

AD LIB: Coleman Hawkins'
"Body And Soul"

For Contemporary Musicians

downbeat

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BRANFORD MARSALIS

Music On His Mind



YELLOWJACKETS

A New Buzz

DON CHERRY

Musical Globetrotter

DON PULLEN

Reconciling Opposites



PRO SESSION:

*Michael Brecker's
Re-charged Sax*



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Branford Marsalis



Don Cherry



Don Pullen



Michael Brecker

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There's more to this man's musical life than popster Sting and brother Wynton. In fact, the "multi-opinionated" Branford would rather sing the praises of "his" first, real, honest-to-goodness band, a collective he feels best expresses his current music. He's a busy man, with a lot on his mind, as **Dave Helland** discovered.

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for Contemporary Musicians

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BRANFORD MARSALIS



JEFF WATTS: "At Berklee, Tain didn't play straight bebop. He didn't telegraph one, didn't play a fill on the seventh bar so you know where 1 is when you are playing. He played past 1. He came into jazz the opposite way, through the back door, like the fusion drummer that checked out jazz. He had a lot of that Billy Cobham, Simon Phillips fusion shit, like that stuff that Bill Bruford does, playing past the bar lines. A lot of the guys that were complaining about him were, to me, pretty marginal musicians anyway. So when I heard people constantly complaining about him, that many people say that he was sad, I thought something must be going on good."

BOB HURST: "He is Wynton's bass player, and I heard him in Wynton's band. When it comes to harmonic conception, and the general conception of playing the bass as an instrument, Bob is

the man for me. If he plays solo bass on any tune, he can sustain himself up there without it getting boring, and that is heavy man, for a bass player."

"We need the bass as a metronome, but with this band, we need a little more than that. With a drummer like Tain—we had seven bass players in Wynton's band, and they would just crumble one-by-one, and they would all blame Tain; but Tain is still here. And when he starts playing some of his shit, Bob can play something else right in between, and they are perfect together. They have the same frame of mind—we all have the same mental reference—that is what makes this band play so well."

KENNY KIRKLAND: "What else needs to be said? Kenny Kirkland, he is the most sought-after piano player in New York and I have got him. I am a happy man."

THE MARSALIS TAPES

With Dave Helland

“I’m a jazz musician; when it comes to the thing that I am most proud of doing, it is playing jazz. What qualifies as jazz? Is the music indicative of the tradition of Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker? Does it have the sound, the spontaneity, the spark of improvisation that music had? And most of the times when I hear electric music, that answer is obviously no.

“There is electric music that fits the category of jazz to me. The first three Weather Report records without a doubt. Herbie Hancock’s *Headhunters* record, without a doubt, because I will be damned if that is a slick trick, you know. It was spontaneous and it was fresh. Some of the Mahavishnu Orchestra records, like *Birds Of Fire*, had more elements of jazz than other things in it. But if you listen to the ’80’s fusion records, they don’t have half of the technique that those guys did to manipulate the music that way. Most of the melodies now are not even as good as warmed-over blues riffs. Most of the songs now are so devoid of melody, or if there is a melody, it is a three-note melody—really outrageously simplistic and condescending.

“I don’t think that there is a movement for the perpetuation of ignorance in jazz, because that makes it sound like there are intelligent people who sit around and decide to make ignorance the rule of the day of jazz. Actually what it is is that there are these people who are musically ignorant, and have very powerful positions in terms of being writers and editors. They make arbitrary decisions on music based on their own lack of knowledge, and once they are confronted with what could conceivably be the truth—since it is not their view—they decide to make the truth the enemy, or distort it to the point where it is actually a farce more than anything else. That is the basis of this big war going on with the writers. Why should I listen to a writer when I know more about what I am talking about than he does? There is no real reason to respect what they do, or listen to what they say. Their reviews are not going to break me as an artist. What affects me is the misinformation, the irresponsibility, and that pisses me off. The only person that can f**k my head up is Sonny Rollins; if he tells me to hang it up, then I will have to consider it.”

Ever wonder why you’ve never seen Sting’s *Bring On The Night* video? Because Branford Marsalis up-staged its intended star. Wit and zinging epigrammatist, mimic and mugger, this Marsalis is a particularly funny storyteller. An actor seen in *Throw Mama From The Train* and *School Daze*, he has his own promotional video, *Steep*, which portrays him as: artist and teacher; concerned that his band gets equal time in the spotlight; respected by such peers in the entertainment world as Billy Crystal, Herbie Hancock, and Sting; family man and funnyman. So in the course of weeks of meticulous investigation and arduous research for this article, I believed it when I heard that Arsenio Hall, the hardest-working man on late-

“I study these guys by learning their solos. I mimic them just like I learned to mimic Ronald Reagan.”

ORNETTE COLEMAN:

“Ornette is in like a motherf**ker. He ain’t out, he is in. His interpretation, which is definitely derived from Charlie Parker—that is what makes it so profound and so deep—is so introspective, so unique. He found a way to play the changes and not play them conventionally, and that is what makes him bad. I would love to hear Ornette play standards, because Ornette would find a way to do the changes, and play outside the changes at the same time.”



BEN WEBSTER: “When Ben plays, sex just drops from the horn. I don’t remember who said it, but I heard once that music in any of its greatest forms makes you want to go out and screw somebody. I essentially believe that; great music is very sensuous. That wasn’t all that he had to offer. Ben had a strong sense of melody.”



COLEMAN HAWKINS:

“To me he was one of the first beboppers. Him and Chu Berry, they were beboppers before Bird, playing double-time, playing those fast notes and picking out all of those unusual notes to play. There is a lot to learn from them in terms of how they advanced the harmony of their time, because the harmony at that time was fairly simplistic.”



CHU BERRY: “The unsung hero of all that. He is one of the more popular guys of that time who could play melody and rhythm at the same time.”



Advice from . . .

WYNTON MARSALIS: "I played clarinet for seven years, and alto for seven years. And when we were with Art Blakey's band, I was always having arguments with Wynton. Wynton said that I should play tenor instead of alto because all that I did was play in the middle to lower register of the alto, that I never used the upper register, that I wasn't playing it like a alto, so why bother playing it. I said: 'You are wrong, I'm working on a concept, so shut the f**k up.' When he said he was starting a band man, and if I didn't have a tenor, I wouldn't be in the band, I got a tenor. Three minutes after I blew it, I knew that he was right all along."

WAYNE SHORTER: "Once at the Playboy Jazz Festival, we were sitting around talking to Wayne, as much as you can talk to Wayne because, you know, he kind of talks circular. I understand him now, because I am really starting to get into the music. I know what he means when he says, 'Notes are like people, you have to go down the steps and greet every one of them'; I know exactly what he means now."

"We were talking about rhythm changes, and I was telling him about his soloing on Miles' *Cookin' At The Plugged Nickel* [Columbia 40645] and I thought that it was unbelievably hip. He said, 'Oh yeah,' and he picked up his horn and said, 'This is how Bird would do it,' and he would play like Bird. 'This is how Lester would do it,' and he would play like Lester and like Newk and Trane. 'And this is how Wayne does it,' and he played it like him. That is when I knew exactly what I had to do and I started going about doing it."

"The most important thing is being able to think like them. The thing that was so great about standing on stage with Sonny Rollins [at Carnegie Hall last summer] was that I had the chance to see him think. I didn't have to guess that this is what he means; I knew what he meant. I watched his eyes, I watched him play. It's helped me learn how to play ballads better, it's helped me to understand the music."

ART BLAKEY: "There's an old joke about the kid who says 'Hey grandpa lets run down the hill and f**k one of the cows.' And the grandpa says, 'No, son, lets walk down the hill and f**k 'em all.' A lot of people have heard that joke in college but the first time that I heard that joke was after I finished my solo on a ballad and Art Blakey came up and told me that joke. That was a lesson for me—that was all he told me, but I got the drift. It didn't mean that I was able to do it at the time—at age 22—but I knew what he meant. And when I started listening to Ben Webster, I really knew what slow is."

"Learning the lyrics is my dad's thing. He always said that. As far as I'm concerned, screw the story. The thing that enables a guy to play a great ballad or not play a great ballad is not an interpretation of the story. The old adage that you have to fear rejection to play rejection, I think that that is garbage. You have to have enough sensitivity and emotion to identify with rejection. When I play ballads, I am trying to explore the melody. That is a challenge to me; not, you know, playing and thinking about a woman, thinking about my wife and thinking, 'Oh, the nearness of you.' When I'm on stage playing, there are sounds dancing around in my head and I have to make sense of these sounds. That is the way that I approach about everything that I do."

"I don't think showing emotion is something that you learn on an instrument, that is something that you learn in life. That is what makes jazz such an unpopular music, because emotional immaturity doesn't really have an age to it. I know a lot of 40-year-old men that are emotionally immature—some of them are even jazz musicians. I think that the emotional depth that is involved with interpreting and playing this music is more difficult to people who don't play. Things happen to me in my life that change the way that I think. Having a child really changed me dramatically."

"I had a cat who played with a rock & roll band walk up to me one time when I was playing with Sting and say, 'Yeah, man, you play your ass off, man. You're one of those jazz cats; but me, I play with feeling.' I guess that meant that Trane didn't play with feeling or Bird didn't play with feeling, because they had control of their instrument."

"It is amazing how the word 'emotion' or 'soul' . . . almost everybody I read about now that has soul are people who don't have very good control over their instruments. They play kind of weird, and kind of funky, and they say, 'This is some soulful shit.' Why is it that the broke-down shit always has to be soulful? Like the funkier car, now that's a soulful car. I am just so tired of seeing it and tired of hearing it. No cat's going to come to me and say that I don't play with soul because I can play the horn better than him! That is absurd, man."

"I practice out of—and this is as theoretical as I get—I practice out of the book *The Repository Of Scales*, by Yusef Lateef, which is a book that is just as good as Leo Straminski's *Thesaurus Of Scales*. The rest of this is just classical music that I have been carrying around with me and have never gotten around to playing but I intend to play someday. *Fantasia* by Villa Lobos, and *Concerto For Alto* by Max Dubois. When I practice, most of what I practice is for technique and tone. I practice everything really long, really deliberate, a quarter-note equals 60 on the metronome. When 60 started to become a little easy to me, I changed it to 50 because that is a littler harder to concentrate; I just kept getting slower and slower."



MITCHELL SEIDEL

Milt Hinton, Branford Marsalis, and James Williams backstage at the JVC Festival last summer.

night TV, was planning a vacation . . . till he heard that Branford Marsalis was going to be his guest host for the week of his absence.

Marsalis was doing three interviews a day early in his week-long stint at George's (a northern Italian restaurant/jazz club in the yup-scale neighborhood that lies in the shadow of Chicago's Merchandise Mart) getting asked the Sting question or the Spike Lee question, depending on the audience of the questioner, as well as the Brother Wynton questions and the neo-trad questions posed by music writers. There were invitations to a buppie breakfast or to go sailing. Between sets he had chatted with Sam Greenlee, author of *The Spook Who Sat By The Door*; filmmaker Spike Lee; wildman Delmar Brown, keyboard player on one of the Sting tours; Robert Irving III, who was producing a light-classical session that Marsalis would play on; guitarist Henry Johnson; some guy from Little Feat; a CBS promo director who flew out from NYC; and a musician everybody else seemed to know, who announced that Anita Baker wanted "another" one of his tunes.

All part of the marketing of Branford Marsalis. Get the public

interested enough in your personality; they'll come hear you play and probably talk through the set. But get young jazz players/fans interested in what you have to say about the music and maybe they'll go out and buy a Monk record.

Following a grueling, afternoon-long interview (Cubs 9, Phillies 2), we adjourned to his hotel where the lobby's furniture music is John Coltrane, Ben Webster, and even Wynton Marsalis. From his trunk of CDs, DATs, and cassettes—including everything from David Bowie's *Tin Machine* to Keith Jarrett's *Belonging*, from a hot Bermudian sax player, Roderick Ward, to *Sgt. Pepper's*—Marsalis picked a CD of Yo-Yo Ma playing Bach sonatas. After explaining his "discovery" of Yo-Yo on *Sesame Street* and elaborating on the importance of melody, we talked about his latest recording, *Trio Jeepy* (see "Record & CD Reviews," Oct. '89); the approach that he (*Jeepy*), The Judge, Delby, and Tain (bass players Milt Hinton, Delbert Felix, and drummer Jeff Watts) took with Tin Pan Alley tunes, the modern jazz repertoire, and slow blues; the source of the sax sounds and the references to the saxophone pantheon.

"I'd been listening to a lot of the people that play in that tempo, guys like Ben Webster and Gene Ammons. So when I am playing a song like 'Gutbucket Steepy,' I'm not really thinking, 'Who am I going to play like now?,' though on a lot of the songs I do. We just wanted to play really slow blues, and to capture the feeling of guys like Jug and Ben and Stanley Turrentine—cats who play like that, who play with that feeling. I really had Bird on my mind, playing 'Come with me if you want to go to Kansas City' ('Parker's Mood'). That feeling.

"The actual saxophone sound was Delfeayo's idea. There is a Stanley Turrentine record *Blue Hour* (with the Three Sounds [Blue Note 84057]) or Coleman Hawkins' *Sirius* [Pablo 2310-707] and what they did was take the saxophone and put it on the left. Then they took the echo or the reverb and they stuck it all on the opposite side of where the saxophone was. Echo takes away the directness. When you take the sound and put it on the left side, and put all of the reverb in on the opposite side, it has this hollow effect, when you hit the note and it goes boooooong; well you know what I mean, it is on the record. A lot of that has not so much to do with how I played, but how it is mixed and how it is recorded.

"I heard Newk [Sonny Rollins] turn away from the mic on record and I thought that it was the coolest shit in the world. When I listen to records, I never really get a mental picture, a real sense of three or four guys in a room. I don't actually see Sonny until he walks away from the mic. That jolts me, you see, and I have to deal with it for a brief moment that he was actually in the room with some guys and he walked away. Sonny wasn't walking away intentionally—he feels the spirit and he just goes off.

"Whereas with me, I actually like the effect of the saxophone moving away from the mic. It allows me to do things; like on one of the songs, when the song goes hum like a train, it's there and then it goes away, I walk past the mic playing. When you do it with a trick on the board, it sounds like a trick on the board. Why switch from the mic to the rim mic when I can just do it myself? I mean jazz is supposed to be real-time music.

"There's a lot of Newk on this record but I wasn't trying to play like Sonny on 'Three Little Words,' simply because it didn't really make sense to sound like Sonny when Milt was doing that slapping thing. A lot of Sonny, I think did invariably come out, but I was actually trying to play more like Chu Berry. But at the end of 'Three Little Words,' when I play the melody, that's a tribute to Newk. I was surprised that I didn't read in any of the reviews, that I quoted the exact phrase that Sonny played on one of his recordings of 'Three Little Words'; but they don't know music, so I can't expect them to know that.

"My records don't sell worth a damn so they are really experimentation for me. The world has the benefit of watching me practice basically. I think if the finished product will be good, then all of those other records will be worthwhile as experimental records. If the finished product is nothing, then all of these records are meaningless. But that is the great challenge in life."

Our interview almost at an end, I still hadn't asked what inquiring minds want to know, what did his brother think of his work with Sting. "Jason [the 12-year-old drumming Marsalis with perfect pitch] doesn't like that kind of stuff," Marsalis replied. "He likes a few pop people but he won't go to rock concerts because it hurts his ears."

Not the brother I had in mind—what about Wynton.

"He may not say it, but we all recognize we're in show business. Do you think that people come to my shows for the music? I don't think so. They come because they saw all those TV interviews. Music isn't what makes you popular. Shit, man, the music is for us. We play the music because we believe in it. What he and I agree on is the final objective: excellence in music. That's all."

db



JOHN BOON

BRANFORD MARSALIS' EQUIPMENT

If Marsalis' black-lacquered Keilwerth tenor saxophone was a vocalist it would be a cross between Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday. Handmade, the bell is longer than the average tenor and it is flared, which makes it heavier. "For the sound that it gives, it is worth the weight to carry around. It sounds marvelous." He uses Fred Hempke #4½ reeds. "My lips swelled up the first time that I went past a 3, and the corners of my mouth hurt. It is just like lifting weights, you know: if you want to get a big sound, you have got to work for it; it is not something that just happens." His mouthpiece is newly modelled by Dave Guardala.

His soprano is a curved-neck Selmer Mark VI. "The curved neck is just easier to play, and the longer that neck the darker the sound." His current mouthpiece is a Bari but a Guardala prototype is being made for him. The reeds are also Hempke 4½.

Marsalis also uses Yamaha WX-7, Akai EWI, and Synthophone MIDI wind controllers. "I usually use keyboards to compose, unless it is something that I am playing really fast—and I want to hear it fast—then I use the Yamaha, it is easier to play. The EWI is closest to what the saxophone is. I like the analog box that they have with it; I like the sound, and the blend. The Synthophone is bad. The breath sensors are phenomenal; you can really make melody out of it because you can play with the crescendo and decrescendo, the dynamics. That is one of the keys to anything in terms of making melodies, that is the ultimate for me."

BRANFORD MARSALIS SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

TRIO JEEPY—Columbia 44199
RANDOM ABSTRACT—Columbia 44055
RENAISSANCE—Columbia 40711
ROMANCES FOR SAXOPHONE—Columbia 42122
ROYAL GARDEN BLUES—Columbia 40363
SCENES IN THE CITY—Columbia 38951
with Dirty Dozen Brass Band
VOODOO—Columbia 45042
MARDI GRAS IN MONTEUX—Rounder 2052
with Joanne Brackeen
FI-FI GOES TO HEAVEN—Concord 316
with Steve Coleman
SINE DIE—Pangaea 42150

with The Duke Ellington Orchestra

DIGITAL DUKE—GRP 1038
with Kent Jordan
ESSENCE—Columbia 40868
with Carole King
CITY STREETS—Capitol 90885
with The Neville Brothers
UPTOWN—EMI 17249
with Janis Siegel
AT HOME—Atlantic 81748
with Nancy Wilson
FORBIDDEN LOVER—Columbia 40787
with Various Artists
SCHOOL DAZE SOUNDTRACK—EMI 48680
STAY AWAKE: Music from Disney Films—A&M 3918



GENE MARTIN PHOTOGRAPHY

The YELLOWJACKETS

By Robin Tolleson

YELLOWJACKETS' NEW BUZZ

The group had just won its third Grammy for *Politics*. "Best Fusion Guys," laughed saxman Marc Russo (Jazz Fusion Album was the actual category). "By the end of the next decade we'll have them all. Best Comedy Album is next." For their next release, they certainly could have stayed at home, musically and geographically. But they decided to go *outside*, stretching the musical boundaries the group had established on previous r&b-flavored albums by opening things up in the jazz tradition. With a definite sound in mind, they recorded *The Spin* at the studio of noted ECM engineer Jon Erik Kongshaug in Oslo, Norway—their first time recording outside of familiar Los Angeles.

If any band had a right to jet lag and extensive shore leave, it would be the 1989 Yellowjackets. After spending last year doing festivals in Europe, Japan, Canada, and all across the United States to Hawaii, they took off for a two-week stay in Brazil for the Free Jazz Festival. In Rio the group may have been sluggish—compared rather unfairly to Spyro Gyra by the local press,

they rebounded in Sao Paulo, cooked and received thunderous ovations. For saxman Marc Russo, a new father, the 18-hour return-trip to California seemed interminably long, and fatigue mixed with joy was showing on other bandmembers' faces too as the 747 taxied to the gate at L.A. They didn't know then they would soon be boarding another plane to record the most adventurous album of the group's career.

Keyboardist Russell Ferrante knew they wanted a lot of space on *The Spin*, a warm sound and that sort of airy ECM feeling. "For awhile now we've been interested in using more acoustic instruments on a record," he says. "We're trying to open up the music, as opposed to going the other way, getting a singer and playing some funk. We're trying to stretch out more with this record," says Jimmy Haslip. "I play electric five-string fretless, and I try to emulate an acoustic bass. I think I came pretty close."

The group rehearsed for three weeks at the Oakland studio of guitarist Neal Schon, and when they got to Norway they were ready to record. "Twelve songs in four or five days," Ferrante says. "Maybe two days to do some overdubbing, a few synth things and whatever needed to be done, and then we mixed. So at the studio we were going strictly for performances and the sound. We knew the songs."

"We focused in on the project," says drummer William Kennedy. "The arrival was exciting, getting there and walking in the studio, realizing we're here to do a record. What's life without a little risk? We went for it and we're happy with it."

"Oslo is a beautiful city," says Ferrante. "It's very calm, more like a large village. And we were basically just at our apartment or in the studio. We were isolated, just concentrating on making the music as beautiful as we could. I'm sure the absence of the normal distractions helped make it calmer, and helped achieve more space in the music—more open spaces."

"There wasn't a lot of time to mess around," says Haslip. "It was putting the blinders on, putting on some goggles and just going for it."

"I always try to play what the situation calls for," says Russo. "So being a million miles from home, it was like, 'Okay, we're making a jazz record. Just approach it more relaxed and see what comes out.' Not that Norway wasn't beautiful, but I for one didn't enjoy going that far away to make an album. It tends to make you focus on the project a little more, though. I'm thinking, 'I really want to get in there and do well so I can get home.' Life changes when you have a family."

Engineer Kongshaug worked at a good pace for the homesick Russo. "He was very comfortable, and it seemed he just turned on the tape machine

and it sounded great. Get a level set and away we go; which is really nice, as opposed to guys during soundcheck that say, 'Okay, keep playing.' Urrghh. He's got his gig down."

What is the secret of this engineer who has recorded artists from Abercrombie to DeJohnette to Shankar to Vitous? "On any one instrument there might be three, four, or five 'rooms' that he's put on a sound to create a feeling, a space, and dimension," says Ferrante. Will Kennedy describes recording with Kongshaug as "live performance and studio clarity."

The fact that Kongshaug is a musician helps immensely in the recording process, according to Russell. "One day we showed up at the studio and he was at the board playing guitar along with 'Whistle While You Walk.' He had the melody. Another day we came back and he had put guitar on the head to 'Hallucinations.' He's a character."

"I'm an old bebopper," Kongshaug says. "And I played guitar and bass in a fusion band for many years. We listened to Tom Scott's records 15 years ago and played a lot of his L.A. Express band. I came into this business by the music, not by the electronics. I was never very interested in the electronics. I have an electronics education, but that was just to have something to do. The music has always been my biggest interest."

"I really liked working with The Yellowjackets. I find that if they're good musicians they're easy to work with. There's no problem. It's when you work with amateurs that you have problems, because then they want me to get the great sound, instead of having it themselves. I hope it's not the last time I work with The Yellowjackets."

The opening notes of *The Spin*, played by Russo and Ferrante, reverberate throughout Kongshaug's Rainbow Studios. And according to the pianist, things sounded that good from the beginning. "We just went out in the room and played, came back and listened, and that's what it sounded like. It was inspiring to play, hearing such warm and rich sounds on the instruments."

The title track also features the sax and acoustic piano on the head, and "currents of swirling groove going underneath," according to Ferrante. Marc Russo really burns. "Just everyone trying to kick everyone else in the butt," Russo says. The bass line is in 3/4 time, the drums in 4/4, and the melody inspired by Keith Jarrett's band with Jan Garbarek. "I almost had to ignore Jimmy," laughs Will. "I had to listen to him but *not* listen to him."

Kennedy really distinguishes himself on *The Spin*, setting up the shifts in dynamics and the horn and keyboard punches with expert fills. "That's drawing back on my stage band and college days," says Will. "I did a lot of big band stuff and played with a private organization called 'The Youth Of America' that had a big band. And tunes like 'Whistle While You Walk' and 'The

Spin' require that kind of big-band set up. I'm attracted to that part of playing. I like being in the throne, so to speak, and signalling to the band that that kick is coming up."

On previous Yellowjacket recordings the approach has been to record a track and leave room for overdubbing. "We approached this record like, 'Let's make the four of us sound like a band. Let's try to get it so we don't need another element on the song for it to sound complete,'" says Ferrante. "That inspires everyone to really open up and try all the dynamics and colors we have."

As on previous Yellowjacket releases *Shades* and *Four Corners*, there is a world vision subtly pervading *The Spin*. Russell Ferrante's family has a good friend from El Salvador, so he's learned a good deal about the situation there. "It's sad what's going on in parts of Central America. I wanted to write something that would offer some hope for the kids and families down there. These situations are hard for us to imagine having what we have here. To me that's the most emotional of the songs." "Thinking about the children of El Salvador, it's very easy to play emotionally," says Russo.

The Jackets have always been a democratic band, in terms of arranging ideas. "We always push and pull at each other to try to get the best out of every song," the saxman says. Ferrante and Haslip, the two remaining original Jackets, wrote much of the material on *The Spin*, including "Enigma." "We just came up with this kind of chromatic melody where we'd change from major 3rd to minor 3rd, and that again was inspired by listening to a lot of the Keith Jarrett trio stuff. Not that we're to that level, but we're inspired by that music."

"I've actually been changing the way I play with the band," says Haslip. "We've been leaning towards open playing, more jazz, and I wanted to approach the band more like Gary Peacock or Marc Johnson. I'm trying to learn from upright bass players—play my own ideas but just cop that sound. There are a lot of 'isms' that string bass has that are good to learn. Just like if you're trying to play country music there are certain boundaries and 'isms.' A vocabulary. Bebop and modern jazz have those traits or 'isms,' and I try to study those and bring those to the band."

"He has a great sound in the bass," says engineer Kongshaug. "On some tunes he puts on some effects. But the basic sound is so good I don't think I did anything as far as EQ. It's just how it sounds. On some songs there's some kind of reverb or room, but as to EQ there's nothing."

Jarrett's trio (with Peacock and Jack DeJohnette) is one of Haslip's favorite bands. "They're still playing the bop kind of thing, but treating it in a modern perspective. That's all that we're trying to do—play jazz, but with modern technology."

And the record I've been inhaling for the last two weeks is the new Branford record with Milt Hinton, *Trio Jeepy*. He's got a great sound on there."

When the Jackets try to play more traditional jazz, it works quite well, but it also comes out slightly funky. A smartly askew swing hip-hop groove that may have to settle for the term Jacket Shuffle, as on "Whistle While You Walk."

"We're trying to pay homage to more of the traditional elements," explains Ferrante (check out their arrangement of Billy Strayhorn's "A Flower Is A Lovable Thing" and Bud Powell's "Hallucinations"), "but yet have our own personality as well. The bop and walking has been done by a lot of great musicians. It's fun to take that feel, but somehow give it a different quality, some of the electric element and some quirky things so it's different. Not right down the tubes in the tradition. It's not in the middle of the road. It's somehow off on the shoulder a little bit."

Although Ferrante conceived of the tune on the synthesizer, once in the studio he felt compelled to move behind the acoustic for part of it. "Sitting out in the room I was inspired to go to the acoustic behind Marc. We'd never done it that way before, but it just felt right, and it gave that section a little different quality."

On recent albums, the sequencer has been more and more an important part of the Jackets' music, but on *The Spin*, "Geraldine" was the only tune performed along with a sequencer. "We sequenced some mallet percussion I had worked on. We put that on tape first and then played as a band to that. In live performance we'll be able to play that song and have it sound real good, with all the parts there."

"The sequencer gives you the percussionist in the machine there, and as many extra members as possible," says Kennedy. "But the new album required more blowing, more of a band performance."

The Yellowjackets were started in 1980 by noted Los Angeles session players Ferrante, Haslip, drummer Ricky Lawson, and guitarist Robben Ford, as a creative outlet, an outside project for their own musical gratification. Nearly 10 years later the group has two Grammys, and it's successful enough to now occupy 75 percent of the bandmembers' time and efforts.

As on their other releases, there are flashes of exceptional musicianship, but there is something quite accessible about the music. "People that don't understand jazz might still like what we're doing, because we're still approaching it very melodically," says Haslip. "That will attract people. We're also trying to keep some sort of traditional direction alive. It seems like there's less and less of that music. You have to go back into the archives to listen to that."

"Jazz lives on through us," says

YELLOWJACKETS' EQUIPMENT

Will Kennedy plays Yamaha drums. "On the record I just used one rack tom, a 10-inch Yamaha. I looked at my kit one day and just noticed a big glob onstage. When I first got the gig I guess I was real excited and thought I needed all this stuff to happen. But I broke it down to one rack. I'm now playing a 20-inch bass drum, which has been a lot of fun. I find the 20-inch really speaks well. I have a 14-inch x 8-inch snare drum, birchwood. A 14-inch floor tom." Kennedy plays the new Paiste line. "They're very bright, aged-sounding cymbals. I have a 19-inch Sound Creation Dark Ride, a 19-inch Flat Ride, which is real good for the music on this record. The ping really cuts through the track without distorting. A 16-inch thin crash. A 17-inch Sound Reflector model. And an 8-inch splash that has a razor edge. I also use 13-inch Sound Edge hi-hat cymbals by Paiste." He uses a new Yamaha chain-drive bass drum pedal. "Get the spring right, and you should be gone," he says. Kennedy uses 5A model nylon-tip drumsticks.

Jimmy Haslip plays a five-string left-handed bass, custom-made by Mike Tobias. It's a 34-inch-scale model with neck-through-body construction, Schaller bridges and tuners, active electronics, and two Tobias humbucking pickups. "During the making of *Politics* I found I could get it to sound more like an upright by using a picking technique and just the way I phrased things. And about midway through the project it hit me—I had a little multi-effects unit that I had been using called a Roland DEP 5. I found this little-room sound like a small bedroom with no furniture. It made it sound kind of like it was mic'd, and that gave it a more wooden quality," Haslip says.

"In the studio I used two direct boxes. A direct on my bass into the effect, which goes into yet another direct box. So I have an effect separate from the bass. I have a clean signal from the bass, and then I can mix in how much of the room sound I want, according to the song. I used a different room sound on the bass on 'Dark Horses' than I did on 'The Spin.'"

Live, Haslip uses SWR gear, the Goliath cabinet. "Onstage I use two SWR 400-watt amplifiers and two Goliaths, which have four 10s in each cabinet. It's really punchy. The 10s make the bass sound like Mike Tyson. I'm going to be adding two Goliath Jrs with two 10s in each, so I'll have 12 10-inch speakers, 800 watts, and it's two separate systems, so I'm in stereo." Haslip uses Dean Markley Super Round Wound strings, the medium-light scale.

Yamaha is also building him a five-string fretless acoustic bass guitar. "It's like a giant Martin guitar, with five strings, fretless, and with a pickup built inside. Like three times bigger than an acoustic guitar. That'll give me even more of a wooden quality."

Marc plays a Martin curved soprano with a Lakey 6 Star mouthpiece and plasticover 3½ reed. He also plays a Selmer Mark IV alto with a Meyer 5 Medium Face mouthpiece and a plasticover 4 or 5 reed.

Russell plays more acoustic piano on *The Spin* than he has on any other Jacket album, a German Concert Steinway Grand at Kongshaug's studio. His keyboards also include a Yamaha KX88, Roland Super JX, a Yamaha DX7.



YELLOWJACKETS SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

THE SPIN — MCA 6304
POLITICS — MCA 6236
STAR TREK IV: THE VOYAGE HOME — MCA 6195
FOUR CORNERS — MCA 5994
SHADES — MCA 5752
SAMURAI SAMBA — Warner Bros. 25204-1
MIRAGE A TROIS — Warner Bros. 23813-1
CASINO LIGHTS — Warner Bros. 1-23718
YELLOWJACKETS — Warner Bros. 3573

Kennedy, who enjoyed getting to stretch out on drums on *The Spin*. "Us and the rest of the jazz maniacs."

"I'm always surprised when we perform and there's people out there," laughs Haslip. "I've never really gotten used to that. But it was very cool—when we did the European tour this past July we mainly performed the new material. And it's been received the best in live performance of all the records we've done. We've done a lot of dates in the States now and it's been the

same kind of deal. That's an inspiration for the band, because we're just trying to play music that we really love.

"We enjoy performing together and taking chances. We're trying to even move further into the acoustic realm and the improvisation realm. And we're going to try to leave behind some of the formulas that we were guilty of performing. Not that we hate it, but we're moving forward. We're ready to get the binoculars out and see what else is up for the band." db



BRIAN McMILLEN

Don Cherry

By Josef Woodard

Globetrotter In The Mainstream

composer, and conceptualist, Cherry is in the midst of a long and unorthodox life in music.

Ironically, Cherry has suddenly found himself in a position of relatively high visibility in these United States, and for odd reasons. *Art Deco*, his first domestic label release in over a decade, is an atypical Cherry record. On it, Cherry and Coleman band cohorts bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Billy Higgins play hosts to the underrated Texas tenorist James Clay over standards, blues, and a few harmolodic charmers (see "Record & CD Reviews," Oct. '89). To the masses plugged into radioplay, the name Cherry registers because of Neneh, Don's stepdaughter—whose album *Raw Like Sushi* (Virgin 91252) is an entrancingly inventive hip-hop sensation.

Where you might expect that Cherry's latter-day recognition would fuel a sense of poetic injustice, his response is less frustration than renewed determination to make his mark. "It hasn't been frustrating for the reason that I've spent a lot of time outside of the country," he reasons, "where I've established myself so that I can have all the facilities as an artist and musician to be creative as my inspirations come. The frustration in America is because of everything being on a business-commercial level and not on a cultural level.

"It's difficult to be able to get the machinery—what's necessary, the studio and all of that—other than someone paying for it as a commercial project. I want to be in America now because I'm tired of seeing it written—'Don Cherry, the great saxophone player.' That's happened twice." Let it be known: Don Cherry, the trumpet player, has come home again.

Although *Art Deco* finds Cherry back in the terrain of major-label activity, the album hardly defines his musical status at present. Still as broad-thinking and eclectic as ever, Cherry is pursuing a myriad of ideas and creative situations. (He is presently working on a commission to do a Mass for all religions in San Francisco's Grace Church with percussionist Naná Vasconcelos.) In conversation, likewise: he speaks in concentric evolutionary loops, discoursing on a variety of topics with little prompting. In a prebreakfast interview at noon recently, Cherry spoke freely of details, memories, and ideas.

For the moment, Cherry's inveterate travels have landed him in San Francisco, where he says he moved to be close to the Berkeley-based Hieroglyphics Ensemble. Peter Applebaum is the organizer and composer for the 15-piece group, which has been in operation for 19 years and with whom Cherry played for a stint at Kimball's East earlier this year. The Ensemble also opened for The Grateful Dead's traditional New Year's Eve show in the Bay Area.

Another Bay Area gig found Cherry playing with Indian percussionist Zakir Hussain. The trumpeter was empathetic to Hussain not only because of Cherry's past Indian music studies, but because of the musical lineage from Hussain's renowned father Alla Rakha. A young-at-heart 53-year-old, Cherry is idealistic about the coming musical generation, especially with the rise of Neneh.

"There's something really exciting happening now with the children—I call them the jazz brats," Cherry says with a laugh. "In fact, for the last few years, I've been trying to push some festival where the children of musicians can play. They should

America, meet Don Cherry: veteran of foreign musical duty, champion of contemporary music, world music hybridizer, groundbreaker of the free jazz avant garde, and native son come home. The lean man with a horn (a pocket trumpet, to be specific) broke into the forefront as one of Ornette Coleman's harmolodic troopers in the late '50s and has wandered the globe—literally and musically—ever since.

In the past three decades, Cherry has mounted musical *coups* and dared to be different in ways which should rightly place him in the inner circle of important post-bebop trumpeters. In his native country, though, Cherry has worked on the fringes of public recognition—both because of his actual detachment, having spent a lot of time abroad, and his willful aesthetic distance from the jazz mainstream.

From his Coleman period to stints with Sonny Rollins, Archie Shepp, and Albert Ayler; to collaborations with such diverse musicians as Carla Bley and Gato Barbieri (pre-*Last Tango*), Robert Wilson, and others; to dabblings in electrified jazz fusion albums in the '70s; to the tranquil strains of his group Codona to a wide gamut of different projects over the years as player,

have at least four groups where they play with their groups and their music, and then have one night where they play the music of their fathers. I think that would be good."

Cherry believes that intergenerational crosstalk is mutually beneficial. "The understanding—that you learn from them and they learn from you—keeps away the problem of a generation gap or ego fighting. Yes, I've learned a lot from Neneh and I'm proud of the way that she's been going about becoming a musician and a recording artist. There's a whole new thing now of technology, studio music recorded as an art. It's a whole art apart from performance. You can make music in the studio, and to perform it is a whole different thing.

"Neneh has always loved being around people and the wonder of people working together and getting something, what I call, 'did,' he laughs infectiously. "I think I got that from Ornette: 'Let's get it did.' The simplicity, the zenness, the finish in her record *Raw Like Sushi* is one of the great values and virtues to her work."

From the look (and sound) of it, *Art Deco* is a return to Cherry's jazz roots, akin to Haden's recent work with Quartet West. It is also an unofficial tribute to Clay and a nod to the rich value of real-book playing. "It's important for that culture in jazz [standards] to stay alive. It brings everyone close to each other. There's a whole list of songs we could say are important for kids to learn as steps in developing their own voice. For us, the family has always been the 12-bar blues. Once you learn the 12-bar blues, you're in business."

The spark for the recent recording dates came about after Cherry's old saxist friend Claude Burks played him some acetate recordings from the '50s, featuring Cherry, Higgins, and Clay. Like Coleman, Clay was a Texas émigré to Los Angeles in the '50s who played with—and studied with—Coleman. But his return to Texas for personal reasons precluded his involvement in Coleman's ensemble intimations of the "jazz to come."

"Scratchy as [the acetate recording] was," Cherry recalls, "it felt so good, it got me wondering, 'Wow, where's James?' He's been living in Texas and working in the area. He's one of the saxophone players from that ['50s] period, and when I first heard him, I was astounded. The way he approached music was that he wouldn't call out chords, but he could play some of the most incredible progressions and harmonies. He could play ballads that would bring tears to your eyes—I mean happy tears of bliss. Us coming together was like a continuation from when we had split



TOM COPI

up.

"I was thinking about how thankful I am to have heard and been around musicians who I heard live. A lot of people haven't had a chance to hear them live. Art Tatum, Bud Powell—I had to go to Paris to hear him—Charlie Parker and Chet Baker playing together. Like Abdullah Ibrahim says about me—"The brother with perfect timing,"" Cherry laughs loudly. He's on the memory trail now. "Thelonious Monk used to always call me 'ugly beautiful.' One time Thelonious Monk came and stayed three days at my house in Watts. We had a good time. I'll never forget those three days."

In many ways, Cherry's life story does read like a case study of the "brother with perfect timing." Descended from African American and Choctaw stock, Cherry was born in 1936 in Oklahoma, where his trumpeter father ran The Cherry Blossom jazz club. The family moved to Watts in 1940, and young Cherry developed musically at a time when the Los Angeles jazz scene—based around Central Avenue—was fairly thriving. Bitten hard by music, Cherry cut school and got lessons in listening from such sources as L.A.'s crusader of the airwaves, Johnnie Otis. As Cherry confesses, "He's been an important person in using the media and turning us all on with the music."

In his formative years, Cherry wasn't into the purely cerebral realm of bebop one-upmanship. "One wonderful thing, being around that period, was dancing. Jazz music has always had a dance element. During bebop, there was 'The Bop' dance around that time. Thelonious Monk was supposed to have been a way-out musician, but he would dance to his own music so the people could see that it was danceable. I think that's really important, especially this thing of people holding each other while dancing.

"I always loved to dance and I guess that's why I later played with groups like Lou Reed and Ian Drury. To me, that music is just rhythm & blues. I came through that whole period."

Cherry detoured around convention early on in his choice of instrument, the pocket trumpet. "When you're ready for certain things, they're there," he figures. "When you're ready for the teacher, he'll appear. It's like the trumpet found me. I found it in a trumpet shop in the [San Fernando] Valley. Red Mitchell, who has always been helpful in the music, was helpful with the finances. It cost a hundred dollars, but that was a lot of money for a kid coming from Watts. I was trying to come out of the love ghetto."

He got out of the ghetto, first as an odd-jobber delivering prescription drugs from Schwabb's to the Hollywood elite, and then playing his horn. Enter Ornette Coleman. The rest is a curious case history. After their legendary Five Spot engagement in New York, the Coleman band entered the jazz annals with force, but also some resistance. "A lot of people thought that we didn't know what we were doing, that we didn't know about chord changes or forms in jazz or pitch—the science of fine-tuning. Young musicians didn't believe that we knew about that. It's not true, because Ornette's harmolodic concept, I think, is one of the most important concepts in Western music."

While the original band—Coleman, Cherry, Haden, and Higgins—splintered off by the mid-'60s, the spirit didn't. Cherry, Haden, drummer Ed Blackwell, and saxist Dewey Redman formed the aptly-named Old And New Dreams in the early '80s (much as VSOP reunited the mid-'60s Miles band *sans* Miles). The original Coleman group reformed in 1987 for the acclaimed *In All Languages*.

Has Cherry reflected on what might have happened had he not met Coleman in Los Angeles? "If I hadn't met Ornette? Things like that in your life are so important—and I'm speaking karmically—that you can't say, 'What if it hadn't happened?' I've been listening to these tapes of rehearsals for when we made *In All Languages* with Ornette. We rehearsed every day except Sunday for what seemed like eight hours a day at Ornette's studio. Those rehearsal tapes are incredible."

Was it easy, during the time of *In All Languages*, to slip back into the elusive groove of Coleman's music?

"Ornette's music has never been easy for me. Maybe that's



BRIAN McMILLEN

DON CHERRY'S EQUIPMENT

Don Cherry is an avid multi-instrumentalist, who plays everything from tablas to woodwinds to keyboards. He prefers not to specify brand names, but is especially fond of his personal pocket trumpet, manufactured by Besson and personally crafted by Meha.

DON CHERRY SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

ART DECO — A&M 5258
 HEAR AND NOW — Atlantic 18217
 DON CHERRY — Horizon/A&M 717
 ETERNAL NOW — Antilles 7034
 ETERNAL RHYTHM — BASF 20680
 COMPLETE COMMUNION — Blue Note 4226
 SYMPHONY FOR IMPROVISORS — Blue Note 4247
 WHERE IS BROOKLYN? — Blue Note 84311

with Codona

CODONA — ECM 829 371-2
 CODONA 2 — ECM 833 332-2
 CODONA 3 — ECM 827 420-2

with Old And New Dreams

OLD AND NEW DREAMS — ECM 829 379-2
 PLAYING — ECM 829 123-2

with Ornette Coleman

SOMETHING ELSE! — Contemporary OJC 163-2
 TOMORROW IS THE QUESTION — Contemporary OJC 342-2
 CHANGE OF THE CENTURY — Atlantic 1327
 FREE JAZZ — Atlantic 1364
 THE SHAPE OF JAZZ TO COME — Atlantic 1317
 THIS IS OUR MUSIC — Atlantic 1353
 TO WHOM WHO KEEPS A RECORD — Atlantic (Japan)

SCIENCE FICTION — Columbia 31061
 IN ALL LANGUAGES — Caravan of Dreams 800

with Ed Blackwell

EL CORAZON — ECM 829 199-2

with Charlie Haden

LIBERATION MUSIC ORCHESTRA — MCA/Impulse 39125

one reason I like it. Sometimes things are so simple that it's difficult. That was a great experience because I was learning again and, out of that, it was enriching. It's like I was saying—when the timing is right, things just happen. And you're ready for it."

In the '60s, Cherry's traveling began—to Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East—both out of diminishing work in the States and an inbred desire to see and hear the world. Twisted though his path has been, Cherry sees an overriding logic governing his musical life. Call it a fatalist streak or just a trust in self and fate: Cherry views his life as a series of connected events.

"I could make an example of the things that are happening now in politics. They were going to happen anyway. It's a force that's going on. It doesn't matter if the Democrats or Republicans have been in. It's the same thing that has been happening in music. It's the force—I call it the life force. We're supposed to be able to be balanced enough in ourselves to steer the boat and not just go with the wind.

"There's a life force that's going with technology that we've all had to face. Whether we use it in our music with love and taste or not, it's still there. Having children, they're playing instruments and have that equipment. That's part of their expression now. Those are the tools."

Cherry has grown accustomed to traveling the cultural byways, free from the hustle of lowest common denominator entertainment tactics. He harbors big ideas about a better situation, bringing up, for instance, the concept of a network devoted to the arts of black people. "It could be the WAAT—The World Afro-American Television," he suggests.

"America now is actually going through an underground cultural revolution, and it's important that all the material that's been accumulated or all the history that's gone down be exposed. Even to the older people—all of us Americans. I think that it could be helpful in solving some of the problems that are happening on the streets. It's difficult for the kids now to feel the future, because the controlling forces in America are not realizing certain things. Now they're being forced to realize certain things in education—of a new curriculum.

"This thing of education, man," he says, pausing, "the jazz musicians and the musicians I know from different countries know their culture and are involved in improvised music. We use the word jazz just to identify the subject matter," he laughs. "It's a label for the can. But jazz has opened up a whole lot of people coming together socially.

"To speak of Afro-Cuban music, it's one of the great things that happened. It came from Africa through the Latin countries—Cuba being one—and now it's gone back to Africa. You can hear it in music of Zaire. You can hear the influence now in the music of salsa and what they call 'samba voodoo' in Haiti. All of that has gone around now. We made that full circle from African music."

Cherry's free-minded approach to weaving world musics cohered neatly into Codona (so titled for members Collin Walcott, Don Cherry, and Naná Vasconcelos). In its brief, three-album history (cut short by Colin Walcott's death in 1986), Codona deftly covered musical terrain from Appalachia to Africa lyrically, without testing the limits of taste. Who else could pull off a medley of Ornette Coleman and Stevie Wonder ("Colemanwonder" on the debut album)?

"There has always been a way you could play that's supposed to be just exotic," Cherry comments. "Codona has been made up of musicians who have studied the instruments that we play and it's a part of our life and soul. We know the technical and cultural side of things that we play. We can do that honestly with our jazz backgrounds, improvising to play. It's the beginning of something and will continue on."

From his Coleman dates forward, Cherry's style has always epitomized deceptive simplicity. Never one to flaunt technique (leading some to foolishly question said technique and thus miss the point of his distinctive voice), Cherry finds the shortest routes to self-expression. Broken runs are punctuated by smears and roughhewn, folksong phrases. In virtually all of his various and sundry contexts, Cherry has maintained the essential musical mandate of the song-and-dance. Thus, whatever reputation Cherry has had as an outsider, as a revolutionary in search of a revolution, he never loses sight of his wary sense of jubilation.

"You have classical, folk, and devotional music. All that can be expressed and understood in jazz music, in one's art, like John Coltrane did. That's why I'm glad I'm doing this commissioned piece at Grace Cathedral for all religions. I can write a piece to express the experiences I've had in different religions. There's something in you, wherever you go. There's this hymn, 'This Little Light Of Mine, I'm Going To Let It Shine.' You have to keep it lit."

db

Don Pullen

Reconciling Opposites

by Kevin Whitehead

Listening to Don Pullen play piano, you might think he's a bit schizy—which is exactly what he isn't. He plays some of the most accessible melodies and tenderest ballads of any pianist around. But at other times, he'll give the piano the back of his hand—literally—rolling his wrist 180 degrees or so and running lightning-stroke glisses up the treble register with his knuckles. But to Don Pullen, playing inside and outside is all one. "At one time they may have been separated, but it's all me, all one thing. I can either use or not use the back of the hands and the rolls, the twists and spirals, and so forth. I can play some of the same lines with the back of my hand as I can with my fingers. I can just play whatever I want to."

There was a time, way back, when Don Pullen kept in and out discreetly separated. In the latter '60s, in fact, he led two lives. In one life, he played free percussive piano with multi-instrumentalist Giuseppe Logan, drummer Milford Graves, and others. "We had a gig maybe every now and then, once or twice a year," he says, snorting out a little laugh. (He's got an old tape where he's playing with Dewey Redman and George Adams on saxes, Sirone on bass, and Rashied Ali on drums that he'd like to release one day.) In the other life, he was the organist leading the house band nightly at The Fantasy East, a "black yuppie place, where ballplayers from the Mets would come by, on Hollis Avenue around 200th Street" way out in Queens, a bit of a commute from home in Harlem.

"I was playing straightforward blues like Jimmy Smith. Thursday through Sunday, I'd play for different singers who came through: Arthur Prysock, Ruth Brown, Jimmy Rushing, Irene Reid, Sonny Til from The Orioles—blues singers and old rhythm & blues singers. From time to time I'd go out on the road, say with Arthur or Ruth. I was with



MITCHELL SEIDEL

[the Cincinnati r&b label] King Records as an arranger for a little while—they had a New York office down on 53rd Street—and Arthur and Irene were two of my assignments.

"People who knew me as an organ player did not know me as a piano player, and vice versa." But sometimes, he'd incorporate some of his dissonant piano stuff into his r&b organ work. "If it fit, I would do it. I didn't have any qualms about it, and never got any complaints. I knew what was appropriate." The urge to join the halves together—to devise a personal music that can express it all—was great.

Once he brought the two together, he was on his way: three years with Charles Mingus, that master of reconciling the tender and the violent, the inside and the outside; 10 with the George Adams-Don Pullen/Don Pullen-George Adams quartet, which broke up in 1988. Nowadays Pullen prefers solo and trio gigs: during festival season last summer New Yorkers could hear him play solo uptown at Weill Recital Hall one day, and in trio at The Knitting Factory two nights later. His recent trio set for Blue Note, pointedly, is called *New Beginnings* (see "Record & CD Reviews," Oct. '89). The here and now, Don Pullen says, is "a new start for me personally and career-wise. I hear myself playing differently, hear different areas that I can go now. There's a whole horizon there that I didn't see before, musically, that I feel free to explore. Everything is more meaningful, the music is more meaningful, it's closer to me. That's what *New Beginnings* really means."

Many of us have known that feeling: you keep plugging away at something you've been working on for a long time, and sud-

denly everything seems clearer. It's the moment that makes the long trek worthwhile. Pullen's long trek began in Roanoke, Virginia one Christmas—he'd prefer the year not be mentioned. Let's just say the 1944 birthdate listed in the *Encyclopedia Of Jazz In The Seventies* is no less than three years off the mark. "I came up through gospel music and blues; I studied classical music to learn to play in church. I played in little bands around my hometown. But I didn't start to hear anything different until I was in college in North Carolina, and exposed to records by Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy—Ornette's *This Is Our Music* and Dolphy's *Live At The Five Spot*. The problem for me is that I didn't hear any pianos playing that way—it was all horns.

"When I got to New York"—in 1964—"people started saying that I sounded like Cecil Taylor, and I hadn't heard of him. So as not to get confused with him, I would stay away from [listening to] him. At least I could keep my stuff for myself, clean and honest. Of course by now I've heard Cecil, but I think we both know we don't sound alike."

Pullen reckons he hadn't even heard Monk until after he got to New York. But he'd had contact with one pianist using extended techniques: Muhal Richard Abrams. "A few months before coming to New York, I went to Chicago. It was only two weeks, but it was a very important two weeks, because at that time I was still struggling with questions like, 'Do I sound right, do I sound okay?' I had no one, no criteria to go by.

"I went there with a friend from my hometown—Lenny Martin, a fantastic bass player. He had relatives in Chicago, so he knew Muhal. At that time, Muhal was

important to me because he gave what I was doing validity. I would go to Mihal's house every day. He'd play some, and then he'd listen to me, and say, 'Okay, you're doing great Pullen.' That approval coming from that source meant a lot to me.

"At that time, when Mihal would go 'out,' he was playing with one hand only—he would play single lines only with his right hand. His left hand never touched the piano. So my ambition was to find a way to introduce both hands. To do more than that was one of my goals.

"I remember having ambitions to make the piano be able to bend notes, like horns can bend. And I used to be frustrated with it because it was so rigid. I couldn't really get the essence of jazz and the blues. But then I began to look at the instrument differently and see it for what it is, and what I can do with it. So now we have a good relationship," he laughs again. For a guy who can look awfully severe in photos and on stage, Pullen has a ready sense of humor.

On his earliest recorded performances, with Giuseppi Logan in 1964 and '65—a young Eddie Gomez was on bass—Pullen's concept was already forming, if a long way from mature. A decade later, it had gelled. His solo on "Opus 4," from his first recording with Mingus, 1974's *Mingus Moves*, is unmistakably in his own pianistic voice. "By then, my concept was pretty much developed. It was just a matter of playing his music, which was perfectly suited for what I did. There were no complaints from him though I think sometimes he didn't know what I was doing. But he liked it. The kind of guy he was, he was looking for something different anyway."

Pullen talked about all this one mercifully dry afternoon during a very wet New York summer. He was sitting at a table at Birdland, that handsome club on Broadway and 105th in Manhattan, one block south of Duke Ellington Boulevard. Pullen had indulged his interviewer's request that we meet someplace with a piano, so he could demonstrate and talk about those rolls, twists, spirals, and things—the something different *he* had been looking for.

Sitting at the piano, he was a little skeptical about the whole idea. "I know what I want to do, and I do it. The problem is, I don't know how I do it. I've taught students who came expecting to get all my secrets, but I don't have any secrets." What he means is, they're secret from him too. So we have exchanges like this:

KEVIN WHITEHEAD: *Sometimes you do things where your wrist is at an angle of about 90 degrees and your fingers are almost flat. It looks similar to Monk's keyboard attack.*

DON PULLEN: Oh really? I can't imagine that. See, my eyes are closed most of the time when I play, so I don't really see what I'm doing.

KW: *You also do a thing where your hand is cupped, like a person making one of those*

shadow silhouettes of a swan.

DP: Oh. That's amazing. Seriously, I don't know this.

But don't mistakenly assume Pullen blunders through his alternative techniques because he doesn't store them in the verbal part of his brain. They're the result of hard work, but may happen too quickly to be broken down into component parts. Sometimes, looking at high-speed photographs of his hands in action, he sees himself doing things he didn't know he did. A case in point is the Eugenio Ratiglia shot that graces the cover of the 1983 recording *Evidence Of Things Unseen* (which is not just prime Pullen, but one of the great solo piano records): his fingers collapse under themselves, like a wave crashing onto a beach, as his hand strikes up the keyboard. It looks like an early moment in one of his oughta-be-patented wrist rolls.

Those rubber-wristed contortions are his most famous innovation. He *can* tell you about those, and how they got started. "I think I was playing around at home, trying to get that [rapid gliss] sound with my fingers, and it just wasn't working—it was neither full nor fast enough. So I [slashes at the piano keys with his knuckles], and said 'Is this what I want? Yes, this is what I want.' That's how it started; then I'd keep trying, dealing with it and experimenting."

In performance it's something he works up to. He illustrates by playing his 5/4 bounce "The Sixth Sense": he fingers right-hand runs that become faster and busier, until he crosses over: whipping his wrist clockwise, halfway around, his fingertips fold loosely back toward his palm as he strikes the keys with his knuckles. Now knuckling, now fingering, he varies the density of his line, but they blend together, one sounding as natural as the other. This ain't no gimmick. The trick, he says, is to do it in rhythm.

"One of the difficulties I have with playing these things is to make it fit the chord. Otherwise it just won't sound right. The chord in the left hand gives it a pitch"—creates a tonal context for what the right does. "I have to play enough notes within the chord with the right hand to make it fit. If I'm playing in C major, D minor, or G, I might do all white notes. If I'm in C minor, I'll need an e-flat and a b-flat. He demonstrates on "All The Things You Are," holding his curled right hand at a slight angle, so that as he rolls his wrist across white keys he strikes an e-flat with the knuckle of his index finger at the end of a phrase.

"Sometimes, to get a fuller effect, I'll use more of the hand, maybe up to the wrist, depending on the sound or how full I want the rolls to be."

His physical approach to playing piano looks like dancing sitting down. He *is* like Cecil Taylor in that both are inspired by dance. Pullen has collaborated with Eva Anderson's Baltimore Dance Theatre, Diane McIntyre's Harlem company Sounds in Motion, and performance artist Jana Haimsohn.

Pullen's father tap danced; an analogy suggests itself, between tap technique and his shifts between fingering and knuckling the keyboard. In each case, beats/notes come closer and closer together until they become a blur. He toys with the idea of putting taps on his shoes for solo gigs.

Since he began doing solo concerts in 1975, Pullen's worn ankle bells on one cuff; they jangle like a tambourine when he stomps his feet. He got the idea from Nadi Qamar (a sometime Mingus pianist in the '50s, under the name Spaulding Givens). Those stomps underscore a flamenco strain in his playing, evident in pieces like *New Beginnings* "At The Cafe Centrale," which he says was composed "about 20 years ago." Pullen plays me a scrap of the first tune he ever wrote, when he was around 10 or 11: it sounds oddly like the tango strain from "St. Louis Blues." He has no idea how that rhythm entered his youthful head; Roanoke has no Spanish tinge.

Sometimes the intense physicality of his performances can be hazardous. I remind Pullen of a solo concert he played in Baltimore a few years ago, at which he'd cut his hand and bled on the ivories—a too-obvious metaphor for the high cost of art. "Yeah, I get cut from the edge of the keys, or get knicked sometimes when the ivory is chipped. Usually it happens in the same spot [by the knuckle of the little finger]. I need a callus here, and sometimes when I don't work regularly I lose it. But it doesn't happen as much as it used to." One way he can tell which parts of the hand he uses when his eyes are closed is by checking to see where calluses build up.

He's become less hard on pianos as well as his hands. "The black keys would always fly away up in the air. A lot of times when I'd play someplace, my reputation would precede me," he grins. "They'd give me the worst piano in the place. Mingus and I used to carry Crazy Glue around. He'd keep it in his briefcase. A note would fly off and he'd hand me the glue and I'd glue it back on in an instant."

Pullen had joined Mingus on the recommendation of Roy Brooks, Mingus' drummer at the time, who'd seen Don playing someplace. (Drummer Dannie Richmond was on-leave, playing with the British rock band Mark-Almond.) "Mingus called me at three or four o'clock in the morning. Nothing happened I guess for a couple of months and then he called me again, and I went down to his apartment in the Village. I played about eight bars and he said, 'Okay, you got the gig.'

Tough audition. "He had a gig the next night. The first tune we hit, when it came time for my solo, he put the bass down and went to the bathroom and stayed for about 20 minutes, left me with the drummer to solo. I'd already been doing duos with drums, with Milford Graves, so that was fine with me. I didn't perceive it at that time as a test, I just thought he had to go to the

toilet. But he came back sorta grinning, and [the band's saxophonist Hamiet] Bluiett hipped me to what was going on."

When the sax chair became vacant, Pullen recommended a guy he'd run into while playing piano with r&b honker Syl Austin down in Atlanta: George Adams. Then Dannie Richmond rejoined Mingus, and three-fourths of the future Pullen-Adams quartet began sharing the bandstand.

Pullen stayed three years, until Mingus began riding him about playing inside the piano on one item in the band's book, Sy Johnson's vamping dirge "For Harry Carney"—a nice tune, if you ask me. "I just hated it, I hated it, I hated it," Pullen says. He's laughing, but he's not kidding. "I mean it was—I don't know. Something about it I hated. I did *not* like that tune." He's still laughing. "Well Mingus didn't want me to play the strings on the inside of the piano, but I thought that was the only way I could make some sense out of this tune. My ambition was to play as good as I could—it still is. I promised myself that if he interfered with that I was gone. And when he did, I left."

After the bassist died, Pullen played on the first Mingus Dynasty album. "But I didn't want to stick with that. And then Jimmy Knepper took the arrangements and I don't know what he did with them. If you knew Mingus charts like I knew them, and then saw what he did to them—he took a lot of Mingus out of the charts and put Knepper in. I think that was Knepper's chance to get back at Mingus for busting him in the chops. I told him that and he just looked at me and grinned."



MITCHELL SEIDEL

After that band was under way, the new quartet was born when Pullen, Adams, and Richmond got an offer from a European booking agent to come over for a tour. On arriving in Europe, the Pullen-Adams quartet—with the trusty Cameron Brown on bass—discovered *they* were being billed as Mingus Dynasty. "In Europe, they'll call you anything. I think they did expect us to follow in the Mingus tradition. But George and I both have a dislike of ghost bands—there's only so much they can do. We did play a couple of Mingus' ballads, but that was the only reference to Mingus."

The quartet stayed together for a decade, through the death of Dannie Richmond last year. (Lewis Nash took over on drums.) "We played the Vanguard I think in September last year, and I let the guys know right after that that I was leaving." There were a few gigs after that, to fulfill outstanding commitments. I tell Pullen I saw the band after it had officially split, at New Music America in Miami last December, and was struck by how much more fiery the music sounded live than on records.

"That band was never actually recorded correctly, in a way to capture the fire. Also that was a small room, and it seems like the more intimate the setting, the better that band performed. But we never got what we wanted in the studio, and the two live recordings were all out of balance. But it was a very fiery band; fire was its middle name. 'Cause we had Dannie there, and Dannie was Dannie. But after 10 years, we had only reached a certain level, and it seemed like we really weren't going anyplace. I was just tired, and wanted to do something different."

The quartet's final two albums were for Blue Note. Pullen told the folks there he was leaving the quartet and wanted to do a trio album. They said okay. He was already looking for a drummer and bassist to record with when he got to Japan's Mt. Fuji festival last summer, and heard Tony Williams with his band and Gary Peacock with Michel Petrucciani. "They were about the best there. So I asked them, they said yeah, and that's how *New Beginnings* came about."

That trio existed only in the studio. For performance purposes, Pullen says he hasn't yet found the perfect rhythm section. "A lot of my music is easy in a technical sense, the heads are not that difficult; but to get the essence or the flavor the tunes is."

Perhaps to shed light on why his heads are simple, he confesses with a grin, "Writing just bores me. I like to have ideas, but to just sit down and write is so tedious." He says he gets some of his best compositional ideas from the music that runs through his dreams. ("It's funny—in my dreams, a lot of times Monk will be playing. But it's totally different from what Monk would play.") So the piano isn't the only place he makes music with his eyes closed; only a player determined to break down musical barriers would keep working right through his sleep cycle.

Pullen's very open-eyed wish to end divisive thinking comes across in concert, when he introduces his piece "Silence = Death" as a protest against racism, sexism, homophobia, indifference and complacency in general. The piece itself makes the same point, contrasting passively doleful left-hand chords with emphatic slashes of protest from his dissonant/dissenting right. "I've found that, with me, everything is connected," Don Pullen says. "Lately, I've made some changes in my personal life, trying to be who I am and not what I'm expected to be or what I think I'm expected to be. As a result of that, the music will grow. If I grow, the music will grow." **db**



MITCHELL SEIDEL

DON PULLEN'S EQUIPMENT

When interviewed by Howard Mandel for the June 1985 *db*, Pullen was looking for a grand piano. He's since bought a circa-1920 Knabe grand. "It was a blessing—I got it very very cheap. But I really need a Steinway. The Knabe is a good instrument; I love its sound, but it's so old. I keep breaking it up. I have to keep my Crazy Glue handy."

DON PULLEN SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Mandel provided an exhaustive 40-item discography for the June '85 Pullen feature; this one covers newer issues/reissues and albums referred to in the text. The last five listed are out of print.

as a leader

NEW BEGINNINGS—Blue Note 91785
THE SIXTH SENSE—Black Saint 0088
EVIDENCE OF THINGS UNSEEN—Black Saint 0080

with the Don Pullen-George Adams Quartet

SONG EVERLASTING—Blue Note 46907
BREAKTHROUGH—Blue Note 85122
LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD—Soul Note 1094
LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD VOL. 2—Soul Note 1144

with Jane Bunnett

IN DEW TIME—Darklight 9001

with Billy Hart

ENCHANCE—A&M 0818

with Charles Mingus

MINGUS MOVES—Atlantic 1653

with Milford Graves

IN CONCERT AT YALE UNIVERSITY VOL. 1—SRP 1
NOMMO VOL. 2—SRP 2

with Giuseppe Logan

THE GIUSEPPI LOGAN QUARTET—ESP 1007
MORE GIUSEPPI LOGAN—ESP 1013

record & cd reviews

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



SUN RA

BLUE DELIGHT—A&M 5260: *BLUE DELIGHT; OUT OF NOWHERE; SUNRISE; THEY DWELL ON OTHER PLANES; GONE WITH THE WIND; YOUR GUEST IS AS GOOD AS MINE; NASHIRA; DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES.* (65:56 MINUTES)

Personnel: Ra, piano, synthesizer; James Jackson, bassoon, flute, percussion; Elo Omoe, bass and contra-alto clarinets, alto saxophone, percussion; John Gilmore, tenor saxophone, clarinet, percussion; Marshall Allen, alto saxophone, flute, oboe, A-flat clarinet; Noel Scott, alto saxophone, percussion; Danny Ray Thompson, baritone saxophone, flute, bongos; Fred Adams, trumpet; Tommy Turrentine, trumpet; Ahmed Abdullah, trumpet; Al Evans, flugelhorn, french horn; Tyrone Hill, trombone; Julian Priestler, trombone; Bruce Edwards, guitar; Carl LeBlanc, guitar; Billy Higgins, drums; Earl "Buster" Smith, drums; John Ore, bass; Elson Nascimento, percussion.

★★★★

vibrant, unconventional harmonies only a Sun Ra could perceive when scoring.

The wise, old jazz maverick knows how to effectively marshal his soloists—here a talented crew, unfortunately too seldom the case with his touring big band. Charter member John Gilmore, his tenor sax relaxed and fluid in a Wardell Grayish manner rather than high-flying à la Coltrane or his more recondite self, develops pithily inventive thematic talks in all eight numbers. Former Arkestra trombonist Julian Priestler, temporarily back in the cosmic fold, emotes convincingly in his several spots, sometimes immediately preceding or following Gilmore for a solid one-two combination punch. Eternal Arkonauts Ahmed Abdullah and Al Evans, brass men, also offer emotionally rich fillips, if less frequently. The "King of the Sub-Underground" himself, now luxuriating in the partial sunlight of jazz semi-popularity, concentrates on acoustic piano, playing with dry wit and/or a pulsating blues feeling.

Something else of importance: Rhythm section guests Billy Higgins and John Ore always make the listener experience the beat. The interaction between the redoubtable pair and the Arkestra's two full-time and five moonlighting percussionists results in a most engaging swinging. Complete with swing and touches of derring-do, the friendly *Blue Delight* exists as a little gold mine of an effort from a hard-working visionary who presently enjoys gently tweaking the mainstream. (reviewed on CD)

—frank-john hadley

guitar playing.

His work on the introspective instrumental "Riviera Paradise," for instance, goes way beyond mere licks, tapping into a well of emotion that had previously been buried in a booze-induced haze. His playing here is purely personal and highly expressive, marked by subtle Wes Montgomery-type octaves and jazzy chordal flourishes, revealing a sensitive side not generally associated with Stevie Ray, The Texas Guitar Slinger.

Unlike the uneven 1986 concert album, *Live Alive*, Vaughan's playing throughout *In Step* is crisp, focused, and killin'. He digs in, Albert King-style, on "Tightrope," a confessional and an apology to his friends for his "out" behavior during his binge days. And he revives the spirit of Jimi on the stirring "Wall Of Denial," another cathartic number in which he owns up to past indiscretions.

His gutsy Strat-tone pierces to the bone on Howlin' Wolf's "Love Me Darlin'," and he tears it up Chuck Berry-style on "Scratch 'N' Sniff." "Travis Walk" is a New Orleans shuffle beat instrumental with touches of Lonnie Mack shining through, and "Leave My Girl Alone" is the obligatory slow blues, with traces of another mentor figure, Buddy Guy, cropping up.

While the form here is not particularly original, Stevie Ray plays it with honesty, soul, and intensity. He's back with a vengeance. (reviewed on LP)

—bill milkowski

Maybe talk of the 20th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing stirred him. Maybe the planets finally lined up just right. Maybe the grand cosmonaut deemed the present state of our world so dark, it was now or never to assertively bring forth his self-proclaimed "spirit music" as a panacea for humankind. Whatever. Sun Ra—he of Saturn, the pyramids, Germantown (Pa.) out-there ego, and iconoclastic jazz—docked his galaxy-hopping Arkestra late last year alongside the earthly flagship of A&M Records, cutting his major-label debut.

The accessibility of *Blue Delight*—the first Ra offering ever to have transcendent sound quality—shouldn't surprise anyone who's charted the Arkestra's course. Since the mid-'70s, Ra's softened his music's avant garde thrust, keeping a rein on the collective and individual abandon of his votaries as well as his own keyboard incontinences. He has long been regardful of the jazz tradition—Tadd Dameron, Jelly Roll Morton, ex-boss Fletcher Henderson, Ellington—and increasingly during these past years he's accented the terrestrial pleasures of his large ensemble.

The spirit of the recently recorded Ra music stays genial all through a program of originals and standards; even an old, dullish pearl like "Days Of Wine And Roses" takes on fresh luster in the Arkestra's amiable, fairly puckish handling. The brass and reed sections are prone to inexactitude, struggling to achieve even marginal consonance, yet their playing has drive, an oddly pleasing cadence of texture, and a boorish charm. Ever the keen arranger, Ra puts together and breaks down his assemblies of instrumental voicings with rascally logic, having kept his ear attuned to



STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN

IN STEP—Epic 45024: *THE HOUSE IS ROCKIN'; CROSSFIRE; TIGHTROPE; LET ME LOVE YOU BABY; LEAVE MY GIRL ALONE; TRAVIS WALK; WALL OF DENIAL; SCRATCH-N-SNIFF; LOVE ME DARLIN'; RIVIERA PARADISE.*

Personnel: Vaughan, guitar and vocals; Chris Layton, drums; Tommy Shannon, bass guitar; Reese Wynans, keyboards.

★★★★ ½

This cathartic album, his first since coming clean after a bout with drug abuse and alcoholism, showcases the guitarist in top form doing what he does best—roadhouse rockers, slow blues, and Howlin' Wolf covers, with the usual nods to Albert King, Jimi Hendrix, and Lonnie Mack.

The formula may read the same as his three previous studio albums—1983's *Texas Flood*, '84's *Couldn't Stand The Weather*, '85's *Soul To Soul*—but there's an added layer of depth here, both in the lyrical content and in Stevie Ray's



FRANK MORGAN ALLSTARS

REFLECTIONS—Contemporary 14052: *OLD BOWL, NEW GRITS; REFLECTIONS; STARTING OVER; BLACK NARCISSUS; SONNYMOON FOR TWO; O.K.; CARAVAN.* (52:35 MINUTES)

Personnel: Morgan, alto saxophone; Joe Henderson, tenor saxophone; Bobby Hutcherson, vibes; Mulgrew Miller, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Al Foster, drums.

★★★★

JOE HENDERSON

INNER URGE—Blue Note 7 84189 2: *INNER URGE; ISOTOPE; EL BARRIO; YOU KNOW I CARE; NIGHT AND DAY.* (43:20 MINUTES)

Personnel: Henderson, tenor saxophone; McCoy Tyner, piano; Bob Cranshaw, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.

★★★★ ½

Discussing '60s Henderson in 1980, Charles Mitchell described him as one of the tenorists

"who sat on a cutting edge of modern jazz, at the interface of hard bop and 'the new thing.' They knew their bebop, were well-schooled in the blues, . . . could move outside if the muse dictated; but it seemed as if their chief concern was resolution between form and freedom, a synthesis that would establish a logical, coherent right to examine all possibilities." Exactly.

Recorded square in the mid-'60s, when Henderson was a sideman with Horace Silver, *Inner Urge* marked him as one of the era's Compleat Tenorists. He had that wonderfully rich tone, particularly in his gutbucket lower register. He might flurry like Trane ("Inner Urge": "in" moving "out")—heck, half of Coltrane's quartet is on here. Tyner comps with some of his tastiest fadeaway chords; Cran-

shaw tolls like Jimmy Garrison on the flamenco modes of the dark "Barrio" and on Duke Pearson's heartfelt "You Know I Care," where Joe's pinched-yet-pretty upper register honors Trane's ballads (not that Coltrane would quote "Sailor's Hornpipe"). But Joe's uptempo, dancing-dervish "Night And Day" shows he'd taken the era's ubiquitous Trane strain and made something personal out of it. And anyway, the bedrock is blues: he makes his four tunes sound like blues whether the structure conforms ("Isotope") or not. Henderson, an early admirer of Ornette, like Coleman, grounds his adventurous flights in soulful basics. *Inner Urge* is one of Henderson's best, and a reminder of the richness of the epoch, of the *frisson* stylistic friction could create.

Joe is reunited with Blue Note labelmate Hutcherson and the Carter-Foster rhythm section from his 1985 trip in Frank Morgan's sextet. Here, too, the idea is stylistic interfacing—post-bop meets Frank's pure bop. (If you want to hear Morgan do Bird, check out "Sonny-moon.") It makes sense, and works—still, that this is the '80s idea of stylistic mixing shows how retrogressively timid the mainstream's become. Indeed, Henderson's own conception reveals less fire. But he's an effective foil for Frank. On Mulgrew's "Old Bowl, New Grits," Joe's solo confirms the gravity of his sound; Morgan's leaps celebrate the bop alto's airborne mobility. The elemental contrasts between earth and air—tenor and alto, piano and vibes—define the sextet. The six listen well;

BYRD BITS ON CD

by Ron Welburn

 f the foremost hard-bop trumpeters emerging in the mid- to late '50s who are around today—Art Farmer, **Donald Byrd**, and Freddie Hubbard (and not meaning to overlook Bill Hardman or the semi-active Tommy Turrentine)—Donald Byrd will make for the most interesting copy in the nostalgia-laden near-future. Simply, his experiences have covered the broadest range, especially on record with an early edition of Blakey's Jazz Messengers to the kind of pop funk that produced The Blackbyrds. One of his '70s albums, *Stepping Into Tomorrow*, was, as one reviewer observed, not where he or presumably other hard-bop devotees wanted to go. Stepping farther on, Byrd on record seems to have eschewed fusion's surroundings in favor of returning to solid traditions of improvisation; his performances on a recent David Tornakowsky album illustrate this. Byrd was a jazz mainstreamer who attempted to rationalize his musical refocus in the '70s—law degree in hand notwithstanding—and like so many others similarly persuaded, the intricacies of style and marketing were never fully understood.

Byrd had dabbled in the waters of audience acceptance in the '60s when his music from the tradition of the African-American spirituals gained widespread popularity. Here he was following the lead of Max Roach's *It's Time* choir but missed its raw energy; and in this then-new subgenre his recordings were the weakest compared to later Blue Note releases by Andrew Hill and Eddie Gale Stevens.

Assessing this important musician finds his straightahead work to endure and offer the greatest satisfaction. Reissues of albums Donald Byrd appeared on in the late '50s make for a saga in criticism that is both in midstream and sustaining of historical reassessment and, possibly, revision. As with any artist, the tendencies will prove themselves. On four CDs from albums recorded during 1957-'58, the listener can compare the trumpeter at his best in two different settings. Two albums are blowing session dates for Prestige, one

with John Coltrane led by Red Garland and the other featuring the pianist but led by Coltrane. The remaining two are the reissue of Byrd's Paris quintet in concert.

At this stage in his career, Byrd seems more at ease in the blowing context that allows him to pace his solo development to great effect. In tone and in the manner of his tonguing and legato phrasing he is clearly in debt to Clifford Brown, yet the quality of his sound is darker and smaller and the care with which he attends the construction of his solos and his penchant for the middle register at times strike one as a bit too self-conscious. He lacks Brownie's lyrical freedom and joyous spontaneity, and this no doubt worked in his favor, particularly on the dates with Garland and Coltrane. 1957 was a good year in the association of these three, though the recorded evidence didn't surface for several years. *High Pressure* (Prestige OJC-349-2, 44:00 minutes) is one of those highly identifiable albums from two late autumn '57 sessions, most of the material from November released either on *All Morning Long* and the subsequent *Soul Junction* albums. The three make for one of the label's best sessions ever: Garland bouyant in his leadership role; George Joyner (now Jamil Nasser) laying down a marvelous foundation on bass, and drummer Arthur Taylor as a consistent exponent and master of the ride. The ambiance, if you will, of these albums survives remarkably well. One could find a pattern in the type of song material and pop standards throughout these dates. For example, on *High Pressure* we have "Solitude" and "What Is There To Say" just as *Soul Junction* featured "I've Got It Bad." Byrd delivers a graceful and lyrical statement on each. His articulation was never as uncluttered as Booker Little's. But while it possessed Lee Morgan's cat-call turns of phrase it lacked his spit, and one really notices the distinguishing qualities in Byrd on these ballads.

Coltrane's *Black Pearls* (Prestige OJC-352-2, 38:54) was a May '58 session that didn't come out until the mid-'60s. The personnel is the same as the earlier sessions except that Paul Chambers plays bass instead of Joyner. It too is a satisfying set of three tunes, and on "Sweet Sapphire Blues," clocked at over 18 minutes, Byrd has a legato stretch at mid-solo filled with

the concentrated power of a saxophone player, one of the rare times in any context that he'd stuck his neck out like this.

The two-volume set from the Paris concert was reissued by Polydor from Brunswick albums. They are here entitled *Byrd In Paris* but the actual title of the second volume seems to be *Donald Byrd Quintet—Parisian Thoughtfare* (833 395-2, 44:54). Despite Brunswick's American origins, the albums got little circulation here and Polydor handled them in Europe. The recordings were made of a concert at The Olympia on October 22, 1958 with Walter Davis, Jr, a pianist underappreciated then and now; Doug Watkins and Arthur Taylor as the rest of the rhythm section, and Bobby Jaspar, the Belgian heavyweight on tenor who was probably Europe's most visceral reed stylist at that time. Volume 1 (833 394-2, 48:38) is consistently attractive with the leader in good form on "Blues Walk" and on "Paul's Pal" taken at a pedestrian lope. Two features here are Jaspar's "Flute Blues," and for "Ray's Idea" we find Davis in a blend of his contemporaries Bobby Timmons and Mal Waldron, believe it or not. Davis proves to be a storehouse of quotable material and he shrewdly weaves fragments like "Strangers In Paradise" and "Heart And Soul" into his solos. His is a single-note, hornlike, expression and the echoes of Mal Waldron could be more accurately described as the two sharing a tendency to avoid the two-fisted climactic buildup in their solos.

The second volume is uneven given the brief readings of "Salt Peanuts," even if the arrangement is unique, and the literal taste-test of "Two Bass Hit" and a fading "Stardust." But in succession are three fine performances, Monk's "52nd Street Theme," a piece called "At This Time," and Davis' evocative "Formidable." Jaspar drives on these with conviction and strength and Byrd paces himself well and plays with imagination and confidence. These are not his first dates as a leader but they come early enough in his career to display how adept he is on the stage. This Parisian quintet becomes the watershed unit for the group Byrd and Pepper Adams co-led briefly just prior to the trumpeter's European sojourn and which, reconstituting it by 1960, developed into one of jazz's outstanding sounds.

db

during Joe's solo on Hutcherson's "Starting Over," the tenorist and drummer telepathically strike staccato notes together. The main problem is the old-string-of-solos format; only the CD-only "Caravan," polymorphously loose, and Carter's moody "O.K."—where Miller comps for Morgan and Hutcherson for Henderson—really exploit the timbral possibilities.

The best melodies are the ballads: "Reflections" (which Morgan reminds us is one of Monk's loveliest) and Joe's haunting "Black Narcissus," in the most subdued of triple meters. A footnote: During Morgan's now-concluded tenure at Contemporary, producers Dick Bock and Orrin "O.K." Keepnews did an exemplary job of placing him in varied, tasteful contexts; may he find such sensitive collaborators now that he's moved on. (reviewed on CD)
—kevin whitehead



KURIOKHIN & KAISER

POPULAR SCIENCE—RYKODISC 20118: *Seeing Red; My Little Plants; Foreign Accents; Rattlesnake Round-Up; My Amazing Rat; The Concept of Concept; Out, Taco Sauce; Sales Pitch; Sugagaki #2 For Conion; What Makes Shadows?; Electricity Vs Foods; Frozen Reflection; Pepper And Soap; The Magic Soda Fountain; Onion In A Closet; Right Paw—Left Paw; Cash Calls Hell; Barking Dogs Vs Minimalists; Rattlesnake Round-Up Reprise.* (76:40 minutes)

Personnel: Henry Kaiser, Synclavier keyboard, guitar; Sergei Kuriokhin, Synclavier keyboard.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

Maybe you didn't hear of the joint U.S./U.S.S.R.-manned space mission last year. It was called *Popular Science*, and struck a major chord for "jazznost." Never a dull moment here from the prolific and marvelously creative Kaiser and his intense counterpart, the fiery and nimble-fingered Soviet pianist. Though press releases on the session note the fact these two men had never met before and don't speak the same language, the communication is remarkable on *Science*.

Freedom is the key here, and a good natured feeling that exists in the music. You might think you're hearing Pee Wee Herman music. You might think you just heard some off-color body noises, muted trumpet, or the chorus from *Star Trek*. Sure, there are some fantastic solos—"The Concept Of Concept" shows off Kuriokhin on a beautiful ballad. But my favorites are the off-the-wall vignettes, like the two-minute "Out, Taco Sauce," which actually seems to trace the path of a final drop of salsa out of the bottle, or "Sales Pitch," which starts as prim, stately Victorian piece and turns into runaway

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harpsichord.

Most songs bare absolutely no relation to the song before or after. Bizarre to more bizarre, but musical as heck. The Synclavier delivers huge drum sounds, rich acoustic piano, "horns" that leap out at you. Birds, dogs, oboes, you name it.

Kaiser's guitar is sometimes more a percussive catalyst than any sort of harmonic additive. On "Electricity vs Foods" they create a glorious din, Kaiser showing how far he can go out. On the minute-and-a-half "The Magic Soda Fountain," Kaiser does some psychedelic gut-bucket blues. He likes dogs and

always tries to include them on his projects somehow—here "Barking Dogs vs Minimalists" is a standout, if you like sampled and detuned hound.

There's a lot of music here—it could very well be split up into three sittings. Listening to it all in one sitting might be overwhelming, but this outrageous "East-West" collaboration is well worth hearing. Henry sort of cuts music down to size, puts it in the proper perspective. Here he's working with a fantastic musician who seems to have a similar crooked vision of things. What results they get. (reviewed on CD)
—robin tolleson



DIZZY GILLESPIE

A JAZZ PORTRAIT OF DUKE ELLINGTON—Verve 817 107-2: *IN A MELLOW TONE; THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE; SERENADE TO SWEDEN; CHELSEA BRIDGE; UPPER MANHATTAN MEDICAL GROUP; DO NOTHIN' TILL YOU HEAR FROM ME; CARAVAN; SOPHISTICATED LADY; JOHNNY COME LATELY; PERDIDO; COME SUNDAY.* (41:42 MINUTES)
Personnel: Gillespie, trumpet; Bennie Green, trombone; Robert de Dominic, flute; Stan Webb, Paul Ritchie, John Murtaugh, Ernest Bright, woodwinds; Richard Berg, Ray Alonge, Joe Singer, french horns; John McAllister, tuba; George Devens, vibes; Hank Jones, piano; George Duvivier, bass; Charlie Persip, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

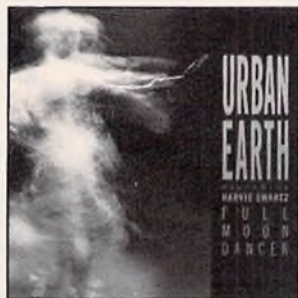
Perhaps one of the best-kept secrets about Dizzy Gillespie on record concerns his late '50s and early '60s orchestral collaborations. The critically-acclaimed late '40s big band bebop experiments notwithstanding, for this reviewer, the most intriguing ensemble work of Gillespie's can be found on such classic—and out-of-print—recordings as *Perceptions*, *Gillespiana*, and *Carnegie Hall Concert* (all, if I'm not mistaken, originally recorded for Verve).

Add *Portrait Of Duke Ellington* to that list. Recorded in 1960, Dizzy's silvery tone winds its way through vignettes of 11 Ellington-related compositions, including rare versions of "Upper Manhattan Medical Group" (Strayhorn) and "Serenade To Sweden" (Duke). Overall, the playing is light yet full, intimate and spacious. Whether muted or open, Gillespie's trumpet remains in the foreground. Clare Fischer's arrangements sound like something closer to Gil Evans what with an emphasis on woodwinds, french horns, flute, trombone, and tuba.

Unlike the more classical-oriented *Perceptions*, *Portrait* sticks pretty much to a three-to-five minute song format. Too bad. Just when things start to cook on a slow, funky (quartet) "Things Ain't," Gillespie's cozy mute and Hank Jones' bluesy piano are called in; or, as on such sensitive readings of "Chelsea Bridge" and "Sophisticated Lady," we've barely heard the melody and, poof!, there's no real development, orchestrally or through solos. On *Perceptions*, by way of contrast, the pieces are longer, allowing not only Gillespie but similarly-(to *Portrait*) constructed brass and woodwind sections to stretch out. The tonal colors are more vibrant, rhythms are used sparingly (and to good effect), not to mention what a treat it is to hear Gillespie in such unconventional and convincing settings.

The pieces here seem more like sketches (or a medley), given the number of musicians involved and what could have been done with them. There is nothing particularly noteworthy about the various arrangements other than that

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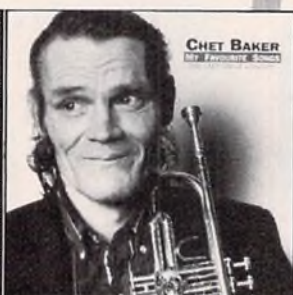
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they provide a setting for alternative approaches to the Ellington canon via the unorthodox instrumentation, with occasional nifty touches from vibist George Devens, not to mention Gillespie's singular voice.

Despite each tune's brevity, Dizzy Gillespie has painted a personal portrait. One only has to hear what Dizzy & Co. do with "Caravan" to recognize the inimitable touches, both in the tune's arrangement and the various rhythmic shifts the band goes through. And yet, the tune ends on a fade-out of Dizzy's solo! Just about the only "orchestral" Gillespie available, this project could have yielded a lot more. I guess we should be grateful for what we got. (reviewed on CD) —*john ephland*

right-hand man. It was fitting, then, that his final public performance be at an October '88 concert celebrating Monk's birthday. The bright tempo kicking off "Nutt" belies any lessening of powers due to his illness, and hear how he pushes the rhythm section on the closing "Epistrophy" "Ruby, My Dear" is simply a masterpiece; never overly demonstrative, Rouse's narrative here is beautifully phrased, poised, inspired yet inevitable—a valedictory statement. This level of creativity takes a lifetime to achieve.

The supporting cast quite often rises to the occasion: Cables is a quick study in Monkish chordal prompting (if a tad more in-the-pocket), though his rhapsodic intro to "Round Midnight," alternating fireworks and introspec-

tive asides, is all his own. Williams mimics Monk more intimately on her one outing. Montgomery's optimistic double-timing contrasts dramatically with Don Cherry's two solos, a haunting muted interlude on "Round Midnight" and some risky cliff-hanging escapes on "Epistrophy."

Playin' In The Yard, recorded in '87 in England with British legend Stan Tracey's quartet, offers several coincidences and curiosities on top of some exquisite individual efforts. There are no Monk tunes in this set and, despite his stature as a brilliant writer of modern post-bop pieces, Tracey is represented only by the easy-to-digest "Li'l Ol' Pottsville." Tracey's keyboard approach is a personal amalgam of Ellington and Monk, however, and so the rhythm section



CHARLIE ROUSE

EPISTROPHY—Landmark 1521: (Some words about Monk); Nutty; Ruby, My Dear; Blue Monk; 'Round Midnight; Epistrophy.

Personnel: Rouse, tenor saxophone; Don Cherry, trumpet (cuts 4, 5); Buddy Montgomery, vibes (4, 5); George Cables (1, 2, 4, 5), Jessica Williams (3), piano; Jeff Chambers, bass; Ralph Penland, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

PLAYIN' IN THE YARD—Steam 116: *PLAYIN' IN THE YARD*; *IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD*; *I'VE FOUND A NEW BABY*; *LI'L OL' POTTSVILLE*; *LI'L SHERRIE*; *WEE*.

Personnel: Rouse, tenor saxophone; Art Themen, tenor, soprano saxophone; Stan Tracey, piano; Dave Green (1-3), Roy Babbington (4-6), bass; Clark Tracey, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

It's sadly ironic that Charlie Rouse died just as his talents had begun to be more fully appreciated by an often-fickle jazz public. Not that his playing changed greatly over the years; outside of a relaxed self-assurance, a tonal mellowing, a deepening of his artistic powers that emerged later on in life, Rouse's music was stylistically consistent throughout his career—and that consistency, particularly in his decade-plus with a relatively unchanging Thelonious Monk Quartet, branded him as "dependable" and "reliable" in the eyes of most listeners and critics. Once considered a liability in the face of flashier, if less substantial, saxophonists, these virtues are being reappraised, and Rouse's stock has grown proportionally (see "Ad Lib," Apr. '89).

The Landmark recording closes a circle, in a sense. Though he enjoyed an extensive career both prior to and after leaving Monk, Rouse will forever be identified as Thelonious

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with Mario Aranz, Fritz Hauser, Franz Koglmann, Klaus Koch & Steve Lacy. Recorded April 23-25, 1987 in Vienna.

RICHARD TITTELBAUM *CONCEPTS CROSS* hat ART CD 6004
with Anthony Braxton & George Lewis. Recorded May 3, 1985 in Cologne/W-Germany.

JOHN ZORN *NEWS FOR LULU* hat ART CD 6005
with GEORGE LEWIS, BILL FRISSELL. Studio and live recordings August 28 & 30, 1987 in Lucerne & Willesau/Switzerland.

MARIANNE SCHROEDER *SUITES FOR CLAUDIO* hat ART CD 6006
GIACINTO SCALZI. SETTES NR. 9 & 10 FOR PIANO. Recorded September 12 & 16, 1987 in Zurich/Switzerland.

HABARIGANI hat ART CD 6007
with Roland Hoboken, Thomas Scherer, Hans Haider & Hans Krenn. Recorded February & December 1987 in Zurich/Switzerland.

GEORGE GRANTZ *CONCERT JAZZ BAND "HAPPENING NOW"* hat ART CD 6008
Recorded live October 10-17, 1987 in Fort Worth/Texas at Caravan of Dreams.

PALLAS OLIVIERO *THE ROOTS OF THE MOMENT* hat ART CD 6009
An audiphonic creation created by Peter Ward. Recorded Nov. 10, 1987.

FRIEZ HAUSER/FWI hat ART CD 6010
Discs with Christy Doreau, Stephan Gruber, Rob Klotz, Ross Krebs, Lauren Newton & Pauline Ullmann. Recorded December 7-12, 1987 in Zurich/Switzerland.

ARNOLD DREYBLATT *AND THE ORCHESTRA OF EXCITED STRINGS* hat ART CD 6011
with JIMMY LYONS, Alan Silva, Ramsey Amey, Jerome Cooper and Sunny Murray. Recorded January 1988 in Munich & January 1988 in Lindhorst.

URS LEINGRUBER *STATEMENT OF AN ANTIDRUG* hat ART CD 6012
Sally Bauer, soprano; A. Invernizzi, Bass. Recorded live March 2 & 8, 1988 at Radio DRS, Zurich/Switzerland.

STEVE LACY FOUR *MORNING JOE* hat ART CD 6014
with Steve Potts, Jean Jacques Aronoff & Steve Johnson. Recorded live at Sweet/Paris on February 09, 1986.

SAITO MICHIRHO hat ART CD 6015
BODAN. Recorded chamber music meeting the LEXARIA at N.Y.C. Recording produced by John Zorn; April 11-16, 1988 N.Y.C.

Bobby Bradford-John Carter Quintet *Comin' On* hat ART CD 6016
with Don Preston, Richard Davis & Andrew Cyrille. Recorded live May 29, 1988 at Catalina's Hollywood.

FRIEZ HAUSER *DIE TROMMEL & DIE WELLE* hat ART CD 6017
work and a scorepage for cymbals, basses & tom-toms (20 players). Recorded November 1987 & 1988 at Radio DRS Basel/Switzerland.

FRANZ KOGLMANN *ORTE DER GEOMETRIE* hat ART CD 6018
TRITA, QUINETS and PIPESET with guest Ron Blake. Recorded November 18-18, 1988 in Vienna.

ANTHONY BRAXTON *COMPOSITIONS 99, 101, 107 & 110* hat ART CD 6019
with Marianne Schroeder and Garrett List. Recorded April 1982 and November 1988.

DAVID MURRAY *3D FAMILY* hat ART CD 6020
with Johnny Weiss Dreyse & Andrew Cyrille. Recorded live September 3, 1978 at Jazzfestival Willesau/Switzerland.

MIKE WESTBROOK ORCHESTRA *ON DUKES BIRTHDAY* hat ART CD 6021
Recorded live May 12, 1988 Amstov/France.

MICHEL PORTAL *LEON FRANCOIS/PIERRE FAYE ARSBERGERS LE CHOCARTS* hat ART CD 6022
Recorded live October 5, 1988, Lausanne.

FRIEZ HAUSER *SOLODRUMMING* hat ART CD 6023
Recorded at Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, April 8-7, 1985.

VIENNA ART ORCHESTRA *THE MINIMALISM OF RIK SATTI* hat ART CD 6024
Recorded September 83 & March 84 in Vienna.

The production has been made possible by a generous financial assistance of Swiss Record Corporation, Zurich/Switzerland.

hat ART: A WORK IN PROGRESS

support must have given Rouse déjà vu. Here how he deftly spins smooth signature phrases over Tracey's jolting salvos on the title tune, or his surefooted scrambling on the surprising, uptempo "I've Found A New Baby," or his warm, winding Gonsalvesish theme embellishments and unaccustomed swooped notes of "In A Sentimental Mood." No doubt Rouse felt energized by Art Themen's impish, antsy playing; their contrary styles are complementary, like vinegar and oil, and collide in rousing jousts on "Li'l Sherrie" and "Wee."

Both of these albums are must-hear additions to Charlie Rouse's rich legacy—which includes classic performances with Monk and Sphere. Hopefully, *Playin' In The Yard* will bring Stan Tracey and Art Themen to the attention of the larger public they deserve. (Steam Records are available from North Country Distributors, Cadence Bldg., Redwood, NY 13679.) (reviewed on LP)

—art lange



ELEMENTS

LIBERAL ARTS—Novus 3058-1-N: *AMBER LINN*; *LIBERAL ARTS*; *UNDERWATER*; *AMERICAN HOPE*; *QUETICO*; *CORAL CANYON*; *OSLO*; *FB 206*; *MICHELLE'S DANCE*.

Personnel: Danny Gottlieb, drums; Mark Egan, bosses and programming; Clifford Carter, keyboards; Bill Evans, saxes (cuts 4,5,7,9); Stan Semole, guitar (3-5); Joe Caro (1,2,8); Steve Khan, guitar (7,9); Cafe, percussion (1,2,6,8,9); Gil Goldstein, keyboards (8).

★ ★ ★

DANNY GOTTLIEB

WHIRLWIND—Atlantic 81958-1: *TROPIC HEAT*; *REEF WARRIORS*; *TWILIGHT DRIVE*; *JUST PASSING BY*;

PERCUSSION OF THE SPIRIT; *RETURN TO KALI AU*; *HOLD ON!*; *WHIRLWIND*.

Personnel: Gottlieb, drums; John Abercrombie, guitar and guitar synth (1,4,7,8); Mark Egan, bass (2,4,6); Doug Hall, keyboards (1-3,8); Bill Evans, tenor sax (2); Cafe, percussion (1-3,6,8); Jon Herrington, guitar (2); Gregory Smith, keyboard (2); Steve Sauber, keyboard (3); Lew Soloff, trumpet (1); Chip Jackson, acoustic bass (7); Mitchel Forman, piano (2); Chuck Loeb, guitar (3,6); Trilok Gurtu, percussion (4); Naná Vasconcelos (4).

★ ★ ★ ½

Drummer Danny Gottlieb and electric bassist Mark Egan have a 20-year history together, going back to their days as students at the University of Miami. They served together for three years in the Pat Metheny Group during the late '70s and hooked up again in the Gil Evans Monday Night Orchestra. And since 1982, they have collaborated as Elements, a loose conglomeration of like-minded young musicians with Egan and Gottlieb as the fulcrum. Originally a vehicle for a more spacious, textural new-agey expression, this fifth Elements album shows a decided shift in direction, going for more aggressive grooves and staking out more lucrative pop-jazz territory on a few cuts.

Egan's "Amber Linn" and "Liberal Arts" push the band in some new directions; the former, a funky, pop vamp with big backbeat and killer rock licks by Caro, the latter a take on house/rap music with Gottlieb's sampler-enhanced kit providing the big-as-a-house backbeat. Nile Rodgers and George Clinton do this sort of thing better.

One of Bill Evans' contributions, a Mahavishnesque "Quetico," is also a switch for Elements but, given their backgrounds, they wear that groove well. "FB 206" is jazz-rock with emphasis on the rock, courtesy of Caro's searing, Joe Satriani-styled solo. And "American Hope," a ballad vehicle for Evans' soprano, is a cut above Kenny G fare. The delicate "Underwater," Carter's "Coral Canyon," and Egan's impressionist "Oslo" will be more familiar to Elements fans, recalling their earlier work and some of the more fragile material they played with Metheny. All of which makes this a Gottlieb & Egan sampler of sorts: a continuation of their Elements sound with a taste of what they each do outside that collaborative context. With a few notable exceptions.

There are no cuts featuring multi-tracked basses, which Egan has pursued on his own (Mosaic on Hip Pocket and *A Touch Of Light* on GRP). And there is nothing on this album that swings, which both Gottlieb and Egan do with the Gil Evans Monday Night Orchestra and which Danny features to some degree on his solo projects.

Gottlieb's latest, *Whirlwind* (his second on Atlantic), makes a few overtures to the burgeoning EZ-pop-jazz market ("Twilight Drive," "Reef Warriors," and the title cut) while allowing room for selfish pleasures like a 2½-minute drum solo titled "Percussion Of The Spirit" and a burning 6½-minute trio jam with Chip Jackson on bass and John Abercrombie playing bebop guitar synth lines.

There's more improvisational daring and personal expression on Gottlieb's album, which for me makes it the stronger record. The cut "Just Passing By" was a spontaneous jam in the studio with Danny, Mark, and two great percussionists, Trilok Gurtu and Naná Vasconcelos. Abercrombie came in later and overdubbed empathic synth guitar, giving greater depth to a hypnotic groove. And N.Y. session ace Chuck Loeb gets to go way out on a limb with a lengthy acoustic guitar solo on "Return To Kali Au."

On the other side of the coin, you've got overtly slick pop fare like "Tropic Heat" and "Whirlwind." High point of this album is the fierce blowing session "Hold On!," recalling some of Abercrombie's inspired trio work with Jack DeJohnette and Dave Holland or his current rhythm section of Peter Erskine and Marc Johnson. It's as high as Danny gets on *Whirlwind* and stands head and shoulders above his work on *Liberal Arts*, which ironically is bound to get more airplay. (reviewed on LP)

—bill milkowski



ABDULLAH IBRAHAM (DOLLAR BRAND)

VOICE OF AFRICA—Kaz CD 101: *BLACK LIGHTNING*; *LITTLE BOY*; *BLACK AND BROWN CHERRIES*; *NTYILO NTYILO*; *MANNENBERG IS WHERE IT'S HAPPENING* (CAPE TOWN FRINGE); *THE PILGRIM*. (61:48 minutes)

Personnel: Ibrahim, piano; Kippie Moeketsi (cuts 1-3), alto saxophone; Robbie Jansen (5, 6), alto saxophone, flute; Basil Coetzee, tenor saxophone, flute; Duku Makasi (1-3), tenor saxophone; Siphon Gumede (1-3), Basil Moses (4), Paul Michaels (5, 6), bass; Gilbert Mathews (1-3), Monty Weber (4-6), drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

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AFRICAN SUN—Koz CD 102: *AFRICAN SUN; BRA JOE FROM KILIMANJARO; ROLLING; MEMORIES OF YOU; SATHIMA; AFRICAN HERBS; NOBODY KNOWS THE TROUBLE I'VE SEEN; BLUES FOR B; GWIDZA; KAMALIE.* (76:16 minutes)

Personnel: Ibrahim, piano, soprano saxophone; Kippie Moeketsi (1-4), Barney Rachabane (5, 7), Robbie Jansen (8, 9), alto saxophone; Basil Coetzee (5, 6, 8-10), Duku Makasi (5), Arthur Jacobs (9), tenor saxophone; Dennis Mpale (5), trumpet; Victor Ntomo (1-4, 7), Siphon Gumede (5), Basil Moses (6, 10), Paul Michaels (8), Lionel Beukes (9), bass; Nelson Magwaza (1-4), Peter Morake (5), Gilbert Mathews (6, 10), Timmy Kwebulana (7), Monty Weber (8), Nazier Kapdi (9), drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

TINTINYANA—Koz CD 103: *SOWETO IS WHERE IT'S AT; TINTINYANA; LITTLE BOY; CHERRY; BRA JOE FROM KILIMANJARO; SHRIMP BOATS; SALAAM; JUST A SONG.* (75:56 minutes)

Personnel: Ibrahim, piano; Dennis Mpale (1), Blue Mitchell (5), trumpet; Barney Rachabane (1), alto saxophone; Basil Coetzee (1, 5), Duku Makasi (1), Harold Land (5), tenor saxophone; Buster Cooper (5), trombone; Siphon Gumede (1), Victor Ntomi (2-4, 6-8), Lionel Beukes (5), bass; Peter Morake (1), Nelson Magwaza (2-4, 6-8), Doug Sydes (5), drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

BLUES FOR A HIP KING—Koz CD 104: *ORNETTE'S CORNET; ALL DAY & ALL NIGHT LONG; SWEET BASIL BLUES; BLUE MONK; TSAKWE HERE COMES THE POSTMAN; BLUES FOR A HIP KING; BLUES FOR B; MYSTERIOSO; JUST YOU JUST ME; ECLIPSE AT DAWN; KING KONG; KHUMBULA JANE.* (73:29 minutes)

Personnel: Ibrahim, piano, soprano saxophone; Kippie Moeketsi (4), Robbie Jansen (1, 2), alto saxophone; Basil Coetzee (1-6), Duku Makasi (4), Arthur Jacobs (1, 2), tenor saxophone; Blue Mitchell (3, 5, 6), trumpet, flugelhorn; Buster Cooper (3, 5, 6), trombone; Siphon Gumede (4), Lionel Beukes (1-3, 5, 6), Victor Ntomi (7-12), bass; Gilbert Mathews (4), Nazier Kapdi (1, 2), Doug Sydes (3, 5, 6), Makaya Ntshoko (7-12), drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Confusion reigns in Discographyville. These four, fully-packed CDs—labeled “the complete African Recordings”—have much musical merit, but are a collector’s nightmare; rather than a thoroughly dated, documented, chronological series, we get 10 different groups apparently recorded over the 15-or-so year period shuffled and spread out over all four discs. Personnel listings are included, but there are no recording dates (the British copyright dates provided are misleading) and the newly supplied liner notes are historically sketchy to say the least.

Further, though the early ‘60s and early ‘70s dates were previously available only on South African LPs, at least three performances were not included in these reissues—and neither is the session by the cooperative ‘60s Jazz Epistles.

So much for “completeness.” Some of the mid-‘70s material was available in the States on Audio Fidelity and Chiaroscuro, and may still be. And, finally, the “Just A Song” on *Tintinyana* credited to D(ave) Mason is not the British rocker’s tune from his *Alone Together*

LP, but actually the British Victorian ballad, “Just A Song At Twilight” by J. L. Molloy.

Fortunately, the music transcends such sloppy packaging. This decade-plus was a crucial period in Ibrahim’s development, during which time he evolved from a Monk/Ellington/Hines-influenced pianist to one with an original, rolling, ostinato-based style, and began leading horn-heavy ensembles reflecting a unique blend of African township riffs and anthems, incantational Islamic rhythms, spirituals and gospel harmonies, and “sophisticated” American jazz. The earliest, trio, ses-

sion (on *Blues For A Hip King*), from 1961, reveals his initial reliance on Monk’s methods—“Blues For B” is a pastiche of quotes and paraphrases, and “Eclipse At Dawn” could pass for an undiscovered Thelonious tune—and the phrasing and closely-voiced, tartly dissonant harmonies are devoutly Monkish. By ‘71 his own style had emerged, but he was still secure enough to quote “Straight, No Chaser” in “Tintinyana,” or incorporate a rollicking Wallerish stride in “Rolling” (on *African Sun*).

The other soloists are distinctive, though

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they seldom reach the pianist's level of invention. South African alto legend Moeketsi is the most impressive in his four '71 quartet outings (on *African Sun*); he displays an expressive grainy tone and phrase-ending wails. Coetzee's tenor is the most dependable throughout ("Sweet Basil Blues" on *Blues For A Hip King* is dedicated to him); though not flashy, he sustains a good, long solo on *African Sun*'s "Kamalie," where his spicy chromatic runs are reminiscent of Ricky Ford. Duku Makasi's best moments are his Pharoah Sanders tenor on "Sathima" (*African Sun*), while Barney Rachabane surveys a soulful, Hank Crawford role on the same disc's "Nobody Knows . . ."

Which one to buy if you're not buying all four? Well, *Voice Of Africa* has the most extended cuts and plenty of blowing over hypnotic vamps. *African Sun* contains the historic Moeketsi material, and samples more of the other groups than any other disc. *Tintinyana* is mostly Ibrahim's piano—six trio cuts dividing two long horn jams. And *Blues For A Hip King* contains the most variety—compositionally speaking—and Ibrahim's entertaining, early Monk imitations. So you decide. But don't blame me if you're swept up into the rich, infectious, repetitious rhythms. This music's addictive. (reviewed on CD) —art lange



OLIVER NELSON

BLACK, BROWN AND BEAUTIFUL—RCA/Bluebird 6993-1-RB: *EMPTY BALLROOM BLUES*; *DUKE'S PLACE*; *ECHOS OF HARLEM*; *DISILLUSION BLUES*; *YEARNING*; *MEDITATION*; *MAILMAN*, *BRING ME NO MORE BLUES*; *BLACK, BROWN AND BEAUTIFUL*; *CREOLE LOVE CALL*; *ROCKIN' IN RHYTHM*.

Personnel: Ernie Royal, Snooky Young, Marvin Stamm, Randy Brecker, trumpet; Al Grey, Quentin Jackson, Garnett Brown, Thomas Mitchell, trombone; Johnny Hodges, B.3b Ashton, Jerome Richardson, Frank Wess, Danny Bank, Jerry Didgion (sic), Joe Farrell, reeds; Earl Hines, Hank Jones, Mike Morand, piano; Joe Jammer, Chas Hodges, Hugh Burns, David Spinozza, guitar; Ron Carter, bass; Pat Donaldson, electric bass; Grady Tate, Pete Gavin, drums; Chas Hodges, Leon Thomas, vocals.

★ ★

What began 18 or so years ago as a perfectly good, four-star Johnny Hodges album (his last under his own name) on Bob Thiele's Flying Dutchman label, has re-emerged here under Oliver Nelson's name, with one of the high spots tossed to the winds, and two strange visitors from another planet tacked on as an errant afterthought.

The original idea was a good one. Take Hodges and a flock of Ellington evergreens, dress them up in some neat, swinging Nelson arrangements, line up a band of seasoned all-stars and see what happens. What happened, not surprisingly, was a pretty good record. Not perfect, mind you. The reeds, for some reason, fail to meld into an ensemble on "Rockin' In Rhythm." But pretty good—except for one thing.

What really messed things up was Thiele's misguided plot to shoehorn singer Leon Thomas in for a couple of guest vocals. He was, and remains, perfectly awful in this context. His gargle/yodel approach to scat singing has no relation to either the players or the material and is an unpleasantly disruptive intrusion.

Now comes this reissue. Thomas is still around unfortunately, as grotesque as ever. But, worse, a snappy Hodges-Earl Hines run at Ellington's 1931 "It's Glory" has been ousted from the original programming, and in its place comes a relatively bland version of Jobim's "Meditation" with a completely different group and no sense of pacing. It just fades indecisively away. The other oddity is "Mailman," a straight, funky r&b number played and sung by Chas Hodges (no relation to Johnny), which would have fit better in an undisguised anthology such as "How Blue Can You Get" (Bluebird 6758-2-RB).

The problem is simple. As a Nelson album, Hodges dominates. As a Hodges album, Thomas and the non-Hodges material is irrelevant. In short, a bad reissue all around. (reviewed on LP) —*john mcdonough*



COLD SWEAT

COLD SWEAT PLAYS J.B.—JMT 834 426-2:
BROWN'S PRANCE; GIVE IT UP OR TURN IT LOOSE; I GOT THE FEELIN'; BROWN'S DANCE; SHOWTIME MEDLEY; FUNKY GOOD TIME; I GOT THE FEELIN'; I CAN'T STAND IT; LICKING STICK; THERE WAS A TIME; PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE; TRY ME; COLD SWEAT. (40:53 MINUTES)

Personnel: Craig Harris, trombone, vocals, musical directions; Eddie E. J. Allen, trumpet; Booker T. Williams, tenor sax (cut 6); Kenny Rogers, alto and soprano sax; Clyde Criner, keyboards; Fred Wells, guitar; Brandon Ross, guitar; Alonzo Gardner, electric bass; Kweyao Agyapon, percussion; Damon Mendes, drums. Guests: Kenyatte Abdur-Rahman, percussion; Arthur Blythe, alto sax; Olu Dara, cornet; David Murray tenor; Sekou Sundiata, vocals.

★ ★ ½

I love Craig Harris' Tailgater's Tales; it's a tough, taut band that can play the hell out of all the change-up material Harris throws at them. Having said that, I've gotta add that unfortunately, this ain't them.

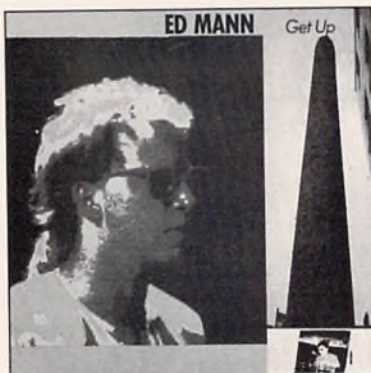
In fact, I'm not sure exactly *what* this is, aside from being a well-intentioned tribute to the highly-deserving Godfather Of Soul, James Brown. Some jazzbos having a funky good time? Serious give-it-up-or-turn-it-loose crossover? Both?

Loose and generic where JB would be tight as whiplash and specific as a prison number, slackly atmospheric where he'd be staring deep inside your eyeballs, *Cold Sweat* somehow manages to sound more like *Mild Fever*.

Partly, I think, that's because some pieces of musical work, at least in the pop realm, are so inseparable from their creators they simply *can't* get justice outside their original settings. Buddy Holly, The Yardbirds, Jimi Hendrix, Sly Stone, Stevie Wonder are just a few examples of serious rock composer/arrangers whose work is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to translate.

With *Cold Sweat*, though, there are more specific problems as well. Though a juggernaut of players was collected for this ambitious date, apparently nobody realized the terribly obvious—that one main reason JB's on-the-good-foot funk is so hot and rhythmically aced comes from how his various crackerjack bands

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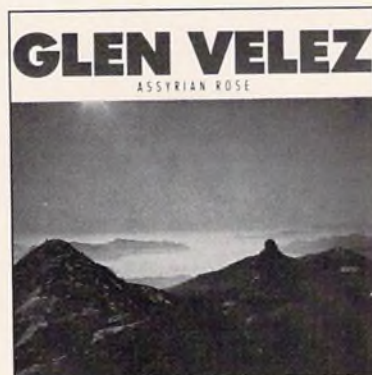
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Digital Recording / DDD — October '88



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have always keyed off his voice, rather than the rhythm section. Like Otis Redding, Toots Hibbert, and countless other soulmen, JB leads the band with that torn and frayed scream, its deft placement, its curving slurs. Neither Harris' bleary trombone nor his hoarse, talky vocals are That Voice.

And That Voice is what these tunes want and need. (reviewed on CD) —*gene santoro*

Waxing On

BRAZILIAN BEAT

by Larry Birnbaum

BRAZIL CLASSICS 1: *BELEZA TROPICAL (Fly/Sire 25805-1) ★★★★★*

BRAZIL IS BACK, VOL. 1 (Braziloid 4011) ★★★★★

MILTON NASCIMENTO: *MILTONS (Columbia 45239) ★★★★★*

NANÁ VASCONCELOS & THE BUSHDANCERS: *RAIN DANCE (Antilles/New Directions 91070-2) ★★★★★*

AIRTO: *SAMBA DE FLORA (Montuno 528) ★★★★★*

FLORA PURIM: *MIDNIGHT SUN (Virgin/Venture 90995-1) ★★★★★*

NARA LEÃO: *MEUS SONHOS DOURADOS (Philips/Polygram 833 639-1) ★★★*

SIMONE: *VÍCIO (Columbia 44275) ★★★★★*

MARIA BETHÂNIA: *PERSONALIDADE—MARIA BETHÂNIA (Philips/Polygram 832 215-2) ★★★★★*

GAL COSTA: *PERSONALIDADE—GAL COSTA (Philips/Polygram 832 217-2) ★★★★★*

ELIS REGINA: *PERSONALIDADE—ELIS REGINA (Philips/Polygram 832 218-2) ★★★★★*

CHICO BUARQUE: *PERSONALIDADE—CHICO BUARQUE (Philips/Polygram 832 220-2) ★★★★★*

GILBERTO GIL: *PERSONALIDADE—GILBERTO GIL (Philips/Polygram 832 216-2) ★★★★★*

CAETANO VELOSO: *PERSONALIDADE—CAETANO VELOSO (Philips/Polygram 832 219-2) ★★★★★*

DORI CAYMMI: *DORI CAYMMI (Electra/Musician 9 60790-1) ★★★★★*

DJAVAN: *BIRD OF PARADISE (Columbia 44276) ★★★★★*

TONINHO HORTA: *DIAMOND LAND (Verve Forecast 835 183-1) ★★★*

In the early '60s, with a little help from Frank Sinatra and Stan Getz, João Gilberto and Antonio Carlos Jobim introduced the bossa nova to the U.S. But just as that seductive blend of sensuous samba rhythms and cool jazz began to take off here, it was squelched by the same British rock invasion that was to spark the next Brazilian pop trend—*tropicalia*. Innovators like Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil electrified the bossa nova and added Sgt. Pepper's harmonies and politically tinged poetry; it was all too much for Brazil's military government, which imprisoned and exiled Veloso and Gil.

In the aftermath of the tropicalia revolution, the new Brazilian music headed north. Gil, Jorge Ben, and Milton Nascimento appeared on American labels in the '70s; expatriates like Airto Moreira, Flora Purim, and Naná Vasconcelos became stars in their own right, and just about every jazz and fusion band—or so it seemed—boasted a Brazilian percussionist. In the '80s, everyone from Pat Metheny to Sarah Vaughan went Brazilian, but the music has yet to make a serious dent in the pop mainstream.

But now **David Byrne** of Talking Heads is spearheading an industry-wide push with his excellent compilation *Beleza Tropical*, which spotlights some of the most popular and influential Brazilian artists of the past two decades, including Nascimento, Veloso, Gil, and Ben. By no means complete, definitive, or up-to-date—and Byrne makes no such claims—it's still the best post-tropicalia sampler available, and a delight to listen to (see "Riffs," July '89).

Counting both Maria Bethânia and Gal Costa, who are represented by a single duet performance, nine artists are featured on the 18 cassette and CD tracks (the sole Lô Borges contribution and three other tracks are dropped from the vinyl version). Only the lyric sheet (not included in the cassette package), with English translations by Arto Lindsay, enables non-Portuguese speakers to distinguish between Ben's soccer chants and Veloso's or Chico Buarque's sublime love poetry. In its wistful, bittersweet melodies and sexually ambiguous male and female vocals, the music projects a curious mixture of innocence and decadence, with beautifully crafted arrangements displaying a variety of rhythmic textures.

Brazil Is Back, Vol. 1, another recent anthology, covers a broader spectrum of modern Brazilian pop. Besides tropicalia-associated stars like Gilberto Gil and Maria Bethânia, it includes similarly oriented but newer artists like Alcione and Luiz Melodia, as well as old veteran Nelson Gonçalves, whose gutsy baritone is still vibrant even if his music is dated. More significant is the inclusion of eclectic young performers like soul stylist Sandra Sá, rocker Lobao, and Afro-popsters Obina Shock; their appropriation of non-Brazilian idioms is a contemporary extension of tropicalia's original impulse to devour and assimilate foreign forms.

Last year, Columbia released **Milton Nascimento's** *Yauaretê*; this year's follow-up, *Miltons*, features Herbie Hancock, who has recorded with Nascimento several times before, and Naná Vasconcelos, who first won attention as a percussionist in Milton's band. More subdued than *Yauaretê*, *Miltons* is no less affecting, as Nascimento's soaring, effortlessly elastic voice slithers through the sinuous, melancholy lines of his own pensive compositions like a lovesick anaconda. Hancock's piano adds a jazzy, almost cocktail-ish feel that complements the music but stands slightly apart, while Vasconcelos' percussion is so subtly idiomatic it virtually disappears.

Since leaving Nascimento in 1970 to join Gato Barbieri's band, **Naná Vasconcelos** has played with Jan Garbarek, Pat Metheny, Don Cherry, B. B. King, and Talking Heads, among others (he recently recorded a duo album on Soul Note with Sardinian keyboardist Antonello Salis). Truly a world musician, he can singlehandedly conjure up a jungle's worth of percussive atmospherics, as he did on his first Antilles album, *Bush Dance*, but his music often has a synthetic ring, pitched somewhere between fusion and new age. On *Rain Dance*, with his new band, **The Bushdancers** (Brazilian percussionist Cyro Baptista and bassist Sergio Brandao, and Swiss keyboardist Teese Gohl), Vasconcelos creates the sort of exotic yet accessible background music that's commended him to such filmmakers as Susan Seidelman and Jim Jarmusch. But without strong melodic ideas, it never quite transcends



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its textures.

Thanks to his association with Miles Davis, Weather Report, Chick Corea, et al., percussionist **Airto Moreira** is probably the best-known Brazilian musician in the U.S. But the Brazilian sound has also spread to the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, and on his first Montuno album, *Aqui Se Puede*, Airto stepped gingerly in an Afro-Cuban direction. On *Samba De Flora*, he moves firmly toward a samba/salsa/jazz fusion. Puerto Rican salsa masters Angel "Cachete" Maldonado and Giovanni Hidalgo anchor a tight rhythm section, while the late Argentine pianist Jorge Dalto provides just the right cosmopolitan touch. Moreira makes a couple of stabs at ballad singing, but wisely leaves most of the vocals to his wife, **Flora Purim**.

Purim, on her own *Midnight Sun* album, sticks closer to the bossa-flavored jazz-fusion approach she and Moreira helped pioneer. The band is mostly American and the lyrics all in English, even on the Nascimento classic "Nothing Will Be As It Was"; Purim also revives "Light As A Feather," from her days with Return To Forever, and delivers a haunting rendition of Lionel Hampton's timeless "Midnight Sun." On more routine material, though, her magic turns to mere mannerism.

Another bossa-rooted singer—one still based in Rio de Janeiro—is **Nara Leão**, who devotes a whole album, *Meus Sonhos Dourados*, to American standards in Portuguese—everything from "Misty" to "Tea For Two" to "Over The Rainbow." That might sound like a recipe for a bad French movie soundtrack, but Leão's coy vocals—the coolest since Astrud Gilberto's—breathe new life into the tritest tunes. **Simone**, the sultry-voiced basketball-star-turned-pop-siren, offers a more contemporary sound on the lushly arranged *Vicio*. Milton Nascimento and keyboardist Don Grusin make guest appearances, the former blending androgynously with Simone's husky timbres on Caetano Veloso's gorgeous "You're Lovely (Voce E Linda)."

Simone is indebted to another deep-toned songstress, **Maria Bethânia**, whose style, though steeped in Brazilian folksong, also has a strongly cosmopolitan pop feel. But where Simone's voice drips with raw sensuality, Bethânia's is dramatic and mysterious, reflecting the influence of Billie Holiday, Judy Garland, and French chanteuse Edith Piaf. Initially successful as a conventional balladeer, she gave free rein to her eccentricities and still maintained her popularity. She stamps her distinctively throaty imprint on material by Gil, Buarque, Veloso, Djavan, and others on her self-titled album from Philips/Polygram's CD-only *Personalidade* series.

Although Bethânia is Veloso's sister, her contemporary **Gal Costa** is more closely associated with his songs and those of the other *tropicalistas*. Originally a protegee of João Gilberto, she became the leading tropicalia interpreter, later transforming her image, à la Linda Ronstadt, from free-spirited hippy to sequined pop diva. On her self-titled *Personalidade* disc, she flaunts the versatility of her light, airy voice on funk-, fusion-, soul-, folk- and rock-flavored tunes by Veloso, Buarque, Djavan, and Jobim.

The same series also presents Brazil's premier pop singer, the legendary **Elis Regina**, who died of a drug overdose in 1982. Her


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pure, penetrating contralto shines on bossas and ballads by Jobim, Nascimento, Buarque, Ivan Lins, and Baden Powell, charging even lesser material with refined passion and rendering a time-worn chestnut like "Fascination" (sung in Portuguese) springtime fresh.

Son of a historian, grandson of a lexicographer, **Chico Buarque** is Brazil's greatest lyricist, a poet whose piercing, sun-scorched imagery creates its own mental music videos. He's also a skillful composer with a broad knowledge of Brazilian pop and folk styles, and on his *Personalidade* album he ranges from African rhythms to music-hall oldies to bombastic, James Bond-style movie music; he's at his best on simple, guitar-accompanied arrangements that underscore the poignancy of his unaffected, almost conversational singing. Unfortunately, the *Personalidade* series includes only the untranslated Portuguese lyrics.

Gilberto Gil's *Personalidade* album suffers somewhat less from the absence of translations; he's one of Brazil's liveliest and most eclectic singer/composers, and his ebullient personality bubbles across language barriers. His political commitment communicates less readily, but his leadership of Brazil's black-consciousness movement shows in his potent and varied rhythm treatments. What he expresses most effectively, and infectiously, is his irrepressible *joie de vivre*, at least on this retrospective sampler. His songs have taken a pessimistic turn lately, reflecting Brazil's current

economic and ecological crises, but here his exuberance is almost reckless.

Like Gil, **Caetano Veloso** is from the heavily African-influenced state of Bahia. Both men were devotees of Gilberto and Jobim; both embraced The Beatles and spurned dictatorship, and both returned from exile in the '70s to become major celebrities. But Veloso's music is more introspective and melancholy, his lyrics sharper and more literary. Where Gil's melodies are honeydew-sweet, Veloso's have an acerbic tang, and his singing—at once childlike and highly sophisticated—is disarming in its emotional directness and aching vulnerability. On *Caetano Veloso*, his 1986 U.S. album debut for Nonesuch, he was accompanied only by his own guitar. His similarly titled *Personalidade* disc places him in a variety of instrumental settings, but he's still most affecting solo, where he can drop his voice to a world-weary whisper. His lyrics mix love poetry with nature-worship, as on the touching "O Leaozinho," which he sings to a metaphorical lion cub, or his masterpiece, "Terra" (featured on the David Byrne collection but not here), a love song addressed to the earth itself.

Dori Caymmi is the son of famed composer Dorival Caymmi and a noted composer/arranger in his own right, with credits that include film scores as well as charts for singers like Nascimento, Elis Regina, and, more recently, Sarah Vaughan. His self-titled Elektra/Musician debut is produced by Sergio Mendes and features Don Grusin on synthesizers along with Caymmi's forceful acoustic guitar and often-wordless vocals. Strongly influenced by Gil Evans and by the French impressionists, Caymmi creates dreamy, gauzy textures, and yearning, Nascimento-esque melodies. His wife, singer Nana Caymmi, contributes a Betty Carter-like performance on "Velho Piano," making it the album's most exciting track.

Djavan represents a second generation of post-tropicalia composer/vocalists. Taking off from the styles of Gil, Nascimento, et al., he ventures confidently into fusion and scat-singing, and tentatively into light funk and reggae, on the album *Bird Of Paradise*. Recorded in L.A. with mostly American studio players, it signals Djavan's crossover intentions with three numbers in English; curiously, except for the title cut, these are more politically oriented than the remaining Portuguese love songs. His material depends for its effect less on message than melody, however, and when he manages to find a catchy hook amid the formula clichés he's a hit in any language.

Composer/guitarist **Toninho Horta** is a member of Milton Nascimento's circle of collaborators who has gone on to forge a successful solo career. On the album *Diamond Land*, his electric guitar playing is highly refined and heavily jazz-inflected (one of his admirers is Pat Metheny), but although his solos are deft and tasty, he's mostly content to comp subtly in the background. There are vocals throughout the album, but only one song has words; elsewhere voices simply melt into the languid instrumental textures. And though his band is Brazilian, Horta's rich, orchestral arrangements frequently mimic Brazilian-influenced U.S. fusion sounds—an effect powerfully underscored by guest star Wayne Shorter's wailing soprano sax solo on bassist Iuri Popoff's "Ballad For Zawinul." **db**

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Is that Fats? Beautiful technique. Stride is so difficult to play clearly: here both hands are really clean. And that's a very modern right hand; in a lot of the earlier piano players, Fats and Duke, especially, you hear a hint of things to come. If they'd taken a step farther, I'd be in the mainstream today.

2 JELLY ROLL MORTON.
"Black Bottom Stomp" (from JAZZ CLASSICS IN DIGITAL STEREO, BBC) Morton, piano, composer, leader of The Red Hot Peppers.

I wouldn't hazard a guess, but I was impressed with the concept of group improvisation, which is something I haven't been hearing much lately. Each voice has a purpose, a statement, and an intention, and blends with the other players. Now we hear more *individuals* playing, with less regard for the "group improvisation"—which concerns listening to the other players, a sense of connectedness that's beyond just playing.

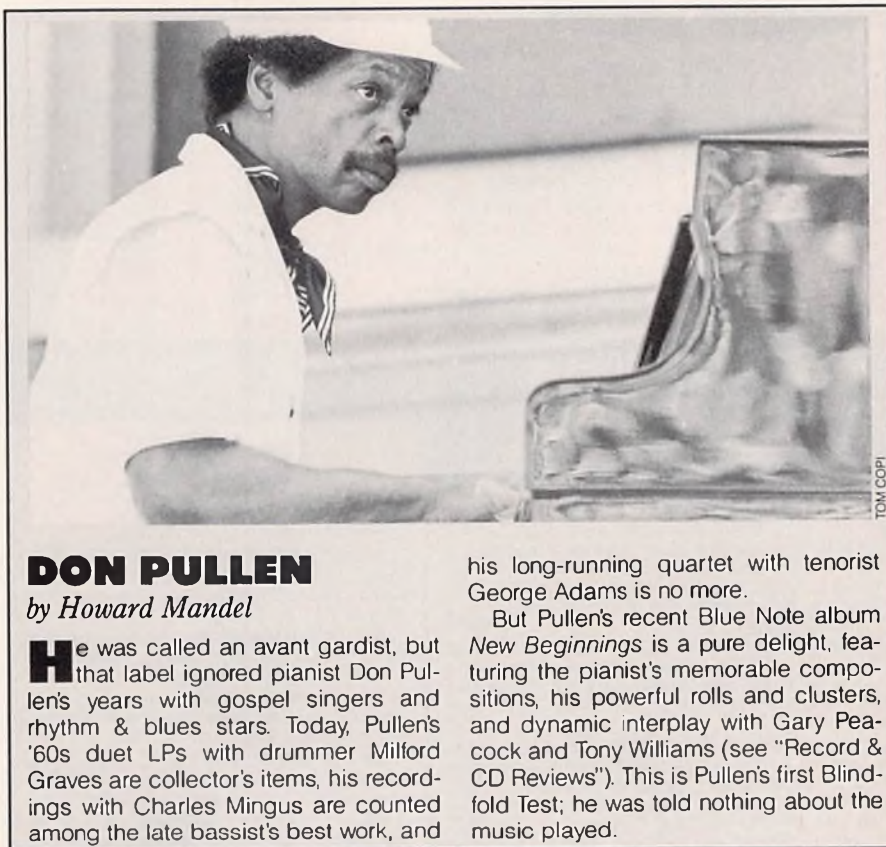
3 DUKE ELLINGTON/ BILLY STRAYHORN.
"Tonk" (from PIANO DUETS: GREAT TIMES!, FANTASY/OJC) Ellington, Strayhorn, four-handed piano.

Ooh, my goodness. It's two piano players—I don't know who. The intro was very interesting, that was the best part. The rest sounds contrived, like it's written. Reminds me of movie music of the '40s and '50s, someone on a shopping spree in Macy's. Very nice rapport, though, both execute very well. It seems to be well rehearsed. Duke and Strayhorn? It's revealing of how closely they must have thought alike.

4 CHARLES MINGUS.
"Orange Was The Color Of Her Dress, Then Blue" (from MINGUS PLAYS PIANO, Impulse) Mingus, piano.

Is that Mingus? [laughs] He always thought he was a piano player. I'd see him move Jaki Byard and Mal Waldron off the bench, to show them, 'This is the way a piano should be played!' It wasn't very respectful. This is quite different melodically from the "Orange" that we played.

5 BILL EVANS. *"Dolphin Dance" (from THE COMPLETE FANTASY*



DON PULLEN
by Howard Mandel

He was called an avant gardist, but that label ignored pianist Don Pullen's years with gospel singers and rhythm & blues stars. Today, Pullen's '60s duet LPs with drummer Milford Graves are collector's items, his recordings with Charles Mingus are counted among the late bassist's best work, and

his long-running quartet with tenorist George Adams is no more.

But Pullen's recent Blue Note album *New Beginnings* is a pure delight, featuring the pianist's memorable compositions, his powerful rolls and clusters, and dynamic interplay with Gary Peacock and Tony Williams (see "Record & CD Reviews"). This is Pullen's first Blindfold Test; he was told nothing about the music played.

RECORDINGS, Fantasy) Evans, solo piano.

The chords sound like what Bill Evans would do. I'm sure he's a good pianist, but it doesn't do anything for me. It's too light, too superficial—I like it down and dirty. The aim of this is to be pretty; of course, there's beauty in jazz. But this seems . . . antiseptic.

6 MCCOY TYNER. *"Rio" (from REVELATIONS, Blue Note) Tyner, solo piano.*

McCoy comes to mind: that's his sound, and the power he plays with. What's identifiable is not necessarily what he plays, but his touch; that's something that comes with maturity and experience. Piano players strive to get a piano to sound the way they hear it in their heads, then they learn to do that no matter what the instrument is. I like some of what McCoy was playing with Coltrane better than what he does now. But he's such a talent, he can do anything at any time.

7 CECIL TAYLOR AND TONY WILLIAMS.
"Morgan's Motion" (from THE JOY OF FLYING, Columbia) Taylor, piano; Williams, drums.

I keep waiting for the song to start. I can't tell what's going on yet. Is that Milford [Graves] on drums? The toms sound like he tunes them. I guess maybe Cecil Taylor, with Andrew Cyrille? Seems like I should know the drummer. He's sort of lagging behind Cecil. This doesn't seem to have much direction or much continuity to it.

I think I'll keep quiet on Cecil. I've been compared to him, but I think it's unfair. I'm not really familiar with all his music. I know I don't sound like that.

8 THELONIOUS MONK.
"Nutty" (from THE COMPLETE RIVERSIDE RECORDINGS, Riverside) Monk, piano; John Coltrane, tenor sax; Wilbur Ware, bass; Shadow Wilson, drums.

Of course it's Monk. Yeah, that's Coltrane. They had a beautiful thing. Monk's probably my favorite piano player. Before I heard Monk, there were others, but he's grown on me. His use of space—that is his genius—and you can't miss Monk's touch, even out of a thousand piano players playing at the same time. You have to use your hands a certain way to even approximate that sound. And when Monk *isn't* there—like he's laying out right now—he's still there! That's great. db

DIAL & OATTS

THIS NEW WRITING TEAM COMBINES A FLAIR FOR CLASSICAL STRUCTURES ALONG WITH THEIR LOVE OF JAZZ AND POP MUSIC.

by Bill Milkowski

With the recent release of their DMP debut, *Dial And Oatts*, a vital new writing team was introduced to the jazz world. But the musical partnership between pianist Garry Dial and reedman Dick Oatts goes back a lot further than this ambitious new work (an hour-long, classically-structured jazz suite for swinging quartet and 30-piece string section).

They came from different parts of the country—Dial from Montclair, New Jersey, and Oatts from Minneapolis—and met in New York City 12 years ago. It was 1977. Rents in the city were cheap then. It was actually possible back then to dedicate one's self to an art—be it painting, dance, writing, or bebop—without having to come up with outrageous sums of cash each month. An aspiring artist wasn't necessarily inclined to wait on tables, do legal proofreading, or other unrelated, demeaning tasks to get by. He or she could focus on their art, which is precisely what Dial and Oatts did.

"I came to town with a few thousand dollars I had saved up from playing every bullshit gig I could play in Minneapolis," recalls Oatts. "And I was lucky, very lucky. Not only did I find this great two-bedroom apartment for a real low price in a rent-stabilized building, but I also got this gig right away with The Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra. I guess I just happened to be in the right place at the right time."

Miracle stories don't happen like that anymore, not with monthly rents over \$1,000 for one-bedrooms and the streets teeming with hungry young Berklee-ites willing to sell their souls to the devil for a gig.

Dial experienced something of a miracle himself in his formative years. "I went to high school in Newark and one day Mary Lou Williams came to perform a jazz mass with Dizzy Gillespie. So I went to check it out and I met her afterwards and she kind of took me under her wing. I was about 15 years old and I'd go up to her place on 145th Street & Broadway and she'd give me lessons for free. I studied with her for a couple of years, got to be real close with her. I'd go to her place and I'd just be sitting there with pictures of Bud Powell and Art Tatum on her piano and Mingus would call on the phone and all these musicians would stop over. It was really an eye-opening experience for me. And the whole thing was, she never dealt with the technical



aspects of playing or anything. It was more a spiritual approach to the music, where she'd talk about the history and the blues and talk about swinging and relaxing. And she actually never charged me for a lesson. I was really lucky."

Dial then attended the Berklee College of Music in Boston for a year and a half, where he also studied privately with the local reclusive jazz guru, Charlie Banacos. When he came to New York in '77, he landed a gig with the Charlie Persip Super Band.

Around that time, Dial and Oatts met in a rehearsal band and instantly hit it off. They played the occasional gig together on off-nights around Long Island or New Jersey but remained too busy with their respective jobs to devote any serious time to a collaboration back then.

Dial eventually hooked up with Red Rodney, who was back on the scene after a period of self-exile. "At first, Red had Billy Mitchell on tenor and we played with that combination for a few months. But they separated and Red decided to get Ira Sullivan. He really had to coax Ira out of being a hermit down there in Florida. And when Ira finally came to town, he ended up staying with me. He became a really important mentor for me, in terms of my writing and playing. He had a broad, open-minded approach to music, playing in a stream-of-consciousness style rather than any pre-set thing. He never played from bar-to-bar but approached music from a much broader perspective, and that was very inspiring for me."

Dial became a prolific composer in the Red Rodney/Ira Sullivan group, contributing the popular "How Do You Know" to their Grammy-nominated album on Elektra/Musician, *Sprint*. When Sullivan decided to leave the group, Dial recommended Oatts for the job. The two have been playing side-by-side in Red's new quintet (with bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Joey Baron) for the past three years and appear on the bop trumpeter's latest release, *No Turn On Red* for Denon. Dial produced that project and also contributed five tunes.

Dial also recently produced and contrib-

uted six tunes to James Morrison's Atlantic debut, *Postcards From Down Under*, and produced his own trio debut with Joey Baron and Jay Anderson on the new Continuum label (111 Mulberry, Newark, NJ 07102). One other producing project of note is a slick synth-laden album he co-produced with Bob Beldon for Red Rodney.

"It was a funny kind of project for Red because all the music is layered using sequencers and samplers and Synclavier," says Dial. The *No Turn On Red* session was basically a direct-to-disc bebop date with all first-takes. And this synth date took us all summer to put it together and mix it down and everything. It was really foreign to Red. I'd call him in to blow a solo over a G7th chord and tell him he was done for the day and he'd say, 'But I didn't do anything!' He'd come in and provide us with these pieces, then we'd put it together later after hours and hours of struggling in the studio with all the technology. It was a new experience for him, to hear the end result later. And he had mixed feelings about it, like, 'That's me in there?' But he had some fun doing it and he liked what he heard. It's a creative use of synthesizers and sequencers, unlike some of the other shock stuff I've heard."

Oatts remains busy with various side projects of his own. He's still playing Monday nights with Mel Lewis at The Village Vanguard. With 12 years on the gig, he's got some serious seniority in that group. He's also playing in Eddie Gomez's quartet and touring with guitarist Dom Salvador and continues to record with the popular group Flim & The BBs, a co-op unit including bassist Jimmy Johnson, drummer Bill Berg, and keyboardist Bill Barber.

"The history of that band goes back to 1973," says Oatts. "They formed as a trio when I was out on the road with Wayne Cochran and The CC Riders. I did that gig for about nine months and during that time those guys formed Flim & The BBs, basically as a means of getting together and playing some music other than all the studio stuff they were doing at the time in Minneapolis. I used to sit in with them at various clubs around town."

"I split for New York in '77 and a few years later when they got a deal with DMP, I was a guest soloist on their first recording, *Tricycle*. I appeared on their next one, *Tunnel*, and then they made me a bona fide member of the band. We recorded three others for DMP and now we're ready to sign with a major [reportedly Warner Bros.]. So it looks like I'll be putting some more energy into that project in the future."

Oatts has to go through some radical gear-shifting to get into a Flim & The BBs composing head. The pop-oriented approach from that band assures them tons of airplay but is light-years away from Dial's first passion, bebop. "It's like having a dual

LEARN MUSIC THE WAY QUINCY JONES DID. AT BERKLEE.

identity," he says. "And people don't associate the two at all. When they hear a Flim & The BBs record they can't believe it's the same guy who they saw playing alto with The Mel Lewis Orchestra down at the Vanguard. And I'm really not aware of the impact that band has had until I go to colleges and do clinics. I think my life in New York is probably a little more underground. I'm not really on any big-selling records or anything. In fact, I wasn't even going to do that first recording with them because I was so much into the I-just-wanna-play-bebop kind of head at the time. I was afraid that if I switched and got into a thing like Flim & The BBs it would just mess up what I was trying to hear. But I've kept them separate and everything has worked out okay."

Re: their DMP debut, "The role models we had for that project were the great string writers . . . Samuel Barber, Eddie Sauter, Claus Ogerman," says Oatts. "We went for those orchestral textures but we wanted to have the quartet blowing right on top in a more straightahead jazz vein." They put in six months on a demo for the project, painstakingly preparing every note on the Synclavier to approximate what the full 30-string section might sound like. There was virtually no rehearsal time with the orchestra. The 30 string players from New York came into Clinton Studios and sight-read all 14 pieces, conducted by Carlos Franzetti.

"It was important for us to show two different sides of expression with this project," says Dial. "We certainly didn't want it to turn out to be a muzaky date with syrupy strings and pretty melodies. And we didn't want it to just be aggressive burn-out music. We wanted a combination of things, a collage of different feelings."

The sections move seamlessly from lush interludes like the dreamy "Harmonic" to more aggressive, swinging portions like "Kept Woman" or the jauntly "I Dig Your Do." Guest Mel Lewis demonstrates his trademark brushwork on the folk-like "Major" while "Anita," dedicated to the memory of Mel's daughter, is a delicate lullaby.

Drummer Joey Baron flashes his creative streak on two of the more open-ended numbers, "I Can't Forget" and "Hurry Up & Wait." Elsewhere, Dial and Oatts blend magically on lush offerings like the Bill Evans-influenced "Patience" and the orchestral "How Do You Know," and they partake in spirited call-and-response on the uptempo romps like "No Option."

The quartet has several upcoming gigs, using different drummers subbing for the in-demand Baron. And both Dial and Oatts are hoping to perform special concerts with string sections sometime this fall. Meanwhile, you can find Oatts blowing alto down at the Vanguard on Monday nights with Mel Lewis. Or you can catch Dial and Oatts on the road with Red Rodney. db



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GEORGE CARTWRIGHT

AT THE BRINK, SAXOPHONIST/COMPOSER CARTWRIGHT LEADS HIS BAND CURLEW ALONGSIDE AN ARRAY OF INDEPENDENT PROJECTS.

by Bill Shoemaker

The '80s have spawned an exhausting number of hybrid musical forms. Their purveyors are often little more than tinkering genre engineers, but, like other proponents of the New York Downtown scene, the work of Curlew has the immutable stamp of creativity. Curlew has become a touchstone of the '80s' legacy—record-collection music, to cop Peter Watrous' phrase—honing its off-kilter mix of jazz, funk, rock, and blues over the course of 10 years, a few personnel changes of almost Darwinian significance, and three benchmark albums—the latest being the roof-raising, *New York Times* Jazz Record of the Week, *Live In Berlin* (Cuneiform Rune 12). Despite the rave write-ups, and major-



KEVIN MICHAEL

label exposure through the A&M/Knitting Factory samplers, Curlew's leader, saxophonist, and composer George Cartwright, has yet to leave his day job.

"I do custom house painting, stuff like faux finishes, graining, stenciling. Right now, Curlew is only working a few months out of the year. Though we go to Europe every

year, it's still hard to put together a tour in the States, which is what we have to do to work, since we live in different parts of the country—[guitarist] Davey Williams lives in Alabama, for instance. I knew this when I decided a few years ago to really make a go of Curlew. If the band was going to make it, I had to have exactly the right people. I wasn't going to get people who lived in New York just because they were convenient. If it meant fewer gigs in New York, okay. But I wasn't going to pass up playing with Davey, or anybody else in the band, for a gig in a little club in New York for \$100.

"I can understand people who say there are a lot of references to various types of music in what Curlew does. Part of that may have something to do with only putting out three records over the years. Maybe if we had more records out, people could see that what we make is in and of itself; that, as a whole, it refers to Curlew. Though we have a couple of cuts on The Knitting Factory compilation for A&M, what I would really like is to have a relationship with a record label that would allow us to do several records, which would give us the means to get that across.

"I do get a little uneasy, however, when writers praise our work for its intelligence, because we could prove them terribly wrong at any moment."

The transplanted Mississippian has hoed a long row—and a few tone rows—to arrive at the brink of a crossover audience. A quick scan of his bio provides ample explanation for his genre-splicing work with Curlew: discovering Delta blues masters via English blues recyclists like Cream in high school; taking up the sax at 21, playing along with Lester Young records; apprenticing with soul bands, eventually branching out with Jackson's experimental *Ars Supernova*; leaving Mississippi for Woodstock's Creative Music Studio, where he worked with Leo Smith and Anthony Braxton, and was a copyist for Braxton's notorious four-orchestra work, *Composition 82*; landing in the Lower East Side in time to ride the No Wave to the Next Wave—Material, Meltable Snaps It (with David Moss, Christian Marclay, and Michael Lytle), Elliott Sharp, et al.

For years, Cartwright was only able to maintain Curlew's hit-and-run existence with a revolving-door personnel policy, particularly in filling the bass and guitar chairs; Bill Laswell and Nicky Skopelitis crop up on Curlew's eponymous debut (*Landslide 1004*); Fred Frith, proving himself an adept bassist, and Mark Howell comprise the string section on *North America* (Moers Music 2042); Wayne Horvitz anchored *Live In Berlin* with keyboard bass. With Williams and bassist Ann Rupel in the line-up with Cartwright, cellist Tom Cora, and drummer Pippin Barnett, Cartwright's vision for the band is coming to fruition.

"The difference between Curlew now

10

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THEORY AND MUSICIANSHIP FOR THE CREATIVE JAZZ IMPROVISER

by michael longo



and, say, at the time of *North America* is that we sound like a band now, to put it bluntly. The band on *North America* hardly ever played live. It was the experience of making *North America* that gave me the idea of putting this band together."

The difference between the treatment of the Cartwright compositions included on *North America* that also appeared on *Live In Berlin* (and are currently staples of Curlew's performances) is striking, as the catchiness of their initial incarnations have been reinforced by seasoned, split-second precision and bar-band brawn. Cartwright is pleased with the roadworthiness of his compositions.

"When I started Curlew, one of the ground rules was that the music would be generally danceable. It might take a modicum of imagination to actually dance to it, but that's alright. Another ground rule was to have interesting melodies and get away from the jazz cliché of head-solos-head, and try to make the kind of arrangement that Mingus would make. The inspiration for the arrangements has always been Mingus, because each song of his contained its own arrangement, its own form.

"Like anybody else writing in this type of genre, I don't have to write a lot, just a form

for people to work around and improvise in. So, I just try to write something that's clear. I used to write on the horn exclusively, but lately I've been writing on a keyboard and a guitar—and I've just started using a drum machine—overdubbing on a four-track that I've got. The trick is writing something that is interesting and clear without it being astute and cloy, which is a fine line to tread. There's also a fine line between something that's catchy and something that has body to it. The band is the best test for what I write, and playing live is the best test for the band.

"A new aspect of my writing started a couple of years ago when Kip Hanrahan called me and asked me to write some music to words by Paul Haines [librettist for Carla Bley's *Escalator Over The Hill*]. Kip has a lot of different people writing music for the project, which he wants to finish in '89. I've already recorded the things I wrote with Wayne Horvitz, Bobby Previte, Dave Hofstra, and Alex Chilton." Speaking of Haines, Curlew will be collaborating with the librettist at New Music America Nov. 13 at The Knitting Factory, putting Haines words to music with the help of singer Amy Denio.

Recently, Cartwright has also used time away from Curlew to keep his chops up in

settings ranging from trio gigs with bassist Mark Helias and drummer Gerry Hemingway to recording with Delta bluesman Jack Owens. This fall, Cartwright will be recording his first solo album with drummer Samm Bennett, bassist/vocalist Sue Garner, and Zeena Parkins on organ and accordian. In addition, Curlew plans to cut another LP this winter.

"I have a friend in Jackson, Malcolm White, who runs a club that features the blues people that are left in Mississippi. One of them is Jack Owens, who lived in Bentonia, who is 84 years old. Malcolm had the idea of making a record with Jack, and then had the hair-brained idea of me playing with Jack, so we went up and got Jack, and went into the studio and played for three hours. I had never met Jack, just did it cold. I just thought of that Muddy Waters record, *Down On Stovall's Plantation*, with the violin, and tried to do something like that. Much to our surprise, it turned out pretty good. Part of the satisfaction of doing it stemmed from my growing up in Mississippi at a time when Sonny Boy Williamson and Elmore James were playing in front of a store in Belzone, and the situation with segregation was so stupid that no one realized what was there. I was glad to have that opportunity." db

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