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For Contemporary Musicians

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The Neville Brothers

It's A Family Affair

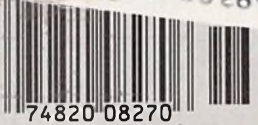
TERRI LYNE CARRINGTON
Real-Life Heartbeats

12th ANNUAL STUDENT
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Pro Session: Note Processing Software, Part 2

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The Neville Brothers



Terri Lyne Carrington



Ed Thigpen



Jorma Kaukonen

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"In the right place at the right time with the right attitude," The Neville Brothers are at it again, playing their unique musical blend of everything under the sun. A "musical gumbo" well represented on a new album as well as live, **Josef Woodard** investigates this special New Orleans family affair.

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down beat

For Contemporary Musicians

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER John Maher
MANAGING EDITOR John Epland
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Dave Helland
ART DIRECTOR Anne Henderick
PRODUCTION MANAGER Gloria Baldwin
CIRCULATION MANAGER Elaine Rizleris
PUBLISHER Maher Publications
PRESIDENT Jack Maher

ALBUM REVIEWERS: Jon Ballerax, Larry Birnbaum, Fred Bouchard, Owen Coidle, John Diliberto, Elaine Guregian, Frank-John Hadley, Peter Kostakis, Art Lange, John Litweller, Howard Mandel, John McDonough, Bill Milkowski, Jim Roberts, Ben Sandmel, Gene Santoro, Bill Shoemaker, Jack Schmet, Robin Tallison, Ron Welburn, Pete Welding, Kevin Whitehead.

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CONTRIBUTORS: Larry Birnbaum, Michael Bourne, Tom Copt, Lauren Deutsch, John Diliberto, Leonard Feather, Andy Freiberg, Art Lange, Howard Mandel, John McDonough, Bill Milkowski, Paul Nafkin, Herb Nolan, Gene Santoro, Mitchell Seidel, Stephanie Stein, Pete Welding, Josef Woodard, Scott Yanow

CORRESPONDENTS: Albany, NY: Georgia Urban; Atlanta: Dorothy Pearce; Austin: Michael Point; Baltimore: Fred Douglass; Boston: Fred Bouchard; Buffalo: John P. Lockhart; Chicago: Jim DeJung; Cincinnati: Bob Nave; Cleveland: C. A. Colombi; Detroit: Michael G. Nastos; Las Vegas: Brian Sanders; Los Angeles: Zan Stewart; Minneapolis: Mary Snyder; Nashville: Dave Jenkins; New Orleans: Joel Simpson; New York: Jeff Levenson; Philadelphia: Russell Woessner; Phoenix: Robert Henschen; Pittsburgh: David J. Fabilli; San Francisco: Tom Copt; Seattle: Joseph R. Murphy; Toronto: Mark Miller; Vancouver: Vern Montgomery; Washington, DC: W. A. Brower; Argentina: Max Seligmann; Australia: Eric Myers;

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EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING PRODUCTION OFFICE:
222 W. Adams St., Chicago IL 60606

ADMINISTRATION & SALES OFFICE:
180 West Park Ave.
Elmhurst IL 60126
FAX: 312/941-3210

John Maher, Advertising Sales
1-312/941-2030
East: Bob Clasen
720 Greenwich St., New York NY 10014
1-212/243-4786

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Charles

Aaron

Art

Cyril

JACKSON HILL

NEVILLE-RY

By Josef Woodard

“M

e and my brothers know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that, if we hadn't

been family, we never would have come this far,” comments Cyril Neville from his hotel in Miami, where the brothers have deplanned briefly. Few things are predictable in the music

universe: One is that The Neville Brothers, those musical emissaries of New Orleans culture, will most likely be appearing soon at a club or theater near you. This family affair of tireless road warriors, all having now cracked the four-decade mark, are just getting up to speed and broadening their appeal, record by record, mile by mile.

The aging process seems to treat the Nevilles kindly, partly because they've never been slaves to time and fashion. They don't bother copping to the tenor of the time, because they seem to exist in a rootsy netherworld of their own making. This is not to say that *Yellow Moon*, their latest and possibly strongest album to date, ignores the contemporary tide. The Neville Brothers' track record—on record—has been problematic, their having previously done four albums on four different labels (plus a compilation, *Treacherous*). Five may be the charm. This time,

under the production guidance of Daniel Lanois—veteran of Peter Gabriel, U2, and others—the band joins the '80s without abandoning the venerable heritage of their hometown.

Lanois somehow manages to respect the siblings' gutsy textures and surging rhythmic interactions, while putting the music in delicate aural pools, enhanced with supplemental parts by himself and Brian Eno. The material varies from their second-line pulses to two Bob Dylan tunes, a Sam Cooke classic to the political nerves of “Wake Up” and “Sister Rosa,” a call to civil

rights awareness done as a rap-meets-Caribbean merger.

At a time when world music and other diverse idioms are sneaking into mainstream pop music—the music of the masses—the Nevilles, with their unpretentious eclecticism, seem poised for flight. Their intuitive junction of soul, swamp, folk, jazz, and Afro-Cuban leanings make them the perfect representatives of the melting pot theory in musical terms. Art Neville was not just trotting out hype when he said recently, “We happen to be in the right place at the right time with the right attitude.”

“This is what The Neville Brothers are about,” asserts Cyril, at 41, the youngest of the clan. “When people ask what type of music we play, it’s hard to explain. It’s hard to put a jacket on what we play, because we play a mixture of every type of music that we have ever heard and some things that just come to us through the universe.”

“I like to compare it to the way we cook in New Orleans,” Cyril continues. “We do a musical gumbo, a musical jambalaya. Even though we have these messages in the songs, they’re all danceable. The spirit of revelry and camaraderie never leaves. Basically, what happens with this album is that Daniel Lanois actually captures the essence of The Neville Brothers on record, which has never been done before.”

Records are one thing, the live ethos another. Earlier this year, the Nevilles stopped in Isla Vista, California on a West Coast swing, playing at The Graduate, a fortress-like club in the building which housed the old Bank of America until it was incinerated in 1970 during a riot. Almost 20 years later, The Neville Brothers are burning up the place in their more benign fashion. A large crowd of mostly young white patrons undulate, almost involuntarily, to the notorious Neville feel.

Theirs’ is a unique and commanding rhythm machine, with drummer Willie Green, bassist Tony Hall, and guitarist Brian Stoltz meshing neatly with Cyril’s percussion attack and keyboardist Art’s sparing approach to funk. It’s refreshing to hear a band with the porous human interplay of good jazz and popular roots music—a modern sound in which digital electronics are not the meat of the matter. (“Personally,” Cyril says later, “I’d rather record with other musicians and leave the machines to somebody else.”) Saxist Charles Neville punctuates the mix and underlines the jazz connection. Then there is Aaron Neville, with a voice both seductive and cutting.

Unstudied and instinctive players though the Nevilles may be, they come from their own school of cool, and one with a plenitude of unofficial followers around the world. Little Feat’s founder, the late Lowell George—one of the brightest Meters/Nevilles pupils in rock—may as well have been talking about members of the Nevilles when, in “Rock And Roll Doctor,” he sang, “he’s got two degrees in bebop, a PhD in swing, he’s a master of rhythm, he’s a rock and roll king.” This kind of grooving you don’t get out of a book.

In 1970, while the counter culture was sharpening its teeth, The Neville Brothers saga was well underway, if not yet in name. Art Neville’s high school band, The Hawkettes, scored a hit in 1964 with what has become a perennial carnival anthem, “Mardi Gras Mambo.” The family figured into the ranks: Charles and Aaron had short stints with the group and young Cyril had his own firsthand exposure. “In my house, there was always music,” he remembers. “My brother Art had The Hawkettes, which used to rehearse in my living room. I used to absorb all of that stuff. I had my own toy set of drums. I sat at the foot of some of the baddest drummers who ever touched drumsticks.”

Meanwhile, Aaron was carving out a solo career during the ’60s, and Charles was making the jazz and blues scene in New York. Aaron came together with Art to form The Neville Sounds, which begat The Meters, with producer Allen Toussaint’s encouragement. The Meters became one of the most influential (if still obscure by mass media standards) bearers and refiners of The New Orleans Sound. They were a tight house band, backing Patti Labelle and Robert Palmer. The Meters were an organic

funk band with a difference, taut and muscular but without the hard edges of urban funk bands of the ’70s. They set up rhythms in spidery skeins.

The Meters became a celebrated musicians’ favorite. Over the years, they and the Nevilles have enjoyed kudos and opening act status for The Rolling Stones, Grateful Dead, and Huey Lewis. “The Meters influenced Little Feat a lot,” Cyril comments. “And if you listen to the early Police records, you can hear a lot of The Meters, too.” The influence also carried across the water in a stylistic crossfiltration. “When I was in Jamaica,” says Cyril, “some of the guys down there told me that The Meters definitely had an influence on the making of reggae. They were calling it ska at that time. The Meters were influenced by stuff they were hearing from down there as well. It’s the African connection. The thread that runs through almost everything that we do are those African rhythms.”

And The Meters begat The Wild Tchoupitoulas. Featuring the Nevilles’ uncle Big Chief Jolly (George Landry), it was a “black indian” group blending tribal-sounding vocals with funky vamps. The experience was like a homecoming. “Because the music came together so smoothly at the session,” Charles relates, “we talked about getting together. My uncle Jolly suggested, ‘You cats should all get together a family band. Your parents would like to see you all working together.’ So we talked about it and said, ‘That’s a good idea. That’s worth moving back to New Orleans for.’”

The Neville Brothers’—having officially formed in 1977—differences, of musical inclination and personality, were gradually ironed out. “The music made a difference, I think, because we were able to blend so easily musically,” says Charles. “Even coming from different directions. That was the main thing about us being together, that we were making music together. That sort of overrides any other kinds of differences and makes it easier to work together. It’s different from being in some other kind of business and having to work together with your family. We each get to express what we feel and do what we want, some. So it’s not like everybody has to go along with somebody else’s idea.”

Also, the brothers weren’t so fresh out of school and had had a chance to mature. “We’d all been through some changes,” Charles says with a sigh. Charles himself interrupted his New York period in the ’70s with a three-year prison hitch for marijuana possession.

Although he is, in one sense, the Neville in the spotlight, Aaron is something of an enigma. His compelling vocal gift, with a soulful tenderness that belies his imposing presence and dagger tattoo, puts him in a class all his own: his voice is truly one of the wonders of the American music scene. Aaron is a bit elusive, shying away from interviews. There may be a residual bitterness due to the fact of his long haul in the music business and relative lack of rewards to show for it; a bumpy ride which included a jail stint for grand theft auto before his career began. But when Aaron launches into his biggest hit, “Tell It Like It Is,” from 1966 (for which he made virtually no royalties, due to a cunning contract), the title rings true and tribulations are momentarily forgotten.

Of late, Aaron can be heard spreading his musical gospel, to good effect. That warm, wide vibrato and inimitable style—a lopsided admix of doowop, pop crooning, and soulman attack—can revive even a musty stalwart song in the most delightful way. Just as Aaron gave a lush Nat King Cole-esque interpretation of “Mona Lisa” (replete with soupy string arrangement) on The Neville Brothers’ *Fiyo On The Biyou*, he puts wind into “Stardust” in duet with Rob Wasserman on Wasserman’s *Duets* and can be heard on producer Hal Willner’s tribute to Disney music, *Stay Awake*. What other singer could cut the camp and put genuine emotion into the “Mickey Mouse March”? On *Yellow Moon*, he displays a great sensitivity to Dylan’s music, waxing majestic on “With God On Our Side” and putting a spooky delta blues spin on Dylan’s “The Ballad Of Hollis Brown.”

The difference with *Yellow Moon* began at a fundamental level:

a redefinition of the studio environment. Lanois rented out an apartment building on St. Charles Street in New Orleans, which became a temporary studio and living quarters for part of the band and the recording crew. "It didn't even feel like a studio," Art notes. "[Lanois] calls it a studio on-the-move." This down-home approach proved conducive to the Neville energy.

"It wasn't the kind of cold business-like atmosphere of a regular studio," Charles explains. "It was really warm and friendly and everybody's spirit was in the place. [Lanois] created an environment around the artist rather than try to force them to fit into an existing studio environment." Cyril concurs: "It was such a spiritual experience, like no other recording experience I've had in my life. I would love for it to happen over and over again."

This album came on the rebound of their *Uptown* album of 1987, which many fans and critics thought to be a disappointing ploy for commercial recognition. As Charles offers, "The last [album] was done as an experiment for the purpose of trying to fit into the mainstream of radio programming. As the experiment that it was, it could have worked." Art comes to the defense of the album. "I enjoyed the last album, too. I got off on *Uptown* because I got a chance to play some different stuff on it. But we weren't going to get away with that."

The mix of tunes on the new album is a trip across time and style. As Cyril says, "There's a whole generation of people who have never heard of 'God On Our Side' or 'Hollis Brown' or 'Change Is Gonna Come,' for that matter. These songs are 20 years old and the lyrics are very much relevant today. And, like I say at our shows, there's no voice on earth like Aaron Neville's voice. The treatment he gave those songs is definitely classic."

Cyril wrote his ode to the civil rights movement, "Sister Rosa," about Rosa Parks, who made history in the '60s by refusing to give up her seat on an Alabama bus where a color line was drawn. By Cyril's account, the song arose out of "a desire to make a contribution to my children's education. I realized that rap music is a tool for this. They weren't interested in what was going on in school, it wasn't reflecting them. I put two and two together and figured that if I put African American history to this rap groove, I will have two or three birds with one stone. I tried it around home first, just with my kids. It did just what I thought it would do. It enticed them to go seek more knowledge, to find out more about what went on during that time, and how it relates to what's happening now."

In Cyril's mind, good music is marked by "musical adventurism and lyrics that tend to stir not just your emotions but your sense of humanity as well."

"Healing Chant," the record's one instrumental, gives Charles a chance to stretch out, with an quasi-ethnic tapestry woven beneath. "It happened at the session," he recalls. "It wasn't something that was written or planned in advance. We had talked about doing an instrumental, but I hadn't really demo'd any of the instrumentals or tried anything out. And on the take on the album, I didn't know they were recording. I was just fooling around, feeling out the tune. Then we put the vocal, 'Healing Chant,' on it. That was really a case of spontaneous combustion there."

Charles is the most directly jazz-oriented Neville, and his inclinations round out the more r&b grounding of his brothers. "On our gigs, I get to play some [jazz]. But the band is not a jazz band; so stuff I could do we really can't do with the band. It wouldn't really fit in the band setting. We used to do 'Night In Tunisia' and 'Caravan.' We may start doing those again."

Not that jazz isn't a compatible ingredient in a variety of contexts. "I remember when I lived in New York, I played in a band with James Booker and couple of other cats from New Orleans. We had this jazz gig on 124th and 7th Avenue. We were playing weekends, and one week, the club changed hands and became a funk dance club instead of a jazz club. We come back to work and the guy says, 'You got to play some dance music.' So we played 'Milestones' and 'Straight, No Chaser' with a funk beat. It worked." It all ties in with the tacit agenda of the band, which tries to avoid discrimination



Cyril Neville belting out some blues.

RICK OLIVER

between idioms.

Charles' first brush with music wasn't on the sax but in the drum section of a drum & bugle corps. Sax entered his consciousness after seeing Louis Jordan in a film tailored to black theaters, and he later tuned into James Moody, Sonny Stitt, and Gene Ammons. "Then I heard Bird and said, 'Oh shit,'" he laughed. Playing on the road with blues bands actually did wonders for his jazz development: after-hours jams and extended practicing in seedy hotels built up his chops. Charles followed his muse to the Northeast in 1966, freelancing in areas of the blues, jazz, and the avant garde.

Culturally, the time was ripe for his mindstate. "There were so many revolutionary things happening in music then. The psychedelic thing was happening in what was called rock then, but the same thing was happening in jazz. There were cats doing different things that were more expressive. People were stretching the capabilities of the instruments beyond where they had gone before," Charles continues.

"I heard Leon Thomas and thought, 'Holy shit, how does he do that?' I thought, 'That's it. If a cat can sing anything, he should be able to do that, too.' Pharoah Sanders and those guys and the fact that they were using not only the musical tones of the horn but all of the sounds that the horn can make. All of it is musical." New York put its stamp on Charles, but New Orleans—and the family—beckoned.

As a youngster, Art always knew that the piano was his instrument of choice. "I was a kid and always wanted to play it, every chance I had. But I had no inkling that I would be doing this as a profession, and be able to do it with my family." He was weaned on "r&b and doowop stuff, before it was called r&b. I was here before they had television. I never listened to jazz. Other than the doowop stuff and the real blues and r&b stuff, the most jazz I listened to was Art Blakey and Stan Kenton and Dave Brubeck. Any piano player I would listen to. I never tried to copy anyone, but I enjoyed listening to any piano player." One native New Orleans son Art grew up with was the virtuosic late Mr. Booker. "James Booker and I grew up together. Booker is the reason I'm playing keyboards."

Art's main contribution has been an understanding of how to propel a rhythm section with spare, to-the-point parts. Rather than relying on technical flash, he believes in the importance of "playing the feeling." He wants to do a solo album, a reconciliation with the various stages of his musical life from his earliest memories. "I want to go all the way back to my roots, into what I learned, because I'm the oldest brother. But using modern

sounds."

As the baby of the brood, Cyril had the best access to media. "By the time I got old enough to be interested in what was on TV, the main things I remember looking at was the stuff happening with the civil rights movement and maybe Lionel Hampton being on a variety show, and Rochester. The radio was the thing for me. I listened to everything—country & western. My first introduction to country & western was through a Ray Charles record. 'It's Cryin' Time' and all that stuff.

"There was always some kind of music going on in New Orleans. There's a parade for just about any and everything. There is always one of those brass bands. Whenever somebody dies who's popular enough, there's a second line [the festive marching music after a funeral] for that. Music was all around me."

New Orleans is an inescapable factor in the Neville saga. The birthplace of jazz, and a crossroads city with a mystical heritage and a tendency to party, New Orleans plays an important role in what makes the Nevilles tick. "It's not like any other city in the United States," Charles notes. "It has a real personality of its own. One thing is that it's at 30 degrees north by 90 degrees west and it's six feet below sea level. There's always been the mystery about voodoo and magic, and the magical energy that exists here. That may be accounted for by where it's located on the planet as well as the many cultures and peoples who have come together to make this place.

"First the Indians had it," says Charles, "then it was Spanish, then it was French. Then it became combined French, Spanish, Indian, African, Chinese, people from everywhere. It still retains some elements of those different cultures. Some of them separated and some of them blended into New Orleans culture. That's why there is music and food that is definitely identifiable as being New Orleans."

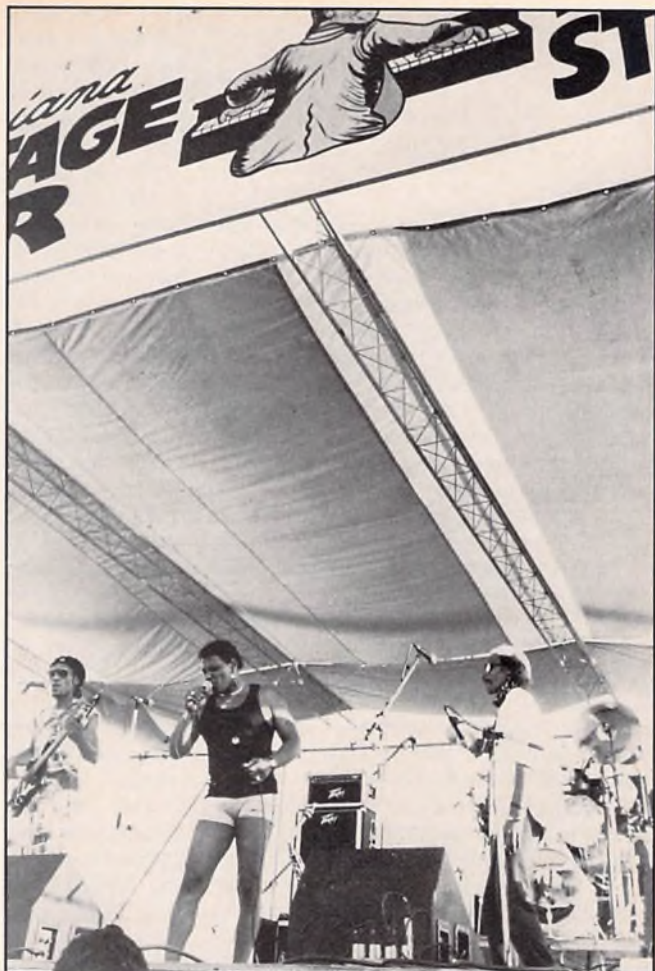
Cyril agrees, adding that "It's not like anywhere else that I've been in the United States except for Harlem. That's the only place where I've felt the same kind of vibes in America that I've felt in New Orleans. I've been in places in the Islands that felt exactly like New Orleans."

The Neville lineage continues: Aaron's son Ivan has an album out, and his youngest son Jason is working on his own music. Charles' daughter Charmagne is angling for a record deal and *her* 17-year-old son is embarking on the musical path. "And a lot of them seem to be here," Charles says of New Orleans, home of many brotherly bands and, of course, the original stomping ground of the Marsalis brothers, Wynton, Branford, and Delfeayo.

But none have the reach of The Neville Brothers and the potential to revitalize the pop music of their time. If New Orleans is the generator of much of America's best music, the Nevilles embody the city's soul and take the message on their own kind of extended chitlin' circuit. As sensuous and as stylistically inclusive as their work is, the Nevilles don't view their music as strictly a call-to-party, but also as a source of social enlightenment and as a warning signal. Steer Art onto the topic of political and ecological turmoil, and his gentle demeanor turns toward a volley of righteous indignation, what he calls "doomsday stuff."

"This is going to be a burned-out planet. This is not *Star Trek*, where we can go where no man has gone before. You ain't getting off this mother. Change could happen if mankind looked at his brother and said, 'We've got to learn to live together.' There are devils bargains being made. We can still play music. If there wasn't music, everybody would have been in despair."

It seems an implicit credo in New Orleans and in the Neville family: Music is still one of the great hobgoblins of encroaching despair. With that essential knowledge understood, will The Neville Brothers go on indefinitely? Art reasons, "No reason not to. We can still all do what we want to do in The Neville Brothers and never have to abandon it. The family that plays together and prays together, stays together." db



THE NEVILLE BROTHERS' EQUIPMENT

Saxist Charles Neville holds forth on a Yamaha soprano, a Selmer USA 80 alto, and a Selmer USA tenor. "I've had some Conns I really loved over the years and the King Super 20. I've got a Busher alto that I play occasionally. I had a Selmer Bundy before I got this alto. Some of the old Conns with the tuning rings on the neck; I had a couple of those that I really like."

Keyboardist Art Neville has entered into the digital age tastefully, using a synthesizer setup with a Roland JX8P as a controller triggering a Roland MKS 20 piano module, and a Juno 105 module. He hasn't forgotten the past: he was recently given a Hammond B3II as a gift. He found himself in love with the new Korg M1 after playing one at a music store. "They had to kick me out," he laughs. "Eric Cobb is my computer genius. I call him Mr. Spock. This sound engineer, Charles Brady, is Mr. Sulu. I'm Captain Kirk. We've got the *Starship Enterprise*."

As a synthesist, Art likes to be true to the notion of synthesis, as opposed to dialing up factory sounds. "I mix [sounds] together. I like to find strange stuff. I'm extraterrestrial. I want to come from another place altogether. I want to play stuff that's not just that funky arrogant stuff—which we can do, too. I try to find other sounds; sounds that sneak into your body and come from inside, where you know you're part of it, too." Sounds like the secret of The Neville Sound.

NEVILLE BROTHERS SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- | | |
|--|---|
| Art Neville | Art Neville |
| <i>YELLOW MOON</i> —A&M 5240 | <i>MARDI GRAS ROCK 'N' ROLL</i> —Ace 188 |
| <i>TREACHEROUS: A HISTORY OF THE NEVILLE BROTHERS (1955-85)</i> —Rhino 71494 | Ivan Neville |
| <i>UPTOWN</i> —EMI/Manhattan 17249 | <i>IF MY ANCESTORS COULD SEE ME NOW</i> —Polydor 834896-1 |
| <i>NEVILLE-IZATION</i> —Black Top 1031 | as The Meters |
| <i>FIYO ON THE BAYOU</i> —A&M 4866 | <i>NEW DIRECTIONS</i> —Warner Bros. 3042 |
| <i>THE NEVILLE BROTHERS</i> —Capitol 11865 | <i>FIRE ON THE BAYOU</i> —Reprise 2228 |
| as The Wild Tchoupitoulas | <i>REJUVENATION</i> —Reprise 2220 |
| <i>THE WILD TCHOUPITOULAS</i> —Antilles 7052 | <i>CISSY STRUT</i> —Island 9250 |
| Aaron Neville | <i>CABBAGE ALLEY</i> —Reprise 2076 |
| <i>ORCHID IN THE STORM</i> —Passport 3605 | <i>TRICK BAG</i> —Reprise 2252 |
| <i>TELL IT LIKE IT IS</i> —Minit 24007 | <i>STRUTTIN'</i> —Josie 4012 |
| | <i>SECOND LINE STRUT</i> —Charly 1009 |
| | <i>BEST OF ...</i> —Virgo 12002 |

By Bill Milkowski

Terri Lyne used to hear it all the time: "Hey, she's good . . . for a girl."

It didn't bother her so much as a talented 10-year-old, when her father, Sonny Carrington, would bring her along to jam sessions around Boston and persuade the likes of Betty Carter, Joe Williams, and Illinois Jacquet to let "the little drummer girl" sit in. Sexism just wasn't a part of her awareness at the time.

By age 16, it began to bug her, being perceived as some kind of novelty . . . "Ladies and gentlemen, step right up and see the amazing little drummer girl. She shuffles, she swings, she puts up the funk."

Now, approaching her 24th year, the novelty has worn off. Terri Lyne Carrington is a full-grown woman, an established veteran who has gained the respect and admiration of her peers. Now they just say, "Hey, she's good," and leave it at that.

Though she's already been playing drums professionally for 10 years, Terri Lyne is just now coming into her own as a musical force and influential role model. Her major label debut as a leader, *Real Life Story* on

Verve Forecast, is not only a testament to her maturity as a player/composer/arranger but it also stands as a declaration of her independence, a bold move away from the straightahead tag that had stuck with her for years.

That notion of "the new" Terri Lyne is further reinforced by her nightly appearances on the tube, playing drums in the house band on *The Arsenio Hall Show*, a gig that tends toward upbeat, familiar pop and rock fare, à la Paul Shaffer and the gang on *Late Night with David Letterman*. She may not be swinging in that context but she is seen by more people in a single night than have packed The Village Vanguard in its 54-year history. That kind of exposure is bound to generate record sales, particularly when Terri Lyne is spotlighted (as she was recently), leading her own group through material from *Real Life Story*.

In short, 1989 is shaping up as a milestone year in her career. And those who have witnessed this coming of age—her mentors like Keith Copeland and Jack DeJohnette and Alan Dawson, her past employers like Clark Terry and James Moody and Wayne Shorter, her Brooklyn pals like Steve Coleman and Geri Allen and Greg Osby—must be swelling with pride.

"I really felt like it was going to be a year of change," says Terri Lyne in the Manhattan offices of Polygram Records. "A lot of people had been asking me to do things . . . go out on tour, record projects and things . . . but I really didn't want to commit to anything in advance. Not that I knew I was going to be doing a TV show or anything. I would never have dreamed a month ago that I'd be moving to L.A. and working on a TV show. It's funny how things just happen when the timing is right. I've made all my moves like that, whether it be from apartment to apartment, band to band or city to city. You realize at some point that the timing is right and you make your move. Sometimes you can get into a habit of booking yourself up for a whole year in advance, but this year I wanted to leave something open just because I knew the record was coming out in February and

TERRI LYNE CARRINGTON

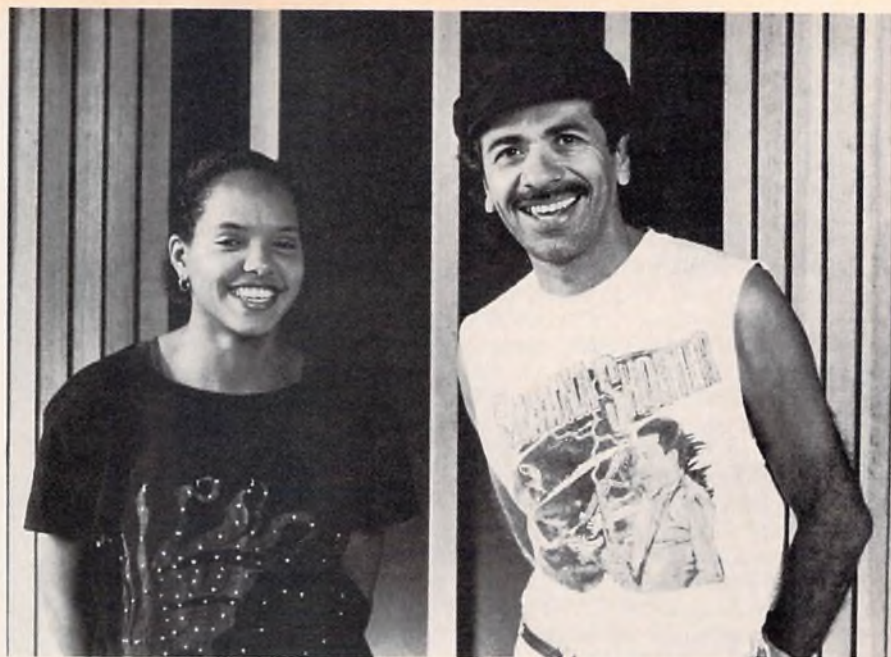
Real-Life
Heartbeats



I could feel a change coming.

"I had been thinking about moving to L.A. for over a year and finally one day I was in Europe and I just decided, 'I'm gonna do it. It's the right time.' So I went out there, auditioned for *The Arsenio Hall Show* and got the gig. Naturally, I'm very pleased. I'll do three months, wait to see if the show gets picked up for the next three months, and take it from there. You never know what's going to happen, so I never plan that far in advance. I can't speak about 'Next year at this time I wanna' I just can't think like that. I believe you have a course, and you direct that course. And if you're open enough, it could go anywhere."

She adds, with a laugh, "So the changes are welcome changes. I need change in my life. I thrive on it."



Terri Lyne and Carlos Santana take a break during the recording of *Real Life Story*.

The material on *Real Life Story* is a definite change, a decided departure from the bop fare she played with The Al Grey All-Stars, The New York Jazz Quartet, or such stalwarts as Frank Wes, Woody Shaw, and Dizzy Gillespie. The album not only introduces her musical vision—a youth-oriented backbeat approach with synth-pop pretensions—but also introduces her vocal talents on "Human Revolution," "More Than Woman," and the title track. This material crosses over into the Sade camp while instrumental cuts like "Message True," featuring Hiram Bullock on guitar and Grover Washington Jr. on tenor sax, or "Hobo's Flat" (CD bonus track) with John Scofield on guitar, go for a more intense burn. Patrice Rushen offers an air of mystery with her composition "Shh," featuring Shorter's signature tenor sound; and Terri Lyne gets to bash out on two tracks, a solo drum showcase entitled "Obstacle Illusion" (with synth colors orchestrated by Rushen) and the aptly-titled "Skeptic Alert," a three-

way burn with Scofield and Greg Osby on alto sax.

Those who haven't followed Terri Lyne's career in recent years will no doubt be surprised by the more commercial approach of *Real Life Story*. But commercial or not, it's her own honest expression.

"I do what I feel in my heart," she says. "I will never sell out to my heart, ever."

Real Life Story is a far cry from *TLC And Friends*, a privately-produced album that Terri Lyne recorded in Boston at age 16. The young drummer was in some pretty elite company on that auspicious debut—Kenny Barron on piano, Buster Williams on bass, George Coleman on sax. Proud Papa Carrington pressed up 500 copies of that debut disc, which was strictly a straight-ahead affair. "Yeah, it's a good record," she recalls. "We just played standards, basically. 'Seven Steps To Heaven,' 'St. Thomas,' 'What Is This Thing Called Love,' Billy Joel's 'Just The Way You Are.' That was just to document my progress at the time. It was just Terri Lyne the drummer at 16. Whereas, the new album is Terri Lyne the drummer/composer/arranger/vocalist. It's a more complete and more personal statement of who I am now. And it reflects more of the music that I love. I love jazz but I also love Prince, Joan Armatrading, Joni Mitchell, Grace Jones, Sweet Honey In The Rock, King Sunny Ade. And it shows in this album."

She adds, with an incisive tone, "Some people like to use stereotypes. They might want to label me as a jazz drummer because I had been associated with more traditional kinds of jazz for so long. So they hear my album and they're surprised that there's no traditional, swinging jazz on it. Well, all I got to say is, pigeonholes are for pigeons."

Not only are her musical tastes more diverse on *Real Life Story* but her playing

has a more distinctive personality to it. As she puts it, "On that first album I did at age 16, I didn't sound like anybody in particular. I may have used a few Tony Williams fills here and there, a few Philly Joe Jones fills here and there, but on the whole I didn't sound like a blatant copycat, which I feel good about. But at the same time, I didn't have my own personality either. I've accomplished that on the new record."

Though she claims that she doesn't have the chops of many hot young drummers on the scene today, Terri Lyne is proud of the fact that she always plays from the heart and tries to put across a feeling rather than flaunt technique.

"My technique is adequate but not awesome like a lot of the other cats who shedded for years to get it like that. But sometimes their technique can get in the way. I never shedded that much. I just draw from the heart when I play, key on the feeling of it. I always liked that approach, the more personal approach. Some people can just sit down to their instrument and be consistent from gig to gig. But with me, I'm only as good as who I'm playing with. I have to be inspired to really burn."

She must've been inspired that night last summer in Switzerland when she nearly burned down the Casino at The Montreux Jazz Festival, stretching out with David Sanborn and percussionist Don Alias on a frenzied jam (in the spirit of "Skeptic Alert"). The crowd leapt to its feet and roared approval while backstage, observing the proceedings on a monitor in the musicians' lounge, fellow drummer Tom Brechtlein shouted out encouragements to the screen. "Kill 'em, kill everyone, kill

me!," he yelled as Terri Lyne whomped the kit with the conviction, control, and a self-assured cool that can only come with experience. It was a display of confidence and sheer power, taking it up a notch from the level she had reached the previous year touring with Wayne Shorter.

"Before I got that gig with Wayne in December of '86, all the gigs I had been doing around New York required very sensitive and subtle playing. I kept getting those calls because I guess I had ears. I could pick up on the subtleties of the music, which is something that a lot of drummers my age miss. So when I went with Wayne, the first thing I thought was, 'Man, I'm gonna hit these drums so hard.' In the beginning stages with Wayne, I felt like I had to prove that I could bash out, play as hard as any man. So I was definitely very strong after that first two-month tour. But then I came to realize that I didn't have to do that because that wasn't me. It wasn't honest. So I arrived at this balance of power and subtlety that seems to work for me. I don't play softer now, I'm just more in touch with my feelings when I'm playing. The Sanborn gig was a pretty high-energy thing but I didn't go into it with the frame of mind that I had to beat the drums to death to prove something. I just played what felt good. I guess that's part of maturing as a player."

She took that attitude into the recording studio when she went to cut *Real Life Story*. "I did this record not to prove anything as far as my drumming," she says. Rather, it was "just to make good music that I was proud of. That's what I set out to do, that's what I did."

After years of playing standards with straightahead groups, the Shorter gig came as something of a revelation to her. "That was a big change in my musical career," says Terri Lyne. "I was always playing with people who were a lot older than me and I was beginning to feel that it was time for me to play a music that not only attracted a younger audience, but I also wanted to be around people who had a younger outlook. You know, I just couldn't imagine myself becoming stagnant, and I felt that happening. I was getting the same kind of calls and it was beginning to affect me negatively. I was beginning to resent the situation I was in. So I was ready for Wayne."

"I can't do anything for too long," she continues, "just 'cause I need that change. But I played with Wayne Shorter all of '87 and until May of '88, and that's the longest I ever played with anybody. With a person like him, you can do that and not get bored because he doesn't want to get bored either. He keeps pushing you every night that you play. So that whole experience really opened me up and turned me around . . . made me want to pursue that direction more than the straightahead jazz thing."

Given her penchant for change, it's hard



to know what Terri Lyne might reveal on her next album. She offers some clues. "I love reggae, I love straightahead jazz, I love funk . . . I wanna do everything. Shoot, I wanna play in a heavy metal band! I wanna do it all. I mean, I'm only 23. I'm just getting started."

She's come a long way from her childhood days as "the little drummer girl." She's making her mark and showing countless thousands of young girls from coast to coast that drums is not just a boy toy.

"Somebody once said to me, 'You play so good you shoulda been a man.' But part of my playing comes from the fact that I am a woman. God put me here as a woman and I want that to enhance my playing. I have to work hard at getting the same physical strength as a man to play the instrument; but there's something else that I have special about me just in being a woman that allows me to draw on a sensitive side quicker than a man. Of course, you can't really generalize. Elvin Jones, for instance. The way he plays brushes is just so alluring, so sensitive."

"But basically, I'm saying, 'Don't use the fact that I'm a woman against me. Don't be chauvinistic and sexist and figure automatically that I'm not as good or won't be as good as a man.' That's the problem . . . seeing the sex of a person before you see the talent. The bottom line is the music. No one should care if you're nine or 90, girl or boy, or whatever. It's like . . . 'Can you play?'" **db**

TERRI LYNE CARRINGTON'S EQUIPMENT

Terri Lyne plays a Yamaha 900 Series Power Recording Kit with a 22-inch bass drum, 6½-inch brass snare, and four toms (10-, 12-, 13-, and 16-inch). Her cymbals are Zildjian: 20-inch clear custom ride, 17-inch clear dark crash, 17-inch medium thin crash, 14-inch crash, and 16-inch crash. Her high-hat is a 13-inch KZ combination. Her sticks are Vic Firth. On tour with Wayne Shorter, she played Yamaha RX-5 trigger pads, though she doesn't currently use them for her own material. "I don't see really right now where I'm gonna use any of that stuff. I want it to be more organic-sounding, that return to the basics."

TERRI LYNE CARRINGTON SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

REAL LIFE STORY—Verve Forecast 837-697

with John Scofield

FLAT OUT—Gramavision 18 8903-1

with Cassandra Wilson

BLUE SKIES—JMT 834-419

with Greg Osby

SOUND THEATRE—JMT 834-411

with Robin Eubanks

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES—JMT 834-424

with Diane Reeves

NEARNESS OF YOU—Blue Note 90264

with Wayne Shorter

JOY RYDER—Columbia 44110

with Mulgrew Miller

WORK!—Landmark 1511

with Rufus Reid

SEVEN MINDS—Sunnyside 1010

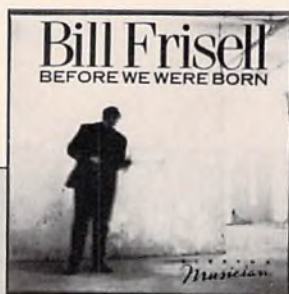
with Scott Robinson

WINDS OF CHANGE—Multijazz 202

with Chris Hunter

THIS IS CHRIS—Atlantic (not yet released)

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



BILL FRISELL

BEFORE WE WERE BORN—Elektra/Musician 60843: *BEFORE WE WERE BORN*; *SOME SONG AND DANCE*; *FREDDY'S STEP*; *LOVE MOTEL*; *PIP*; *SQUEAK*; *GOODBYE*; *HARD PLAINS DRIFTER*; *THE LONE RANGER*; *STEADY, GIRL*.

Personnel: Frisell, guitar; Hank Roberts, electric cello (cuts 2,3); Kermit Driscoll, bass (2,3); Joey Baron, drums (2,3); Julius Hemphill, alto (2); Billy Drewes, alto (2); Doug Wisselman, baritone (2); Arto Lindsay, guitar (1,4,5), vocal (5); Peter Scherer, keyboards, drum programming (1,4,5).

★★★★★

His albums have been too few and too slow to document his astonishing growth as a player, writer, and bandleader—killing as it was, his last one, *Lookout For Hope* (ECM), was released almost a year after it was actually cut. Which is one of the reasons he jumped labels, and came up with a different, tripartite approach to *Before We Were Born*, one that would showcase his skills in the round, downtown-New York-style.

With Lindsay and Scherer—aka the Ambitious Lovers of *Envy* (Editions EG) and *Greed* (Virgin)—he moves even within the title track from acoustic swaying to molten grunge. The fierce and funny and fast-fast-fast chart by jumpcutter John Zorn scrambles typically byte-sized sections of “Hard Plains Drifter, Or, As I Take My Last Breath And The Noose Grows Tight The Incredible Events Of The Last Three Days Flash Before My Eyes.” By the time these guys are done, it’s more like the musical events of the last 30 years that go flashing before your ears.

And then there are the tracks featuring his own quartet augmented by a dream horn section. The blues—Frisell calls them “disguised blues,” which they are until the solo sections—form the connecting thread for “Some Song And Dance.” Only put together as a suite at this album’s sessions—Frisell’s quartet has been playing some of the individual tunes on stage for quite a while—“Some Song And Dance” recapitulates those underlying blues through such diverse faces as New Orleans dirges, tangos, and off-kilter Western Swing. It’s a composite portrait of shifting times, places, and emphases that makes a powerful, witty, prismatic, and cohesive statement.

For it’s not only as a guitarist that Frisell has grown—undeniably formidable as his chops are, immediately recognizable as his delay-induced cloud-of-raunch is. What sets Frisell even further apart from other post-fusion axe-slingers is his insistence on composition as

something more than an excuse for ever faster and flashier solos. His quirkily humorous melodies, his unpredictable herky-jerky rhythms, his faith in sheer space, echo Thelonious Monk. He covered Monk’s “Hackensack” on *Lookout*; he’s reworked countless Monk tunes with The Paul Motian Trio. The dividends clearly pay off on *Before We Were Born*. —gene santoro



ANTHONY BRAXTON

QUARTET (LONDON) 1985—Leo 414/415/416: *COMPOSITION 122 (+ 108A)*; *COMPOSITION 40 (0)*; *COLLAGE FORM STRUCTURE*; *COMPOSITION 52*; *COMPOSITION 86 (+ 32 + 96)*; *PIANO SOLO FROM COMPOSITION 30*; *COMPOSITION 115*; *COMPOSITION 105A*; *PERCUSSION SOLO FROM COMPOSITION 96*; *COMPOSITION 40F*; *COMPOSITION 121*; *COMPOSITION 116*.

Personnel: Braxton, clarinet, flute, soprano, alto, and C-melody saxophones; Marilyn Crispell, piano; Mark Dresser, bass; Gerry Hemingway, percussion.

★★★★★

Quartet (London) 1985 is an indispensable addition to Anthony Braxton’s discography, as it documents a critical juncture in Braxton’s quartet music. Braxton’s suite-like structuring of his quartet performances have always given his concert recordings—such as *Performance 9/1/79* (hat ART 2019)—an added dimension, but with the advent of “pulse track structures” (brief alternative sequences of notated and improvised materials to be played by two musicians), “collage form structures,” and “universe structures” (processes of complimentary juxtaposition, allowing the quartet to play two, three, or four compositions simultaneously), Braxton’s mid-’80s quartet music gained new facets best appreciated through performance documentation.

This three-disc boxed-set also presents an underexposed edition of Braxton’s quartet in inspired form. Marilyn Crispell, Mark Dresser, and Gerry Hemingway are attuned to the expanded demands of Braxton’s music, as the nature of improvisation in Braxton’s recent music is markedly different from the coordinant music of the ’70s quartet recordings. Not only does the quartet have the requisite explosive power for the conventional soloist/rhythm section context of the vamp-patterned “Composition 52” (a 1976 work, this version compares favorably with the one on *Six Compositions: Quartet*—Antilles 1005), it also has the agility to navigate the contours of “Composition 116,”

a work ripe with secondary constructions for the performer to make independent decisions.

Perhaps most importantly, *Quartet (London) 1985* is one of the finest showcases ever for Braxton’s clarinet. It is one of the great mysteries of the age why Braxton doesn’t use it more prominently. Particularly on “Composition 122 (+ 108A),” Braxton effectively combines the Desmond/Konitz sheen of his alto in lyrical long-toned passages, and manipulates the horn’s woody tone in octave-leaping, thickly textured bursts.

The pleasures of *Quartet (London) 1985* are sufficient enough to justify the premium price of an imported three-disc limited edition (only 750 copies were pressed) and to endure the less-than-state-of-the-art sound quality: the BBC destroyed the original 24-track tape, and the two-track masters have Crispell and Dresser mixed a bit low in several ensemble passages. And, as Braxton and his colleagues have publicly rebuked *The Coventry Concert* (ITM-Westwind 001) during a notorious firefight in *The Wire*’s “letters to the editors” pages, it is the only untainted document of the quartet’s 1985 Contemporary Music Network tour of England. —bill shoemaker



ROY ORBISON

FOR THE LONELY: A ROY ORBISON ANTHOLOGY, 1956-1965—Rhino R1 71493: *Ooby Dooby*; *Go! Go! Go!*; *Rockhouse*; *Devil Doll*; *Up Town*; *I’m Hurtin’*; *Only The Lonely (Know How I Feel)*; *Blue Angel*; *Crying*; *Candy Man*; *The Crowd*; *Dream Baby (How Long Must I Dream)*; *Running Scared*; *Leah*; *Workin’ For The Man*; *In Dreams*; *Falling*; *Mean Woman Blues*; *Oh, Pretty Woman*; *Blue Bayou*; *Pretty Paper*; *It’s Over*; *(Say) You’re My Girl*; *Goodnight*.

Personnel: Orbison, guitar and vocals; various others.

★★★★★

MYSTERY GIRL—Virgin 7 91058-1: *You Got It*; *In The Real World*; *(All I Can Do Is) Dream You*; *A Love So Beautiful*; *California Blue*; *She’s A Mystery To Me*; *The Comedians*; *The Only One*; *Windsurfer*; *Careless Heart*.

Personnel: Orbison, vocals, guitar, background vocals; various other players, including Jeff Lynne, guitars, keyboards, piano, bass, background vocals (cuts 1,4,5); Tom Petty, acoustic guitar (1,5), background vocals (1,2,5); Mike Campbell, bass (2,10), guitar (2,10), acoustic guitar (5,7,10), mandolin (5); Bono, guitars (6); Billy Burnette, acoustic guitar, background

vocals (3); Rick Vito, electric guitar, background vocals (3), slide guitar (9); George Harrison, acoustic guitar (4); T-Bone Burnett, guitar (7); Steve Cropper, guitar (8); T-Bone Walk, electric bass (3); Buell Neidlinger, arco bass (3,7); Al Kooper, organ (2); Benmont Tench, piano (6,9,10), cheap strings (6), organ (8), piano (8); Mitchell Froom, piano (7); Howie Epstein, bass (6,8,9), background vocals (2,8,10); Jim Keltner, drums (2,5,7-10); Ray Cooper, drums (4).

★ ★ ★

I don't think Roy Orbison needs any more of the hagiographic treatment his recent death brought on. Not that he doesn't deserve full credit for what he did do for rock & roll: by reclaiming the big ballad within the rockabilly context, he not only broadened the format's premises but showed it was possible to circumvent the treacle put out by the apparently endless succession of Dick Clark-issued voiceless crooners. Still, if comparing Orbison to Frankie Avalon or Fabian makes him look inevitably like a shining star, fact is that The Voice could sink into repetitious, mannerist bombast with the same effortless, narcissistic glide that fuelled forgettable followers like Tom Jones and Gary Puckett, as well as one of his biggest latter-day boosters, Bruce Springsteen himself.

The excellent Rhino collection spans both the high points of Orbison's career and the greater breadth of his musical range, from

early rockers like "Ooby Dooby" to the still pointedly kickass "Oh, Pretty Woman"—a tune whose sheer durability has allowed it to survive manhandling covers from Van Halen's to John Zorn's. The trademark pseudo-operatic ballads with their hanging and glistening strings are fully represented. And the fine sound, concise but thorough liner notes, handful of well-picked photos, and attempts to reconstruct session personnel are the kind of quality touches that mark Rhino's best work—which is very, very good indeed.

By the time he cut *Mystery Girl*, Orbison had already logged plenty of mileage on Comeback Road. The Boss' boosterism was a tremendous shove, of course, and brought on board all sorts of other folks. Which led to a Cinemax special and *The Traveling Wilburys* (Warner Bros.), Orbison's one-off, widely-acclaimed collaboration with Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, and George Harrison, among others.

Harrison and Petty are just some of the stars-in-homage who are, not surprisingly, prominently featured on Orbison's final album. Sad to say, while The Voice is clearly in excellent shape still, the material is by and large little more than excuses for it to shine. The arrangements mostly restate his early triumphs without doing much to recontextualize his strengths. Maybe they just couldn't. Even though there is a try at a Memphis soul-style chart for "The Only One," for instance, its ample lack of success mostly demonstrates that Orbison

was utterly devastating at what he did, but that he couldn't really move outside that narrow range. His early peaks remain his best epitaph.

—gene santoro



TRILOK GURTU

USFRET—CMP 33: SHOBHAROCK; SHANGRI LA USFRET; OM; DEEP TRI; GOOSE BUMPS; MILO.

Personnel: Gurtu, percussion, drums, tabla, congas, voice; Shobha Gurtu, voice; Ralph Towner, acoustic guitars, keyboards; Don Cherry, trumpet; Shankar, violin; Daniel Goyone, piano, keyboards; Janas Hellborg, electric bass; Walter Quintus, tambura.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

THE CLASSIC HOAGY CARMICHAEL

by John McDonough

Those of us who listen to jazz with intent to commit criticism are inclined, I think, to give short shrift to songs—as if they were just an excuse for improvisation. But a great song can be an object of formidable power.

"The Classic Hoagy Carmichael" (RO38 IHS 1002)—a four-LP set with 63-page booklet—jointly produced by the Smithsonian and the Indiana Historical Society, calls attention to this power in general by examining the songs of Mr. Carmichael in particular. It's an instructive examination. Carmichael was probably more influenced by jazz than any other major American songwriter. Yet, he wrote odd melodies that violated the governing logic of both jazz and Tin Pan Alley. Who else could have shaped so quirky, eccentric, and unimprovisable a tune as "Washboard Blues"?

Improvisation thrives on the ambiguity of harmonic intrigue. But it struggles in the grip of melody. And there are Carmichael melodies here that embody such assertive perfection that they simply stymie improvisation. Consider "Stardust" (1927). There are three jazz treatments heard here: Louis Armstrong (1931), Artie Shaw (1940), and Wynton Marsalis (1984). And none escapes the gravitational pull of its unique melody, which permits only paraphrase.

Carmichael also wrote folksy homilies to the South because he came from there—the south of Indiana, at least. He was close enough to the real thing to absorb its tempo and culture; yet distant enough to see its ethos and mythology through rose-colored glasses. Early Carmichael is consistent in this theme: "New Orleans," "Lazy River," "Lazy Bones," and "Moon Country," the last two written with lyricist Johnny Mercer, another Dixie expatriot. These songs seem to long for the 19th century, especially when Carmichael himself sings them in his own croaky, conversational drawl ("Washboard," "Lazy River," "Old Buttermilk Sky," among others). They are Uncle Remus stories set to music. What a contrast to the great Jewish songmasters of New York's Lower East Side, who had little nostalgia for rocking chairs and minstrel shows! (Ironically, Cole Porter, the most urbane of American song writers, also came from Indiana, albeit northern Indiana, not Carmichael's southern stomping grounds. Yet, it would take more than geography to account for the difference between "Rockin' Chair" and "Love For Sale," both from 1930.)

Carmichael could also turn out mainstream Tin Pan Alley formula writing ("Judy," "Charlie Two-Step," "Sing Me A Swing Song"), clever novelty material ("The Monkey Song"), and good film tunes ("Small Fry," "In The Cool Cool Cool Of The Evening"). His later ballad writing was full of simple, accessible beauty ("Lampighter's Serenade," "The Nerness Of You"). This is not a "best of" collection, but a balanced retrospective—warts and all.

His masterpiece, "Stardust," recurs six times over the collection's 57-year span of

performances. It gives the collection a kind of continuity. In addition to the versions cited, there is Carmichael in 1942, Ella Fitzgerald from 1955, and Frank Sinatra singing only the verse before an override 1961 string arrangement. (The classic Sinatra/Dorsey 1941 performance is so conspicuous by its absence—it's not even listed in "other recommended recordings"—that an explanation is surely called for.)

But a larger theme emerges about two-thirds of the way into these 57 titles. Through the first five of these eight LP sides, song and performance run in roughly contemporary register. A tune like "Blue Orchids," written in 1939, is recorded in 1939 (by Glenn Miller). But around side six, something happens. Carmichael stops running. Important new songs cease after 1951. But the old songs keep going. A passage begins as successive generations take custody.

"Georgia On My Mind," written in 1930, is reinvented by Ray Charles in 1960. Carmen McRae and Bob Brookmeyer bring "Skylark" (1941) into the '50s and '60s. By side eight, the present (Susannah McCorkle, Dave McKenna, Margaret Whiting) embraces the past as if it's the most natural thing in the world. And it is. We admire the great, distant original performances by Crosby, Armstrong, Mildred Bailey, and Benny Goodman. But Hank Jones, Art Pepper, Wynton Marsalis, and the superb Marlene VerPlanck bring us Carmichael up-close today.

And that's what this album is all about: There's an immortality in 32 bars of music that transcends standards of performance.

db

DIZRHYTHMIA

DIZRHYTHMIA—Anilles/New Directions 91026-1: *DIZRHYTHMIA*; *STANDING IN THE RAIN*; *IT WILL ONLY END IN TEARS*; *KATY GOES TO SCHOOL*; *WALKING ON THE CRACKS*; *8000 MILES*; *WHAT KATY DID NEXT*; *A GROWN MAN IMMERSSED IN TIN-TIN*.

Personnel: Gavin Harrison, drums, percussion, marimba; Danny Thompson, bass; Pandit Dinesh, Indian drums, percussion, vocals; Jakko M. Jakszyk, acoustic, semi-acoustic and sitar guitars, piano, synthesizer, flutes, vocals; Sultan Khan, sarangi (cuts 2, 4); Gurudev Singh, sarod (3), dilruba (6); Durga Pandit (4), Rattan Sharma (3), Surekha Kothari (5), Peter Blegvad (7), vocals; Lyndon Connah (1, 6), Dave Stewart (4), piano; B. J. Cole, pedal steel guitar (4, 7); David Coulter, didjeridu (5); Bobby Harrison, flugelhorn (7).

★ ★

Indian pop is one of the world's great fusion musics: Eastern scales and elaborately ornamented vocal lines meet up with Western instruments that adapt to India's microtonal intervals with ease (violins, steel guitars) or with relative difficulty (saxophones, keyboards, etc.). The tension between one musical world and the other is invigorating, and—to these Western ears, anyway—slightly comic.

Of course, jazz—merging African and European esthetics—is also one of the world's great fusion musics, one equally concerned with improvisation and rhythmic subtlety. So it's puzzling that attempts to combine jazz with Indian music have been few and generally disappointing. (The fusoid meanderings of violinists/brothers L. Shankar and L. Subramaniam are cases in point.) On *Usfret*, Trilok Gurtu, the Bombay-born percussionist now working with the group Oregon, comes as close as anyone since Shakti-era John McLaughlin at forging a synthesis between the two traditions.

For Gurtu, modal improvising is the cultural bridge; gauzy synthesizer backgrounds simulate the drone of an Indian sruti-box or stringed tambura. The featured soloist is his mother Shobha Gurtu, a classical Indian singer who doesn't attempt to bend toward the West. Trilok superimposes her keening, curlicued vocals over muted keyboard power-chords ("Deep Tri") or brooding art-rock ostinati ("Usfret"). On the latter, Don Cherry's jazz trumpet leapfrogs over Shankar's fuzz-toned violin, played in an authentic Indian manner. Both styles retain their integrity, gracefully balanced. (Cherry, incidentally, was placing his raggedy horn in world music contexts long before such hybrids got trendy.) Elsewhere on the same piece, Trilok superimposes his hi-hat, clanging cymbals, and snapping snare over his own chattering Carnatic vocal improv. "OM" even sneaks in a straightforward Indian trio of voice, tablas, and tambura. Yet the music's never merely clever; it works because Gurtu is so thoroughly grounded in two cultures, and because he gives Shobha and Shankar room to stretch. He neither slums nor overreaches. *Usfret*'s success isn't earth-shattering, but it's real.

Dizrhythmia doesn't attain the same depth. If I read the notes correctly, the Indian guests overdubbed their vocals and solos after the basic tracks had been laid down. In any case,

the exotic flavors seem more like afterthoughts than integral components; shoehorned into short segments, the guests are deprived of the elbow room their native music affords. Three-fourths of the band is English, including ex-Pentangle bassist Thompson and principal writer Jakszyk, whose acoustic guitar solos, harmonic sense, and wispy vocals are unremittingly Western. On "Katy Goes To School" and "Walking On The Cracks," percussionist Dinesh provides a glimpse of India's complex rhythms, but too often (as on "Dizrhythmia") his tablas serve as little more than exotic bongos. Where Indian music's apt to bistle with excitement, this stuff's just too laid-back.

—Kevin Whitehead

HUMANSVILLE—Rounder 9019: *MONEY CAN'T BUY EVERYTHING*; *CANTO A LA SALSA*; *BESAME MUCHO*; *OUR IMAGINED IMAGE*; *VIVA LA REINA*; *CHEM—OO—CHEM*; *POOR PEOPLE OF PARIS*; *LA NEGRA*; *NIGHT*; *MOVE*; *TICK TOCK POLKA*; *AY, ME DUELE*; *OH, WHAT A BEAUTIFUL MORNING*; *TUBULAR JUGS*.

Personnel: Carl Finch, accordion, guitar, keyboards, percussion, vocals; Jeffrey Barnes, tenor saxophone, clarinet, keyboards, percussion, whistles, didjeridu, vocals; Bubba Hernandez, bass, tuba, vocals; Mitch Marine, drums, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ★

It's hard to image four happier, more easygoing iconoclasts. Scrabbling together sounds from literally around the globe, Brave Combo (what's in a name?) manages not only to mix and match them in ways few sane people would have imagined, but thankfully avoids the self-importance that sometimes distracts sonic scavengers from the task at hand. I mean, who else would parenthetically subtitle "Poor People Of Paris" "muzak swing" or describe "Move" as "frustration rock ska"?

Partly they can deal with that range of fare because of their irreverent knowledge. They refuse to be distracted into pomposity or the reliquary because of their impeccable, high-class, wildly versatile musicianship. Just take another look at the improbable personnel credits above, and you'll see what I mean.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34



Keith Jarrett



PERSONAL MOUNTAINS

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Whether these guys take on a Czech polka or a Tex-Mex weeper, you get to watch them map out the fine line between a truly devastating parody and the totally straight rendering they're quite obviously capable of. At the same time, parody, at least in their eyes, doesn't mean belittlement; they genuinely love this stuff, all of its unlikely selves; they seem to thrive on the breadth and depth of their tangled musical roots, and translate that affectionate knowledge into off-the-wall fun that you can dance to.

Sure, it's not gonna change the world, but who can argue with what it can do? Who would want to?
—gene santoro



STEFANO BATTAGLIA

AURYN—SPLASC(H) 162: *AURYN*; *TOY ROADS*; *EMILIE MARIE*; *THE REAL MEANING OF THE BLUES*; *SOME LITTLE NOTES FOR YOU*; *GLEAM*.
Personnel: Battaglia, piano; Paolino Dalla Porta, bass; Manhu Roche, drums.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

The impact (American) jazz has made on non-American jazz musicians can sometimes be measured in terms of style. In other cases, it might have more to do with instrumentation, improvisation, or composition. The music on this acoustic trio date of Italian jazzers strikes me as both confusing and refreshing. Confusing because it is next to impossible for me to distinguish its distinctively European roots (other than the typical Euro-classical ones) from its eventual expression.

From the first bars of "Auryr," I am reminded of a mid-to-late '70s Keith Jarrett, specifically the music from two European-based/produced albums, *Belonging* and *My Song* (minus the saxophone, of course). But it is Stefano Battaglia, the composer and arranger of all six of these tunes, who is the centerpiece. With more than ample support from Paolino Dalla Porta and Manhu Roche, the confusion subsides replaced by a refreshment that has less to do with startling innovation; rather, this music is like a delightful pastiche of trio music, from early '60s Bill Evans and Paul Bley on through to the more conventionally experimental—as well as lyrical and soulful—sounds of Jarrett. And yet, as stated, the music is all Battaglia.

There is a forcefulness to Battaglia's playing that spills over into a kind of playful abandon, as on "Blues" and "Toy Roads." On both pieces, he alternates extended right hand single notes with well-placed chords, giving his solos coherence. It's the rhythmic feel generated by both Porta and Roche combined with the unexpected bluesy sensibility I get from Battaglia that most reminds me of Jarrett's work with Charlie Haden/Palle Danielsson and Paul Motian/Jon Christensen, respectively. In fact, it's when they combine their version of the slightly-altered song form—à la Ornette—with a more driving swing feel that they sound their best. (The young American pianist Fred Hersch also comes to mind.)

There is a good balance between gentleness and aggressiveness on this album. On the ballads "Auryr" and "Emilie Marie," Battaglia makes convincing lyrical statements, his solos building nicely on each theme. Throughout, it is apparent that all three are good listeners, regardless of tempo. Tonally, the sound is intimate without being too cozy.

It isn't until "Gleam," however, that the band finally loosens up enough to allow for something really unexpected; and yet the tune doesn't go far enough. Battaglia & Co. take the music through various moods: serenity, somberness, a kind of dreamy playfulness bordering on anarchy, returning to a more thematic form similar to Battaglia's unaccompanied opening statements.

This is a band of inventive players, obviously influenced by an American (piano) jazz trio tradition. Battaglia is young, by the looks of the cover photo, and this music strikes me as being a sort of egg-hatching affair for him. He's on the outskirts of real innovation here, but fun to listen to, nonetheless.
—john ephland

CONTINUED ON PAGE 41

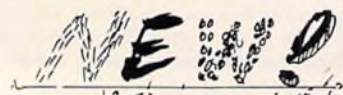
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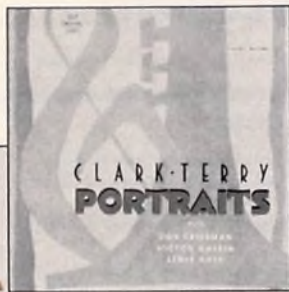
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CLARK TERRY

PORTRAITS—Chesky JD2: *PENNIES FROM HEAVEN; SUGAR BLUES; AUTUMN LEAVES; FINGER FILIBUSTER; LITTLE JAZZ; WHEN IT'S SLEEPY TIME DOWN SOUTH; JIVE AT FIVE; CIRIBIRIBIN; OW; I CAN'T GET STARTED; I DON'T WANNA BE KISSED.* (56:35 minutes)

Personnel: Terry, trumpet, flugelhorn, vocals; Don Friedman, piano; Victor Gaskin, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Before walking onstage to perform at the University of New Hampshire jazz festival named for him, Clark Terry flashed this typist his trademark Cheshire Cat grin and blithely said, "I've been doing this for 50 years and I'll keep at it for another 50 till I get it right." The long and distinguished career of Terry is predicated on his having worked to *get it right* on trumpet with, among others, the Count Basie and Duke Ellington orchestras and small groups co-featuring Oscar Peterson, Thelonious Monk, and Bob Brookmeyer. By now, of course, he's long shown exemplary technique at the service of a compelling bop style underscored indelibly by sincerity and jocoseness.

Spend some time with Terry, such as giving listen to his first feature sessions date in several years, *Portraits*—the CD-only collection of salutes to nine trumpeters he respects—and the supreme jazz entertainer will hold you in a most agreeable musical spell. Terry assumes his elfish persona Mumbles on an arrangement of Harry Edison's "Jive At Five," offering both relaxed and zesty scat singing as homage to affable, supernally swinging Sweets, and on his bop whirl "Finger Filibuster," where all his rapid-fire sputters, stammers, and gurgles celebrate his famous, frisky other self.

Terry's bewitching trumpet and flugelhorn sound is as clean, smooth, and pert as ever and his phraseology's that of a tirelessly articulate and logical player. He honors his colleagues by covering songs associated with them, doing so thoughtfully but without a moment's pause to altering his own conceptions and touch. We find him divesting "Sugar Blues" of Clyde McCoy's schmaltz while still adoring the Clarence Williams melody, making his muted trumpet glow campfire warm as only he can on "Autumn Leaves" (which he identifies with Miles Davis), and giving his lines in Dizzy Gillespie's "Ow" an individuated sparkle. The loveliness of his version of Bunny Berigan's "I Can't Get Started," with its deceptively simple and easy cast, derives from Terry's great command of the horn and the sympathetic nature of underrated pianist Don Friedman, bassist Victor Gaskin, and Lewis Nash

on brushes. As for his rendition of Roy Eldridge's "Little Jazz," what higher praise can be given it than to report that Little Jazz himself enjoyed hearing the track when Terry played it for him over the phone? Fats Navarro ("Pennies From Heaven"), Louis Armstrong ("When It's Sleepy Time Down South"), Harry James ("Ciribiribin"), and Miles again ("I Don't Wanna Be Kissed") receive his recognition on the remainder of the program; their numbers are somewhat less pleasing than the other tributes as Terry provides each with at least dollops of lazy or swaggering cant.

One real reason to grouse: The songs, their art and entertainment value aside, are by and large a conservatively chosen, predictable lot. *Portraits* could have been more interesting had Terry elected to dip into the song archives of Clifford Brown, Kenny Dorham, Lee Morgan, and Howard McGhee—trumpeters he also counts as favorites. A second, hipper volume of *Portraits* begs to be done. —frank-john hadley

FOR YNA YNA; PACO/MOODY BLUE. (67:21 minutes)
Personnel: Wofford, piano; Rufus Reid, bass; Carl Burnett, drums; Richie Gajete Garcia, congas and percussion.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

With Gil Evans gone, Gerald Wilson might inherit the throne of eldest statesman among big band jazz leader/composers, provided that the energetic septuagenarian would sit down long enough to assume it. Except for a recent symposium and concerts at New England Conservatory, and Berklee College workshops, Wilson's presence has been felt less in the Northeast than on the West Coast, where he has carved out a long and fruitful career playing, composing, arranging, teaching, film-scoring, doing studio work—music's whole nine yards. His pure, lean, exuberant arranging style brought prominence to Jimmie Lunceford's Orchestra (1939-42). After a musical hitch in the Navy, Wilson led his own band from 1944-46, played and wrote for Count Basie in the late '40s. He formed another hot ensemble in the '60s, some members of which (Young, Nimitz, Collette) appear here in Ellingtonian longevity. With a score of albums under his trim beltline, arrangements for singers from The Platters to Carmen McRae, film, and symphonic credits, Wilson shows little sign of flagging as a composer and conductor.

Here we have two quite diverse explorations of Wilson's compositions. The first shows a studio orchestra of seasoned veterans and youngbloods in two guises: three short tracks pay rather earthy tribute to Ellington in raw-boned, red-blooded fashion and frame Earth, Wind & Fire's rockish, lengthy "Getaway"; then, with a few personnel changes, six bluesy, hard-hitting originals (first out as a 1981 LP) exhibit rough-hewn gusto à la "Carson Show" and sport many solos. Most tunes, Wilson reports, were second takes, to retain spontaneity. The band frequently pounds on bigger than life—both a beauty and a bane; some solos seem tossed off (brassy Brashear, automatic-over-drive Watts); some marvelous (gritty Wiggins, salty Otis). Wilson's open-arms, impassioned tributes to loved and respected ones burn through as bold sketches. His heroic harmonies (he claims to have written the first 10-part big band voicings for Lunceford) and familiar Latin-tinged melodies team famously in charcoal portraits of matadors (here "Lomelin," elsewhere "Tirado" and "Camino").

Mike Wofford, as pianist on the LP date, is solid in his comping and subdued in soloing. In another date, he pays lively tribute to Wilson the man and portraitist in a firm, forthright, and exuberant set for piano and rhythm. Wofford brings subtle, new harmonic extensions to Wilson's compositions with cohesive swing and energy, and fleshes out Wilson's own portraits of honored and loved ones. Wofford's covers of the big band charts we hear here—"Lomelin" and "Triple Chase"—capture the excitement without the exhibitionism of the originals even as he adds linear interests of his own.

Wofford, like any good artist, tells as much about himself as about his subject; he's done it before with a stately set of Scott Joplin interpretations. He focuses Wilson's grand sweeps into delicate arabesques. Reid cuts



GERALD WILSON: ORCHESTRA OF THE 80'S

LOVE YOU MADLY—Discovery DSCD-947: *LOVE YOU MADLY; GETAWAY; SOPHISTICATED LADY; DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANYMORE; LOMELIN; AYE-EE-EN; SEE YOU LATER; YOU KNOW; TRIPLE CHASE; BLUES FOR ZUBIN.* (66:21 minutes)

Personnel: Wilson, Bobby Bryant, Rick Baptist, Eugene "Snoopy" Young, Oscar Brashear, trumpets; Jerome Richardson, Buddy Collette, Hank deVega, Jack Nimitz, Roger Hogan, Harold Land, Ernie Watts, reeds; Jimmy Cleveland, Garnett Brown, Thurmon Green, Maurice Spears, trombones; Mike Wofford, piano; Harold Land, Jr., electric piano; John B. Williams, bass; Paul Humphrey, drums, percussion; Bob Conti, John "Shuggie" Otis, guitar; Jo Villaseñor Wilson, copyist (cuts 1-4). Cuts 5-10: Hal Espinosa replaces Gerald Wilson; Anthony Ortega replaces Collette; Gerald Wiggins replaces Wofford; add Milcho Leviev, keyboards; guitars out; Clayton Cameron replaces Humphrey.

★ ★ ★ ★

MIKE WOFFORD

PLAYS GERALD WILSON: GERALD'S PEOPLE—Discovery DSCD-951: *YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT; TRIPLE CHASE; LATINO; GERALD'S PEOPLE; LOMELIN; ARAM; TERI; NANCY JO; EL PRESIDENTE; JERI; BLUES*

smooth and sinuous bass solos on "Teri," "Jeri" (two of Wilson's daughters), "Aram" (composer Khatchaturian), and "El Presidente" (a fictional character); he and drummer Burnette clearly co-opt Wofford's pastiche portrait of Gerald Wilson as their own. —*fred bouchard*



REGGIE WORKMAN ENSEMBLE

SYNTHESIS—Leo 131; *Jus' Ole Mae*; *Ogun's Ardor*; *Martyrs Hymn*; *Earthly Garden*; *Chant*; *Synaps II*; *Fabula*. (63:22 MINUTES)

Personnel: Workman, bass; Oliver Lake, alto

saxophone, flute; Marilyn Crispell, piano; Andrew Cyrille, drums, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ½

More than any other active Coltrane alumnus, Reggie Workman keeps up with the ongoing progress of the jazz avant garde. Now, some folks think that the free music of the 1960s remains jazz's *permanent* avant garde, probably 'cause they still can't abide it. But of course that notion is false—some proof being the ways two generations of players (including Oliver Lake and Marilyn Crispell) have built upon that quarter-century old music. And even then, the movement was diverse enough to encompass Coltrane and Cecil Taylor.

Workman's quartet here—more outward-bound than the band Top Shelf he led for some time in the early '80s—pulls together divergent spheres of influence: Coltrane (Workman), Taylor (Andrew Cyrille, one of the music's great drummers), and the AACM/BAG Midwest (Lake). Crispell studied with Taylor and has worked intensively with Anthony Braxton. The opening moments of this 1986 concert (from Philly's arts mecca, The Painted Bride) are paradigmatic. Workman's hard-wrung bass notes are greeted with barnyard cackles from his mates—a juxtaposition that spans, if not the AACM's "ancient to the future," at least

the distance from "Livery Stable Blues" to the near-past. Horn and piano then enter playing an angular structuralist's line—but it's constantly reiterated, like a Coltrane incantation.

There may be subtle changes of mood in the course of a piece, but the foursome steer clear of high-energy clichés. Lake plays flute almost half the time, and the musicians (mostly Cyrille) deploy "little instruments"; friction- or wind-driven birdcalls, sleigh bells, musical saw. ("Synaps II" shows how nimbly Andrew underpins and propels a twisting line.) On "Earthly Garden," they spoof twitting-and-tweeting "sunrise" clichés, but they invest this pastorate with bracing dissonances. Similarly, Workman underscores Lake's bluesy/gospel flute on "Martyrs Hymn" with groaning arco. Bowing or pizz, Reggie gets a ruddy, visceral sound from the bass—his long glisses sound like an accelerating subway train.

Workman values the African-rooted coarse timbres which help keep jazz vital. But in a way, *Synthesis* resembles a neo-conservative statement. Mindful of the past, it's a little too familiar less a synthesis than a consolidation. This quartet seems better equipped than most to break through to something new, but hasn't done so yet. Be patient: Reggie Workman is still exploring. —*kevin whitehead*

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MARCUS ROBERTS

THE TRUTH IS SPOKEN HERE—Novus 3051-2-N: *THE ARRIVAL; BLUE MONK; MAURELLA; SINGLE PETAL OF A ROSE; COUNTRY BY CHOICE; THE TRUTH IS SPOKEN HERE; IN A MELLOW TONE; NOTHIN' BUT THE BLUES.* (53:25 minutes)

Personnel: Roberts, piano; Reginald Veal, bass (cuts 1, 3, 5-8); Elvin Jones, drums (1, 3, 5-8); Wynton Marsalis, trumpet (1, 6, 8); Todd Williams (3, 6), Charlie Rouse (5, 7, 8), tenor saxophone.

★ ★ ★ ½

This CD is a little too cool. Roberts catches fire on a solo "Blue Monk," and his "Country By Choice," a quartet track with Rouse; but otherwise he's more interesting than warm—interesting in an intellectual sense. The intellectual development of themes is Roberts' forte.

In contrast, Marsalis seems warmer than ever on Roberts' "The Arrival," a minor-key tune opened by Jones' chattering brushwork. Playing muted, Marsalis' time is perfect. Roberts swings more rigidly, his clipped left-hand figures recalling Dave Brubeck. Jones ends it with a loose, polyrhythmic solo and a final cymbal crash. Jones is also one of the reasons for the successful balance of "Country By Choice." He boots the others. The late Rouse—this was his last record date—is as investigative and rewarding here as he ever was with Monk, this being an angular, Monk-like tune. Roberts' barbed, percussive solo lines also reflect Monk. Veal's bass cuts through with feeling and a fat resonance.

On the solo piano pieces ("Blue Monk" and the Ellington-Strayhorn gem "Single Petal Of A Rose"), Roberts quotes the composers' piano styles but shows that he has broadened their scope, too. His Monk is an especially relevant extension with thumping, off-center stride work. The performance of "Maurella," sandwiched in between, lacks feeling. An impressionistic ballad reminiscent of Wayne Shorter (as is Williams' tenor), it nevertheless shows Roberts' delicacy and linear logic as a soloist.

The title track, a pretty tune, is in the same cool vein. "In A Mellow Tone" and Roberts' "Nothin' But The Blues" are more open but still somehow reserved. On the Ellington tune, Roberts tinkles like an abstract, intellectual Basie (not to be confused with John Lewis, who is known to favor a similar approach). On the blues, we're back to Monk.

Overall, there's not a bad solo or tune on this album. But compared to his playing on Marsalis' live Blues Alley recording, Roberts seems less daring. Also, we're not served anything new on "In A Mellow Tone." Veal and Jones work together excellently, but Roberts doesn't always respond to their heat/beat generation. Things could have cooked more. —*owen cordle*

DUKE EVERLASTING

by Kevin Whitehead

Duke Ellington has been gone 15 years, but I keep picturing him alive at 90 (he would've been this past April), still hauling the band around the globe, flattering the ladies from the piano bench, striving to impress the snobs with one perfect suite. The illusion's easy to foster—no other master's music remains so timelessly fresh. Herewith, a sorta chronological look at some recent Ellingtonia, by Duke and his progeny.

In later years, Ellington's endless retreading of his hits exasperated admirers, but it was no late development. Of the 22 tunes on *Early Ellington (1927-1934)* (RCA/Bluebird 6852-2-RB; 72:02 minutes), he'd previously recorded more than a third—in some cases within days of these takes. (Remakes include "Black And Tan Fantasy," "The Mooche," and "East St. Louis Toodle-0o.") But Ellington, miraculously enough, could play a tune a zillion times without wearing it out, by switching soloists, changing voicings or the rhythmic pattern—or by making it so great in the first place you didn't care how often you heard it. The band's sometime stiffness aside, Ellington was in many ways fully formed by the end of the '20s—fully exploiting his orchestral resources, fully appreciating particular soloists' strengths. Of special note are Duke's second (8½ minute) version of "Creole Rhapsody," which took up two sides of a 78, and the first (and in many ways greatest) train song in his book, "Day-break Express." Baritone Harry Carney joined up in 1927; the later sides include many who set the band's style for decades: Johnny Hodges, trumpeter Cootie Williams, trombonists Juan Tizol and Lawrence Brown.

Even cleaned up for CD, Duke Ellington and **Billy Strayhorn's** 1950 *Great Times! Piano Duets* (OJC 108-2; 35:22) won't win any audiophile awards, but be glad it exists at all; the masters were lost in a fire that helped crush Mercer Ellington's ill-fated Mercer Records. It may be the strangest Ellington recital. On "Great Times," four hands at two pianos recall the superhuman exuberance of Earl Hines, whose left-hand scrambles influenced Duke's. Densely percussive and polyrhythmic, "Cottontail" and Billy's "Johnny Come Lately" highlight what Cecil Taylor got from Ellington: it's a surprisingly short hop from these sides to CT's relatively conservative 1955 debut. (Hines and Taylor sound like they have four hands anyway.) The duets were recorded in mono of course, but Ellington's typically jabbing attack is easy to tell from Strayhorn's lighter touch. Duke perversely plays thick, slabby chords—more not less than usual—but sparkling overtones give "Tonk" a Gershwin touch. There's something endearing and comic about hearing Strayhorn play the familiar intro to his "Take The 'A' Train" on celeste; Oscar Pettiford (guesting on cello for four tracks) interpolates Duke's "I'm Beginning To See The Light," an inspired pun on a subway song.

Capitol has reissued on CD its old budget LP *The Best Of Duke Ellington And His Famous Orchestra* (Capitol 91223 2; 39:04), recorded



C. STAM

in '53 and '54. The title is of course unrealistic—Hodges' singing alto was absent the whole time. And there are other problems: no notes, dates, or personnel credits, and no new titles added to the 10 on the already skimpy LP. But it's budget-priced, so be forgiving. There's one bona fide hit—"Satin Doll"—and more remakes, among them "Prelude To A Kiss" (the pianist's feature) and "In A Sentimental Mood," and less common beauties like "Warm Valley" and Strayhorn's "Passion Flower." They are all impeccably played, in an era when the band's lack of discipline was notorious; and there are several featured spots for Ray Nance's exquisite violin: "Flamingo" (a 1943 hit for Duke) and Tizol's Moorish "Bakiff" and "Caravan."

From 1957 comes the swell **Ella Fitzgerald Sings The Duke Ellington Songbook** (Verve 837 035-2; 3 CDs—2 hours, 52:46). Duke's orchestra accompanies Ella on 20 mostly-familiar selections, and some lesser-knowns like "Bli-Blip." Ella's harmonic acumen, near-peerless scatting, her swing, and cheerful exhibitionism perfectly complement Duke's own. Duke and Strayhorn pay tribute with a graceful, gracious four-movement portrait of the singer. On 18 titles, Ella's joined by a small group with Ben Webster, who recreates his original "Cottontail" solo, and matches her nuance-for-nuance on the ballads. On half that session, Stuff Smith's violin is a further bonus, with its echoes of Nance. This box may be the ideal cure for listeners who resist Ella's charms; skeptics who think of her as a show-off may be stunned by her exquisite taste.

Under the Saja imprint, Atlantic now distributes the five-volume "Private Collection"—studio and live sessions recorded by Duke for his own amusement, and/or with half an eye on eventual release—selected by Mercer and issued in '87 by the indie label LMR, with extensive notes by Duke's Boswell, Stanley Dance. (Jack Sohmer reviewed 'em in the 1/88 **db**.) The graphics have been spruced up, and a couple of bucks shaved off the price. Better yet, five more all-new volumes should be out by the time you read this. (They weren't available for review at press time.) We'll amplify Jack's mostly general comments with some specifics. Incidentally, because these CDs include early versions of pieces Duke reworked later, some folks wrongly assume these are all rough drafts—forgetting that Duke was always futzing with finished pieces.

Volume 1, *Studio Sessions Chicago 1956*

(Saja 7 91041-2; 54:39), includes "March 19th Blues," which appeared on Mercer's '87 Grammy-magnet *Digital Duke* as "22 Cent Stomp." Hodges had returned to the fold, and while the band was a few months away from Paul Gonsalves' Newport tenor epic, which marked its full-blown resurgence, the orchestra was already primed for action. "Feet Bone" demonstrates, as does so much Ellington music, the electrifying excellence of Duke's writing for five perfectly blended saxes. Nobody voiced horns like Duke—the weirdly wonderful clashing "bones on "Uncontrived" would earn him an F in any college harmony class. Jimmy Hamilton, one of the most underrated clarinetists in jazz, romps across an otherwise low-key "Jump For Joy." This is also the earliest album surveyed on which we encounter drummer Sam Woodyard. His firm, on-the-beat socking powered the band for a decade, and is one of those instantly recognizable signature sounds for which Ellingtonians are prized.

The grind of marathon touring was sometimes evident in the orchestra's raggedy playing, yet sometimes the band seemed to have an awful lot of fun even as it threatened to fall apart on the stand. Witness Volume 2, *Dance Concerts California 1958* (Saja 7 91042-2; 70:43), taped before a high-spirited (and audibly high) crowd at Travis Air Force Base on March 4. Duke's men were not teetotalers, and more juices than the creative ones flowed on this evening—Duke's announcements are a trifle slurred. Off for the night were Johnny Hodges—Russell Procope covered his solos—and high-note trumpeter Cat Anderson. Goofiness apexes with a lubricated vocal by Nance and ensemble on the Betty Rochestyled "'A' Train," and a feeling-no-pain "Oh! Lady Be Good," by request, which on cue from the pianist riffs onto Monk's variant "Hackensack." Also scattered among the Ellington favorites are "Stompin' At The Savoy" (charted by Dick Vance, one of Duke's favorite hired arrangers), "Dancing In The Dark," and a lugubrious "Autumn Leaves" sung by Ozzie Bailey. This enjoyable slice-of-live may be particularly welcomed by those lucky enough to've caught the band on such a night—likely their memories were hazy the next morning.

Speaking of Monk—whose kinship as pianist Duke recognized on first hearing—Volume 3, *Studio Sessions New York 1962* (Saja 7 91043-2; 54:01) is highlighted by Strayhorn's charming "Monk's Dream" chart, penned for Thelonious' guest shot with the band at Newport '62. (Did that ever turn up on record?) Duke splanks Monkishly at the piano, then follows up with the riffy blues "Frere Monk," featuring the plunger of the recently-returned Cootie, an early Monk booster. This set is especially recommended to admirers of "Mex" Gonsalves, spotlighted on one post-Newport steamer, no less than five medium romps, and four slow ballads or blues—10 features out of 16 tracks! This Mex fiesta is a must for every misguided soul who thinks Paul was a mere Ben Webster clone or "vulgarizer" of Coleman Hawkins. Singer Milt Grayson's baritone bellow of "To Know You Is To Love You" is the only bummer in this splendid batch, but his undulating twist-feature "The Lonely Ones" is twisted fun.

Cornetist Ray Nance dominates Volume 4, *Studio Sessions New York 1963* (Saja 7 91044-

2; 58:40), soloing on nearly every cut. On 12 of 16 titles, he is the brass section (trombones and fellow trumpeters absent), and shows how well qualified he is to do it all—open horn exclaiming, in-the-pocket swinging, tender balladry. (The stripped-down lineup also gives the band a delightfully different flavor.) Ray's skillful jockeying of various mutes lets him play multiple roles on the same piece ("Killian's Luck"). Dance notes that on the night-half this set was recorded, five trumpeters, including Dizzy, dropped by to say hi; clearly Duke was in a mood to show off the vet who'd served him so well in so many capacities—trumpeter, cornetist, violinist, vocalist, "pep" expert—since first joining up in 1940. One of his features here is the Hodges specialty "Jeep's Blues," a reminder that Ellington many have written for specific musicians, but wasn't adverse to passing a feature on to someone radically different. Cootie's plunging on "TAJM" is a special delight. Duke said the name was derived from a Swedish candy's, but it could stand for "'Tis A Jolly Man"—the tune's baldly based on "He's A Jolly Good Fellow."

Two elusive later works make up Volume 5, *The Suites New York 1968 & 1970* (Saja 7 91045-2; 71:19): *The Degas Suite*, for Sam Shaw's abortive documentary about impressionism; and *The River*, the original score to Alvin Ailey's 1970 ballet. *Degas* is even more fragmentary than other Ducal suites—it's been trimmed to fit the images—but there's much of beauty for those not engaged in pointless fretting over a lack of overall form. For *Degas*,

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the band was shrunk to 10 pieces; *The River* involved 22 players, including four percussionists. This version of *The River* was intended for rehearsals only, till the symphonic score was readied, but—surprise—it's superior. "The Run" 's syncopated toy soldier march, the sluice-gate/waterfall saxes of "The Giggling Rapids," and the xylophonic "Whirlpool" are unlike any other Ellington pieces I know.

Now go back to 1962, a busy year in the studios even by Ducal standards. *The Feeling Of Jazz* (Black Lion 760123; 44:43), culled from four sessions, is another boon for Nance fans—Ray's featured on "Black And Tan Fantasy," showing off his distinctive shake-and-plunger combination (Duke's on piano, Strayhorn on tack piano) on Strayhorn's "Smada," "'A Train," and sleek "Boo-dah," on two snappy pieces from *Anatomy Of A Murder*—including "I'm Gonna Go Fishin'," with terrific huff'n'puff Carney—and on the lovely "What Am I Here For?" Ellington's best postwar vocalist too, Nance sings "Jump For Joy" and "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" (introduced by "I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart"). Mercer's daffy "Taffy Twist" features a long involuted tenor solo by—no, not Gonsalves—Jimmy Hamilton. Much has been written about Duke's and the band's alleged early '50s and '60s slumps, but in the studios at least, both leader and orchestra were often right on the dime—as this ebullient find attests.

Duke Ellington & John Coltrane (Impulse! MCAD 39103; 35:03) was recorded in September of '62. One might wonder why producer Bob Thiele thought this summit would work. As pianist, elliptical Ellington was worlds away from Coltrane's expansive accompanist McCoy Tyner. And Duke was no conspicuous booster of the era's avant garde. Each leader brought his own bassist and drummer (Aaron Bell and Sam Woodyard; Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones), eventually deciding to use one team or the other—except on one track. After all that, of course, it was an astonishingly successful session. Duke's custom-made "Take The Coltrane" is set on exactly the sort of incantatory figure that set Coltrane afire. (Duke lays out for most of the burning improvising by Trane and his men, à la Monk.) And Elvin's forceful bata-like tom work is somehow perfect for Duke's coy calypso "Angelina." By 1962, fire-breathing Coltrane had developed into one of the greatest of ballad players, witness Strayhorn's "My Little Brown Book" and the session's masterpiece, "In A Sentimental Mood," with Duke's bassist and Trane's drummer. So much for common sense.

As reissued on CD, *Recollections Of The Big Band Era* (Atlantic 7 90043-2; 74:24) conflates that record with the Reprise album recorded at the same late '62 and early '63 sessions, *Will Big Bands Ever Come Back?* Strangely, the packaging refrains from making that clear. All 23 selections are the themes of other swing and sweet bands; most were arranged by Ellington or Strayhorn, though Sy Oliver contributed his original chart of Lunceford's theme "For Dancers Only," and Eddie Barefield supplied a Calloway-days "Minnie The Moocher" (with wahwah-muted Lawrence Brown playing Cab). A few close-to-the-vest charts are pleasantly nostalgic; others are quite striking. Waltz-king Wayne King's "The Waltz You Saved For Me" is done in 4/4; Dick



Duke directs with (from left) Johnny Hodges and Otto Hardwick.

Vance's chart of "One O' Clock Jump" is half over before the band eases into the theme, a sly way of hinting at Basie's self-effacing understatement. Strayhorn's take on Kenton's "Artistry In Rhythm," a feature for Nance's plaintive violin, is underpinned by Woodyard's quietly insistent barehanded shuffle on snare. (Sam later claimed he'd been up all night practicing it.) It's tied for best-of-show with the Whiteman-dedicated "Rhapsody In Blue," which begins not with soaring clarinet but Carney's basement-ummaging—a nifty example of Duke's creative obstinacy.

Ellington's best travel suite is 1966's *The Far East Suite* (RCA/Bluebird 7640-2; 44:39), compositions co-credited to Ellington and Strayhorn. Jimmy Hamilton has claimed to've lent a pen too, an assertion bolstered by his central role. On his feature "Bluebird Of Delhi," a self-contained mini-suite, Jimmy's fetching, liquid clarinet line is based on a birdcall. He also dominates the closing "Ad Lib On Nippon"; this album may be his best showing with the band. Skeptics say Ellington's travel suites had little to do with the music of the places depicted, but Duke was no ethnomusicologist. He savored exotica for the ways they stimulated his imagination—as signified by the opening title, "Tourist Point Of View" (an oddly Sun Ralike piece, with rich dissonant chords and Carney's rock-solid bari). Taking his cue from Islamic musics, Duke favors his reeds: Hamilton, Gonsalves, and Carney on "Tourist"; Hodges on the grand "Isfahan." The lone dud is "Blue Pepper," one of Duke's sorriest rock & roll dabbings. Still, his taste didn't often fail him, and pundits dump on the suites at their own risk. Ellington dealt in shapes, colors, and extramusical themes as much as in melodies. If this suite doesn't fit the modern classical definition, think of it instead as an early example of that late '60s fad, the concept album.

Leader/composer/arranger **Mercer Ellington**—on *Musis Is My Mistress* (Musicmasters 60185; 70:16)—calls his capable band "The Duke Ellington Orchestra," though only he and trumpeter Barrie Lee Hall (with Duke under a year) are held over from that band. Doubtless the name enhances the unit's earnings, but it obscures Mercer's own considerable contributions to jazz—which is not to discount his devotion to Pop's music. (His title suite is very Dukish.) Granted, the band at best recalls latter-day Ducal units; here it plays updates of "Black And Tan Fantasy," "Azure," and such. And granted, Duke, like Mercer,

would hire soloists to imitate style-setters who'd moved on. (Wasn't Cootie expected to replicate Miley's parts?) And granted, the worst arrangement—the kitschy "Queenie Pie Reggae"—is furthest removed from Ducal models. But many bandleaders (such as Charlie Barnett) leaned heavily on Duke's sound without giving him all the credit—and a name change would discourage unrealistic expectations. Stars-to-be Kenny Garrett and Mulgrew Miller appear on Onzy Matthews' "The Duke's Suite," recorded sometime around 1980; the rest of the set is of more recent vintage.

The Music Of Duke Ellington And Billy Strayhorn (Stash CD-9; 72:04) was culled from 15 Stash albums, by everyone from Hilton Ruiz ("A Train," chugging through Spanish Harlem) and the NY Saxophone Quartet to the George Barnes-Carl Kress guitar duo. As period pieces, the Bluebird Society Orchestra does "Rockin' In Rhythm," and the Savoy Sultans hop on "Cottontail." Michael Hashim's Hodgesque alto on "I Didn't Know About You" and Jordan Sandke's Bubbery trumpet on "Black Beauty" are highlights. Norris Turney's lead alto on a chart co-penned by Wild Bill Davis (on piano) and Strayhorn, "Stolen Sweets," adds natural Ducal flavor to Grover Mitchell's tasty big band.

Maurice Peress conducts the **American Composers Orchestra** on *Four Symphonic Works by Duke Ellington* (Musicmasters 60176; 68:40). Best up is the 1950 "Harlem" for orchestra and jazz band (including Jon Faddis, Ron Carter, Butch Miles, and the fine clarinetist Bill Easley). It boasts the best integration of jazz and symphonic elements, and is voiced (by arrangers Peress and Luther Henderson) to sound truly Ellingtonian. On "New World a-Comin'," Sir Roland Hanna breathes life into Duke's 1943 piano part, and improvises a cadenza. But "Three Black Kings" (posthumously completed by Mercer) and the *Black, Brown And Beige Suite*, both loaded with strings, sound somewhat old-fashioned and stodgy (input from saxists Jimmy Heath on the former and Frank Wess on the latter notwithstanding). These problems didn't arise when Duke's men played *BBB*; their burly sound counterbalanced the delicate writing. Ellington craved the respect of the classical world, and approved ventures like this—Peress worked with him on the 1970 symphonic *BBB*—but it's foolish to gussy up his stuff to attract highbrows' attention, when the gussying vitiates what makes his work great. **db**

1 DAVE HOLLAND TRIO.

"Games" (from *TRIPPLICATE*, ECM)

Steve Coleman, alto saxophone, composer; Holland, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

I don't know who that was. For a moment, I thought it might even be Warne Marsh, but I really don't know. I liked the line of the composition. As far as the overall performance, I would have liked a little more animation. There's sort of an even keel about it. It could have used something to kick it out of that.

BS: It was Dave Holland's Trio.

JH: That's who it was? That was subdued for them.

2 JOHN CARTER/BOBBY BRADFORD.

"The Sunday Afternoon Jazz Blues Society" (from *SELF DETERMINATION MUSIC, Flying Dutchman*) Carter, alto saxophone; Bradford, trumpet; Tom Wilkerson, bass; Bruzz Freeman, drums. Recorded 1970.

Was that Ornette? No? It sounded like him, and it also sounded like Booker Ervin in spots; that Texas thing. And that wasn't Don Cherry? I liked it. It reminded me of Mingus for a minute, a scaled-down Mingus. Who was it? They had the texture down.

BS: Did you hear Carter play this kind of material when you first knew him as a teacher?

JH: No. I had a pretty limited exposure of him professionally, outside of his teaching. It was some time before I was even old enough to hear him at a dance or a club. I don't recall him playing alto saxophone then, but he played the clarinet to pieces. I recall hearing him at a dance, but I wasn't as much into the music as I was being at the dance.

3 ROVA. "Sportspeak" (from *BEAT KENNEL, Black Saint*) Bruce Ackley, soprano saxophone; Andrew Voigt, alto saxophone; Larry Ochs, tenor saxophone; Jon Raskin, baritone saxophone. ROVA, composer.

That was ROVA Saxophone Quartet. I liked that piece. Spirited kind of thing, and they maintained it. I like that. That's hard to do. I don't get to hear them. I see them—I saw them on a train last month. I'm always leaving as they're arriving, or vice-versa. They've gotten better with age, which happens when you keep a group together for a period of time.

4 ORNETTE COLEMAN. "In All Languages" (from *IN ALL LANGUAGES, Caravan of Dreams*) Coleman,

JULIUS HEMPHILL

by Bill Shoemaker

Composer and saxophonist Julius Hemphill first gained national recognition in the early '70s through his self-produced Mbari recordings—including the classic *Dogon A.D.*—and his activity in the St. Louis-based Black Artists Group (BAG), whose ranks included Oliver Lake and Hamiet Bluiett, among others. Upon moving to New York in 1974, Hemphill took part in several landmark projects, contributing compositions and arrangements for Lester Bowie's *Fast Last*, and recording, with Lake, Bluiett, and Anthony Braxton, the groundbreaking saxophone quartet for Braxton's Arista debut. Hemphill's own Arista-Freedom releases during this period included the enduring *Coon Bid'nness* and the reissue of *Dogon A.D.*

In 1977, Hemphill, Lake, Bluiett, and David Murray formed the Real New York Saxophone Quartet, renamed The World Saxophone Quartet. Hemphill recently contributed arrangements of Junior Wells' "Messin' With The Kid" and Marvin Gaye's "Let's Get It On" for their next Nonesuch album, a program of soul and r&b interpretations entitled *Rhythm And Blues*. Hemphill's discography as a leader in the '80s includes the widely praised *Georgia Blue* (Minor Music), which featured his electric JAH Band, and *Julius Hemphill Big Band* (Elektra/Musician), perhaps the most adventurous



ous big band release of 1988. The centerpiece of the album is the 18-minute "Drunk On God," a collaboration with poet K. Curtis Lyle, with whom he created *The Collected Poems for Blind Lemon Jefferson*, an early Mbari release.

Hemphill has revised his saxophone opera, *Long Tongues*, in anticipation of a 1989 premiere. He also recently recorded several tracks for guitarist Bill Frisell's latest, *Before We Were Born*.

It should be noted that, growing up in Fort Worth, Texas, Hemphill received music instruction from John Carter. He also occasionally heard his second cousin, Ornette Coleman, perform.

This was Julius Hemphill's first Blindfold Test. He was given no prior information about the recordings.

alto saxophone, composer; Don Cherry, trumpet; Charlie Haden, bass; Billy Higgins, drums.

Ornette was among the first persons I ever saw play a saxophone. But he didn't play like that, then. He played the blues, mostly, in these local bands, on the occasions I saw him, then. A far cry from that concept there, that diatonic conception he develops there. Matter of fact, nobody else does that like him. Miles Davis does it to an extent, with a certain kind of economy, or whatever you want to call it.

5 JOHN ZORN/GEORGE LEWIS/BILL FRISELL.

"This I Dig Of You" (from *NEWS FOR LULU, hat ART*) Zorn, alto saxophone; Lewis, trombone; Frisell, electric guitar; Hank Mobley, composer.

That was . . . it's from something for Lulu, isn't it . . . John Zorn, Bill Frisell, and

George Lewis? I haven't heard it before, but I've seen it advertised, so I thought it was that. That was kind of interesting. I was wondering what kind of ground they would cover. That was fun. I'd like to check that out.

6 29TH STREET SAXOPHONE QUARTET.

"The Long Way Home"

(from *THE REAL DEAL, New Note*) Robert Watson, alto saxophone, composer; Ed Jackson, alto saxophone; Rich Rothenberg, tenor saxophone; Jim Hartog, baritone saxophone.

That was The 29th Street Quartet. I liked that. It had a curious ending, but it had inventive harmonies, little twists and turns. Towards the end, I got a little more confident it was Bobby Watson playing the lead. What's that called?

BS: "The Long Way Home."

JH: . . . Good title. They're getting better, too. db

COTA CATS

PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS JOIN HANDS IN THE POCONOS.

by Joe Cunniff

That exciting things happen when professional jazz musicians, educators, hard-working students, and the business community decide to work together can be seen in the story of the "COTA Cats," a student band that works with professional musicians with remarkable results.

The story began in the Pocono Mountains area of Pennsylvania, on the Delaware River. In 1978, a Delaware Water Gap Celebration Of The Arts (COTA) was started by Rick Chamberlain and alto saxophonist Phil Woods. Woods wrote 26 letters to local schools offering to work with them to put a summer program together getting high school kids to take part in the festival.

It was area educator Patrick C. Dorian who responded. He "became the guiding spirit" according to Woods, who adds that the kids also deserve "all the credit in the world." For eight years, Dorian has organized and directed a group of area high school students that become an important part of the 10-12 hours of music each day at the Celebration Of The Arts festival. Dorian, who teaches in area public schools and is Director of Bands at East Stroudsburg University, organizes area students each June, rehearsing seven times in late July and August for their appearance the weekend after Labor Day.

The COTA Cats try to do as much original music as possible. A portion of the festival budget is earmarked for jazz education. The executive committee of the festival commission establishes professional composers to write for the band and provides stipends for students who compose.

Composers who have worked with the COTA Cats include John LaBarbera, Kenny Berger, Bill Dobbins, Bob Dorough, Dick Cone, Gary Anderson, and Phil Woods, who commented, "The more kids are involved with music, the less they are with drugs." Professionals who have performed with the band include Woods, Dorough, woodwind player George Young, saxophonist Nelson Hill, and singer Kim Parker, the daughter of Charlie Parker.

Urbie Green has played with Dorian's high school group, and his two sons are in the COTA Cats. The late tenor saxman Al Cohn played with the band in '86 and '87, and on Phil Wood's recent octet album there's a song dedicated to Cohn, "Alvin G." Phil also did a big band arrangement of the song which the COTA Cats premiered. Dorian said, "Two of the pieces by John LaBarbera



Phil Woods, guest soloist, with COTA Cats, Pat Dorian conducting.

which the band premiered have been published by Kendor Music: 'Post-Boperation' for Phil Woods and 'For Them All' for Al Cohn with the students. Both are available for any schools or pro bands that would like to play them."

Some of the students write, too, like 9th grade drummer Becky De Santo, who wrote "Budget Your Time," and tenor saxman and **deebee** winner Jesse Heckman, who did an arrangement of "Autumn Leaves," spending part of the summer in the Eastman School of Music High School Jazz Program. Bass trombonist David Springfield has written his fourth chart, called "Morris The Cat," and is now a sophomore at Eastman.

Soprano saxophonist David Liebman, who has lived in the Delaware Water Gap area for several years, has worked with the band. "Pat Dorian deserves the credit," says Liebman. "To get high school kids together is not an easy task; and to get them together on Labor Day, before school begins, is a real testament. This is a by-product of jazz education over the last 15 years. Jazz all over the world is reaching into more and more grass-roots situations like this."

The positive involvement of the business community is clearly seen in the case of the festival property, which is given by Fred Waring Enterprises of Delaware Gap, the parent company of four music publishing divisions. Ruth Sibley of the Waring Co. said, "We are only happy to get involved with the musicians in our area. We are music, and they are music."

Dorian stressed that "the kids pay nothing to be a part of this group—that's important. Our focus is to turn out knowledgeable, educated music consumers, who can sift through a record bin and pull out the gems. There are also a lot of reciprocal benefits in the COTA Cats—the kids go back to their respective schools with their knowledge of jazz furthered; so each individual school benefits. This makes the community a better

place, gives the community an understanding of jazz. And the passing on of the art form is also accomplished."

Dorian continued, "Jim Daniels, bass trombonist with Woody Herman and Mel Lewis, will stop by and give the students some pointers. Steve Gilmore, the bassist in Phil's quartet, will come by and work on the school's string bass, adjust it."

Dorian, whose students have taken first place in their division at the Berklee College Jazz Festival in Boston, added, "Out of 60 bands, you might see four or five string basses." He appreciates Gilmore's help. "When students are dealing with world-class musicians, but know them as neighbors, we are very fortunate. But this is the kind of thing that could be happening all over the country." db

For more information about the COTA Cats, write: Delaware Water Gap Celebration Of The Arts, P.O. Box 249, Delaware Water Gap, PA 18327.

HOT TUNA

ON TOP OF THEIR FORM, THIS MUSICAL ONE-TWO PUNCH IS MORE ECLECTIC THAN EVER.

by Jon W. Poses

The spirit of ragtime guitarist Rev. Gary Davis rings as true as ever in Jefferson Airplane co-founder Jorma Kaukonen's guitar work and song selection. Jack Casady, a second quintessential vertebrae of the one-time kingpins of San Francisco rock, continues to tastefully attack the bass up and down the fretboard: he churns out a melody with a clarity that few can match, accenting, as he goes,

unusual and atypical rhythms.

"I don't think of myself as "just the bass guitarist." In a lot of styles of music I would drive drummers nuts; my playing wouldn't fit, but it works well with Jorma's style." As always, the two employ "harmonic fatness," as Kaukonen labels the aesthetically-pleasing technique.

True to tradition, two longish sets per show are, as they have been for nearly a quarter-century now, a way of life. Kaukonen and Casady—Hot Tuna—have been back together three years, ("because it's fun again") performing nearly 200 shows annually, "quasi-acoustically," as they did on their first post-Airplane release, *Live At The New Orleans House* (RCA 4353), issued in 1970. Kaukonen employs an acoustic Gibson. ("I've mostly used Gibsons, sometimes a Fender," he reports). Casady travels with a "basic, large, acoustic guitar. We electrify our acoustics," says the bassist, "but the acoustics come out, and that's the idea." Clearly, though, something's changed here.



Jack Casady (left) with Jorma Kaukonen.

The veteran players, friends since the late 1950s during their Washington, D.C.-area high school days, have no time for, or interest in, running a repeat trip by the public. Kaukonen and Casady are more than willing to play "Hesitation Blues," "Candyman," "Baby Want You To Know," "I Know You Rider," and a host of other familiarities, including their biggest hit, "Keep On Truckin'." Still, the lead guitarist whose repertoire incorporates "hundreds of songs," contends the duo works hard to keep material fresh. He and Casady purposely leave room to ensure improvisational passages and consciously rotate selection; they also have incorporated new material into their act. As Casady bluntly points out, "When it wasn't fresh, we stopped altogether."

That was in 1978. Both then pursued separate projects, Casady playing electrically, co-leading a variety of rock bands, Kaukonen performing acoustically, mostly solo, in clubs and coffee houses. Kaukonen

left California ahead of Casady, feeling the scene had run dry. "And let's not forget how right-wing, historically, California has been," says the 45-year-old musician. He relocated near Woodstock, New York, simultaneously establishing ties in the Florida Keys. Casady eventually moved East, too, citing a "lack of inspiration" on the West Coast. Currently, he lives in Manhattan. "Jorma lived upstate [New York]. I can visit my mom in D.C., and I like Chesapeake Bay crabs."

"You have to check yourself out periodi-

cally," reiterates Kaukonen, who says friends and fans alike keep him and Casady honest. "Years ago, for instance, my left-hand position was incorrect by teaching standards. I used to say, 'So what.' After awhile, when you're playing three or four hours a night, four or five nights a week, you start to get tendinitis; you start to do it the right way."

Casady, 44, echoes the sentiment. "We're not like teenagers learning our instruments. We are continually evolving and I feel right

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now—and I know I can speak for Jorma in this case—I think we are on the top of our form. I expect us to get better, not just more polished, but allow ourselves to open up more and explore more. You don't start out at the peak; you're supposed to get better at your craft. And part of the craft is an awareness of who you are. I'm more sensitive now to my music than I ever was—and that's how it should be."

This straightforward attitude is a microcosm of their approach to the industry, too. Kaukonen and Casady both say there is

interest in another Hot Tuna record—but it would be the first in a decade—but they will only employ a record company if allowed to "approach each song from whatever standpoint it needs to be approached from.

"If we want to get a pedal steel player," says the still lanky, blues-drenched guitarist, "we'll get one. If we want to use Rashied Ali on drums (who Kaukonen has worked with previously), we'll use Rashied. . . . The more eclectic it is, the better I like it. When we were with RCA, it used to drive them nuts; they didn't know what to do with Jack

and I."

Also underway are plans to get Airplane members Paul Kantner and Grace Slick to join them for "a major project" that would take the quartet (and, as of yet, an unnamed drummer) into the studio and around the world on tour. Everyone, sources say, is working hard to heal the many one-time rifts that have prevented, thus far, any potential joint venture.

"Massive baggage," quips Kaukonen, half-jokingly, referring to the previously much-publicized, socio-political and philosophical differences between band members. "Not all bad, mind you. You know, my ex-wife used to say, watching us was like witnessing a boxing match on stage. These days, everyone's pretty much acting like a quasi-adult. Since Grace quit *The Starship*, she's been woodshedding, playing well, better, I think than she gives herself credit for."

Casady and Kaukonen feeling optimistic, say Slick is writing new songs, "boning up on her [piano] chops" in anticipation of the major, long-term deal and impending reconciliation.

"We visited Grace," says Casady. "I said, 'If there's a possibility of us playing together again, you're going to be on stage playing piano like you used to. Paul's going to play his guitar; there'll be no surrounding instruments to cover up anything or to make it grander. . . . [We're] going to put our butts on the line. That's what the original Airplane stood for.'"

Last year, Kaukonen and Casady joined Kantner for about 30 shows. "Paul is Paul," laughs Kaukonen, claiming not to understand Kantner's politics these days. "You know, he's raving about Nicaragua or whatever. Our politics are different; he focuses on the international plane. Since I moved to upstate New York, I'm more concerned with local issues, landfills, garbage dumps. . . . If you don't pay attention to things like that, next thing you know, you're living on a shit heap." Despite any differences, Kaukonen says when the threesome performed together, "Everyone gave it their best shot."

"It can't be a nostalgic, reunion trip," Casady adds insistently, talking about the Airplane. "What we, as a group, were able to do [from the start] was manipulate music in concert. That can't be the same. I mean that in a healthy way. You're not going to recreate jams that were then. They'll be jams that are now. It's not like we had a string of three-minute hits. . . . that people can identify with their high-school graduation.

"We used to play like crazy. We were crazy. It was the combinations of those individuals in the band, coming together, that bore something unique. So, if we [reunite], that's the criteria it will be. Now, whether we're successful or not will depend on how well we communicate performing on stage or in a studio when we're making a record."

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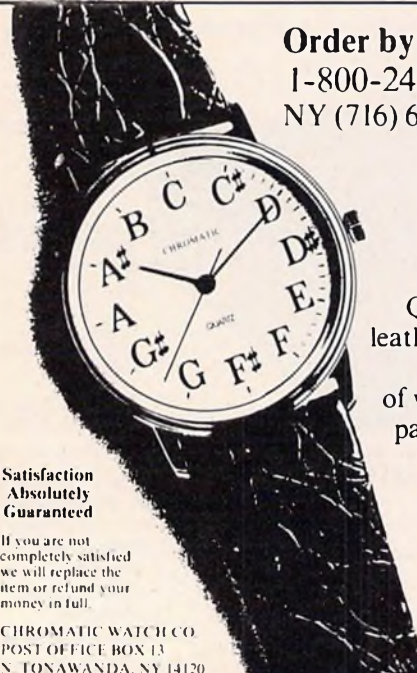
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