

Book Review: Miles' Autobiography

For Contemporary Musicians

downbeat

December, 1989 \$1.95 U.K. £2.25

JACK DEJOHNETTE

Multidirectional Musicmaker

WINNERS! 54th Annual Readers Poll

BENNY CARTER
A Legend In Process

FOCUS ON DRUMS AND DRUMMERS



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Caught: Chicago Jazz Festival



VERLY OAKLAND

Jack DeJohnette



Woody Shaw



MARIC POKEMPIER

Benny Carter



MARIC POKEMPIER

Chicago Jazz Festival

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A drummer who plays to cha-chas and calypsos? Well, he used to anyway. He's built his rep around jazz, thoroughly convincing **db** readers of his merits throughout the '80s (see our polls). But there's more to his music than just jazz. For composer/bandleader/"multidirectional" musician Jack DeJohnette, a world of new music awaits to be made. **Jeff Levenson** catches him in-stride.

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Woody Shaw enters the Hall of Fame, Wynton and Jack D. repeat as Jazz Musician of the Year/top trumpeter and top drummer, respectively. Sure, the perennials are here, but look for the new winners as well.

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Cover photograph of Jack DeJohnette by Andy Freeberg.

down beat

For Contemporary Musicians

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

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

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

ALBUM REVIEWERS: Jon Balleas, Larry Birnbaum, Fred Bouchard, Owen Cordle, Elaine Guregian, Frank-John Hadley, Peter Kostakis, Art Lange, John Lilweiler, Howard Mandel, John McDonough, Bill Milkowski, Ben Sandmet, Gene Santoro, Bill Shoemaker, Jack Sohmer, Robin Talleson, Ron Welburn, Pete Welding, Kevin Whitehead.

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EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING PRODUCTION/OFFICE/ ADMINISTRATION & SALES OFFICE:
180 West Park Ave
Elmhurst, IL 60126
FAX: 312/941-3210

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

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LISSA WALES

MULTIDIRECTIONAL MUSICIAN

JACK DEJOHNETTE

By Jeff Levenson

Jack DeJohnette is in a political frame of mind. It's a balmy, autumn Sunday near Woodstock, 90 miles north of New York City, and he has just finished struttin', New Orleans-style, at a Democratic fundraiser for local candidates seeking elected office. One of those locals is Ed Sanders, celebrated Fug emeritus, whose penchant for the absurd should serve him well in politics.

The Woodstock area is a haven for creative types and DeJohnette counts among his neighbors some distinguished jazz playmates: Pat Metheny, Dave Holland, Carla Bley, Steve Swallow, Howard Johnson, Anthony Cox, Jimmy Cobb, Warren Bernhardt, Mike Mantler. There's a sense of community among many of them, sometimes evidenced in collaborative projects, or in their support of socially-minded events such as the fundraiser. In Woodstock one feels a relaxed pull that inspires creative thought and a cooperative spirit.

DeJohnette has done well in this environment. In recent years, he has truly come into his own, demonstrating to the jazz world that his talents are far-reaching, that his gifts as a percussionist are the tips of a musical iceberg, that his creativity encompasses a worldly, music-and-art sensibility. Even those who have followed just the highpoints of his career—his work with Charles Lloyd, Miles Davis, John Abercrombie, Ornette Coleman, Keith Jarrett, New Directions, Special Edition, and other peak associations in between—know of his versatility and musicianly ways.

It has become increasingly apparent that DeJohnette is more than just a drummer's drummer—he is a focused artist who thrives on challenges and places himself in situations that encourage spirited play. Witness the interactive chemistry among band members on his latest records as a leader, *Irresistible Forces* and *Audio-Visualscapes*.

His most recent projects have him shifting mindsets and examining various stylistic attitudes: *Parallel Realities*, an acoustic and electronic romp with Metheny and Herbie Hancock (completed a few months back and slated for release in the spring) finds him and his fellow bright lights thinking texturally as well as melodically; the newly issued *Zebra*, a video soundtrack album, has him dueting on synthesizers with longtime friend Lester Bowie; a recording date with baritonist Nick Brignola, scheduled a day after our talk, had him motoring down to Rudy Van Gelder's studio in New Jersey; and later that same week, DeJohnette left for a tour of Europe with the Standards Trio of Jarrett and Gary Peacock. The man's been busy.

Given this swirl of activity, DeJohnette approached our interview with enthusiasm but with the idea that his musical projects should speak for themselves. Quite obviously, he wanted to talk about other things. Though we began by discussing his recent trio outing with Metheny and Hancock, other topics soon emerged. Consciousness-raising was clearly the order of the day.



Jeff Levenson: Let's start with *Parallel Realities*.

Jack DeJohnette: Herbie and Pat had never done anything on record together, but none of us are strangers. I'm really thankful they respected me enough musically to do it. At first I thought we should have a bass player, but with the technology available—especially Pat's Synclavier—I thought it really wasn't necessary. So Pat and I got together. We actually co-produced the album and we each wrote four songs. It's very much an equal collaboration. We wanted to make a listenable album.

J.L.: Was that the prevailing attitude as you approached the project?

J.D.: It was very important to make people feel something. We're in a world right now where everything is a quick fix. It's instant gratification. "I want it now, I can't wait until tomorrow." We've lost our patience to wait on things. And that's something that's very important and that takes time. It's like the Standards Trio. It's not about standards, it's about what we do with them, the process. Bill Moyers had a [TV] program the other day with [the late philosopher] Joseph Campbell and they were discussing the power of myths. Moyers asked him, "Can we have myths in a modern age?" Campbell said, "Not in the same way we used to have them. Things are moving too fast." Things used to be passed down word of mouth. Now it's the age of computers and records and tapes.

We have to create our myths for this age.

J.L.: How does that affect your art or your ability to make art?

J.D.: I think life itself is an art. The whole creation is really art. But in order for art to recognize art, you have to educate people. And unfortunately, in this country, maybe 15 or 20 years ago, we had more of an appreciation. We had funding for it and we also had a better educational system. Music was in the schools. Kids were being turned on to it. Our political system in the last eight or 10 years has eroded that all away. We have to create alternatives. You have to go out there and reach that audience. And maybe you can't do it via established routes. We need people to just be creative and try to reach people so they know about art. We need to teach people about our music.

I used to do gigs in Chicago where we'd play cha-chas, and swing stuff, and calypsos, and people would be dancing to the music. Then when people started listening, and the music came out of the clubs into the concert halls, it had elegance but it became kind of stuffy. It got to be intellectual and we lost a lot. We lost our mass audience. The musicians wanted to be recognized, not necessarily as entertainers but as artists—with respect. That's why a lot of musicians went to Europe. They got respect. We're still fighting for that here in America.

There's still this whole thing of portraying musicians as drugged-out, crazy people. Look at the movie *Bird*. The movie never gave you the feeling that Charlie Parker was a genius. The music *Bird* played healed a lot of people, but from the movie we're left with the idea that he was a poor bastard, that he lived a lousy life. I think that the music that Charlie Parker played, what he wrote, the spirit of what he did, was honest and true and that's the thing we should be appreciating. We should have walked out of that movie celebrating him and humming his music.

J.L.: In Miles' new autobiography [see "Book Reviews," p. 69], he talks with disgust about how certain black musicians lowered themselves seeking respect and admiration from predominantly white audiences. Specifically, he resented the way Louis Armstrong resorted to "Tomming."

J.D.: Maya Angelou has a poem about that. She talks about the mask. The mask that masks the pain. Louis really felt bad about the treatment of his people. He was vocal about it later on. He smiled that smile because that was his trademark. Rochester [Eddie Anderson] and Steppin' Fetchit and all those guys knew what was happening. These were people who wanted to raise children, wanted to have a chance to have a better education. Sometimes their esteem was traded for that.

Racism is on the rise in this country. Unfortunately it's our job



ANDY FREEBERG

and that of other minorities to remind white people, "Hey, don't make that mistake again." White people have to internalize that the skin is like a badge—you have to wear it all the time. We wonder, "Okay, I didn't get that job. Was it because I was black, or was it because I wasn't talented?" A white person doesn't have to worry about that unless he's dealing with a reverse-quota system. Then he feels the racism and he becomes indignant. Then he knows what it feels like to be on the other side, to go into a neighborhood and hear, "Nigger, get the hell out of here!" When I was living in Chicago there were places where you couldn't go, you wouldn't cross the tracks. You'd run the hell out of there.

J.L.: Was your involvement with the AACM [Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians] during your early days in Chicago a response to those racial concerns?

J.D.: That was partially it, but it was about music, mainly. It was an ideal place where black musicians could have an alternative. Muhal [Richard Abrams] set it up, got a charter for it, figured out where we could go to play our own music. We were trying to raise the consciousness of black people. Look, when I was coming up, jazz was not a good word. If you wanted to be a jazz musician, [most people thought] you'd never make money, you'd be strung-out on drugs.

J.L.: Luckily it didn't turn out that way for you.

J.D.: Music has been very good to me and I have more enthusiasm for it now than ever. It has given me back a lot. It's a spiritual thing for me, a religious thing, almost, and I'm blessed in that sense. I've played with the legends and history-makers of the music.

J.L.: Do you believe that your music will have historical value? Will writers write about its importance?

J.D.: The first thing is, how we refer to it. I realized that some musicians, myself, Ornette, and other guys I came up with, don't have names for the music they play. None of the musicians gave the music names. I mean, once the intellectuals started digging bebop they gave it the name "bebop." Some musicians would say, "That's not bebop, it's our music. It's Charlie Parker's music. It's the music of the moment, of right now. We don't call it bebop, we don't call it mainstream, we don't call it free jazz. We don't call it anything." So I thought I'll take responsibility for what I do. I call what I do "multidirectional music." When somebody talks about Jack DeJohnette's music, he can use the term "multidirectional."

I like all kinds of music. I like reggae, I like soul music, I like hip hop, I like rock, I like bluegrass, I like opera. If it's happening, if it's something you can feel, then it's real. That's what's happening.

It's like when I was with Charles Lloyd. We played the Fillmore East and West. We were on bills with Big Brother and The Holding



DeJohnette with musical mate Lester Bowie.

Company, Cream, The Jefferson Airplane. We all worked the same circuit because Bill Graham was the first guy to bring all the music together. We need to get back to that. We need the cross-fertilization. Graham was at the forefront of that stuff, but we've gone backwards the last 18 years. The way we've gone, it gives the impression that nothing has been happening creatively in America. Of course, that's not true.

J.L.: Given that your overall point of view has been shaped by so many different musics, how do you view your drumming? Do you feel that you've created a signature style of play?

J.D.: I think that people know me and my sound. The sound of my snare, the way I touch the cymbals. You know how you can hear a singer and know who it is? Well, the same holds true for drummers. It's personality. I know the touch of the great drummers. I know Philly Joe [Jones], or Tony [Williams], or Bernard Purdie, or Roy Haynes, or Elvin [Jones], or Kenny Clarke, or Max [Roach], or Paul Motian. It's not only how they hit the drums; it's how they run around the kit—the feel, the approach, the attitude.

J.L.: Aren't you concerned that synthesizers will interfere with just that, with a player's ability to reveal his or her personality through the music?

J.D.: I see synthesizers the way an artist sees the palette. You're dealing with sound and color. I see it as enhancement, because I like to think of music as a mixture of acoustic and electronic [elements]. What you *do* with those things is the important issue. On *Zebra* I tried to approach the electronics from an acoustical point of view. It gave me the advantage of creating multilayers of rhythm and being able to create moods.

You see, you don't always need a beat. The media tells us there's got to be a beat. It's got to have a groove to it. It's got to swing. Well, swing is not always true or false. Swing can be lyrical. It can be a rhythm that's not necessarily in time. It can be abstract time *and* it can move you and it can swing. Time is a man-made illusion. You know, we create time. We tell time by the clocks, but it's all illusion. It's like a canvas you can paint on. You can play with it, stretch it, go up and down with it.

When I listen to a lot of music and see a lot of videos, I see some sad stuff out there. And I think that so much could be done creatively. We need to start living our lives more spontaneously and creatively. We've gotten away from spontaneity. We have to learn to roll with impermanence, because we've created the illusion of permanence. We've got to learn to really understand one another. We've got to learn what we're all about. We've got to learn that black people are not just about eating collard greens and saying, "What's happenin', bro?" Music is one way to do it, but it's also about the power of the word, of poetry, education, communication, of dropping the bigotry and taking the blinders off our eyes.

J.L.: It's interesting to think of art as providing the means for that kind of salvation.

J.D.: That's what's so fascinating about jazz. It's that you have individualism within the collective context, but it works democratically. We've got to get to the point where money is not the issue but substance is. Everything now is based on dollars, not on compassion and caring. That's what we really need. We've got to get decent housing for people, get homeless people off the streets. We need first-class education because the rest of the world is passing us by. And we've got to do it in the next five or 10 years.

Unfortunately, we just had an administration that took funds from education, spent more money on defense and less on domestic programs. There's no excuse in a country as rich as this one for citizens not getting a decent education. We cannot afford to waste minds like that.

The demise of certain things always opens the doors to other things. There are alternatives coming. It's not as bleak as it seems. People want to hold on to things, to musical things, to bebop, to the mainstream, to whatever. We have to be able to be renewed. We have to keep renewing ourselves. When stuff gets too safe and comfortable, that's when it falls apart. We ought to come up with alternative ways of thinking. **db**



TOM COPI

JACK DEJOHNETTE'S EQUIPMENT

DeJohnette's drums are Sonor Hillites with a 6½ × 14-inch snare, rack toms that are 8 × 8, 9 × 10, and 11 × 13 inches. His floor tom toms measure 15 × 14 and 17 × 16-inch with a 16 × 22-inch bass drum. Jack plays his own Sabian Jack DeJohnette signature series cymbals, which includes a 14-inch hit-hat, 16- and 18-inch crash cymbals, 22- and 20-inch rides, and a 20-inch China. His hardware includes his Sonor signature series with electronics by Korg, models DDD-1, M1, and DSM-1.

JACK DEJOHNETTE SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- | | |
|---|---|
| as a leader | with Pat Metheny |
| AUDIO-VISUALSCAPES—MCA/Impulse 2-8029 | 80/81—ECM 2-815 579-1 |
| IRRESISTIBLE FORCES—MCA/Impulse 5992 | with Dave Holland |
| ALBUM ALBUM—ECM 823 467-2 | TRIPLICATE—ECM 837 113-1 |
| INFLATION BLUES—ECM 1244 | with Lester Bowie |
| TIN CAN ALLEY—ECM 1189 | ZEBRA—MCA 42160 |
| SPECIAL EDITION—ECM 827 649-1 | with Eliane Elias |
| NEW DIRECTIONS IN EUROPE—ECM 829 158-2 | CROSS CURRENTS—Denon CY 2180 |
| NEW DIRECTIONS—ECM 1128 | with Tommy Smith |
| NEW RAGS—ECM 1103 | STEP BY STEP—Blue Note 919302 |
| PICTURES—ECM 1079 | with Ralph Towner |
| UNTITLED—ECM 1074 | BATIK—ECM 1121 |
| SORCERY—Prestige 10081 | with Collin Walcott |
| COSMIC CHICKEN—Prestige 10094 | CLOUD DANCE—ECM 825 469-2 |
| HAVE YOU HEARD?—Milestone 9029 | with George Adams |
| COMPLEX—Milestone 90022 | SOUND SUGGESTIONS—ECM 1141 |
| with Keith Jarrett | with JoAnne Brackeen |
| RUTA AND DAITYA—ECM 1021 | ANCIENT DYNASTY—Columbia 36593 |
| STANDARDS VOL. 1—ECM 811 966-1 | KEYED IN—Columbia 36075 |
| STANDARDS VOL. 2—ECM 825 015-1 | with McCoy Tyner |
| CHANGES—ECM 817 436-2 | SUPERTRIOS—Milestone 55003 |
| with Charles Lloyd | with Miroslav Vitous |
| FOREST FLOWER—Atlantic 1473 | MOUNTAIN IN THE CLOUDS—Atlantic 1622 |
| BEST OF . . .—Atlantic 1556 | with Terje Rypdal/Miroslav Vitous |
| DREAM WEAVER—Atlantic 1459 | TRIO—ECM 825 470-2 |
| LOVE IN—Atlantic 1481 | TO BE CONTINUED—ECM 1192 |
| FLOWERING OF THE ORIGINAL QUARTET—Atlantic 1586 | with Jan Garbarek |
| IN EUROPE—Atlantic 1500 | PLACES—ECM 829 195-2 |
| IN THE SOVIET UNION—Atlantic 1571 | with Kenny Wheeler |
| JOURNEY WITHIN—Atlantic 1493 | DEER WAN—ECM 829 385-2 |
| SOUNDTRACK—Atlantic 1519 | GNU HIGH—ECM 825 591-2 |
| with John Abercromble | with Gary Peacock |
| NIGHT—ECM 823 212-1 | TALES OF ANOTHER—ECM 827 418-2 |
| GATEWAY ONE—ECM 829 192-2 | with Richie Beirach |
| GATEWAY TWO—ECM 1105 | ELM—ECM 1142 |
| TIMELESS—ECM 829 114-1 | with Bill Evans |
| with Miles Davis | AT THE MONTREUX JAZZ FESTIVAL—Verve V6-8762 |
| IN A SILENT WAY—Columbia CJ-40580 | with Sonny Rollins |
| BITCHES BREW—Columbia J2C-40577 | REEL LIFE—Milestone 9108 |
| LIVE AT THE FILLMORE—Columbia 30038 | |
| LIVE-EVIL—Columbia 30954 | |
| with Pat Metheny/Ornette Coleman | |
| SONG X—Geffen 24096 | |

THE 54th ANNUAL down beat READERS POLL

HALL OF FAME

174	Woody Shaw
106	Red Rodney
105	Lee Morgan
60	J. J. Johnson
60	Gerry Mulligan
60	Charlie Rouse



JAZZ MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

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184	Miles Davis
132	Michael Brecker
120	Pat Metheny
76	Branford Marsalis
72	Betty Carter

JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR

144	<i>Letter From Home</i> , Pat Metheny (Geffen)
114	<i>Amandla</i> , Miles Davis (Warner Bros.)
114	<i>Majesty Of The Blues</i> , Wynton Marsalis (Columbia)
108	<i>Blackwood</i> , Eddie Daniels (GRP)
102	<i>Akoustic Band</i> , Chick Corea (GRP)

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244	<i>Yellow Moon</i> , Neville Brothers (A&M)
136	<i>Don't Be Cruel</i> , Bobby Brown (MCA)
52	<i>Batman</i> , Prince (Warner Bros.)

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156	<i>Amandla</i> , Miles Davis (Warner Bros.)

POP/ROCK MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

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144	Miles Davis
120	Prince
80	Tracy Chapman
64	Peter Gabriel
60	Vernon Reid





STEVEN GROSS

SOUL/R&B MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

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- 104 Neville Brothers
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RAYMOND ROSS

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PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

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MICHAEL JANG

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MITCHELL SEIDEL

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HYOU VIELZ

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By Mitchell Seidel

Benny Carter

A LEGEND IN PROCESS

Satchel Paige once said, "Don't look back. Something may be gaining on you." At 82, Benny Carter isn't looking back. But it doesn't matter, because nobody's even close.

After a long career in music, it seems odd for Carter not to reflect. The man whose musical skills earned him the nickname "The King" more than half a century ago and who went on to become one of Hollywood's most versatile arranger/composers has covered a lot of ground, both in score paper and shoe leather. One explanation is that most of his thoughts on that career were presented by the late Morroe and Edward Berger and James Patrick in the 1982 bio *Benny Carter—A Life In American Music*. Another is that Carter has too many irons in the fire to dwell on the past.

"People always ask me about the good old days. My good old days are here and now," he is quoted in the newly-released documentary film, *Benny Carter: Symphony In Riffs*.

Recent recordings on the Musicmasters label with an all-star saxophone ensemble and The American Jazz Orchestra have rekindled interest in Carter's arranging skills, and this year he took the top spot in the **down beat** International Critics Poll in that category. His alto saxophone playing, if anything, has improved over the last 30 years, with Carter remaining as contemporary as ever. Chops permitting, he even plays a little trumpet on club dates.

In addition to lecturing at colleges and performing, the last few years have been spent laurel-gathering, with Carter humbly, if reluctantly, being honored as an "elder statesman" of jazz wherever he plays. Japanese tours are now common for Carter, and he collects frequent-flyer credits as often as he gets royalty checks. In addition, Carter and Morroe Berger—a longtime friend—will be remembered by an Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers Morroe Berger-Benny Carter Jazz Research Fund, designed to provide grants to jazz scholars to study at the Institute, to publish the results in the Institute's "Annual Review Of Jazz Studies," and to lecture at the university. Carter celebrated his 82nd birthday on stage at Alice Tully Hall at New York's Lincoln Center, and followed that up two weeks later with a performance at The Chicago Jazz Festival, featuring works from his landmark 1961 album *Further Definitions*.

That recording occurred in the middle of Carter's career of writing music for films and television, and early in a period that saw few recordings issued under his own name. By the early 1970s, Carter's career took a turn back towards performing publicly and recording albums.

MITCHELL SEIDEL

Ironically, the Hollywood work that Carter walked away from a few years ago doesn't exist anymore.

"They're not doing the work that they were doing years ago when they had those large orchestras in all of the studios, and so much independent stuff is going on; and from what I hear, they're doing these one-man things with synthesizers," says Carter, adding that he's so far removed from that line of work, all of his information about it now is secondhand.

"I've been out of it for quite some time. The last thing I did for film was probably something for an animated film, which I did about three or four years ago and since then I've done nothing. I've been more concerned with my performance, and particularly concerned with keeping away from deadlines, which, at this point, I do not welcome," he explains.

"They call 40 guys in the studio at 8 o'clock in the morning. You can't call up and say, 'Gee, I won't have it ready until tomorrow.' You know, it means it's got to be there. There's no excuses; no putting off; no postponements. No cancellations, unless it happens to be your's, after you do that once," he says, chuckling.

"A lot of times you take on more than you can really chew, because there will be something at the last minute. You get a little greedy, you figure you can do it. And you *can* do it if you stay up all night for four nights running; you know what I mean. That's what I think is one thing that happened to Oliver Nelson. That's what the people who were close to him tell me. He got so popular at Universal that he couldn't say no. He'd get through conducting one picture, then he'd go right to the projection room to see it."

The Hollywood of Benny Carter was one where films produced songs that went on to become standards, while on the East Coast, Broadway was equally productive.

A fluent tunesmith, Carter's songbook includes such diverse entries as "When Lights Are Low," "Cow Cow Boogie," and "Evening Star." While they don't write songs like that anymore, Carter still does.

"Broadway isn't what it was. There is no Tin Pan Alley anymore," says Carter. "I think that's kind of like an era that has passed. There are still tunes that become standards that are written today, but when we think of the vehicles for which those things were written, those were all written for situations for theater. 'We need a song for this spot in the show and for this particular singer.' It's something that was fashioned just for that. I don't know, are there any shows from which great songs have come in the last 20 years? Maybe a few good songs from films."

Citing "Laura" by David Raksin and "The Shadow Of Your Smile" by Johnny Mandel as superior examples of film music, Carter says they come to mind because "they're well-constructed and unusually lovely. But then, those tunes are well over 20 years old."

Carter's composing and arranging are as distinctive as his alto saxophone playing, a sound which was forged alongside such contemporaries as Coleman Hawkins and Roy Eldridge. When asked if the young musicians of today don't seem to have voices

as distinctive as those of Carter's youth, he hesitates in gentlemanly fashion lest he be perceived of serving a salad of moldy figs and sour grapes.

"You mean individuality. Yeah, that's what I miss, too. Because the younger players, there're so many clones around today. Nobody sounds like themselves," he says.

In teaching at colleges, often, after hearing students play briefly, Carter will simply say, "Now play a nice melody"; an obvious reflection of his tastes in playing and composing. Melody is something he finds frequently missing in younger musicians' performances.

"Very oftentimes when they start out playing, they say, 'Let's play such and such a tune,' and they start out improvising from the word go. By the time they play three or four choruses, the listening audience doesn't necessarily even know what the tune is they're playing, unless it's been pre-announced. And maybe some people can recognize chord changes; but today, so many of the chords are the same — so many of the same chords are in different tunes."



David Sanborn pays a backstage visit to Carter during a recent engagement at Carlos I in New York.

MITCHELL SEIDEL

Carter, though, feels there are a great number of talented young players on the scene today and declines strong comment on the theory that students spend too much time playing Charlie Parker and John Coltrane solos note for note, only to use the next seven years "unlearning" what they were taught.

"I'm not a reviewer, I'm not a critic, so don't get me into that," Carter responds. "Coleman Hawkins, to me, was a great creator because he had no prior influences. From what you know historically, who was there before him on his instrument? But then again, when Parker came along, he still had something full-blown of his own. I don't know if he got anything from me or from Willie Smith or from Johnny Hodges or from anybody. He came on the scene with something quite different."

Could the lack of widespread mass communications have had an influence on that earlier generation, forcing them to find their own voices?

"Absolutely, absolutely," Carter replied. "You didn't have those great influences of those role models."

Ironically, trying to get an opinion from Carter on future trends in music also sends him back a generation.

"Who knows what's going to spring forth? And from where? I always think back to 1928, when I first heard Art Tatum. Just sort of out of the blue, really," says Carter. "There'd been Fats Wallers and J.P. Johnsons and Willie 'The Lion' Smith and people like that with that great stride piano. And then along comes an Art Tatum with something vastly different and much more advanced harmonically and technically. But where did he get it from, I wonder? I don't know. These things do happen like that."

When it comes to trends in modern music, Carter takes his usual diplomatic tack, stepping around toes instead of on them. His most intent listening is done while behind the wheel of his Rolls Royce while tooling around Hollywood, which would make



Carter in rehearsal with: (from left) Bucky Pizzarelli, Dizzy Gillespie, J. J. Johnson, Oliver Jackson, and Derek Smith.

MITCHELL SEIDEL

you wonder what his driving record is like.

"The listening that I'm able to do is when I'm in the car, because at home I cannot find the time. Unless, in rare instances, I can just listen and do nothing else," he says. "I listen to a lot of people and work available today. But I won't mention any names, because if I do, immediately when you leave I'll say, 'Oh gee, I should have mentioned so-and-so."

"There are a lot of young arrangers doing very interesting things. Yes there are, a lot," he said. "There is a lot of interesting music being played and a lot of the experimental stuff is very interesting. And a lot of it, of course, is very uninteresting and unpretentious. But a lot of it is very valid, very good."

"I can't elucidate that too clearly. These things, of course, are very personal, you know. Very subjective," Carter says, adding that his tastes encompass a wide range of styles.

"I like some funk. I like some rock & roll. I like fusion. Of course, to begin with, jazz is fusion. What does the word 'fusion' itself mean? Well, they claim that jazz was that, you know. From the European harmonic thing and the African drums, field hollers, and all that—that's fusion when it comes together."

Carter does recall being very impressed by Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy and its spirited recording of "I Only Have Eyes For You."

"Oh yeah, you can mention that I love that. I think [it was] the freshness of it. I know it's sort of the old New Orleans feeling, but to me that was new, almost. It was a good, great, honest feeling. I think the music is more important if it says something to you, if it moves you somewhat. I don't care how many notes are played. It sounds as though they were happy and having fun with it."

The work that distracts Carter from listening to music at home is his own composing. The Harrison Engle and Lucille Ostrow one-hour documentary film about his life offers a brief example of what it's like to be a fly on the wall, showing Carter almost effortlessly crafting a tune while humming quietly to himself. That oversimplifies matters somewhat. Operating something like a novelist, Carter jots down ideas as they hit him, whether that means relaxing at home or racing along in the Japanese bullet train.

Central City Sketches, a Carter jazz suite, premiered at an American Jazz Orchestra concert in New York in 1987. He is

currently working on a Japan suite based on his frequent visits to the Far East.

As a result of all these notes, "I've got a lot of bits and pieces about, fragments." When actually sitting down to write a piece, "first you pull out a piece of score paper and you sit and look at the blank page for a long time," Carter laughs. "And then finally an idea will come to you. The hardest thing is always getting that first note down. No, seriously, I'd had it on my mind for quite some time and I've got some thematic material already mapped out. And I've got some stuff already written."

But when he's really stuck for an idea, those piles don't really help, he says, explaining that you "just sit down and fool around at the piano. And then sometimes, I just get away from the piano, go to the kitchen table, just do it there. Don't try to pull anything out of the piano if it won't come. Leave it. Forget it, just go away from it."

Preparations for a recent Japanese tour had Carter getting his scoring juices flowing by settling in at his copyist's office, particularly because it has no piano. "When I go to his office, the copyist is breathing down my neck. You have to continue. And it's quiet there, because nobody else is doing anything. There are about five or six guys sitting at different desks, but they're just writing."

It went the same way with Carter's latest album, a saxophone ensemble effort called *Over The Rainbow*. Faced with 45 minutes left before entering the studio with Herb Geller, Jimmy Heath, Frank Wess, Joe Temperley, Richard Wyands, Milt Hinton, and Ronnie Bedford, Carter put the finishing touches on the score while simultaneously chatting with producer Ed Berger.

The saxophone ensemble format is not new to Carter, his work in it going back to the '30s. But it is one in which he is rarely recorded these days, the most recent such American work being 1966's *Additions To Further Definitions*.

Benny Carter's life has been one that has touched at least three generations of musicians and nearly encompasses the history of jazz. Peers ranging from Wynton Marsalis to Dizzy Gillespie feted him at Lincoln Center (see "Caught," Nov. '89), a few steps from where Carter was raised in New York's San Juan Hill neighborhood. Carter was perhaps prescient of the birthday cake that was soon to splatter over his gray suit, or more likely, sincerely overwhelmed by the standing ovation when he said, "Whether it's a long life or a short life, moments like this are rare."

db



MITCHELL SEIDEL

BENNY CARTER'S EQUIPMENT

"I have a Selmer Mark VI [alto saxophone], 1964 model. And an Arnold Briehart mouthpiece, Ebolin, I think that's it. It's probably 40 years old. I've had it all this time, but I've only been using it a couple of years.

"I use a variety [of reeds]. I use Rico, I use Buffet, I use something called SPI. Generally about #2. But I don't even know what I have on there now, because anytime I look for a reed I just go through what I have and see one that looks good, put it on. If it plays, I put it on and leave it on as long as it doesn't become too water-soaked. As long as it works for me, I keep it on. I don't even know what the name of it is at the particular time because I don't remember.

"I have a Getsen Eterna [trumpet] that I've had about a year now, that I play, sort of infrequently. That's an old mouthpiece. I don't know the origin of it. I don't know what brand name it is or anything, but it's a mouthpiece that Doc Cheatham gave me in 1932. It's the only mouthpiece I've ever played on when I play trumpet."

BENNY CARTER SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

JAZZ GIANT—Contemporary 167

FURTHER DEFINITIONS—MCA/Impulse 5651

IN THE MOOD FOR SWING—Musicmasters 60144T

OVER THE RAINBOW—Musicmasters 60196Y

WONDERLAND—Pablo 2310-922

MY KIND OF TROUBLE—Pablo 2310-935

BENNY CARTER 4—Pablo 2308-204

with Dizzy Gillespie

CARTER, GILLESPIE, INC.—Pablo 2310-781

with Oscar Peterson

BENNY CARTER MEETS OSCAR PETERSON—Pablo 2310-926

with The American Jazz Orchestra

CENTRAL CITY SKETCHES—Musicmasters 60126X

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



MARVIN "SMITTY" SMITH

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED—Concord Jazz 4379; *THE NEIGHBORHOOD*; *I'LL LOVE YOU ALWAYS*; *WISH YOU WERE HERE WITH ME (PART 1)*; *WISH YOU WERE HERE WITH ME (PART 2)*; *SALSA BLUE*; *GOthic 17*; *CONCERTO IN B.G.*; *THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED*. (51:27 MINUTES)

Personnel: Smith, drums; Wallace Roney, trumpet; Steve Coleman, alto saxophone; Ralph Moore, tenor saxophone; Robin Eubanks, trombone; James Williams, piano; Robert Hurst, bass; Kenyatte Abdur-Rahman, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ½

One of the few New York musicians to work both with neo-con dogmatists and M-BASE funksters—not to mention one of the very best drummers of his generation—Smitty Smith has the potential to be a great leader. He can write nice melodies, assemble intriguing bands, push an ensemble with power and taste, and put on a fine live show. But he's yet to make a whole album that does him justice.

If *Road* and 1987's *Keeper Of The Drums* (Concord Jazz 325) reveal Smitty's goal in life, it's to be the new Art Blakey: to take the road well-traveled. The cooking kickoff "The Neighborhood," with trumpet, trombone, and tenor in parallel motion, could march easily into Blakey's book. That's no crime. But Smith's ideologically mixed groups have promised something more, a new synthesis: who else could get M-BASic Steve Coleman and bop militant Wallace Roney (both returning from *Keeper*) to intertwine? Yet in practice, his lineups lean right; Coleman is on only three tracks here. (For variety's sake, the four horns are deployed en masse just twice; the full octet is only on "Salsa Blue." Abdur-Rahman's lone performance.) The cast boasts three onetime Messengers, including the ever-tasteful pianist, and that other floater between schools, trombonist Eubanks. His bop chops rule Smitty's sly Benny Golson tribute, marred only by the gauche "Moonlight Sonata" licks on the head.

Bill Bruford's "Gothic 17" has been recast in the impressionistic mode of the first Marsalis quintet. The Roney-Coleman mix is spirited and pungent. Coleman has the chops to glide through; I just wish Smitty had exploited his outward-bound harmonic sense as well. "Gothic" is also the best example of how the drummer leaves spaces in an arrangement for himself, and then crams them full without overwhelming the action.

Smith's strongest compositions are the septet's "Road"—built on a snaky piano-bass union, and driven forward by percussive punching

horns—and, better yet, the quartet track "Wish You Were Here," a fetching seesaw line voiced by tenorist Moore in his smooth upper register. (On LP, he just has time to state the melody; the CD version lets him explore it.) Those tracks, like "Gothic 17," catch Smitty at his best. He may not have made that great record yet. But I betcha he will.

—kevin whitehead



BENNY CARTER ALL-STAR SAX ENSEMBLE

OVER THE RAINBOW—Musicmasters 60196Y; *OVER THE RAINBOW*; *OUT OF NOWHERE*; *STRAIGHT TALK*; *THE GAL FROM ATLANTA*; *THE PAWN-BROKER*; *EASY MONEY*; *AIN'T MISBEHAVIN'*; *BLUES FOR LUCKY LOVERS*. (62:42 minutes)

Personnel: Carter, Herb Geller, alto saxophones; Jimmy Heath, Frank Wess, tenor saxophones; Joe Temperley, baritone saxophone; Richard Wyands, piano; Milt Hinton, bass; Ronnie Bedford, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LIONEL HAMPTON

MOSTLY BLUES—Musicmasters 60168K; *BYE BYE BLUES*; *SOMEDAY MY PRINCE WILL COME*; *TAKE THE A TRAIN*; *BLUES FOR JAZZBEAUX*; *WALKIN' UPTOWN*; *HONEYSUCKLE ROSE*; *MOSTLY BLUES*; *LIMEHOUSE BLUES*; *GONE WITH THE WIND*. (60:04)

Personnel: Hampton, vibes; Bobby Scott, piano; Joe Beck, guitar; Bob Cranshaw (cuts 1-5), Anthony Jackson (6-9), bass; Grady Tate (1-5), Chris Parker (6-9), drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Even now, jazz is a young enough music so that we still have relatively little experience in the effects of old age upon its players. In the 1940s, when recorded jazz was only about 20 years old and everything before 1920 was shrouded in silence and tall tales, some early-jazz enthusiasts heard talk about a lost trumpeter who was supposed to have been the greatest of them all. Thus did the myth of Bunk Johnson precede his discovery. He and a few others were believed to represent a direct connection to the beginning of jazz. To the astonishment of their discoverers, however, the music they played was strained, off-key, sloppy, and far from what the legend-mongering had led them to expect. Why? The most likely answer seemed age. At a time when Louis

Armstrong and Sidney Bechet were still in their 40s, some of these men, after all, were past 60. Age explained it all. When a great jazz musician gets on, the theory went, his technique shrinks into primitivism.

Jazz, of course, was too young to know better then. Too wet behind the ears to know that a bad musician at 60 was probably just as bad at 25. It was only in the '60s and '70s when the great virtuosos of the 1930s (Hines, Goodman, Harry James, Roy Eldridge, Johnny Hodges, Bud Freeman) passed 60 that we learned how little age necessarily has to do with skill. Today, the first and second generations of bebop are learning the same thing, along with even some early post-modernists like Cecil Taylor (age 60).

In the 1940s it would have been impossible to imagine anyone playing jazz with command, fluency, and freshness at 80. But that was then and Benny Carter and Lionel Hampton are now—nearly 1990, which may, with a little luck and good health, open the decade of the jazz octogenarian.

Carter, at 82, has finally given us the album we've been waiting for since 1966, when the last of two *Further Definitions* sessions for Impulse came out. This one probably should be called *Ten Amendments To Further Definitions*. But there are only eight tunes, which reminds us that the only thing this CD of sax ensembles lacks is more of the same. It's one of the few examples in small-group jazz where the writing is of more interest than the excellent solo lineups. Carter doesn't just know the secret of good sax writing. He discovered it: infuse an ensemble line with the spirit of improvisation. This means you take pen in hand and treat the material as a soloist might. You take that bridge of "Over The Rainbow" with its two teeter-tottering eighth-notes, and alter the form without changing the essence.

There is classic Carter here: "Out Of Nowhere" mostly floats on long, windswept notes, jostled occasionally by little double-time whirlpools of energy. At faster tempos, there are jaunty out-choruses on "Gal From Atlanta" (a.k.a. "Sweet Georgia Brown") and "Ain't Misbehavin'." The only complaint is the bookend nature of the formats with standard solo sequences in between. Some ensemble counterpoint or riff support would do well to sustain the ensemble feel that all this is really about.

Carter's alto sound and attack are as imperceptible and unchanging as ever, as satisfying today as they were on the Impulse albums. I probably prefer the first one best for its solo qualities; after all, it had Coleman Hawkins and Joe Jones. But the second Impulse album and this one have meatier ensemble work.

Lionel Hampton's recording career following his Clef/Verve days has had so much discontinuity about it, it seems something of a shambles today. So many combinations and labels! *Mostly Blues* is a highly successful attempt to return him to the straight quartet setting and bring out the musician, not the cheerleader, in him. Hampton at 80 sounds wonderfully graceful, at ease, and into the music once he gets past the first choruses, with which he sounds consistently bored. From then on things start to happen. He really listens to what he plays. And happily, there are no vocals, no piano

ARTMUSIK

Carol Lian *Ronnie Bedford*
piano percussion



MOMENTS SOLO AND DUO IMPROVISATIONS

Side 1

1. Beijing
2. Visions*
3. 8's of 2005
Part I Part II
4. Aspens**
5. In the Night

Side 2

1. Moments*
2. Pinnacles & Zephyrs
Pinnacles Equus Zephyrs
3. The Great Blue**
4. Kestral**
5. My 20th Love Song
6. Castle Rock

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playing, and no drumming (which would be welcome if he'd take it seriously and not treat it as a stunt).

The only problem is that sometimes your ear has to search for him through the rest of the rhythm section and reach out to him. The percussive edge is missing, not so much in the playing as in the balance. Phrases and transitional figures sound mushy and feeble. They tend to get lost in the mix, but it's the mix that seems to be the culprit here, not Hampton. Just listen to a couple of the Verves by comparison and hear how he pops out on them.

There are no speed-demon tempos here. But then that's always been more Terry Gibbs' forte than Hampton's anyway. It's not missed. What counts is that the energy is concentrated into the music and nothing else. "Honeysuckle Rose" generates vintage Hampton power. And "Limehouse Blues" is kicked along on a bumpy, funky rhythm, but Hamp solos merrily through in mighty form as if it were the old Benny Goodman Quartet. (reviewed on CD)

—john mcdonough



JEAN-LUC PONTY

STORYTELLING—Columbia 45252: *IN THE FAST LANE*; *TENDER MEMORIES*; *SPRING EPISODE*; *PASTORAL HARMONY*; *THE STORY TELLER*; *THE AMAZON FOREST*; *AFTER THE STORM*; *A JOURNEY'S END*; *CHOPIN PRELUDE No. 20*.

Personnel: Ponty, violins, Synclavier, keyboards (cuts 1, 3); Jamie Glaser, guitars; Baron Browne, bass; Wally Minko (2, 4-8), Patrice Rushen (2, 7), keyboards; Grover Washington, Jr., soprano sax (2); Carla Ponty, piano (9); Kurt Wortman, percussion (6).

★ ★ ★ ½

MARK O'CONNOR

ON THE MARK—Warner Bros. 9 25970-1: *HOT TOMALE*; *GET SET, GO*; *PACIFIC EXPECTATIONS*; *MARCH OF THE PHAROAHs*; *WHEN WE TALK*; *BOWTIE*; *WE'RE SURROUNDED*; *MINIATURES*; *CHANGING OF THE GUARD*; *INTRO: OL' BLUE; OL' BLUE*.

Personnel: O'Connor, violin, acoustic and electric guitars, viola (8); Eddie Boyers, drums; Tom Roady, percussion; Michael Rhodes, electric bass; John Jarvis, Matt Rollings, Mike Lawler, piano and synthesizers; Michael Brecker, tenor saxophone (2, 7); Kathy Chiavola, vocals (7); Edgar Meyer, double bass (10); Jerry Douglas, dobro (10); James Taylor, guitar and vocal (10).

★ ★ ★ ★

The hint on Ponty's opening number that this may be a machine-y, mostly programmed record is happily not born-out. This is a *played* record, and Jean-Luc is once again telling stories in his music. Cuts here are reminiscent of his best work on *Aurora* and *Enigmatic Ocean*. Not that the aim is to always move 10 years back, but those were cooking bands, and J-LP's ideas flowed fresh and free.

"In The Fast Lane" is some of the funkier Ponty ever. But that violin sounds real synthetic. It's not *what* he's playing, but the sound that could be a bit more real. On "Tender Mercies" he follows the soulful Grover Washington solo and takes a great romp before Wally Minko's fine-fingered offering in 5/4. "Spring Episode" is a well-played and not overblown ballad, but "After The Storm" is kind of lame despite the presence of Patrice Rushen. Given her fusion roots with Jean-Luc, this was a fine opportunity for her to shine, but she's largely wasted here. Was the leader reluctant to share the spotlight with Rushen, or did he just bring her in for window dressing?

Jamie Glaser broke in with Lenny White, and Baron Browne with Cobham, so you know they've got a sense of where the beat is. Drummer Rayford Griffin proves himself as a strong but equally mindful fusion player, belting out the tried-and-true bash barrages but switching things up effectively too. While playing along with sequenced percussion parts on several cuts, he doesn't let it hold him back. Indeed, he plays along with it, and involves those parts to his advantage.

"A Journey's End" gives everyone a final chance to stretch out before the Ponty Family Chamber Group finishes up with a jam on some Chopin.

Mark O'Connor's musical background is certainly impressive, and his technical ability has been proven time and time again. He was National Junior Fiddle Champion several times, an integral part of David Grisman's "dawg" music, and solo foil for Steve Morse for a couple years in The Dregs. And at the age most musicians are struggling to win a chair in the college stage band, he was performing at the White House.

It is the suppression of that technical prowess that separates *On The Mark* from some other O'Connor releases. Working here with a talented if not super-showy Nashville rhythm section, he lets his melodies carry most of the limelight.

"Hot Tomale" is an interesting blend of bluegrass melody and Latin rhythm, while the follow up, "Get Set, Go," is a down-home blues-rocker that allows Michael Brecker to blow some of his New York crunch.

O'Connor doesn't use a lot of effects to change the sound on his fiddle—he likes acoustics. And his soloing has developed beyond the search for fastest, most impressive riffs. On "March Of The Pharoahs" he stays close to the head quite a bit of the time, making other melodies out of that, maintaining a reference point. He's completely under control here. His held notes on the ballad "When We Talk" are exquisitely played, and his wild solo with Brecker on "We're Surrounded" delivers some effective mayhem. For O'Connor, the growth of his songwriting ability has resulted in his most accessible record, and possibly his best. (reviewed on LP)

—robin tollerson



JOHN ZORN

SPY VS. SPY—Elektra/Musician 9 60844-2: WRU; CHRONOLOGY; WORD FOR BIRD; GOOD OLD

DAYS; THE DISGUISE; ENFANT; REJOICING; BLUES CONNOTATION; C&D; CHIPPY; PEACE WARRIORS; ECARS; FEET MUSIC; BROADWAY BLUES; SPACE CHURCH; ZIG ZAG; MOB JOB. (41:03 minutes)

Personnel: Zorn, alto saxophone; Tim Berne, alto saxophone; Mark Dresser, bass; Joey Baron, drums; Michael Vatcher, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

This drastically reworked collection of Ornette Coleman pieces comes with liner notes that read simply, "F**king hardcore rules. Smash racism." But as with so much of Zorn's work, there's a world of meaning to be unpacked from that terseness, and the gloss illuminates the fierce, gnarled, and—especially for jazz fans—forbidding blasts of this album.

Second sentence first. It's no news that racism has made it extremely difficult for Ornette, as for most other jazzers, to perform, to get his music properly recorded, and to be paid something more than slave wages; it's also meant that, even now, he's treated as a kind of second-class musical citizen, a horn player who writes weird idiosyncratic stuff rather than a serious composer who has a stature earned over 30-odd years. So as he did with spaghetti-Western composer Ennio Morricone on *The Big Gundown*, Zorn is now doing with Ornette; affirming that his music is serious enough to stand the test of jarringly diverse interpretations, even—maybe especially—when the interpretive approach is so completely a reimagining that it's more like a deliberately dislocating aural assault.

Back to sentence one. Recently, the 36-year-old Zorn has become more and more fascinated with hardcore, that thrashing offshoot of punk-rock that speeds tempos up to a dizzy, breathtaking whir while unleashing barrages of noise and fusillades of notes. With vocals yowling over the blitzkrieg, it can be the musical equivalent of a chainsaw massacre.

Zorn has begun harnessing hardcore's volatile, rebellious attitude and thrusting insistence to various projects, including his band Naked City. But in the context of *Spy Vs. Spy*, hardcore also serves to link Ornette once again with the diverse downtown New York scene both his music *per se* and his relentless spirit of pioneering helped create and continue to energize. In a sense, then, Zorn uses hardcore to extend Ornette's musical genealogy into the present in an unpredicted direction at the same time he's retrospectively ratifying Ornette as a source. For it's a fact that Ornette's own earlier editions of Prime Time could probably grab the hardcore crowd's attention; after all, they once grabbed the punkers'.

Then too, to take it from another angle, abrasive jump-cuts and off-the-wall juxtapositions just happen to be Zorn's musical lifeblood. Who else would try to conjure up such an apparent incongruity as a thrash-jazz dream of an Ornette ballad? If the sheer exuberant energy is its own kind of reward, its simple ferocity also reforges Ornette's melodies after the molten meltdown of initial statement via explosive ensemble work. Zorn and Berne jostle, probe, irk, and goad each other into viciously spiraling lines that sail aloft like frisbees ringed with razor blades; meanwhile, the rhythm section slams like a set of piledrivers while somehow managing nuance.

There are occasional breathers for non-hardcore fans, where Zorn allows an airier feel. But most of *Spy Vs. Spy* hurtles along full-throttle, right in your face. And for that, no doubt, Zorn will pay, once the jazz critics have their say. It's likely, I think, that at least a few will appoint themselves to speak on behalf of Ornette and his tunes, whose forms and meanings Zorn has so willfully, disrespectfully violated.

But I wonder if such perspectives don't ironically echo those from which yesteryear's critics took potshots at Ornette as he struggled to establish himself, to push his limits, to expand music's syntax. I wonder, too, if Zorn's shake-'em-'til-their-teeth-rattle reinterpretations aren't—like his Morricone, his Sonny Clark, his *News For Lulu*—a necessary antidote, an irreverent way of dealing with history

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that balances the nostalgia-haunted certainties of the Marsalis clan. If it did nothing but restore uncertainty—the necessary precondition for the sense of adventure that fuels discovery—to our idea of jazz and its traditions, *Spy Vs. Spy* would have been a worthwhile project. And it does enough more to repay going back to test it—and your own perceptions—again. (reviewed on CD) —*gene santoro*



STU HAMM

KINGS OF SLEEP—Relativity 88561-1013-2: *BLACK ICE; SURELY THE BEST; CALL OF THE WILD; TERMINAL BEACH; COUNT ZERO; I WANT TO KNOW; PRELUDE IN C; KINGS OF SLEEP.* (39:05 minutes)

Personnel: Hamm, basses; Jonathan Mover, drums; Scott Collard, keyboards; Amy Knoles, percussion; Harry Cody (cuts 2,3,5,8), Buzzy Feiten (1,6), guitar.

★ ★ ★

ROBBIE KRIEGER

NO HABLA—IRS 82004: *WILD CHILD; EAGLES SONG; IT'S GONNA WORK OUT FINE; LONELY TEARDROPS; LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT; THE BIG HURT; DOLORES; PIGGY'S SONG; I WANT YOU, I NEED YOU, I LOVE YOU; YOU'RE LOST LITTLE GIRL.*

Personnel: Krieger, guitar; John Hernandez (1,3,4,8), Scott Gordon (2,5), Bruce Gary (6,9), Gary Malabar (7), drums; Brian Auger, organ, bass (6); John Avila (2-6,8), R.K. (1), Jack Conrad (7), bass; Skip Vanwinkle (3), David Woodford (8), keyboards; Arthur Barrow, bass and keyboards (9).

★ ★ ★

Hamm's fresh bass face has been wowing crowds across the United States in guitar whiz Joe Satriani's band—when you're stealing the show from that guy you must be good. Unfortunately the live enthusiasm he bathes his audiences with doesn't translate to disc as well as hoped. The chops make it through, but the emotion has a harder time. Hamm is so quick-witted in concert, and it sounds like he's "playing it straight" a little too much here. Maybe what we need is a live album from Stu. He sounds great on Satriani's live EP side (*Dreaming #11*).

Hamm's bass solos during "Surely The Best" capture some of his warmth. He's got good taste, lifting from some of the best fusion artists. Bits of Dixie Dregs. Power-fusion à la Jeff Beck on "Black Ice." Some halting sequenced parts on "Surely The Best" bring Group 87 to mind. The muffled rhythmic chant of "Terminal Beach" sounds like a King Crimson outtake. "I Want To Know" may be Hamm's tip of the hat

to Stanley Clarke's gold tones. And much of *Kings Of Sleep* sounds like a Joe Satriani album. Joe didn't show up, but the talented fill-ins apparently use the Satriani switch on their amps. After awhile the rocking-out seems like much ado about nothing.

There's nothing Stu Hamm can't do on an electric bass, and chances are he'll learn to transfer that entertaining skill onto disc more completely than he did here. The best moments on *Kings Of Sleep* are exciting ensemble passages during "Call Of The Wild" where he utilizes his musicians best and his love for spontaneity shows through. The least in-

triguing are the heavy-metal power-fusion displays.

Former Doors guitarist Krieger has his instrumental rock band dig in on this set, beginning with the down-home, blues-rock groove of "Wild Child." "It's Gonna Work Out Fine" also has a folksy feel, with a wild, slide-guitar line. Sometimes they sound like a glorified, rockified country & western band. One thing is constant all the way through the record—they go for melody and ensemble instrumental lines rather than sheer numbers of notes during solos or mass confusion during group passages. They play well, but they play together

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and are good listeners.

Krieger's calm and cool professionalism was always an interesting contrast to the on-the-edginess of singer Jim Morrison. The guitarist never felt the need to try and shout over The Doors and he plays with a quiet confidence here that commands respect within the mixed soundscape. Robbie Krieger is a fine player who feels no need to prove himself. Even when he's wailing, his music is calm because of that—nothing outrageous. Stu Hamm, on the other hand, is right up there in the *Guitar Player* bass polls, feeling his first taste of fame if not fortune, and his album at times sounds more like an exercise than a sound statement. (reviewed on CD and LP, respectively)

—robin tolleson

Is A Rare Thing" here unfolds gradually into a round—a bit like watching DNA untangle) to their own varied vehicles. Here working entirely with split-tones and overtones and all kinds of tonguing effects, there collapsing and inverting expected harmonic movement, everywhere the trio bends their impressive arsenal of axes to deliberately offbeat, expansive sonic concepts that are provocative and appealing. New Winds lives up to its name, and brings some welcome blasts of fresh air into what can be a stifling, self-referential musical realm. (reviewed on CD)

—gene santoro

BOOTIN' JAZZ

by Art Lange



NEW WINDS

THE CLIFF—Sound Aspects 025-1: *THE CLIFF*; *BEAUTY IS A RARE THING*; *SEEING THE DOUBLE*; *CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVES*; *BUSINESS*; *CHROMA*; *MOOD INDIGO*; *SUBJUMP*. (50:04 minutes)

Personnel: Ned Rothenberg, alto saxophone, bass clarinet, flute, ocarina; J. D. Parran, A clarinet, E^b soprano clarinet, E^b alto clarinet, E^b contra-alto clarinet, soprano saxophone, flute, bamboo flute; Robert Dick, flute, bass flute, A^b piccolo, C piccolo.

★ ★ ★ ★

When I saw these guys at the World Music Institute's Improvisations series under the JVC Festival umbrella in 1986, they blew me away. So when they announced during the performance that they would soon be releasing an album of this stuff, to be titled *The Cliff*, I was eager to hear how their combination of spiraling multi-instrumental textures, bristling multiphonics, and tight-plotted arrangements would translate to disc.

It's been a long, long wait—which, not coincidentally, illustrates the sorry treatment of non-mainstream music in these days of ever-growing entertainment conglomerates and high-profit, high-ticket compact disc reissues. But in this case, at least, the wait was well worth it.

Drawing on antecedents from John Cage to The World Saxophone Quartet, New Winds brings a usefully broad set of perspectives to its diverse chamber-jazz outings. Useful, because they can range with sensitivity, taste, and confidence from the now-*de rigeur* Ellington (whose "Mood Indigo" becomes a breathy, glowing piece that partly, astonishingly, echoes how its early Ducal incarnation sounds on an old disc) to Ornette (whose haunting "Beauty

When Kevin Whitehead bravely surveyed a carload of Italian jazz albums in *db*, February '88, no one suspected it would turn out to be a yearly exercise. Chalk one up to perseverance and being prolific.

Thanks to the perpetual vigilance and unceasing efforts of local labels Red, Soul Note, and (in this case) Splasc(h) Records—and *Cadence* (Cadence Building, Redwood NY 13679), who sells these and hundreds of similar discs by mail—the contemporary Italian jazz scene is documented with a thoroughness that Americans might envy.

Over the past few weeks I listened to some 35 albums, chose 20 as especially notable or worthy of notice this side of the Atlantic. Though most Italian musicians do draw on established American models for stylistic boundaries and personality traits, one can't complain about their talents; all are competent, many merit attention, more than a few are able to inject fresh blood and a unique viewpoint into the music. (A quick word about Splasc(h) Records, who issued 19 of the 20 discs herein. Naturally aimed at a local audience, whatever liner notes there are are usually in Italian. But the music is uniformly well-recorded, and the covers—primarily splashes of color in abstract contour, many by producer Peppo Spagnoli—are among the most visually exciting of any jazz label. This is obviously a quality concern.)

As critic Whitehead astutely suggested, though fluent in the bop-to-free vocabulary, those Italian instrumentalists who stand out from the crowd do so through the innate emotionalism of their playing. Lyricism—put to use in the jazz equivalent of an operatic aria—usually takes precedence over rhythmic concerns. Best is when the two can come together, as in reedman **Gianluigi Trovesi**. On *Les Boites A Musique* (Splasc(h) 152)—rather like Wayne Shorter in *Weather Report*—he reins in his often expressionistic phrasing to enhance the ensemble nature of the lone poems offered by computer-synthesist Luciano Mirto's remarkably rich palette of electronic textures and timbres (assisted by Tiziano Tononi's colorful percussives). The music is variously reminiscent of slasher soundtracks, neo-

Baroque three-part inventions, outer space ethereals, and hi-tech gamelans, while avoiding fusion clichés. As a front-line partner of trumpeter Paolo Fresu on bassist **Paolo Damiani's** *Poor Memory* (Splasc(h) 07), Trovesi resembles a sun-drenched Mediterranean version of Ornette, with an undercurrent of romance and melancholy. This time out it's the soloists who sustain interest over the long vamps and unassuming chord changes.

Paolo Fresu's own date, *Ovarto* (Splasc(h) 160) is even more casual; a "hip" neo-bop attitude underscores the trumpeter's Art Farmer-like flexibility, despite his occasional dabbling in electronic effects. Mid-tempo, melodic unison heads (in tandem with tenorman Tino Tracanna—capable, but less adventurous than Trovesi) predominate... are Italian instrumentalists in general not as aggressive as Americans? The rhythmic fires are a shade hotter on percussionist **Mimmo Cafiero's** *I Go* (Splasc(h) 157), with lots of activity behind the excitable if not always memorable saxist Maurizio Caldura and, again, trumpeter Fresu's comfortable voice. The writing for sextet essays a romantic ballad, some toe-in-the-water freedom, and reaches its zenith on the ambitious, episodic, sidelong "Black Pipes."

As long as I mentioned Art Farmer above, I might as well compare the music on *Xoanon* (Splasc(h) 145) to Benny Golson's *Leader*/trumpeter **Guido Guidoboni** fronts a quintet playing stylish, classy mainstream with the added kick of two brass (trumpet and trombone), no sax. The solos are tight, concise, and close-to-the-vest; these guys are so self-assured they fail to work up much of a sweat. There's much energy and daring apparent on **Giannantonio De Vincenzo's** *Soft Landing* (Splasc(h) 137), especially via the attractive dual reeds of the leader and baritonist Bruno Marini (who uses all of his beefy horn); though fear not of frenzy. Perky front-line harmonies, an almost-in-unison anthem ("Honky"), elastic tempos to accommodate soloists' whims, and tonal exoticisms (a bass/bass clarinet riff inspires one tune) balance the lack of active backgrounds or patches of dull vamping.

Attrezzo (Splasc(h) 140) goes one step further out. Leader **Diego Carrarosi's** soprano sax is an echo of Steve Lacy's early, less elliptical arabesques, and his tunes, often multi-themed, utilize repetition and stepwise progressions à la the latter. In conjunction with vibist Alessandro Di Puccio (plus Franco Nesti's bass and drummer Alessandro Fabbri), the sounds have an attractive airiness and light swing—like an old Blue Note album Bobby Hutcherson and Lacy never made. Another soprano-led quartet, **Gianni Gebbia's**, adopts a more serious, hard-blowing demeanor on *Arabesques* (Splasc(h) 147). The mostly modal tunes reveal a trace of Moorish influence (in Gebbia's reedy, melismatic phrasing) alongside the heavily folkloric impetus (Sicilian-flavored melodies erupt, and there's even a tarantella). Some "ambient" tapes heighten the effect; while a pair of Pinos (guest trumpeter Minafra and guitarist Greco) provide the "jazz."

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quartet is even more indebted to local folklore: on *Oltremare* (Splasc(h) 153) they kick off with close-harmonized Sardinian singing, later replaced by Piero Pozzo's and the leader's tart reeds. Their excursions into regional roots music eventually border on parody (too much coy playfulness, too many animal noises—is this the Italian version of the ODJB?), and their alternately lilting or pastoral themes, while pleasant enough, seldom develop or sustain passionate soloing. Nevertheless, this foursome force their personality into the music—it's a unique blend, true—and the spunky dance rhythms, background vamps, bass ostinatos, and drum commentary succeed at least half the time. Sardinian keyboardist **Antonello Salis'** solo outing, *Salis!* (Splasc(h) 136), sports a similar success rate. Though his thorough technique allows him to dovetail lyrical, introspective lines with harsher moments in the sidelong rhapsodic "Chincaglierie Suite," the vast stylistic range strikes some ironic contrasts elsewhere (especially the typically fruity synth effects). The more aggressive he is, avoiding Jarrett/Evans sentimentality, the better. Salis' presence spices up *Plaything For Soul* (Splasc(h) 149), though the core trio of **Mauro Orselli** (drums), **Antonio Apuzzo** (tenor sax), and **Sandro Lalla** (bass) seem to have emerged from an overly predictable '60s time warp.

These LPs feature lots of strong bass-and-drum teams, and that of **Giuseppe Costa** and **Pippo Cataldo** step out front to lead a brash septet on *Picture Number One* (Splasc(h) 141). The compositions, by the leaders and thoughtful pianist Salvatore Bonafede, are aggressive, with agile twists and turns and explosions of polyphony. Though none of the soloists are outstanding, the ensembles are played with plenty of enthusiasm and carry the day. Ditto **Stefano Maltese's Open Music Orchestra**, who lend a loose-limbed, circus atmosphere to the spontaneous-sounding arrangements. Like Breuker's *Kollektief* at its freest or Sun Ra at his most restrained, the soloists leap out of the orchestrated flux in melodramatic poses. There are plenty of fascinating colors and details, bittersweet dissonant voicings, and a moody undercurrent of Sicilian melancholy. Part-time vocalist Gioconda Cilio is an acquired taste, with a surrealistic French interlude on "Dans Les Cielis" and a torchy Billie Holiday mimicry elsewhere. (If you're a vocal freak, you might check out Cilio's own, odd LP, *Deep Inside* (Splasc(h) 138), which boasts Antonello Salis on keyboards (accordion too!) and some nicely squirrely Maltese sax solos.)

I had a tough time getting a handle on **Jazztrio's** *From Time To Time* (Splasc(h) 148), primarily due to tenorman Matthias Schubert's elusive, slippery vibrato and tonality. His illogical sound and phrasing lends a satiric tinge to the mournful-then-litigious "Lush Life," and curious covers of David Murray's "Interboogieology," Bill Evans' "Twelve-Tone Tune," and Mal Waldron's "Duquility" never coalesce (I've no gripe with bassist Nicola Vernuccio or drummer Stefano Bambini). Most revealing is "For Ayley," where

Schubert pulls out all the stops, but comes off as caricature. Similarly, the pastiche of Morricone-ish orchestral episodes and the intentionally disruptive forays of **Pino Minafra** with guests Misha Mengelberg (piano), Michele Lomuto (trombone), and Han Bennink (percussives), seems perpetually out-of-synch on *Tropic Of The Mounted Sea Chicken* (Splasc(h) 05). Minafra spits venom in his exorcistic trumpet distortions, the others rattle, boom, atonalize, or bluster to little avail. Contrast this with the confident intensity of **Mario Schiano** (alto), **Gaetano Liguori** (piano), **Guido Mazzon** (trumpet), and **Lino Liguori** (drums) on *Effetti Larsen* (Splasc(h) 09)—a single, spontaneously conceived, flowing sojourn through hills and valleys of free improvisation. These wily vets place tongue-in-cheek parody alongside tongue-in-groove interactive blowing to good advantage.

Claudio Fasoli has a reputation as a top-flight reedman in a variety of settings, and his solo recital, *Egotrip* (Splasc(h) 161), is a deft display of moods and techniques. By overdubbing and adding judicious electronic effects, Fasoli surveys songs to fantasies to motion/timbre studies—always with a dramatic cry at the heart of his tone. Though there were times when I'd wished he'd thrown all caution to the winds, or, conversely, tendered more straightforward, haunting melodies as on "Imago," there are moments that hang in the ear a long time—for example, a single Messiaenic piano chord chiming obsessively while soprano sax lines flutter above. Another formidable saxist of growing renown, **Roberto Ottaviano**, fronts a wind/brass sextet confronting eight Mingus compositions on *Six Mobiles/Portrait In Six Colors* (Splasc(h) 169). Surprisingly, the chamber music intelligence at play here neglects none of the music's passion, irony, or, at times, cruelty; still, as might be expected without bass and drums, Mingus' ferocious rhythmic impetus is sometimes suppressed. The arrangements can be crisp and concise or circuitous, and the soloists—especially Ottaviano and electrifying oboist Mario Arcari—equal to the task. Familiar material seen from a fascinating, unfamiliar point of view.

Ottaviano and pianist Stefano Battaglia are the standouts on singer **Tiziana Ghiglioni's** *Yet Time* (Splasc(h) 150), where they receive the lion's share of solo space. Ghiglioni shows her mettle via narrative singing (in English), vocalese, or scat, and there's a pleasant blend of originals and covers ("September Song," Milton Nascimento, and Ornette). And at least (but far from least), Ottaviano and Fasoli grace **Giorgio Gaslini's** *Multipli* (Soul Note 121 220-1). The leader is probably Italy's leading jazz export; his shrewd composing and quirky, elliptical piano are always distinctive, slicing off into unexpected directions or exploring enticing harmonies, densities, and textures, while supplying lively, sometimes cerebral, melodic shapes and designs. The interaction of Gaslini's unfettered, handpicked cohorts is a joy throughout. Missing out on this music—and the best of Italian jazz—would be like snubbing lasagna or pasta e'fagioli. Pity. db



THE ZAWINUL SYNDICATE

BLACK WATER—Columbia 44316: CARNAVA-

LITO; BLACK WATER; FAMILIAL; MEDICINE MAN; IN THE SAME BOAT; MONK'S MOOD; LITTLE ROOTIE TOOTIE; THEY HAD A DREAM; AND SO IT GOES.

Personnel: Josef Zawinul, keyboards, accordion (cut 4); Scott Henderson, electric and slide guitars; Gerald Veasley, bass, narrations (2,3,6); Cornell Rochester, drums; Munyungo Jackson, percussion; Anthony Zawinul, keyboards (9); Lynne Fiddmont-Linsey, vocals, percussion; Carl Anderson, Kevin Dorsey, Fred White, Dorian Holly, vocals.

★ ★ 1/2

In two of the last three db Critics Polls, Sun Ra has dislodged perennial favorite Josef Zawinul from his synthesizer-category throne. But even as his critical stock dips, the former Weather

hat hat hat hat hat

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<p>MARIANNE SCHROEDER, GIACINTO SCIELI hat ART CD 4006</p>	<p>HABARIGANI with Roland Dabizade, Thomas Eckert, Hans Haider & Hans Kerschel Recorded February & December 1987 in Zurich/Switzerland hat ART CD 4007</p>	<p>GEORGIA GAUNTZ, HAPPENING NOW Recorded live October 18-17, 1987 in Fort Worth, Texas at Carver's Dreams hat ART CD 4008</p>	<p>PAULIE OLIVERSON, THE ROOTS OF THE MOMENT An audio tape in just intonation in an interactive electronic environment created by Peter W. Aik. Recorded Nov. 10, 1987 hat ART CD 4009</p>	<p>FRITZ HAUSER, ZWIJ with Charles Davis, Stephen Graham, Rich Klare, Rolf Kudo, Lorenz Newton & Pauline Oliveros. Recorded December 7-12, 1987 in Zurich/Switzerland hat ART CD 4010</p>
<p>ARNOLD DREYBLATT, ORCHESTRA OF EXCITED STRINGS with Philip Miller in love Recorded January 1986 in Munich & January 1988 in Endhoven hat ART CD 4011</p>	<p>CECIL TAYLOR, IT IS IN THE BREWING LUMINOUS with Jimmy Lyons, Alan Silva, Ramsey Jones, Jerome Cooper and Steve Murray Recorded live February 6-8, 1980 N.Y.C. hat ART CD 4012</p>	<p>URS LEIMGRUBER, STATEMENT OF AN ANTIRIDER Solo (drum, organ, & saxophone, flute) recorded live March 2 & 8, 1988 at Radio DRS, Zurich/Switzerland hat ART CD 4013</p>	<p>STEVE LACY FOUR, MORNING JOY with Steve Potts, Joan Japano, Assad & Oliver Johnson. Recorded live at Sunset/Paris on February 18, 1986 hat ART CD 4014</p>	<p>SATO MICHIEHO, RODAN Solo. Japanese shakuhachi player modeling the LORDS of N.Y.C. Recording produced by John Zorn. April 11-16, 1988 N.Y.C. hat ART CD 4015</p>
<p>BOBBY BRADFORD, JOHN CARTER QUINTET COMEDY ON, with Don Preston, Richard Davis & Andrew Cyrille. Recorded live May 29, 1988 at Catalina Hollywood hat ART CD 4016</p>	<p>FRITZ HAUSER, DIE TRAMMEL DIE WILLE An audiotape work and a soundtrack for symbolic, textural & impact (six players). Recorded November 1987 & 1988 at Radio DRS Zurich/Switzerland hat ART CD 4017</p>	<p>FRANZ KOGLMANN, HETS DER GEMERBE TRIP, QUINITY, and PUPPET with guest Ray Black. Recorded November 11-18, 1988 in Vienna hat ART CD 4018</p>	<p>ANTHONY BRAXTON, COMPOSITION 99, 100, 101 & 110 with Massimo Sestini and Lorenz Lee Recorded April 1983 and November 1988 hat ART CD 4019</p>	<p>DAVID MURRAY, 10 FAMILY with Johnny MacFadden & Andrew Cyrille. Recorded live September 8, 1978 at Jantzenville/W. France/Switzerland hat ART CD 4020</p>
<p>MIKE WESTBROOK ORCHESTRA, IN THE HEART OF BIRTHDAY Recorded live May 12, 1984 (revised) 1987 hat ART CD 4021</p>	<p>MICHEL PRINTELLI, LEON FRANK JOHANNES FARRI ORCHESTRA Recorded live October 3, 1980, 1 musician hat ART CD 4022</p>	<p>FRITZ HAUSER, SOLODRUMMING Recorded at Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, April 8-7, 1985 hat ART CD 4023</p>	<p>VIENNA ART ORCHESTRA, THE NUMERISM OF TRIANGLE Recorded September 83 & March 84 in Vienna hat ART CD 4024</p>	<p>HAT ART RECORDS LTD, BOX 161, 106 THERWIL SWITZERLAND The production has been made possible by a generous financial assistance of Swiss Bank Corporation, Zurich/Switzerland.</p>

hat ART: A WORK IN PROGRESS

Report co-anchor man keeps a solid lock on the Readers Poll and remains a premier purveyor of electronic keyboard sounds. At present, he heads up The Zawinul Syndicate, an eve-of-the-21st century, jazz-rock fusion collective whose members include world-class rhythm players Gerald Veasley and Cornell Rochester.

Put forth as a world music storybook and, in part, an homage to Thelonious Monk, *Black Water* is diverting and trifling rather than compelling and valuable, along the lines of the Syndicate's shallow debut *The Immigrants*

from 1988. On the one hand, Zawinul's pet Pepe keyboard and other synthesizers are remarkable for blurring distinctions between acoustic and electric-powered sounds; his command of equipment results in music rich with the delights of imagination and cleverness. But all the splendidly layered keyboard textures, the rhythmic sweeps of shaded tonal colors, and the impressive Pepe solos subsist as so much diffuse, masterful tableaux since storyline melodies are lacking. Devising tunes out of choice programmed sounds, Zawinul just doesn't pass muster as a satisfying melo-

dist or tale spinner.

Zawinul makes the condition of the world his business, yet he fails to offer music that convincingly reflects his humanism or his social consciousness. The title piece lambasts apartheid in peculiar fashion: the puerilely menacing, freedom-via-bullets verse (penned by Veasley), is sung with dashing spirit by several male and female voices amid the good cheer of Zawinul's top-dollar machines, Scott Henderson's clichéd guitar, and other instruments. (For an idea of its oddness, imagine the buoyant Dave Grusin scoring *films noirs*.)

On "Familial," whatever eloquence the anti-war poetry of Jacques Prevert might have gets blotted out by both the electronic mutations of the spoken words and the music's misterioso, high-tech veneer. "In The Same Boat"—which the press kit claims "reinforces the truism that all of us on Earth share a common destiny"—drifts aimlessly, platitude nebulous, with Zawinul and friends capering on top of pulsating, contrived Third World rhythms. A most superficial, musical meeting of cultures. "They Had A Dream" comes as a well-intentioned but banal and indistinct tribute to Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Mohandas Gandhi.

If one can get through the daft, spoken conceit by Veasley that mars "Monk's Mood," the modern-age arrangement of Thelonious' "Little Rootie Tootie" provides kinetic fun—note Zawinul's tantalizing rediscovery of acoustic piano and his Pepe's artful, amazing likeness to the tenor saxophone. A couple more pseudo-tunes of a vague travelog sort also appear, including his son Anthony's showcase bagatelle, "And So It Goes," whose title sums up the progression of this interestingly mediocre program. (reviewed on LP)

—frank-john hadley

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JOHN COLTRANE

COLTRANE PLAYS THE BLUES—Atlantic Jazz 1382-2: *BLUES TO ELVIN; BLUES TO BECHET; BLUES TO YOU; MR. DAY; MR. SYMS; MR. KNIGHT; UNTITLED ORIGINAL.* (46:16 minutes)

Personnel: Coltrane, soprano and tenor saxophones; McCoy Tyner, piano; Steve Davis, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.

★★★★

At the time the original liner notes to this album were written, the debate was still raging over John Coltrane's "status as an experimenter and leader of the jazz avant garde." Interestingly, the writer then goes on to link Coltrane's drive as an improviser with the blues, particularly those blues he would play on tenor during the last sets of his club dates, "generally

start[ing] at around two in the morning."

By way of contrast, *Coltrane Plays The Blues* seems to catch Coltrane in a relative period of reexamination—almost as if he were doing a tribute to his roots before returning (in the spirit of *Giant Steps*, from '59)—and moving on—to the more compositionally- and structurally-oriented material that was to follow. It was recorded in the fall of 1960 (released in the fall of '62), the same year he recorded *The Avant-Garde* with Don Cherry and in the midst of Ornette Coleman's initial major-label flurry. Atlantic and Nesuhi Ertegun had them all (but was soon to lose Coltrane to Impulse), playing an important—and timely—role in jazz's uneasy acceptance of this "new music."

Perhaps there's a metaphor in the way the four instruments sound on this CD reissue—saxophones are clear and metallic, the drums have a distinct bite and crispness to them (given the period in which the album was recorded); the piano and bass suffer from either a sense of blurred distortion, as with Tyner's piano on "Blues To Elvin," or simply from a muffled tone that, in Davis' case, gives us the bare minimum of bass tones. Fortunately, it is Coltrane and Jones who provide the most interesting music. For example, while Tyner's dark, moody chords provide the ideal setting for "Blues To Elvin," it's Coltrane's measured spirals on tenor and Jones' punctuations that linger in the imagination. As with "Blues To Bechet," one of three tunes where Coltrane

plays soprano, the tempos are slow and easy; walking blues that lend the kind of space necessary to fully appreciate the kind of conversational, rhythmic scampering Jones was to perfect in the years to come with the legendary Coltrane quartet of the early to mid-'60s.

"Blues To You" is vaguely reminiscent of the later "Chasin' The Trane," what with its drive, trio form (*sans* Tyner), and blues progression. It doesn't explode like "Chasin'" would, but seen in relation, it may provide music students, among others, with an interesting case study. "Mr. Day" appears to be a corollary to "Mr. Knight," given its identical form, tempo, and slightly altered chord progression. The one bonus track, from the 1970 LP reissue, is not the same "Untitled Original" played on *The Other Village Vanguard Tapes* but sounds more like a reworking of "Giant Steps" changes mingling with Coltrane's arrangement of "Body And Soul." Not a blues tune, it's included because it was part of the same session.

Coltrane plays it pretty much close to the vest on these selections, suspending his then-legendary "sheets of sound" approach. Instead, what we hear is something more intimate, evenly-paced, laden with a convincing and satisfying blues feeling. Maybe the blues—to play them honestly—has its own requirements, its own agenda. Here, John Coltrane played the blues, and yet, it appears to have cut both ways. (reviewed on CD)

—john ephland

BIG BANG

by Kevin Whitehead

Doomsayers have been predicting the death of the big bands for 40 years—death due to changing fashion, economic pressures, the cooptation of dancers by rock & roll. . . . You know the list. Only thing is, the patients refuse to die. Some visionaries are busy rethinking the large ensemble; others go on as if the institution were in no danger at all. Like a universe born of a big bang, the big band keeps perpetuating itself.

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straightahead orchestras now active. *East Side Suite* (Musicmasters CD 60161, 53:14 minutes) was recorded at the same 12/87 sessions that spawned last year's fine *Hot* (Musicmasters 60160), and is similarly blessed with guest shots by Clark Terry on flugelhorn. Bellson and Terry played together almost 40 years ago with *the* master, and Don Menza's brass writing has an Ellingtonian tinge on "Blues For Uncommon Kids." "Kids" shows how a drummer can be all over the place, prodding players like crazy, somehow without sacrificing the band's relaxation—and shows how a band can sound relaxed without

sacrificing ensemble precision. Most bands would kill for section work this clean and balanced—a joy to hear. Menza, who arranged more than half the album, manages the trick of paying homage to the giants without losing himself: "My One And Only Love" (a feature for his own ballad tenor) is full of gauzy Gil Evans chords, but the overall effect isn't imitative. "Paddlin' Madeline," showcasing Menza and Terry, honors Ellington and Evans both without aping either. Don's skillful writing dwarfs the pedestrian title suite, written by Tommy Newsom from Bellson's sketches, but Terry and harmon-

muted trumpeter Brian O'Flaherty sound inspired just the same.

Buck Clayton, no longer playing trumpet, now leads and writes for his own swing band, heard live on *A Swingin' Dream* (Stash CD 16, 69:34). A few of the band's distinguished members are lead altoist Chuck Wilson, baritone saxist Joe Temperley, trombonist Dan Barrett, and drummer Mel Lewis. As you'd expect from a revered Basie vet, Buck puts easy swing first—the charts lilt and lift. (Bassist Eddie Jones put in a decade with Count; guitarist Chris Flory knows his Freddie Green.) There's something a little archaic about the band's no-frills 4/4, the reed section's rich vibrato, the by-the-book brass punches, the loose execution, and lack of pretension—and something deeply satisfying, too. Clayton's ear for old and unimproved swing is so true, he'd be nuts to mess with it: he knows how to amass a powerful sound without blowing out your tweeters. The many soloists aren't equally gifted, the recording isn't the greatest, and Clayton fans say the band often plays better—but it's a very pleasurable date nonetheless.

The Bay Area's **Full Faith & Credit Big Band**, on *FF&C III* (TBA CD 237, 50:26) likes to show its brass—10 in all. Lead trombonist Chris Brayman, who used to work and write for Maynard Ferguson, penned or arranged four of the nine pieces, so that brassiness should come as no surprise. You can hear it on Brayman's chart of J.J. Johnson's "Lament," where the arranger takes a lovely burnished solo, on his own "Irrelevant, Incompetent And Immaterial," and on Jeff Beal's "Free Association," which spotlights Beal's appealing flugel tone. Russ Ferrante's "Black Tie" wades into the generic funk cesspool for a sec, but fresh interpretations of "Perdido" (Brayman again) and "Out Of Nowhere" (with a taste of snaky Benny Carterish saxes) make up for that. Like Buck's band, they seem to play for the joy of it.

Two bands surveyed flirt with the funk, with disparate results. Tenorist/bass clarinetist **Bob Mintzer's** *Urban Contours* (DMP CD 467, 56:30) is slick, urban contemporary. "I Heard It Through The Grapevine" is so trendy it sounds like the *Saturday Night Live* band; at least the other cover, "With A Little Help From My Friends," is oddly low-key. To help evoke the New York experience, Mintzer's avowed intention, the bass drum on some tracks is mixed to sound just like your neighbors pounding on the wall, demanding you turn this music down. Thundering or mushy synths, handclap machines, nasal-bass stringpops, and a pinched-sounding tenor sax—you've heard them all often enough to know whether you like 'em or not. You've read enough reviews to know what critics think. The players include Marvin Stamm and Randy Brecker on trumpets and Peter Erskine on drums.

Norway's **Circolazione Totale Orchestra** works even more funk trappings into *Accent* (Odin CD 4025-2, 48:45): bumping electric bass, skittery rhythm guitar, the clipped drumming of dual percussionists Audun Kleive (from Terje Rypdal's band) and The Spontaneous Music Ensemble's John Stevens. Yet the result is infinitely more creative

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photo by Lisa Bogdan

and listenable, because CTO's composer/arranger/tenorist Frode Gjerstad takes chances. This lineup had never played together before—the 10 players come from varied jazz/rock/reggae/free music backgrounds—and all 10 tracks (including duo, trio, and quartet free improvisations) are first takes. The lines jostle each other and bubble to the surface. Morten Mølster's strangle-string guitar gets good and raunchy on "J7" and "O.C. On TV" (no points for guessing who that's about); Eivin One Pedersen's accordion adds a pleasantly incongruous note to some numbers, like the quasi-harmolodic hoedowns "BKB" and "Cherry's Cherry." (Didrik Ingvaldsen's trumpet makes the latter title's homage explicit.) Like harmolodic O.C. himself, Gjerstad knows jazz/funk needn't be a contra/diction.

Among reissues, **Gil Evans' Where Flamingos Fly** (A&M 0831, 46:27), released on Artists House in 1981, was recorded in '71. It catches Evans in transition, between his gorgeously understated late '50s/early '60s orchestrations, and the heavily electrified jamming bands to come. "Zee Zee," for



Gil Evans

ALLAN S. FLOOD

instance, proceeds slowly and quietly like the early classics, but rests on the shoulders of Don Preston's sloping synth riff; John Benson Brooks' title track (a feature for tenorist Billy Harper) is reprised from 1961's peerless *Out Of The Cool*. (By the way, has anyone pointed out its four-note ascending riff came from Prokofiev's *Romeo And Juliet*?). "Jelly Rolls" (aka "Hotel Me"), by Evans and Miles Davis, is fascinatingly minimal: mostly it's an endlessly repeated blues cadence Gil said

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he lifted from Otis Spann and Muddy Waters. After the Brazilian tune "Nana" was in the can, Evans met Flora Purim and Airtio, and decided to work them into the recording; his liner note account of the difficulties he had incorporating them gives a glimpse into the mind of a composer/arranger who never seemed finished with a piece. (Flora and Airtio also turn up on Kenny Dorham's "El Matador," in unconstricted 5/4.) Evans admirers less than enchanted by the hectic nature of his later bands should try this one.

English leader **Mike Westbrook's** *On Duke's Birthday* (hat ART CD 6021, 74:35) was recorded not on 29 April but 12 May 1984. Save for a bit of Bubbering by Phil Minton, an amazing singer given little to do here (he mostly plays trumpet), Westbrook honors Ellingtonian tenets only in a general way. He showcases a wide (you might say motley) array of soloists—among them electric violinist Dominique Pifarély, cellist Georgie Born, multi-reedist Chris Briscoe, and Kate Westbrook on bamboo flute—and exploits their varied skills and colors over a shifting sonic terrain. There are nice moments: the mournful chamber sonorities of "On Duke's Birthday 1," the savvy blend of brass, reed, and strings at the beginning of "... Birthday 2," and the accretive elaborations of the acute-angle riff that conclude it. But there's a paucity of memorable themes; "Music Is" s three-note vocal/instrumental hook is more chant than melody. Like Bill Shoemaker, who gave the original release three stars in these pages, I'm fond of other Westbrook efforts.

New from Austria and strongly recommended is flugelhornist **Franz Koglmann's** *Orte der Geometrie* (hat ART CD 6018, 64:19). Sonically, Franz steers a singular path between great '50s arrangers like Evans and Shorty Rogers—he remakes Johnny Carisi's cool staple "Israel" here—and Viennese tone-color melodists like Berg and Schoenberg (Art Lange expounds on all this in his typically erudite notes.) But Koglmann also understands, as Duke did, how dynamic and diverse soloists can create something greater than the sum of their parts. He's a cagey bandleader as well as supreme colorist, deftly integrating the composed and the improvised. His dozen-strong "Pipetet" (on seven of 12 tracks) includes the playfully precise Swiss drummer Fritz Hauser, the fine Italian soprano Roberto Ottaviano (in a lacy mood), his foil Mario Arcari on oboe—and, sometimes, the beguiling pianist Ran Blake, in a rare appearance as a hired gun. Like Blake, Koglmann plays/composes such heady complex stuff, and has such a knack for musical melancholy (here he orchestrates Ran's "Short Life Of Barbara Monk"), you might miss the whimsy that crops up in his work. It reveals itself in the way the Pipetet springs in and out of swing time. Franz's big-ensemble charts are so open and airy (without sounding thin), so full of internal contrasts, they don't clash with the pieces by mixed quintets, brass trio, and flugel/alto sax/bass trio. Koglmann brings his smart orchestral sensibility to any band—big or small. Which is why he's one of the most interesting composer/leaders working now—anywhere.

db

Waxing On

THE BLUES— YESTERDAY & TODAY

by Ben Sandmel

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *GREAT BLUESMEN AT NEWPORT* (Vanguard VCD 77178): ★★★★★

SCREAMIN' JAY HAWKINS: *REAL LIFE* (EPM Musique FDC 5509): ★★★★★

MEMPHIS SLIM: *DIALOG IN BOOGIE* (Zeta ZET 711): ★★

OTIS SPANN: *WALKING THE BLUES* (Candid CCD 79025): ★★★★★

SKIP JAMES: *TODAY* (Vanguard VMD 79219): ★★★★★

JAMES VAN BUREN: *I Ain't Doin' Too Bad* (JVB 5803): ★★

BESSIE SMITH: *THE COLLECTION* (Columbia CJ 44441): ★★½

REVEREND BILLY C. WIRTZ: *DEEP FRIED AND SANCTIFIED* (Hightone HT 8017): ★★

THE JEFF HEALEY BAND: *SEE THE LIGHT* (Arista AL-8553): ★★½

CLARENCE CARTER: *CLARENCE* (Ichiban ICH 1032): ★★½

BLUES BOY WILLIE: *STRANGE THINGS HAPPENING* (Ichiban ICH 1038): ★★½

JUMPIN' JOHNNY AND THE BLUES PARTY: *WHERE Y'AT?* (King Snake KS 012): ★★

BOB MARGOLIN: *THE OLD SCHOOL* (Powerhouse P105): ★★½

THE KINSEY REPORT: *MIDNIGHT DRIVE* (Alligator AL 4775): ★★★★★

THE BACKSLIDERS: *THE BLUES ARE BACK* (Corryon 0004): ★★½

As the blues enters its eighth decade of commercial documentation, many significant changes are occurring, yet certain crucial factors remain constant. Studio technology is vastly improved, and this applies to CD reissues of vintage material, as well as new releases. The blues' audience has also changed dramatically: there were relatively few white listeners back in the '20s, although blues has always had a great influence on many white music styles. Today, however, the white market is essential to the blues' continued commercial viability.

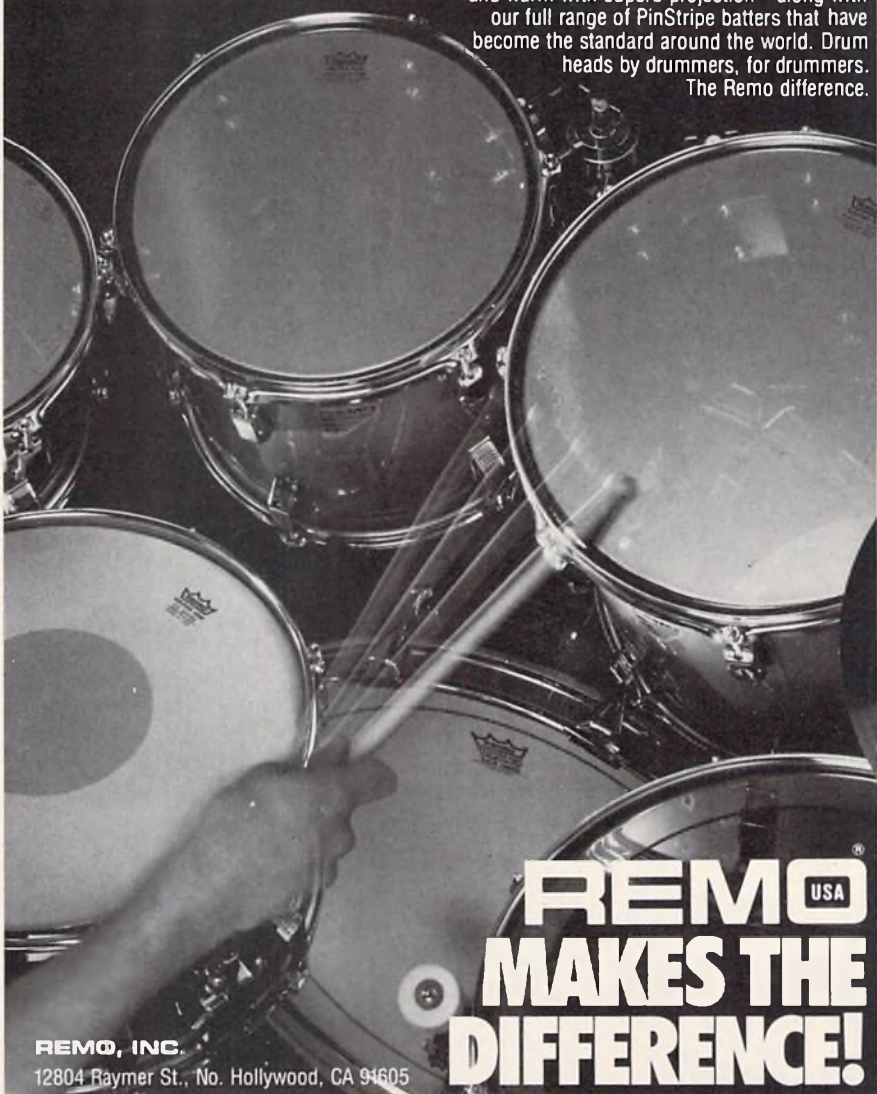
The music itself has also evolved, spawning new blues stars who perform badly-needed new material. There has been some increase in lyrics which comment on social and political issues. But blues, for the most part, still deals with personal situations and raw human emotions. Its song structures remain comparatively simple, if not redundant, depending on an energizing groove to bring the music alive.

Blues releases from all styles and eras continue to appear prolifically, and what follows here is a random selection.

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various live performances from 1959 to 1965. This was the era when the blues' recording pioneers emerged from years of obscurity to meet adoring young new audiences. In doing so they shaped much music that would follow, especially rock. There are hits and misses here; Texas guitarist Lightnin' Hopkins is in fine, improvised form, intuitively followed by Chicago drummer Sam Lay. John Lee Hooker gives a dramatically whispered account of the great flood in Tupelo, Mississippi, while a little-known performer named Doc Reese gives a rousing demonstration of work songs and field hollers. There is also some great work by Louisiana guitarist Robert Pete Williams, Piedmont stylists Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry, and slide guitar ace Mississippi Fred McDowell. Fellow slide-man Son House does not sound so inspired, and neither does Tennessee guitarist Sleepy John Estes, though Yank Rachell adds some brilliant mandolin to Estes' songs. On the whole, though, this rich set is highly recommended, and presents an excellent cross section of acoustic country blues guitar.

A 180-degree jump brings us to **Screamin' Jay Hawkins'** ultimately silly *Real Life*. Best known for his bizarre classic "I Put A Spell On You," Hawkins is a master of odd effects and ridiculous histrionics, enhanced by his rich, operatic bass voice. In an effort to follow up on his one hit, Hawkins has continually leaned heavily on voodoo and occult imagery, with such occasional forays into bathroom humor as "Constipation Blues." He is accompanied here by a French band that's heavy into "art-rock" synthesizers. The result, perhaps unintentionally, is a completely unique high-camp classic.

Pianist **Memphis Slim** is far more down-to-earth on the all-instrumental *Dialog In Boogie*. He is accompanied by his long-time Parisian drummer, Michel Denis. Both sound rather frantic here, but work well off each other. Denis loses the pocket occasionally, as on "E. C. C. Boogie," but keeps his grip on "3, 2, 1 Boogie," which also features some of Slim's best piano work, with creative quotes from songs such as "One O'Clock Jump" and "Frankie And Johnny." Ten cuts with no vocals does grow a bit repetitious, but high energy keeps this album going.

Otis Spann's *Walking The Blues* is more relaxed, and yet also leaves a more lasting impression. It features haunting vocals, brilliant piano work, and exquisite guitar accompaniment from Robert Junior Lockwood. Spann (who's best known for his work with Muddy Waters) played with a rural sensibility, recalling the levee-camp tradition of blues piano. He combined this approach with complexity and sophistication, especially in his chording, and lower-register solo intervals. The result was a stark, brooding sound that's complemented perfectly here by Lockwood, who takes some fine solos on songs like "It Must Have Been The Devil." For the most part though, Lockwood reveals himself as a consummate sideman and rhythm player. St. Louis Jimmy adds some guest vocals, but they pale in comparison to Spann's. *Walking The Blues* is something of a classic, and comes highly recommended.

The '20s/'30s genre known as "classic blues" is represented here by the great **Bessie Smith**. *The Collection* is somewhat uneven; on many cuts, Smith seems to be singing on

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Otis Spann

detached automatic pilot. Even so, her tone itself is magnificent, and there are fine solos from Louis Armstrong, on cornet, and pianist Fletcher Henderson. While most of side one is tame and restrained, Smith finally does sing at full, hair-raising intensity on "I Ain't Gonna Play No Second Fiddle," "Empty Bed Blues," and "Do Your Duty."

Guitarist and pianist **Skip James** emerged during the same era, but was worlds apart statistically. A delicate, sensitive player, whose falsetto vocals followed suit, James typified what's known as the "Benton School" of Mississippi blues. Such music was complex and subtle, with a lighter, less rhythmic feel than that of the Delta style. *Today* was recorded after James resurfaced during the '60s blues

revival. On his own compositions—"I'm So Glad," "Cherry Ball," "Washington, D. C. Hospital Center Blues," and the eerie "Cypress Grove"—James is stunning. His playing of more generic tunes like "How Long" and "My Gal" are less powerful, but still pleasant.

Mainstream Mississippi blues—along with contemporary styles including the '50s Chicago school, and r&b/soul—are represented here by guitarist **Bob Margolin** on *The Old School*. Margolin spent seven years of intensive hands-on training with Muddy Waters, and learned his lessons well; he's an accomplished and aggressive-yet-tasteful player with deadly accurate timing. He favors a simple, small-band, '50s framework, but does not sound dated in the process. Margolin's vocals are somewhat less impressive, at times sounding strained; he is most effective as a crooner, as on "River's Invitation." The highlight of this well-paced and solidly-grooving album is its title track, which recounts Margolin's tenure with Muddy. (Powerhouse Records: P.O. Box 2455, Falls Church, VA 22042)

Denver singer **James Van Buren** has a thoroughly contemporary sound, but is rooted in classic jazz-blues sophistication. *I Ain't Doin' Too Bad* is a diverse, balanced, and consistently grooving set of urbane blues, funk, swing, and ballads, with fine accompaniment by pianist/producer Joe Keel and guitarist Calvins Keys. Van Buren is an expressive singer with

an agile sense of phrasing; his thin, narrow-ranged voice is not particularly pleasant, but comes across nonetheless thanks to sheer self-confidence. This is also demonstrated by the cocky cover art, which recalls those classic '50s albums where featured artists (such as Bobby Bland) were surrounded by adoring harems, expensive cars, etc. This is not an album for sensitive '80s guys. (JVB Records: Box 468, Denver, CO 80224)

If Van Buren's posture offends some listeners, they may be positively outraged by the **Reverend Billy C. Wirtz**. Wirtz is a nimble blues and boogie pianist, who learned firsthand from such greats as Sunnyland Slim. He is also a devastatingly clever lyricist, and has made his mark as a twisted comedian who focuses on modern life in the South. *Deep Fried And Sanctified* does not measure up to his live performances, but is recommended for sick gems like "Inbred" and a raunchy, well-played monologue on the slow blues "Roberta."

Moving back to the mainstream, **The Kinsey Report** is innovating the blues from within. The three sons of a traditional blues man, the Kinseys returned to such music after various adventures with commercial rock and reggae. Accordingly, their sensibility is thoroughly modern while remaining authentically grounded. Lead guitarist Donald Kinsey has a soaring, melodic guitar style; his sustained single-note licks show some influence from his

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record & cd reviews

tenure with Albert King, but are essentially original and quite distinct from his legions of Chicago colleagues. Kinsey is also an effective, if less distinctive vocalist. Most significantly, he has most moments of brilliance as a writer—here, for instance, on "Love's Overdue." While *Midnight Drive* also has some forgettable, derivative tunes, it nonetheless solidifies The Kinsey Report's position as an important contemporary group. The band's repertoire is yielding future blues-band classics; in addition, the Kinseys may be able to recapture a substantial, young, black audience.

R&b veteran **Clarence Carter** is one of the few contemporary blues artists who's been able to get black airplay. This, combined with

his ceaseless Southern touring, makes him a modern blues star, and deservedly so. His latest effort, though—simply entitled *Clarence*—is a major disappointment. This grooveless collection of over-dubbed, computerized, lame material is distinguished only by "Kiss You All Over," a notable exception, and "Why Do I Stay Here (And Take This Shit From You)," which deserves mention for its pure weirdness. An artist of Carter's proven stature, soul, and creativity can surely do much better than this.

Ichiban Records is also represented here by **Blues Boy Willie** (Willie McFalls), a rather flat and uninteresting singer. *Strange Things Happening* was recorded live, though, and has a relaxed, pleasant modern blues-band groove. No single performance is outstanding,

but tunes like "The Fly," "Fishing Trip," and "Leroy" show that McFalls has a flair for songwriting. (Ichiban Records: P.O. Box 724677, Atlanta, GA 30339)

The same applies to Richmond, Virginia-based harmonicaist "**Jumpin' Johnny Sansone**," who leads a solid enjoyable band called **The Blues Party**. Thanks to Sansone's rich, rough-edged vocals, Ivan Apperouth's tasteful guitar and Anthony Geraci's keyboard work, *Where Y'at?* has a relaxed, confident groove, and makes a fine dance record. The band works in a '50s vein, somewhat reminiscent of revivalists like The Fabulous Thunderbirds, with material including New Orleans mambos, South Louisiana "swamp pop," originals, and Chicago classics. (King Snake Records: 205 Lake Blvd. Sanford, FL 32771)

In a similar vein, yet more eclectic and aggressive, is a New Orleans band called **The Backsliders**. Led by singer/harmonicist Ben Maygarden and guitarist Steve Spitz, this tight, hard-driving band on *The Blues Are Back* also incorporates rockabilly and Western Swing. Maygarden's originals, like "Tight Pants," have the ring of idiomatic authenticity. (Carryon Records: 1517 Cambronne St., New Orleans, LA 70118)

Canadian guitarist **Jeff Healey** has been lionized for his hot licks and unorthodox "lap-top"/tapping technique. Some of the hype has been quite excessive, but Healey, in his early '20s, is already an accomplished player, an effective blues-rock singer, and a songwriter of some substance. His guitar style shows the combined influence of Clapton, Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and Alberts King and Collins. Clapton also appears to inspire his writing, as many of the best tunes on *See The Light*—"My Little Girl," "Don't Let Your Chance Go By," "See The Light"—recall the feel of Clapton's Derek and The Dominos collaboration with Duane Allman. These blues/pop/rock efforts are more interesting than Healey's straight blues performances; his rendition of Freddie King's "Hideaway," for instance, is nothing special. More will be heard from this young multi-talent. **dh**

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1 CHARLES MINGUS. "The Shoes Of The Fisherman's Wife Are Some Jive Ass Slippers" (from *SHOES OF THE FISHERMAN'S WIFE*, Columbia) Mingus, composer.

I liked the last two minutes a lot. It didn't grab me from the beginning, but I liked when that bass clarinet and tympani came in near the end. Is that Gil Evans doing Mingus?

GS: No, it's later Mingus.

BP: Oh, because it's so polished and toned-down; the Mingus stuff I really love is the Jazz Workshop stuff, where Dolphy and all those guys go crazy. This felt like it had classical players in it. I felt like there was a real separation between the rhythm section and some of the horns, and there always seems to be that problem when you get players from the different disciplines together.

2 JOHN COLTRANE. "India" (from *IMPRESSIONS*, MCA/Impulse!)

Coltrane, soprano sax; McCoy Tyner, piano; Jimmy Garrison, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.

When I was young, I ran away from Elvin, because he was so strong and everybody was so drawn to him that I was afraid of getting sucked into the vortex. But even though I ran away from him, there's so much of him in me because there's so much of him in everybody. He's one of the greatest drummers that will ever walk this earth. Everybody always talks about his polyrhythms, but there are a couple of things about Elvin that people don't usually mention. One, he's got the most amazing touch; he can play so quietly yet be so powerful and assertive it's amazing. Two, everybody talks about how he plays behind the beat, but he also plays ahead of the beat at the same time. Three, he always stands his own ground; he doesn't run to the soloist; he responds, but he's on his own turf. He's an incredibly strong and beautiful musician.

3 THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE. "Manic Depression" (from *ARE YOU EXPERIENCED?*, Reprise) Hendrix, guitar; Noel Redding, bass; Mitch Mitchell, drums.

People are now going back and realizing what a genius he was, and what a great drummer Mitch Mitchell was. It's like you remember when John Kennedy was shot; I remember the first note I ever heard of Jimi Hendrix's, it made such an impression on me when a friend of mine brought that record over to the house. I'd never heard anything like that. Just the sonic contribution he made to modern music, just for that alone he's in my top 10. The things he made the guitar do were incredible, and the inter-

BOBBY PREVITE

by Gene Santoro

Hailing from Niagara Falls, N.Y., percussionist/composer Bobby Previte started playing rock music at 14. While studying music at the University of Buffalo, he fell in love with the sounds of John Cage, Charles Mingus, Miles Davis, and Edgard Varèse. Previte credits Varèse's "ionization," in fact, with pushing him to explore percussion from an orchestral perspective.

Shortly after moving to the Big Apple in 1980, Previte began collaborating with folks like John Zorn, Wayne Horvitz, Butch Morris, and Elliot Sharp, as well as composing his own material. Very much a part of the downtown-New York crowd (though he lives uptown) that is currently breaking out big, Previte's compositional leanings are toward organic development, shifting forms and patterns that circulate through a piece.

Though he's eclectic, he avoids flaunting the diversity of his influences, preferring to understate them in order to



PHOTO: CHASE-FERGUSON

produce a cohesive feel. His 1986 debut as a leader, *Bump The Renaissance* (Sound Aspects) garnered critical raves, as did 1987's *Pushing The Envelope* and last year's *Claude's Late Morning* (both on Gramavision), which assembled stellar casts of players.

Previte was given no information about the music played.

action between him and Mitchell was too.

4 HENRY THREADGILL SEXTETT. "Bermuda Blues"

(from *YOU KNOW THE NUMBER*, RCA/Novus) Threadgill, alto saxophone; Diedre Murray, cello; Fred Hopkins, bass; Pheeroan akLaff and Reggie Nicholson, percussion.

It's funny you'd play a tune like this from Henry, because I really admire his composing and arranging, but this particular tune sounds more like something I'd like to hear live, because there's not as much composition in this as in some of his other stuff—it's kind of riff-based.

5 THE METERS. "Here Come The Metermen" (from *HERE COME THE METERMEN*, Charly) Art Neville, keyboards; Leo Nocentelli, guitar; George Porter, bass; Ziggy Modeliste, drums.

The Meters sound so good to me. I mean, the recording by today's standards is terrible, ugly—but who cares? There's so much music there. What a groove, and it breathes so nicely. The grooves you hear on the radio today don't breathe like that—especially the bass. Bass players now play patterns that are like jails, but in music like that the ability to play around it is what makes it classic. Ziggy makes so much out of everything: BOMP BOMP on the snare, those two little quarter-notes are his signature to me.

6 ORNETTE COLEMAN. "Midnight Sunrise" (from *DANCING IN YOUR HEAD*, A&M) Coleman, alto saxophone; Robert Palmer, clarinet; Master Musicians of Joujouka.

It's Ornette, but I don't know the record. (GS explains.) Beautiful, incredible drumming, and I enjoyed it, but I always enjoy Ornette more when he has the harmonic stuff that Charlie [Haden] did underneath.

I think that Charlie's contribution to Ornette's thing is underrated: he had a really big part in the sound of that music. So I miss his harmonic direction sometimes. Sometimes I just can't hang on to it as well without the harmonic structure, and I think Ornette really responds to it.

7 KING SUNNY ADÉ AND HIS AFRICAN BEATS. "Ja Funmi" (from *JUJU MUSIC*, Mango) Adé, composer.

That was too easy! Just for the way he uses guitars he's won my admiration: they almost never play a chord, they're always playing single lines that they make into chords. Obviously that music was a big inspiration for me for my last record, especially the pedal steel, who'll sit there for two minutes without playing a note and then suddenly play the most incredibly beautiful thing and suspend the time completely. He's really, really subtle in this big group of people. db



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profile

YUSEF LATEEF

THIS VETERAN MULTI-INSTRUMENTALIST EXPLORES BROAD MUSICAL VISTAS.

by Dave Holland

In 1948 Bill Evans of Detroit, a veteran of Dizzy's big band, became Yusef Abdul Lateef—Joseph, servant of the gentle, amiable, and incomprehensible God. Since his first recording sessions three decades ago for Savoy, in a piece called "Morning," playing the argule (a Middle Eastern flute), and the bassist the rebob (an Afghani stringed instrument), Lateef has been at the forefront of the melding of improvisation and odd time signatures with the use of ethnic instruments and European composition. To record his *Little Symphony* (Atlantic 81757), Lateef laid down the basic tracks with a Casio 500 keyboard and Ensoniq Mirage digital sampling keyboard, adding saxes and bamboo flutes as well as Hausa talking drum and algaitea, an instrument used in the emir's court with a double-reed boiled in onion and beef broth. This Grammy-winning recording—1988 New Age category—was made possible by the combination of the MIDI workstation and third-world harmonies with classical compositional structure and the art of the improviser.

The harmonic structure of this *sonata allegro* spans the world musically. The first movement, for instance, is a raga with an Egyptian scale. The third movement combines a theme stated on sax and flute over a contrapuntal Oriental string *basso continuo*. But the notes begin to lengthen and bend till it becomes obvious that this is not a stringed instrument at all but a Japanese scale being played on an electric keyboard.

Lateef speaks of improvising as interacting with his immaterial self, as "a way of expressing my deepest feelings and sentiments, a way of being poetic. This is how this particular kind of beauty is transmitted." He is also the author of *Night In The Garden Of Love* (Vantage Books), a musical allegory with sci-fi overtones that may have appeal to the suspected reading tastes of that hot-tub class of crystal-rubbing yuppies that are new age music's supposed market. But Lateef spent the early '80s—when Windham Hill went from cottage industry to multi-million dollar buy-out, a Success Story the equal of Atlantic or Motown—in northern Nigeria, a senior research fellow at Ahmadu Bello University's Center For Cultural Studies. Four years were spent teaching anthropology techniques and working with flute makers, producing the Fulani herdsman's flute, the sarewa, in glass and metal, as well as taking his ensemble to the Festival of



Nations, in Sophia, Bulgaria.

Lateef returned to the States in 1985. He teaches improvisation at UMass in Amherst and at Hampshire College using pianist Barry Harris' system based on the 7th scale—the Ionian with 7th lowered a half-step—as well as writing for chamber ensembles at both schools. He is on the faculty of UMass' Jazz In July program with Billy Taylor, Max Roach, and Sheila Jordan.

A trailblazing force in modern jazz, Lateef refuses to use the word. In his first db interview 30 years ago, Lateef said his goal was to help establish jazz as a respected art form by "doing away with the derogatory connotations associated with jazz and jazz musicians." Now he feels that "jazz" is too ambiguous: "If you are going to talk about my music, that term is not needed. It is distracting." For us to talk about jazz was a waste of time.

But Lateef—who had neither heard the music his recording epitomized for the Grammy electorate nor knew the connotations those of us who are truly hip apply to "new age"—is willing to embrace the term "new age" based on the literal meaning of the words. He hadn't heard the term until a producer suggested releasing *Little Symphony* on Atlantic's new age label. "I've never bought a Windham Hill record, I've no idea what they sound like. To me, the term implied a music different from what has been in the past, a recent development, and I think *Little Symphony* fits that category. I had never heard anything like *Little Symphony* until I produced it."

He brought his ideas of its form and content back with him from Nigeria to the basement studio of his neighbor, guitarist Norman Blain. It is indeed a *sonata* with its thematic development and electronic episodes serving as passages from movement to movement though he dispenses with the

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conventional allegro first movement—his is *larghissimo*—and makes the third a fantasy instead of a dance.

"It was a challenge for me to improvise against the particular structures in that music. It wasn't like the blues form that I had played for so many years. It wasn't an AABA song form. That is why when the listener listens to this music he can't anticipate what is going to happen because there are no trite or redundant elements in it. It's a new arrangement of content, an evolution of content."

Whether you attempt to label his music Third Stream, World Beat, avant garde, new age, or new music, constant over a career with scores of recordings on Riverside, Impulse, Atlantic, and CTI has been Lateef's use of improvisation and instruments from other cultures in European classical forms.

"Just as a Brahms symphony is written in *sonata allegro* form—no one would deny that—so was the *Little Symphony* written in *sonata allegro* form, but none of the critics recognized that. It is really crass for someone to review it and put it in the jazz category because it is not that at all."

He assigns critics the task of understanding the form and content of what they review while he fulfills his own responsibilities. "Nobody can develop my music for me. I have to do it. My responsibility is to impart all of the aesthetic substance and romance and intelligence and creative energies I can muster from my experience. My duty is to put this into the music."

Does he sense any cross between the classic European styles and American improvisatory music, the restoration of improvisation to the performance of concert? "If any time was ripe, it was during the lifetime of Charlie Parker. It is a tragedy that we don't have concertos that had been written for Charlie Parker. That was the time to do it. Look at what he did with strings; such beautiful things. He could have performed concertos just as easily and perhaps been more inspired than he was by those strings," explains Lateef who once sat in with Parker on Swing Street. "He was such a congenial person. He let me play what I wanted to play and I played what I thought I could play best."

Since the success of *Little Symphony*, released are two more works of Lateef's written for small classical ensembles: *Concerto For Yusef Lateef* (Atlantic 81863) and *Nocturnes* (Atlantic 81977). While The Hamburg Radio Orchestra has performed one of his symphonies, he has yet to get any of his orchestral works performed in this country.

"The works of Beethoven and Mozart are played over and over for a certain class of people. Of course this is quality music, but that doesn't imply that no one else has made quality music since. A certain ideology is perpetuated: You can't enter there." **dh**



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MILES—THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, by Miles Davis with Quincy Troupe (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989, 431 pp., \$22.95, hardcover).

Throughout Miles Davis' lengthy career, both his musical artistry and enigmatic personality have been praised and damned repeatedly—he's been idolized, imitated, courted, arrested, held in disdain and in awe. Several other biographies (most notably Ian Carr's and Jack Chambers') and chapters throughout jazz literature have already documented the life and prolific and influential work of this perennial musical front-runner. And through interviews which have surfaced more frequently in the past few years, Davis has allowed a few glimpses through the private veneer he has fiercely maintained for so long. Thus this book—Davis' own voluminous and candid account of his life so far—still comes as something of a surprise.

From the very first page, Quincy Troupe, Davis' co-author, quickly establishes an intimate, conversational tone that doesn't let up. Davis is the narrator one might always have imagined—intelligent, forthright, detailed, quick, and quixotic. His tone shifts emotionally with his memories, from admiring to angry, defensive to humorous, covering detailed musical and personal territory. Issues that strike a deep chord within him—his condemnation of racism, his steadfast sense of creative freedom and experimentation—can be gleaned through his early life experiences and onward. His narrative is packed with significant incidents, beliefs, and opinions and is often revealing and riveting. Unfortunately, the last few chapters are mostly just rambling and the material becomes more disjointed. The reader is left with many unanswered questions, not just about Davis, but about how Davis and Troupe worked together, and how the narrative was shaped.

The first chapters move compellingly forward as Davis recalls his childhood in St. Louis, his unusual middle-class black family, his musical development and first professional experiences, and his eventual move to New York. His father gave him his first trumpet when he was 13, exemplifying the strain between his parents (his mother wanted to give him a violin), inevitably setting the course of Davis' life. Davis fondly recalls his first teacher, Elwood Buchanan, who encouraged him to steer clear of vibrato and to develop his own sound: "You got enough talent to be your own trumpet man."

Davis describes sitting in with the sensational Billy Eckstine band in St. Louis in 1944 as a pivotal moment. It was his first time sharing the bandstand with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, and soon after, Davis uprooted his life to follow Bird. From here through the next several chapters, the



Miles, circa 1970.

pace is quick and intense. For those familiar with jazz history, much of Davis' account of his early years in New York has the glow of a *deja vu*. Attending Juilliard was his cover for seeking out Parker, his real musical education taking place on 52nd St. He traces his own emerging sound and concepts as he struggles playing alongside Parker on and off for the next few years, his friendships and work with Coleman Hawkins, Freddie Webster, Gillespie, Max Roach, Monk, and other musicians who were creating jazz history. He recounts meeting Gil Evans, the beginning of their profound friendship and musical association, and the *Birth Of The Cool* recordings, which started establishing Davis as a leader and a stylistic innovator.

After a fierce four-year struggle with her-

oin, which Davis kicked in '54, his renown and artistic maturity ascended steadily through the rest of the '50s and '60s. He describes the varied personnel he worked with over the years which established his equally legendary reputation as a talent scout. Details of sessions, club dates, concerts, and tours vivify the development of some extraordinary musicians: Sonny Rollins, Philly Joe Jones, Paul Chambers, John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley, Bill Evans, Tony Williams, Ron Carter, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock—the list is long and brilliant.

As we move into the '70s, Davis speaks about his five-year hiatus from music between 1975-80 for the first time. Once again, he drifted back into drug abuse—perhaps partly resulting from some chronic and painful physical problems—but this time he admittedly did not pick up his horn. As per the rest of the book, his delivery—about addiction, self-destructiveness, strained relationships with women (which at times turned abusive)—is completely frank and unreserved and without any moralizing. But there is no real digging into the reasons behind his actions. Clearly, the lives of several of the most creative jazz artists were fraught with similar struggles, and it is kind of miraculous that Davis is still alive and thriving. And though one surely doesn't want a sanitized version of Davis' life, the sheer preponderance of not-so-pretty raw data doesn't really add to our understanding of this extraordinary musician. Nonetheless, the unabridged Miles is a fascinating and provocative chronicle which, along the way, impels you to reach into your collection and let the music speak along with the man.

—stephanie stein



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