

BLINDFOLD TEST: *John Abercrombie*

For Contemporary Musicians

# downbeat

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**PAUL SHAFFER**  
AND THE WORLD'S MOST  
DANGEROUS BAND:  
**OVERNITE SENSATION**



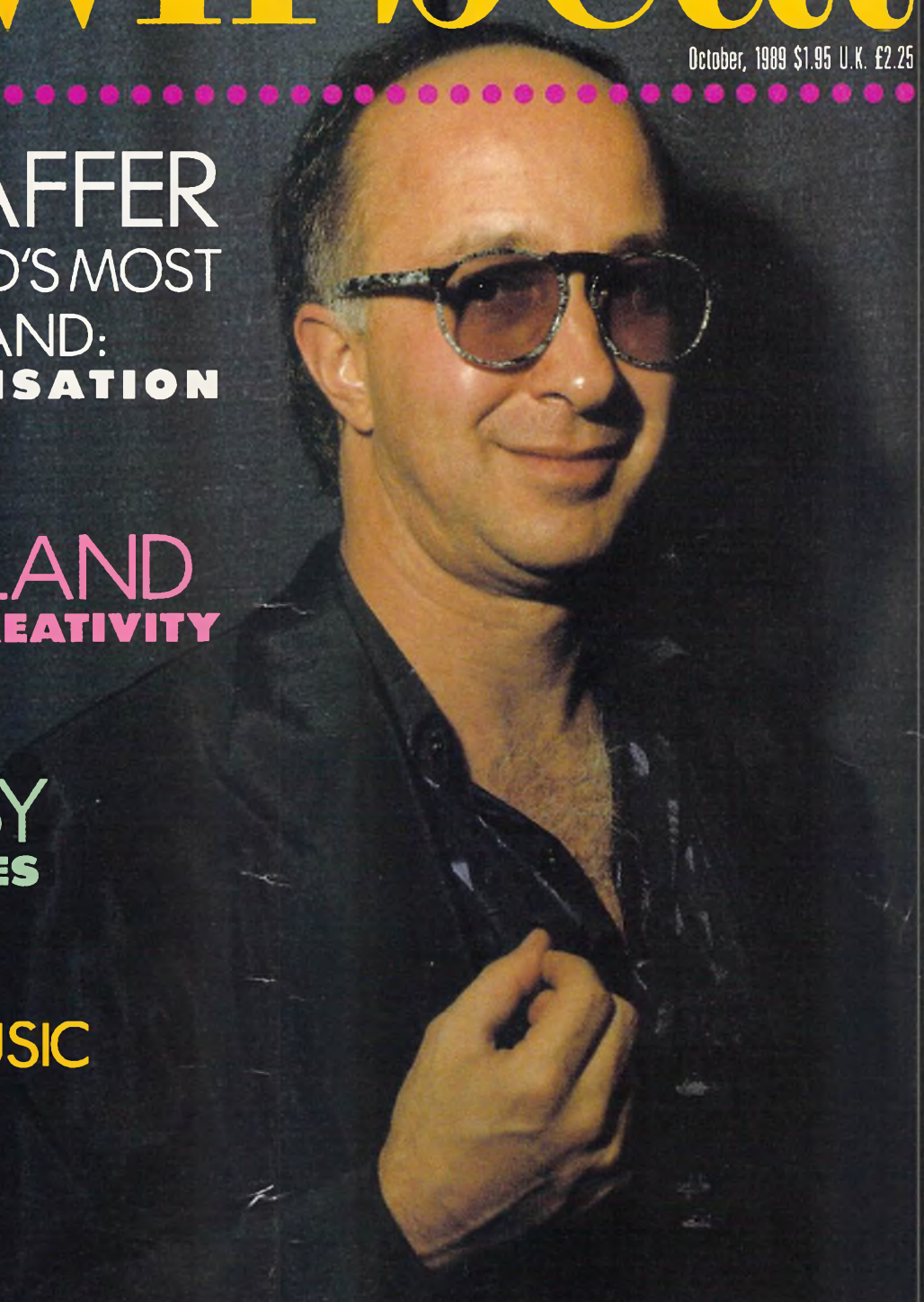
**DAVE HOLLAND**  
**THE BASIS FOR CREATIVITY**



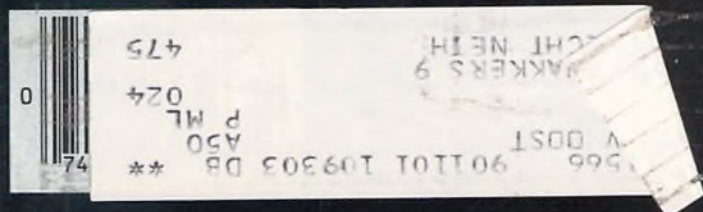
**GREG OSBY**  
**OPEN ON ALL SIDES**



**FOCUS ON MUSIC  
EDUCATION**



**CAUGHT:**  
JVC & Knitting  
Factory Festivals





Paul Shaffer

FRAN VOGEL



Dave Holland

CAIRATI



Greg Osby

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John Abercrombie

VERYL OAKLAND

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Cover photograph of Paul Shaffer by Mitchell Seidel.

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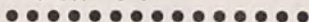
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## down beat

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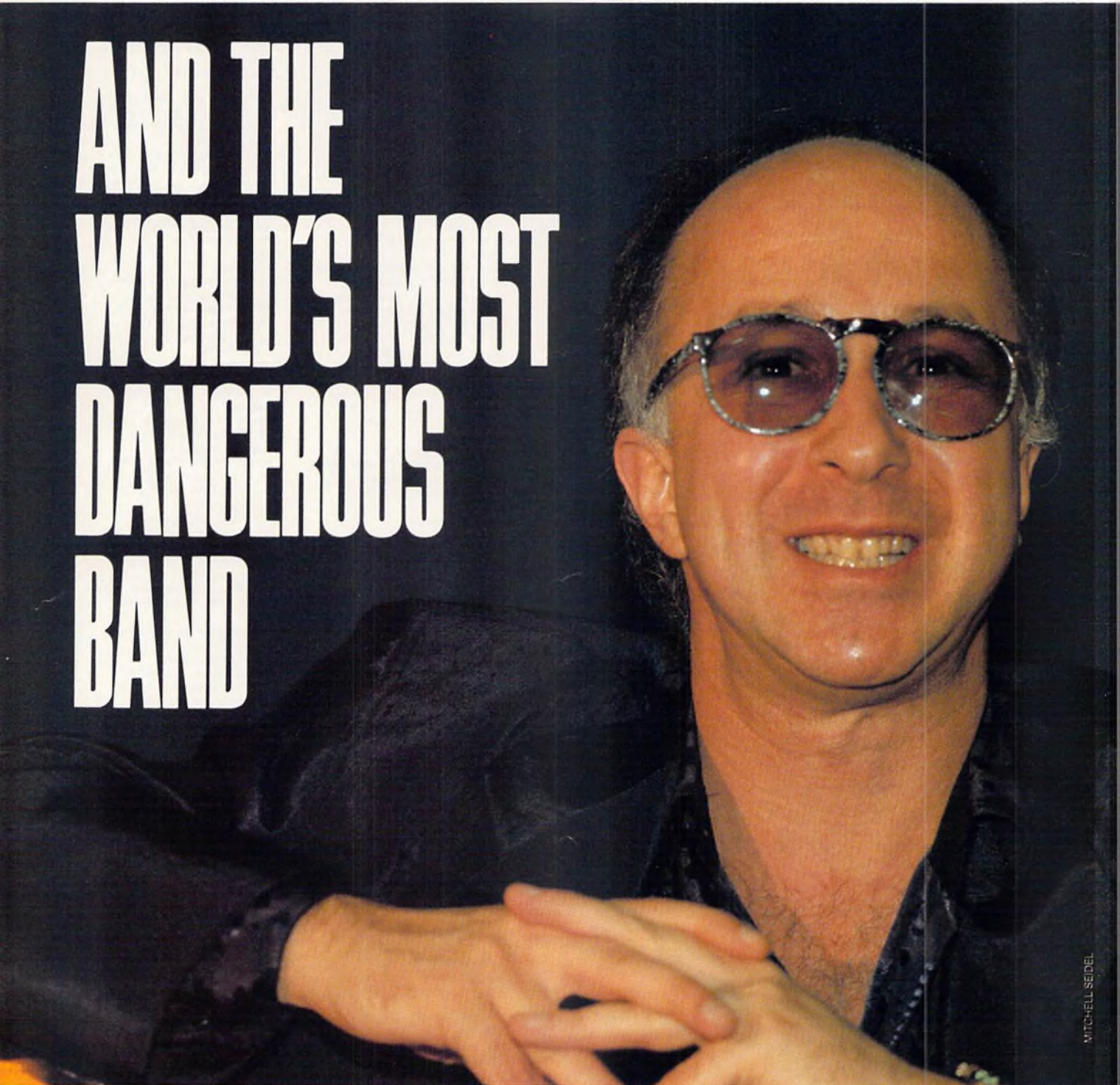
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Late-Night  
Success

# PAUL SHAFFER

AND THE  
WORLD'S MOST  
DANGEROUS  
BAND



MITCHELL SEIDEL

By Joe Cunniff

**E**ach week, millions of TV viewers tune in *Late Night With David Letterman*. A big part of that show is Paul Shaffer and The World's Most Dangerous Band, a quartet that fills in the show with musical puns and a phenomenal repertoire of tunes. Sitting in with three different musical guests a week, Shaffer and his band draw on a wide-ranging feel for rock, jazz, soul, and more that leads to a special hybrid style. In addition, Shaffer's joking and wisecrack-trading with Letterman have added a spontaneous comedic feel to the show, now the hottest on late-night television. Shaffer was nominated for an Emmy as Musical Director of a Special TV program for the series of David Letterman specials out of Chicago, which aired this past spring.

• • •

The popularity of Shaffer and his band seems to have reshaped the look and sound of TV music from the traditional big bands to a scaled-down, rockier sound. That popularity has also led to the band's touring and recording an album.

At the recent National Association of Music Merchants Show, Paul and the band performed, beginning with a tight version of "The Late Night Theme," Paul's workout on the organ sometimes showing shades of Jimmy Smith. They then took the audience through a history of rock & roll, with Will Lee doing a tribute to James Brown on "Live For Yourself" and later soloing on "The Pink Panther Theme," with musical puns from Paul at the organ. There was plenty of choreography on a loud "Louie Louie" and an ultra-high energy tribute to Booker T. and The MGs. With music from his recently released album *Coast To Coast* (Capitol 48288) blended in, the set was a fun trip through the '60s and '70s, Paul's chopping-hand gestures cueing his highly disciplined band with the pinpoint precision of a symphony conductor.

Asked about how music for TV is different from concerts, and whether his style was cramped by commercials and guests, Paul said that "I'm just starting on concerts now. I'm learning about concerts even as we speak. One difference is that in concerts, performers literally *grab* people. As for music on TV, often while we're faded on the tube, the band continues to rock."

Recording his debut album, Shaffer said he's had "the time of my life. I decided to do a project in which I would pay tribute to the regional sounds in rock & roll music. When I was growing up and playing at the skating rink, the greatest thing that happened to me was the discovery that after dark I could pick up American radio stations: I could hear rock & roll music and soul music coming from the south, and I could get WLS radio from Chicago. We had a little secret society of people who listened to WLS after dark and heard the top songs in Chicagoland and kept up on it. We listened to such deejays as Dick Biondi. This was about . . . '61. Last time I was here with Letterman I found out he was on the air in Chicago again on an oldies station. I called him up, and it was really a big thrill for me to be on the air with Biondi.

"So I got to know the music that came out of that time. We all know that Carole King-Don Kirshner songwriting scene out of which The Drifters' records came, and all those girl groups, the Phil Spector Sound, the New Orleans sound of Alan Toussaint and Mother-In-Law, records like 'Working In A Coal Mine,' the Chicago blues sound, the Miami sound of K. C. And The Sunshine Band, Detroit Motown, etc. When I was asked by Capitol to make a record, the idea that I came up with was, 'Let me make a tribute to the regional sounds that influenced me when I was coming up.' And that's what I did—I went to each of these cities and collaborated with some of my favorite people in each.

"My first single is out, a New York tribute song called 'When The Radio Is On.' It is a tribute to street music, past and present. It seemed to me that the street music of the '50s was 'doo-wop' street corner music, and today what's happening on the street is 'hip-hop'—that's beat-box music, rap, and that type of style. So I get a song that contained both of those elements and put together a terrific little rapper's delight consisting of The Fresh Prince, who you know from 'D. J. Jazz Jeff and The Fresh Prince,' and a guy named Ecstasy who's a rapper from the rap group Whodini. These guys within the course of the record teach



me how to rap a little bit myself."

For the flip side, Shaffer assembled "the ultimate 'doo-wop' group: Jay Siegel from The Tokens (this is the guy who sings the opening to 'The Lion Sleeps Tonight'); Mr. Johnny Maestro of The Crests, the first integrated doo-wop group—he sang 'Sixteen Candles,' 'Trouble In Paradise,' and so many more—he has a very distinctive bel canto kind of voice; Dion—my all-time favorite, when I heard him sing 'The Wanderer' on WLS, I've been wandering ever since—and Ronnie Bright, the most wonderful doo-wop bass singer who worked with so many of the groups back then and also reputed to be the bass on 'Mr. Bass Man.'

"And the girls, historically, were Carole King and Ellie Greenwich, who, between the two of them, wrote so many of my favorite records. Ellie: 'Be My Baby,' 'Day-Do-Ron-Ron,' 'Chapel Of Love.' Carole, of course: 'Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow,' 'Take Good Care Of My Baby,' not to mention, 'You've Got A Friend.' So that was quite a heavy vocal group.

"Each of the songs on this record is like that, for each of the different cities. In Chicago, I brought my band from the Letterman show, The World's Most Dangerous Band, and had an all-star blues session live at The Vic Theatre with Buddy Guy, Sugar Blue, the great harmonica player,

and also Eric Burdon (not from Chicago, of course, but Newcastle, England, but quite an aficionado of Chicago blues), and also Koko Taylor, in her first appearance after her accident. We did 'Wang Dang Doodle' with her that was just such a gas, I put it in on the album. And Eric Burdon did a slow blues called 'Room With A View' backed up by Buddy Guy, Sugar Blue, and The World's Most Dangerous Band. It was a very nice little live date."

Shaffer continued, "The Late Night band appears on most of the tracks, and co-produced with me 'The Late Night Theme' which appears on the album. David Sanborn guest stars on saxophone on that cut.

"Some of it is live; some is, you know, dance music, but with sequencers, like they do today—you know how nutty the kids get with their sequencers these days.

"On the album, I used people who meant the most to me as a fan of rock & roll music, and I was touched when people like Valerie Simpson came and sang a song on my record in honor of The Motown Sound. And George Clinton—who just kills me—did a background vocal arrangement. Brian Wilson did a cut with me on the West Coast segment. I just thought I'd get the people that personally mean a lot to me, and then, in the case of each song, decide how best to do it. Like in the song with Valerie and George Clinton, it seemed like a repetitive, machine-like groove

## THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS SIDEMEN

"Down beat! Does this mean we'll get to do a Blindfold Test?," asks the British accent of the band, drummer Anton Fig, while bassist Will Lee sang "Pick-a-little, Talk-a-little" from *The Music Man*. In a freewheeling conversation that included guitarist Sid McGinnis, the band members offered their thoughts on their favorite musicians, on what is distinctive about the band, on playing concerts on TV, on playing with Shaffer, and why what makes the band is clicking.

Will Lee is the senior member, the first guy Shaffer met when he came to New York and they've been hanging out ever since. The tall blonde bassman, whose trademark leaps into the air are seen at Letterman's entrance, said, "I think that the band's 'clicking' has a lot to do with the positive feedback we get from our audiences.



The World's Most Relaxed Band (from left): guitarist Sid McGinnis, Paul Shaffer, bassist Will Lee, and drummer Anton Fig.

We go out there and people yell our names out. TV is more *focused*, a live audience is more frantic. You can't overdub on TV, not on this show, but with Paul's cues you can make it in a jam."

Lee continued, "Paul can listen to an artist and find the essential parts to make it as much like the record as possible with the quartet on the show. Little things—like a hi-hat pattern. We've played 1100 shows, probably 3/4ths with musicians. You must be a fast, quick study. Paul's a stickler for details."

Lee, who added that he goes back with *db* to 1971, and that *db* is "the first magazine I ever subscribed to," described the late-night gig as "the best job in the U.S. today. It keeps people remembering you, and leads to commercials, MTV hosting jobs, and endorsements."

Guitarist Sid McGinnis, who amazed Shaffer when he started playing licks by Canadian jazz guitarist Lenny Breau, joined Paul in '84 (see "Riffs," Aug. '88). A veteran of recordings with Peter Gabriel, David Lee Roth, and David Bowie, he mentions Andy Summers as his main guitar influence. In preparing for the show, he said he "feels good if I can do 15 minutes with a cassette of the tune." Currently writing as well, he adds, "I don't like to use a music stand on the show, but I think everyone should work on reading." He said that "on TV, *time* is of the essence. There's no time to *try* ideas. The process of working on a live show is different, the band has a sound now and will push and pull with that." Describing Paul's knowledge as "encyclopedic," he added that he "tries to keep a live feeling—it helps you to think that the sound is disappearing, is going into air."

Drummer Anton Fig, who came on in '85 after working with Mick Jagger, Bob Dylan, Cyndi Lauper, and Kiss, commented that the band has "an active list of about 250 songs that you can call upon at any time. Playing with three different guests a week on the show, I like to walk to the studio with a Walkman and listen to their stuff. Paul keeps you *to style*. Also, playing on TV feels like playing under a microscope, and it's a backup role." Asked what he feels he contributes to the show, Anton joked, "a single-stroke roll," then added, that he can "play every day with fine musicians. And having your instruments before three million people a night makes money for the people who make your instruments." He listed his favorite performers as "Miles Davis on the show, Dylan on records, and Tony Williams on drums."

The band is joined on tour by the horns of Bruce Kapler and Al Chez, who have played with Ben E. King, Bon Jovi, and Little Anthony, among many others. Bruce enjoys the choreography, and says, "Paul is into the authenticity of originals. Touring takes it away from being a TV band—it's not just 30 seconds." Al said, "This opens up what you can do," and described the band as "fun" and himself as "overjoyed." Will wrapped up *db*'s conversation with the band by saying, "Say hello to Maynard Ferguson. He's a hero to us." Anton also mentioned that he loved recently trading solos with jazz great Louie Bellson.

would be required to kind of update The Motown Sound, so I started working with sequencers on that cut.

"When I came to Chicago to do a tribute to the Chicago blues sound, of course, the way to go was live in a club with an audience, and live musicians. So there's how those decisions were made. I tried to have a balance on each cut of old influences, roots, yet I wasn't trying to make an oldies record; I'm trying to make a contemporary record, so I had to update the groove in each case. In the club in Chicago, I got a great producer/engineer named David Z to work with me, so I did my best sonically on those. In the case of the Detroit song or the New York song where I was using older influences, I worked to use totally up-to-date sequencers to balance that off."

**S**haffer was born in Thunder Bay, Ontario, at the top of Lake Superior, studied classical music with a private teacher, but confessed, "I didn't practice my lessons very much once I discovered rock & roll on the radio. That was it for me. I used to put in . . . several hours a day just bashing out the hits on the baby grand piano in my parents' living room.

"I didn't really think that I would have the nerve to go into show business. It seemed like too far-fetched an ambition, especially for someone coming from that far away from where the action really is. Here I was in Thunder Bay. I did very well at the local Kiwanis music festivals, classical competitions for kids.

"I started playing in a rock & roll band in high school, which gave me something to do on the weekends. But, alas, I never learned how to dance, because I was always playing at the dances. That's why most musicians don't dance, have you noticed that? A little theory I have.

"After I first got out of college—I attended the University of Toronto, majoring in sociology and philosophy—I decided that I would take a crack at pursuing a career as a musician. I spent a year playing in a jazz group, cosmically-oriented, in Toronto. Then I got my first real professional job as musical director of *Godspell*, the Canadian company of the off-Broadway show. I spent a year playing that show, and then, through the auspices of the producers, I was able to come to New York and play in the pit of *The Magic Show* on Broadway, where I spent another year. So, I soaked up a fair amount of theatrical training during that time.

"During my first year in New York, playing in *The Magic Show* with Doug Henning—the pit was 18 feet in the air, we used to have to climb up a ladder—eight shows a week. During that year, a friend of mine who was an actor from *Godspell* got me an audition for a TV series. I had never acted before, but I got the part, and we made a pilot for a show called *The Year At The Top*, a Norman Lear-Don Kirshner production."

**T**his pilot did not sell, and Shaffer went back to his job at *The Magic Show*. Then Lorne Michaels, a Canadian television producer, arrived in New York to put together the original *Saturday Night Live* TV show. His musical director, Howard Shore, had worked with Shaffer in Canada, and called him to be a pianist in the *Saturday Night Live* house band.

"I had a pre-existing friendship with many of the writers and performers on the original *Saturday Night Live* through *The National Lampoon Radio Hour* for which I did a little bit of work when I first came to New York. So, I naturally became involved in the creation of some special musical material for the *SNL* show in collaboration with some of my friends, the writers and performers, and in the fifth season I became what was known as a featured player, a supporting actor.

"I spent five years at *SNL* during which time I became a freelance studio musician as well. People would see me on television and call me for a session so I got a lot of studio work. I left the show after five years, when the original cast left, and concentrated for two years on studio work, then got a call from the office of David Letterman's manager. They told me about a show that they were putting together for him, and asked if I could come in and meet him, and we hit it off."



MITCHELL SEIDEL

#### THE LATE NIGHT BAND'S EQUIPMENT

Leader Paul Shaffer: Hammond B-3 organ with Keyboard Specialist, MIDI-modification; Kurzweil 250, Kurzweil 1000 string exp, Oberheim OB-Xa synthesizer with MIDI. Horn sampling: Casio FZ-1 and FZ-10M samplers, MIDI step triggers; Shure W1525/58 wireless. Sid McGinnis: a Stratocaster-type guitar with many ESP parts, Marshall amp, Boss distortion pedals, Shure wireless. Will Lee: Sadowsky Bass, Hartke speakers, Peavey Megabass, Boss pedals, and a Hipshot D tuner. Anton Fig: Yamaha drums Recording Series, Zildjian cymbals (22-inch K-Custom, 22-inch China lowboy, 16-inch medium-thin crash, 17-inch rock crash, 12-inch K-splash, 13-inch K-Z hi-hat), Drum Workshop Speed Pedal, and Remo heads.

Regarding acting, film, and Hollywood projects, Paul stated that "I've never really gone after that type of work, and yet I've managed to do a little bit of it just by accident: the TV series I mentioned, my little role in the movie *This Is Spinal Tap*. It just came up because my friend wrote me into that movie."

Looking into the future, will TV be the main venue? "I don't know. I've never done that. I've never had a plan. Only that I love to play the piano the best of anything else. Yet I have a lot of fun doing comedy and acting. So just to try to keep working, that's all I've ever really tried to do, and all that I intend to do."

Shaffer grew up watching Skitch Henderson (one of Doc Severinsen's predecessors on *The Tonight Show*). Does he consider himself a continuation of that tradition or breaking away into new ground?

"A little bit of both. Yeah, I grew up watching the Carson show, like all of us did, not only Skitch, but, you know, Milton DeLugg, Tommy Newsom, and of course, Doc. They were playing music of their age. When I got a job on a late-night talk show, I said to myself, well, let me play the music of *my* age. So, I put together a rock & roll band to play on this talk show. In that way I guess I'm extending what Skitch did, but I'm just presenting what he did in a contemporary manner.

"Yet I must say that I think we are the first band, though, in the history of rock & roll to have major rock acts come on day after day and play with our band, and sound pretty good. In the old days you could barely get a rock act to do TV, let alone do it with a studio band. But I think bringing a band to TV that loves to play, and that loves to play rock & roll, that's an accomplishment, I think. I think that shines through with the band that I got, the players that I got. They have the *skill* of professional musicians, but the *love* of rock & rollers."

As to why they are called "The World's Most Dangerous Band," Shaffer laughed and said, "Letterman started that: I thought it was a cute name. I think of it as a tight, little guerilla unit, doing things that a normal offensive force couldn't handle."db

# DAVE HOLLAND

## *Creative*

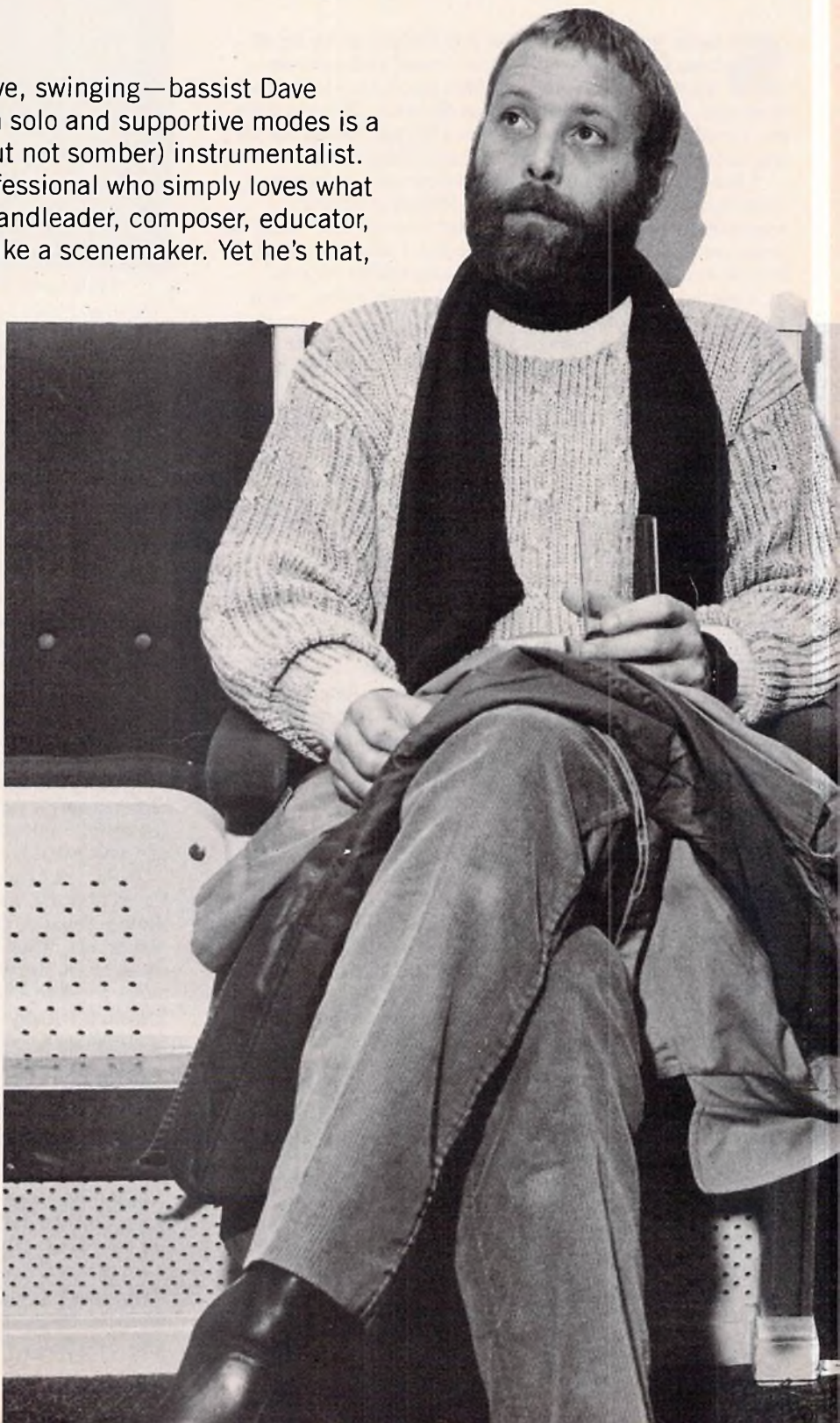
By Howard Mandel

**S**upple, subtle, substantive, swinging—bassist Dave Holland's playing in both solo and supportive modes is a model for the serious (but not somber) instrumentalist. A soft-spoken and easygoing professional who simply loves what he does, 43-year-old Holland—bandleader, composer, educator, and ECM artist—may not seem like a scenemaker. Yet he's that, too.

In the 30 years since his musical career began in a garage in the English midlands, Dave Holland has zeroed in on jazz's Afro-American tradition as it evolves to embrace ever wider contents and contexts. While his current music (most recently documented on *Triplicate*, which tied for Album Of The Year in **db's** '89 Critics' Poll) tends towards advanced explorations of strong structures, Holland's experience ranges from pop and trad and swing and mainstream to plugged-in-Miles and total freedom. His sensibility runs from bop and Bach and Bartók to Rivers and Braxton and M-BASE, as he's hired and been inspired by Steve Coleman, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, the brothers Robin and (in his new quartet) Kevin Eubanks.

Since beating a life-threatening heart condition in 1981, Holland has issued three probing quintet LPs (abetted by trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, trombonist Julian Priester, and drummer Steve Ellington, as well as those credited above), developed the summer jazz program at Banff in Alberta, Canada, and joined the faculty at New England Conservatory. He's in master pianist Hank Jones' trio, also working equilaterally with Jones and drummer Billy Higgins. Nor is this the sum total of Dave Holland's collaborations; he's still involved with his Gateway mates Jack DeJohnette and John Abercrombie, and earlier associates including saxophonist Evan Parker.

A resident of not-too-far upstate New York since the late '70s, Holland has advanced through a series of what he calls "stepping stones." He was introduced to string instruments by an uncle who played ukulele. His mother and grandmother played sheet music on piano (his father, an amateur saxist, left the family when Dave was a year-and-a-half). Getting a guitar for his 10th birthday, at age 13 Dave Holland volunteered to play bass guitar in a kid's band with a



# Collaborator

Beatles-like lineup.

"I immediately felt an empathy for playing the bass line," he remembers. "I really got off on it. It was a great thing. So I started listening to bass players.

"When I got a little more proficient, I moved on to another band, then another. When I left school at 15, I was working with

a group playing dances in workingmen's clubs. By 16 I was in a group covering pop hits on local television. When I was 17 this group decided to play a club in Germany for the summer. But you had to be 18 to get a work permit, and that left me out. I'd gotten an acoustic bass when I was 15; this was the summer I started listening to Ray Brown and Leroy Vinnegar.

"Ray Brown won the **down beat** poll that year, as he'd done for many years. I'd never heard him before, but I went out and bought *Affinity*, which he was on with Oscar Peterson, and wore the record out. I played it over and over again. I learned every one of Ray's bass lines. Then I bought their album *Night Train*.

"While I was in the store I saw a cover photo of this big guy with a bass. It was Leroy Vinnegar's two-record set on Contemporary, *Leroy Walks!* and *Leroy Walks Again!* The bass was recorded magnificently. So I learned all *these* bass lines and played along with *them*.

"**T**his was *pleasure*," Holland asserts. "By this time music had really taken over. All day I was trying to get the tone I heard these guys play with, trying to get my time right, playing the lines. I was playing by ear; I wasn't thinking theoretically too much. I was playing more from a melodic point of view." Holland fears this approach is slighted by institutions training today's musicians.

"Of course, theoretical understanding is important," he believes. "But ear training shouldn't be left out. Really using your ears, learning the sound of the music first—it's sometimes the longer route, but is, I think, the more *complete* route."

Holland's own path led him to an audition with Birmingham big-bandleader Trevor Orton. "He told me later he knew I couldn't read, but he liked the way I played anyway, and I got the job," Holland grins. With amazing prescience, Orton told another bandmember, "This boy's going to go with Miles Davis someday." That day arrived after Holland's period of woodshedding, his tour behind proto-rocker Johnny Ray, a move to London to gig in a Greek restaurant, studies with symphony bassist James Merritt, a



H.L. LINDENMAIER

three-year scholarship to the Guild Hall School of Music, and his initiation into diverse wings of the English jazz scene.

"There was a big boom in the '60s in England for traditional jazz," Holland says, "and I worked with a band that played Louis Armstrong's original Hot Five arrangements. It wasn't a particularly popular band, but it was very authentic. I enjoyed it a lot.



I met my wife at one of the gigs." He also ran into Londoners of his own generation, including John McLaughlin, Derek Bailey, Tony Oxley, Mike Westbrook, and Chris MacGregor.

"John Burman called me one night to replace his sick bassist; we'd never played together before. He showed me the music; the first chart had some notes written, and at the end it said 'Open.' I said, 'What do you want me to do here?' He said, 'Play whatever you want. After the head, play what you hear.'

"It was the first time I'd played anything outside of changes, so I started playing the same stuff I played over changes, but in a freer way. I followed what I heard, and tried to make sense of it. This began my relationships with people who were exploring the directions of Ornette Coleman, Coltrane, Cecil Taylor, and Albert Ayler."

Holland had lost interest in the pop styles that made millionaires of musical mediocrities—far more fulfilling were his engagements at London's jazz showcase club Ronnie Scott's with such stars-on-the-road as Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster. While working in a combo opposite Bill Evans' trio, Holland was approached by Philly Joe Jones, who said Miles was in the house and wanted Holland in his band.

Though Davis left England before Holland could confirm his interest, the bassist did get a call within the month inviting him to New York as Miles' replacement for Ron Carter.

"I came to New York in August of '68, and *Filles de Kilimanjaro* was recorded in September. It was a wonderful time, because we played the whole history of the music: 'Round Midnight' and 'Stella By Starlight,' then something from *Filles*, and maybe something from one of the albums made around '64. But a lot of people went into shock when they heard the group. Because what we were doing with electronics just wasn't a familiar sound. It was like having somebody talk to you in a foreign language."

**M**iles' direction of the time is represented on *Live At The Fillmore*: with Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett, Steve Grossman, Airtio, and Holland in his group, the repertoire and instrumentation changed. Sets were continuous investigations of charged timbres, thick textures, and hard-rocking rhythms. The brew was new.

"We started using electric piano, and I started to feel frustrated with the acoustic bass," Holland says, "because I couldn't get enough weight of sound. Each instrument has a role, and for some things the acoustic bass just doesn't work. As I remember, I offered to play the electric bass—I don't remember Miles telling me to do that. As time went by, I found myself playing more and more electric, and that's when I started to question whether I should stay in the band."

Though other bassists were turning to



Razor sharp: Dave with colleagues (from left) Kenny Wheeler, Steve Coleman, Marvin Stamm

electronics, Holland had thought bass guitar was something he'd left behind.

"The people inspiring me were all acoustic players: Mingus, LaFaro, Ray Brown, Jimmy Garrison, and Jymie Merritt, who played with Max Roach. I felt like I'd found my voice on the acoustic; its sound quality rang a more personal note for me. And there were things I could do with the bow, new music kinds of things I couldn't otherwise find except for the use of electronics. I was happy to go ahead and do it, but I must say I had some reservations."

The situations Miles allowed, though, kept Holland interested. "Miles liked the form to be kept very clearly, but you'll notice on the records when Miles finishes his solo, very often the rhythm section starts opening up the form and *playing*. I was very interested in that direction, and I had quite a few conversations with Miles about it, which usually ended with him saying, 'If you want to do that, you should get your own band.' Which was a fair enough statement. Finally, we followed his advice; Chick and I left Miles to form Circle based upon the convictions we had about music."

But Holland took some of Miles' lessons with him. In free-form settings, he'd initially kept the bass' time function; swayed by others' innovations, he began to improvise against and around the time.

"I got quite radical about this. In one period with Miles, I didn't play much of a supportive role at all. I was trying to play along with the soloist all the time. One night Miles said to me, 'Dave, you know, you *are* a bass player.' It was one of those moments he'll lay on you that you end up thinking about for the rest of your life. It was like, 'Well, don't lose track of your true character. It's all very well to expand the role, but don't forget there are some things the bass does beautifully, and you should acknowledge that.' So I went totally the other way, got into playing the same vamp for 15 minutes, to learn to be really solid, and hold a center to the group."

In Circle—with Corea, Anthony Braxton, and Barry Altschul, a quartet that lasted only a year-and-a-half—Holland indulged his wildest experiments, played cello, and began to compose in earnest. But work opportunities were limited. Corea wanted out. Fusion filled the air.

"To call Miles fusion music is a mistake; it's just creative music. But it spawned a lot of second-rate stuff. And I wanted to make a musical statement of an alternative." Out of frustration with Circle's demise and a new association with tenorist Sam Rivers, Holland issued his first LP as a leader, the classic quartet *Conference Of The Birds*.

"I could see the differences between



Smitty" Smith, and Robin Eubanks.

Holland's ideas have indeed consolidated—but never calcified. His playing has gained depth and authority; his composing is distinctive, if slippery and demanding. Continually seeking challenges, Holland listens intently to his bandmembers. He met the younger Coleman and the Eubanks in Sam Rivers' Studio Rivbea bands, Smitty Smith at a New York jam session. But his music is not about blazing stars; it's about ensemble.

"I've always been attracted to jazz's group context," he explains. "I admire how the soloist works with the rhythm section, how the bass player interacts with the drummer. To me, the music is a group music. And I want any group I put together to function on that level, where everybody feels that they have a place, that they can be themselves, that they can stretch their imaginations and their creative aspirations as far as they are able. So I've always encouraged as much involvement from the musicians as possible. I mean, why would I take somebody on the level of Smitty Smith or Steve Coleman or Kenny Wheeler or Julian Priester and box them in?"

"My thing is to create a setting—and I learned this from Miles. During the time I played with him he would create the environment for the music, then let the musicians deal with it. That's what I've tried to do."

This tactic has worked to help Holland keep from feeling boxed-in, too. Though he won't generalize about the music of the Coleman-Smith-Eubanks generation, he realizes they've incorporated "extraordinary new ideas in rhythm, and I've had to develop new skills to play the music.

"There've been some songs I've worked on with the quintet where I've had to relearn certain things. It's like the transition people made to play 3/4 from 4/4. Like Steve Coleman's 'Uhren' on *Seeds Of Time*: it's got a very unusual rhythmic structure which was challenging for me to learn.

"It's a cycle of nine, the bar is in nine, and the nine is divided up into two different ways. One grouping is: two-two-three-and-two. That repeats for the second bar, and then the third bar is two-three-two-and-two. You get a four-beat thing in the bar, but one beat is longer than the other three. And the beat changes, the long beat is placed second in the third bar, whereas in the first and second bar it's placed third.

"If you try to play one of your normal phrases that you'd play in 4/4, you come unstruck. So you have to learn to rephrase. When you're playing in a time structure like that you have to learn to build your phrases around these new structures, you can't just go into your bag and play your normal thing. You have to reshape everything.

"But I like having new things to work on. This is what keeps me going. Because every new challenge you work on alters your perspective on everything else, too. Even when you play 4/4, you approach it differently." That is, Dave Holland does. db

Anthony and Sam's styles—Sam's very much based in the blues, extending that, and Anthony's controlled, thought-out, but still with a lot of feeling. After the record, we attempted some gigs, but the combination was too different to work on a long-term basis."

If Braxton and Rivers couldn't continue together, Holland could—and did—keep playing with them both. Flourishing in creative collaborations, Holland in the '70s became active in the Woodstock Creative Music Studio organized by vibist/educator Karl Berger, was virtually house bassist for ECM, released solo bass and solo cello LPs, and polished off his apprenticeship as a sideman.

"I couldn't see any point in going out and being a bandleader just for the sake of it, and I didn't feel ready, either, until I started the quintet when I was 35 or 36," he readily admits. "To me, that's not strange. I don't think you really mature, consolidate your ideas, until your 30s. And I certainly had a great deal to learn from the people I played with.

"I wanted to have a band because I felt the need to do it, was moved to do it. And that happened in the '80s. I got sidetracked by an illness, endocarditis, which fortunately I survived. After that I immediately put the group together."



MITCHELL SEIDEL

## DAVE HOLLAND'S EQUIPMENT

Dave Holland has one acoustic bass.

"This instrument replaced a beautiful old one I'd had since '66 that was broken in an accident in Europe when I was there with Gateway in '83," he says. "The next day I went to Munich and bought this, which has no name brand at all.

"It's a fairly standard 7/8-size instrument, made in a workshop in Mittenwald by a number of people in a kind of assembly-line situation. It's about 60 years old.

"The only thing about it that's exceptional or unusual in any way is its long string length, 44 inches from the nut to the bridge, where normally you have 41½. It does require a bit more of a stretch in the hand than most, but I got used to that. Maybe the extra string length gives me a little more resonance. It was a struggle at first to get used to, though, and in the beginning I considered not keeping it. But it's a wonderful instrument to record with. It has a very centered, direct, compact sound. I think the older instrument I had had a more diffused tone and didn't give that core sound quite so much.

"For amplification I'm using the Underwood pickup; I also have a Schecter pickup, but I haven't moved into using it; I tend to change equipment very slowly. If I like something I stay with it, and the Underwood works fine. I don't use a tremendous amount of amplification, so that as much sound as possible is being produced from the bass itself. I have a Gallien Krueger bass amp that I put it through."

Holland still plays cello, and has recently retrieved his electric bass guitar from storage.

"It's a copy of a Fender Jazz bass, with a Precision neck and a Fender Jazz body. It's got the Precision pickup and the Jazz bass pickup. Since we've started working with this quartet—and having Kevin Eubanks on guitar is new, I haven't had a chordal instrument in my band, though Geri Allen did a 12-piece thing with me at The Public Theatre a couple of years ago—I've been hearing that sound again. I've been thinking about trying to get involved with it. But I haven't made the jump yet. That's maybe in the future. Somewhere. We'll see." Can't wait.

## DAVE HOLLAND SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

### as a leader

TRIPPLICATE—ECM 837 113-1  
THE RAZOR'S EDGE—ECM 833 048-1  
SEEDS OF TIME—ECM 825 322-2  
JUMPIN' IN—ECM 817 437-2  
CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS—ECM 829 373-2

### solo

LIFE CYCLE—ECM 829 200-2  
EMERALD TEARS—ECM 1109

### with Miles Davis

IN A SILENT WAY—Columbia CJ-40580  
BITCHES BREW—Columbia 2JC-40577  
WATER BABIES—Columbia 34396  
AT FILLMORE—Columbia 30038  
FILLES DE KILIMANJARO—Columbia 9750

### with Chick Corea, et al.

CIRCLE—ECM 1018/19  
SONG OF SINGING—Blue Note 84353

# POWERHOUSES OF MUSIC EDUCATION

## CAROLINE DAVIS JR. HIGH

by Robin Tolleson

**W**hen California voters passed Proposition 13 in 1982 to cut property taxes, schools felt the brunt of the state's loss of revenue. But quick-thinking and dedicated teachers like Pam and Bill Slocum of Caroline Davis Jr. High in San Jose, Calif., took action to save music in the schools.

"We had lost our 4th, 5th, and 6th grade programs. Doing a jazz band before school was one of the ways to get kids started and keep them interested," says Pam Slocum. "We start them in the 6th grade, train them in the 7th grade, and take them to competition in the 8th grade," she adds proudly.

"We felt we needed something that would have a wider appeal, doing rock and jazz and Latin. And we liked the format of the big band," says Bill Slocum, who co-directs the stage band with his wife. The teachers alternate years at the helm, "so that we each get a chance to work with the top kids," says Pam.

In attending various band competitions and winning the Stage Band IVA Gold Award at this year's Musicfest U.S.A. in Philadelphia, the group has become one of the focal points at the school. Bill sees other positive aspects of the big band: "You have to know your scales. That's a good reason for doing jazz. Good jazz musicians depend on knowing their scales and their technique real well, and it's motivation for them to practice."

"Once we get them going in classical music, we start with scales," Pam says, "and with easy jazz music from different years. And we try to get them recordings of different bands to listen to, because it's a style they're not used to."

The ghetto blasters at Davis Jr. High may not be blaring Ellington or Kenton yet, but there are encouraging signs. "At festivals we used to start with rock pieces, because it's what they've listened to, mainly. There's nothing wrong with rock, but as we've played more and more jazz, this group has almost refused to do very much rock. It's nice. It's kind of weird."

"The kids worked real hard at developing the swing concept,"

Pam continues. "So they have a preference for that. There are various degrees of picking it up. It's like anything else. You have to listen to it a lot and play it a lot." Those of us who heard a lot of swing and jazz at home should feel fortunate for the exposure. According to the Slocums, the great majority of the kids at Davis aren't hearing any kind of big band music at home. "Ninety-five percent of them don't. It's kind of become an acquired taste."

Recruiting efforts have been successful, however. It seems like if kids can only hear it, they may very well be attracted to the big band sound. "In 6th grade, the Davis Jazz Band came to my elementary school and played, and I really liked it. Ever since, I kind of wanted to be in the band," says pianist/clarinetist and Musicfest U.S.A. All-Star Danny Chai, 13, the only 7th grader in the Davis band. "While taking piano lessons I've been listening to classical, because that's mostly what I play. But ever since I started jazz band, I've been really interested in jazz."



## ALL-PHILADELPHIA JAZZ

by Russell Woessner

**T**he All-Philadelphia Jazz Ensemble, a group of student musicians from high schools across the city, has been awarded four Gold and one Silver Award in the Jazz Combo and Stage Band categories at the three Musicfest U.S.A. Finals. Individually, trumpeter Jason Golley received a \$5,000 scholarship to the University of Southern California. Keyboard master and new Columbia recording artist Joey DeFrancesco got the same amount to study at the Berklee College of Music and was named a Jazz Combo All-Star in each year. But soft-spoken bassist Christian McBride came away with the most money and perhaps the best professional connections.

McBride was given a total of \$7,000 in scholarships to Berklee and was chosen an All-Star in the Stage Band and Jazz Combo categories as a result of his performance at Musicfest. At a jam session during the first competition in Chicago in 1987, he met

Jimmy Walker of Free Flight. This past May, the 17-year-old bassist joined Walker, Mike Garson, and Alex Acuna in their Musicfest U.S.A. performance in Philadelphia.

After beginning his formal training on the bass in the seventh grade, the young musician was introduced to jazz by his uncle, Howard Cooper, who has played bass in Philly with drummer Sonny Murray. He remembers, "I was into Motown. One night I spent the night over at my uncle's house and he just kept playing jazz albums all night. By the time I left the house, I was ready to break all my Motown records."

McBride advanced his musical studies with Kevin Rodgers, the instrumental chairperson at the High School for the Creative and Performing Arts, and with William Whitaker, the director of the All-Philadelphia Jazz Ensemble. Whitaker predicts that the teenager "is going to be a force in jazz" and relates that the



Trumpeter Allen Vizutti and Christian McBride.

DAVE HELLAND

scholarship fund of the Philadelphia Music Awards enabled McBride to buy his own instrument, a German Juzek upright bass, two years ago.

After graduating this past summer, McBride made his first trip abroad on a two-week tour of East and West Germany with the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra, a group led by conductor Joseph Primavera, playing mostly 20th century classical music. With strong interests in both jazz and classical music, McBride cites Bach and John Coltrane among his favorite musicians. He explains, "Personally, my favorite composer to play is Bach because he writes those real slick bass lines with melodic 16th notes and everything. I like to listen to Coltrane because his music is so emotional. I remember I was practicing

with one of my Coltrane albums and the music got so hot that I passed out right in my bedroom."

Having played first bass with the All-Philadelphia Senior High School Orchestra for five years, McBride has applied and auditioned at Julliard with the intent of continuing his studies there this fall. He has also jammed with Terence Blanchard and Donald Harrison and hopes to tour and perform more with Free Flight. In his characteristically modest manner, he says that in the future, "I just want to keep locking myself in my room with my bass every night, so I'll just get better."

## WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY/GOLD COMPANY

by Michael G. Nastos

**K**alamazoo, Michigan, though legendary in verse of song, is not a hot spot for jazz activity. Fairly equidistant from major areas of activity like Chicago and Detroit, Kalamazoo, via Western Michigan University, is a focal point for vocal jazz in the Midwest. Under the direction of Steven Zegree, the W.M.U. Gold Company singers have won **deebee** student awards several years running. And if winning does beget winning, then the program Zegree nurtures is on a roll.

"When I came to Western, there really wasn't a vocal jazz program," states Zegree. "Its roots are in the Pacific Northwest; many schools and colleges were doing vocal jazz there. In the Midwest, there was a big emphasis on show choirs. My philosophy was, well, that's entertaining, but if I'm going to be a music teacher and a jazz educator, I want to make sure my students *want* to sing."

Zegree is an associate professor in the full-blown jazz studies program at Western, one of the few in Michigan. He is a cum laude graduate in piano performance at the University of Miami (Ohio), earned his masters at Indiana where he studied with Dr. David Baker, and received his doctorate in conducting at the U. of Missouri-K.C. Conservatory. His most visible production credits can be found on the two volumes of *Mark Murphy Sings The Nat King Cole Songbook* for Muse Records, Volume 1 receiving a Grammy nomination.

But in terms of singing, Zegree related that he always accompanied vocalists. "I remember hearing the album with

Oscar Peterson and The Singers Unlimited. That was a combination with everything I love, and hearing Gene Puerling's arrangements, that turned me around."

At school, Zegree attributes the success of The Gold Company simply to striving for a high quality of performers and performance, based on the examples of The Singers Unlimited, The Hi-Lo's, and, to a certain extent, The Manhattan Transfer. Puerling and Don Shelton lend a hand, and an ear, when their schedules allow. The Gold Company has also gone on tour recently with Janis Siegel. "We do a lot of sophisticated, complex music which appeals to musician's ears. The impact when a person hears them for the first time can be overwhelming."

It is all the more amazing that this program is so well-thought of and successful considering that The Gold Company and the vocal jazz program receive no regular budget monies from the University. They generate funds from their performance fees to make recordings and schedule tours. They also do not fundraise. "We're poor and happy."

Zegree looks at the curriculum from an historical standpoint. "When you're dealing with 18-22 year olds, they're not going to know who The Hi-Lo's were, or Lambert, Hendricks and Ross, or the great individual singers. Most of them are hip to Ella and Sarah, but it's nice to tell them about Betty Carter, Carmen, Mark Murphy." They, like many schools, have not yet delved into vocalese à la King Pleasure and Eddie Jefferson. "We do encourage student arrangements and, of course, we emphasize improv. Everybody has to improvise. We favor Puerling's writing, we have a working relationship with Clare Fischer, and I do some writing for the group."

The Gold Company comprises 44 students, 16 of which represent the actual Gold Company touring unit, while the other 28 make up G.C. II. Their most recent release, *G.C. Fiesta*, is available on compact disc (Western Sounds-NR 17891). **db**

# GREG OSBY

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his has been Greg Osby's year for piano players. He spent a week with Andrew Hill at The Knitting Factory in preparation for recording *Eternal Spirit* (Blue Note 92051). "One of the most enlightening experiences of my life. He's fantastic, amazing." The tour with Mal Waldron didn't happen, but Osby got a call from Herbie Hancock. "Two months of the highest level in jazz as far as treatment and conditions are concerned. That's the way it is supposed to be." And when I talked to him he was just back from a three-week tour of Europe with Muhal Richard Abrams.

"I have a lot of respect for Muhal and I wanted to deal with his music some kind of way, but I haven't really been satisfied with the way his music has been interpreted in awhile," explained Osby. "He has very specific notations and requirements. Each tune has its own character and he manages to get that across. He made me arrive at some things I wouldn't normally be doing."

But the tour also gave Osby—who was voted to the TDWR lists of both the alto and soprano sax categories of the most recent **db** Critics Poll—a chance to pick the brain of one of the founders of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), an organization, a school of music with parallels to the Brooklyn-based M-BASE, of which Osby is a founding member. "He [Abrams] really put a lot of emphasis on unity and allowing people to be what they are and not trying to force any of your doctrines on anyone."

Osby was two days back from Europe and we were interrupted by phone calls—people asking how the tour went, saxophonist/cohort Steve Coleman wanting to jam. This gave me a chance to nose around the living/working room of the apartment he used to share with drummer Terri Lyne Carrington—her name is still on the mail box—in Ft. Greene, the Brooklyn neighborhood made famous by filmmaker Spike Lee. In one corner was his musical setup—alto and soprano saxes, Atari computer, Korg synthesizers, a Peavey amp, and drum machines—as well as file cabinet and desk. On the walls were Japanese prints, a Noh mask, and pictures

of jazz giants carefully cut from magazines. An erotic netsuke—a Japanese ivory carving—sat on top of the bookcase housing his record collection and tapes of Bruce Lee movies.

"It began as a long-standing love of martial arts. I was a Bruce Lee fanatic and then got into the Japanese stuff later. They have a high sense of order and discipline and efficiency, and economics. My ultimate goal is to have a Japanese-style house, sparsely furnished, a nice garden, that kind of thing."

Newly-purchased CDs neatly stacked next to the player included Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*, Monk's Riverside recordings, Miles Davis' *Live In Stockholm*, the latest from Brazilian singers Milton Nascimento and Djavan—"I'm wearing the grooves off that one."—as well as Najee. "It's important for jazz [he draws the word out for emphasis] players to know the technology so they can have their records sound just as good as those people." Filed away is everything from Grace Jones to Buddy Rich, a box labelled "Motown Dance Party," Tom Waits, and the speeches of Malcolm X.

"Malcolm was into perfection and development. I just marvel at him. He was a hoodlum, a pimp, and a dope dealer, but he studied in prison and came out good. Plus, it's good to hear somebody say, 'Get your thing together.' I don't agree with violence and all that kind of shit, but I don't get that from him. He was into not being dependent; he was into going out and getting your thing together, using all kinds of resources, and don't let anybody tell you you can't do this and you can't be that."

That is, Osby gets from the speeches and writings of Malcolm X what he learned from his mother growing up in St. Louis.

Georgia Osby raised Greg, his younger brother, and sister to appreciate order and discipline, to be resourceful, inquiring, and responsible. "I can't say enough about her. She provided a really good example, a role model for me to follow," boasts Osby.

Ms. Osby worked for a record distributor and brought home a little of everything: Cannonball Adderley and Cat

# Open On



Stevens, The Isley Brothers and The Eagles, Aretha Franklin and Bob Dylan. "This is how variable the music in our home was and why I'm not indebted to or owe allegiance to any single kind of music now. I know all the lyrics to all kinds of old stuff that people in the black community wouldn't ordinarily hear."

In school Greg liked drawing, English, geography, and science; wanted to be an architect even though he wasn't—and still isn't—good at math. And he liked to take things apart, whether it was dissecting a frog or seeing what made his radio work. "Every time I would get something for Christmas I would take it apart to find out how it worked. I messed up a lot of stuff, but being curious is part of my Leo

# All Sides

nature." So is being orderly and clean; friends call him "Felix" [Unger, after the fastidious Neil Simon character].

Starting with the clarinet in the 7th grade, he added flute and alto sax to his arsenal and was soon playing in pop groups, becoming known as "the little Grover Washington of St. Louis. That was my thing, King Curtis, Jr. Walker, Maceo Parker. All through high school, I was on the road on weekends with guys old enough to be my father playing proms, Elks clubs, motorcycle clubs. I didn't have much rapport with my peers. I was aloof, business-minded. I was thinking about New York even then."

When his mother's boyfriend was listening to jazz Osby played little funk licks along with the Blue Note records. Only later did Osby begin to seriously listen to jazz; but while most alto players use Charlie Parker as their student text, Osby, always ready to follow a lesser-used path, studied Cannonball Adderley. From the early Riverside recordings to Miles' sextet to the hit "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy," he learned a forceful, physical way of stressing phrases and a loose, confident, logic-defying way of playing. Earl Bostic—"the father of sax acrobatics"—was another influence and he studied Bunky Green (see "Profile" May '89), after hearing him on the radio in St. Louis. "He had something that you could hear was fully formulated and worked-out," remembers Osby. "I can hear him play two notes and recognize him. I like that."

Fred Irby taught Osby in St. Louis—and gave him his first horn—before taking over the jazz program at Howard University. Visiting St. Louis with the Howard Jazz Ensemble—which included pianist/colleague Geri Allen—Irby offered Osby a scholarship in spite of his lack of formal training, unorthodox style, and use of a tenor mouthpiece on his alto. Osby didn't last long at Howard.

"They corrected a lot of my bad habits but I couldn't use anything I was learning in those classes on a gig. They were teaching me about Mozart, four-part choral harmony. The upperclassmen were not firing it up; I didn't want to sound like that. I was young and arrogant, so I rebelled," recalls Osby. "But I paid attention. The way I write now is with four-part choral textures, a lot of counterpoint."

Osby visited Berklee College in 1979, sat in on classes, jammed, and liked what he heard—as did the instructors. He was offered a scholarship, transferred, and wondered what he had gotten himself into. This was his first experience in an integrated setting—his roommates were long-haired rock & rollers—but he was impressed that everything he learned in class he could apply that night on a gig.

"I was in this class, *The Music of John Coltrane*, and the assignment might be to bring in a tune based on the structure of 'Giant Steps.' There might be a woman from Mississippi with a gospel background and she'd bring in a gospel tune. A hard-rock cat from New Jersey would be bringing in a rock tune with the changes based on 'Giant Steps.' Somebody from Israel or Japan or Italy would write a tune based on their own folk music or native language. At Berklee, you bring instruments to class so you got to hear instantly how your stuff went down. That was a great environment."

And the jam sessions: Branford Marsalis, Cindy Blackman, Kevin Eubanks, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Kevin McNeil, Jeff Watts, Wallace Roney, and Terri Lyne Carrington were all there at the time. But as time passed these people dropped out, to tour as sideman, moving to Brooklyn. "Here I was still being Joe Academic and everybody else is coming back from Europe with nice suits. I had always been New York-minded. At the first opportunity, I was going to be gone."

That opportunity came just a couple months before graduation; Jon Faddis was forming a band and asked Osby to join. That lasted a year-and-a-half; Faddis put his band on the back burner and Osby found himself searching for *that dreaded day gig*.

"It was really humiliating. Five-and-one-half years of college and I'm working for a cleaning service. Every morning at 7 a.m., I'm on the #2 train with a mop, bucket, sponges, assorted cleansers, vacuum, going to affluent peoples' apartments in Manhattan cleaning up their mess."

He worked on a loading dock till a dishwasher almost tore off his big toe; did demolition till he stepped on a nail and got lockjaw. But all the while he was moonlighting, jamming, and playing a little jive gig up in Harlem. Then Faddis' group—"a jazz juke box"—started working again. Lester Bowie gave him a call now and then as did David Murray. He subbed

for members of The World Saxophone Quartet. His reputation spread. I was looked on as one of the out guys, not exactly avant garde, but I also played straightahead with Faddis' band."

But all the time he had been looking for the "New York scene," a modern Minton's, places to jam and talk music, exchange ideas and hear about the slick trick side of *the business*. "Nobody was really working on any new concepts or trying to formulate any kind of style or direction. Steve Coleman was the only like-minded person I'd met since I got to New York. We had a lot in common at that point. We'd get together and write tunes or just play. Like he just called, said bring your horn over and let's play. That fervor is still there."

That fervor grew into M-BASE (Macro Basic something or other), a concept that the media could get a hold on by contrasting it to the neo-traditionalists (read: bands led by people named Marsalis), or misinterpreting its organization (Steve Coleman as guru/fuhrer), or making it an aspect of an illusory Brooklyn Renaissance. They work together, record each other's material, and school each other in business and technology. They plug the same Dr. T note processing software into the same Atari 1040 ST computers, using modems and MIDI to send drum tracks over the phone, evolving a common musical language.

"We're not Moonies—everybody is in total control of what they do—and the only reason we live in Brooklyn is that the rents are cheaper," explains Osby. "We want to use what each of us has to offer. Everybody had their thing but nobody knew what the other was doing, nobody talked, nobody collaborated. Yet, they had fully formulated principles that they never really executed but were thinking about and could explain. Something that is adaptable; that you didn't have to go to the moon to understand. A lot of cats, even older cats, I'd ask them to explain what they were playing and they'd go to the cosmos on me. Shit, I can't use that."

Osby's *formulated principles* are called "Shifting Melodic Order," a way of creating tension and surprise by developing an original melodic motive in a fugue- or canon-like progression. Certain points within a phrase are signposts for jumps to different registers, a change in dynamics, or octave shifts. In this way, Osby uses a harmonic ambiguity to create tension and surprise in both his compositions and solos without being excessively angular.

While this approach is thought-out, with a set of rules and methods, he identifies his sound as a completely natural thing he had no choice in because it is based on facial structure and general anatomy. Osby is convinced that "fat guys have a different sound than slim guys, which I am. You can't predetermine it; once you hear that sound and you know that's how you're going to be sounding for awhile, refine that sound."

"I feel sorry for anyone who tries to imitate someone else for their sound. A lot of cats are running around trying to sound like Dave Sanborn. They might be successful at it but he is alive and well and on TV. There are drummers trying to imitate Tony Williams and Jack DeJohnette. Why? They're going to be around for a long time.

"I just want to focus on alto and soprano. That's why I sold my clarinet and flute. You have guys who play all kinds of stuff: oboes, english horns, bassoons, all kinds of flutes and piccolos. I don't want to be tottin' all that stuff. I want people to call me for what I have to offer, because they want that Greg Osby Sound, because of the way I interpret things."

Meanwhile Jack DeJohnette had heard about Osby through the Berklee grapevine. On a tape of Faddis' group, he heard that Osby Sound: deliberate, original lines, not just the standard jazz licks and solo clichés—the same direction Osby has taken with much different material in DeJohnette's group since the spring of '85. And Osby's originals on *Audio Visualscapes*—the tone poem, "Donjo," and the contrapuntal variations of "Mastermind"—fit into DeJohnette's scheme of things.

"I can write for Greg and Gary [Thomas]," explains DeJohnette, "and know that they will do something totally different with the harmonies, not demolish the changes but dress them up in new clothes."

Osby is not into wearing a suit, not comfortable playing into the mic and then standing to one side *looking stupid* till it's time to take the tune out, doesn't want to listen to the tapes from last night's gig. "Oh, man, some bad shit, want to check it out?" No I was there. I don't want to hear that; I want to improve on it. I get drugged when I hear what I played the night before; I aspire to a higher plateau."

He does want some hip clothes, to dance on stage, maybe a semi-truck load of equipment, backdrops, props. "It would certainly draw more of an audience of young people. They are repelled by the thought of sitting in some smokey club, dim lighting, high prices for drinks, noisy, bad acoustics. They'd prefer to be out in the open, a nice concert or a festival kind of thing with more than one group."

But here and now: he is preparing for a concert with Sound Theatre and guests for the New Music America Festival at BAM November 12; label shopping a recording he produced with trombonist Robin Eubanks of music from the M-BASE concert at last year's Next Wave Festival, and gearing up for the release of his *Season Of Renewal* (on JMT). That recording features Sound Theatre (bassist Lonnie Plaxico, drummer Paul Samuels, and



#### GREG OSBY'S EQUIPMENT

Greg Osby plays Selmer Mark VI alto and soprano saxophones with Vandoren A45 mouthpieces and #3½ Vandoren reeds. He can use his saxes as a MIDI controller for composing or adding parts to the floppy discs the M-BASE circulates by attaching either his IVL Pitchrider 4000 Mark II or IFS-30 MIDI Performance controller to the bell of the horn. These can be run through either of his two Korg synthesizers—Poly 800 or DW 8000—his Korg EX 8000 synth module, or Yamaha TX 812 tone generator. The resulting sounds can be further modified by his Digi-tech DSP 128 signal processor. He has Yamaha RX 11 and Roland TR 505 drum machines, and uses Dr. T KCS Level 2.0 software and an Atari 1040ST computer.

#### GREG OSBY SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

SEASON OF RENEWAL—JMT (January 1990 release)

MIND GAMES—JMT 834 422

GREG OSBY AND SOUND THEATRE—JMT 834 411

Strata Institute (with Steve Coleman)

CIPHER SYNTAX—JMT 834 425

with Andrew Hill

ETERNAL SPIRIT—Blue Note 92051

with Gary Thomas

BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY—JMT 834 432

with Jack DeJohnette

AUDIO VISUALSCAPES—Impulse 8029

IRRESISTIBLE FORCES—Impulse 5992

with Terri Lyne Carrington

REAL LIFE STORY—Verve 837 697

with Michele Rosewoman

CONTRAST HIGH—Enja (released in Europe)

QUINTESSENCE—Enja 5039

with Mark Hellas

THE CURRENT SET—Enja 5041

with Steve Coleman

SINE DIE—Pangaea 42150

with Franco Ambrosetti

MOVIES II—Enja 5035

with Cecil Brooks III

THE COLLECTIVE—Muse 5377

guitarist Kevin McNeal) along with guitarist Kevin Eubanks, percussionist Neal Clark, and Cassandra Wilson and Amina Claudine Myers on vocals.

Vowing never to make the same record twice in row, Osby has progressed from the album *Sound Theatre*, a collection of one-act plays, to *Mind Games*, a concept record with each tune representing various tribulations and trials of relationships, to *Season Of Renewal*, a suite about development and change. But one constant throughout Osby's recordings is that each individual composition on these albums is built on a unique drum part, a drum chant.

"If I recorded with a quartet all the time, I'd be bored as hell," explains Osby. "I like to present myself in a variety of contexts doing my thing. Bird would play with Machito or with strings. Coltrane would play with ballad singers, and he would play wild stuff, and he played with Earl Bostic and Johnny Hodges. He wouldn't compromise or make any kind of concession. That's what makes it interesting to me: not to hear a person play with the same group the same thing all the time."

Would we hear the dance funk of Strata Institute's *Cipher Syntax* in a dance club? "I don't know that we would hear it but we'd like to have it heard as opposed to a lot of the cyclic, mindless, pointless stuff that's going on. We're not denying ourselves anything, not any available resource. Especially not things that we grew up with.

"Some young cats put out stuff so that people think they are 60 years old. They weren't even alive when this was prominent," continues Osby. "It's funny, a lot of people think we can't play jazz. Steve knows more Bird, can sound more like Bird, than anybody I've ever heard, and Geri can play inside or out; but we grew up on Sly, The Jackson 5. That's going to be in the music, too. Charlie Parker didn't just start jumping out with bebop. He grew up in Kansas City listening to blues and popular songs and you hear that in whatever he does. Whether it is with strings or the Afro-Cuban stuff, you hear the blues. We're not denying our background either."

Osby's personal goals and the aim of M-BASE are to play music that stands out for this time and place the way "Motown" or "Blue Note blowing session" brings to mind specific sounds and songs and players.

"Some music is like a curtain, it cuts you off. But some music makes me smell things, like Brazilian music makes me smell fresh rain. With the Bulgarian State Women's Choir I can taste bread right out of the oven, an open hearth; Oriental music and I taste sushi, rice, the exotic way they prepare food. Music makes me smell things, makes me feel a certain way. I'm not getting heavy. It's not that music takes me to another plane, another universe, but these are the physical sensations that I get out of some things. I want to convey that."

db

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



## DON CHERRY

**ART DECO**—A&M Records CD 5258: *ART DECO; WHEN WILL THE BLUES LEAVE; BODY AND SOUL; BEMSHA SWING; MAFFY; FOLK MEDLEY; THE BLESSING; PASSING; I'VE GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO YOUR FACE; COMPUTE.* (56:25 minutes)

**Personnel:** Cherry, trumpet; James Clay, tenor saxophone; Charlie Haden, bass; Billy Higgins, drums.

★★★★★

Thirty-five years is a long time to go between gigs. But somehow, amazingly, Don Cherry, Billy Higgins, and Charlie Haden have hooked up together for this session sounding utterly at ease with each other. Joined by another long-time friend of Cherry's, high school buddy James Clay, they have made a recording that definitively updates the innovations spearheaded by Ornette Coleman.

Playing in Ornette's quartet in the mid- to late '50s, Cherry, Haden, and Higgins threw listeners for a loop with their free improvisation on Ornette's none-too-tame compositions. Ornette's idea was to break with bebop's conventions, and in reading commentary from that time, it's clear that the quartet's music did strike listeners that way. But listening today to an album like the quartet's *Change Of The Century*, the music's connections with bop come through, too. What's especially interesting about the reunion on *Art Deco*—beyond the pure musical joy of it—is hearing this lineage being extended even further.

There's plenty of bebop's legacy in the curving lines of "The Blessing" or the twisting melodies and sudden rhythmic turnarounds of "Compute," both Ornette tunes. But there's nothing antiquated about these lilting, supple performances.

The lazy-day mood of the title track (written by Cherry) sets a laid-back tone that is observed for most of the recording, which combines standards with selections by Monk, Coleman, and Cherry. Playing his signature pocket trumpet, Cherry sounds great, hitting notes dead-center with an ease that you just can't fake. He's at his best on "Art Deco" and Monk's "Bemsha," playing with the economical assurance of someone who could go on and on but doesn't choose to.

One of the unexpected pleasures of this disc is James Clay's tenor playing. His big, gutsy sound works perfectly against Cherry's cooler approach. And his playing on "Body And Soul" shows him to be a soloist with plenty to say. Clay, who briefly performed with Ornette, has recorded relatively little, but after this outing his phone may be ringing.

Higgins and Haden turn in the kind of

ingeniously supportive performances they've built their reputations on. Given their talents, it's nice that they each get a short tune to themselves for an unaccompanied solo.

It's only on Haden's solo, "Folk Medley," that any hint of Cherry's interest in world music comes across. But maybe that isn't so surprising. After all, there just isn't room on one disc to capture the sum total of musical experience embodied in this group. After hearing *Art Deco*, all I want to know is when the next recording will be out. (reviewed on CD) —*elaine guregian*



## PAT METHENY GROUP

**LETTER FROM HOME**—Geffen 24245: *HAVE YOU HEARD; EVERY SUMMER NIGHT; BETTER DAYS AHEAD; SPRING AIN'T HERE; 45/8; 5-5-7; BEAT 70; DREAM OF THE RETURN; ARE WE THERE YET; VIDALA; SLIP AWAY; LETTER FROM HOME.*

**Personnel:** Metheny, acoustic and electric guitars, guitar synths, synthesizer; Lyle Mays, acoustic and electric keyboards, trumpet, accordion; Steve Rodby, acoustic and electric basses; Pedro Aznar, voice, acoustic guitar, marimba, vibes, tenor sax, charango, melodica, percussion; Armando Marcal, percussion; Paul Wertico, drums, cava, percussion.

★★★★★

While not being a ground-breaking musical statement from Metheny, this is nonetheless one of the most pleasing Group albums from his crew. The challenging "Have You Heard" gets it off to a promising start; and fun, outrageousness like "45/8" keeps the vibe alive. There's just enough meandering and solid melody to move "5-5-7" along. And perhaps the most promising thing: Metheny seems to be a better leader, giving more room for expression from all sides.

The Brazilian influence on Metheny's music, obvious even before Nana Vasconcelos' residence during the *Wichita Falls* days, has never been more out-front than on the upbeat "Better Days Ahead," with cuicas wailing, or the lively "Beat 70," an intriguing color-filled number. Aznar seems to contribute something different at every turn—a marimba here, tenor sax, there, and on "Dream Of The Return," a spell-binding vocal. He, like Vasconcelos, is a colorist, and a quality one. "Vidala," written by Aznar, is a curious and brooding piece. Metheny's "Letter From Home" is equally beautiful and more direct. Metheny, for the most part back to his signature electric guitar sound, seems intent on connecting here, and he does.

Pat's Group is still a cymbal drummer's

dream, but Wertico supplies more than just wash effects. He smooths out Lyle's tune, "Are We There Yet," making it flow while driving it hard. Pat plays guitar synth on the fine, fine groove, ripping through the sonic jungle of shifts, halts, and startling sounds. (reviewed on LP) —*robin tolleson*



## MILES DAVIS

**AMANDLA**—Warner Bros. 9 25873-2: *CATEMBE; COBRA; BIG TIME; HANNIBAL; JO-JO; AMANDLA; JILLI; MR. PASTORIUS.* (43:29 minutes)

**Personnel:** Davis, trumpet; Marcus Miller, bass, keyboards, guitar, bass clarinet, soprano saxophone, drums; Kenny Garrett, alto and soprano saxophone; Rick Margitza, tenor saxophone (cut 5); George Duke, keyboards, Synclavier (2); Joey DeFrancesco, keyboards (2); Joe Sample, piano (6); John Bigham, keyboards, guitar, drum programming (7); Jason Miles, synthesizer programming (8); Michael Landau, guitar (2); Foley, guitar (3, 4, 7); Jean-Paul Bourelly, guitar (3, 5); Steve Khan, guitar (6); Billy "Spaceman" Patterson, wah-wah guitar (7); Ricky Wellman, drums (3, 7); Omar Hakim, drums (4, 6); Al Foster, drums (8); Don Alias, percussion (1, 3, 6); Mino Cinelo, percussion (1); Paulinho Da Costa, percussion (4, 5); Bashiri Johnson, percussion (6).

★★★★★

*Amandla* means "power" in Zulu. It's a word with special meaning for anti-apartheid protesters in South Africa, and it's an apt title for this album. The music has the tension of a clenched fist.

Like *Tutu* and *Siesta*, this album was a collaboration between Miles—the featured soloist and dominant personality—and Marcus Miller, who wrote six of the eight tunes, arranged, co-produced, and played a half-dozen instruments. To my ears, this is the most successful Miles & Marcus project to date, and the most convincing Miles Davis album since *Decoy*. It's got a precise and consistent sound that flows through the shifting instrumental combinations and lingers after the music has stopped. It creates a mood.

The mood is angry but also exultant. There's more passion in Miles' solos than we've heard in some time. He blows hard (almost always with the Harmon mute in) but with great control, punching out his phrases like a middleweight measuring his opponent with jabs.

There isn't an extended solo anywhere on the album. Each player makes a tight, concise statement and then backpedals (Kenny Garrett is especially adept at this). The tunes are



textural pieces, and the solos are woven tightly into the overall design. This isn't an especially original idea—Weather Report did it for years, and so did Duke Ellington, for that matter—but it's unusually well-executed here.

*Amanda* is an album of tributes. Without a single word other than its title, it makes a powerful statement about the martyrs in the struggle for justice. Then there's "Mr. Pastorius," a memorial to Jaco that connects to his musical spirit without mimicking his style. And the album as a whole is dedicated to Gil Evans.

As has been noted before, there are many similarities between what Marcus Miller is doing today and what Gil Evans did with Miles 30 years ago. There's a big difference, though: These tunes are harmonically less sophisticated than *Sketches Of Spain* or *Porgy & Bess* but rhythmically (and technologically) much more complex. It's an accurate reflection of our times: We'd rather be funky than cool. Some folks may not like it, but I'm glad that Miles remains committed to making music that's modern (or post-modern)—especially when he does it this well. (reviewed on CD)

—jim roberts



## DON PULLEN

**NEW BEGINNINGS**—Blue Note 91785-2: JANA'S DELIGHT; ONCE UPON A TIME; WARRIORS; NEW BEGINNINGS; AT THE CAFE CENTRALE; REAP THE WHIRLWIND; SILENCE = DEATH. (49:23 minutes)

**Personnel:** Pullen, piano; Gary Peacock, bass (cuts 1-6); Tony Williams, drums (1-6).

★ ★ ★ ★

Don Pullen's repertoire of right-hand moves is amazing. He'll contort his wrist to a near-90-degree angle, and splank the keys with a flat hand. He'll bunch up his fingers and pounce on the keys from above. He'll cup his hands like he's making a shadow-silhouette of a swan, and smack the keys with that. He'll rubberize his wrist and roll lightning-stroke glisses up the keyboard in short, spiraling bursts. (In truth, the last of these is becoming a personal cliché—you hear it over and over on *New Beginnings*. Which is one of two minor beefs I have with it.)

The tune "New Beginnings" connects Pullen with one source: splanky Monk, who pioneered idiosyncratic right-hand approaches more than anyone before Pullen or the pianist to whom he's habitually and inaccurately compared—and at whom annotator Stanley Crouch takes several gratuitous, if covert, swipes—Cecil Taylor. "New Beginnings" has a Monk composition's playfulness and brilliant corners; like Monk, Pullen swings hard, with headlong

momentum. He never lets those percussive patches disrupt the flow. The way he varies the density of a line, from delicate strands to thick blotches, makes him the Ralph Steadman of pianists.

For these reasons and more, Pullen has become one of the most sheerly pleasurable pianists around. *New Beginnings*—the title a reference to the end of the long-term Pullen/George Adams quartet—may be the best vehicle for his talents since his extraordinary 1983 solo set for Black Saint, *Evidence Of Things Unseen*. (*New Beginnings*' solo piece, the touchingly pretty "Silence = Death," is on CD only, though it'd've fit easily on the LP.) "Jana's Delight" is one of his prettiest and lightest tunes, showing he's no one-trick tickler. "Cafe Centrale" shows off his stomping flamenco tendencies. "Reap The Whirlwind" is his avant garde hurricane, where those glissy blurs begin to wear thin.

The other criticism I'll make of this album is probably unfair. Big-name rhythm sections help sell records, and Peacock and Williams both know how to play as politely or impolitely as Don's music demands. Still, anyone who's caught Pullen's working trio—with the fierce drummer Bobby Battle and bassist Andy McCloud (whose attention to line-density parallels Don's)—knows they stoke more fire under him than those stars do. For art's sake, I wish they'd made the date. (reviewed on CD)

—kevin whitehead



## JOHN ABERCROMBIE/ MARC JOHNSON/ PETER ERSKINE

**ABERCROMBIE/JOHNSON/ERSKINE** — ECM 837 756-2: FURS ON ICE; STELLA BY STARLIGHT; ALICE IN WONDERLAND; BEAUTIFUL LOVE; INNERPLAY; LIGHT BEAM; DRUM SOLO; FOUR ON ONE; SAMURAI HEE-HAW; HAUNTED HEART. (61:58 minutes)

**Personnel:** Abercrombie, guitar, guitar synthesizer; Johnson, bass; Erskine, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

John Abercrombie's guitar has gone through some kinda changes. I can still hear the fizzy notes that showed up on those '70s albums with Billy Cobham and Jack DeJohnette, not to mention his debut on ECM in '74 with Jack and Jam Hammer entitled *Timeless*. That was a trio album quite distinct from this '80s band with Erskine and Johnson.

Gone are the mandolin and acoustic guitar. Gone also are the gnarly and jagged lines of a style in transition; a style that leaned more towards Hendrix and McLaughlin and used

rock rhythms to good effect. The quasi-space music meanderings remain, but now they are more clearly juxtaposed with initial influences Jim Hall, Barney Kessel, and Bill Evans.

AJE, a live recording, picks up where 1986's *Current Events* left off, the one repeat being a slightly shorter and more uptempo version of "Alice" (a staple of successive Bill Evans trios). As with occasional collaborator Ralph Towner's sonic keyboard ventures, this reviewer/fan has been slow warming up to Abercrombie's synth work on guitar. And yet, stylistically, it makes complete sense to include it: here is a trio that has roots in the best of two worlds—"traditional" jazz and electric "fusion" (for lack of better terms). In fact, Abercrombie's synthesizer helps to keep this music fresh (and "current"), as on Johnson's swing-rocker "Furs On Ice." A light, uptempo romp, we don't hear even a trace of the theme to "Stella" until four minutes into it. At times, Abercrombie's single-note runs hint of Metheny, as on his opening solo to "Beautiful Love," but then he drops in a few signature chords and . . .

These guys like to swing, playing a delicate yet fiery, intimate yet spacious brand of trio jazz, Erskine and Johnson offering both strong solo and supportive voices. Of the 10 tunes, six are written by the various members, providing an unusual balance of standards with less conventional idioms (e.g., the intermittently interesting "Innerplay" through "Samurai Hee-Haw" suite sandwiched between standards). In sum, not only do you get 62 minutes of very good "digital jazz," ECM throws in some liner notes as well. What a deal. (reviewed on CD)

—john ephland



## DR. JOHN

**IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD**—Warner Bros. 9 25889-1: MAKING WHOOPEE!; CANDY; ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE; MY BUDDY; IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD; BLACK NIGHT; DON'T LET THE SUN CATCH YOU CRYIN'; LOVE FOR SALE; MORE THAN YOU KNOW.

**Personnel:** Dr. John, all vocals and keyboards; Larry Williams, synthesizer (cuts 1, 3, 6); Paul Jackson, acoustic guitar (1); Hugh McCracken, guitar (2, 4-9); Abe Laboriel, bass (1, 3); Marcus Miller, bass (4-7, 9); David Barard, drums (2, 8); Harvey Mason, drums (1, 3, 6); Jeff Porcaro, drums (4, 5, 7, 9); Herlin Riley, drums (2, 8); Ralph Burns, horn arrangements (1, 3, 6); Marty Paich, string and horn arrangements (2, 4, 5, 7-9); Rickie Lee Jones, vocals (1); David (Fathead) Newman, sax solo (2); Joel Peskin, sax solo (3).

★ ★ ★ ★

The title tells it all. Well, almost. One of the

nicest things about this swing through Memory Lane is the way old Mac Rebennack, unlike some of the younger generation from his native New Orleans but like his peers the Nevilles, isn't so respectful of any traditions that he's afraid to slop 'em around, then put his own croaking gris-gris stamp on them.

So what you get here is him mucking up a bunch of oldies-but-goodies—just scan the list above. He's got some cream-of-the-crop sessioners backing him, some fine arrangements filling out the tunes, and his own inimitable keyboard tinklings that come out of that long, long Crescent City line of great professors that in the last generation yielded the likes of Longhair, Booker, Toussaint, Art Neville, Larry Williams, and him. And across the whole collection he scrawls that unmistakable pinched rasp he uses to sing with, meandering in his understated way around notes that fall between any keyboard's cracks.

Idiosyncratic, yes. Laid-back with nothing much to prove, yes. Good-natured fun, yes. Your move. (reviewed on LP) —*gene santoro*



## WYNTON MARSALIS

**THE MAJESTY OF THE BLUES**—Columbia 45091: *THE MAJESTY OF THE BLUES (THE PUHEEMAN STRUT)*; *HICKORY DICKORY DOCK*; *THE NEW ORLEANS FUNCTION: THE DEATH OF JAZZ*; *PREMATURE AUTOPSIES (SERMON)*; *OH, BUT ON THE THIRD DAY (HAPPY FEET BLUES)*. (60:03 minutes)

**Personnel:** Marsalis, trumpet; Wes Anderson, alto saxophone; Todd Williams, tenor and soprano saxophone; Marcus Roberts, piano; Reginald Veal, bass; Herlin Riley, drums. Additional personnel on *THE NEW ORLEANS FUNCTION*: Teddy Riley, trumpet; Dr. Michael White, clarinet; Freddie Lonzo, trombone; Danny Barker, banjo; Rev. Jeremiah Wright Jr., narration.

★ ★ ★

Wynton Marsalis' mission on *The Majesty of The Blues*, Stanley Crouch tells us, is to present music that "investigates the gutbucket majesty of the blues and explores the ceremonial depths of a tradition that has brought about the most original aesthetic mutations in the music of America."

In other words, this isn't just a blues album. It's an attempt to musically *analyze* the blues in the context of the entire jazz tradition. That's a big chore for any musician, even one as serious and scholarly as Wynton Marsalis. He doesn't entirely succeed, but it's still a laudable—if flawed—effort.

Marsalis' focal point is New Orleans, his hometown and the city that has played a

crucial role in the development of various musical forms—blues, jazz, rhythm & blues, rock, soul—that are really overlapping colors in the spectrum of American Music. The album begins brilliantly. The title cut is a long, elegant piece that acknowledges the styles of many great American musicians while making its own statement about the blues. "Hickory Dickory Dock" is an effective complement: a light, swinging tune that draws on ragtime, gospel, and Monk.

Then the project collapses under the weight of its own agenda. "The New Orleans Function"

is a suite that parallels a New Orleans funeral: the dirge played on the way to the cemetery, the sermon at the graveside, then the joyous march back, celebrating the soul's ascent to heaven. The music is well-crafted and convincingly authentic, thanks to the New Orleans musicians who augment Marsalis' working band. Unfortunately, however, Marsalis uses the suite as a vehicle for a pretentious and overblown statement about the so-called "death of jazz" and its resurrection (at the hands, we might assume, of its self-appointed

CONTINUED ON PAGE 33

# Guitar Monsters on ECM

## RALPH TOWNER

RALPH TOWNER  
GARY PEACOCK  
MARKUS STOCKHAUSEN  
PAUL McCANDLESS  
JERRY GRANELLI  
CITY OF EYES

Ralph Towner  
CITY OF EYES  
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## JOHN ABERCROMBIE

JOHN ABERCROMBIE  
MARC JOHNSON  
PETER ERSKINE

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by Art Lange

**"C**ertain artists are absolute. Their work is profound and pure and cannot comfortably be used . . . to further causes other than itself. . . . It is work that is nothing but surface, an arrogant and above all joyous creation that resists or subverts interpretation, and that pulverizes ideas for the sake of the one, the sublime form, past ideology, past compromise. Such artists are, in a real sense, beyond criticism, since the authority of their work is an unsullied presence, so that their weaker productions are always more interesting and valuable than the best work of that artist who works outside of, as it were, a *gestalt*. . . ."

So wrote Gilbert Sorrentino of fellow poet Basil Bunting. But the analogy holds with certain musicians, too, notably **Steve Lacy**. Still, there's a curious irony to Lacy's art: so pure and consistent is his own playing that the environment he performs in takes on added importance—but only to the audience. In other words, Lacy's high level of invention—his *presence*—holds our attention, so that his various recordings must frequently be judged on the quality of his collaborators, or the musical context. As in this survey; eight recent CDs from this most prolific of jazzmen, none of which share a similar personnel.

Chronologically, the first is *Morning Joy* (hat ART CD 6014, 68:35 minutes), a live recording from '86 by a quartet including longtime cohorts Steve Potts, bassist Jean-Jacques Avenel, and drummer Oliver Johnson. The two-sax front line of Lacy and Potts is remarkably complementary; they solo from fundamentally different perspectives, and in ensemble they can support, contrast, riff, trade, or unite in exciting fashion. This is a hot, spontaneous blowing date, with plenty of meaty moments—Lacy's soprano threatening to squirt out of our hearing range on the jovial "Prospectus"; the always underrated Potts' deep, mysterious blues playing (closely followed in his footsteps by Avenel) on "Wickets"; the horns lurching against the swinging rhythm section on the title tune; the all-out push, especially Potts, on "In Walked Bud." Only the harsh "As Usual," harkening back to the free-form frenzy of the '60s, fails to inspire this exuberant crew.

Another quartet, this one replacing Potts with baritonist/altoist Charles Tyler, recorded *One Fell Swoop* (Silkheart SHCD 103, 53:15) four months later. For all of his heady, adventurous playing on his own discs, Tyler here sounds conventional, even lethargic on this "Wickets." The dramatic four-part invention of "Keepsake" can't be sustained over nearly nine minutes, and the measured, martial cadences of Tyler's "The Adventures Of" are hard to swing. If he had continued to characterize his playing with the feverishly expressive rage he confronts on take two of "One Fell Swoop," the energy level of this session would have been greater, and might have matched the intense logic of Lacy's lines.

Lacy's working sextet (including Potts, Avenel, Johnson, plus pianist Bobby Few and vocalist/violinist Irene Aebi) is heard to good advantage on *The Gleam* (Silkheart SHCD



COLLIS H. DAVIS, JR.

102, 58:38). Their familiarity is immediately evident in the crisp rhythms, precise unisons, and comfortable interaction. Aebi's vocals reveal Lacy's structural intentions—true songs, with multiple layers to allow narrative and instrumental meaning. But *Few* is the hero of this date; his piano anchors the others' improvisations (resulting in more incisive, to-the-point playing) while his own outings (tender and surprising on "Napping," expansive à la McCoy on "The Gleam") keep the excitement level high. This version of "As Usual" is a case in point—Potts' entrance is a scream of anger and objection to "business as usual," and *Few*, Avenel, and Johnson sustain a bluesy mood which in turn provokes Lacy's thoughtful paraphrases. Parts of this "Keepsake" sound like an exotic soundtrack for a Jon Hall '50s South Sea film, and *Few*'s rubato-laden solo supplies a dreamlike ambiance. All told, *The Gleam* displays Lacy's full-group conception at its best.

"I'm always after a kind of consistency and a free form . . . something that's fixed and open," as Lacy was quoted in the liner notes to *The Gleam*. You can hear this dichotomy on *Live In Budapest* (West Wind ITM 2011, 43:51), where the skeletal duo of Lacy and Potts strip the flesh off of ensemble-oriented compositions like a Giacometti pencil sketch. Their see-saw equilibrium offers two-part inventions of linear resolve, with no loss of wit or energy. Together, they confuse solo and accompaniment, foreground and background, and, naturally, there's more space, more freedom to explore varieties of tempo and tessitura. Hence Lacy's most expressionistic phrasing (smears, slurs, squeaks) and Potts' Kirk-like dual-horn background riffs. The pair provide plenty of atmosphere; "Cliches" becomes a jig, and "Morning Joy" contains more of a melismatic, alternately Mid-Eastern and Near-Eastern tinge than the previous quartet version.

Lacy's concert with young British percussionist Steve Argüelles (*Image*, Ah-Um CD 001, 52:26, available from New Note Distributors, Electron House, Cray Ave., St. Mary Cray, Orpington, Kent BR 5 3RP, England) is more a duel than a duet. The percussionist's technique is subtle, not flashy, contrary, and discontinuous—nothing stays the same for very long, and he creates little or no momentum, pulse, or continuity. For the most part, Lacy proceeds unconcerned, but unconnected; soprano sax and drums are out-of-synch throughout. This causes slow motion, making Lacy's phrasing seem even more malleable, rubbery, but pensive. They almost come together on a quasi-Latin "Blinks," and by the sixth tune, "Twilight," Argüelles has changed his strategy; as he turns slyly aggressive and ornery, Lacy reacts with quiet, small-voiced gestures.

The trio of Lacy, pianist Eric Watson, and bassist John Lindberg could have used a touch of Argüelles' eccentricity. Weakest when developing a chamber music delicacy, *The Amiens Concert* (Label Bleu LBLC 6512, 46:46) finds Lacy as a role player in a program primarily penned by Watson. Most of the themes are multi-sectional, but hold too much in reserve. Watson likes rhapsodic structures, and is too rigid uptempo—the staccato "Juggernaut," for example, requires Lindberg's percussiveness to goose Lacy into high gear. The saxist's "Holding" doesn't receive the loose, casual flow it craves—the ensemble is tense, and Lacy sounds hemmed-in. Lindberg's "The Terrace" produces some impassioned playing, but what successful moments are here are due to Lacy's resolute determination.

On *Your Tonight Is My Tomorrow* (Owl 047CD, 44:31), the substitution of Jean-Paul Celea's bass for Lindberg's and the addition of aggressive drummer Aaron Scott helps kick some life into "Punching Paich Patch"—the theme has rambunctious possibilities, but the airy interludes are dangerously diffuse, and Lacy and Watson tussle with the material without giving it shape. Similarly, the insistent hammering bass of "Situation Tragedy" suggests an impending, rather than final, explosion; the situation is unfortunately defused before it's adequately resolved. Lacy provides mournful moments on the more appropriately titled "Last Request," but his effort is like pushing a boulder uphill; the pianist's poking and prodding at the notes suspends progress but offers no release. Curiously, it's the leader's trio numbers, sans Lacy, where Watson's best licks arrive—the rolling, real-McCoy rhythms of "Walking Duet" and the attractive pastoral melodies reminiscent of early Jarrett on the title tune.

*The Door* (RCA CD 3049-2N, 59:13) is a deceptively accessible sampler placing Lacy in various settings. The quintet tracks (sans Aebi) swing convincingly—"Blinks" explodes full force from the very beginning, with Potts cunningly avoiding conventional phrasing and Lacy considered, like traipsing through a minefield; Monk's misleadingly titled "Ugly Beauty," a nostalgic waltz conveyed with intimacy and elegance. "The Breath," a drums-and-soprano duet, shows how telepathic Oliver Johnson is; Bobby Few's romantic piano nudges Lacy along in their sentimental duet "Forgetful"; Avenel's African Sanza (thumb piano) suits the saxist's repetitions and paraphrased patterns without forced exoticism in "Cliches." The choice of Bud Powell's "Coming Up" reveals something special about Lacy's ear; one of Bud's most abstract, Monkish pieces set to a curt, staccato rhythmic pattern, the pianist crushes chords, repeats riffs, and realigns disjointed, elliptical phrases. Lacy's version forgoes piano, and his self-absorbed, intricate spirals are alien to the rhythm section's bopish clatter—but fits, shrewdly.

Finally, "Virgin Jungle" adds ex-Ellington drummer Sam Woodyard's snake-charmer rolls and punctuation to the ensemble's spiky racket. (This cut suggests—the Soul Note duet with Mal Waldron, *Sempre Amore*, notwithstanding—how thrilling a Lacy sextet recording of early Ellingtonia would be.) Through it all, Steve Lacy perseveres. **db**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31  
saviour).

The centerpiece of the suite is a pompous "sermon" written by Stanley Crouch. I find it curious, given Marsalis' ongoing war of words with the musical press and this magazine in particular, that he finds it necessary to employ a critic to explain his every move. Although Crouch's essays were easy enough to skim (or ignore) as liner notes, this time we're forced to sit through a 2,000 word thesis on truth, justice, and "the Constitutional orchestra of American life" delivered by the Rev. Jeremiah Wright. It's a bore. Even worse, it's *hype*: another blatant attempt by Crouch to elevate Marsalis' status by constantly intoning the names of the jazz pantheon: Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, and John Coltrane.

Wynton Marsalis' music doesn't need sycophantic program notes and "sermons" to make its points. It's good enough to speak for itself. Whether it's as good as the music of Armstrong, Ellington, Parker, and Coltrane, time—not Stanley Crouch—will tell.

A final point: The cover art of the album is Henri Matisse's "Icarus." Icarus, you'll recall, was the mythical lad who attached wings with wax, took off, and got carried away with the freedom of flight. Thinking himself a god, he flew too close to the sun. The heat melted the wax, the wings came off, and Icarus fell into the sea. There's a lesson in there somewhere. (reviewed on CD) —jim roberts



**STRATA INSTITUTE**

**C-I-P-H-E-R S-Y-N-T-A-X**—JMT 834 425-2:  
SLANG; BED STUY; TURN OF EVENTS; DECREPIDUS;  
IHNGAT DOWN; MICRO-MOVE; WILD; HUMANTIC;  
ABACUS; IHNGAT. (51:57 minutes)

**Personnel:** Steve Coleman, alto sax; Greg Osby, soprano and alto sax, pitchbender; David Gilmore, guitar (cuts 1-3, 5, 7-10); Bob Hurst, bass (1-5, 7-10); Tani Tabbal, drums (1, 4, 9); Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums, percussion (1-3, 5, 7-10).

★ ★ ★

I really wanted to like this album more, but the more I played it the more its problems jumped at my face.

I haven't heard many recordings by Coleman or Osby that actually manage to capture what they sound like live. For some reason, Coleman's horn live always gets a bit bigger and cries the blues with more of an ache, and his music generally opens up and packs a more visceral wallop, where the studio makes it seem more abstract and intellectualized.

That means, for instance, that the one-chord funky vamp he and Osby are both so fond of doesn't translate very well to disc—that fiercer, live edge that keeps its crossrhythms cutting at, say, The Knitting Factory, dwindles on tape to a kind of mildly interesting crosstalk with some intense interludes. In turn, this lends a certain unwarranted credibility to critics who attack the various M-BASE projects as just p.r. gimmicks and/or fusion retreads.

Of course, there are major differences between the M-BASERS and the fusioners. Fusion is about long solos and flashy technique: the best that even the outstanding fusion outfits could usually manage, in terms of crosstalk, was simultaneous monologues. M-BASE material tends to be about conversation in a way more traceable to African ensemble playing and its jazz manifestations (Bird and Max, Miles and Tony, Trane and Elvin) and funk than to mainstream rock or hard-bop, which are primarily what fed into fusion.

For Coleman, for instance, the different instruments, from drums to horns, all play highly flexible roles that can change at any point during a tune—the drums may suddenly erupt into a lead voice, for instance, while the alto keeps time to compensate, in much the same way you'd lay back while a friend is talking to you, then to talk when he's done, interjecting comments along the way. There's a lot of that subtle interplay on *C-I-P-H-E-R S-Y-N-T-A-X*, but it's not rendered as vividly as it is live, stays too much in a polite tea-time vein, and doesn't really open up into a full-blooded kind of discussion.

And speaking of discussion, *C-I-P-H-E-R S-Y-N-T-A-X* is described as "a dialect of the M-BASE language"—which brings us to the problem of p.r. The M-BASE folks—at least, Coleman and Osby—spend some serious time thinking up names for what they do. But do we really need a multiplication of terminologies in a field as fragmented as contemporary jazz, even if those terminologies are preemptive, intended to prevent the perjorative critical mislabeling of emergent musics that happened with jazz and bebop? What do the names accomplish beyond confusion? If they have a particular significance—and I'm aware that they do—why not include at least a cursory explanation somewhere so that the curious public could get hip to them?; especially since the whole M-BASE idea revolves around larger notions of music's role in culture and society, its educative and social functions. Without an explanation, jargon just obscures. What does it mean to be a dialect of the M-BASE language? What are the other dialects? How do they differ and overlap in function, shape, impact?

But after all these questions have faded, there's the music. Technically, it's pretty flawless: Osby and Coleman are developing into ever-more-flexible players, Smitty Smith is one of the most adept drummers around, Gilmore and Hurst both know how to move in and out of the pocket with easy grace. But flawless doesn't mean meaty, burning, passionate, fierce. In this case, it's good enough to be interesting, lukewarm enough to be disappointing to anyone who's ever seen Five Elements tackle similar grooves and themes on stage with a controlled but rabid vengeance. (reviewed on CD) —gene santoro

FRANZ KOGLMANN

**ORTE DER GEOMETRIE**



Guest Artist  
Ron Blake

**It's** hard to build an international reputation in the arts — to overcome prejudices of geography, culture, society, and political dogma. Especially so in music, where upstart America has had to come to terms with centuries of European classical tradition, while Europe desperately (and, often, successfully) strives to forge distinctive styles within that relatively recent American art form, jazz.

The Viennese composer/flugelhornist Franz Koglmann certainly warrants such international attention. However, he is working under an additional handicap — his music cannot be categorized under a single label. While he has used "standard" jazz themes for his rigorous deconstructionist and imagist arrangements (his previous Hat Hut CD, *About Yesterdays Ezzthetics*, is a singularly rewarding example) he is not, in the common usage of the term, a jazz musician; nor is he to be considered a classical artist despite the fact that his compositions often deftly draw on harmonic attitudes developed by post-WWI classicists. His view of music is philosophically expansive and conceptually vigorous; the combinations of sounds he invokes are exhilarating and unique. He is in debt to no single time or place, style or theory as his scores are the result of a conscientious mingling of intellect and emotion which is highly personal — and all the more communicative for that. He is, in other words, an individual.

And yet, he cannot be divorced from his environment. Viennese traditions course through his veins, fuel his emotions and feed his intellect. The city's history reveals in opposition: Old World gentility vs. 20th century modernism. The city of Johann Strauss Jr. and Sacherbrotle is also the city of Schoenberg and Freud. Koglmann has written of his attraction to the "continuity of life" — but in Vienna today, this means he must embrace the contrasts, even the contradictions, such a potentially schizophrenic stance implies. His music reflects his philosophical choice: compositions arising out of an inner compulsion and not an abstract or preconceived formula. Episodes of aggression, tenderness, agony, humor, vulnerability, violence, romance erupt and resolve in the most remarkable, unexpected ways. Exquisite pinpoints of color and texture, arrangements of clarity and dramatic atmosphere, all with an undercurrent of tension and urgency that triggers subconscious emotions, feelings which often go unacknowledged, unspoken for fear of embarrassment or misunderstanding.

Koglmann's music is so stylistically diverse and emotionally generous because he draws inspiration from many places, revealing a kinship with other arts — poetry, painting, architecture — which enrich his life.

Franz Koglmann has spoken of a concept, resolutely European, possibly Austrian, perhaps unique to Vienna, or himself: "precision in melancholy." I don't presume to understand all that it means, but I can sense a particle of it in this music — in the pain of loss, the joy of craftsmanship, the pleasure of friendship, the necessary loneliness of the individual, the fulfillment of art. That this much can be gleaned from mere sounds, in the air makes their creator worthy of attention, respect and admiration.

— Art Lange  
January 1989

FRANZ KOGLMANN

**ABOUT YESTERDAYS EZZTHETICS**



Steve Lacy  
Klaus Koch  
Fitz Husar  
Mark Anderl

FRANZ KOGLMANN  
ABOUT YESTERDAYS EZZTHETICS hat ART CD 6003  
ORTE DER GEOMETRIE hat ART CD 6018

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## JOEY DEFRANCESCO

**ALL OF ME**—Columbia 44463: *BLUES FOR J.; CLOSE TO YOU; CARBON COPY; ALL OF ME; 30TH STREET STATION; ONE FOR C. C.; L. G. BLUES; PETALA.*

**Personnel:** DeFrancesco, Hammond organ; ENSONIQ EPS, SQ80, MIRAGE, SDP1 piano; Lou Volpe, guitar; Alex Blake, electric bass (cuts 2, 5-8), acoustic bass (3, 4); Buddy Williams, drums; Bashuri Johnson, percussion; Houston Person, tenor saxophone (7, 8); 16-piece string section (2, 4, 6); eight-piece horn section (3, 8).

★ ★ ★

The kid swings. He's from Philadelphia, home of the jazz organ brotherhood. He's toured with Miles, which is another story altogether, not

part of this album. The liner notes include clothing credits. He's 17, a prodigy.

What do you do at 17? You copy, you create. One leads to the other. This album is more copy. The spirit of Jimmy Smith is all around: the sound of his Blue Notes of the '50s and Verves of the '60s, the funky organ combo sound where jazz, r&b, soul, and the blues meet. And here's this high school senior, a white guy at that, cooking up that greasy groove on "Blues For J.," "Carbon Copy," and "L. G. Blues."

The stereotypical organ combo never aimed for much more than a good groove and soulful improvising, and this album maintains those standards. Fusion slips in on "30th Street Station." And "Close To You," "One For C. C.," and "Petala" veer close to "easy listening." But the groove is solid, the rhythm section down-home, and the other soloists amply blues-rooted.

Still, one questions the logic of this kind of debut album when DeFrancesco obviously could have made a strong piano album. The evidence is his status as a finalist in the 1987 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition and his performances at a concert introducing the Monk Institute in Durham, North Carolina (reviewed in the April issue of **db**) and at all three Musicfest U.S.A. Finals. But, according to the record company biography, DeFrancesco prefers the organ.

*All Of Me*, then, is only part of DeFrancesco. The rest is the piano prodigy, the musician discovered and tutored by Miles, the electronic keyboard thinker of "30th Street Station," and who knows what else given the scope of jazz today. Stay tuned. (reviewed on LP)

—owen cordle



## LARRY CARLTON

**ON SOLID GROUND**—MCA 6237: *JOSIE; ALL IN GOOD TIME; THE PHILOSOPHER; LAYLA; ON SOLID GROUND; THE WAFFER; BUBBLE SHUFFLE; CHAPTER II; HONEY SAMBA; SEA SPACE.*

**Personnel:** Carlton, guitars, keyboards (cuts 3, 4), bass (8, 9); Terry Trotter, Alan Pasqua (2, 6-8, 10), Rhett Lawrence (5), David Foster (5),

## OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES . . . SOMETIMES

by Jack Sohmer

**T**he conventional critical contention is that all school bands tend to sound alike. In their efforts to instill in their students a working knowledge of contemporary standards in the fields of both jazz and pop/rock, many instructors actually encourage conformity to existing musical formulae rather than the development of their students' own creative impulses. But, as the instructors might rightfully argue, these kids need to learn the discipline of consistent, purposeful practice, the team spirit involved in sectional playing, and the rigors imposed by relevant, timely scores. Personalized solo styles will come later, they say, if the technical foundation has been well-laid.

On the plus side, however, it must be said that all of the band directors involved here appear to be exacting taskmasters, because the ensemble playing of these quite often difficult arrangements is of a very high standard indeed. But, sad to say, the propulsive quality of real swing, the forward-seeking movement of the beat, has frequently been sacrificed in these bands for a rigid, mechanical, triphammer-type pounding that is antithetical to the natural flow characteristics of jazz rhythm. Moreover, there are few improvising soloists to be heard here who even hint at an originality of thought. Most are

competent, to be sure, but their's is a faceless sort of competence which substitutes technical proficiency for meaningful self-expression.

It may come as a surprise to some, but I found the **Dallas Arts Magnet** High School record (AMHS-1988), under the direction of Bart Marantz, to be superior—from a jazz point of view—to two of the other three submissions from college ensembles. Its major attraction lies in the contributions of trumpeter/composer/arranger Roy Hargrove, whose precocious assimilation of the Clifford Brown style augurs well for the future of one so young. (Note the use of *assimilation* rather than *imitation*.) Also worthy of commendation is altman Keith Anderson, whose heated delivery and unbridled enthusiasm are reminiscent of Bobby Watson, late of The Jazz Messengers. This LP contains four tracks by The Jazz Combo, two by The Lab Singers, and two by the big band.

Equally enjoyable, although for different reasons, is *Classic*, the CD entry by The **Widener University Jazz Ensemble** (AC-14, 48:45 minutes), led by ex-Herman trumpeter John Vanore. Possibly because the group is not composed of music majors, it comes across as a far more swinging unit than those emanating from more professionally-oriented programs. The nine tracks are all superbly executed by the individual and collective sections, but the single outstanding piece is Mike Falcone's arrangement of "Round Midnight" for four a cappella saxophones. Also commendable is the quality of the recording.

The **McGill Jazz Ensemble** is directed by Gordon Foote, and its latest release, the CD *Day & Nite* (McGill 750033-2, 54:36),

features as guest star the popular sopranoist Dave Liebman, who solos on four of the eight tracks. But despite his name appeal, the soloist I found most compelling was trombonist Brad Shigeta in his all too brief contribution to Alf Clausen's "Captain Perfect," one of the only real swingers in the set.

Recorded with the high- and low-end frequency emphasis common to disco and other fusion-oriented products, The **North Texas State University One O'Clock Lab Band's** LAB 87 (NTSU LA-8701) seems to typify the approach of most contemporary academic institutions. The scores are generally geared toward the sort of mentality that finds it difficult to relate to anything but the modish and superficially exciting. Thus, we are bombarded with over-modulated, robotic drumming, the whinnying wails of hysterical guitars, screeching Kentonian trumpets, and solos constructed of little more than mindless scalar runs, all of which formulaic ingredients go to guarantee the loyal, enthusiastic support of young, indiscriminate audiences. The two exceptions here are director Neil Slater's thoughtful "No Promises" and trombonist Scott Whitfield's "G'Day, Mates."

Martin Williams put it best in his recently published *Jazz In Its Time*: "No student ensemble has to train on trendy trash that will soon be forgotten. Remember, an educator is not there to confirm the taste which students already have. In jazz, as in any other subject, a teacher is there to enlarge and develop students' taste, and give them a sound perspective on the past and its accomplishments. . . . Some of us, however, seem to have been acting as though jazz had no past worthy of serious attention." **db**

Brian Mann (9), keyboards; John Robinson, Rick Marotta (9), drums; Abraham Laboriel (1), Nathan East (2), John Pena (3, 4, 6, 7, 10), bass; Kirk Whalum, saxophone; Paulinho Da Costa (1), Michael Fisher, percussion; Dean Parks, guitar (2, 3, 7).

★ ★ ★ ★

Larry Carlton is back, in case you haven't heard. And he's taken up right where he left off. The guitarist claims some of the parts on *On Solid Ground* took hours to lay down as the nerves in his left arm repaired themselves. But every line he plays here seems straight from the heart. "Josie" (which Carlton first recorded with Steely Dan in 1977) is handled with strength and style—and his playing seems cleaner than ever. On the new "Josie," he's jamming like he did with Dan on "Kid Charlemagne."

I can remember seeing Carlton with The Crusaders, sitting on his Fender Twin on the back of the stage, his eyes closed and the bluesy fusion lines dripping from his guitar. Larry still pulls the same slight-of-hand, the same straining, bending notes that seem to rise out of nowhere. He made the guitar sing then, and now more than ever knows how to sell a melody.

John Robinson plays some adventurous drums, still in the pocket but not just formula disco-funk. Saxman Kirk Whalum distinguishes himself on "All In Good Time," making you sit up at attention with each pause of his horn. Whalum has a good sense of timing—he definitely doesn't rush things. And the unsung Terry Trotter provides great accompaniment for Carlton throughout. (reviewed on LP)

—robin tolleson



## BRANFORD MARSALIS

**TRIO JEEPY**—Columbia CX2-44199: *HOUSED FROM EDWARD; THE NEARNESS OF YOU; THREE LITTLE WORDS; MAKIN' WHOOPEE; U.M.M.G.; GUT-BUCKET STEEPY; DOXY; MAKIN' WHOOPEE (REPRISE); STARDUST; PEACE; RANDOM ABSTRACT (TAIN'S RAMPAGE).*

**Personnel:** Marsalis, tenor saxophone; Milt Anton (cuts 1-6, 8, 9), Delbert Felix (7, 10, 11), bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums.

★ ★ ½

I like Branford Marsalis. I respect his musical ability and versatility. And I've heard him play strong, creative music a number of times, in various settings, live and on record. But, for the most part, this is a disappointing release—and much of the blame, I believe, should be placed

on the shoulders of the album's producer . . . whoever that might be.

Let me explain. It used to be that record producers were men (or women) with particular knowledge or insight into the music, and, being responsible to the record company, were in charge of the session. Sometimes this meant they had total control—even to the point of choosing the sidemen and the material. But at the very least they had veto power to reject a problematic or sub-par or flawed performance, and ask for another, better take. It's

unclear who, if anyone, had such authority on this date. The album credits read "Produced by Delfeayo Marsalis for 3/5th Productions," but also add "Executive Producer: George Butler." If Delfeayo's decisions were deferential to his older brother's wishes, then the blame falls on Branford. But the point is that the majority of these tracks should not have been released.

The album definitely has an attitude problem. In among the complete cuts are snatches of in-studio banter, false starts, sloppy end-

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ings, and three or four spots where Branford wanders off-mic in the middle of a solo. All of which were, I suspect, intended to convey a casual atmosphere, but instead sound slapdash and cavalier. Unfortunately, this state-of-mind carries over into the music. It's quite possible that, aiming for spontaneity, these are mostly first or second takes; as a result, the trio often seems aimless, in need of an arrangement to anchor them.

Because of the trio instrumentation and the "blowing session" looseness, Branford is especially exposed and vulnerable. The ballads "The Nearness Of You" and "Stardust" are taken slowly, filled with trills, double-timing, long held notes, boppy interjections, and exaggerated tonal effects which sound cursory, as if he's playing the saxophone instead of the music. There's no sense that he feels these songs very deeply—even the blues, "Gutbucket Steepy," seems like a technical exercise and not an emotional statement. There are lots of spots where his imagination breaks through with a remarkable, biting phrase or two, but he'll then throw it away with an ill-advised cliché or silly unconnected run. The solos lack continuity.

Not everything is a disaster. Branford scores points for an unorthodox "Doxy," his most sustained outing, and parts of the full "Makin' Whoopee" and Ornette's lovely "Peace" incorporate a bit of urgency that's missing elsewhere. (It should be mentioned that Milt Hinton is a supportive tower of strength on his tunes, while Felix and Watts pretty much stay in the background.) But too many of the cuts meander along à la "U.M.M.G."—a pleasant enough opening (why the unpleasant tenor tone, though?)—leading to a rambling solo (here falling into a rat-a-tat rhythm reminiscent of one of Charlie Rouse's lesser moments, when Monk was on a stroll) and a long vamp as interest disintegrates.

Releasing these flat, flawed performances was a mistake, and does a disservice to the talents of the musicians—especially Branford. Someone should have just said "No." (reviewed on LP) —*art lange*



## WORLD SAXOPHONE QUARTET

**RHYTHM & BLUES**—Elektra/Musician 60864: *FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY; LET'S GET IT ON; I HEARD THAT; LOOPOLY; (SITIN' ON) THE DOCK OF THE BAY; MESSIN' WITH THE KID; TRY A LITTLE TENDERNES; NEMESIS; NIGHT TRAIN.* (40:30 minutes)

**Personnel:** Julius Hemphill, alto saxophone; Oliver Lake, alto, soprano (cut 2) saxophone;

David Murray, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet (8); Hamiet Bluiett, baritone saxophone, alto clarinet (8).

★ ★ ½

## YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD SAXOPHONE QUARTET

**WHAT'S GONE**—Coppens 3002: *IMPETUS; THE SEYCHELLES; ENARTLOC; LESTER FALLS DOWN; BARPUNKTALK; SONG FOR WHAT'S GONE; HUMAROCK; HIGH TIME; EGGSHELL; GUTTOWN; FUNKY STUFF.* (61:39 minutes)

**Personnel:** Allan Chase, Ben Schachter (except cuts 5, 7, 8, 10, 11), alto, soprano saxophone; Bob Zung (5, 7, 8, 10, 11), alto saxophone; Tom Hall, tenor saxophone; Steve Adams, baritone, soprano saxophone.

★ ★ ★ ½

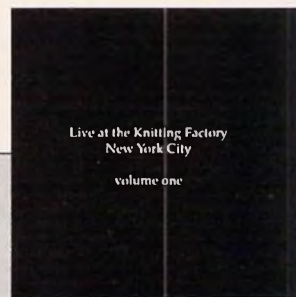
Before the triumph of the electric guitar, the saxophone was the r&b axe supreme. Honking was its forté and delight: the sax was made to yawp. So how to explain one listener's disappointment with *Rhythm And Blues* (especially given the strength of the WSQ's other Elektra/Nonesuch discs, *Plays Duke Ellington* and the underappreciated *Dances And Ballads*)? The problem *isn't* that they're playing soul hits in the first place—this chamber group has the earthiness to make the idea seem a good one. But there's a difference between earthiness and sloppy intonation. Where Julius Hemphill's radical retake of "'A' Train" had been written to sound radically dissonant, this music sounds slapdash, without enhancing the concept.

The major disappointment is WSQ's cover of "Dock Of The Bay," for which Oliver Lake has converted Otis Redding's whistling exit into the saxes' pivotal riff. The lead alto (Lake, I believe) retraces the line of Otis' vocal, but replaces its soul-baring sadness with braying abrasiveness. It's belligerently subtle. Conversely, the other Redding cover, a boozily loose "Try A Little Tenderness" with David Murray in the lead, has none of the wrenching urgency of the original—on that version, the rising chords that climax a chorus hit you like a piledriver. Here they're too limp to connect. (Listen to both versions back-to-back and you'll hear the point.) The best selections are Jimmy Forrest's riffarama "Night Train" and two non-covers with r&b spirit: Hemphill's "Loopology," and Hamiet Bluiett's ballad-with-a-hopping-break "Nemesis," with its fetching low clarinets.

The organizing principles employed by Your Neighborhood Saxophone Quartet suggest that without the WSQ's example they might not exist: hear Ben Schachter's peppy "Impetus," Allan Chase's delicate "Song For What's Gone," or Steve Adams' plaintive "Eggshell." So please don't construe the above ratings to mean the younger Q's superior to the elder—only that they acquit themselves better here. Coincidentally, they often inhabit r&b-ish turf; on last year's *The Walkman* (Coppens 3001), they covered a Big Jay McNeely tune. On *What's Gone*, they play a sanitized take of Blood

Ulmer's "High Time" and Kool and The Gang's "Funky Stuff." The latter wouldn't sound out of place on *Rhythm & Blues*; its bari-sax bassline runs close to "For The Love Of Money"'s. The quartet flash other references too; Tom Hall's "Humarock" reveals a playful Dutch tango strain. (The album was taped in the Netherlands.) This foursome lacks the WSQ's heavy-weight soloists—though there's an attractively serpentine (if not backwards-Coltrane) soprano break on Schachter's "Enartloc"—but the ensemble work is tight and in the pocket: a testament to the positive influence of WSQ's best instincts. (reviewed on CD)

—*kevin whitehead*



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**LIVE AT THE KNITTING FACTORY**—A&M 5242: *ST. CROIX; ATSUI YORU NO KAWA; DECOMPOSER BY A NECK; HARKENING; IRONCIDE; OPEN HEART; ANGEL CARVER SAX; PIZZA PARTY.*

**Personnel:** Pippin Barnett, drums (cut 1); George Cartwright, sax (1); Ann Rupel, bass (1); Davey Williams, guitar (1); Samm Bennett, electronic percussion (2); David Fulton, guitar (2); Yuval Gabay, drums (2); Kumiko Kimoto, vocals and percussion (2); Kyle Sims, bass (2); Curtis Fowlkes, trombone (3); Brad Jones, bass (3); Ray Nathanson, sax (3); Jim Nolet, violin (3); Marc Ribot, guitar (3); E. J. Rodriguez, drums (3); Bill Ware, vibes (3); Nels Cline, guitar (4); Mark Dresser, bass (4); Mark Feldman (4); Percy Jones, bass (5); David Linton, drums (5); Elliot Sharp, guitar (5); Ed Greer, bass (6); Steven Marsh, guitar and vocals (6); Rock Savage, percussion (6); Tom Cora, cello (7); Hans Reichel, guitar (7); Charles Burnham, vocals and percussion (8); Alva Rogers, vocals (8); Brandon Ross, guitar and vocals (8).

★ ★ ★ ½

Since it opened three years ago, The Knitting Factory has become a crucial nexus for various overlapping and distinct musical scenes around New York that for years had had no continuing place to test-drive their ideas in front of an audience. For that alone, it's been invaluable.

By having few preconceptions about what kinds of music would fit their club—most venues around New York have a pretty strict sense of what they exclude—they've managed to overturn conventional wisdom and prove that even some of the odder oddballs hovering at the music business' edge can build a following, if they're allowed the time and space to connect with like-minded listeners. In the process, they've managed to wring recognition from the establishment-likes of George Wein, who gave them some room to huddle under his umbrella for this year's JVC Jazz Festival.

This record is an intro, a peek at what The Knitting Factory does over, say, a typical week. Like any sampler, its single biggest flaw is the one-cut-per-artist syndrome: just when you're getting into something, it's over. And, as with any sampler, it's easy enough to argue with the decisions about who to include on the album when you know what the options were. But for its category-ignoring practice, its general sense of celebration, its refusal to parade "big names," and its sheer range of sonic approaches, this album is worth checking out. From the gritty glide of Curlew's "St. Croix" to the careening classicism of Dresser/Feldman/Cline's "Harkening," from the blistering raunch of Scanners' "Ironcide" to the almost sing-along feel of Alva Rogers' "Pizza Party," it's like opening a few aural windows into the atmospheric tumult of New York's music mix. (reviewed on LP) —*gene santoro*



## BOBBY BRADFORD/ JOHN CARTER QUINTET

**COMIN' ON**—hat ART CD 6016: *COMIN' ON*; *ODE TO THE FLOWER MAIDEN*; *ENCOUNTER*; *SUNDAY AFTERNOON JAZZ SOCIETY BLUES*; *ROOM 408*. (74:57 minutes)

**Personnel:** Bradford, cornet; Carter, clarinet; Don Preston, piano, synthesizer; Richard Davis, bass (cuts 1, 3-5); Andrew Cyrille, drums (1, 3-5).

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Bradford and Carter have collaborated for decades, but this 1988 live date is their first co-led combo recording since 1972. Starting in 1969, they recorded two for Bob Thiele's Flying Dutchman label—which beg reissue under Thiele's Portrait imprint—and two for Revelation. But their partnership hasn't gotten stale. It's gotten better.

They're a perfect match, expressive stylists who cannily exploit their axes' pitfalls: the clarinetist seasons his lines with throaty squeals; the cornetist makes pivotal use of roughhewn flurries and split-tones and wayward low notes. But they're no primitives; On Carter's "Comin' On," Bradford's fatback lyricism is built on creative paraphrases of a tuneful riff. He digs into the burnished ring of brass as deeply as Carter does into the rich sound of wood.

That's what makes their blend so profound: the physical union of wood and metal, the organism and the alloy, the natural and the

manufactured. The steel-stringed bass and the drum set are made with wood and metal, too, so the blending resonates out, permeating the band's sound. Don Preston's microchip keyboards expand that sound, opening it out. (He's listed as playing piano too, but it sounds like he's playing piano on synthesizer.) This sonic chameleon's low-key ghostly harmonies add a haunting quality to Carter's "Ode," sans bass and drums—he sours where blander synth players sweeten.

On "Encounter," Preston buzzes like a bee strafing a picnic, hisses like an angry cat, and tolls like Big Ben—all in the first three minutes. (The shortest track runs almost 10, so everyone has room to stretch. But there's no filler.) The underappreciated Richard Davis' relentlessly driving ostinato keeps the intensity level high; the always splendid Cyrille (like Bradford and Preston, a vet of Carter's octet) weaves around that pile-driving bass figure with no flagging of momentum. "Encounter"'s a riveting exercise in sustained intensity and tension.

Over the years, Carter and Bradford have been plagued by easy comparisons to Ornette and Don Cherry. True, there are Ornette echoes in Carter's jaunty "Sunday" and Bradford's singsong "Room 408." But this wonderful group sounds like none other, and, boy, is it good to have 'em back. (reviewed on CD)

—*kevin whitehead*



## THAD JONES/ MEL LEWIS

**THAD JONES/MEL LEWIS QUARTET**—A&M/Horizon CD 0830: *BUT NOT FOR ME*; *THIS CAN'T BE LOVE*; *AUTUMN LEAVES*; *WHAT IS THIS THING*; *LOVE FOR SALE*; *THINGS AINI' WHAT THEY USED TO BE*. (63:35 minutes)

**Personnel:** Jones, cornet; Harold Danko, piano; Rufus Reid, bass; Lewis, drums.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

**MEL LEWIS AND FRIENDS**—A&M/Horizon CD 0823: *AIN'T NOTHIN' NU*; *A CHILD IS BORN*; *MOOSE THE MOOCHE*; *DE SAMBA*; *WINDFLOWER*; *SHO NUFF DID*; *MEL LEWIS RHYTHM*. (45:08 minutes)

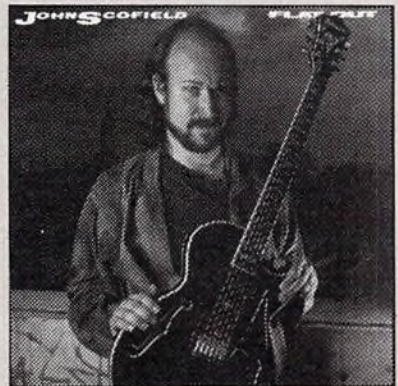
**Personnel:** Freddie Hubbard, Cecil Bridgewater, trumpets; Michael Brecker, tenor saxophone; Greg Herbert, alto saxophone; Hank Jones, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Lewis, drums.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

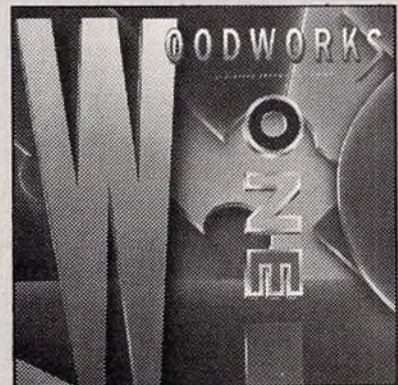
**NEW LIFE: DEDICATED TO MAX GORDON**—A&M/Horizon CD0810: *GREETINGS AND SALUTATIONS*; *LOVE AND HARMONY*; *LITTLE RASCAL ON A ROCK*; *FOREVER LASTING*; *LOVE TO ONE IS ONE TO LOVE*; *THANK YOU*; *CHERRY JUICE*. (44:35 minutes)

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**Personnel:** Jones, flugelhorn, trumpet; Al Porcino, Waymon Reed, Sinclair Acey, Cecil Bridgewater, Lew Soloff, Steve Furtado, Jim Bossy, Jon Faddis, trumpets; Bill Campbell, Janice Robinson, John Mosca, Earl McIntyre, trombones; Julius Watkins, Roy Alonge, Peter Gordon, Earl Chapin, Jim Buffington, french horns; Don Butterfield, tuba; Lou Marini, Jerry Dodgion, Eddie Xiques, Frank Foster, Greg Herbert, Pepper Adams, reeds; Rasan Mfalme, Barry Finnerty, guitar; George Mraz, Steve Gilmore, bass; Roland Hanna, Walter Norris, piano; Leonard Gibbs, congas; Lewis, drums.

★ ★ ½

*New Life* was recorded in the mid-'70s, when the Jones/Lewis band was about 10 years old and had grown restless for new sounds and changes to tackle. I wish I could say this CD was a lot of fun, but it wasn't. Surely, it is, well, interesting—a word that may sound like an accolade but is really a question: To wit, if this is so damn well-crafted and impeccably played, why can't I respond? You doubt yourself, not the music, which is undeniably pretty. Thad Jones' flugelhorn, for instance, is coolly silhouetted before gently burnished harmonies on "Love To One." You have to respect it. But ultimately, the compass of doubt swings back to the music. There is a tight-lipped seriousness about so much of it. Even a vampy 12-bar blues called "Greeting And Salutations"

(which has some wonderful Lewis drumming) is prefaced by a pretentious non sequitur of an abstraction. Ellington and Strayhorn turned out a good deal of music like this once upon a time—music in which clever voicings and weaves camouflaged thematic hollowness; and I suppose they got away with it because they were Ellington and Strayhorn. But not Thad Jones, who did most of the charts. I hate to sound like a grim-faced movie critic coming from one of Woody Allen's neo-Bergman works, but hey fella, where are the jokes? Where's the swing of those early Solid State LPs? There's really only one track here—"Cherry Juice"—where one might say to Leonard Feather in a *Blindfold Test*, "Yeah, that sounds like Jones/Lewis."

In *Mel Lewis And Friends*, recorded in 1976, Mel puts some of the fun back in the music leading a stock company of players in various configurations (quartets to septets) through a few standards and originals. Hank Jones is consistently at the top of his considerable form, and Hubbard and Brecker add muscle and weight to the material. Lewis' moment comes unexpectedly in a ballad performance of "Windflower" in one of the most artful examples of the slow drum solo you're likely to find.

In the *Jones/Lewis Quartet*, from a live club performance in 1977, the players apply themselves to a program of classics—Gershwin, Porter, Rogers, etc. Oddly, the longest of these

three CDs (63 minutes) falls upon the smallest group. A 17-minute excavation of "But Not For Me" stretches the group's creative resources a bit thin, and raises the question of how wide a creative arc one player can play one theme and sustain it with sufficient interest. In this case, while there are intriguing parts—especially when a staccato Thad Jones plays against 4/4 rhythm in which a guitar suddenly seems to materialize (probably from Harold Danko's piano strings)—the piece lacks cohesiveness; although the perception of the same performance by the live audience may have been different. Jones' cornet is crisp and incisive as the group's centerpiece. And Danko, using the base clef of his piano, brings a starkly inventive concept to "Autumn Leaves" that nearly steals the CD. Rufus Reid's walking bass compliments Danko to perfection. There's also some fierce swinging on "What Is This Thing." The overall feeling is completely relaxed and informal. (reviewed on CD)

—john mcdonough

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## THE NYLONS

**ROCKAPPELLA**—Windham Hill 1085: *LOVE THIS IS LOVE; DRIFT AWAY; WILDFIRE; ANOTHER NIGHT LIKE THIS; NO STONE UNTURNED; COUNT MY BLESSINGS; (ALL I HAVE TO DO IS) DREAM; POISON IVY; BUSY TONIGHT; RISE UP.* (37:23 minutes)

**Personnel:** Marc Connors, Paul Cooper, Arnold Robinson, Claude Desjardins, vocals; Dave Darlington (cut 1), Claude Desjardins (2,5), Matthew Gerard (2,5), John Morales (3,4,10), Rob Yale (9), Jon Goldsmith (9), Jeffrey Goldsmith (10), drum programming, percussion.

★ ★ ★

## NEW YORK VOICES

**NEW YORK VOICES**—GRP GRD-9589: *NATIONAL AMNESIA; CARAVAN; TOP SECRET; DARE THE MOON; NOW OR NEVER; WHO KNOWS?; STREET PARTY; BAROQUE SAMBA; 'ROUND MIDNIGHT; COME HOME.* (55:56 minutes)

**Personnel:** Peter Eldridge, Kim Nazarian, Sara Krieger, Darmon Meader, Caprice Fox, vocals; John Werking, Peter Eldridge (7), keyboards; Chuck Bergeron, Tom Barney (6), bass; Tommy Igoe (1,3,5-8), Peter Grant (2,4,9), drums; Darmon Meader (1,3,4,6,7), tenor sax; Bob Christianson, synth programming (1); Steve Weisbart, sequencer programming (1,3,5); Sammy Figueroa, percussion (1,4-8).

★ ★ ½

In looks as well as sound, there is no escaping comparisons to that other New York vocal

group. They've probably heard "Manhattan Transfer, Jr." enough without me saying it. Imitation is a form of flattery, which is fine, but New York Voices never let their own personalities through, and can't fight the programmed stuffiness of the arrangements.

There are moments when the group busts out—the soulful voice of Caprice Fox on "Top Secret" with an ear-catching funk track, the grand theme of "Now Or Never" (with a heartfelt vocal from Kim Nazarian) that catches the group at their best. Not to say they sound like "Up With People," but there is a certain wholesome enthusiasm and spiritualism brewing, a cockiness that often turns into wild scatting for a few select measures. Fox turns in the most memorable scat solo on "Secret," though they all try to top each other every time out. And they often seem like window dressing on top of already crowded instrumental tracks. That's not the group's fault—it would be nice to hear them with some material that sounded more their own.

New York Voices may be showier, flashier, but The Nylons make a more impressive musical statement with *Rockapella*, a complete program of vocals and percussion only. It's complete in that there's always an interesting sound in the air, but there's also room enough to enjoy it all. The Nylons have a doo-wop sound much of the time, largely because of the human bassman blowing in the background. But they really cover a variety of rhythm & blues styles.

The Nylons' arrangements seem made to order. On the a cappella rhythm track to "No Stone Unturned" there is wonderful use of space. "Poison Ivy" never knocks you out, but it makes you feel good. Rather than try to impress or outdo, The Nylons choose the band concept, and it pays off.

They can rock, as their remake of "Drift Away" proves, and their vocal arranger, Peter Mann, is sympathetic to the group's strengths. The Nylons can breathe within their songs, really let loose and feel it, and that makes all the difference in the world. (reviewed on CD)

—robin tolleson

## Waxing On

### FUSION RENEGADES

by Bill Milkowski

**ROLAND VASQUEZ:** *THE TIDES OF TIME* (Soundwings SWC-2106) ★★★★★

**PASSPORT:** *TALK BACK* (Atlantic Jazz 81937) ★★★½

**BOBBY LYLE:** *IVORY DREAMS* (Atlantic Jazz 71938) ★★½

**JORGE DALTO:** *RENDEVOUS* (Cheetah 22222) ★★½

**ERNIE WATTS & GAMALON:** *PROJECT: ACTIVATION EARTH* (Amherst 93320) ★★★

**AHMAD MANSOUR QUARTET:** *EPISODE* (Open Sky OSR 8901-1) ★★★★★

**FULL CIRCLE:** *MYTH AMERICA* (Columbia 44474) ★★★

**DAVID MANN:** *INSIGHT* (Antilles 91050-4) ★★★★★

**RICK ZUNIGAR:** *NEW FRONTIER* (Headfirst A675-2) ★★★

**RAY OBEIDO:** *PERFECT CRIME* (Windham Hill Jazz WD-0115) ★★½

**TORSTEN DE WINKEL:** *MASTERTOUCH* (Optimism OP-3212) ★★★★★

**SPECIAL EFX:** *CONFIDENTIAL* (GRP 9581) ★★★

**HENRY MILLER:** *OPEN HOUSE* (Optimism OP-3214) ★★½

**T LAVITZ:** *AND THE BAD HABITZ* (Intimo 7-73512-2) ★★★

**SHERRY WINSTON:** *LOVE MADNESS* (Headfirst A729-2) ★★

**MICHAEL PEDECIN, JR.:** *ANGLES* (Optimism OP-3211) ★★★★★

**THE RIPPINGTONS:** *TOURIST IN PARADISE* (GRP 9588) ★★½

**BOB BERG:** *CYCLES* (Denon CY-72745) ★★★★★

They used to call it fusion music. Now it's known in industry circles as the F-word. Twenty years have gone by since Miles Davis, the Tony Williams Lifetime, the Mahavishnu Orchestra, and about a half-dozen others pioneered this new musical terrain. It was a new sound then, raw and energized, aggressive, disturbing, exciting. It was the sound of musicians reaching, probing, taking chances, and sometimes going blindly down new avenues, following their heart, as John McLaughlin put it.

Well, that initial burst of energy and enthusiasm didn't last long. Chick Corea came along and made it slicker, then Pat Metheny came along and made it softer. New age came along and introduced the wimp factor and hordes of faceless fuzak bands got on the "happy jazz" bandwagon.

In these kinder, gentler times, more and more bands are playing it safe, churning out non-threatening, formulaic music to appease the burgeoning thirtysomething set. Radio stations have popped up all over the nation, promoting this pablum while taking a hard line on just what gets on the air. Their basic criteria: 1) no lengthy solos 2) no dissonant harmonies 3) no 'out' solos 4) no distortion guitars. Lifetime and Mahavishnu wouldn't stand a chance in this musical climate. Unfortunately, some musicians have been compelled to play the game. They've watered down their intentions and are aiming for the airwaves with kinder, gentler renditions of their regular deal. It's sad, but then, airplay is directly linked to sales, and a musician has a right to eat. There are a few holdouts, a rare fusion renegade here or there. And there are those who cling steadfastly to their musical vision, airplay or no airplay. Some in the following roundup fall into that category. Others have chosen to follow the *Billboard* charts rather than their hearts.

Drummer/composer **Roland Vasquez** remains true to his musical vision on *The Tides Of Time*, a Latin-flavored offering with strong horn charts, percolating percussion work, irresistible grooves, and dynamic solos by a string

### STEVE LACY FOUR MORNING JOY

(Live at Sunset Place)



Steve Lacy sopranosax  
Steve Potts alto- & sopranosax  
Jean-Jaques Avenel bass  
Oliver Johnson drums

1. EPITROPHY	W:ER	9:10	6. IN WALKED BUD	W:ER	11:30
2. PROSPECTUS	L:CT	7:37	6. AS USUAL	L:CT	13:00
3. WICKETS	L:CT	16:00	TOTAL TIME		68:33
4. MORNING JOY	L:CT	10:15			ADD

Recorded live at Sunset, Paris on February 19, 1986 by RADIO FRANCE (Robert Triquet & Caroline Recurt); Remix and tapetransfer to DIGITAL by Peter Zuber; Liner Notes by Lee Jeske; Cover painting: Causeur, 1985 by Jean Zuber; Design by Walter Bosshardt; Produced by P. & Werner X. Uehlinger.

What we have here is a one-nighter by the Steve Lacy Quartet at Paris' Sunset Club. The four members of the Quartet get a chance to stretch out and you can feel the club's energy clearly in the recording - it's a good night at the Sunset. In this era of homogenization - of jazz players who are filled with technique but have gotten their sound from textbooks - there is not enough attention that can be focused on an uncompromising jazz individual like Steve Lacy. "Morning Joy" is yet another distinguished addition to a substantial and important body of work.  
—Lee Jeske, NYC, July, 1986

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of special guests. The great Anthony Jackson shows his deftness on six-string bass throughout this project, locking down grooves with Vasquez while simultaneously doubling horn lines, as on the burning salsa workout "Pire," which also features a typically killing guitar solo by Mike Stern. Dick Oatts blows some cool alto on "60 Berkeley Place" and Brian Lynch gets off a tasteful trumpet solo on the mellow "Dance For Louise." Vasquez's most ambitious piece is "By What They Did Not See," a cinematic suite about his father's life which shifts moods and colors, going from a big band explosion to a scaled-down quartet. Another highlight is his 20-piece arrangement of Wayne Shorter's "Palladium." Music this good deserves airplay.

Klaus Doldinger, on the other hand, has got nothing but airplay on the brain. Much of the material on his latest **Passport** project, *Talk Back*, is tailor-made for the CD-101s of the country. "Nico's Dream" is calculated post-Kenny G mush. "Todo Legal" is ersatz salsa that doesn't groove (not by Roland Vasquez standards, anyway). "Sahara" is nothing more than soprano noodling on a techno-vamp. "Fire Walking" is tedious droning with some sampled silliness behind Klaus' tenor . . . kind of like John Klemmer meets Art Of Noise. Ho-hum. "Dancing In The Wind" is generic background fuzak for a Pepsi or Levis commercial. Klaus actually gets funky on "City Blue" but there's no real drive behind him. This stuff is processed, slick, uninspired, and is probably getting tons of airplay on lame fuzak stations across the country.

Pianist **Bobby Lyle** fits right into that formula with *Ivory Dreams*. On this debut outing, Lyle tries to have it both ways, playing into the hands of fuzak programmers on Side One then trying to regain his jazz credibility on Side Two. It doesn't work. The title cut is non-threatening mood music, distinguished only by Kirk Whalum's tenor. "Save It For A Rainy Day" is faceless pop-funk, the kind you might hear played by the house band on *The Pat Sajak* or *Arsenio Hall* shows. Saving grace on that tune is the soulful Helena Springs, a singer with mucho sass and charisma. On Anita Baker's hit "Been So Long," Lyle lets his piano sing the melody in the tradition of Ramsey Lewis. "Tropical" is more lame mood music. His interpretation of "Lush Life" is strangely schmaltzy. Rather than playing it with a tinge of melancholy, he plays it bright and peppy, swaggering and playful, like how I imagine Marvin Hamlisch might render the tune. He misses the boat on that one, then comes out with some lukewarm swing on "88 Ways." Lyle opens up a bit on "Nova," an uptempo swinger, showing some harmonic daring. But a Don Pullen he is not. He might be better advised to stick with the cheese next time out and avoid the token stabs at jazz.

The late **Jorge Dalto** cut a session in '83 with the likes of Steve Gadd, David Sanborn, Anthony Jackson, Barry Finnerty, and George Benson. Recently released as *Rendezvous*, it's a tame offering of pleasant, EZ-jazz fare intended to soothe. Much fuzak radioplay potential here with Sanborn singing the melody line with his signature alto stylings on "You're Like An Angel" or Benson handling the melody on "Poinciana." More fuzak clichés on "It's Magic,"

while "My Latin Brother," a supper club samba penned by Benson, never catches fire. Jorge displays his rhythmic flair on "Jamboree" and "Hotel Du Globe," but the rest of the album is too polite, too studied, and never reaches a boil.

Veteran saxophonist **Ernie Watts** has some fun with a Buffalo-based fusion band by the name of **Gamalon** on *Project: Activation Earth*. This album succeeds at what the Brecker Brothers tried to do 10 years ago with *Heavy Metal Bebop*, particularly on the tune "Lift Off." This project is reminiscent of groups like UZEB, Sky Walk, and Windows, leaning more toward the rock side of fusion by flaunting heavy drum action and wild Van Halen-type guitar licks, courtesy of Bruce Brucato and George Puleo. There's a tendency toward funk, like on "Activation," a Prince-Meets-Metallica vehicle, and the high-energy "Project Earth." Ernie blows over the top of these heavy-handed vamps and occasionally, as on "Miles To Go," he gets some changes to wail over. This stuff is way too aggressive for the EZ-jazz radio stations and too rocky for real jazz stations. It might fall through the cracks but there's a potential link to the brave new world of jazz for the Steve Vai and Eddie Van Halen fans who might pick up this album.

Guitarist **Ahmad Mansour** takes a totally different tack on *Episode*, a more subdued quartet outing in the ECM mold. A Berklee grad and student of Mick Goodrick, he goes for that warm, ringing, chorus-inflected guitar sound. In bassist George Mraz and drummer Ian Froman (of the Gary Burton band), he has a loose, interactive rhythm section to complement his subtle, textural approach. Guitar synth figures prominently on this session, though Mansour uses it tastefully, generating church organ swells behind Stephane Mentrax's lusty tenor sax on "The Wandering" or buying up the whimsical "Carousel" with airy tones, sounding like a John Abercrombie-Meets-Jan Garbarek. "Angels" is an extended drums-guitar synth duet that allows both players to stretch, while on "Sans Paroles" and "Poisson D'Avril," Mansour solos with the fluidity and confidence of his mentors. Mraz's booming bass anchors this album and he gets to stretch out himself on "Delphine's Waltz." A moody, probing affair, more ethereal than the guitarist's previous LP, *Is Really This It?*

Another Berklee-ite, composer Karl Lundeborg, blends in African juju, samba, gospel, and traces of happy jazz on **Full Circle's** second album, *Myth America*. This is a much more organic kind of fusion music than Klaus Doldinger's *Passport*, for instance, though the band does rely on electronics. Lundeborg succeeds in subtly melding the sequencers and synths into the fabric of the tunes rather than letting them dominate. Highlights here are "Gold Shoes," an urgent groove with Third World pretensions, and the powerful "Flowers For Laos," a cinematic soundscape of the Vietnam War. "Street Of Roses" is a scat-along samba, the kind of thing that Tania Maria does much better, and the title cut should fit squarely into happy-jazz radio programming. Guest appearance by J. Geils harmonica ace Magic Dick heats up the gospelish "Southern Crossing," though I could've done without the inane wordless vocals here. The few cloying moments ("Music For Little People," "Dear

You") are outweighed by strong, focused concepts.

Saxophonist **David Mann** is a self-assured soloist and clever songwriter who generally avoids clichés while making some concessions to EZ-jazz radioplay on his second album, *Insight*. Clearly, Antilles Records thinks they've got another Sanborn on their hands, and Mann does follow that melodious path of "Chelsea After Dark," "Las Estacas," and the funky big backbeat of "Lunar Love." But Mann is far more ambitious on the rest of his compositions, particularly "The Clock Winder," which features some nice harmony lines between Mann's alto and Chris Botti's flugelhorn, and "Trail Of Tears," an evocative suite that recalls some of Charlie Haden's music with his Liberation Orchestra. "Nuclear Bop" swings for real (unlike Bobby Lyle's token attempt on "Nova" from *Ivory Dreams*), mainly because drummer Graham Hawthorne knows what to do to keep this groove happening. Mann and guitarist Jay Azzolina blow over the changes here in high-flying fashion. Mann doesn't rely on vamps but keeps his tunes flowing with ideas and dynamics.

West Coast guitarist **Rick Zunigar** is strong on chops but weak on compositions on *New Frontier*. The guy can play, as evidenced by his Scofield-influenced approach on "It's Not Always What It Seems," and his open blowing on "Photosynthesize," an uptempo cooker which features Freddie Hubbard's hard trumpet lines. But tunes like "Hussongs" and the sluggish ballad "Twilight" fall flat. Best composition here is the title cut, also a good vehicle for Zunigar's single-note prowess. Better material next time out will make for a stronger album.

Another West Coast guitarist, **Ray Obiedo**, puts more emphasis on tunes than chops in *Perfect Crime*, his debut on Windham Hill Jazz. In a decided break from the label's soft image, this one has urban contemporary written all over it. Tons of happy-jazz airplay here, particularly on pocket-jazz like "Short Stories," the mellow cruisin' vibe of "Anazia's Dance," a vehicle for the Yellowjackets' alto player Marc Russo, and the happy-jazz ballad "One Look, One Smile," featuring a steel pan solo by producer Andy Narell. Obiedo is a funky guitarist from the Johnny "Guitar" Watson school of economy, as he demonstrates on "Blue Kiss," and the production is generally bright and snappy throughout, particularly on the funk throwdown, "No Fiesta." But the material here is predictable, non-threatening, formulaic pap for the *Moonlighting/thirtysomething* set.

West German guitarist **Torsten de Winkel** assembles an all-star cast of fusionoids, including Michael Brecker, Billy Cobham, and Alphonse Mouzon, on his *Optimism* debut, *Master Touch*. This album is more open-ended than Obiedo's, with a spirit of improvisation permeating clever compositions like "Double Blue" and "Pyromantic." Brecker fans will delight in his signature tenor lines on "TAQ," an evocative ballad reminiscent of Weather Report's "A Remark You Made." Torsten displays some ferocious speed-licks on "Lilo & Max," then affects a more muted Metheny-esque tone on the jazzy "Double Blue," featuring Ernie Watts' tenor and an eight-minute rendition of Mike Mainieri's "Sara's Touch," which gives

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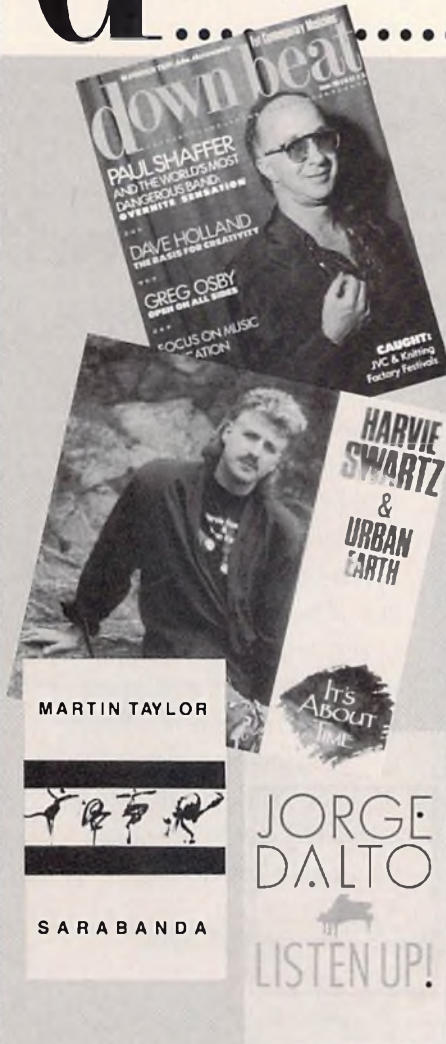
pianist Joachim Kühn plenty of room to stretch. New bass sensation Kai Eckhardt-Karpeh (currently touring with John McLaughlin and Trilok Gurtu) is a formidable presence throughout. Possible airplay potential with the bouyant Caribbean groove of "Coconuts."

After flirting with wussy fare on the new agey *Double Feature*, **Special EFX** has returned to its more aggressive edge on *Confidential*, an album that recalls the high energy of earlier offerings like *Modern Manners* and *Slice Of Life*. While guitarist Chieli Minucci and percussionist George Jinda, the force behind Special EFX, do make some concessions to yuppie jazz stations on the light, melodic "Sabariah" and "My Place In The Sun," they throw down some serious Shakti energy on "Nature Boy," a live-in-the-studio jam with Chieli's classical guitar flying on top of Jinda's irrepressible groove. A solid rhythm section of drummer Omar Hakim and bassist Vince Loving pushes Chieli to some searing heights on "The Effect" and the funky "Big Night Out," while the rather tame "Diamond In The Sand" seems a hold-over from their *Double Feature* phase. Most ambitious composition is "Secret Storm," an evocative soundscape pitting Rodney Holmes' frantic drumming against a bittersweet refrain played gently by Hungarian new age pianist Szakcsi. Interesting juxtaposition.

Composer **Henry Miller** is anything but predictable. His Optimism debut, *Open House*, is a clever, eclectic offering with a few nods to happy-jazz, notably "Surrender" and "Lightning River." But even those relatively tame pieces are imbued with the composer's renegade spirit. Three pieces stand out here—"Choice Of Words," a Jazz Messengers-inspired number with cool drumming by Jeff Watts, the eccentric "Architecture" with it's Monkish head and swinging solos by altoist Greg Osby and tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore, and the highly interactive Trio number, "Eyes Of The Witness," a waltz number featuring some solid upright bass by Koji Ohneda. "Wild Cosmos" is Miller's excursion into the world of samples and drum programs, and "Electro-Rock Therapy" is his tongue-in-cheek fusion suite that shifts back and forth between funks and raucous rock, fueled by Peter Parcek's wailing guitar. Schizophrenic, perhaps. But at least Miller avoids all the fuzak clichés.

Former Dregs-head **T Lavitz** plays it fairly tame on his Intima debut, *T Lavitz And The Bad Habit*. Much of this borders on EZ-jazz or even new age, notably "September," "The Quiet One," "Holidays," and "A Dream Come True." Other cuts, like the funky "Trash Park" and the Latin-flavored "Hobo's Lullabye," featuring some cool guitar lines by Jeff Richman, are clearly geared toward fuzak airplay. Only "Slideways," with its burning sextuplet unison lines, and the Miles-ish "On The Street" defy this rather safe direction. T displays his trademark bluesy flair on "Down At The Docks" and puts some new twists on an old funk vehicle with "Young Circle" (reminiscent of the familiar Jaco Pastorius tune "The Chicken"). But three noteworthy cuts is not enough to recommend an entire album.

Flutist **Sherry Winston** is supported by a killer rhythm section in bassist Tom Barney and drummer Steve Ferrone on her second album, *Love Madness*. But the rather formulaic nature of the music leaves much to be desired.



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Nothing adventurous here, either compositionally or in terms of solos. There's a mix of sappy love ballads like "Stride" and "Anniversary Song" with predictable pop-funk fare like "Hit It Hard" and "Metro North." Throw in rather limp renderings of Horace Silver's "Song For My Father" and Earth, Wind & Fire's "That's The Way Of The World" and you have one unspectacular album. "Symphonic Rock Suite #2" is a pretentious title for the same ol' same ol'. Nothing challenging here at all.

**Michael Pedecin, Jr.**, on the other hand, seems more dedicated to his art than to

radioplay. On his Optimism debut, *Angles*, he stretches on some challenging material composed by pianist Micki Rossi. On "Another Waltz," a gospelish vehicle anchored by bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Peter Erskine, Pedecin blows his tenor with conviction. He switches to soprano on "The Glass Man," a highly interactive affair featuring the same quartet. Great use of dynamics and space, great listening by all. The 14-minute title cut features some open sections for group improv and guitarist Alex Domschot responds with some deft, impressionistic touches to help set

the mood while pianist Rossi colors the proceedings with tasteful touches behind Bob Shomo's subtle brushwork and Jimmy Hoff's Haden-like basslines. Pedecin stretches on tenor in a Breckeresque fashion on the melancholy 11-minute "Moscow" and takes a more melodic approach on the buoyant "Gravity." This is jazz without any hyphens. Great writing by Rossi, serious playing by all.

If craft were the only criterion, Russ Freeman would get five stars for his latest **Ripping-tions** project, *Tourist In Paradise*. This package of buoyant, upbeat sounds is so slick it makes Special EFX sound like the Art Ensemble of Chicago. This stuff makes no pretensions about being jazz. Though Freeman is indeed an accomplished synth and drum machine programmer, his material here tends to blur into a wash of commercial clichés. Only on the soothing "One Summer Night In Brazil" does Freeman lower the digital armor and reveal some heart, playing with genuine feel on nylon-stringed acoustic guitar. Elsewhere, he's merely clever.

The strong tenor voice of **Bob Berg** speaks volumes more on his second Denon release, *Cycles*, than he was ever able to say in the context of the Miles Davis group. The muscular rhythm section of Jeff Andrews on electric bass and Dennis Chambers on drums kicks these tunes along while Berg and guitarist Mike Stern flaunt mighty chops on top. Stern contributes four strong compositions here, including the eccentric blues "Bruze," with its challenging head, and the lyrical ballad "Miyumi," a great vehicle for Berg's expressive tenor. Stern himself is positively killing on the funk-bop of "Company B," another original, blowing endless lines with ice-pick intensity and building to a rock-fervor crescendo. Bert testifies on his own bluesy ballad, "Back Home," and wails passionately on the luscious Don Grolnick composition, "The Diamond Method." Pianist David Kikoski, an up-and-coming talent who has previously recorded with Randy Brecker, gets to stretch out on Berg's lively "Pipes," and the two close the album with a lush duo rendition of Gershwin's "Someone To Watch Over Me." Strong blowing, strong compositions, strong band. A welcome alternative to the endless stream of fuzak that seems to be flooding the record bins these days. **db**


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CONTINUED ON PAGE 59

## 1 PAT METHENY. "Tears Inside" (from *REJOICING*, ECM)

Metheny, guitar; Billy Higgins, drums; Charlie Haden, bass.

That's really a dark tone. Lines are great but I wish the guitar were a little clearer. Really makes you come in and listen to it, though. Almost sounds like Pat a little bit, but it doesn't have his sound. It sounds like Pat Metheny playing real straight, like older or something. I'd say it's Pat but I don't know what recording this is. Sounds great. But the tone is extraordinarily dark. This is the darkest guitar sound I ever heard. In the very beginning I couldn't even hear the guitar. It was so dark and there seemed to be a lot of reverb on it. But as soon as he started playing lines, I focused in 'cause they sounded so nice. Yeah, Pat's such a great player. I wish the guitar had more presence on this cut, though. It can still be dark but maybe be up-front a little more.

## 2 EMILY REMLER. "Hot House" (from *EAST TO WEST*, Concord Jazz)

Remler, guitar; Hank Jones, piano; Buster Williams, bass; Marvin Smitty Smith, drums.

Sounds like somebody who plays a big jazz guitar and uses relatively heavy strings; but the recording sounds more recent. Maybe it's a younger player playing in an older style. There aren't too many young guys doing this sort of thing. It could be Bruce Forman.

BM: I'll give it away with a clue. It's not a guy.

JA: Okay, I thought about that. It's Emily Remler. Actually, I haven't heard her play that much, even though we did a gig together at Berklee last year. I didn't realize her chops were quite so prodigious. She sounds wonderful. Sounds like she's starting to stretch her lines a little bit, playing more chromatically, which I like. And she's got great time, better than most guitar players I know. And her feeling is really strong, which I think is the Wes Montgomery influence, 'cause he had such powerful time. Wow, I'm impressed. Nice tone, too. Very warm yet very clear. You can hear every note. Her playing sounds very strong, stronger than I remember it. Sounds like she's been in the woodshed, working. Her chops sound really powerful here.

## 3 BILL CONNORS. "Subtracks" (from *DOUBLE UP*, Pathfinder)

Connors, guitar; Kim Plainfield, drums; Tom Kennedy, bass.

Sounds like Holdsworth. That whole legato approach. It's a really full sound for a trio and the guitarist is definitely Holdsworthian.

## JOHN ABERCROMBIE

by Bill Milkowski

A native of Greenwich, Connecticut and graduate of the Berklee College of Music in Boston, John Abercrombie came to New York in 1969 and hooked up with Billy Cobham's band. His first album as a leader was 1974's *Timeless* on ECM with Jan Hammer and Jack DeJohnette. He followed soon after with *Gateway*, featuring DeJohnette and bassist Dave Holland. He has continued a musical relationship with DeJohnette (reuniting with the drummer and Hammer on 1984's *Night on ECM*) and has an ongoing duet situation with Ralph Towner (*Sargasso Sea*, *Five Years Later*, ECM).

1986's *Current Events* marked the beginning of his association with drummer Peter Erskine and bassist Marc Johnson. The trio's latest on ECM, a self-titled live date at the Nightstage in Boston, contains stretched-out versions



ANDY FREEBERG

of standards and originals, highlighting the group's highly interactive approach. And this album also serves as the latest chapter in Abercrombie's ongoing fascination with guitar synthesizers (see "Record & CD Reviews," p. 30). This was Abercrombie's third Blindfold Test. He chose not to assign star ratings to any of the tunes.

It's not? Then I know who it is. It's Connors. He's such a creative player and I love his approach to the trio, but I have to say that the linear approach sounds very Holdsworthian . . . the tone, the stretches, and the way the lines fall together sound like Allan. Sorry, Bill.

## 4 MIKE STERN. "Kwirk" (from *JIASAW*, Atlantic)

Stern, guitar; Jeff Andrews, bass; Peter Erskine, drums; Bob Berg, tenor sax.

I don't think these guys are from Los Angeles. Tune's got a nice mood to it. And the player's really good. It's Stern, right? Yeah, he plays these kind of triplet phrases and he has amazing chops. And he's starting to get more lyrical as he gets older. I relate to this more because it's a jazz feeling. The lines are more jazz-like and the tone isn't distorted. Neat tune. I never heard him do anything quite like this. I like that a lot.

## 5 TERJE RYPDAL. "Ambiguity" (from *CHASER*, ECM)

Rypdal, guitar; Audun Klieve, drums; Bjorn Kjellemyr, bass.

It's somebody who likes to use a lot of whammy bar. I like it. Really powerful sound. Drummer's good. A little reminiscent of somebody like Terje Rypdal but it doesn't

sound like a European player so much. It's in the ball park of his sound, but not really. It's not Terje Rypdal, is it? Wow! I think it sounds great. Very full. His playing sounds more aggressive than it has been on other records. This sounds a little rawer, a little nastier. I prefer it, actually, to some other things he's done.

I think he should play with a rhythm section like this all the time . . . makes him dig in more. He's always been real conscious of sound, really aware of how all the effects work. Yeah, this is much more rocked-out than the stuff he did with Miroslav Vitous and Jack DeJohnette. That was really nice but he didn't play nearly as much on those records. I think this is fantastic.

## 6 BILL FRISELL. "Freddy's Step" (from *BEFORE WE WERE BORN*, Elektra/Musician)

Frisell, guitar; Kermit Driscoll, bass; Joey Baron, drums; Hank Roberts, cello; Julius Hemphill, alto sax; Billy Drewes, alto sax; Doug Wieselman, baritone sax.

Hmm . . . that's funny. I'm pretty sure I know who that is even though I haven't heard him play a note yet. It's probably Frisell, but I can't tell because I don't hear that identifiable rubber sound of his. It's gotta be Bill. Yeah, that's him. I don't know what the record is. It certainly is some wild shit. Sounds like dixieland in 1999. db

## ARNIE LAWRENCE

WHETHER TEACHING OR PLAYING JAZZ, IT'S ALL ONE GREAT LOVE AFFAIR FOR THE SAXOPHONIST/EDUCATOR.

by Michael Bourne

"T his is the hardest thing I've ever done, but it's the easiest because I love it," says saxophonist Arnie Lawrence, the Director of Instruction for the Jazz and Contemporary Music program of the New School in New York. Lawrence and a busload of his students, those without gigs that night, were celebrating the end of the school's third year with a jam at The Pursuit of Happiness, a friendly joint in the Catskills—where Lawrence paid some dues as a young musician 30 years ago. Through the years since then, he's played with most of the greats of jazz, especially gigs with friends like Chico Hamilton and Clark Terry and with idols like Coleman Hawkins and Duke Ellington. Nowadays he's more involved orchestrating the jazz program, working with a Who's Who of jazz, teaching some of the future greats. David Levy, the dean of the Parsons School of Design, where the jazz program is housed, also serves as dean of the jazz program—but Arnie Lawrence is the school's heartbeat.

He encouraged the students that night to jam nonstop, to play whenever and whatever they wanted. Larry Goldings kicked off with some serious organ grooves, and eventually everyone played, some with chops, some with style, all with talent. "The thing I like best of all is that no two of them sound alike," said Arnie. "I ain't making no clones!" Arnie himself joined the jam, and "C" Sharpe, who's become one of the many musical godfathers to the students and who'd come along to celebrate his birthday, at last picked up his saxophone to play, perhaps ironically, "Old Folks."

About a hundred students were enrolled last year, many from overseas, with many more anxious to attend. "We've been trying to accept as many students who've showed that they want to come and that we can teach them," said Lawrence. What they listen for in auditions is not so much a student's technique as a student's spirit. What do they know of the language of jazz? What do they need to become professional artists? And, most important of all, do they love the music? "If they don't love the music with a full heart, they're doing it wrong. If they're afraid to make mistakes, they're doing it wrong. If they're not enjoying it and at the same time they're not serious enough, it don't mean a thing!"



MITCHELL SEIDEL

New York itself is the school's campus, with clubs like The Village Gate where the students have open jams on Sundays, and with studios where Lawrence often records the students so they'll be prepared for the working world of jazz. And, being the Apple, where so many of the greatest musicians in the world live, reading the names of the faculty is like reading a **down beat** poll. It's what someone once called the flesh teaching the flesh.

"The jazz tradition has to be passed on by inflections in the voice, inflections in the sound. When you talk to somebody who sat between Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk in a taxi and was a disciple of both of them, you'll get the most accurate information about them and you'll also learn how to be an original yourself, because the guy sitting between them is an original, Walter Davis Jr. He taught a course called 'The Language of Jazz' and he didn't play a note the whole semester. He talked about hanging out with Bird. He wanted the students to learn that jazz is a reflection of life."

Some of the teachers conduct regular classes. Some speak in master classes—or, "mysteries" classes as they're called by Arnie. Roy Haynes, Art Blakey, Tom Harrell, Red Mitchell, Dave Liebman, and Sam Rivers, among many others, have revealed the "mysteries" of jazz in sessions that usually happen on Fridays. And if a student wants to work individually, that's also possible. "I want the students to be free, to find their own discipline," said Lawrence. "If you want to go with one person, become a disciple of Junior Mance or Jaki Byard, it's real open. And there are other ways, getting a cross section of teachers."

Lawrence feels, and it seems only natural, that the best teacher for a jazz musician is a jazz musician. "What these people teach, it's real. And the teachers have one instruction from me: if they see something wrong,

fix it. I'm not concerned how they do it. I trust them. They'll know how to fix it. If you see a student has a particular need, that's when it needs to be addressed, sometimes just by pulling his coat or kicking his backside or just playing a couple of notes. Whatever you have to do to put the message across, do it at that moment."

And what is that message? "To make a commitment to this music and be prepared to love it. Once you love this music, there's no going back. Every teacher in this school has an open-hearted love for this music that goes beyond, in most cases, life itself. . . . I look in the 'Analysis of Rhythm' class and I see Jimmy Cobb teaching without saying too many words. He's just playing with them and making them swing as hard as possible so many different grooves. And the guy's got his shirt off and he's sweating, and I'm thinking, this is real! That's what I see in a lot of the classes, with many of the teachers. This is not just a gig to them. . . . I see the same kind of faith in this music that people have in the Creator. Most of them I've spoken with, those who've been blessed with the love of this music, feel that the music comes through the Creator. I heard [guitarist/pianist] Sivuca say this once. He's like an actual instrument himself. And that's the purpose of this school. We want to make each student a musical instrument, so that they express themselves, so that the music becomes a reflection of their own inner selves."

Already many of the students have become working musicians with careers happening even before they've graduated. "It's amazing," said Arnie. "Some of these young people are working more than the teachers. And we understand that, it's a youth-oriented society. And also, as fathers, it's our job to teach them to be better than us." Chris Walker is playing bass with Ornette Coleman and soon will record as a gospel singer, and both organist Joey DeFrancesco and saxophonist Christopher Hollyday have straight-ahead albums as leaders, DeFrancesco for CBS, Hollyday for RCA. Larry Goldings plays piano for Jon Hendricks and at Bradley's. Others have worked all around the scene and also as far afield from jazz as the Prince band and for TV commercials. Several of the school's musicians were winners of the Musicfest U.S.A. competition this past spring in Philadelphia. Christopher Hollyday and saxophonist Jesse Davis each fronted a combo and each was awarded an "All-Star" jacket and a \$1500 scholarship from Rico Products and the National Assn. of Band Instrument Manufacturers, respectively.

"Musicfest was a wonderful event," said Lawrence. "I heard some real jazz played there. There were players from schools that have really dedicated themselves to jazz, the pure music, and the students were so happy to be hanging out with other people

who've sacrificed what they've sacrificed. It wasn't about young or old, just cats hanging out, and I was one of the cats. That's the way it's always been with jazz musicians. We support each other. We come together and play as good as we can. There were moments in the so-called contest when I saw kids from other schools dancing to the music of kids they were supposed to be competing against. They couldn't help themselves. The music was making people shake their ass—and that's jazz! When you do it right, the music just feels great!"

Arnie Lawrence is fulfilling a dream at the New School, gathering the best of jazz to inspire the best to come, just as all the teachers also learned the music—from the source. "Ben Webster was one of my first inspirations and first teachers," said Arnie. "I'll always remember Ben playing 'All Too Soon' at The Montmartre in Copenhagen when I was with Clark Terry's big band. We had Duke's arrangement. Ben was close to the end and all of the cats had tears in their eyes. I was dumbstruck."

He also remembered some magical moments with Stan Getz and Dizzy Gillespie, Elvin Jones and Zoot Sims. "I've had so many wonderful experiences," said Arnie. "I've played with almost everybody I ever admired—and got paid for it! I've been so blessed." And now Arnie Lawrence is blessing a whole new generation of jazz. db

## BUCKY PIZZARELLI

FOR LEGENDARY GUITARIST PIZZARELLI, MUSIC HAS BEEN, AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE, A GREAT FAMILY TRADITION.

by Michael Bourne

So why do we become what we become? Heredity? Environment? Whatever the source, it was inevitable that Bucky Pizzarelli would become a guitarist. "It just sort of happened," said Bucky. "My uncles were Bobby Dominick and Peter Dominick. They played guitar with a lot of dance bands: Clyde McCoy, Raymond Scott. They were always playing around the house and I wanted to join in. I played my first guitar duets with them. They were both associated with Joe Mooney. Joe was a great musician and through him my uncles played a lot of things the right way. They passed those things on to me, and I also got to know Joe when I was growing up."

Bucky grew up and still lives in New Jersey. He was born in Paterson in 1926 and

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—Claudio Roditi

*Claudio Roditi is a former member of the Herbie Mann Group, Charlie Rouse's Cinnamon Flower Band and is currently touring with Dizzy Gillespie's United Nation Band and the Paquito D'Rivera Quintet. His most recent album is Gemini Man on Milestone Records.*

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was named John but not often called John. "My father gave me the name Bucky. He'd been in Texas years ago and when I was born he called me Buck and it stayed with me." Buck played locally when a teenager, and what he didn't learn from his uncles he learned from listening. "We didn't have many records but my uncles would tell me to listen to George van Eps or Charlie Christian. We had a few 78s of Django. Most of the things I heard were on the radio. I heard Les Paul the first time on the radio, and the George Barnes octet."

His first professional break happened in 1943 when so many young musicians were being drafted. "Vaughn Monroe had a deferment and he tried to get a band together but all the guys were scattered. There was a guitar chair open, so I went along. We played all these theatres a week at a time. I was 17. I stayed three, four months until I was 18 and the army got me." Whenever his unit settled somewhere Bucky always played "in the little unauthorized band" and always he was listening. "I heard Dizzy and Charlie Parker with Lionel Hampton on a radio show just before I was going to come home from the Philippines. That was wild. It was music different from what we thought the music was going to be, and that excited me."

He rejoined Vaughn Monroe as soon as he returned. "I stayed with him four, five years. We traveled all over the country doing one-nighters. We did a radio show every week on Saturday wherever we happened to be. He was very successful. He had hit records. 'Ghost Riders In The Sky' had a lot of guitar on it. I had maybe four or five solos in the whole book. I mostly was playing rhythm guitar. It was very important for a guitar player to know how to do that."

Pizzarelli became a master of rhythm guitar (now almost a lost art) and one of the most versatile musicians around New York. "I got into the studio scene. I got a job with Kate Smith. I went on the staff at NBC around '51, '52 and I started making records. They used a lot of guitar players then. They'd want two or three, one to play rhythm, another to solo, maybe somebody else. It became wide open for guitar players. I stayed in that whole record scene for maybe 12 years. I recorded with Ray Conniff, Mitch Miller, Don Costa. I worked with Julie London. I made a lot of records. I made all the records with Dion and The Belmonts. We had some good guys playing on those dates: George Barnes, Mundell Lowe, Kenny Burrell. We made his first hit records: 'Runaround Sue,' 'Teenager In Love,' they all sold a million. I mostly played rhythm guitar. George Barnes was the best soloist, him and Tony Mottola. They'd call each guy for a specific thing. When the bossa nova came around I was playing a gut-string guitar, so I played a lot of those dates."

His own first recording as a leader was a session for Savoy in 1961. His own natural



groove was to swing. "I'd heard all those great guitar players when I was growing up and that's what rubbed off on me. When you listen to an old George Barnes record today, he'll blow you out of the room." Pizzarelli joined Barnes in a twosome when Barnes and Karl Kress split. Bucky's recording with Barnes at Town Hall in 1970 is among his favorites.

Throughout the '60s Pizzarelli was playing just about everything, from "all these crazy rock & roll dates" to frequent gigs with the likes of Benny Goodman, and by the turn of the '70s he'd become even more musically versatile with a new instrument. "George van Eps came to New York around '67, '68 to demonstrate the Gretsch seven-string. I said that's for me. I've played it ever since. It's got a low note on it and you're not limited to just playing in open keys. Normally, if you want to play a chordal solo, everything has to be in D and E and A, but with the seven-string guitar you can play in any key, anytime. You can play piano music right off the sheet because you've got those extra notes. It's complicated for your fingers when you've got those six-string chords in your brain. You actually throw them down without looking, so when you've got an extra string you have to think differently. But for me it was simpler."

He's recorded many an album in the years since, especially memorable sessions with Joe Venuti and Zoot Sims, but in recent years he's worked more and more as a soloist or playing duets and trios with his friends and his children. He's recorded a variety of ballads and intimate swing for Stash: *Dialogue* with Slam Stewart, *Just Friends* with Red Norvo, two solo albums, *Love Songs* and *Solo Flight*, and two albums of seven-string duets, *2 x 7 = Pizzarelli* and *Swinging Sevens*, with his son, John Pizzarelli Jr. Just as it was inevitable that Bucky became a musician, so it was inevitable that his children also play. Ann plays piano. Martin plays bass. John Jr. and Mary both play guitar.

"He only gave Mary formal lessons," said John Jr. "He guided Mary through a classical book, *The Aaron Shearer Method*. And next thing we knew she was playing 'Chicken à la Swing' with him." Mary also recorded with Bucky, an album re-creating the Barnes and Kress duets. John Jr. first learned the banjo from his father's teachers, Bucky's uncles, but he soon switched to the guitar. What was the best lesson he learned from his father?

"I learned the way the guitar should sound, especially rhythm guitar," said John Jr. "That stays with me the strongest. I hear his sound and I know how it's supposed to sound. It's something he's developed in me, not through lessons but just hearing him. The best example of how well he plays rhythm guitar is on the *Digital Duke* album. Norris Turney plays this beautiful solo of 'Prelude To A Kiss' and my dad is playing the heaviest rhythm guitar in the world. It's so great, the sound of that guitar and the way he's playing this really slow tempo. He's hitting that guitar so right, right in the center of the beat. It's perfect and, aside from everything Freddie Green did, there's nobody that can do that. It's also the melodies. His solo guitar is definitely not like Joe Pass. It's so much chords and the melody, just get those chords right and make sure the melody is there. That's more important to him than playing hot licks. And his touch, his attack on the strings, is so delicate and so right."

Bucky plays rhythm guitar on the several Stash albums John Jr. recorded as a singer and they often work as a twosome, sometimes a threesome when joined by Martin on the bass. Bucky especially enjoys playing the many jazz parties around the country where he'll usually join a stellar section or play impromptu with guitarist friends like Herb Ellis, Barney Kessel, or Joe Pass, though most often it's the twosome, Pizzarelli *per se et fils*. They're featured with violinist Johnny Frigo on a new Chesky CD, *Live From Studio A*. "We got a bunch of lead sheets, went into the studio, and rattled it off," said Bucky. "It was all acoustic, just with one mic. No amplifiers. No headphones. We just gathered around the mic with the drums, the bass, and played 15, 16 tunes, one after another. That's real enjoyment."

It's an enjoyment that Bucky Pizzarelli works at. "I practice every morning. I'll run over a tune or add something to my repertoire. If somebody asks me to play a tune and I don't know it, next morning I'll learn it and the next time somebody asks for it, I'll know it. That's the challenge. You've got to keep doing that."

Whether he'll keep doing that with the next generation, playing guitar with the kids of his kids, is again a question of Heredity and Environment. "In our family it's actually been a tradition, but you never know what a kid wants to play," said Bucky. "But if they hear enough music, it's going to rub off." db

**THE NEW GROVE DICTIONARY OF JAZZ**, edited by Barry Kernfeld (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1988, 2 vols., 1,360 pp. combined, \$295.00).

Reference books are rarely ever completed. They are eternal works in progress. New information is always being added, incomplete data is constantly being clarified, and stealthy errors are routinely spotted and repaired.

The body of factual material contained in these two volumes of *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* is enormous. It seems to me it would be almost inconceivable that such a work could be born totally without original editorial sin. More important, there is so much information collected here on so many facets of the jazz world, it remains the most formidable one-stop jazz research source around.

So why all the nasty reviews? More than just bad. The hostility I've read in some quarters seems almost strident. Perhaps it's in the nature of a "reference" book that it be, like Caesar's wife or the Speaker of the House, above suspicion; and that when it's not, there is glee in exposing it. Or maybe the *ex cathedra* authority imparted by the name Grove invites challenges. Certainly, any jazz writer confronted with such a work must feel the itch to match wits with it. After all, to go up against Grove and win is a kind of David-and-Goliath-of-trivia fantasy.



WARREN ROTHSCHILD

Red Norvo: of mallets and mysteries.

I don't mean to excuse Grove's inaccuracies, though. The danger of error in a "definitive" reference book is real. It's like a computer virus. It will reproduce itself in perpetuity. The authority of these particular printed pages has the awesome power to define truth. But let's not discount the Grove's formidable strengths in scolding its weaknesses. Let's let reviews such as this and others serve as a kind of proofreading process, weeding out the work's errors while hanging onto its overwhelming usefulness.

Because this book has many authors (232 contributors, by my count, nearly 100 from outside the U.S.), there are occasional in-

stances of one hand not knowing what the other is doing. Bradford Robinson, in his entry on Lionel Hampton, for example, says "Hampton was not the first jazz musician to take up the vibraphone (Red Norvo had preceded him in the late 1920s) . . ." When we turn to Grove editor Barry Kernfeld's piece on Norvo, however, we read that Norvo played only xylophone and marimba in the '20s and '30s. And then in Clifford Bevan's survey of the vibraphone (there are histories of all major jazz instruments), it turns out that "Norvo took up the vibraphone in 1944" (which is true).

Other minor errors I spotted include these: Norman Granz' Clef Records was launched in 1953, not 1947 (p. 446); George Avakian recorded the 1956 Newport Jazz Festival, not the first one in 1954 (p. 46); and certainly no one who's seen a drug-free Red Rodney perform so brilliantly over the last dozen years could agree that heroin "destroyed" his career (p. 600). Interrupted yes, but not destroyed.

More serious are the authors who use the Grove as a platform to push their own pet theses in the guise of an objective reference entry. In 1983, James Collier published a remarkable biography on Louis Armstrong which said that Armstrong was a neurotically insecure artist, who, without a strong will of his own, put himself in the hands of others, who in turn told him to play the clown. His theme was an intellectually provocative inquiry into the nature of stardom. I reviewed it favorably in this magazine. But what made provocative reading in a book doesn't necessarily make for objective fact in a reference work, particularly in light of the heavy fire Collier's Armstrong theories drew from other critics whom I respect. Thus, his interpretation of Armstrong's psyche is too disputed to be offered as certified fact in a reference source.

A reference book is much more than a passive inventory of random facts. In selecting and ordering fact, it actively confirms



JACK ALBIN

Peggy Lee: TDWR?

and legitimizes. It raises some things to importance, exiles others to oblivion. It shrinks, expands, alters, and shapes the way in which its particular field is defined and perceived by the larger culture. *The Grove Dictionary* gives jazz a significantly new profile. The fact that nearly half the Grove contributors come from outside the United States means that this work recognizes the astonishing globalization of jazz. Xenophobic readers may gasp at America's vanishing monopoly—or simply ignore such unpronounceable entries.

Grove's taste for the arcane, however, lives alongside some often shocking absent-mindedness. We read about Puddinghead Battle and Maffy Falay, for instance, but nothing about Richard Sudhalter or Loren Schoenberg. And why do Alfred Lion and Harry Lim each have an entry, but not Milt Gabler or Bob Weinstock? Tony Bennett and Bing Crosby are included—properly, I think; but not—are you ready?!—Peggy Lee. And throwing modesty to the winds momentarily, why no entry on this magazine, **down beat**—and *Metronome*, *The Melody Maker*, *Jazz Journal*, *JazzTimes*, *Swing Journal*, or *Coda*?

So move over, Leonard Feather. But don't go away!  
—john mcdonough

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