

# downbeat

For Contemporary Musicians

March 1990, \$1.95 U.K. £2.25

When  
Harry  
Met  
Stardom

**THE HARPER BROTHERS**

*Tradition Plus*

**MEL LEWIS**

*Footsteps In The Cellar*

**MICHEL CAMILO**

*Caribbean Jazz Classic*

**JACK BRUCE**

*Basses Covered*

Harry Connick, Jr.

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Harry Connick, Jr.

ANDY FREEBERG



Jack Bruce



The Harper Brothers



Michel Camilo

ENID FARRER

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## down beat

For Contemporary Musicians

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**I**t oughtta be a movie. Something dangerous from the '40s. Very noir.

It's about this District Attorney in New Orleans. He's tough, a crusader. He's sworn to bust crime on Bourbon Street. But there's a troubled look on his face, and at his desk he's looking at a photo. It's him with a child playing piano. And as some blues resound, the camera walks through the smoke of a jazz joint. Someone dances for a table of gawking gangsters, and on the bandstand, as an old black clarinetist blows a mean chorus, the camera stops at the piano.

There's a white kid playing, his eyes closed, enraptured by the music. And in spite of the cigarette and the demimonde around him, it's obvious he's an innocent. Just then, a whistle! It's a raid! Cops everywhere! Over at the bar, a whore jumps aside, pushing away a drunken hand snatching at nylons. And a pusher drops a white packet but slams into angry, blue beef. And the kid looks up, frightened. There, standing at the eye of the storm, gunshots and screaming all around him, is the D.A.—his father.

"It wasn't as bad as all that," said young New Orleans entertainer Harry Connick, Jr. Now a destined star of the '90s as a pianist and singer with three albums on Columbia (the newest, his best-selling soundtrack from the movie *When Harry Met Sally* . . .), and on screen as an actor in the forthcoming World War II movie *Memphis Belle*, and on tour with his trio or his orchestra playing sold-out concerts and crooning to babes young and old, and ga-ga as if he's Sinatra rejuvenated, Harry first gigged on Bourbon Street when all of 13—and when his father was indeed the District Attorney. Only, the scene wasn't so . . . cinematic.

"It was quite unusual and looks strange now, but then it was just a gig. There were really no gangsters, but a lot of prostitutes were hanging around and a lot of dope pushers. My father came down there to clean up the prostitution and to bust a big heroin ring and he successfully completed that. I'd be playing down there and he'd be down there at the same time. He'd stick his head into the club just to make sure I was alright. I was surrounded by nice, older guys who'd never let anything happen to me anyway."

What? No temptations? No fallen angels offering to show the kid the joys of manhood? Not even a raid?

"A raid is nothing like 25 policemen bust in with rifles and shout, 'Stick 'em up!' A raid is seeing a prostitute or an act going on, handcuffing them, and putting them on a bus until the bus is



ANDY FREEBERG

# *When Harry Met Stardom*

By Michael Bourne

# HARRY CO

full. That's a raid. It was never 'Oh Daddy, don't shoot!'"

Harry was five in 1973 when his father was first elected, beating Jim Garrison, the D.A. who'd become famous when he'd accused the Warren Commission of covering up a conspiracy to assassinate JFK. "I wasn't aware until last year when my daddy explained how corrupt it was before he got there." And if one righteous parent wasn't enough, Anita Connick, his mother, was a judge as politically determined as his father. When she was dying of cancer, she beat seven men for the judgeship.

But, really? No troubles for young Harry? No hookers and Hurricanes? If not the melodramatic scenario, at least some youthful foolishness?

"When you have a dad who's a D.A. and a mom who's a judge, you don't go around smoking pot and getting drunk. I stayed clean, not only for my health's sake but for the sake of their political careers."

And when his father was first sworn in, June (as Junior is called by his family) realized his own true calling.

"My mother said, 'I want Harry Jr. to play 'The Star-Spangled Banner' at the ceremony.' My father said, 'I have the biggest speech of my life to give today! I don't have a piano!' She was a proud mother. She said, 'I want him to play!' So my daddy called up a friend who had a warehouse with a piano and a flat-bed truck. I played and I remember hearing the crowd applaud. I wanted to continue to play but my daddy shoved me out of the way and said, 'Look, this is my day, not yours!' But that sound generated my interest to continue to play. I've always wanted to hear that applause. To me, that's what a lot of it is all about."

**H**e'd played the piano as if from the womb. "I don't know where I got it from. There were no outstanding musicians in my family. I've always just played. It's been a part of my life as long as I can remember. The first time I touched a piano, I knew it was what I wanted to do."

Harry's cousin Georgia was his first teacher. "She taught me what middle C was." And eventually he worked with many others, in particular, two legends of New Orleans piano, James Booker and Ellis Marsalis, father of the remarkable Marsalis brothers, Wynton, Branford, and Delfeayo. "I've known the Marsalis family a very long time. Me and Delfeayo played basketball together. I remember hearing Wynton and Branford playing with Ellis in the '70s when I was a child."

At nine, Harry joined the union, first recording two albums featuring his impression of Louis Armstrong. Harry was enrolled at the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts—but was already working professionally. He first gigged, at 13, at the Dixieland joint The Famous Door. "There'd be 16 hours of music seven days a week. I played just about every club there is. I played jazz, rap, funk, fusion, dixieland. I played classical recitals." Though his instrumental style nowadays hearkens to the masters of jazz piano, especially Thelonious Monk, Duke Ellington, and the energetically entertaining Erroll Garner, jazz was not, early on, his delight.

"I was a teenager in the '70s and I don't think any teenager, unless he's an introvert, will listen to music that's not popular. I wanted to be popular, so I'd do Stevie Wonder imitations. I'd do The Bee Gees, Donna Summer, Michael Jackson. It wasn't until I'd moved up to New York when I was 18 that I started playing the piano seriously. I'd listened to Chick Corea and Herbie

# CONNICK, JR.

Hancock, the Return to Forever albums and *Thrust*, and I was impressed by those records. But then I started playing the piano seriously. I started listening to Monk—and I hated Monk. I hated Duke. I hated Erroll Garner. I said, 'Why can't I do this? Why can't I play like Monk? It sounds so easy!' That's when I discarded Chick and Herbie—because I could play like them. I'm not denying their talents. I think they're wonderful players—but I'm still saying, 'Why can't I play like Monk?'"

Harry became a jazz classicist, excited by Earl Hines and Fats Waller, the stride of James P. Johnson, the boogie woogie of Meade Lux Lewis, Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson, the pianistic phantasmagoria of Art Tatum—"all of the people who really

played the piano!" Elements of all of them resound in Harry's playing. And as a singer, he also listened back to classic crooners—Russ Colombo, Bob Eberle, Dick Haymes, and especially Frank Sinatra. He's already being called, in his way with ballads and his appeal as an entertainer, the *next* Sinatra.

"Tony Bennett said that, and that was a high compliment. Sinatra is my favorite. He's the greatest singer in the world. He's initiated things that had never been done before him. Nobody ever changed lyrics in a song before like him. No one could slide on the notes like him. No one ever extended phrases, like for 25 seconds without breathing, before he did. Nobody ever used a microphone like he did. No one had ever been that popular and changed fashion like he did. No one had ever won an Oscar, being a musician, like he did. No one had ever been 74 years old on the Lou Rawls telethon a while ago and completely made untrue what people say, that he can't sing anymore. He sang 'Luck Be A Lady' and completely trashed everyone else on that show!"

Tony Bennett, likewise a singer Harry appreciates, praised Harry after his sensational stand in January 1989 at The Algonquin, the chic-beyond-chic cabaret of New York—a professional leap that was quite quantum.

**H**e'd settled in New York in 1985 and gigged around—a church in the Bronx, weddings, The Empire Diner, other piano joints. Wynton Marsalis encouraged George Butler to sign him with Columbia and Delfeayo Marsalis produced the eponymous 1987 release *Harry Connick, Jr.* He dedicated the album to his mother and recorded "On The Sunny Side Of The Street" in the spirit of James Booker. Ellis Marsalis was also honored, and Harry's original called "E" is the only trio—with bassist Reginald Veal and drummer Herlin Riley, regulars now with Wynton's band. All of the other music, including "I Mean You" by Monk, features Harry's duets with Ron Carter.

Kevin Blau, another New Orleans friend and the son of Harry's classical teacher, Betty Blau, produced his second Columbia release, *20*—his age at the time. Marion Cowings worked with Harry on his singing debut—that is, as a grownup. It's almost all solo and is all standards, most written generations before Harry was alive, from "Avalon" to masterworks of Irving Berlin, Harold Arlen, Hoagy Carmichael, and "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" by Ellington, the latter with bassist Robert Hurst, Carmen McRae, and Dr. John also guesting.

Yet, even with two albums, Harry Connick, Jr. was not a name to reckon with. Not yet. "The Algonquin is a cabaret and I don't want to be a cabaret musician, but it's a room that would get me a lot of attention, and it surely did. January 1989 was when my career started." Nobody was certain what to expect. Nobody but Harry. "They said they'd get me the guy who wrote *Sugar Babies* to write some patter. I said, 'I don't need no patter!' They said they'd give me songs. I said, 'I don't need any songs. I'll do it myself.' They were scared to death."

More than half the audience opening night were critics—and Harry was annoyed they weren't reacting like a *real* audience. "I was wondering why I wasn't getting much applause. Press people don't clap. I said, 'What the hell's wrong with you people? Come on, now! I'm from New Orleans and I want to hear some applause!'" They were nonetheless charmed, said so in review after review, and all of the 36 shows sold out.

Soon thereafter Harry sold out a concert at Lincoln Center so fast he didn't have a ticket for his father. Harry even showed up in Liz Smith's gossip column after he'd played a birthday party for cabaret superstar Peter Allen, a friend he's now recorded with. He'd also played a Ted Kennedy party and a variety of all-star shows. Harry Connick, Jr. was almost . . . *there*.

But some supposed breaks turned into breaks of his spirit. Harry played *The Tonight Show* in 1988 and was angered when they rejected him playing solo. "They said Doc Severinsen's band plays loud and going to solo piano is gonna be anti-climactic. I said, 'I'm from New Orleans. I play loud!'" They then, after already booking him, wanted Harry to audition just before the broadcast. He'd auditioned for *The Tonight Show* years before,

when he was a prodigy of nine, and Harry remembers being hurt. "I played 'Sophisticated Lady' and Doc Severinsen said, 'Get away, kid!' He was an adult and could've acted like an adult."

Harry, now an adult, was stuck with a bassist from the band. "I was incredibly nervous and right before the curtain goes up, the first time I'll perform for 30 million people, Freddie DeCordova pats me on the shoulder and says, 'Don't screw up, kid!' That made me feel just *great!* I cracked the first note." Harry sang "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," and wowed the audience—but vowed never to return. "They've insulted me twice!"

It was much the same, being pissed, when he played *Late Night With David Letterman* to promote *The Algonquin*. "I had a number all worked out to do with Paul Shaffer, and he said, 'That sounds too lounge act, too much like Duke Ellington.' I'd never heard Duke Ellington and 'lounge act' in the same sentence before. I was so miserably insulted by that, I said to myself, 'I don't want to play a duet with you.' So during the rehearsal, I played just fierce piano to make him scared. He's great for that show but he ain't no piano player!" Harry eventually played solo, some boogie woogie as requested by the show, some stride for himself, and then sang "Shake, Rattle And Roll"—but it wasn't satisfying, not for the audience, not for Harry.

"I don't like those shows. You play one song and that's supposed to represent what you do. But I don't do one thing. I sing ballads and swing songs. I play stride and boogie woogie. I play New Orleans. I tap dance. If I could play five songs. . . ."

Harry won't have to return to TV, not after the success of his soundtrack to *When Harry Met Sally* . . . Bobby Colomby at CBS talked director Rob Reiner into working with Harry. "Don't ask me why, but Rob took this unknown jazz musician and said, 'Do my movie.' I said, 'I'd love to do it but I have to play jazz.' Listen to the opening theme, the instrumental of 'It Had To Be You'—that's jazz. It's like 'Paris Blues' by Duke, even though it's not on that level—but it's real jazz. Rob is a great director and he's got balls. He said he wanted this and that's what he did."

Billy Crystal and Meg Ryan inexorably fell in love to the classic New York love songs of the Gershwins, Rodgers and Hart, Vernon Duke, and Duke Ellington. Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Ray Charles, Bing Crosby, and Frank Sinatra all sing in the movie, but on the soundtrack album, it's all Harry. "They, or their estates, didn't want to be part of the album, and I ended up doing all the songs. It's the biggest break of my life."

**H**arry's album sold 200,000 in a month, headed for gold, and quadrupled sales for 20. He was also featured on two videos from the movie, singing "It Had To Be You" and "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" all around Manhattan and looking so *mah-velous*. He's classically photogenic, a clothes horse with a Hollywood face and that trademark pompadour. And with the movie, plus the momentum from *The Algonquin*, Harry leaped from 300-seat rooms to 3,000-seat halls, often with '90s-style bobby-soxers swooning.

"I don't mean to be chauvinistic, but young girls love to be sung to. I do concerts in San Francisco, Seattle, Minneapolis, and 15 to 20 rows are all young girls. They throw flowers! It's like a rock concert. I come out backstage after an hour and there's still 200 people out there in the cold waiting for autographs. I try to be cool, but inside I'm jumping for joy. I can't believe this is happening, not just for me but for the music. Of course I want the money. Of course I want the attention. But jazz is becoming popular again! Wynton started it, and Branford, and I'm



ANDY FREEBERG

### HARRY CONNICK, JR.'S EQUIPMENT

"I always ask for Steinway when I play. It's the best piano in the world. I have a Yamaha at home—just because I can't afford a Steinway yet."

### HARRY CONNICK, JR. DISCOGRAPHY

HARRY CONNICK, JR. —Columbia CK 40702  
20 —Columbia CK 44369  
WHEN HARRY MET SALLY . . . —Columbia CK 45319

continuing it. And it's not that Lite-FM jazz. It's the real thing!"

Harry looks back to Armstrong and Ellington, jazz greats who also entertained, and aspires to do likewise. "Some jazz musicians seem to feel that the audience doesn't matter, that only the music matters. But the audience absolutely 100 percent matters, and every performer wants a full house. Some people think entertaining is wrong, but the reason we get on stage is we have big egos and we want to play music in front of a crowd. I'm not ashamed to admit that. I watched Lionel Hampton play and you can see when he smiles that old school coming out. In the '40s and '50s, jazz musicians entertained. In the '60s, rock & roll entertained and jazz stopped entertaining. In the '70s, jazz got very obscure. In the '80s, jazz was dead and rock was #1. Jazz was absolutely nothing until Wynton Marsalis came along and pretty much brought it out of obscurity. He made it possible for me and every other young jazz musician who's making it today."

Harry Connick, Jr. is making it today—and there's more to come. He's just finished acting in a movie, *Memphis Belle*, filmed in England. David Puttman

produced, Michael Caton-Jones directed, and Harry stars. "Memphis Belle was the first B-17 to fly 25 missions over Germany without getting blown up. I played a guy from New Orleans who sings a little and plays the piano, so it wasn't that difficult to settle into the character. But the technique of working with a director, working with the camera, finding your mark, and trying to portray a character that was authentic to that time, that was difficult. My character was based on a guy from Yonkers, Johnny Quinlan, who was the tail-gunner. All of the crew except him came over to England and had dinner with us and told us the stories. That was the most rewarding experience of all of it."

He expects he'll act again on screen soon—for Harry, it's more fun than work. There's talk that he'll play Bobby Darin, a singer he's often considered to be similar to, in a bio. And he'll have a song on another soundtrack, the Warren Beatty blockbuster, *Dick Tracy*. He's already turned away several offers to star on Broadway—a revival of *Pal Joey*, a stage adaptation of *An American In Paris*. "I'd love to do it, but for Broadway, you have to do it on the road and by the time I got to New York, I'd be sick of it, the same thing night after night. One day I will. It's a challenge to me, but now is not the right time."

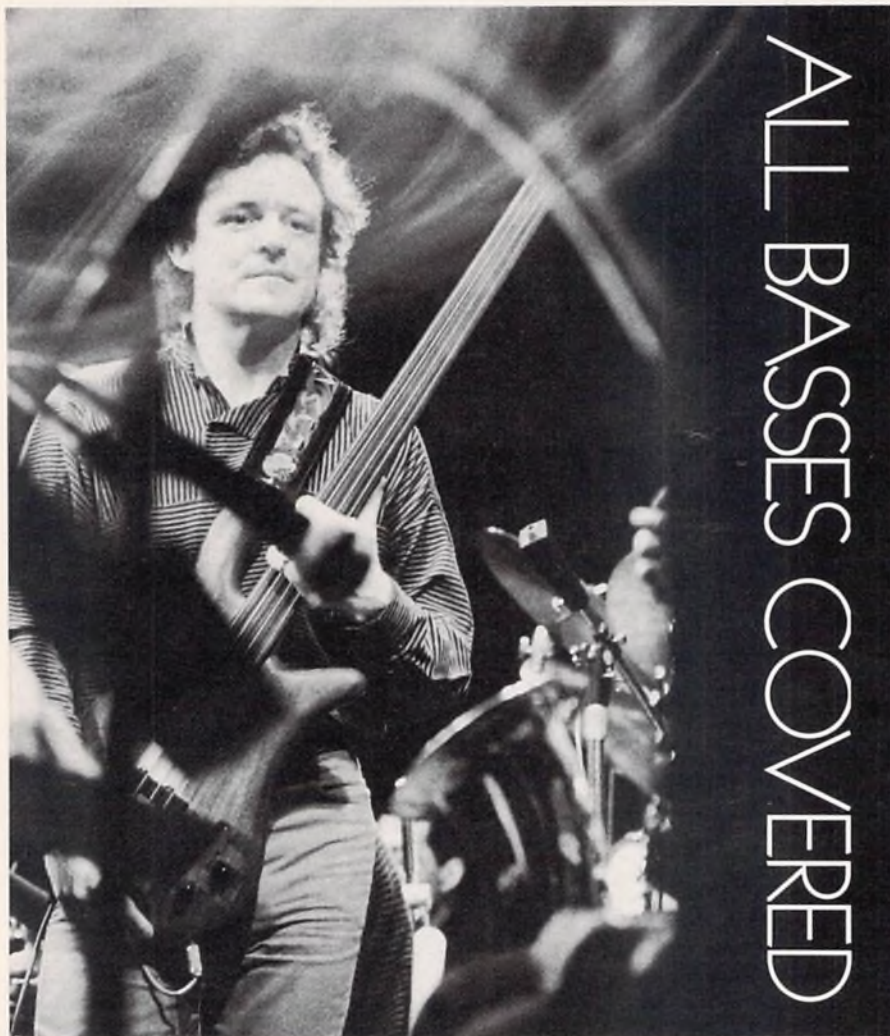
What he'll do in the meantime is travel with his trio, with bassist Ben Wolfe and drummer Shannon Powell, or his 30-piece orchestra. "They call it 'When Harry Met *When Harry Met Sally*,' but I call it Harry Connick, Jr. trying to sing in tune in front of an orchestra. People don't know, but that's hard work." He'll record twice this year, a trio album and an album of songs, most of the songs his own. And at 22, he's only just beginning.

So, with all this success, the inevitable covers of *People* and *GQ*, the girls, the money, the gossip, the inevitable blather of critics outraged that's he's so young and cocksure, there's an obvious question: What's to stop Harry Connick, Jr. from pumpkin-ing, from turning into just another phenomenon of show biz, just another sensation of the moment, just another asshole?

"I'm good at what I do, but 50, 60 years ago, Duke Ellington did stuff I can't do. How can I be conceited if I'm not mastering what I do? I have no doubt about my talent, but I just don't rank up there with the people I respect. I might be a jerk one day. But right now, as far as I can see, until I become great at what I do, I have no reason to be that. And even if I become great, I have no reason to be that. I have a big family, 45 cousins. They'll keep an eye on me. They'll kill me if I get uppity!"

db

# JACK BRUCE



on to study less sacred texts. As a budding bassist, he played in a series of British jazz and rock bands in the early '60s, culminating in the enormously popular Cream, which lasted for only two and a half years but had a tremendous influence.

In a sense, the Cream legacy is very much alive in the latest chapter of Bruce's ongoing saga. Much of the new material on *A Question Of Time* evokes Cream, albeit with a bevy of guitarists such as Albert Collins, Vernon Reid, and Allan Holdsworth in place of former Cream mate Eric Clapton. "What I believe is happening is the birth of a band," he says about his new band—featuring the other ex-Creamer, drummer Ginger Baker. "It sounds like the title to a corny movie, but it's actually true. With Ginger, 18-year-old [guitarist] Blues Saraceno, and [ex-Parliament-Funkadelic keyboardist] Bernie Worrell, and myself, everybody's a kind of personality. The first of everything is joyous, but there's also a certain amount of pain involved."

**L**ive, the new Bruce show is a generous sampling of what Bruce has been up to from Cream until this year. (Actually, much of the more obscure Bruce material from the interim has been snipped: it's mostly an old-meets-new package.) Whereas the first half of the show belongs to a more straight-shooting rock style and the newer music, Bruce's sinuous bass lines and signature tenor vocals link up with the inimitable Baker's ferocity and finesse, heavy on tom-tom thunder—in the second half. The spare, surging beauty of Cream—or at least two-thirds of it—is momentarily revived.

"I see The Rolling Stones, in an interview, seem to criticize me for having too much energy at my age," Bruce notes. "The thing is, people think of things in labels. I never thought of myself as a rock & roll star or a pop star. I simply think of myself as a musician."

"Nobody would criticize Duke Ellington or Count Basie when they were quite elderly. I believe rock & roll, or whatever label you could put on what I'm trying to do, it's still valid for the length of time people like myself have been performing. So what I'm trying to do with my show is to give an overview of my development as a musician."

"More importantly, in a way, is the reunion of Ginger and myself. When people think of us, they think of Cream. Quite rightly—that was a very successful band and lots of people heard it. But Ginger and myself played as a jazz rhythm section back in 1961 in various bands. The reunion between him and myself and the brotherhood that now exists between us is, to me, the thing that makes me most happy."

"Ginger and myself started off basically playing free jazz. I was most influenced by people like Ornette Coleman and Thelonious Monk, and Charles Mingus, of

By Josef Woodard

**N**ineteen eighty-nine, among other things, was the Year of The Return in rock music, when musty names spilled back out into the public sphere. Just when you thought the '60s were over, the Stones, Jefferson Airplane, and The Who were coming soon to a concert hall or stadium near you.

Which may have led some to assume that the comeback fever also resulted in the reputed "return" of bassist/vocalist Jack Bruce this past year—with his well-received album, *A Question Of Time*, and attendant global touring. There are a couple of gaping holes in this theory: 1) Bruce never really went away, having worked on sundry projects—solo work and sideman duties for others—and in esoteric contexts outside of mainstream rock channels, and 2) to corral the category-leaping Bruce into a strictly rock vein, in the first place, is highly misleading. Yes,

commercially speaking, it was rock that bore him. Eventually, it was rock that bored him.

Bruce is one of those rare (and undersung) birds, adept in rock, blues, jazz, folk, and other areas in-between, who has made sense of the spirit of diversity spawned by the '60s broad, pop music aesthetic.

In a recent interview, Bruce was at once genial, humbled by his heroes, and proud of his accomplishments past and present. Determined to win respect for his musicality and to incite rock & roll fever again, Bruce wants to take his case to the music-listening public again. Jazz, in particular, holds a warm spot in his heart—having been the music that sparked his interest in music as a Scottish youth.

"When I was a lad growing up in Glasgow," Bruce effused, "*down beat* was my bible." To follow the metaphor, he went

LONA FOOTE

course, as a bass player. The kind of music I loved when I was starting to develop was the piano-less jazz trio in the vein of Ornette Coleman-Charlie Haden-Billy Higgins.

"But because I've become involved in music after Cream, I've written songs like on my new record, I need a more straightahead kind of drummer, someone who's just laying it down in order that I can do my other kind of material. I wouldn't ask Ginger to play it. He doesn't understand it. His stock phrase is, [Bruce slips into a gruff Cockney], 'I hate rock & roll,'" he laughs.

"He's distilled his style in the same way that I've tried to, vocally, on keyboards and bass, and with writing. I've tried to make use of what I have—distill it over the years. In other words, years ago, maybe I'd be playing a million notes, and now it's only a thousand notes to say the same thing."

Born in Lanarkshire, Scotland in 1943, Bruce's formative years led him from a classical education at the Royal Scottish Academy to jazz groups and, after moving to London, gigs with British r&b bands led by Alexis Korner and Graham Bond. All roads led to Cream in 1966, after which Bruce became a household name, a household voice.

Young Bruce had a taste of musical factions early on. "My father was a big jazz fan, but he was a real traditionalist who liked Fats Waller and Louis Armstrong. There was a lot of that in the house. My brother was a big bebop fan. There were actually sometimes almost physical fights, and I'm this little boy trying to get in the middle of it," Bruce laughs.

Jazz was in the house: ironically, for this icon of blues-rock, it took awhile for Bruce to get blues in his bones. "I'd come from Glasgow, had been classically trained and listened to jazz, but I was totally unaware of the blues as such until Mingus. So Mingus sort of introduced me to country blues, which then kindled an interest in me to discover more about that. With the help of Eric Clapton, I found the early recordings of the Delta blues players—Robert Johnson, Skip James, etc."

**F**ollowing the demise of Cream in 1969, Bruce went on to explore other avenues. He played bass in The Tony Williams Lifetime, the proto-fusion band featuring guitarist John McLaughlin and the late organist Larry Young; the band's guitar-heavy improvisatory grist made for easy parallels to Cream, albeit in a jazz mode. Bruce sang on Carla Bley's legendary 1972 magnum opus, *Escalator Over The Hill*. From the pop end of things, Bruce's song, "Theme For An Imaginary Western" (written for Cream but recorded on Bruce's *Songs For A Tailor*), was cut by the rock band Mountain and scaled the pop charts. Scattered solo albums over the last

## JACK BRUCE'S EQUIPMENT

Jack Bruce plays Warrick fretted and fretless four-string basses, and also has a five-string, all equipped with EMG pickups. Strings are made by SIT (Stay In Tune) Amp-wise, Bruce runs through Crown 1200 power amps, Hughes and Kettner pre-amps, and Barcus Berry's BBE Sonic Maximizer. He uses six cabinets-worth of Hartke speakers, making a total of two 15-inch, eight 12-inch, and eight 10-inch speakers. He also uses Yamaha and Heritage acoustic guitars, Ensoniq keyboards, and a Hohner harmonica (through a Hohner bullet microphone). He also swears by the standard Shure SM 158 mic.

## JACK BRUCE SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

### as a leader

*SONGS FOR A TAILOR*—Polydor 835242-2  
*HARMONY ROW*—Polydor 835243-2  
*OUT OF THE STORM*—Polydor 835284-2  
*HOW'S TRICKS*—Polydor 835285-2  
*THINGS WE LIKE*—Polydor 835244-2  
*WILLPOWER* (compilation)—Polydor 837806-2  
*A QUESTION OF TIME*—Epic EK 45279

### with Cream

*FRESH CREAM*—RSO 827576-1  
*DISRAELI GEARS*—RSO 823636-1  
*GOODBYE CREAM*—RSO 823660-1  
*LIVE, VOL. 1*—RSO 827577-1  
*LIVE, VOL. 2*—RSO 823661-1  
*STORY OF*—Polydor 2PLL 2658127  
*STRANGE BREW, THE VERY BEST OF*—RSO 811639-1  
*WHEELS OF FIRE*—2-RSO 827578-1

### with Robin Trower

*NO STOPPING ANYTIME*—Chrysalis VK-41704

### with Kip Hanrahan

*DESIRE DEVELOPS AN EDGE*—American Clave 1009/B  
*VERTICAL'S CURRENCY*—Pangaea PAND-42136  
*DAYS AND NIGHTS OF BLUE LUCK INVERTED*—Pangaea PAND-42137

### with Carla Bley

*ESCALATOR OVER THE HILL*—JCOA 839 310-2

20 years run the wide spectrum of Bruce's favored musical idioms.

"I'm very fortunate to have such varied experiences," he professes. "I respect the people who only listen to Chuck Berry and take that on. But I just happened, by accident at birth, to have a wide variety of music to call on. And I'm always looking for more. Balinese gamelan music, I love Japanese music, classical music, Indian music, everything.

"Also, when I started out listening, you actually had to really search to find anything to listen to. Especially in Glasgow, where there was no real radio. I suppose I haven't really lost that habit of trying to search for things."

In the last several years, musicians of different leanings have searched for Jack Bruce, and found in him a game participant for outside projects (outside, sometimes, in more than one sense of the word). While his public profile included brief stints with guitarists Leslie West and Robin Trower, Bruce has gained a reputation for his contributions to more experimental fare by Bley, Kip Hanrahan, Mark Nauseef, and others.

The work sometimes slips between the cracks, from music to drama and back. Bruce appeared in Bley's "micro-opera"—an adaptation of *Under The Volcano* featuring Bruce as author Malcolm Lowry's sodden protagonist, for the 1985 New Music America Festival in Los Angeles.

This led to a role in Sam Shepard's *Tooth Of Crime* in London.

As a devoted songwriter who claims 300 titles to his catalogue, Bruce has walked a fine line between a plaintive lyricism and touches of progressivism—e.g., odd meters and skewed blues riffs. And that's the stuff *A Question Of Time* is made of. "What I try to do is come up with new forms," Bruce explains. "In my own small way, I try to extend the limits of the music I'm involved in. Instead of using four-bar phrases, I'll use five-bar phrases—like the song 'No Surrender.' It doesn't sound uncomfortable. It's very easy to play. It's only when you come to write those things down that you notice them being out of the ordinary.

"Form has always interested me as much as content. I wanted to have Ginger play on this record. One of the songs, 'Hey Now Princess,' was one of the songs I wrote for Cream in 1967. With 'Obsession,' that was a deliberate copying of myself: it's basically 'Sunshine Of Your Love' upside down. 'Life On Earth,' if you analyze it musically, is 'White Room.'

"I think composers—if I can call myself that—get their best ideas when they're young. I did a solo album called *Things We Like*. I wouldn't call it a jazz album because I'm careful with the use of that word. It had John McLaughlin on it. All of that music was written when I was 11. I called it "Things We Like" because that's the name of a grade-one reading book—I like apples. . . . Also, remember that Charles Mingus did an album of him playing piano, of things that he had written when he was in adolescence. I think that a lot of artists of any kind get all of their ideas in their youth, and then they just rehash or refine or recycle."

Suddenly, at the age of 46, Bruce seems to have come full circle. He is reconciling himself to the lasting allure of his Cream songbook, settling differences with his old rhythm sectionmate Baker, and looking to keep alive his current band. Whatever Bruce's less accessible ambitions, this is decidedly a "rock" band, featuring Blues Saraceno, a wily greenhorn who could be his son. (Bruce's own sons, Malcolm and Jason, play a bit of guitar and keyboards, respectively, on the new album; he also has two young daughters by another marriage.) Never one to wallow in nostalgia, Bruce's story is less a case of a comeback than a coming forward.

"Nostalgia's a very dangerous thing to get involved in. I've obviously been asked over the years if I'd do package tours with this and that. I've always said no, because I've never been locked into any particular time. I'm trying to be a working musician. And, you know, I'm doing pretty well at it. I'm bringing four kids up. They've got shoes," he laughs.

"One of the things I'd like to say is that it is possible to play the music that you love, to keep going and to make a living at it. It is possible." db

# THE HARPER BROTHERS

—TRADITION WITH A DIFFERENCE—



CHEUNG CHING MING

By Kevin  
Whitehead

**W**hen drummer Winard Harper talks about the jazz tradition, you hear a familiar tune. There's been an erosion of standards in musicianship in recent decades, and it's time to get back to a solid knowledge of musical craft. All the great masters have had a deep awareness of the past, and The Harper Brothers are following suit.

It sounds like standard neo-con doctrine, a reading from the book of Marsalis. But The Harper Brothers are traditionalists with a difference. If quintets that came up a bit earlier took Miles Davis' great mid-'60s fivesome as a role model—Wynton's first band, Harrison/Blanchard—the Harpers have their ears cocked elsewhere. "Clifford Brown-Max Roach, that was one of my favorite bands," says Winard. "The Cannonball Adderley band was another. I grew up really listening to those bands, and Lee Morgan and Billy Higgins. I guess there was always a hookup between trumpet and drums that I liked." Which makes sense, as his brother (and Harper Brothers' co-leader) Philip is a trumpeter. "Naturally," says Winard, "once our band was put together, there'd be similarities."

Which is what makes the Harpers sound different, as their two albums (1988's *The Harper Brothers* and '90's live-at-The-Village Vanguard *Remembrance*—see "Record & CD Reviews," p. 34) confirm. The youngish bands that echo Miles' trademark melancholy can give you the impression that tradition is a burden: a heavy responsibility. But Brown-Roach and the Adderley unit—a brother act, of course, Cannonball on alto, Nat on cornet—were energy bands. "I was always flabbergasted by Cannonball Adderley's band," Winard says. "They always seemed to have a good time, and played their butts off." "Give them any piece of music, they'd swing it to death," Philip echoes.

Lee Morgan was a jazz entertainer, what with "The Sidewinder"

and "The Rumproller" (both Billy Higgins-powered) and the other upbeat funky tunes he aimed at the jukebox. The Harpers see themselves as coming out of the tradition of jazz-as-entertainment, a tradition that got submerged, Winard says, back when Louis Armstrong got accused of being a Tom, in the heat of the civil rights struggle in the '60s. "We're not trying to spoon-feed anybody," Philip says. "We want people to have a good time."

The paths they took to come to that conclusion seem logical. Philip's highest-profile gig was with Art Blakey, the consummate hard-bop extrovert; Winard's was with Betty Carter, the consummate bebop entertainer. "But don't call us a bop band," Philip warns. "We're more modern than that. When we did a tour of Germany in the fall, people complained some of the music was *too* modern."

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*"Where you come from is going to help you in where you're going."*

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**T**he brothers were born into a hard-bop hotbed, Baltimore—Winard in '62, Philip three years later. Winard got his start doing guest shots with brother Danny's rock & roll band. (Trumpeter and pianist Danny, nine years older than Winard, has contributed a few tunes to the Brothers' book; he did a German tour with the quintet last fall when regular pianist Stephen Scott was unavailable.) "I first played with Danny's band when I was five or six," Winard recalls. "I'd come up and play one or two songs. My father was the one who interested me in playing drums after he saw me beating on some cans when I was about three or four.

"My father was always interested in jazz—his idol was Lester





MITCHELL SEIDEL

Young—and turned my brother on to it. Danny got heavily into it after we'd moved to Atlanta when I was 10 or 11. It took awhile. Then I heard that *Clifford Brown & Max Roach* album, with 'Jordu.' Hearing Max do the things he did—playing with mallets, and 'Parisian Thoroughfare'—fascinated me. But Atlanta didn't have much of a jazz scene, so I was still playing Top 40 and rock & roll in basement bands.

"I really started putting time and effort into being a jazz musician when I left Atlanta in 1980. I went to the Cincinnati Conservatory for a quick minute," Winard laughs—"a semester. But it was about as bad as Atlanta; there wasn't a lot of jazz happening, I felt. I came back to Atlanta, and luckily had the fortune of meeting Billy Hart and Frank Foster. Billy Hart and I got to be very close—to this day we're like brothers. They had come through town for the jazz festival, and did a workshop at Georgia State that I heard about. He encouraged me to leave. He was from D.C., and I had relatives in the area, so I figured if I'm going back to school I'd try Howard University.

"After Atlanta and Cincinnati, Washington was like being in New York. There were enough clubs that I could see music everyday, and enough players I thought I could learn from. I didn't stay in school, because after my first semester I started working around town. I was house drummer at One Step Down for jam sessions on Saturdays and Sundays, and then on Mondays landed a trio gig there with pianist Reuben Brown." Brown, as anyone from that area knows, is one of the jazz world's stubborn homebodies: a fine player who could really make a name for himself if he lived about 235 miles further up the coast.

"I did that gig for about a year and a half, then I formed a band, The D.C. Jazz Quintet. Reuben did the gig a couple of times, and said, 'I really like the band, I got some tunes I think would be nice.' I liked them, and we ended up recording them: 'Haitian Blues' and 'Sonny Boy,' which are on the first album. I have some other ones of his we'll eventually get to."

Not long before leaving Washington for Hartford in 1983, to go study in Jackie McLean's jazz program at the Hartt School of Music, Winard sat in one night with Dexter Gordon. Shortly thereafter, Gordon tapped Winard for a European tour, but after a couple of break-in nights in Philadelphia—during which Winard got a crash course in playing slow—Long Tall Dex had to bow out due to illness. Johnny Griffin stepped in to fill the European engagements—during which Winard got a crash course in playing fast.

Winard didn't last long in school in Hartford, either. He missed the sense of community he'd enjoyed in D.C.—it was time to make his move to the Apple. He got two long-term gigs after he arrived in '84. One was with pianist Abdullah Ibrahim. "When I first did that gig, I had a hard time grasping exactly what to do. But then

we did a tour Sonny Fortune was on; Sonny Fortune explained to me what he felt his concept is. He said it was like playing gospel, with a little bit of r&b from the '60s. He said, 'Just lay in the pocket.' From that moment on, I got a grasp on playing that music. I did that gig about a year and a half, when I wasn't working with Betty, and for a short time after I left Betty."

Winard joined Betty Carter in 1984, through her pianist Benny Green, whom he knew from Connecticut and from sessions in New York. "I played with Betty for three and a half years. We were like best friends for at least three years of it—yeah, the first three," he grins. "I enjoyed that—I have a lot of respect for Betty." It must have been a challenge—Carter's live performances are filled with sudden and dramatic turns, rapid shifts in dynamics, tempo, and mood. "The key to playing with Betty is watching her—if you keep your eyes on her about 90 percent of the time, you'll find out what's happening from her cues, the way her body moves. The drummer makes or breaks that band—if you're right on top of it, it makes everything else move right along.

"Originally, her album *Look What I Got!* was supposed to have two instrumental tracks on it by The Harper Brothers. At the time, her rhythm section and ours were the same—Benny Green, Michael Bowie, and me—and Don Braden [who's on the album] was on tenor. But when we fell out, she took them off."

Other players who drifted through The Harper Brothers band in the early days, when they began gigging around New York in '84, were tenorist Ralph Moore and bassist Charnett Moffett. Recently, James Genus and Kiyoshi Kitagawa (who's on the Vanguard recording) have alternated on bass. Playing on both Harper Brothers albums, and still in the band, are the crisp-sounding pianist Stephen Scott—another Betty Carter vet—and the keening altoist Justin Robinson, who names Jackie McLean as a (conspicuous) influence.



MITCHELL SEIDEL

Philip Harper has been playing trumpet with Winard since The D.C. Jazz Quintet—Philip spent the summer in Washington after graduating from high school in '83, and tagged along to Hartford and New York. (Actually, they settled in New Jersey, right across the river, where they still live.) Philip got his start with brother Danny, too. "I picked up the trumpet when I was about 10," says Philip. "Danny had this record by Lee Morgan—*The Sidewinder*, or something like it. When I heard it, I sat down and listened for 45 minutes. Even at that age, I could hear what he was trying to put across. So Danny gave me a mouthpiece, and said, 'Go buzz on this for awhile.' Finally, he started giving me lessons. He asked me to write a paper, like a two-page school report, on the purpose of air in relation to the trumpet. Of all the lessons he gave me, that was the most important—at that age, it weighed heavy. It made me realize that your sound and tone is all about air. That was a gift to me.

*“There are three steps  
to developing as a player:  
imitation, assimilation,  
and innovation . . . .*

*We’re still in the imitation  
and assimilation stages.”*

“Lee Morgan was my first and main influence. I never sat down and studied him, but if I play a Dizzy Gillespie lick, it’s gonna sound like Lee. When someone plays me a record of his I’ve never heard, I can sing the whole solo. Every player has someone to really connect with like that: Wynton with Miles, or Jon Faddis with Dizzy.

“But my favorite trumpeter is Kenny Dorham, because of what he was able to do with time—the way he interwove those triplets. I can’t sing his solos. I’ve transcribed a lot of them, but even when I play his licks, they don’t come out the same. People sometimes say his technique wasn’t that good, but try to play it—that stuff is impossible! And he could play with anybody—Bird, Joe Henderson, the Messengers, even out with Coltrane and Cecil Taylor on *Coltrane Time*.”

Philip went to Atlanta’s performing arts high school, and studied with the first trumpeter in the Atlanta Symphony. But he says his jazz education began when he started hanging out in clubs, hearing and talking with musicians. “I also studied with William Fielder, a great trumpet instructor at Rutgers—he’s very into air—and with a great friend to me, the Washington trumpeter Webster Young.

“About four months after I came to New York, [organist] Jimmy McGriff heard me playing with tenor saxophonist Leo Johnson at a place in New Jersey. He hired me, and I stayed with him for a year and a half, until he fired my main inspiration there, saxophonist Arnold Sterling, who’s from Baltimore. I sat around for a couple of months, then I got a call from Little Jimmy Scott, who was just making a comeback.” Scott, you may remember, was the ‘50s r&b hitmaker with a high, feminine voice and mesmerizing delivery on slow and sad numbers (see “News” photo, p. 11). “It was amazing to see the effect he had on audiences—everyone had to pull out their handkerchiefs. I got heavily into ballads and interpretation after that; I wanted to get the same reaction from people, to make ‘em cry, laugh, scream, or shout.

“I stayed with Jimmy for about a year and a half, till I began working for Art Blakey, at the end of 1986. The volume intensity stayed on ‘10’ the whole time; it was almost like playing in a marching band. I had to get my chops together. I’d shed every night, trying to get strong enough just to be heard. Before that, when Betty Carter heard me, she said I was just a ballad trumpet player. But Art would also beg me to use the mute, especially on [Benny Golson’s] ‘Along Came Betty.’ He’d say, ‘You don’t have to be scared to play like Miles, or Fat Girl [Fats Navarro]. You could play their licks verbatim, and it still won’t sound like them.’

“Winard is a leader just like Art. There aren’t many drummers like that, where you have to play off his rhythm. Winard has all that, and a lot of finesse. As a soloist, I can take what he offers, and can still do what I want to do.”

In conversation, the brothers have different styles—Philip is intense, Winard laughs a lot. (He says one of his favorite drummers is Monk sideman Frankie Dunlop, “because his playing was always so comical.”) But they see eye-to-eye on the stand—the band is lighthearted *and* intense. “We have the same ideas and like the same kind of music,” Philip says.

Winard: “There’s nothing like playing with my brother, ‘cause we’ve grown up together, and we’ve played with each other for



CHEUNG CHING MING

#### HARPER BROTHERS' EQUIPMENT

Winard Harper uses Sabian cymbals, Vic Firth sticks, and a Canopus snare drum from Japan. The rest of his kit varies, depending on the job—he has five or six drum sets. He prefers an 18-inch bass drum and 14-inch floor tom, and will use either one or two mounted toms. Philip Harper plays a “very old—40- or 50-year-old” Selmer trumpet with a medium-large bore. It has a custom-made lead pipe and is fitted with a Bach 3C mouthpiece.

#### HARPER BROTHERS SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as The Harper Brothers

REMEMBRANCE—Verve 841 723

THE HARPER BROTHERS—Verve 837 033

Winard Harper with Betty Carter

LOOK WHAT I GOT!—Verve 835 661

Philip Harper with Art Blakey

NOT YET—Soul Note 121 105

HARD CHAMPION—ProJazz CD 657 (on  
one track; listed as “J. Harper”)

awhile. We know how the other plays, and there are things we do together at the spur of the moment that work out well. We try to get that with the whole band, ‘cause we all spend a lot of time together.”

Does it ever seem odd to the brothers that they’re playing music rooted in the ‘50s and ‘60s, most of it made before they were born? (When Lee Morgan died, Philip wasn’t yet seven.) Surely they hear the taunt non-boppers like to throw up at young traditionalists, that they should play the music of their own time. “We heard that in Japan, for some reason,” Winard says. “It surprises me they’d drop that on us, like we shouldn’t have respect for tradition, because the Japanese are such a traditional people. Where you come from is going to help you in where you’re going.”

Agreed—but aren’t some players so respectful of the past, they never get beyond it, extending the tradition?

“When I was in school for one semester up in Hartford,” Philip says, “Walter Bishop told me there are three steps to developing as a player: imitation, assimilation, and innovation, and that very few players ever get to that third step. We’re still in the imitation and assimilation stages. We’re trying to get the music back to where it was when people came out to feel good when they heard it. But remember, nobody in the band is over 30 yet. You can’t say what we’ll sound like five years from now. They’re gonna grow. We grow.”

# MICHEL CAMILO

## Caribbean Jazz Classic



By Larry Birnbaum

**"E**nergy is something I believe in," says pianist/composer Michel Camilo. "I want to come on strong from today's point of view, respecting tradition but still making the music come alive. We're living in times that are exhilarating and at the same time stressful, and that has to be conveyed if you want to be a musician of today. You have to express your experience—what you really feel—through your art; that's what makes it contemporary. But we're using the acoustic trio format; maybe that's what shocks some people."

It's hard to believe that straightahead jazz can still be controversial, but like his early idol Art Tatum, who was adored by musicians and fans but scorned by many critics, Camilo may almost be too good for his own good. His first, self-titled domestic solo album (on CBS/Portrait) shot to #1 on the jazz charts; as of this writing, his second, *On Fire* (for Epic), is rapidly climbing the top 10, while Michel winds up his first full-scale U.S. tour. So far the reviews have been mostly raves, but some writers have accused him of playing too many notes—although he makes ample and

eloquent use of space—and of concentrating too heavily on uptempo material—although he excels at ballads. He's also been criticized for being, of all things, too intense, a charge he makes no effort to refute.

"I'm a true Latin," he says, "in the sense that I'm hot and fiery. I'm purposely bringing out that energy in the trio, and I guess it sometimes shocks people who want to hear very soft textures. I do play soft textures, but maybe not enough for them. But I have a duty to go with my feelings; if I'm hearing this power and energy, as well as the soft textures, then that's what I'm going to go for. It's not whether you play too many notes or too few notes; the important thing is the message being conveyed."

Another problem for the Dominican-born Camilo is how to avoid being pigeonholed as a Latin-jazzer. "I'm not against people recognizing the Caribbean heart in my music," he says. "The trouble starts when they only want to hear that side of me. I don't want to feel I have to flavor every tune in a Latin way, because that just clips my wings. After all, my background is originally classical music."

Combining magnificent technique, remarkable rhythmic finesse, and irrepressible *joie de vivre* with a deep immersion in jazz, classical, and Latin traditions, Camilo is fast creating his own camp, with followers like Milt Hinton, Phil Woods, Clark Terry, and even Cecil Taylor, an admirer since Michel's Village Vanguard days with Paquito D'Rivera. "Cecil is one

of my biggest supporters," he says. "It goes to show you, it's all music." Recently Clint Eastwood dropped in to hear Camilo at Catalina's in Los Angeles and stopped backstage to give Michel his compliments.

**C**amilo has stirred up quite a buzz in Europe; last year alone he toured the Continent three times. In the Dominican Republic, where he was once considered a rebel, he's now a hero; he's musical director of the annual Dominican jazz festival he founded, and two years ago was invited back to conduct the Dominican National Symphony, which he joined as a percussionist at age 16. "They really have accepted that there is a Dominican jazz piano player," he says, "and now there are other people there playing jazz as well." And since his U.S. breakthrough, he's been cited, along with Harry Connick Jr. and Marcus Roberts, as one among the fast-rising group of young piano stars poised to assume the legacy of McCoy Tyner and Chick Corea.

It was Tyner, along with Tatum and Oscar Peterson, who inspired the teenaged classical prodigy to take up jazz. A visiting American percussionist, Gordon Gottlieb, turned him on to Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, and Keith Jarrett; later he discovered Bill Evans, Ahmad Jamal, Red Garland, Phineas Newborn, Sonny Clark, and Erroll Garner, whose two-handed octave runs he adopted and whose audible moans he unconsciously echoes. At the behest of Latin-jazz patriarch Mario Bauza,



ENID FARBBER

he also studied the work of Cuban semi-classical composer Ernesto Lecuona, best known for his song "Malagueña."

But Camilo's style is distinctly his own, surging with open-hearted passion and polyrhythmic dazzle. "I go for that percussive edge," he says, "because for a while the piano trio was becoming a cocktail-type thing, and I wanted to revitalize it. I wanted to say, 'Wait a minute, the jazz piano trio still has a lot to say.' So I try to make it very contemporary and give it an injection of energy and vitality." One measure of his success is his ability to attract top young drummers like Marvin "Smitty" Smith, who graces *On Fire* with his superb cymbal work, and Dave Weckl, who was working with Camilo's trio when Chick Corea "discovered" him.

Born on April 4, 1954, into a musical family in Santo Domingo, Michel picked up the accordion at the age of four; at nine he enrolled in the National Conservatory to study piano. "I got exposed by listening to my uncle, who was a very good piano player," he says. "He played Caribbean style—Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Dominican—and a little bit of boogie woogie as well." By 1979 Camilo had earned life tenure with the National Symphony, but he was determined on a jazz career and left for New York with his wife Sandra.

There he studied piano, composition, orchestration, and conducting at the Juilliard School and the Mannes College of Music. To support himself he got a job as

associate musical director of the Broadway show *Dancin'*, in which he played a Bach toccata as well as a piano transcription of Benny Goodman's "Sing, Sing, Sing." After gigs with Mario Rivera and others, he began working regularly with a group of off-duty studio players—including Peter Gordon, Anthony Jackson, Dave Weckl, Gordon Gottlieb, and Sammy Figueroa—called French Toast. His composition "Why Not?" became their anthem; recorded by Manhattan Transfer, the song won a 1983 Grammy award.

**A** music contractor heard French Toast at a club and asked Camilo to write for television. "I said what I always said—'Why not?'—and that's how I survived," says Michel. He wrote mostly news and sports themes like the theme for *CNN Headline News*, the reorchestration of the theme for Peter Jennings' *World News Tonight*, and themes for the broadcast of the Winter Olympics at Sarajevo and the New York marathon. "I got an Emmy for the composition and musical direction of the worldwide broadcast of the Goodwill Games, and it was written for symphony orchestra, so that's not Latin jazz," he laughs. He went on to write music for such movies as *Knight Riders* and *Broadcast News* but has no plans to pursue film scoring. "Not for now, anyway, unless a jazz score comes my way, or something where I can really shine."

From 1983 to 1986 Camilo toured and recorded as a member of Cuban saxophonist Paquito D'Rivera's band, meanwhile forming his own sextet with Anthony Jackson on electric bass and Dave Weckl on drums. For his 1985 Carnegie Hall debut, on the same bill with Brazilian singer Tania Maria, she persuaded him to use an acoustic trio, his format of choice ever since.

The following year he made his first tour of Europe, where his dynamic live performances quickly made him a festival favorite. He also recorded two albums for the Projazz-distributed Electric Bird label of Japan. Since last year's major-label breakthrough he's been in constant demand, from Town Hall in Manhattan to Ronnie Scott's club in London to festivals in Mexico City, Guadeloupe, and Martinique.

Eager students press him for technical tips, but Camilo is still learning. Lately, he's been investigating James P. Johnson's striding rhythms and Jelly Roll Morton's "Latin tinge." But however deep his devotion to jazz, he says, "I try to put my classical background and my Caribbean roots in there as well. It comes in handy to have a classical background; it gives you control over the instrument, and over the form of the music. I think in terms of form a lot. I build the shape of a solo; it's not just playing randomly. Sometimes I say that my music is chamber music for trio, because I really orchestrate for the trio. I believe in the textures and counterlines, in



ARTHUR L. COHEN

### MICHEL CAMILO'S EQUIPMENT

"I require a responsive instrument," says Michel Camilo. "so that when I go for a run the keys won't stay down." For club and concert appearances he insists on a Steinway Model D concert grand, a Bosendorfer Imperial or a Yamaha concert grand. He favors German-made Steinways over their American counterparts, he says, because of their mellow action and clearer tone, citing the Steinway at Kimball's West in San Francisco as "one of the best I've ever encountered."

If a club doesn't have an acceptable instrument, he arranges to have one rented from Pro Piano, a company that services both classical and jazz artists. With the help of engineer Ed Rak, he's worked out a recording technique using six microphones—three inside the piano and three outside—to capture the overall instrumental ambience. "I prefer a piano with medium-heavy action and a deep, roaring bass, but with a milder tone," he says, explaining that with his brightly percussive touch. "I have to be careful" to avoid sounding shrill or brittle.

### MICHEL CAMILO SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

#### as a leader

*ON FIRE*—Epic EK 45295  
*MICHEL CAMILO*—Portrait OR 44482  
*SUNTAN*—Projazz CDJ 632  
*WHY NOT?*—Projazz CDJ 628

#### with Paquito D'Rivera

*EXPLOSION*—Columbia JZ-20038  
*WHY NOT?*—Columbia FC-39548

#### with Gerry Niewood

*SHARE MY DREAM*—DMP CD-450

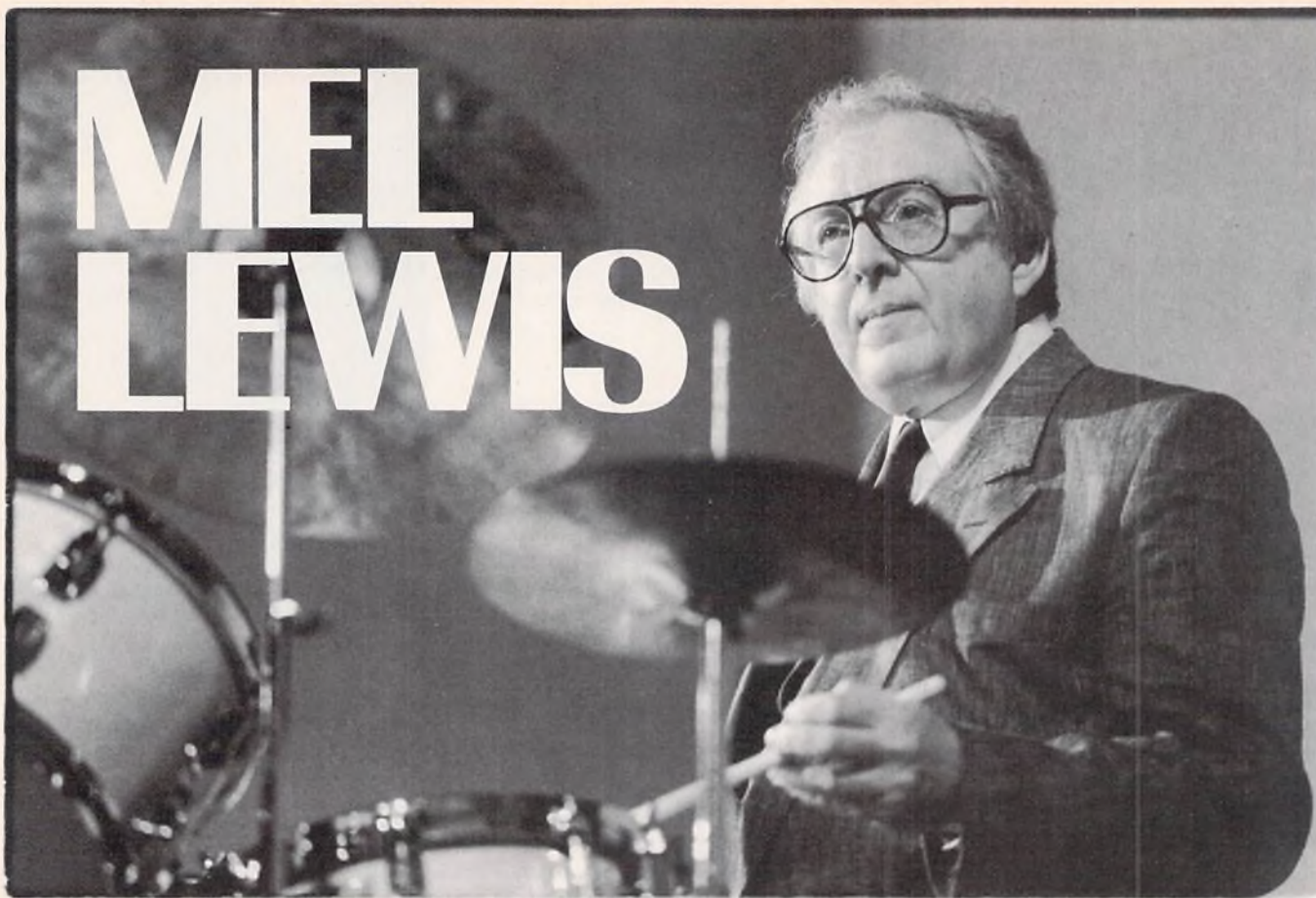
#### with French Toast

*FRENCH TOAST*—Electric Bird K28P 6302

the ensemble things. And I think classical music helped me to understand that.

"When I was playing jazz in the Dominican Republic. They would say, 'Why are you playing that American music?' But I just thought of it as music, the same way I view classical music. I never thought you had to be French to play Debussy, or Polish to play Chopin, or German to play Beethoven. I don't know why you have to be in Camp A or Camp B. I love to be in all the camps, and still be myself, which is the hardest thing." db

# MEL LEWIS



MITCHELL SEIDEL

## FOOTSTEPS IN THE CELLAR

By John McDonough

This month a lot of people will remember 24 years of Monday nights at 178 Seventh Avenue—big band night at the most famous cellar in Manhattan, The Village Vanguard.

It was in February 1966 that the late Max Gordon's famous club, which was established in 1934 and moved to its present sight between 11th St. and Waverly Place in 1935, became the permanent residence for a blue-ribbon band jointly led by cornetist and arranger Thad Jones and drummer Mel Lewis. It was a milepost event.

By 1966, the end was closing in on the great traveling bands of the '30s and '40s. Only about a half-dozen still hung on. Half the leaders were over 60, and all were over 50. It was easy to ignore reality, though, because the music still seemed to sound so alive. Ellington was still the most potent figure, but also the oldest. Kenton, Basie, Harry James, Woody Herman, and Lionel Hampton all led excellent bands. Buddy Rich, at 49, defied grim odds and formed his own band that year. But every fan knew all this music couldn't go on forever. What would happen when attrition had its way and they all were gone?

When Thad Jones and Mel Lewis, who was then 37, opened at the Vanguard in '66, they provided an answer to that question. That's why that February in 1966 was more than just another big band opening. The Jones-Lewis-Vanguard partnership was, in

retrospect, a watershed event. It was a model that offered the big band a new way to survive in a marketplace that could no longer pay it a living wage. Here was the prototype of a fundamentally new kind of orchestra in America—the rehearsal band as a mature musical force.

"I hate that term," Mel Lewis said last December in a phone interview from his home in New York, where he was recovering his strength from several days of radiation treatments for cancer. "A rehearsal band is a band that doesn't work. We work every Monday. And we tour. We started touring two months after we started playing in 1966. We're a working band and we always have been."

Lewis may not like the term rehearsal band, but he has nothing to be ashamed of. More than any other musician in music, he's the man who raised the rehearsal band from a garage orchestra to a major force in contemporary jazz. He helped make it a laboratory for innovation in a form that had been locked into formula for years. He brought the concept out of the backroom and gave it substance, dignity, artistic authority, and most of all, an audience. The only thing he didn't give it was a new name.

"We filled a vacuum," says Lewis, "although I don't think we realized it at the time. But that's how it's worked out. Our rise began when the old surviving bands started to disappear."

But the times would never allow it to become what Lewis likes to call a full-time working band. Working for what? For \$25- or \$50-a-man a night and a love of the music.

Lewis' Vanguard band has always existed outside the rigors of the bottom line. It is essentially subsidized by the pleasure its members take in playing what they want. The music is theirs to choose. Thus, the rehearsal band is compensated for its lack of compensation by an intoxicating artistic freedom that few commercial bands ever enjoyed. Basie always *had* to play "Li'l Darlin'" every night; Ellington, "Mood Indigo"; Herman, The "Four Brothers." Even Buddy Rich became tied to "West Side Story."

But Mel Lewis and company changed the rules. They've never had to play anything. They were tied to nothing they didn't want to hear themselves. Audiences respected this autonomy from the start, and still do. They rarely offer requests. The band is expected to play a different program every set, and this suits Lewis just fine. Thus, Lewis has helped redefine the role of the big band in jazz and made it possible for it to exist and grow free of the tyranny of acceptance. He may have started out in 1966 thinking he was continuing the big band tradition. But actually, he invented a new one.

"We've been a lot luckier than Woody's [Herman] band and just about any road band in another way, too," Lewis points out. "That one night a week means everybody stays with the band, which is important. It's always there no matter what else they do. We never have to change personnel. Road bands never have that kind of stability. We can get the best musicians, and we can keep them for years. It never gets to be a grind."

This accounts for the consistently all-star nature of Lewis' bands over the years. Among the familiar names who have served are Snooky Young, Jimmy Nottingham, Bill Berry, Al Porcino, Marvin Stamm, Jon Faddis, Tom Harrell, Bob Brookmeyer, Eddie Bert, Jimmy Knepper, Jerry Dodgion, Eddie Daniels, Pepper Adams, and Roland Hanna.

The idea clicked almost immediately back in 1966. Before the end of the year, the first in a long line of albums came out. And the albums begat tours—what Lewis calls "real work." "We started touring right after the first records came out," Lewis says. "Typically over the years we've averaged about 12 weeks a year. The first overseas tour was in 1968." And 10 years after Lewis toured Russia with Benny Goodman in 1962, he returned to Russia co-leading his own Thad Jones/Mel Lewis band. In 1979, Thad Jones left his wife, his two children, and the band to remarry and live in Denmark. "I couldn't do anything about it," Lewis says. "And I didn't know at the time that it was all over a chick. He wouldn't talk to me. That's why nothing was written about the real reason." With Jones out, it became just the Mel Lewis band and kept right on touring and playing. It still is. Last summer they played in Japan.

On those tours, maybe it's possible to pretend, as Lewis insists, that this is a real, old-fashioned, working band. But then comes the one hard question: If Lewis and his men had done nothing else but play the Vanguard on Mondays and tour 12 weeks a year, would they be living as well as they are today? "No," Lewis admits. "We get a little salary, but we're not making any money. We don't do it for the money."

What has kept the Mel Lewis band together as much as Lewis' leadership, a love of the music, and Max Gordon's taste and vision (shared by his savvy wife Lorraine, who now runs the Vanguard) is the commercial work that is many a musician's bread and butter. Twenty years ago it was studio jobs. Now it's different. "Studio work doesn't support jazz anymore," Lewis says. "It's theater work. That's the big source of jobs for musicians today. Some of the guys do an occasional rock date. [Trumpeter] Earl Gardner, for instance, in the *Saturday Night Live* band. I used to do studio work for 15 years. I made a very substantial living at it. Now I'm collecting my pension."

After Thad Jones departed, Lewis invited Bob Brookmeyer to take over as musical director. Trombonist Brookmeyer had been writing for the band since its beginnings. But as chief theoretician, he reshaped the band, broadened its range, and, some say, narrowed its audience with a mixture of eclectic new works that seemed to commingle 20th century classical and jazz influences. "I realized without Thad it couldn't be the Jones/Lewis Orchestra anymore," Lewis says. "Yet I had 13 years in the band. I made up my mind that I was going to keep it going. We had to have new music coming in, and that was Bob's job. He did some beautiful things—stuff like 'American Express,' for instance. But I can understand how some people might have been a little surprised sometimes.

"Today, the music comes from inside the band. It always has, really. That's the best. Everyone knows who he's writing for. That's

## MEL LEWIS' EQUIPMENT

Mel Lewis plays a custom-made Pearl set with a 6½ × 14-inch snare, a single 9 × 14-inch rack tom tom, and a 16 × 20-inch bass drum. He plays three ride cymbals: a 19-inch medium Istanbul on the left, a 21-inch medium Istanbul in the center, and a 22-inch Zildjian Chinese symbol with studs on the right. His high-hat is made up of two 14-inch Istanbuls, free-floating. His heads are all calf skin, made by United Rawhide in Chicago. His sticks are the Mel Lewis' model, a light stick made by Capella.

## MEL LEWIS SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

### as a leader

PRESENTING THAD JONES-MEL LEWIS & THE JAZZ ORCHESTRA—Solid State SS 18003

LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD—Solid State SS 18016

CONSUMMATION—Blue Note 84346

SUITE FOR POPS—A&M/Horizon SP 701

MAKE ME SMILE & OTHER NEW WORKS BY BOB BROOKMEYER—Finesse FW 37987

LIVE IN MUNICH—A&M/Horizon SP 724

POTPOURRI—Philadelphia International (CBS) KZ 33152

NEW LIFE—A&M/Horizon CD0810

THE MEL LEWIS ORCH. 20 YEARS AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD—Atlantic 81655

THE MEL LEWIS JAZZ ORCH. THE DEFINITIVE THAD JONES—Musicmasters 60228A

MEL LEWIS AND FRIENDS—A&M/Horizon CD 0823

THAD JONES-MEL LEWIS QUARTET—

A&M/Horizon CD 0830

MEL LEWIS SEXTET THE LOST ART—

Musicmasters 60222F

### with Stan Kenton

CUBAN FIRE—Capitol T731

CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTS—Capitol T666

### with Benny Goodman

BENNY GOODMAN IN MOSCOW—Victor LOC 6008

### with Loren Schoenberg, AJO

TIME WAITS FOR NO ONE—Musicmasters 60137K

AJO/BENNY CARTER: CENTRAL CITY SKETCHES—Musicmasters 60126X

AJO: ELLINGTON MASTERPIECES—East-West 7-91423-2

our future. We're doing a lot of stuff with [pianists] Jim McNeely and Kenny Werner. Oooh, are they writing! The next album will be all them. We usually go through new stuff right on the stand at the Vanguard. But if it's a little tough, we'll call a rehearsal and go over it. The arranger always leads the band through his own work. We always have new things to play. I never want to be one of these guys that plays old music all the time."

This brings us to the other Mel Lewis—the one who plays old music. New York is a town of various musical cultures within the jazz community, most of them separate and mutually incommunicado. The city's big band life tends to be remarkably segregated. Two recent albums, issued the same week in November, 1989, make the point (see "Record & CD Reviews"). One is The Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra: *The Definitive Thad Jones*, the other, The American Jazz Orchestra: *Ellington Masterpieces*. One is a great contemporary big band that plays new music, the other, a brilliant repertory band that plays old music. A look at the personnels shows what one would expect: no musician in one band currently plays in the other. Except for one. Mel Lewis. He moves easily and with complete credibility between these two widely separated sensibilities. He also plays Fletcher Henderson, Bennie Moten, and Eddie Sauter with the Loren Schoenberg band, and the music of Buck Clayton with Buck Clayton. Lewis, in short, is one of the most sensitive and versatile drummers since Sid Catlett.

"I really don't understand why there's so little crossover," he says. "Maybe guys like Loren and the guys in the AJO are willing to give their music more attention. My band isn't as methodical in approaching a chart. All I know is that I care as much about tradition as much as I do about new music. Both give me pleasure and are worth my time and best efforts. Besides, it's 25 years since jazz has produced a real innovation—Coltrane. The past has got to become more important once you reach the limits of innovation."

Mel Lewis' range is unique among jazz musicians, artists who are often typecast and labeled. If he were an actor, his name might be Dustin Hoffman or Laurence Olivier. The original Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra helped mark out a vital new role for big band jazz 24 years ago in the cellar of a Seventh Avenue bar. In the footsteps of its nationwide success, other bands—Toshiko Akiyoshi, Louis Bellson, Juggernaut, among others—were able to break out to national exposure as critics, audiences, and record companies started to listen. Twenty-four years later, Mel Lewis, who's taken his band around the world several times over, is still making new footsteps into that same Seventh Avenue cellar. db

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



## JOHN CARTER

**SHADOWS ON A WALL**—Gramavision R2 79422: *SIPPI STRUT*; *SPATS*; *CITY STREETS*; *AND I SAW THEM*; *52ND STREET STOMP*; *HYMN TO FREEDOM*. (53:27 minutes)

**Personnel:** Carter, clarinet; Bobby Bradford, trumpet; Andrew Cyrille, drums; Marty Ehrlich, bass clarinet, flute; Fred Hopkins, bass; Terry Jenoure, violin, vocals; Benny Powell, trombone; Don Preston, keyboards, electronics; Rochelle Shorts, Jackie Simley, Michael Starr, vocals; Bill Marshall, organ.

★★★★★

Into the mid-'80s, John Carter's foremost accomplishment had been an instrumentalist's, bringing a new vitality to the clarinet. Yet, at decade's end, Carter ranks as a preeminent composer on the strength of his five-suite series, *Roots And Folklore: Episodes In The Development Of American Folk Music*. With the release of the fifth suite, *Shadows On A Wall*, what was increasingly apparent with the release of each previous suite can now be stated categorically: *Roots And Folklore* is a classic.

But will it endure? It has the best odds of any major work of the decade. For starters, the suites have been released one at a time (packaging them individually is a more viable long-term marketing strategy than a \$50 megabox). Even Anthony Davis' *X* can't survive in the public's memory on just yellowing press clippings. Since Carter, in Ellingtonian fashion, has crafted the suites around his sterling septet, a extensive tour for *Roots And Folklore* could be mounted below the cost of an opera's premiere. In short, there's no excuse for the cultural establishment to let *Roots And Folklore* fade into the woodwork.

*Shadows On A Wall* is a fitting conclusion to *Roots And Folklore* because of its very inconclusiveness: there are no unequivocal statements, no coming to full-circle. From the opening strains of "Sippi Strut," one of the meanest vamps this side of Mingus, to the vertigo inducing contrapuntal ensemble passages of "Hymn To Freedom," Carter portrays the urbanization of the African-American experience as more a change of scenery than of circumstance, as the urgency of earlier suites remain in the foreground.

Carter's writing is equally as incisive when detailing the sensory excitement of city life, and the deep-rooted mettle of uprooted lives. His "City Streets" are slippery-sloped fast tracks, his "52nd St." kaleidoscopic; yet, beneath the latter's jarring polyphony are gospel singers in sanctified harmony. The residues of African mysticism are evoked in "And I Saw Them," which features a stirring vocal perform-

ance by Terry Jenoure, part art song, part griot-like recitative, part speaking in tongues.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of Carter's writing, however, is how he has updated the Ellingtonian proposition of composing for an ensemble of improvisors, including himself. *Shadows On A Wall* is brimming with exceptional statements from a septet which has achieved that rare compliment of voices usually associated with smaller units such as the Modern Jazz Quartet and the Art Ensemble of Chicago. There isn't a facile note to be heard in the entire program.

Anyone claiming a serious interest in American music needs to hear *Roots And Folklore*, and there's no better place to start than at the end. (reviewed on CD) —*bill shoemaker*



## GARY BURTON/ PAT METHENY

**REUNION**—GRP CD 9598: *AUTUMN*; *REUNION*; *ORIGIN*; *WILL YOU SAY YOU WILL*; *HOUSE ON THE HILL*; *PANAMA*; *CHAIRS AND CHILDREN*; *WASN'T ALWAYS EASY*; *THE CHIEF*; *TIEMPOS FELICES (HAPPY TIMES)*; *QUICK AND EASY (CD only)*.

**Personnel:** Gary Burton, vibraphone; Pat Metheny, guitars; Mitch Forman, keyboards; Will Lee, electric bass; Peter Erskine, drums, percussion.

★★★★★

What a happy rejoining of forces for these two dissimilar, long separated (since 1976) compatriots! If Pat and Gary had met again at Manfred Eicher's house (ECM Records), he'd have had them talking philosophy and world issues at a formal sit-down; but Grusin & Rosen threw this party, so the banter was of weather and football and old times, and there was barbecue and boogeying and good fellowship all around.

It's been a long time coming, since these two haven't stood up in a studio together since Burton's *Passengers* (on ECM), when Pat was a febrile 22 and Gary a steady 34. The watchword here is textbook Burton, enhanced by former student-turned-compatriot Metheny: easy control, seamless ensembles, fat-free solos, Spartan *joie de vivre*.

This is a rich reunion, fragrant with memories and steeped in affection. All hands are copacetic, and all tracks are exuberant, carefree, reflecting many years and influences: Piazzolla, si, Coleman, no. "Autumn" opens with swirling bright leaves and a crisp breeze, and "Reunion" goes minor 12-bar, a tango blues, with a nice taste of Mitch Forman's composer's piano. "Origin," unfolding Pat's tenderly Spanish acoustic work, is the first of three luscious

ballads, all played with a maturity and affinity they'd never achieved before. (Metheny debuted with Burton in 1973, but really blossomed on his 1975 lead debut, *Bright Size Life*.) Comic relief comes with "Panama," where Gary tickles marimba and Pat phases into sleepy, miriachi brass. "The Chief" speaks of trains, silos, and riding the rails between Indianapolis and St. Joe.

"Quick & Running"—the last and longest (CD bonus) track and the third tune by young Spanish pianist Polo Orti—is fleet and facile, but it takes a pack of pros to make this sneaky, nervous line sound easy. The rhythm, here as elsewhere, stays hand-in-glove, but subordinate to the soloists, who take pretty solos and dialogue brightly. Will Lee plays silky smooth and Peter Erskine peppery, articulating each beat meticulously and doing his shuffle step strut; neither get solos in this crisp, tightly structured format. Who'd expect it? And who cares? Pat and Gary are back at it, as peers and pals, and they are on. (reviewed on cassette) —*fred bouchard*



## MUDDY WATERS

**THE CHESS BOX**—MCA/Chess CH6-80002; including *GYPSY WOMAN*; *TRAIN FARE HOME BLUES*; *MEAN RED SPIDER*; *STREAMLINE WOMAN*; *LITTLE GENEVA*; *ROLLIN' AND TUMBLIN'*, PART 1; *ROLLING STONE*; *STANDING AROUND CRYING*; *FLOOD*; *BABY PLEASE DON'T GO*; *BLOW WIND BLOW*; *HOOCHIE COOCHIE MAN*; *I JUST WANT TO MAKE LOVE TO YOU*; *I'M READY*; *SMOKESTACK LIGHTNIN'*; *YOUNG FASHIONED WAYS*; *MANNISH BOY*; *TROUBLE NO MORE*; *FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS*; *I LOVE THE LIFE I LIVE*, I LIVE THE LIFE I LOVE; *ROCK ME*; *LOOK WHAT YOU DONE*; *GOT MY MOJO WORKING*; *DOUBLE TROUBLE*; *I FEEL SO GOOD*; *YOU SHOOK ME*; *YOU NEED LOVE*; *TWENTY FOUR HOURS*; *MY HOME IS IN THE DELTA*; *GOOD MORNING LITTLE SCHOOLGIRL*; *WHO'S GONNA BE YOUR SWEET MAN WHEN I'M GONE*; *CAN'T GET NO GRINDIN'* (*WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH THE MEAL*).

**Personnel:** Muddy Waters, vocals, guitar, with Sunnyland Slim, piano; Big Crawford, bass; Alex Atkins, alto sax; Leroy Foster, guitar; Little Walter, harmonica, guitar, vocal; Elgin Evans, washboard, drums; Leonard Chess, bass drum; Jimmy Rogers, vocal, guitar; Otis Spann, piano; Walter Horton, harmonica; Fred Below, drums; Francis Clay, drums; Willie Dixon, bass; Auburn "Pat" Hare, guitar; Andrew Stephens, bass; Casey Jones, drums; Calvin Jones, bass; others.

★★★★★

Listen. Trust me. You can never have too much Muddy Waters, especially when it's put to-

gether with the sturdy knowledge, sure taste, fine sound, and generous annotation producer Andy McKaie has used throughout his work with the gold-laden Chess catalog for MCA. So whether you already have a bunch of Muddy, or would like to find out just why so many historians and critics are always making so much noise about his pivotal musical role, the six-record *The Chess Box* is one helluva buy.

Its 72 tracks span 25 years, and the selections add up to a solid, entrancing portrait of Muddy's own musical evolution, motion, shifts, importance. Some tunes are obvious and familiar, though no less necessary in a set like this: how could you do an overview of Muddy without including "Long Distance Call" and "Mannish Boy," "Baby Please Don't Go," and "Got My Mojo Working"? On the other hand, the box boasts 23 relatively rare tracks and 10 that have been previously unreleased—which inevitably sweetens the kitty just enough for Muddy-maniacs like me.

Best of all, it all adds up to a compilation worthy of the name. When Muddy Waters first started recording for Chess in the late '40s, the blues were coming to sonic grips with the Northern urban homes they'd been transplanted to when Southern blacks migrated for factory jobs during and after the war years. Muddy's blues, like Howlin' Wolf's, Robert Jr. Lockwood's, and John Lee Hooker's, were crucial in redefining the sound of the blues, balancing the Delta feel that recalled home and origins with the harder, electrified drive that reflected unfamiliar, frightening, exhilarating city ways. Then came the heyday of the early '50s, the still-formidable blues power of the late '50s, the eclipse of the blues—and every other form of popular music—by its stepchild, rock & roll. During this period Muddy, like many if not most other bluesmen, was often forced back into a folkie mold: acoustic accompaniment ruled, 'cause the folkie audiences misread blues as an archaic folk style. So every bluesman became Mance Lipscomb even if, like Muddy and Lightnin' Hopkins and countless others, they'd been electrified for literally decades. Still, in Muddy's case it meant doing some interesting recordings with Buddy Guy and Willie Dixon that otherwise probably wouldn't have happened.

The British Invasion refocused attention on the blues roots of rock, since so many of the invaders were straight or slightly-bent lifts from idols like Muddy; it also helped focus attention on Stateside blues disciples like Paul Butterfield and Danny Kalb. The birth of the guitar hero guaranteed another twist to that blues revival, as the razorsharp, dense, plotted arrangements pioneered by bluesmen like Muddy yielded to Cream-style extended jams, as the variable-measure feel of country blues hardened into a strict 12-bar format. And of course, the young white players wanted to meet and perform with their heroes, partly just for love, partly to bring the progenitors back into the spotlight. Some of those meetings were ill-advised; the selections here spare you the pain of sitting through them.

What you get served here is great steaming heaps of prime-time Muddy: his deeply resonant hell-fire voice, his slashing and stinging bottleneck, his fiercely honed bands with their intertwined lines, his biting wit and throbbing ache. In short, an over-arching sense of his

towering achievement and its legacies.

Add the peeks behind the scenes that the previously-unissued tracks (complete with studio chatter) provide, and you've got a fine selection. Then factor in the thick, well-wrought booklet: a bio/appreciation by Mary Katherine Aldin of *Living Blues* magazine, a thought-provoking, somewhat revisionist extended essay by historian Robert Palmer, visual memorabilia like label and album covers used as artwork throughout, detailed discographic and session info, and assorted pics of Muddy and the crew from various periods. If you know, or want to know, anything about Muddy Waters and the postwar transformation of the blues, you're gonna have to get this set. Period. (reviewed on LP) —*gene santoro*



## ASTOR PIAZZOLLA

**LA CAMORRA: LA SOLEDAD DE LA PROVOCACION APASIONADA** (LA CAMORRA: THE SOLITUDE OF PASSIONATE PROVOCATION)—American Clave AMCL 1021 CD: SOLEDAD; LA CAMORRA I-III; FUGATA; SUR: LOS SUENOS (SOUTH: THE DREAMS); SUR: REGRESSO AL AMOR (SOUTH: REGRESSION TO LOVE). (48:06 minutes)

**Personnel:** Piazzolla, bandoneon; Fernando Suarez Paz, violin; Pablo Ziegler, piano; Horacio Malvicino, electric guitar; Hector Console, bass.

★★★★★

Astor Piazzolla's *tango nuevo* cuts through reality like a dagger. He is the nemesis of ambivalence, of ego, which informs us that sexuality is the primary repression. To the contrary, consciousness of death is the primary repression. Piazzolla's tangos snarl, the instinct that drives us to transcend human limitation, vulnerability, and mortality. Each squeeze of Piazzolla's bandoneon exhorts this; his compositions are, in turn, systems of pure spasms. *La Camorra: La Soledad de la Provocacion Apasionada* is Piazzolla's latest addition to the available stock of truth.

Piazzolla's innovations are the result of his tapping into the tango's aura of danger, the possibility that passion possesses the kernels of madness. These kernels may lie dormant in the ground fog of lyricism and muted counterpoint of "Soledad," or explode in a metabolic frenzy, tripped by the mercurial cadences of "Fugata," or the slashing thematic materials of the three-movement "La Camorra." Piazzolla's relentless point of view propels all that is new in his tangos, and in all of the album's bristling, bracing intensity.

The level of musicianship in Piazzolla's quintet is uniformly excellent. Still, the work of Fernando Suarez Paz and Pablo Ziegler stands

out. Paz has a laser-like attack, one of the most thrilling violin sounds to be heard today. Especially on the demanding "Fugata," Ziegler's dexterity and articulation are stunning. They more than meet the demands of bringing Piazzolla's vivid, harrowing vision to life.

*La Camorra: La Soledad de la Provocacion Apasionada*—initially, it seems like a pretentious, unwieldy title, until you listen to the music. Then the title comes across as an understatement. (reviewed on CD) —*bill shoemaker*



## GARY THOMAS AND SEVENTH QUADRANT

**CODE VIOLATIONS**—Enja R1 79604: MAX-THINK; TRAF; ZYLOG; THE DAWNING CRESCENT; CODE VIOLATIONS; PADS; ABSOLUTE IMAGES; SYBASE; ADAX.

**Personnel:** Thomas, tenor sax, flute; Paul Boltenback, guitar, guitar synthesizer; Tim Murphy, piano, synthesizers; Anthony Cox, bass; Geoff Harper, bass (cuts 1,3,7); Steve Williams, drums; Dennis Chambers, drums (2,8).

★★★★★

**BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY**—JMT 834 432-1: BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY; CONTINUUM; YOU'RE UNDER ARREST; POTENTIAL HAZARD; TO THE VANISHING POINT; SCREEN GEM; JANALA; AT RISK; OUT OF HARM'S WAY.

**Personnel:** Thomas, tenor sax, flute, synthesizers; Tim Murphy, piano, synthesizers; Anthony Cox, acoustic bass; Dennis Chambers, drums; Greg Osby, alto sax, synthesizers (7,9); John Scofield (1,3,8), Mick Goodrick (6,8), guitar; Geri Allen, piano, synthesizers (4,5,7); Nana Vasconcelos (1,2,4,6-8).

★★★★ 1/2

Gary Thomas has a dark vision. Next to his stuff, Wayne Shorter's post-*Atlantis* output comes off as happy jazz. His edgy compositions, many highlighting long passages of individual improvisation, are not exactly prime candidates for radioplay. And he tends to surround himself with like-minded renegades just waiting for such a chance to stretch out.

On these simultaneous releases (the Enja album was recorded in July of '88, the JMT recorded a year later), Thomas solos with in-your-face intensity and his sidemen follow suit, stretching on funk-based, polyrhythmic vehicles that swing in odd meters. Call it post-bop-techno-hip-hop-out-jazz or the *new new* thing. Whatever you wanna call it, it involves equal doses of John Coltrane, James Brown, Herbie Hancock, computers, science fiction movies, and rap music energy. In Thomas' case, it also involves Jack DeJohnette (his



mentor and most recent employer), whose influence shows up on both of these records. And while both musical statements stand as the perfect antidote to Kenny G. and his "love horn," the more recent of the two is more focused compositionally and benefits from the guest appearances of such strong improvisors as John Scofield, Mick Goodrick, Greg Osby, and Geri Allen. This is ferocious, searching music, not recommended for art gallery openings or wine and cheese bashes.

On both *Code Violations* and *By Any Means Necessary*, Thomas successfully blends warm, acoustic instruments (Anthony Cox's double bass and Tim Murphy's piano) with technology (his IVL Pitchrider gives his sax access to banks of synthesizer sounds via MIDI). "Maxthink," from *Code Violations*, is a good example of the tenor player's muscular blowing in a neo-bop setting while "To The Vanishing Point," from *By Any Means*, is only slightly less intense than Public Enemy's "Fight The Power," powered as it is by Dennis Chambers' monstrous double-bass drum thump. Chambers and Thomas, pals from high school, burn a blue streak on the duet "Traff" on *Code Violations*, which actually sounds like a trio with the aid of Thomas' MIDI converter. And the title cut from that album, a dark opus based on tone rows, has an ominous *Blade Runner*-ish soundtrack quality to it. *Code Violations* also introduces (to my ears, anyway) a strong new voice on guitar in the person of Paul Bollenback, whose Pat Martino-influenced lines help carry the quirky "Zylog" and whose guitar synth lines add an extra edge to "Pads." Bollenback is especially creative in free settings, as he demonstrates on the rubato flute-guitar duet, "The Dawning Crescent," and the freewheeling band piece, "Adax."

*By Any Means Necessary* features a kind of Scofield composite band—drummer Dennis Chambers from his funk-based quartet, acoustic bassist Anthony Cox from his recent, open-blowing trio. Scofield's influence is apparent on the title cut, an aggressive, driving groove that recalls "Protocol" from his *Still Warm* album, and on "You're Under Arrest," an opened-up rendition of the Scofield-penned title cut from a 1985 Miles Davis album. Sco, in fact, really stretches here on his solos, exploring nasty tones and taking it much farther out than he was ever able to do in the service of Miles. "Potential Hazard," from this same album, is a vehicle for Geri Allen's thoughtful touch on the ivories. "Jamala," an atmospheric interlude created by Allen's synths, Osby's synths and alto sax, Nana's vocals, and Thomas' flute, serves as a breather between the more intense moments on *By Any Means Necessary* (a slogan also associated with the recent Spike Lee movie, *Do The Right Thing*). And Osby makes another contribution on "Out Of Harm's Way," a groove utilizing Pitchriders that recalls Osby's "Master Mind" from Jack DeJohnette's *Audio Visualscapes* album of last year. Guitar fanatics should also note the presence of the great Mick Goodrick on the stop-time swing of "Screen Gem" and on the imposing groove of "At Risk," in which he plays "Chasin' The Bird," a cat-and-mouse game with Scofield.

With the release of these two albums, Thomas stakes his claim as a leading light in the new new thing. (reviewed on LP)

—bill milkowski



## CARLA BLEY

**FLEUR CARNIVORE**—Watt/21 839 662-1:  
*FLEUR CARNIVORE; SONG OF THE ETERNAL WAITING OF CANUTE; UPS AND DOWNS; THE GIRL WHO CRIED CHAMPAGNE (PARTS 1/2/3); HEALING POWER.*

**Personnel:** Lew Soloff, Jens Winther, trumpet; Frank Lacy, french horn, flugelhorn; Gary Valente, trombone; Bob Stewart, tuba; Daniel Beoussier, oboe, flute; Wolfgang Pusching, Andy Sheppard, Christof Lauer, Roberto Ottini, reeds; Karen Mantler, harmonica, organ, vibes, chimes; Carlo Bley, piano; Steve Swallow, bass; Buddy Williams, drums; Don Alias, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ★

## KAREN MANTLER

**MY CAT ARNOLD**—XtraWatt/3 LP 839 093-1: *I WANNA BE GOOD; MY STOVE; VACATION; BREAKING UP; PEOPLE DIE; MY CAT ARNOLD; BEST OF FRIENDS; FEAR OF PAIN; MAJOR LOVE; GREEN BEANS.*

**Personnel:** Karen Mantler, vocals, harmonica, organ, piano; Eric Mingus, vocals; Jonathan Sanborn, bass; Ethan Winograd, drums; Marc Muller, guitar; Steve Weisberg, synthesizers; Steven Bernstein, trumpet; Pablo Cologero, baritone saxophone.

★ ★ ★ ½

Two recent releases, by Carla Bley and Karen Mantler, respectively, amount to the year's most intriguing mother-and-daughter jazz love story.

On record recently, mother Bley has been dabbling in intimate and sometimes slightly questionable settings, in duet with soulmate bassist Steve Swallow and in compositional waters more openly soothing than challenging. *Fleur Carnivore*, recorded live in Copenhagen in 1988, announces Bley's welcome return to the big band format she so expertly deals in.

As a whole, the album is an attractive catalogue of Bley's best instincts. Tango or Latin pulses turned sideways, skewed lyricism that just brushes up coyly against supper club suavety, the cool, downward spiraling chord progressions, the thick ululations of her arrangements spring to life here. Bley's band is rife with soloing might, and the boss judiciously doles out solo space. Christof Lauer's tenor flight on "Ups And Downs" is especially ear-seizing, with its syncopations and engaging Monk-ey logic (Monk seems a subliminal guiding light in Bley's approach).

Notably, Gary Valente's muscular trombone sound has become a signature Bley device, and Swallow's lean, slithering bass work is virtually part and parcel of the Bley aesthetic. Swallow rises to the surface for a solo on "Healing Power," while Bob Stewart's tuba holds down the low-end fort and mother and

daughter provide a keyboard blanket of piano and organ. Sparkling moments like this are abundant, testament to the distinctive ensemble weave of Bley's extended musical family.

On *My Cat Arnold*, Karen Mantler displays a lot of traits handed down the bloodline, the most visible one being her mop of hay-colored hair. But this is not to ignore her finer musical points—similar chordal and rhythmic leanings, a satirical cabaret fixation, and a wry sense of humor. However, while Bley inserts said humor between the lines of her charts, Mantler renders it verbal through such vocal tunes as "I Wanna Be Good" and "Major Love," on which she slyly equates matters of the heart and of the harmonic palette: "Major tunes are not so bad/If they're for a guy you really love/I would sacrifice the world for you/And minor-major seven too." Of course, minor-major sevens don't offer a consoling shoulder, but they also don't show up late for dinner.

Mantler's taste for the eccentric and affection for the commonplace sometimes obscures her musical ingenuity. Her poetic sensibility is reminiscent of Annette Peacock's work. The title cut, with its dour radiance and Mantler's peeling chromatic harp playing, is the most poignant song dedicated to a pet since The Beatles' "Martha, My Dear." Mantler's band—a mid-sized unit—includes such jazz progeny as Eric Mingus and Jonathan Sanborn. It's a family affair with no apologies. No doubt, Carla is the most supportive mom anyone could ask for. "Best Of Friends" is a quirky ode to mom: "... No one loves me more than her/Except for my cat Arnold." Mantler has made a tongue-in-cheek paean to the comforts of home. (reviewed on LP)

—josef woodard



## TIM BERNE

**FRACTURED FAIRY TALES**—JMT 834-431-1:  
*HONG KONG SAD SONG/MORE COFFEE; NOW THEN; THE TELEX BLUES; LIGHTNIN' BUG BOUT; SEP; EVOLUTION OF A PEARL.*

**Personnel:** Berne, alto sax, voice; Mark Dresser, contrabass, giffus, bungy; Herb Robertson, trumpet, cornet, laryngeal crowbar; Mork Feldman, violin, baritone violin; Hank Roberts, cello, voice, electronically processed cello; Joey Baron, drums, CZ-101, shacktronics.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

If you're thirtysomething like Tim Berne and most of the outstanding players he's assembled here, the title "Fractured Fairy Tales" conjures up a world. A childhood world, that is, of Saturday mornings in front of the tube—Cartoon Heaven.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

## SOUL SAUCE REVISITED

by Robin Tolleson

**B**efore the Castro Revolution in 1959, Havana was a place where the well-to-do could vacation and hear the most spirited and syncopated Afro-Cuban music. Jazz musicians were becoming hip to the rhythmic sounds—Dizzy Gillespie hired Cuban drummer Chano Pozo to play in his big band at Town Hall in 1947. Diz and Charlie Parker also performed with the bands of Machito and Chico O'Farrill.

After making a splash in Mexico, the late Perez Prado ("King of the Mambo") sparked a Latin American rhythm movement in the U.S. in the '50s with his show band. And West Coast vibraphonist Cal Tjader took up the standard of Latin jazz in the '50s and '60s, recording with Stan Getz, Armando Peraza, Mongo, Willie Bobo, Chick Corea, and Vince Guaraldi.

These new releases from L.A., Austin, New York, and Sweden show that salsa is alive, well, and even growing into the '90s.

*Afro Roots* (Prestige PCD-24018-2; 78:13

minutes: ★★★★★) is a **Mongo Santamaria** compilation package from recordings he did in '58 and '59. The notes of the drums are so clear on "Bata," and when the players build to that final driving groove it gets hearts racing. "Meta Rhumba" gets perfectly joyous—the visual image one gets from hearing these rhythm masters is fantastic. All those arms picking up off the heads at differing, interlocking times, hands lowering for solid blows to the drum skins, dampening and filling. The groove of "Afro Blue" clues you in right away, as does "Onyae" with chants, bells, and the musical slap on skins. Beautiful woodwinds and percussion on "Rezo." Stretching a bit on "Mazacote." *Olé Ola* (Concord Picante CCD-4387; 43:47: ★★½) is Mongo's new release, and it's not as satisfying, though comparisons to *Afro Roots* are unfair. *Olé Ola* plods just a bit, rather than skating. "Mother Jones" conjurs up some of the fast-forward spirit, "Papa Willie" moves, and "Aged In Soul" flows with some fine playing. But even Mongo's "La Tumba" is missing some urgency.

Tasty salsa from the border? Only seems natural. **Beto and The Fairlanes** are some hot blowing Texans that distinguish themselves on *Eye Of The Hurricane* (Fable F-109-CD; 45:35: ★★★★★). This well-recorded effort borders on pop-rock at times but always maintains a spicy edge. The Latin tunes work especially well, but so does the modern big band, as on "Chud." The grooves, driving like "Blanca" (with a fierce trumpet solo steered by Bob Meyer) or a bit laid back on the beat like "Una Voz Llamando," are performed gracefully by percussionists John Treanor and Arturo Garza. The playing here is solid enough but the arranging also shines, such as on the twisting end to "Pacapito."

*Olé L.A.* (Discovery DSCD-961; 67:08:

★★★) is a solid effort from veteran Southern California percussionist **Ed Jones** and his group **Familia**. Horace Silver's "Bonita" and Cal Tjader's "Pauneto's Point" are naturals for the group, and Duke's "Sophisticated Lady" sounds nice with a salsa feel. "Olé L.A." is a dirty, Latin funk with cowbells replacing the backbeat snare. "Soft And Gentle" is one of several effective solos for trumpeter Bobby Rodriguez, and Jones' congas are set up well by syncopated horn lines on "My Salsa Ship" and "Josefina."

**Jerry Gonzalez** is a veteran of the Gillespie band in the 1970s, and one of the young (40) jazzers keeping the Afro-Cuban scene hot in New York. With *Rhumba Para Monk* (Sunnyside SSC 1036D; 72:23: ★★★★★½) he pays tribute to the pianist he feels made his own unique contribution to Latin music. The dance party starts on "Bye-Ya" with a raw drive, then things get into a silky Latin swing on "Nutty." Pianist Larry Willis is in the style, all over the style really, impressive with his depth, discipline, and freshness. The rhythms on "Little Rootie Tootie" and others switch from swing to burning rhumba—drummer Steve Berrios and bassist Andy Gonzalez are right on it. Berrios' solo is tasty and formidable. "Mysterioso" swings just as much as ever with a cowbell leading the charge. This record is designed beautifully, and is a memorable Monk tribute besides.

*Hot Salsa Meets Swedish Jazz* (Amigo AMLP 863: Box 6058, 5-102 31 Stockholm, Sweden: ★★★★★) is an intriguing title, almost funny, but be not deceived. The music is for real. This is a fine mixture of originals by bassist/bandleader **Wilfredo Stephenson** and fresh arrangements on standards like "Night In Tunisia," "Giant Steps," "Bluesette," and "Caravan." "Sangre Nueva," written by Stephenson and pianist Tarbjorn Langborn, gets out of the gate like a triple-crown winner, and is sustained throughout by the churning rhythm capped during a montuno by a fierce Rafael Sida timbale solo. The Peruborn Stephenson has invited some of Sweden's top jazz players to blow, and the results kick ass.

**Eddie Palmieri** has put together a sometimes brooding, sometimes exhilarating collection on *Sueno* (Capitol/Intuition CDP 7913532; 43:51: ★★★★★½) with help from eclectic co-producer Kip Hanrahan. The solid and sure conga master Francisco Aguabella heads a rhythm section with bassist Johnny Torres, Anthony Carillo on bongos, and Charles Cotto on timbales. They're consistently excellent, setting up one slippery, undulating groove after another. A violin trio colors throughout, trumpeter Brian Lynch lets a high one fly on "Just A Little Dream," David Sanborn gets a windstorm going on "Azucar," and guitarist Mike Stern hits his End-of-the-World switch for a metal jab during the one tune that may try too much, "Humpty Dumpty." The two solo piano pieces may be the most fascinating of all. This one's got a little of everything, and it's a personal look at Palmieri, who conceals nothing. **db**

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Recorded at Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin,  
April 4-7, 1985

*There's not a lot one can say with certainty about Solodrumming; on the other hand, an almost infinite number of allusions suggest themselves. The music, as music, offers rich contrasts, ripe ambiguities, of tone and temperament. Precision vs. illusion. Stasis vs. evolution. Predetermination vs. spontaneity. Intelligence vs. intuition. Skin vs. metal. Hard vs. soft. Dark vs. light.*

*But these are abstract, rhetorical, considerations; the particular nature of percussion adds another, physiological, dimension. Undoubtedly the first instrument invented by man (the voice not being an instrument, per se), percussion seems to communicate on a subconscious level, recalling a ritual element in our collective past. The language of percussion is global; spoken, in a variety of dialects, on every continent, by every society, for an assortment of reasons, functions, meanings. We carry a percussive rhythm within us: our heartbeat.*

*Fritz Hauser's percussion music is conscious, deft, forever with an aura of inevitability. Nothing happens other than what will. But precious little is as it appears. In "Tutuguri," the repetitious patterns fit together mosaic-like, yet careful listening reveals dropped notes, phrase shifts, which alter our perception of the whole, confuse foreground and background, like a Bridget Riley painting. "Tic-Tac" unfolds with an authority and formality that imply thorough composition, yet overtones and sympathetic vibrations are incidental, intended.*

*As an alchemist, Hauser alters the weight, shape, density, color, and texture of isolated sounds, transforming cymbal strokes into an opaque cloud, a drum thud into a porous echo, a gong splash into a transparent watercolor. His virtuosity inspires motion studies, dramatic dances of dreamlike aggression and compassion ("Traumbilder"), a manmade maze of acoustic details and phenomena ("Labyrinth").*

*If, as John Ruskin said, architecture is frozen music, perhaps Solodrumming insinuates music as liquid architecture. The space (Martin-Gropius-Bau) in which these sounds originated influences their aural characteristics; clarity of articulation/gesture, exquisite resonance, delay, decay, ambiance, added to Hauser's crisp technique, his formal concerns, his zen conception, create new definitions of those areas we occupy in mind and body.*

— Art Lange  
August 1989

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32

Up at the pinnacle of Cartoon Heaven ranks the now-hard-to-find repository/sampler of arcane jokes and groaning puns and scrambled eclecticism, *Rocky And His Friends*, starring a somewhat intelligent flying squirrel and his dumb-moose sidekick who battled bumbling Russian spies Boris Badenov and Natasha Fatale in epics-by-weekly-installment. Mixed in with the adventures of Canadian Mountie Dudley Do-Right and the hare-brained time-travels of the dog-scientist Mr. Peabody and his pet boy Sherman, "Fractured Fairy Tales" was a treasured segment on the show, featuring Bullwinkle's oddly twisted reworkings of Mother Goose and the Brothers Grimm that ended inevitably with a series of groaners-as-morals.

The allusions fit the mutant serio-comic sounds this crackerjack band spews out. Slashing an opening somewhere between Ornette Coleman, musique concrete, Carl Stallings, The Velvet Underground, Henry Threadgill, and Henry Cowell, Berne & Co. then fracture your perceptual frame into a post-cubist collage that's strident and energizing and moving and provoking and edgy and insistent and very, very funny. Berne's compositions reflect his continuing astonishing growth; he's evolved a language that conveys a hyper-hip, tongue-in-chic sense of a world that's surrealistically playful and painful by immediate turns.

Kinda like a world that's so skewed that George Bush is president, Dan Quayle is vice-president, and Ronald Reagan collects piles of \$ on trips to Japan, telling the Japanese film industry that it's making good old-fashioned American-family-type movies. Kinda like a Saturday-morning world, where Rocky and Bullwinkle, Boris and Natasha, Mr. Peabody and Sherman and the Wayback Machine unfold absurd, hilarious, and telling allegories for kids of all ages. (reviewed on LP) —*gene santoro*



## HARPER BROTHERS

**REMEMBRANCE**—Verve 841 723-4: HODGE PODEG; IN A WAY SHE GOES; REMEMBRANCE; SOMEWHERE IN THE NIGHT; CB; KEYNOTE DOCTRINE; KISS ME RIGHT; ALWAYS KNOW; DON'T GO TO STRANGERS; UMI; YANG.

**Personnel:** Philip Harper, trumpet; Winard Harper, drums; Justin Robinson, alto saxophone; Stephen Scott, piano; Kiyoshi Kitagawa, bass.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

New jazz groups are arriving fast. The Harper Brothers display more maturity than most. The band knows how to savor the reflective moment

before unleashing the chops. The players have a good perspective on jazz.

Originality is not the most important issue to this generation of jazz musicians. Thus, one hears Blakey in Winard's drums, the Jazz Messengers in the ensemble, Lee Morgan in Philip's trumpet, and Jackie McLean in Robinson's alto. These references imply respect for tradition, a way of thinking about jazz.

Philip thinks in terms of laid-back entrances and uncrowded lines, with vocalized effects along the way. He often lands on notes that offer tension in the chord. On "In A Way She Goes," you can feel him search for ideas. In jazz, feeling communicates more than perfect notes do. Robinson's search is interesting to follow. On the first two tunes, he's hard-boiled and angular. On "CB," he turns supple, and in a brief interlude on "Don't Go To Strangers," one of two standards on the album, he's as lyrical as Philip. Throughout the album, he's a solid, developmental soloist.

Scott is less direct, by turns stingy ("In A Way"), playful and Monk-like (his own "Always Know"), and effusive (nice middle-register block chords on "Don't Go"). He gives a nice balance to the band: strong and up-front like the horns, strong and supportive in the rhythm section. Winard guides the structural exposition of each performance, and he's fond of the Blakey-like backbeat. Kitagawa, a young bassist from Tokyo, is another firm timekeeper with spiritual roots in hard-bop.

The album was recorded at The Village Vanguard, the jazz shrine that signifies one's arrival with the fittest in jazz. Judging by this album, The Harper Brothers are perfectly at home. (reviewed on cassette) —*owen cordle*



## FRED HERSCH

**THE FRENCH COLLECTION**—Angel CDC 7-495610-2: DEBUSSY: PRELUDE FROM SUITE BERGAMASQUE; RAVEL: 1ST MOVEMENT FROM SONATINE; FAURÉ: SICILIENNE, OP. 78; RAVEL: PRELUDE FROM LE TOMBEAU DE COUPERIN; FAURÉ: APRÈS UN RÊVE, OP. 7 No. 1; DEBUSSY: CLAIR DE LUNE; POULENC: CANTILENA FROM FLUTE SONATA; FAURÉ PAVANE; RAVEL: NOS. 2 & 3 FROM VALSES NOBLES ET SENTIMENTALES; RAVEL: PAVANE POUR UNE INFANTE DÉFUNTE; SATIE: GYMNOPÉDIE No. 1. (51:57 minutes)

**Personnel:** Hersch, piano; Steve Laspina, bass; Joey Baron, Jeff Hirshfield (cut 11), drums; James Newton (1, 9), flute; Kevin Eubanks (2, 10), guitar; Toots Thielemans (3, 7), harmonica; Eddie Daniels (5), clarinet.

★ ★ ★

Usually, when jazz musicians play classical

pieces—as they've been doing since the days of John Kirby and Tommy Dorsey—the charm of it all is in hearing high culture brought down to earth without the stuffing. To take classical music and de-classicize it.

The intention here seems somewhat different, though. The Fred Hersch trio, assisted by the guest artists listed above, take on a French Impressionist repertoire. But rather than strip it of its sensibilities and make it over, these extremely versatile musicians meet the music more than half-way. Here is jazz painted with "a silk brush"—Jean Cocteau's phrase, I think, talking about the French Impressionist movement of Debussy, Ravel, etc. If the impressionist music of Cocteau's day, with its emphasis on the implicit and the subjective rather than the dense dynamic drive of romanticism, was the New Age music of its time, then why not today?

Although the music is necessarily downsized for trio and soloist, the impressionist aesthetic remains essentially intact much of the time. The pieces are presented straight at first, then opened up. But even the improvised interludes have about them the ambiguity of contemporary New Age music. James Newton's poised flute has a formality about it that serves the music well. His blends with Hersch on Ravel's "Valse" are the collection's high point. (reviewed on CD) —*john mcdonough*



## RALPH PETERSON

**TRIANGULAR**—Blue Note 92750: *BEMSHA SWING; TRIANGULAR; WATER COLORS; PRINCESS; JUST YOU, JUST ME; MOVE; SPLASH; SMOKE RINGS.*

**Personnel:** Peterson, drums; Geri Allen, piano; Essiet Okun Essiet, Phil Bowler (cut 5), bass.

★ ★ ★ ★

**V**—Blue Note 91730: *ENEMY WITHIN; MONIEF; THE SHORT END OF THE STICK; SOWETO 6; VIOLA'S DANCE; BEBOPSKERONY.*

**Personnel:** Peterson, drums; Terence Blanchard, trumpet; Steve Wilson, soprano, alto saxophone; Geri Allen, piano; Phil Bowler, bass.

★ ★ ★ ★

Ralph Peterson is a rarity, a powerhouse drummer who really listens. He shoves a band along and responds to other players' nuances at the same time. His *Triangular* trio has its Monkish side: "Bemsha Swing"'s by Monk and drummer Denzil Best (who wrote another entry, the pop classic "Move"), and there's one standard Monk recorded and on which he based his "Evidence": "Just You, Just Me." Allen fleetingly refers to "Evidence" toward the close of "Just You" (on which Phil Bowler relieves reg-

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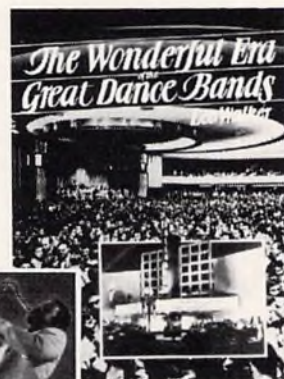
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ular bassist Essiet), but more importantly, the trio's pared-down version of the tune makes it sound as Monk had written it in the first place—without ripping off his version, by the way. Geri's Monk strain has been noted before; the space she allows in her playing lets her play in trios, like this one, in which all members are equal partners. It's equilaterally triangular—Essiet's deep sound, steady time, and sure intonation deal him in; the mbira-like trance of his "Splash" shows his African upbringing.

Monk had a special bond with drummers—think of the symbiosis between him and Blakey, each inspiring the other. Peterson's too smart not to use a few of Blakey's tricks, like the forceful brushwork and chomping hi-hat on "Move." But Ralph's "Smoke Rings" points to the variety of phrasing and tough sonorities he can coax from a kit. He never limits himself, and never coasts on mere muscle.

The drummer's power and finesse are equally evident on his *V*, released earlier in '89. That quintet album also focuses greater attention on his writing—all tunes except Donald Brown's "Stick" are his—and proves he's equally confident handling larger groups and a broader palette. His tunes are designed for blowing, although one bright melody, "Bebopskerony," is catchy enough to stay with you on its own. But the blowing's not simple; the fine tuning of tempo and dynamics that makes *V* victorious begins in "Enemy Within"'s opening seconds. Peterson and Bowler love to dicker with the time, prodding and challenging the crackling soloists. If *V* owes something to Miles' classic quintet and its modern offshoots, it's more fiery than most such homages. Blanchard's playing is especially tart and hot, newfind Steve Wilson's soprano and alto are plaintive and liquid, and Allen again shines in a straightahead context. Taken together, these albums mark Peterson as a drummer to listen to and a leader to watch. (reviewed on LP)

—kevin whitehead



## JOHN KLEMMER

**MUSIC**—MCA 6246: *HIGH LOVE; MUSIC (VOCAL); YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW; GET HIP; THE GIFT OF MUSIC; IF THIS AIN'T LOVE . . . WHAT IS?; THE FIRE OF LOVE; MUSIC (INSTRUMENTAL); MY LIFE, MY LOVE; MUSIC (ENAMORATA); TOUCH; GLASS DOLPHINS; SLEEPING EYES; TOUCH (REPRISE)*. (75:33 minutes)

**Personnel:** Klemmer, tenor sax, vocals, piano, percussion, effects; Ronnie Foster (all cuts), John Hobbs (2), Robert Etoll (2), Dove Grusin (11-14), Mike Lang (11-14), keyboards; John Tropea (all cuts), Calib Quaye (4), Larry Carlton (11-14), guitar; Abraham Laboriel, Chuck Dononico (11-14), bass; Harvey Mason, Steve Schaeffer (2,8), John Guerin (11-14), drums; Lennie Castro, Louis Conte (4), Joe Porcaro (11-14), percussion; Emil Richards, kalimba (6); Amy Wilkins, harp; Ellis Hall, vocals, synth bass, guitar, drum programming; David Batteau, vocals (12); Stephen Zipper, sampling.

★ ★ ½

## RICK MARGITZA

**COLOR**—Blue Note CDP 7 92279 2: *WIDOW'S WALK; COLOR SCHEME; FERRISS WHEEL; OUR SONG; WALTZ; CHANGE-UP; ANTHEM; BRACE YOURSELF; KARENSONG; WE STAND ADJOURNED; POINT OF VIEW*. (54:50)

**Personnel:** Margitza, tenor, soprano saxes; Steve Masakowski, guitar; Joey Calderazzo, piano; Jim Beard, synths; Marc Johnson, bass; Adam Nussbaum, drums; Airtio Moreira, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ½

Those who like challenges in their music might be miffed at John Klemmer, who has apparently given up on jazz and even fusion to release this set of what we used to call "make-out music." Young saxman Rick Margitza served an apprenticeship with Miles and takes a few more chances on his solo debut, although it's nearly as predictable as Klemmer's echo wonderland at times.

Granted, *Music* is sophisticated make-out music, but the only challenge on this disc was finding as much ear candy as possible to fill the grooves with. The production is superb—at times the percussive use of voice sampling is interesting, but it doesn't work for a whole record. Klemmer, known for echoplex excess, has been out of the studio for several years due to health problems. Upon returning, he seems to have discovered sampling and gone nuts with it.

Klemmer gets in some soulful blowing on "Music," and Ellis Hall's contributions on vocals and rhythm tracks are noteworthy on "If This Ain't Love . . . What Is?" Klemmer knows how to pick a rhythm section, but Harvey Mason has certainly had more interesting sessions. The real star of the show becomes the sampled bell tree. You keep waiting for Barry White to show up, and he never does.

The occasional blandness of Margitza's debut is spelled with welcome exceptions like the swinging "Ferriss Wheel," where the saxman plays the head with a spryness, then takes it out when he has the chance. I'm not sure exactly where the gravel-lish "We Stand Adjournd" is coming from, and I like it. His soprano work (hello, Wayne) on "Our Song" shows discipline and some flair, but there is a sameness about his rhythmic approach during other solos. It becomes a bit too familiar.

The band is filled with young notables—Steve Masakowski gets good mileage out of his seven-string electric on "Brace Yourself," as Airtio gets a firestorm going behind him. Joey Calderazzo makes the most of his turn at the plate on "Change-Up" with a triple into the

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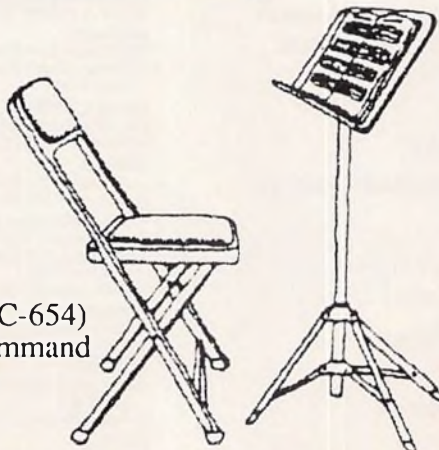
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MEL LEWIS

**THE DEFINITIVE THAD JONES**—Musicmasters CIJD 60228: *LOW DOWN*; *QUIETUDE*; *THREE IN ONE*; *WALKIN' ABOUT*; *LITTLE PIXIE*. (51:07 MINUTES)

**Personnel:** Lewis, drums; Dick Oatts, Ted Nash, alto saxophone; Joe Lovano, Ralph Lalama, tenor saxophone; Gary Smulyan, baritone saxophone; Earl Gardner, Joe Mosello, Glenn Drewes, trumpet; Jim Powell, trumpet, flugelhorn; Stephanie Fauber, french horn; John Mosca, Ed Neumeister, trombone; Earl McIntyre, Douglas Purviance, bass trombone; Kenny Werner, piano; Dennis Irwin, bass.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

**THE LOST ART**—Musicmasters CIJD 60222F: *HELLO*; *VOYAGER*; *BULGARIA*; *NATIVE AMERICAN*; *ALLANJUNEALLY*; *BALLAD MEDLEY ('TIL THERE WAS YOU*; *IN MY SOLITUDE*; *MY IDEAL*; *THE LOST ART*); *TRIO FOR B.B.*; *ONE FOR MAX*; *OLD RANGER*; *FACE VALUE*; *GOODBYE*. (64:28)

**Personnel:** Lewis, drums; Dick Oatts, tenor, soprano saxophone; Gary Smulyan, baritone saxophone; Jim Powell, flugelhorn; John Mosca, trombone; Kenny Werner, piano; Dennis Irwin, bass.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Mel Lewis makes the rhythm flow. He defines the beat, of course, so that one feels the tension and relaxation of the music around it. But he creates a continuous line of rhythm, with attention to dynamics, phrasing, color, and feeling. Listeners know when it's Mel playing.

Mel's flexibility—and hence, the flexibility of the rhythm section—colored the original Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra as much as the late Thad's arrangements. The two leaders formed the band in 1965, and Mel kept it going when Thad split in 1978. By then, Thad's writing style had become the most influential modern big band sound of the decade. Mel's style was more elusive. Not everyone wanted to—or could—deal in such subtlety and quiet strength. The best way to hear the band has always been at its regular Monday night gig at The Village Vanguard, where *The Definitive*

Thad Jones was recorded in 1988.

As in Duke Ellington's band, certain chairs seem endowed by the ghosts of sidemen past. Smulyan, in "Three In One" and "Little Pixie," is particularly effective in the Pepper Adams-baritone saxophone role. And Mosca, also heard in "Three In One," recalls Jimmy Knepfer. The tenors carry on the Joe Farrell-Eddie Daniels tradition of vigorous, sometimes outside exploration. Overall, this set of Jones compositions and arrangements shows the unity of the band. It's doubtful if any but a longstanding unit could play the complex (and now accelerated) "Little Pixie." The way the band breathes dynamics together doesn't happen overnight, either.

All the tunes except "Low Down" have been recorded before. ("Walkin' About" was not released in the U.S.) Each illustrates how Thad's writing and the band's performance make complexity swing. It's an intricate style based on the reeds-versus-brass concept and the Basie-associated lightness and fluidity of the rhythm section. It couldn't happen this way without Mel's leadership, though.

As for the rating, I've knocked off a half-star because the remakes seem slightly less exciting than the originals. This band's record of excellence is a tough act to follow.

We hear a different Mel Lewis in *The Lost Art*. The title refers to Mel's versatility, which is showcased in Werner's modern orchestral writing for sextet (or quintet, in the case of "Old Ranger," which marks Powell's lone appearance). One feels the influence of Bob Brookmeyer's eclectic, latter-day concert band style in the arrangements. As for the drums, Mel goes outside the swing and bebop concepts he is often identified with and into the realm of adventurous, up-to-date interaction. But he still swings and affects plenty of subtlety.

If I may digress a minute, I saw the Jones-Lewis Orchestra in May 1967 at the Vanguard—a Southerner's one and only trip to New York. Joe Farrell was soloing at length and suddenly Mel juggled the rhythm and percussion sounds like someone slipping on ice, drums and tenor scattered everywhere. It was a great moment in outside playing, and then Joe and Mel came back into time together and led the band home. This is how I feel about the surprises and spirit in this album.

The album begins and ends with short drum solos, and the title track is a drum solo with brushes. (How many drummers like to play solos at ballad tempo?) Werner's comments in Burt Korall's liner notes cite various influences and dedications among the other performers: Andrew Hill in "Voyager," British drummer Allan Ganley and his family in "Allanju-neally," Brookmeyer in "Trio For B.B.," Horace Silver in "One For Max" (Gordon), and the Miles Davis band of the '60s in "Old Ranger."

The scope of the solos is less diverse than the tunes, but Oatts (who wrote "Native American" and "Face Value") proves plenty versatile, ranging from Bird to Coltrane to Shorter. Werner ranges pretty wide, too, with references to classical music as well as to Tatum, John Lewis, and Bill Evans. Smulyan and Mosca are as engaging here as on the big band album. Irwin's tone and feeling, which are just right, are a throwback to the days when the bass was a bass and not a guitar. The main impression of the solos on this album is how well

developed each one is. The main impression the album conveys is that the music is moving forward. (reviewed on CD) —*owen cordle*



## FRANK MORGAN

**MOOD INDIGO**—Antilles 7 91320-2: LULLABY; THIS LOVE OF MINE; IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD; BESSIE'S BLUES; A MOMENT ALONE; MOOD INDIGO; UP JUMPED SPRING; POLKA DOTS AND MOONBEAMS; WE THREE BLUES; 'ROUND MIDNIGHT; LULLABY; GRATITUDE. (54:16 minutes)

**Personnel:** Morgan, alto saxophone, voice (cut 12); Wynton Marsalis (4,6), trumpet; George Cables (1,3,8,10,11), Ronnie Mathews (2,4,6,7), piano; Buster Williams, bass (2,4-7,9,10); Al Foster, drums (2,4,6,7,9,10).

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## OUT OF THE BLUE

**SPIRAL STAIRCASE**—Blue Note CDP 7 93006 2: NORTH OF THE BORDER; SAMBA LA RUE; THE PERPETRATOR; SPIRAL STAIRCASE; GERRI-ANN; IKA SASHI; INPUT. (47:43)

**Personnel:** Michael Philip Mossman, trumpet; Steve Wilson, alto saxophone, flute (6); Ralph Bowen, tenor saxophone; Renee Rosnes, piano; Kenny Davis, bass; Billy Drummond, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

You've probably seen the advertisement for Frank Morgan's new album. Some scribe over at *Esquire* hails the man as the best alto saxophonist under the sun, while panjandrum Wynton Marsalis and venerable *db* contributor Leonard Feather also offer laudation. No hollow praise at all, the accolades being entirely justified... Morgan's a mature master of jazz music, and *Mood Indigo* is the most arresting of several outstanding recordings he's made since his Lazarus-like reappearance on the scene in the mid-'80s after 30 years of personal torment.

Where the bulk of his "comeback" waxings on Contemporary exalt bebop, Morgan's Antilles debut follows a less noticeable praise unto Bird's course, calling attention to the open-hearted, communicative side of his musical personality and thereby holding out appeal to the uninitiated as well as mainstream jazz fans. The listener's well positioned for a tête-à-tête encounter with Morgan: the songs are reassuring and the tempos mostly reasonable and subdued. Even Morgan's more complicated runs appear effortless, orderly, outreaching.

Producer John Snyder and presumably the altoist himself have chosen well-known Ellington songs, jazz staples, an accessible Coltrane blues, a Sinatra tune, and a couple of originals

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The sensitivity and concern with which these two approach this meeting is manifested in the music's subtlest elements ("God lives in the details," as Mies van der Rohe reminded us). From the opening moments, where Max sculpts dramatic and delicate gong and cymbal shapes in the air in support of the pastoral melodicism of Anthony's soprano sax, to the spry soprano and drum duet dance at the close, the music is full of marvelous episodes and minute particulars - none of which can be divorced from the flow of the whole. Braxton has told me of his sense of total communication between them, and how he "never felt a moment of separation". This, too, is everywhere audible - the intensity, and cohesion, and tension, demands sustained attention throughout.

And the rewards are great. To recognize the humor (the fragility of Roach's chimes against Braxton's gruff contra-bass-clarinet), the adaptiveness (after the initial alto explosion, with Max on traps, hear how Braxton insinuates his soprano into the drummer's torrid phrasing), the formality (a particularly architectonic alto solo - the second - off of a self-generated three-note cell while tom-toms thunder), expertise (Roach keeping an intricate and regular bass drum pattern while forging deft counter-rhythms with his hands), simplicity (Max's barest backbeat which, in its dynamically effective lack of extravagance, inspires Braxton's expressive blues playing... including the traditional tag!) - to recognize these characteristics while maintaining contact with the ritual importance of the total experience is to share the moment of creation, and its meaningfulness, with the musicians. It's a rare opportunity. But it's here.

- Art Lange

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penned by either Morgan or date pianist George Cables that you'd swear to having heard elsewhere. Furthermore, the program has the pleasingness of an excellent, refined meal: right from Morgan's appetizing, exquisite duet with Cables ("Lullaby") through several main dishes—all expertly seasoned, be they served in trio, quartet, or quintet settings—on to a deliciously light dessert (another Morgan-Cables take of "Lullaby") and the benediction of a brief, spoken appreciation on life by this most kindly of men ("Gratitude"). There's also an appealing mid-program side dish by self-assured bassist Buster Williams—a solo sans accompaniment entitled "A Moment Alone."

Disciplined, unwavering, and never prone to cliché, Morgan's alto positively knives or flutters out of our speakers, the sound of it pure, colorful, and poignant in expression. He scrutinizes Freddie Hubbard's "Up Jumped Swing" and Ol' Blue Eyes' "This Love Of Mine" for their uplifting romantic content, looks yearningly into the inherent beauty of "In A Sentimental Mood," and cuts a singularly saucy mood in his "We Three Blues." The other musicians on the album—follow romantic Cables, lively pianist Ronnie Mathews, Wynton Marsalis, Williams, and drummer Al Foster—convey significant sincerity and stand tall for their adeptness, though they cannot equal the artistry of the saxophonist.

On a more mundane level, Out Of The Blue triumph with *Spiral Staircase*, the fourth album attributed to the band and the first featuring mainstays Philip Mossman and Ralph Bowen alongside their present helpmates. Forever drawing inspiration from the Blue Note recordings of the '50s and '60s, OTB achieves a facility of expression that allows the players to perform harmonically and rhythmically challenging hard-bop without seeming stiff, calculated, or chary. Mossman's songful trumpet, with its limpid, crackling tone, arguably carries the greatest emotional weight, but that's not to say the rest lack honest feeling.

All the tunes—a good bunch outfitted with mostly proficient playing—come from within the sextet, while the arrangements show every sign of having been done by revivalists who knew how to marshal ebullience with care and reason. (reviewed on CD) —frank-john hadley

**EGBERTO GISMONTI**  
**DANÇA DOS ESCRAVOS**



**EGBERTO GISMONTI**

**DANÇA DOS ESCRAVOS** — ECM 837 753-2: 2 VIOLÕES (VERMELHO); LUNDU (AZUL); TRENZINHO DO CAPIRA (VERDE); ALEGRINHO (AMARELO); DANÇA DOS ESCRAVOS (PRETO); SALVADOR (BRANCO); MEMÓRIA E FADO (MARROM). (40:15 minutes)

**Personnel:** Gismonti, six-string contralto guitar; 10-, 12-, and 14-string guitars.

★ ★ ★ ★

**CARLOS PAREDES**

**GUITARRA PORTUGUESA** — Elektra/None-such Explorer 979203-2: VARIACOES EM RE MAIOR; CANCAO VERDES ANOS; DIVERTIMENTO; ROMANCE NO. 1; DANÇAS PORTUGUESA NO. 1; VALSA; FANTASIA NO. 1; I. VARIACOES SOBRE UMA DANÇA POPULAR; II. MUDAR DE VIOLA (TEMA); III. MUDAR DE VIOLA (MUSICA DE FUNDO); IV. ANTONIO MARINHEIRO (TEMA DE PECA); V. CANCAO; MELODIA NO. 1. (38:51)

**Personnel:** Paredes, Portuguese guitar; Fernando Alvim, guitar; Tiago Velez, flute.

★ ★ ★ ★

The connection between Carlos Paredes and Egberto Gismonti is strong and uncontrived, one extending beyond an old world/new world continuum of instrument and tradition. It is the bond of music as a moral weapon. In the '60s, Paredes subverted the then-seemingly interminable Fascist rule in Portugal with a music rooted deep in the national psyche. At a time when Brazil is faced with overwhelming economic and ecological crises, Gismonti's *Dança dos Escravos* (Dance Of The Slaves) evokes Brazil's colonial past to create a stunning metaphor.

Once adjusted to the heavier, cittern-like sound of Paredes' Portuguese guitar, it is possible to clearly hear the antecedents of the angular melodies and treacherous resolves that are Gismonti's stock in trade. Though Paredes' music is markedly the more plain-spoken, it has a sharp, double edge and many dark recesses.

It is not a music of daredevilish virtuosity, though Paredes periodically reminds the listener of his mastery in an ungratuitous manner. Rather, it is a music that forwards a fundamental Portuguese sensibility, the sadness of Fado, the slow, intoxicating, street-wise Portuguese folk music. Still, there is room for exuberant, if measured, flight in Paredes' music, and the resulting gliding lyricism is frequently found on *Guitarra Portuguesa*.

*Dança dos Escravos* is the most ambivalent statement Gismonti has released on ECM, his tropical lyricism counterbalanced by an occasionally palpable gravity. While the program includes the joyous sprints that characterize Gismonti's soaring spiritedness, the album has a persistent melancholy, and much of it—the stark title piece, the reflective "Memória e Fado," and Villa Lobos' pensive "Trenzinho do Caipira"—stems from the Portuguese factor in the Brazilian creative equation. Compared to Paredes' music, Gismonti's program is lush and exotic, attributable, in large part, to well-utilized overdubbing and several unusual instruments. Gismonti has never been a naive romantic, but never has he sustained the restiveness that permeates *Dança dos Escravos*.

While *Guitarra Portuguesa* and *Dança dos Escravos* are but two points along a trajectory across centuries and an ocean, they give even the uninitiated listener a vivid example of how the essence of a musical tradition remains vitally intact, no matter how much it is permu-



tated by time, migration, and new blood. (reviewed on CD)  
—bill shoemaker



### GEOFF KEEZER

**WAITING IN THE WINGS**—Sunnyside 1035D: *THE DRAWING BOARD; ACCRA; PIERCE ON EARTH; WHO CARES; WAITING IN THE WINGS; PERSONAL SPACE; TROPOPAUSE; BA-LUE BOLIVAR BA-LUES-ARE; I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT YOU; BABES IN MCCOYLAND; THREE IN ONE.* (69:59 minutes)

**Personnel:** Keezer, piano; Bill Mobley, trumpet; Billy Pierce, tenor, soprano saxophone; Steve Nelson, vibes; Rufus Reid, bass; Anthony Reedus, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

### NIELS LAN DOKY

**DAYBREAK**—Storyville 4160: *DAYBREAK; NATURAL; JET LAG; FINAL DECISION; WHY; ALL OR NOTHING AT ALL.*

**Personnel:** Loky, piano; John Scofield, guitar; Niels-Henning Orsted Pedersen, bass; Terri Lyne Carrington, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

### BENNY GREEN

**IN THIS DIRECTION**—Criss Cross Jazz 1038: *THE FRUIT; WHAT IS THERE TO SAY; DEALIN' WITH A FEELIN'; I'LL KEEP LOVING YOU; TRINKLE TINKLE; AIR DANCING; TOKU-DO; TO WISDOM, THE PRICE.* (57:41)

**Personnel:** Green, piano; Buster Williams, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

In the '70s, all the new pianists copied Bill Evans and McCoy Tyner. In the '80s, tastes were more comprehensive. Bebop made a comeback and so did the influence of Bud Powell, Thelonious Monk, and Horace Silver. For the orchestrally inclined new pianists—those who approach the instrument as if it were an orchestra—there were Art Tatum, Oscar Peterson, and Ahmad Jamal to be studied.

Now, at the beginning of a new decade, the future of the piano looks bright. Young pianists are emerging with a sense of their own voices. It is no longer enough to be a perfect copy of Evans or a brilliant synthesis of Tyner and Tatum. One must establish his own identity beyond the discernable, eclectic influences.

The '70s were not devoid of such emerging pianists, of course, but the pace accelerated in the '80s. And the pianists seemed to be finding themselves at younger ages. Peer pressure created by the Marsalis generation has

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For evidence, listen to these releases by Green, Doky, and Keezer, who were, respectively, 25, 25, and 17 at the time of recording. For comparison, we can say that Green is most boppish, Doky most rhythmically and harmonically modern, and Keezer most orchestral.

The compositions in the Green album offer a clue to his direction. "The Fruit" and "I'll Keep Loving You," both by Powell, and "Trinkle Tinkle," by Monk, set up the bebop connection. Green's spare, biting chords and purposeful, dancing lines unveil his favorite musical era here and throughout the album. The trio sometimes puts you in the mood of the Sphere rhythm section (Kenny Barron, Williams, and Ben Riley). I like the way Williams sustains notes on the slower tempos to fill out the trio sound ("What Is There" and his own "Air Dancing," for example). This allows Green the freedom to select the best notes without rushing to fill up all the space. But when it's time to cook, as on Green's "Dealin'," the pianist is no slouch. Altogether, this album shows the enduring qualities of bebop and the beauties of the well-meshed piano trio.

Doky's *Daybreak* is more "flat out," to borrow the title of Scofield's latest album. These are no-letup players. On the title cut, the pianist kicks and spins like Tyner. Scofield roars down the runway, and Pedersen and Carrington engage in some very aggressive interaction. This is one of five originals by Loky in the album—all show his command of bass figures, modal and blues structures, and rhythmic enticement. You expect a pianist from Europe—Doky is from Denmark (as is Pedersen)—to have a romantic streak. Doky does, and it surfaces in chords reminiscent of Evans, but he refuses to stay in this mood very long. It's just as well, because Scofield burns throughout the album. He and Doky share a spirit of harmonic adventurousness—changes on top of changes. I like Carrington's springy, Tony Williams-meets-Art Blakey feeling on "Jet Lag" and the buoyant ensemble groove on "All Or Nothing," the LP's only standard. This album is interesting because it gives some future scope to the acoustic piano. It sounds fresh.

The sound of piano, vibes, and drums opens Keezer's *Waiting In The Wings*. The voicing of the vibes with the rhythm section gives a different color to the hard-bop or neo-hard-bop combo, Keezer's chief ensemble focus. There are also four trio cuts and a solo track (Ellington's "I Didn't Know"). As a pianist, Keezer works in broad strokes, with the splashy, florid, rhythmically charged style of a Peterson or a Jamal. As a composer, he works from the oblique angles favored by the '80s generation of acoustic jazz musicians. Mobley, Nelson, and Pierce are from that generation. Each has his models (Hubbard, Shaw, Hutcherson, Coltrane, et al.), but each is mature, or nearly so. One of the album's most lyrical pieces is Keezer's "Pierce On Earth," a feature for the tenor man. As in the case of the other albums, the bassist and the drummer are vital and uplifting.

With all these positive comments, why not give each album five stars? I thought about it, but then thought about a lot of jazz piano history. Compared to that lineage, these emerging pianists are very good, a comment meant positively and respectfully. (reviewed on CD, LP, and CD) —*owen cordle*



## THE AMERICAN JAZZ ORCHESTRA

**ELLINGTON MASTERWORKS**—East-West 91423-2: *SEPIA PANORAMA; JOHNNY COME LATELY; ALL TOO SOON; KO KO; CHLOE; BOJANGLES; COTTON TAIL; WARM VALLEY; SIDEWALKS OF NEW YORK; MAIN STEM; JACK THE BEAR; TAKE THE 'A' TRAIN; CONCERTO FOR COOTIE; CONGA BRAVA; ROCKIN' IN RHYTHM.* (55:23 minutes)

**Personnel:** John Eckert, Virgil Jones, Bob Millikan, Marvin Stamm, trumpets; Eddie Bert, Jimmy Knepper, Benny Powell, trombones; Norris Turney, John Percell, Bill Easley, Loren Schoenberg, Danny Bank, saxophones; Dick Katz, piano; Howard Collins, guitar; Mel Lewis, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## DUKE ELLINGTON

**ORCHESTRAL WORKS**—MCA Classics MCAD 42318: *NEW WORLD A' COMING; HARLEM; THE GOLDEN BROOM AND THE GREEN APPLE.* (54:39)

**Personnel:** Ellington, piano; Cincinnati Symphony, conducted by Erich Kunzel.

★ ★ ★

When Ellington wrote his big, symphony-sized pieces, he probably heard them in his mind sounding as they do here in the hands of the Cincinnati Symphony. But since he had to make do with his own band most of the time, the rest of the world become familiar with them through that voice. Thus, it's startling to hear, for instance, "Harlem" "pronounced" not by Ray Nance's plunger trumpet but by a sequence of english horn, oboe, and clarinet. Nevertheless, as an expression of composer intent, these may be as pure examples of Ellingtonia as any 1940 Victor record.

The album (a reissue of a 1970 Decca LP) offers the only recording I'm aware of, outside of a rare mid-'40s air shot, of "New World A'Coming," a loose, 11-minute piano concerto. It's a thin and overly-long piece, with the orchestra entering periodically, providing breadth and texture but little substance. Ellington's firm piano is relatively formal. A comparison with the early broadcast recording reveals little latitude for improvisation. The thematic material, which seems to flicker occasionally with hints of Billy Strayhorn's later and more beautiful "Lotus Blossom," is attractive but camouflaged in too many arpeggios.

"Harlem," commissioned by the NBC Symphony in 1951 and which Ellington recorded several times, has greater strength as a composition and hangs together nicely, with some of the cleverest transitions Ellington ever devised through a diverse series of moods and tempos. Given the different instrumentation, a

few liberties have been taken with the original score, but none that radically alter the piece. "Golden Broom" is a three-part program piece that Ellington wrote for the New York Philharmonic in 1965. Though it sounds more like a film score than an integrated orchestral work, it's nevertheless light, breezy, melodic, and occasionally sly. Ellington's narration plus comments on the other pieces are included.

A much more familiar Ellington comes from John Lewis and The American Jazz Orchestra. This is the second new album in a year to get past the familiar Ellington standards and tackle the essence of the mythical, early '40s period. Last year, Claude Bolling and a French orchestra produced some of the best post-Ellington Ellingtonia. Excellent as it was, though, this AJO set is better. The tempos in a couple of cases are better. The repertoire is generally fresher and more unexpected. And the sensitivity of the musicians to the material is evident in the solos and the playing of Mel Lewis, who dances skillfully around Sonny Greer without ever copying him.

On tempos: Bolling's "Cotton Tail" was a bit fast. But his offense was nothing compared to the way Ellington used to race through it, blowing its rolling, well-rounded contours into weeds. The AJO offers the most relaxed tempo the piece has ever had; and it blossoms. The famous reed passage hasn't swung so gracefully since Benny Carter's 1961 recording.

On repertoire: By taking the wraps off such formidable but unplayed pieces as "Bojangles," "Main Stem," "Jack The Bear," and Ellington's marvelous variation on "Sidewalks Of New York," the AJO demonstrates that Ellington's greatest and most personal works have a brilliance and self-sufficiency that thrives outside the old records. These performances offer the most conclusive evidence yet not only of the validity of the repertory concept in jazz, but of the need for it. It's time to set aside the cultish mythology that the keys to this music, as if through some metaphysical passage, were lost with the Carney-Hodges-Williams-Webster generation of Ellingtonians. Well intentioned though it may be, such nonsense is ultimately a smear on Ellington the composer. In music, there may be immediacy in performance. But in composition, there is immortality. (reviewed on CD) —*john mcdonough*



## UPTOWN STRING QUARTET

**UPTOWN STRING QUARTET**—Philips 838 358-2: *EXTENSIONS; LET US BREAK BREAD TOGETHER;*

JELLY ROLL RAG; TRICOTISM; EASY WINNERS; SONG FOR WINNIE; OVERTURE; AND HE NEVER SAID A MUMBLIN' WORD; REMEMBERIN', MIDNIGHT CHILD; CALVARY; CHATTAHOOCHEE RED. (58:45 minutes)  
**Personnel:** Diane Monroe, Lesa Terry, violin; Maxine Roach, viola; Eileen M. Folsom, cello.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

## WARREN VACHE AND THE BEAUX-ARTS STRING QUARTET

**WARM EVENINGS**—Concord Jazz 4392: WITH THE WIND AND THE RAIN IN YOUR HAIR; YOU GO TO MY HEAD; SUMMER NIGHT; THAT OLD FEELING; THIS IS ALL I ASK; HE LOVES AND SHE LOVES; ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT; A FLOWER IS A LOVESOME THING; THERE WITH YOU; A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP; TOO LATE NOW; SPIKE'S WALTZ; DAY DREAM. (51:44)

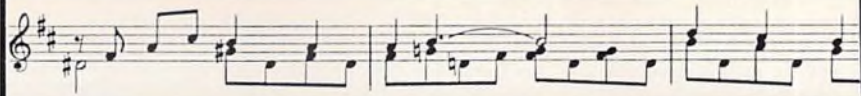
**Personnel:** Vache, cornet, with: (cuts 1-2, 5-9, 11-12) Charles Libove, Richard Sortomme, violin; Lamar Alsop, viola; Charles P. McCracken, cello; (3-7, 10-13) Ben Aronov, piano; (3-7, 10-12) Lincoln Millman, bass; Giampaolo Biagi, drums.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

In theory, African-American music should be well suited to music-reading string quartets: sans frets, blue notes are easy. But in practice, schooled string players usually have an aversion to playing in the cracks between the notes in Western scales—they've been taught to avoid them. Swing is hard to notate (and read), too.

The academically-trained Uptown String Quartet seem especially well equipped to transcend those problems, from their cultural roots to their years of experience with Max Roach's Double Quartet. USQ's debut is a set of spirituals, ragtime, and jazz, arranged by Cecil Bridgewater, Bill Lee, violist Maxine Roach, and others. Diane Monroe is an ideal lead violinist; she can play sweetly lush or harshly whining as the material demands. The quartet can chop a chord clean or blend blue; they have a keen timbral sense. Roach's viola sounds like an oboe on "Mumblin'"'s legato opening. Joplin's "Easy Winners" is suitably stately, but Maxine's chart slips some wild/wide glissing embellishments into the closing statement: an inauthentic but right touch. Time-wise, USQ often err on the side of neatness—the blue "Rememberin'" could be rhythmically looser—although Folsom (who's also recorded with the improvising Black Swan Quartet) can walk a good bass line, as on the close of Bridgewater's "Chattahoochee". Still, the album could use more stuff like Odean Pope's syncopated "Overture," where the players stretch time as ably as they stretch pitch.

Warren Vache uses a lot of vibrato for a contemporary jazz musician, but his vibrato can't begin to match the soupy sound of The Beaux-Arts String Quartet (not to be confused with the esteemed Beaux Arts Trio) on his new album of mostly under-exposed ballads. His cornet tone is so mellow, the strings ought to smother him; in fact, they enhance his sound—when his horn cuts through it's like sun streaking through storm clouds. Quiet as it's kept, in



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the '80s, Vache developed one of the prettiest brass sounds in jazz. But concentrating on cornet, he can indulge his penchant for Bobby Hackett's open-horn lyricism, hewing close to the melody, without sounding like the trumpeter. (He also plays a wonderful Harmon-as-plunger solo, far afield, on Strayhorn's "Flower.") On four tracks where the strings lay out, his backing players blend so well, you'd swear you can hear the phantom rhythm guitar—an effect caused by the meshing of Biagi's shuffle rhythms and Aronov's tight piano chords. Those tunes offer relief from the strings' cloying sweetening. But Vache at his best, as here, could score at the helm of a kazoo band. (reviewed on CD) —*kevin whitehead*

## COLUMBIA CACHE CONTINUES

by Jack Sohmer

**A**lthough **Louis Armstrong** had recorded before 1925, it was that year that first marked his arrival as a leader/star in his own right, beginning with the Hot Five recordings of Okeh, and continuing, on that same label, with a small band format throughout the next three years. With the recent release of *Louis Armstrong, Volume IV: Louis Armstrong And Earl Hines* (Columbia CK 45142; 57:53 minutes; ★★★★★), we come to the end of that

series of brilliant milestones in jazz history. This album opens with "Chicago Breakdown," a title which was omitted from *Volume II*, where it would normally belong in a chronologically sequenced program because it features Earl Hines, a pianist not present on the earlier, New Orleans-styled Hot Five and Hot Seven dates. The two Armstrong/Hines features with Carroll Dickerson's Orchestra come next, to be followed by the remaining 15 titles of the smaller group. Seasoned collectors will know all of this material by heart, but newcomers should devote considerable time to the study and enjoyment of Louis and Earl throughout, but especially on such standout tracks as "West End Blues," "Sugar Foot Strut," "Squeeze Me," "Basin Street Blues," "Beau Koo Jack," "Weather Bird," and "Muggles."

The 20 tracks included on **Roy Eldridge: Little Jazz** (Columbia CK 45275; 60:20; ★★★★★) were recorded between 1935 and 1940, and though it must be said that the much younger virtuoso lacked the swelling majesty and emotional depth of Armstrong's more profound playing, he nevertheless was capable of exhibiting the same raw power and exuberance, the same physical fortitude, and the same voracious appetite for risk-taking that were the hallmarks of the Armstrong genius. In addition to all six of his own band's 1937 titles (with an additional alternate take of "Wabash Stomp"), this album also includes breathtaking examples of his solo work in

other settings: one track each with Teddy Hill and Putney Dandridge, four each with Fletcher Henderson and Teddy Wilson, two with Mildred Bailey, and one with Billie Holiday. On the first 17 titles, his open tone can be savored in all of its crackling intensity, while on the last three, the ones with Mildred and Billie, even his use of the mute can barely contain the vibrancy of his emotional drive.

Although many great and near-great soloists abound on the 19 titles that comprise **The Jazz Arranger, Volume I: 1928-1940** (Columbia CK 45143; 59:41; ★★★★★½), the focus here, quite obviously, is on the man in the background, the one who normally does not receive his fair share of the spotlight. By their very nature, anthologies are difficult to compose, because there will always be a nagging doubt that this or that artist, band, or selection might have been a better choice than the one finally arrived at. In an album of this kind, however, there are fewer opportunities for judgmental blunders, simply because some of the choices for inclusion are unavoidable, i.e., Ellington, Henderson, Don Redman, Benny Carter, Edgar Sampson, Jimmy Mundy, Sy Oliver, and Eddie Sauter. It would have been a much easier job to produce a satisfactory collection of works selected from the libraries of just these eight giants, but Columbia went one step further to give us an even more comprehensive picture of the era; thus, we also hear from such less well-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 59

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# blindfold test

**1 BRANFORD MARSALIS.** "Three Little Words" (from *Trio JEPY*, Columbia) Milt Hinton, acoustic bass; Branford Marsalis, tenor sax.

Sonny Rollins. No? Well, let me listen a little more. Okay, that's Milt Hinton slapping the bass, so this must be Branford's new album. Yeah. Sounds like Branford approached this tune the way Sonny would. As it goes on, you can hear it's Branford. But Milt, as soon as he started slappin' I could tell it was him. At first, I thought it was an old recording, which I think most young musicians want to capture when they do these types of tunes. I think Branford was smart to take advantage of what Milt Hinton can do. I never heard something like this before on record. Yeah, Milt is my favorite bass player for slapping the bass. Most of the young electric guys who are slapping don't realize where that technique comes from. Milt was doing it decades ago. And he's got two other qualities that make him a great bass player—perfect time and a sense of humor. He and Slam Stewart are my favorites for this style. I would give this three stars.

## 2 CHICK COREA AKOUSTIC BAND.

"Bessie's Blues" (from *Akooustic Band*, GRP) John Patitucci, acoustic bass; Chick Corea, piano; Dave Weckl, drums.

It's either Chick Corea or somebody else who's trying to imitate Monk. This is his new trio with John Patitucci and Dave Weckl. They are all good musicians, but the way I feel about the younger generation of jazz players, it's like we don't have our personalities totally together yet. The technique is there. It definitely is in this case. But like when I hear John Patitucci solo here it sounds like Eddie Gomez. I don't really hear a strong personality as you would hear with P.C. [Paul Chambers]. Technically, it's perfect. But musically—and I include myself in this category of being guilty of this—being able to execute with the spirit that P.C. or Scott LaFaro had when they were playing this music is not there. It's like we have to rely more on our technical thing to make it happen. On this tune, John really sounds like he's just trying to show a lot of facility but it doesn't sound like he's approaching it from the heart. He only had two choruses to solo and he sounds like he's trying to say a lot real fast. I would give it 2½ stars.

**3 PAT METHENY.** "Round Trip/Broadway Blues" (from *Bright Size Life*, ECM) Jaco Pastorius, electric bass guitar; Metheny, guitar; Bob Moses, drums.

Let's see . . . fretless bass. Okay, that one

## 4 LONNIE PLAXICO

by Bill Milkowski

A Chicago native, Lonnie Plaxico came up playing acoustic bass on the straightahead scene before moving to New York City in 1981 to work with Wynton Marsalis. There followed gigs with Dexter Gordon, Slide Hampton, and Sonny Fortune until Lonnie hooked up with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers in June of 1983, a gig he held for three and a half years. During his tenure with Blakey, the bassist also played on David Murray's 1984 album *Children*, which featured guitarist James "Blood" Ulmer, drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, and pianist Don Pullen.

Through a recommendation from saxophonist Greg Osby, Plaxico was hired by Jack DeJohnette for the Special Edition band. He appears on the group's 1987 album for MCA Impulse, *Irresistible Forces*, and the 1988 double album, *Audio Visualscapes*, on which he plays both upright and electric basses. Recently, Lonnie has been exploring the



sonic possibilities of the six-string electric bass, which he uses to good effect on his upcoming debut as a leader on Muse Records, *Bass-ically For You*. In addition, he has appeared on projects by such colleagues as Osby, Cassandra Wilson, and Steve Coleman. This was his first Blindfold Test.

lick gave it away . . . Jaco! This must be Pat Metheny and Bob Moses. I haven't heard this album but I've seen it. To me, Jaco made the fretless bass popular with the things he did with it. Playing on the high end of it, down by the bridge, made a sound that was real effective. His solo here is to me more interesting than the guitar player's. It really draws me in and makes me listen to what he's going to do next. 3½ stars. I put him on the same level as Stanley Clarke. He gave something to the bass. He didn't carry it out, but what he left was highly appreciated.

**4 CHARLES MINGUS.** "Cryin' Blues" (from *Blues & Roots*, Atlantic) Mingus, acoustic bass; Dannie Richmond, drums; Jackie McLean, John Handy, alto sax; Booker Ervin, tenor sax; Pepper Adams, baritone sax; Jimmy Knepper, trombone; Willie Dennis, trombone; Horace Parlan, piano.

Reminds me of Mingus. You can tell by his attack. It's more meaningful. He's playing his music like he's living it. And that's what I was trying to say was missing from the Chick Corea record. Also, his harmony choices are really good. And I like the sound of his bass, and I really liked the way he built his solo. He didn't just dive into it like Patitucci did. It's like, 'Later, for what you wanna hear. Even if you don't like it, I'm gonna play what I feel.' He has nothing to

prove. And I think that school of musicians played that way. It wasn't about flash or scale exercises or anything. I like this composition and it also sounds like they're having fun playing it, which I think is lacking in the younger generation. I'd give this five stars.

**5 STANLEY CLARKE.** "I Want To Play For Ya" (from *If This Bass Could Only Talk*, Portrait) Clarke, electric bass, synths, programming; John Robinson, drums.

Sounds like a sequencer bass part there. Okay, here comes the solo. Sounds like the way Stanley Clarke starts off his solos. [*a few bars later*] Yeah, that's Stanley alright. What I like about Stanley Clarke is not so much what he's doing but the way he makes it work. He's not a melodic player like a Coltrane or Wes Montgomery, but he has things that he uses that work and he probably is the only bass player who can do that. I also like his spirit. He changed the way most bass players play in the last two decades. That's saying a whole lot. He survives. His style of playing is kind of showy for me. I don't have the personality to pull that off. He's a crowd pleaser, and I don't mean that in a negative way. I still have to give it up to him. To me, a great musician is measured by how long he stays on top. And he's done it longer than any other bass player of his generation. Five stars. db

## CECIL BRIDGEWATER

SCHOOLED IN THE COLLEGE OF MAX ROACH, THIS TRUMPETER APPLIES THE HISTORY OF JAZZ AS PLAYER/WRITER/ARRANGER/PRODUCER.

by Dave Holland

Cecil Bridgewater was a so-so trumpet student, promising but not applying himself, till one night his father took him to hear Louis Armstrong. "Seeing him come onstage and start to perform, something crystallized in my mind: that I would like to do that. Not out in front of people performing, but to play the trumpet. That seemed like the greatest thing in the world."

So, Bridgewater spent his 15th summer being serious about music—working out of a book of Bunny Berigan trumpet solos and studying solos off records borrowed from his uncle Pete, the dj with a wall of 78s—instead of getting ready for football season. At the end of the summer, the first practice, he took a shot that left him laying on the ground dazed with the coach standing over him intoning, "Now that's the way not to tackle." Bridgewater woke up the next morning with a terrible headache and a renewed commitment to music.

Soon to celebrate 20 years working with Max Roach, Bridgewater feels like Harry Carney, longtime member of Duke Ellington's orchestra. "I've learned so many things from him. That's what keeps us together. When Max comes up with a project, you feel like you're a part of it. Sometimes I'm his third hand; we'll play rhythms back and forth between each other and, for example, in writing for the Uptown Strings [The Uptown String Quartet, which includes Roach's daughter Maxine], I've tried to incorporate them into that sort of context.

"It's been an education, to learn to write for strings without using the traditional style of writing for strings. I don't want to write in the style of Beethoven and call it a jazz piece. I have to understand the characteristics of the string instruments but write like it was for the sax section of Thad Jones/Mel Lewis' band. Some of it is just the opposite of the bowing they would normally use. When I studied classical trumpet, I developed a technique to do that. In learning jazz, I developed a different technique. They [the Quartet] have had to do the same thing."

Besides his work with Roach, which in a typical year will take him to festivals stretching from Brazil to Detroit to England, Bridgewater teaches trumpet and arranging with the Jazzmobile on Saturday mornings and does college clinics. He played in *Black*



RON BRIDGEWATER

*And Blue and Me And My Girl* on Broadway, and in Spike Lee's *School Daze*. When clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton or piano player Jay McShann plays at Carlos I in Greenwich Village, he is there in the combo.

As producer/player/writer/arranger, Bridgewater can be heard all over the Muse and Stash catalogs, on recordings reminiscent of the various '50s and '60s styles he grew up with. His recent projects range from the Basie-style big band of Grover Mitchell's *Truckin'* (Stash 277) and the organ-led soul combo of Jack McDuff's *The Reentry* (Muse 3561) to the big r&b tenor sound of Houston Person's *Basic* (Muse 5344) and the mainstream blowing session of drummer Michael Carvin's *Between You And Me* (Muse 5370).

"I needed his ears," explains Carvin. "Cecil understands me as a person and that means he understands where my musical concept is coming from. To have a producer who understands you as a person and to have him as a friend, you have a great pair of ears in that booth for you."

The education of this particular trumpeter, growing up in Champaign, Ill., had three parts. First, there were jazz records, "to get the idea of what this music was about." One album that still stands out in his mind featured Clark Terry, Clifford Brown, and Maynard Ferguson with Max Roach on drums and Dinah Washington singing. "It was very important to me to hear three trumpet players who were playing on the same tune, at the same tempo, and trading fours, eights, trading choruses."

The second part was an Am Vets club across the street that had jazz bands on weekends and Monday night jam sessions. Cecil and his brother Ron, the saxophonist, would lay in bed by the window and hear, they realized years later, musicians from the U. of Illinois like Joe Farrell, as well as musicians playing in Chicago that had Mondays off, like Wes Montgomery and Freddie

Hubbard. "The education I got there, I didn't even know I was getting an education; it was just some music that was going on that I listened to."

Finally, there were private lessons, studying the classical literature—first with Richard Talley, and then with Haskell Sexton, head of the brass department at the U. of Illinois' music school—playing in his high school's orchestra, marching band, and wind ensemble, competing before juries. This is how he developed classical technique and tone, and a low-lip pressure technique.

"Classical music got me a little confused at one point. The people I was listening to: Louis Armstrong, Roy Eldridge, Miles Davis, the young Freddie Hubbard to a degree—this was the early '60s—Clifford Brown, Kenny Dorham, they didn't sound like what they were teaching me was a good trumpet sound. So actually, in my mind, I thought that they couldn't have been good trumpet players. They played interesting things—but they couldn't have been good trumpet players. I wasn't thinking of what I was being taught as being a classical sound.

"One day I said, 'Wait a minute, I can listen to two notes and know that's Dizzy Gillespie playing or know that's Miles playing or know that is Lee Morgan.' Not only are the ideas different but the sound of the instrument is different. I had to reevaluate what they were telling me and realize that there were two different kinds of techniques involved. The idea in jazz was individuality, and in European classical music you don't want to be sticking out as an individual.

"That caused me to think about how to deal with that. If I'm playing symphonic music, a Haydn trumpet concerto, I'll sound one way; if I'm playing 'A Night In Tunisia,' I'll sound a little different. Still the same person, just using a different technique. Jazz seemed like a much more creative way of dealing with it because, as I learned later, they were rewriting the piece every time they played it. I really enjoyed the [Paul] Hindemith piece for trumpet because of the modern harmonies I could hear in it, but that was the only way to play it.

"Max always talks about the fact that jazz is the most democratic kind of music, in that the drummer can interject an idea, the bass player, the pianist, so that at any moment somebody can interject an idea. This idea of a democratic kind of music is something that drew me more to the music.

"We can play Thelonious Monk and not have to play it just the way Monk wrote it. We can play it and make it living music. I have a chance to do that every night, to put a little something different in it that I didn't put in the last time. Not only am I allowed to do that, I'm expected to do that.

"Max used to tell me, you don't really start improvising till after you've played all the things you know." db

## RUTH BROWN

THE '50s QUEEN OF RHYTHM & BLUES ENTERS THE '90s ON A HIGH NOTE.

by Stephanie Stein

As the curtain rises on *Black And Blue*, the award-winning Broadway musical, the figures of vocalists Ruth Brown, Carrie Smith, and Linda Hopkins emerge on the darkened stage. Sheathed in the glittery elegance of the '20s they sing "I'm A Woman," their rich voices and images intermingling, evoking each and every blues diva that ever lived. Ruth Brown, now 62, is their latter-day counterpart in many ways. The depth she brings to a lyric and her charismatic stage presence reverberate with her experience as a black artist in the grist-mill of show biz. From a fledgling jazz singer in the '40s, she became the undisputed Queen of rhythm & blues in the '50s. Obscured by the changing musical styles of the '60s and '70s, Brown is now enjoying a well-deserved "rediscovery."

Since the mid-'80s, Brown has been back in the limelight. She received the 1989 Keeping The Blues Alive Award in Memphis and her latest album, *Blues On Broadway* (Fantasy 9662), has been nominated for two Grammys. Acknowledging her gifts as an actress—she was in the mid-'70s sit-com *Hello Larry*, co-starred with Divine in John Waters' 1985 film *Hairspray*, and has appeared in several off-Broadway productions—Lorimar Films has signed her for a TV comedy series. She is actively performing and recording again, as well as hosting the NPR radio program *BluesStage* (a sequel to *Harlem Hit Parade*). But Ms. Brown's show-stopping numbers in *Black And Blue*—the dazzling revue that celebrates great black culture through jazz, blues, and dance—really helped put her back on the map. The original production in 1985 in Paris was scheduled for an eight-week run and ran for eight months. The show is in its second year on Broadway and the cast album, featuring a stellar on-stage jazz band with Roland Hanna, Grady Tate, Britt Woodman, and others, is now available on DRG (19001). Last year, in addition to the show's other awards, Brown received both a Tony and the Outer Critics Circle Award for "Best Actress In A Musical." The accolades and offers just keep pouring in.

"These last few years have been amazing," Brown said recently, relaxing in her dressing room before curtain time. "Sometimes I still can't believe it. I'm doing the same thing I've always done, but Hector and Claudio [Hector Orezzaoli and Claudio Segovia, the show's creators] put it in the right package, and it's about the packaging that makes the gift inviting. People come up to

me afterwards telling me how marvelous it is, but black people come up and say, 'I am so proud.' That is my paycheck. I had no idea three years ago that I'd be on Broadway. So I guess it's all about timing and perseverance, because for a number of years I was just barely visible. In the '60s and '70s, I did performances where I hardly made any money. I ended up doing domestic work and working for school programs, I worked with the mentally retarded. I was living out on Long Island and had two children in elementary school, and I had 9-to-5 jobs until they were ready to go to college.

"In '78 I started to make a move again. It was a struggle because I had almost disappeared. I had to do a lot of things to prove that I was still qualified, so I took jobs that didn't really pay and sang at places that were not the most glamorous. I never had any doubt about my talent, because it was a God-given talent—I never studied, I could always sing. But the '70s was a sad period for me. It seemed like the music business only wanted the young ingenue-type of performer, and singers were made in the control booth. I never tried to get into that setting because I didn't like it, it was not for me. So if and when I did sing, I still sang what I knew best—good r&b and good torch



TOM COPP

songs, good standards that made sense.

"I had tried out for Broadway a number of times, and again, I had the voice but not the look. So this show is one of the best things that's happened to me. The creators were looking for a truly earthy singer and they had no qualms about appearance or age. It's a very happy show, but it also deals with the poignancy that has to do with the title—*Black And Blue*: 'Why was I born to

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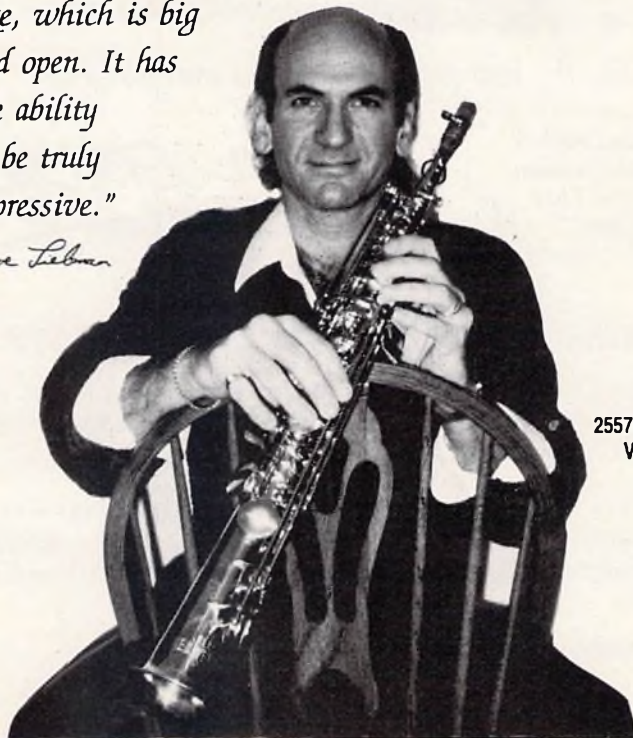


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be so black and blue?' When you slow that song down, the lyrics take on a whole different attitude. I'm really singing my life out here."

Ms. Brown was born in Portsmouth, Virginia, the oldest of seven children whose father was the choir director in their local church. She was raised singing gospel, but inspired by the music of Billie Holiday and other jazz singers, she left home at 17 to go on the road with singer/trumpeter Jimmy Brown, whom she soon married. In the late '40s, while singing at The Crystal Caverns,

a club in Washington, D.C. run by Cab Calloway's sister Blanche, she made quite an impression on Duke Ellington, who recommended her to Herb Abramson and Ahmet Ertegun, then in the process of forming Atlantic Records. En route to New York for her Atlantic audition and a debut at The Apollo Theater, Brown was seriously injured in a car accident that kept her in the hospital for months, affecting her legs to this day. In 1949, while still on crutches, she recorded "So Long," a blues ballad, with the Eddie Condon band for Atlantic. It was an imme-

diate hit and the first of many she was to record for the label, launching its success, as well as her own. She became the top-selling black female recording artist from 1951-'54 and kept producing hits for Atlantic until 1961, when she left the label.

Atlantic recently released *Ruth Brown—Miss Rhythm* (82061), a soul-stirring two-album compilation that documents her years with the label, tracing the course of r&b as it evolved into rock & roll. In recent club performances and on two current albums for Fantasy, *Have A Good Time* (9661) as well as *Blues On Broadway*, Brown shows her truly broad scope, including jazz and blues standards, and even some Willie Nelson. Her voice seems stronger than ever, matched by her unerring sense of nuance, always setting up the listener for a thrill.

In the flush of her renewed success, Brown, a deeply spiritual woman and a staunch civil rights supporter, is on both the giving and receiving end of her good fortune. Her recent amicable settlement with Atlantic over back royalties led to the establishment of the Rhythm & Blues Foundation, providing grants and health benefits for other pioneers of the music. In recent months, she received the Image Award from the NAACP, The Trailblazer Award from One Hundred Black Women, and the city of Philadelphia established a Ruth Brown Achievement Award. In January for her birthday, her hometown honored her with a four-day gala celebration and set up a Ruth Brown Scholarship fund for students in the performing arts.

"I feel like I've come full-circle now," said Brown. "Years ago, I met Josephine Baker, Billie Holiday, Blanche Calloway was my mentor, Dinah Washington—all the great singers; I came along with some great teachers. That's what young people need now, and somewhere along the line you find your own style. I've run the whole line, being part of all these different stages in music, and I feel qualified to be called a *stylist*. These new albums have given me a chance to show what my length and breadth are, and I think people are finally seeing The Real Ruth Brown.

"We recorded 'Good Morning Heartache' for this latest album, a song I've been wanting to record for a long time. And the day we recorded—it was about a week or so before the Tony last year—it was raining, it was dreary. And I was not standing, I was in a wheelchair. They rolled me into the studio and it was like a *deja vu*. All of a sudden I felt maybe something special was going to happen that day, with that music, with that session. Because the first time I ever walked into a studio in my life, I was on crutches—and that turned out to be the session that introduced me to the music world about 40 years ago. I thought about that sitting in that wheelchair, and I felt, 'Wow, here we go again!'" db


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