewheeling music. Some were calling this Gypsy prodigy the natural heir to that rich legacy. But on his Blue Note debut, last year's *Inferno*, Bireli stepped out from the shadow of Django and asserted a bold new direction on electric guitar.

Now on *Foreign Affairs* the 22-year-old virtuoso goes a step further in establishing his own voice on the instrument. Spurred on by the formidable rhythm tandem of bassist Jeff Andrews (from the Michael Brecker Band), and drummer Dennis Chambers (from John Scofield's group), Bireli burns with newfound conviction while maintaining his uncanny Gypsy lyricism. From his soaring acoustic treatment of Herbie Hancock's "Jack Rabbit" to his own aggressive "Josef," a powerful homage to the classic Weather Report sound, and his tribute to son "Timothée" in a Pat Metheny groove; from his soulful rendering of the standard ballad "I Can't Get Started" to his inspired acoustic guitar improvisations on "Rue De Pierre (Part III)," Bireli plays with typical fire and finesse.

Foreign Affairs places Bireli Lagrene firmly in the ranks of the top guitarists on the contemporary jazz scene.



Foreign Affairs

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THE FINEST IN JAZZ 1939-1989





YELLOWJACKETS

POLITICS—MCAD-6236: *Oz*; *Tortoise & The Hare*; *Local Hero*; *Gaileo (For Jaco)*; *Foreign Correspondent*; *Downtown*; *Helix*; *Avance*; *One Voice*; *Evening Dance*.

Personnel: Russell Ferrante, keyboards; Jimmy Haslip, five-string bass; Marc Russo, saxophones; William Kennedy, drums; guests: Alex Acuna, percussion; Steve Croes, synclavier.

★ ★ ½

This is Yellowjacket's fifth on MCA since forming in 1981, and I confess I hadn't listened to any of them all the way through. It's pretty easy to get through the musical life with the blinders on, as many a Blindfold Test proves, but you still apply your limited standards when listening. It does seem that, having no jazz roots in their collective history (Ferrante toured

with blues singer Jimmy Witherspoon, Russo with early fuser Narada Walden), this band is determined to graft its own. I hear big band noises here and there, lightning lines born of bebop and citified blues forms: perhaps Croes beefing up the band with Ferguson/Rich semblances (twelve horns in a box); on "Avance," he pulls out the strings—just a few.

Fusion alto players have as hard a time breaking away from the sound of Dave Sanborn as it was for a generation of tenor men to avoid the more pervasive influence of John Coltrane. The mold has been cast, and who can—or dares—break it? Not Marc Russo, nor any of the players I've noticed in this burgeoning idiom since Jay Beckenstein. His "Local Hero" is surely Big Dave—quiver, gesture, syrupy stiletto; he's more on his own on tenor.

The album starts promisingly enough with some florid soprano and a good lick of a tune on "Oz." Fidgety boppish lines punctuated with big band-like chords from a trumpety-synthesizer spiced "Correspondent" and "Downtown." It's a little overkilling, but the contrast in texture varies the context enough that the nagging sameness of fusion's weak premises (Funk Forever, LCD of Taste, Melodic Triviality, The Beat) are kept in abeyance. Good arranging and judicious programming are prime factors in this YJ set; the material itself is a bit thin and wan, and hopelessly familiar.

As a jazz fan, I listen for solo spaces meted out freehandedly and filled creatively; YJ

makes out better on the former than the latter. Ferrante takes a good piano nip on "Helix" (a glancing, playful tune with windowdressing by Acuna), and Russo takes nice soprano nibbles on "Oz" and "Avance," a lowkey samba with a playful fade for soprano and piano. Kennedy's a little shrill and obvious on drums, and Haslip seems your average, sturdy, over-miked bassist. *Politics* is a pretty good fusion date—lively, amusing, varied—by a well-schooled and copacetic band. As the title implies, though, there's more posturing and form than soul and substance.

—fred bouchard

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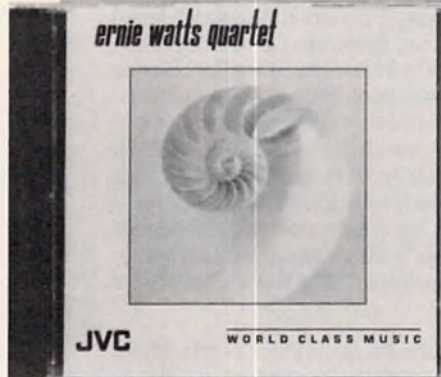
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cd reviews

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



MICHAEL BRECKER

DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME—Impulse MCAD 42229: *ITSBYNNE REEL*; *CHIME THIS*; *SCRIABIN*; *SUSPONE*; *DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME*; *EVERYTHING HAPPENS WHEN YOU'RE GONE*; *TALKING TO MYSELF*; *THE GENTLEMAN & HIZCAINE*. (55:36 minutes)

Personnel: Brecker, tenor saxophone, EWI; Mike Stern, electric guitar; Mark O'Connor, electric violin; Don Grolnick, Herbie Hancock, Joey Calderazzo, piano; Jim Beard, piano, synthesizer; Charlie Haden, bass; Jeff Andrews, electric bass, fretless electric bass; Jack DeJohnette, Adam Nussbaum, Peter Erskine, drums; Judd Miller, synthesizer programming.

★ ★ ★ ½

Of course Mike Brecker plays the hell out of the tenor, what with his curvaceous lines, dou-

bled-up tempi, full sound all around the horn—faissetto range included—and his solid harmonic knowledge. More than on last year's *Michael Brecker*, he came to blow; the shortest track here is five minutes, the longest nearly 10. Sidefolk are split between his new working band (Stern, Calderazzo, Andrews, Nussbaum) and old pals.

But there are problems, starting with the Brecker/Grolnick "Itsbynne Reel," a high-concept rollercoaster ride designed more for ear-grabbing airplay than close scrutiny. It flows from a EWI and violin (Mark O'Connor's) Irish reel, to Zawinoid fusion over Haden's pulsing drone, to a climactic tenor blowout. But until the closing minute when everything comes together—violin, hard tenor, drone bass—the different styles don't so much blend as co-exist. Brecker almost humanizes the sound of his much-touted Electronic Wind Instrument here and there, letting us here the breath behind the gadgetry—notably on "Suspone" (Stern's snazzy line over rhythm changes that could easily become Manhattan Transfer's next hit travesty). But even at best the EWI sounds like window dressing, no match for his tenor.

On half the album, Charlie Haden gives the music a dose of heartfelt soul, even inspiring some Ornettey moments on the title track. Brecker's tenor tone is hard enough to sound shellacked—not unlike Jan Garbarek's, in fact. Whether it strikes you as pleading or bleating

PETER ERSKINE: MOTION POET

He's a veteran of Weather Report, Weather Update, and Steps Ahead. He's played extensively with the likes of Maynard Ferguson and Stan Kenton. He's drummer/composer Peter Erskine he has a new release out from Denon. Comprised exclusively of Erskine originals, "Motion Poet" features Randy and Michael Brecker, Eliane Elias, John Abercrombie and other top New York studio musicians.



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on the ballad movements is a matter of taste. But there's no denying his satisfying drive on the medium-to-up romps (which ballads like "Chime This" and "Talking To Myself" eventually become). If only there were still more tenor and less EWI, more Haden and less Andrews—a quite capable player whose electric tone is out of place on "Suspense"'s bop.

Jim Beard's "The Gentleman & Hizzcaine"—slinky variations on a ticktock singsong vamp—continues Impulse's mysterious habit of including one of an album's best tracks on CD only. (They did the same on DeJohnette's *Irresistible Forces* and the *Blues For Coltrane* set.) It's all the more mysterious as the whole program could have fit on LP, and because, perhaps better than anything else here, "Hizzcaine" shows that creativity and accessibility are fully compatible.

—kevin whitehead



CASSANDRA WILSON

BLUE SKIES — JMT 834 419-2: *SHALL WE DANCE*; *POLKA DOTS AND MOONBEAMS*; *I'VE GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO HIS FACE*; *I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TIME IT WAS*; *GEE BABY AIN'T I GOOD TO YOU*; *I'M OLD FASHIONED*; *SWEET LORRAINE*; *MY ONE AND ONLY LOVE*; *AUTUMN NOCTURNE*; *BLUE SKIES*. (51:06 minutes)

Personnel: Wilson, vocals; Mulgrew Miller, piano; Lonnie Plaxico, bass; Terri Lynne Carrington, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

A set of standards to woo skeptics, *Blue Skies* is half great and half green. As on previous albums, Wilson has turned up some splendid oddities, beginning with *The King And I*'s "Shall We Dance," an invitation extended to her splendid trio. Mulgrew's translucent chords revisit Herbie with Miles and Tyner behind Johnny Hartman. Terri Carrington shows her sensitivity with brushes on a lightly zippy "I'm Old Fashioned" (taking her cue from the lyric's "sound of rain upon a windowpane"); Plaxico, walking solid with doubletime dips, glides across the floor like Astaire.

The singer's big find here (courtesy of pianist James Weidman) is the 1942 Josef Myrow-Kim Gannon "Autumn Nocturne," a sad saga of quenchless love unrequited; Wilson's plunging low notes give me goosebumps. (Yeah, she flubs a line, but jazz ain't supposed to be perfect.)

Wilson's uncommonly chipper "Polka Dots And Moonbeams" is a masterpiece. You recall



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the Johnny Burke lyric: at a social, he bumps into her, she sees moonbeams and polka dots, and asks him to dance. The first time through, Wilson gives it the standard love-at-first-sight interp—one glance, time stands still. But on the second pass—slurring words, his "oh beg your pardon" a melismatic blur—we get a different sense: he's reeling drunk, and she obligingly offers to dance to keep him vertical. The polka dots wrapped around him become cartoon shorthand for inebriation (an impression reinforced by Miller's clinking champagne-glass punctuations). As the happy-ever-after second verse sets this action in the past, one imagines the singer endlessly retelling the story of How They Met, putting a playful spin on it each time. Telling the same tale different ways, Wilson's reading of "Polka Dots" becomes a metaphor for jazz itself.

That Wilson should be shaping up into a shrewd dramatist makes sense. Her chief role models—Abbey Lincoln elsewhere, Betty Carter here—are among the music's best actors. But she doesn't always focus so well on a lyric: Casting "Sweet Lorraine" in the third person—he just found joy—the singer sounds so coolly aloof, you can't tell if she approves of his find. And when Wilson invites a direct Carter comparison (as on the jaunty "Blue Skies"), her lax scat can't touch the master. Her substitution of a BMW for the Cadillac in a slow-drag "Gee Baby" is too yuppie cute, too. But flaws and all, no other young singer comes close. If she can resist her Brooklyn pals' funk mania, Wilson matured will be damn hard to catch.

—kevin whitehead



ELAINE ELIAS

CROSS CURRENTS—Denon CY-2180: *HALLUCINATIONS; CROSS CURRENTS; BEAUTIFUL LOVE; CAMPARI & SODA; ONE SIDE OF YOU; ANOTHER SIDE OF YOU; PEGGY'S BLUE SKYLIGHT; IMPULSIVE; WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR; EAST COASTIN'; COMING AND GOING.* (62:08 minutes)

Personnel: Elias, piano; Eddie Gomez, bass; Jack DeJohnette (cuts 1, 3, 5-10), Peter Erskine (2, 4, 11), drums; Barry Finnerty, acoustic guitar (11); Cafe, percussion (11).

★ ★ ★ ★

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

MICHEL PLAYS PETRUCCIANI—Blue Note CDP 7 48679 2: *SHE DID IT AGAIN; ONE FOR US; SAHARA; 13TH; MR. K.J.; ONE NIGHT AT KEN AND*

JESSICA'S; IT'S A DANCE; LA CHAMPAGNE; BRAZILIAN SUITE. (43:55 minutes)

Personnel: Petrucciani, piano; Gary Peacock (cuts 1-5), Eddie Gomez (6-9), bass; Roy Haynes (1-5), Al Foster (6-9), drums; John Abercrombie, guitar (2, 7); Steve Thornton, percussion (9).

★ ★ ★ ★

The progression of the jazz piano trio has led to Elaine Elias and Michel Petrucciani in the '80s. Following the lead of Ahmad Jamal, Bill Evans, Herbie Hancock, Keith Jarrett, and Chick Corea in the '60s and '70s, these two have emerged as leaders of the romantic tradition. Some of the romance—that certain way of combining melody and harmony to produce a beautiful melancholy—may be in the genes. Elias is Brazilian, Petrucciani French, although both are fully Americanized and internationalized players.

The difference in their approaches is a matter of energy. Elias flows, staying even-tempered whether she's taking a bop romp through Bud Powell's "Hallucinations" and Charles Mingus' "Peggy's Blue Skylight" and "East Coastin'," or drifting through her own "Side(s) Of You." Occasionally her tinkle becomes more taut, and although this CD has more bite than *Illusions*, her Blue Note debut, she remains cooler than Petrucciani. The Frenchman's playing can be described as "ecstasy with an edge." He's harder-hitting, with occasional allusions to McCoy Tyner.

Unlike Tyner's style, Petrucciani's and Elias' are pregnable by bass and drums. The integration of all three instruments occurs at the conversational level first established by Evans' trio with Scott LaFaro and Paul Motian. Of course, Gomez, Peacock, and DeJohnette worked with the late pianist, so there's a direct link here.

The sidemen do play brilliantly: Gomez locks into Elias' quasi-boogie figure on her title tune even as Peacock joins in with Petrucciani's boogie line on "She Did It Again." In the drums department, DeJohnette, Erskine, Haynes (who matches tone and rhythmic placement in a stirring solo on "One For Us"), and Foster are models of fire and restraint. Each CD has an odd track or two with guitar and/or percussion—Elias' even features a family-and-friends group vocal on "Coming And Going," which was written by her grandmother at the age of 12—but these complement the total feeling of each CD.

In fact, these are complementary CDs. Where Elias is more ruminative, Petrucciani is more outspoken. Each pianist's compositions receive attention. Petrucciani's CD is all originals; Elias' features five, but she remakes the others with her even touch and lush, linear approach. The differences in Petrucciani's pieces seem to guide his attack; thus he ranges from the playful blues of "Mr. K.J." to the Latin feeling of "Brazil" to the tenderness of "La Champagne," with a different attitude toward each. Elias seems to minimize the differences in her material so that "Hallucinations" and "When You Wish Upon A Star" are extensions of the same reference.

The point is, these are two of the hippest trio pianists of the '80s. They give us renewed hope in the modern mainstream, romantic, acoustic jazz tradition.

—owen cordle

steve MILLER



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CHIMES OF FREEDOM

by Peter Kostakis

Like Freddy on Elm Street, the Freedom label's *back*—reissued by P+O Compact Disc (995 Mansell Road, Roswell, Georgia 30076) and made available in the U.S. on vinyl and, for the first

time, \$12.98 list CDs. Like Freddy again, Freedom comes back with flashes of wit and some of the original threat. Freedom encompassed young lions, old hands, searing avant gardists, and mainstreamers of the knotty neglected kind. The initial availability of its output in America comprised some of my formative and favorite listening of the 1970s. Lest you entertain wild hopes, the *new Freedoms* contain no alternate takes or bonus tracks, only music originally issued. Timings between 37 and 54 minutes underutilize storage capacity of the

CD, but this shortfall is industry-wide. Yet, sound quality on the following sampling of four ensemble and four solo piano discs leaves their vinyl cousins biting the chrome-colored dust. Digital transfers of fair-to-good quality particularly have livened solo piano recorded in analog.

CD booklets reproduce original Freedom covers, photographs, and liner notes, and repeat old errors by doing so. Andrew Hill's photo is printed in place of Cecil Taylor's, composer credits are generally absent, some track listings are wrong (for instance, too many titles listed and others seemingly transposed on the Taylor), and "phantom personnel" put in surprise appearances. (Who plays trumpet on *Spiral's* title selection, where no brass is listed? The Shadow knows.) Such mistakes are avoidable, but fortunately the music should, and does, override them.

Restoration to the marketplace of **Albert Ayler** and **Don Cherry's** landmark *Vibrations* (FLP 41000, 37:38 minutes) may not inspire dancing in the streets, but should. Atmospherics on this 1964 Copenhagen session could be out of Charles Ives, proposing a drunken Day of the Dead in New England, as Ayler's titanic tenor saxophone overblows an imaginary gazebo bandbox into shards on the new grass. Physically *loud* as if challenging Ayler's own sound on the dirges and anthems, Cherry's cornet is tart, clarion, and yes, not always accurate. But this liberating session of brooding energy and free exchange is not about "notes," but "feelings." Digital sound drops Gary Peacock's expressive slaps and furious fingering in the forefront; seldom walking after the ensembles, the bassist inhabits contrapuntal parallel worlds with the horns and Sunny Murray. The latter releases propulsive bursts and splatters from his kit, the opposite of *timekeeping*, making me think of mythologist Joseph Campbell's definition of time as a device separating us from eternity. These fiercely independent "vibrations" seemingly still emanate from gods at play, despite the intervening years. Essential listening. (Will Ayler's intenser, *funnier* ESP dates ever make it to CD?)

Jan Garbarek's *Esoteric Circle* (FCD 41031, 45:10), produced by George Russell, advances a more conservative freedom than Ayler's, disclosing some very *paradoxical* influences undergoing integration. One notices in the writing and group conception the harmonically expansive modalism of Miles' 1960s quintet, the out-of-temp horns and rhythm of Ornette, and the chromatic thinking of Russell. Just as important though are rock borrowings. Whether strumming, picking, or notebending, guitarist Terje Rypdal successfully injects blues-rock stockphrases (including the Kinks' "You Really Got Me" riff!) into solos. His viscous texture building presages Bill Frisell and David Torn while echoing a Rypdal contemporary, Sonny Sharrock. The complementary rhythms of Arild Anderson and Jon Christensen leave a simultaneous impression of energistic heat and virtuosic detachment. On top, Garbarek's tenor proclaims a reedier Rollins-inflected tone than his latter-day ECMs, employing breaths, phrasing, phrase-endings, and other devices in a manner suggestive of Shepp and Coltrane. The young Scandinavians sound well-matched; and this questing date, *circa* 1970



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(no recording year given), compares favorably to their later output as part of the ECM school. Digital sound reinforces an appealing noir ambience.

Randy Weston brings jazz "home," figuratively, after a serious African stopover on *Carnival* (FLP 41004, 40:08), recorded live at Montreux in 1974. This is Weston at his most likable, in solo and percussionist-augmented quintet settings. The high-life inspired title composition and a Ghanaian song offer generous settings for Weston to unfold his rippling conception of piano as percussive, rhythmic, and orchestral force with definite family ties to Ellington. Keenly interplaying, the group sounds like one big *drum*. (A Herbie Nichols idea!) Billy Harper's tenor saxophone solo on *Carnival* haunts the lower register, followed by the leader's piano parleying ringingly with Don Moye's traps and Steve Berrios' congas. An a cappella Weston stride-to-Africa feature bristles with invention and pays tribute to the Duke by name and frequent quotation. Despite average LP length, *Carnival's* introduction to Weston's African-American "fusion" always ends too soon. New listeners wanting more will sadly discover that too little documentation exists on the artist. (Will anybody reissue *African Cookbook* pre-millennium?) *Carnival* boasts a quieter background and more negligible tape hiss than its companion *Blues To Africa*.

Weston recorded the solo originals on *Blues To Africa* (FCD 41014, 41:16) in the studio one month later. This eight-sided view of emotive pianism takes in split-handed polyphonic dances, marches performed in "African Rhythms," call and response blues, and iridescent impressionism. Weston's earthy composing—and improvising—shimmies with harmonic surprises and rhythmic turns, including masterful shifts such as tipping the ballad "Tangiers" into samba and *literal* African blues. His touch evokes Monk just as often as the globetrotting Ellington or primary ethnic sources. "The Sahel"—arranged as self-accompanied tone poem with a Weston recitation—raises the only qualification about this starkly ecstatic set: that the programmatic quality of the writing can create "set pieces" which obscure more daring facets of the improviser's personality. The CD rewards Weston's gradations in touch and volume with clarity; the piano retains a sharp profile through inevitable tape hiss. I never missed the surface noise on my worn-out record.

Spiral (FLP 41007, 44:46). **Andrew Hill's** "comeback" in 1975 after four years away from Blue Note, situates him in varied groups with Robin Kenyatta, Ted Curson, Art Lewis, and others. Hill exhibits characteristic ambiguity and suspense on the keyboard, snaking out rapid but unresolved right-handed runs here, dropping out beneath a soloist there; but comes across under-committed to his surroundings. Jump cuts from duo and trio, to quartet and quintet, may account for why the date stays earthbound overall despite several standout performances. "The Message," for example, is a hard-to-forget Caribbean line for quintet on which Lee Konitz's alto saxophone "plays" the spaces in Hill's composition and drops Hill-like accents in the darndest places. Or the "Invitation" duet, where Hill and Konitz soar instrumentally in sonorous free flight. Nev-

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ertheless, *Spiral* sent me back to Hill's '60s Blue Notes for consistency.

Live At Montreux (FCD 41023, 45:15) captures Hill at work in longer formats than *Spiral*. Recorded solo in 1975, Hill covers one Ellington standard and three mostly musty originals, "antiques" which sound all the more striking after he modernizes them. Take "Nefertisis": Hill develops the tango theme by stops and starts into Scriabinesque harmonies, as if in a state of rhapsodic meditation. Subtle interplay between hands helps Hill fantasize variations on chordal structure, in the midst of deconstructing the tango and a waltz. "Come Sunday" he treats like a Ran Blake miniature—bell-like chords sounding through a haze. Meandering sets in, however, during "Relativity"—a virtual 18-minute warehouse of technique which twice staggers into blues and boogie, but misses the integration that this post-Monk pianist brings to his best work. Still, *Live* dares much and succeeds often; rare and strange, deserving appreciation anew in light of Hill's just-released solo set (on Soul Note).

Perugia (FLP 41010, 40:49) is another Montreux solo concert dating from 1974. The keyboard style of **Sir Roland Hanna** is indebted, in the jazz sense, to Art Tatum rather than Monk or Duke. He loves to interrupt and decorate a melody with *not quite* florid statements—as in the stride section on "A Train"—that belong to jazz. But the authority of *Perugia* really rests on Hanna being unconfined by academic arranging and instrumental devices which strongly suggest the classical discipline. Yet he avoids the pitfall of preciosity in a stylistic meeting ground where lesser artists slip. Ravel coloration and dynamics may characterize his slow *tempi* on the impressionistic title piece, but Hanna swings when the music so summons. Sad to report, the piano itself nags Hanna's cause. Interfering noises resembling a door creaking or a Brazilian *cuica* (friction drum) erupt out of the instrument! I detected similar, though far less disruptive interference during the identically recorded set of Cecil Taylor. The caveat notwithstanding, *Perugia* rewards attention.

For the last word I have saved the last "Montreux, class of '74" reissue. First, you will find nothing silent about **Cecil Taylor's** *Silent Tongues* (FLP 41005, 54:00). The five-movement core of the performance begins simply: Taylor using easy syllables—a four-note ascending fillip—to formulate an entire language. He alters the phrase pattern through high-note chattering and rumbling bass asides that validate the CD medium in their own right, until every charged particle of musical utterance large and small merges. Temporary resemblances between his conjunctive phrases and the opening bars of the "Woody Woodpecker Song" may be pinned on my own pixillated imagination rather than the inherent wit of Taylor's free speech! How the pianist concretizes in sound ageless, eternal, the William Blake maxim, "Energy is eternal delight," is the most convincing part of *Tongues*. The way the CD images the full sonic range of "Crossings, Part One" especially, gives pleasant concussions, bidding wisdom and good feelings enter. Take your own meaning from these notes Taylor has written or pulled from the air. They enjoy a miraculous coherence either way, and are indispensable. **db**

1 JIMMY KNEPPER. "Of Things Past" (from *DREAM DANCING, Criss Cross*) *Knepper, trombone, composer.*

Jimmy Knepper. I can tell by his attack and the way he does his grace notes. He doesn't separate them. He just slurs them with the slide instead of tonguing every note. Jimmy's got his own style. It's beautiful. He was a great help to me. He showed me a lot of things. But his style is not to tongue every note. J.J. tongs everything. That's why J.J. is so clean. Everybody has strong and weak points. Jimmy's harmonic conception is masterful. He really knows his changes. He's one of my favorites and it's really not a criticism, but he's lazy with the tongue. He makes beautiful music and I appreciate it, but my particular attitude toward the horn is more precision in terms of rhythmic statements and clarity of attack. The trombone is so unusual because everybody plays so different because you have to articulate every note. It's not like valves. Everybody sounds so different. Jimmy's really got a pretty tone. Jimmy's one of the masters. I like the tune. It sounds like a standard. I'll say 4½ stars.

2 ROB SCHNEIDERMAN. "While We're Young" (from *New Outlook, Reservoir*) *Schneiderman, piano; Slide Hampton, trombone.*

It's hard to tell on the head but I got a few hints. I'll tell you when the solo comes—Slide Hampton! There was a certain thing he did on the phrase, just the way he tongs notes, the way he uses the upper register. I know Slide's harmonic conception because we played together so much. He's one of my mentors and a great inspiration. I've never heard this tune. I wish Slide would make a live album because when he plays in front of people some other stuff happens that doesn't happen in the studio. When he plays for the people it's magic. I haven't heard a recording yet that captures the fullness of his sound. He's got a great big sound and it doesn't really come across on this record; his resonance, the warmth—right there! Slide came off that high note and he put that little crack on it. That's part of his trademark, the way he cracks those notes a little bit. It's like when a singer puts the grit on it. I don't know who the piano player is. It could be James Williams. 4½ stars.

3 J.J. JOHNSON AND ANDRE PREVIN. "Mack The Knife" (from *MACK THE KNIFE, Columbia*) *Johnson, trombone; Previn, piano.*

That's J.J. with one of the great Hollywood film score piano players. Is that Lalo Schifrin? J.J. and him did an album together. J.J.

STEVE TURRE
by Michael Bourne

It often seems the trombone is an odd duck nowadays. Once a featured instrument of traditional jazz, the trombone has become a sixth or seventh instrument, if that, in the usual jazz units. Young trombone players might feel discouraged that players of trumpets or saxophones work more. Yet if the trombone is an odd duck, Steve Turre is the swan. No trombonist is playing so much and so great a variety of music.

Once a featured soloist with Woody Shaw and Roland Kirk, among others, just in the last year he's played with Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, Cedar Walton, Bobby Hutcherson, McCoy Tyner's big band, salsa queen Celia Cruz, Conjunto Libre, the Jazztet, Freddie Hubbard and Buddy DeFranco, Jerry Gonzalez and the Fort Apache Band, Dave Valentin, Jon Faddis, Dizzy Gillespie's Latin Jazz Superband, and the Saturday Night Live band. He's also playing his own music more and more with his own band, often a quartet, sometimes a sextet when joined by cellist Akua Dixon (his wife) and violinist John Blake. *Viewpoint*, his 1987 Stash release, his first as a leader, was fol-



TIMOTHY WHITE/ONYX

lowed in '88 by *Fire And Ice* (Stash 275). He's joined on most of the new album by the string Quartette Indigo, and one of the songs—"You Are The Sunshine of My Life"—features another musical love, the shells. He's gathered a whole choir of shell players from time to time to play jazz standards and originals. And when he's not playing he's teaching. Turre is proud to have finished his master's degree from Manhattan School of Music in 1988.

This was his first Blindfold Test. He was given no information about the music played.

Johnson is the master. He did for the trombone what Charlie Parker did for the saxophone. The thing about J.J. is the perfect attack, the perfect center in his sound, perfect intonation, the rhythmic precision, just complete mastery. Every sound is accounted for. Everything is by choice, not by chance. He's in command of every sound that comes out of that horn, plus he has a style that sets the pace. It's not just that he's got the command, he's got something to say behind it. If five stars is as high as you can go, then J.J. gets five-plus because he changed the level of playing the horn.

4 FIRST BRASS. "Chops à la Salsa" (from *FIRST BRASS, M-A Music*) *Allan Botschinsky, trumpet, composer; Derek Watkins, trumpet; Bart Van Lier and Erik Van Lier, trombones.*

It's interesting. There's no percussion. I'll be damned if I know who that is. I don't hear any trademarks. It's two trombone players. That first one played high up there. He's got some strong chops. It's a Latin tune but it's not played by Latinos. I can tell by the rhythm, the attack, by the feeling of the phrase. Part of Latin music is the dance. You've got to know the dance to get the feeling. It was so technically perfect, eve-

rything in tune, right in time, but it's almost metronomic. It was popping, but it didn't dance, didn't feel like it was being played by Latinos, even though the arrangement was basically in clave. I will have to say that being Latin is not a prerequisite for understanding this music. Barry Rodgers is one of the greatest trombone players in Latin music.

I enjoyed the piece. I'll give it three stars but that's just for the quality of the recording and for the precision. It was executed wonderfully.

5 THE JAZZTET. "Are You Real?" (from *REAL TIME, Contemporary*) *Benny Golson, tenor sax, composer; Art Farmer, flugelhorn; Curtis Fuller, trombone.*

The Jazztet. I've played this arrangement. Curtis sent me in to sub for him on some gigs. Curtis has been a dear friend and influence, especially in the area of rhythm. Everything he plays is rhythm. Everything he plays is a statement. Just in terms of speed, forget it. Curtis is the cat. I've never heard anyone play faster than Curtis. It's not speed alone. He's saying something, and his phrasing is the greatest.

Four-and-a-half stars. J.J. gets 5—and Lawrence Brown. db

MARK SOSKIN

SONNY'S LONGTIME SIDEMAN
TACKLES THE CLASSICS
ON A NEW SOLO PROJECT.

by Bill Milkowski

Pianist Mark Soskin probably can't count all the times he's played "Don't Stop The Carnival" in the past 10 years. As Sonny Rollins' sideman since 1979, he's had to play that calypso favorite night after night on the road with the tenor great. He's sometimes sat back and comped on that set-closer for up to 20 minutes or more as Sonny stretched the bouncy riff into an exhilarating showcase of Saxophone Colossus power.

Soskin does get to solo himself on that joyous jam, and he has made significant statements on four Rollins records (*Don't Stop The Carnival*, *Sunny Days Starry Nights*, *G-Man*, and *Dancing In The Dark*, all on Milestone). But it's in the context of his own dates as a leader that Soskin is able to make his most personal statements. On those gigs, whether it's a club date or a recording (like his 1980 debut as a leader on Fantasy, *Rhythm Vision*, or his recently released *Overjoyed* on the Japanese Pony/Canyon label), he gets a chance to let all his influences show through—from the show tunes he loved as a kid to the salsa he played with Pete Escovedo to the Brazilian grooves he has handled with Herbie Mann, Astrud Gilberto, and the New York Samba Band.

"What I try to do," says the New York-based pianist, "is keep a common thread going through all these different types of situations. I enjoy a lot of different types of music. I think jazz has infused itself with so many different kinds of influences that I think it's important to learn all these things. So I try to incorporate these different styles into my music while still searching for my own compositional style. I wouldn't say I've found it as such yet, but I feel I am gaining ground on that through experiments like *Rhythm Vision* and *Overjoyed*."

While Soskin's first album for Fantasy (recorded when he lived in the Bay Area) was a showcase for his compositional style, highlighting his use of electronic keyboards and his clever horn arrangements, *Overjoyed* is a stripped-down acoustic affair that presents his take on several straightahead classics. He turns the Burton Lane-Yip Harbug chestnut, "Old Devil Moon," into a burning salsa romp. Rather than treating the Jerome Kern classic, "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," with lush restraint, he really lets it smoke, throwing in some fervent McCoy block chording to fuel the flames of this uptempo cooker. He maintains that sense of playful spontaneity in Monk's "Rhythm-A-Ning" while injecting some new



life into the eccentric tune by re-harmonizing and re-arranging the melody, adding a new intro and incorporating some Brazilian rhythms in the middle section.

He deals Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma" with a 12/8 feel and lets more Brazilian influence show through on his own "Home Movie." Stevie Wonder's contemporary standard, "Overjoyed," is handled with reverence for the composer, as is the Rodgers and Hart show tune, "It Never Entered My Mind." It's a strong outing for Soskin, highlighting his sensitive touch, bold statements, and keen interplay with bassist Lincoln Goines, drummer John Riley, and (on some cuts) guitarist Chuck Loeb.

"I'm still playing a lot with Sonny," says the 35-year-old Brooklyn native, "but this album is really where I'm at right now. It's something I've wanted to do for a long time. That aspect of my playing, the trio side, gives a piano player a lot of freedom. This project, where I tried to re-arrange standards, presented a real challenge to me. And even though this album was all-acoustic, I might want to play a bunch of synthesizers on my next album. Because I don't like getting pigeonholed into one type of thing. I really want to present myself as multi-faceted."

Soskin comes by his diverse tendencies quite naturally. As a young Berklee grad in the Bay Area during the early '70s, he played in a number of salsa bands, including one hot outfit led by percussionist Pete Escovedo and featuring Pete's daughter Sheila (or Sheila E, to you pop fans). In the mid-to-late '70s he hooked up with Billy Cobham, who had produced the two Escovedo albums he played on (1977's *Solo Two* and 1978's *Happy Together*, both for Fantasy). During the two-and-a-half years he toured in Cobham's band, he also appeared on two albums by the funk-fusion drummer (*Magic* and *Simplicity Of Thought*, both on CBS). There followed a tour with the CBS All-Stars, whose ranks included Cobham, bassist Alphonso Johnson, guitarist Steve Khan, and saxophonist Tom Scott. That tour yielded the document, *Alivemuthaforaya* on CBS.

He released his *Rhythm Vision* in 1980

and worked with Brazilian singer Astrud Gilberto on the West Coast before moving back to New York City, where he began to immerse himself in the burgeoning Brazilian music scene happening around town.

"I moved back to New York because I just wanted to explore more of the music," says Soskin. "I did a lot of playing on the West Coast with my own band and with a lot of different people around San Francisco, from Bobby McFerrin to Julian Priester to Eddie Henderson to Pete Escovedo. But I kind of felt like I had exhausted the scene there. I saw more opportunities in New York and I felt I had to be here, just for my own musical growth."

He immediately hooked up with flutist Herbie Mann for some touring and recording (on *Jasil Brazz*) and also played on occasion with the New York Samba Band. He explained that going from salsa music to Brazilian music required a certain amount of gear-shifting in order to make the music happen.

"A lot of it is defined by the rhythms, by what the bass and drums are doing and how they're working together," says Soskin. "In salsa music the feel is more behind the beat while in Brazilian music it's really on top of the beat. And as a piano player, you have to learn how to fit comfortably into those different grooves. So I tried to study those kinds of music to get a real feel for it. And then when I go back to Sonny, it's another thing entirely. The jazz thing with a Caribbean feel is a whole other thing, rhythmically and harmonically. So I try to keep on top of it all and the net effect is that it all comes out again in some form on my solo albums."

Soskin grew up in East Flatbush, studied classical music at the University of Colorado, and later fell in love with jazz. "I heard classical music a lot as a kid when I was taking private piano lessons. And the first popular music I got involved with on a playing level was show tunes. I hadn't really heard much jazz at all until I went to Colorado and met some people who were involved in jazz. Then a friend who was studying at the Berklee College of Music got me interested

CONTINUED ON PAGE 51

in moving to Boston to study at Berklee, which I did from 1973 to 1974. And that's when I really got serious about jazz."

After leaving Berklee, he moved to San Francisco. "I decided I didn't want to go to New York immediately," he says. "I felt I still had some things to get together. So I started meeting people and jamming a lot and developing as a player."

One of his first connections in San Francisco was with a group called Azteca, who, along with Santana, were tearing up the Bay Area with salsa-flavored rock. "Through that I met Pete Escovedo, and that was really the start of me getting seriously into salsa music."

He became a mainstay at the Fantasy studio, appearing on a number of diverse sessions during the mid-to-late '70s. After the gig with Cobham, he hooked up with Sonny Rollins.

"The very first gig I did with Sonny was a live record," he laughs. "I didn't know if I was ready, but there I was with Tony Williams and Donald Byrd and everybody, and it felt great."

He remained Sonny's pianist of choice for the subsequent nine years. When asked what it is about him that Rollins digs, Soskin smiles and offers, "I don't know. You'd have to ask him that. But I think, in general, Sonny's music demands a certain type of energy. It's a pretty high level of energy, and you always have to be ready to switch gears if need be because he's liable to do anything in the midst of a concert. And so I think my adaptability in those kinds of situations, because of my varied musical background, is something that I bring to Sonny's group."

He adds, "Sonny is very open and allows a lot of freedom of expression on the gig, but you also have to know how not to get in the way. You have to really listen to what he's doing. He's such a strong leader that he likes to direct where the music is going. So I just try to listen to where he's taking the harmony and maybe follow him, instead of vice versa. It's definitely a real listening-type gig. We work within a repertoire and he's been adding to that all the time. But he's liable to stop in the middle of a song and change course. You'll be playing along and all of a sudden he'll just raise his hand and the music stops. So you have to watch for that sort of thing. You just have to expect the unexpected with Sonny. Stopping and starting, having to play the same tune in a lot of different keys . . . you really have to watch and listen with him."

Soskin also recently played an extended gig at Blues Alley in D.C. with saxophonist Stanley Turrentine and he's had a turn at composing electronic music for the TV show, *The Equalizer*. After putting the finishing touches on his standards album, he turned around and did a pop-jazz date with flutist Sherry Winston, featuring guitarist Eric Gale, bassist Tom Barney, and drum-

mer Steve Ferrone. He's constantly shifting gears, from Brazilian to salsa, from Caribbean to straightahead, from bop to pop, from acoustic to electric.

"For me, I'll always be a piano player," says Soskin. "That's pretty much been my focus. But I like the colors and different possibilities of composing with the electronic stuff (his current gear includes a Kurzweil K-1000, a Roland Super Jupiter, a Yamaha TX802 module, and a Yamaha RX-11 drum machine).

"Usually when I'm soloing, it's acoustic. But I use the electronics as background, not to overshadow the rest. So I can go both ways. I want to do different gigs in a lot of different formats because I enjoy it all and I don't want to get roped into just one thing."

His Pony/Canyon release, *Overjoyed*, is the first of an ambitious series of piano jazz projects being released by the Japanese label. A stateside distribution deal is in the works. Until then, seek out this fine album in the import bins. It's worth the search. db

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