

DOWN BEAT

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Jazz, Blues & Beyond

May 1990, \$1.95 U.K. £2.25

LEE RITENOUR
DETOUR: STRAIGHT AHEAD

BOBBY WATSON'S
INVENTIVE FREEBOP

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GARDEN OF DELIGHTS

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Lee Ritenour



Bobby Watson



Jim Hall



The Music of New Orleans

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Jazz, Blues & Beyond

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LEE RITENOUR

STRAIGHT AHEAD

By James Jones IV

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Maybe it's more than a coincidence that in the last 12 months or so a number of non- or former jazz traditionalists have recorded very traditional jazz albums. Lou Rawls' *At Last* conjures up memories of his classic *Stormy Monday* with keyboardist Les McCann. He's in the studio now recording another album in the same vein. We haven't heard George Benson swing like he does on *Tenderly* since his *Take Five* days. Ramsey Lewis bops with Billy Taylor on the piano duo *We Meet Again*. Earl Klugh's *Solo Guitar* includes jazz standards. So does Patti Austin's *The Real Me*. New age pianist David Benoit recorded the straightahead *Waiting For Spring*, while Chick Corea released the straightahead *Akoustic Band* album. Even classical pianist/symphony conductor André Previn recorded *After Hours*, his first jazz album in nearly three decades.

But mouths are dropping open over the latest release from guitarist Lee Ritenour. After recording 18 very commercial albums, Ritenour swings Wes Montgomery-style within an acoustic quintet setting. Released on the JVC and GRP labels, his *Stolen Moments* also features bopping performances from Chick Corea's John Patitucci on acoustic bass, drummer Harvey Mason, saxophonist Ernie Watts, and West Coast studio musicians Alan Broadbent on piano and Mitch Holder on acoustic guitar.

Ritenour records the album live to two tracks, sans synthesizers, sans synthsax, sans computers, and sans Yamaha controllers. Puzzling considering that in *DOWN BEAT*'s last guitar issue (May '89), Ritenour drooled over the proliferation of equipment. "There's a lot of great music being made on these devices,"

he said. "It's forward, not backward, and that excites me. I've always liked to keep moving."

Yet, on *Stolen Moments*, he not only moves backward—to the music of his teens, where he says he played jazz regularly in school—but to the guitar of his teens, the Gibson L5 Electric.

After a sold-out fusion concert, Ritenour explains why he, and so many others, are taking a recording hiatus from the money-making, chart-topping glories of fusion, or pop-jazz, contemporary jazz—whatever you want to call it—for the challenges of straightahead jazz. "I think there's a certain maturity level among some of the musicians that, maybe they feel the limitations of the contemporary thing a little bit. Maybe we need a breath of fresh air, a little bit of a break. In a way, this straightahead approach sounds fresh again. It sounds more contemporary than some of the fusion stuff."

Especially in light of the blatant commerciality of fusion lately. The adventure, the originality, the musicality of 1970s Weather Report, Mahavishnu Orchestra, and Return to Forever have been replaced by sound-alike, crossover-obsessed instrumentalists. What exactly is fusion now? The definition especially becomes blurred by Quincy Jones' *Back On The Block*, which tops several different fusion and contemporary jazz charts despite its heavy inclusion of rap and r&b. Fusion's commerciality has been thoroughly exploited by a flood of saxophonists: Najee, Kirk Whalum, Sadao Watanabe, Kenny G, Gerald Albright. Who can differentiate one from the other?

Ritenour calls this the era of genetic clones.

"That's the problem with a lot of the music that's out there today in this contemporary jazz-fusion world. Because of the huge success of Kenny G, everybody wants a Kenny G type on their label. Kenny G got a lot of his stuff from Grover [Washington, Jr.], no doubt about it. He'll tell you himself. Who wants to hear the soprano like that any more? To hear the soprano like John Coltrane played, well it just doesn't exist any more."

Strange words for someone who records for GRP, a highly successful but very pop-jazz-oriented label. "In a way, GRP is one of the ones, along with everybody else, that created some of the cloning. David Benoit is, in his own right, a fine musician. But he's very influenced by David Grusin. It seems like the Rippingtons get a certain influence from me [through] Russ Freeman. Nelson [Rangell] is heavily influenced by [David] Sanborn.

"[Fusion] has gotten softer, which is fine. I've gotten softer, too. There was that good soft period with Pat Metheny stuff, Earl Klugh, and Bob James. But this last year has been kind of this genetic-clone thing happening. All this music, in my opinion, sounds all very vanilla, like '80s muzak."

T

Frustrated, last year Ritenour began listening to more traditional players like Trane, Wes Montgomery, Cannonball Adderley, Sonny Rollins, and Bill Evans. So when he discovered that he had one more album to record for JVC in Japan, it seemed logical to him to record a straightforward one.

"I always knew I could do it but I realized nobody else knew it. My own taste for it has grown enough where I wanted to try it. As proud as I am of *Festival*, *Color Rit*, and all the albums, I'm not sure why we need so many of these kind of records out there, because there are so many, whether they're original like me or cloned.

"The other reason I wanted to do this is because sometimes I still feel that after all these records and all the nice things that have happened to my career, some questions still remain in some critics' eyes as to how much Lee can really stretch and play. After all these years and all these f**king albums, I still wasn't getting the credit I thought I was due."

Not that he doesn't deserve credit. Ritenour, 38, began in hometown Los Angeles as one of the most in-demand studio players. He recorded more than 3,000 studio sessions before he became a leader in 1976. Dubbed Captain Fingers, he's developed into a very rhythmic-oriented player with a fat sound. Whether he's playing alongside the heavy thumping riffs of bassist Marcus Miller or the thundering beats of drummer Omar Hakim, he's always able to elevate himself over the band.

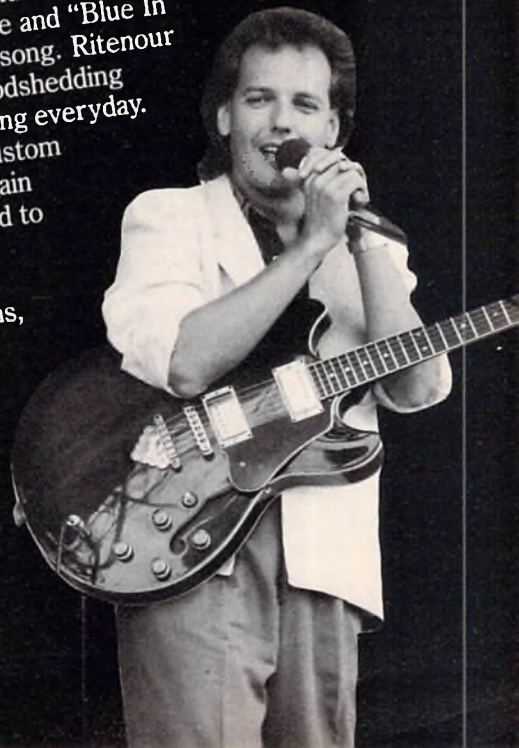
Lee says he's always moved back and forth between jazz and rock. "I'm a true

fusion baby. I always loved both. Larry Coryell was my idol. He was one of the first with jazz roots who merged with rock & roll and blues." Lee also developed a love for Brazilian music after he toured in Brazil in 1974 with Sergio Mendes. He's even engaged to a Brazilian, Carmen. His most successful album, *Festival*, featured an all-star cast of Brazilian musicians like Joao Bosco and Caetano Veloso with New York studio musicians. *Festival* reached #1 on seven different jazz and adult contemporary charts.

Yet, he purposely avoided the Brazilian influence on *Stolen Moments*. "I was trying to get away from Brazil. It's so much in my blood. I feel so comfortable with it. I wanted to make sure I did a jazz album." Besides, he says, "I've done a lot of acoustic guitar playing in the last four or five years, but by the time I finished *Color Rit* [his last album], I realized I've done enough acoustic guitar playing for a while."

But in playing his L5 guitar, he admittedly smacks of Wes Montgomery. "I was afraid that the nod to Wes would be a little too much. When I go into single-string playing, there really isn't any Wes. It's really only in the octave style. A little more so than Wynton sounding like Miles. You can't get away from your main men."

In fact, he dedicates one of his compositions to Wes—a 24-bar blues called "24th Street Blues." He includes three other compositions and four standards, including the title tune and "Blue In Green," not an easy song. Ritenour spent six weeks woodshedding last fall. "I was playing everyday. Mainly I had to accustom myself to the L5 again because I'm so used to playing the Fender Stratocaster, my Gibson Chet Atkins, or my Yamaha



classical guitar. My L5 is a 1950. I've had it since I was 13. That's the guitar I grew up on. So whenever I pick it up, it has a real closeness to me once I've played it for a couple of hours. To spend over a month with it shedding was great because it was like going back to school in a way."

His greatest challenge on the album was his own rapid-fire "Up Town," one of the more impressive performances. "I wrote that tune last. I kept looking for an uptempo one because I didn't have one and I didn't want the album to come out too soft. I kept looking for a tune, like a standard, but the ones I found were too much in the bebop tradition. And some of the other kinds of tunes, like 'Impressions,' I thought were better suited for a horn than a guitar, so I hadn't had anything until a week before the project. Then I came up with that."

It took 10 takes. "Waltz For Carmen," written for his fiancé, and "Haunted Heart" took one take. The others took about five or six. The live sessions took two days. "It was just like jamming in the living room. When you're doing ballads like 'Blue In Green,' you need that interplay. The tempos are changing. You need to see each other and feel each other."

Ritenour says in some ways playing fusion is harder than playing bebop. "The dramatics are a lot harder, a lot stronger. The drums are kicking. They are either playing some sort of hard fusion groove or maybe some kind of funk thing behind you. Even if it's a Brazilian thing, it's a much louder kind of approach. If the bass player is a Marcus Miller or Anthony Jackson, or one of those guys, they're pumping really strong. When you try to solo over that, even if the rhythm section is giving you all the room you need and giving you the right kind of dynamics, it's still a lot harder. You have to push your sound out a lot. It shouldn't take a lot of amplifier to do that. You really have to be able to push yourself out either through your approach on your guitar or through your rhythmic playing or whatever way you do it."

"On the other hand, when you're playing a bebop project, I noticed that when I went to play ballads or even the 'up' tunes, it wasn't that much of a problem from a dynamic point of view because the dynamics are so much more flexible, so much softer. A jazz guitar can fit quite comfortably. Now if you're only a fusion player and you're just used to playing this hard, almost rock & roll thing, you're going to have trouble playing a jazz style."

"Solo-wise, I made sure I didn't come up with too much cliché and that I created solos that built and had a climax; a beginning, a middle, and an end, which, of course, is the traditional jazz story of life, right?"

"The biggest difference between fusion and jazz is that there really isn't room to take the scales too far out in the fusion



LEE RITENOUR'S EQUIPMENT

On the album, he uses only the 1950 L-5. "I haven't played the Gibson for a number of years. I'm starting to use it again. When you grow up with a certain guitar, that's what you end up playing the best. My solid-body guitar is an old Fender 1954 Stratocaster. That's what I use mostly on my fusion records. My Gibson Chet Atkins' was designed for Chet originally. It's a combination acoustic and electric. It has classical guitar strings, but it's electrified with a solid body. That's for the acoustic material that I play live. A regular acoustic guitar causes problems on stage because of the feedback. My strat uses EMG pickups. My other guitars have the original pickups. For speakers, I'm using Marshall cabinets with Celestion 412s in each cabinet."

Ritenour also uses the Yamaha classical guitar and several guitar synthesizers: the SynthAxe, the Yamaha digital G10 controller, the Roland Guitar synthesizers GR 50 and GR 70, both of which are pitched to voltage systems, and the Takamine acoustic guitar synth with a MIDI converter built in.

He composes on an Atari ST-1040 computer with Hybrid Arts music software. He has D'Addario strings on all of his guitars, regular wounds on the strat and ES-335, flat wounds on the L5. He uses a Bob Bradshaw rack with a Soldano preamp and a Carvin power amp.

LEE RITENOUR SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

STOLEN MOMENTS—GRP 9615
 COLOR RIT—GRP 9594
 FESTIVAL—GRP 9570
 FEEL THE NIGHT—Elektra 6E-192
 PORTRAIT—GRP 1042
 EARTH RUN—GRP 1021
 BANDED TOGETHER—Elektra 60358-1
 ON THE LINE—Elektra/Musician 60310-1
 RIO—GRP 1017
 RIT/2—Elektra 60186
 RIT—Elektra 6E-331
 BEST OF LEE RITENOUR—Epic JE 36527
 CAPTAIN FINGERS—Epic PE 34426
 THE CAPTAIN'S JOURNEY—Elektra 6E-136
 FIRST COURSE—Epic PE 33947

with Dave Grusin

HARLEQUIN—GRP 1015

with Friendship

FRIENDSHIP—Elektra 6E/ET8/CT5-241

stuff. With the jazz album, I had all the freedom in the world. That was probably my biggest challenge because I wanted to make sure I didn't play just a bunch of b.s., that it really had a lot of substance. That's probably where I did my homework the most. I used the diminished scale on a tune like 'Haunted Heart.' It has a lot of diminished passing chords. I was listening to Miles and Bill Evans doing it. I was listening to the way Bill weaved through the diminished scale, combining it with arpeggios of the chords just real interestingly. I don't think of soloing much in modes when I'm playing. That comes natural. When I do go to a diminished or augmented scale, it takes more thought."

This summer, Ritenour has a video coming out, *Lee Ritenour And Friends*, which will show him performing "Stolen Moments," "24th Street Blues," and "Up Town" in concert. He also performs three songs with Tuck & Patti, and he performs a set of his more popular fusion tunes with his regular band, including Mason, Watts, Jackson, Paulinho Da Costa on percussion, and Bob Wilson, former drummer for Seawind.

Jazz promoter George Wein has asked him to do some festivals this summer. "I won't do a complete 180-degree turn and do totally acoustic jazz but I'll include a great deal of it because that's a great opportunity to do those kind of things. I'm looking forward to it; I can stretch out."

Will he do another straightahead album?

"No doubt about it. I enjoyed this one so much. But I want to take a little break from making albums right now. I've been making a lot recently. I want to let a little time go by and let myself mature."

Ritenour feels this trend of non-traditional artists recording traditional jazz reflects upcoming changes in fusion. "No doubt about it. Change is in the wind. Established producers like Marcus Miller—who's involved in this New York scene—notice this clone thing going on, and that we have to get to the place where something fresh has to come along again."

"[The music] is going to develop a little more edge to it. There are going to be some surprises. I just worked on Bob James' new record. He has very different things on the record. We didn't talk about it, but I can just tell he's saying, 'To hell with them; I'm going to do what I want to do.' Maybe it's not the traditional Bob James thing, but it's going to be interesting."

Ritenour plans some surprises of his own on his next fusion project. "It'll probably have a couple different twists on it, that's for sure. I'm not sure what that would be yet, but I'm certainly not going to back down in view of a softer album. If the fans started off learning to love contemporary jazz through people like Kenny G, they're not going to have the ears to stay with some of us who want to go further. But it'll just get too soft to go anywhere if we don't change it."

DB

BOBBY WATSON



SON OF THE INVENTOR

By Kevin Whitehead

Syracuse, New York, summer 1977: Art Blakey's new Jazz Messengers are playing an open-air Jazzmobile gig outside the Everson Museum. First tune: the trumpet player solos. Good chops, nice. Then the tenor player. He's good too, fluid. Then the alto player. This guy is on fire. He's got this *sound*: sizzling, electrical, searing. He grabs your ears from his opening bars. Who is this cat?

That cat, of course, is Bobby Watson.

Birdland, New York City, January 1990: Bobby Watson's quartet Horizon is playing the first set of a three-night stand. As you'd expect from one who spent more than four years in the Messengers—a longer than usual tenure—Watson honors Blakey's #1 Rule for Soloists: build to a climax and then get out, leaving 'em wanting more. His second solo on his ballad "Karita" is a long, long buildup to cascades of 16th notes, subsiding through a cooling-off chorus. Later solos are ended more abruptly—he barrels up to a climax and bails out, denouement be damned.

When Bobby Watson gets charged up, his body moves six ways at once. He'll throw one shoulder forward and the other back, his head cocked to his right, horn to his left. Leaning back, knees bent, he rises and falls on the balls of his feet, in parallel to the line he plays—while keeping time with his right foot.

His sound is still the first thing you notice. During the second set, on his open romp, "The Inventor," he plays a circular cadenza, full of raw energy. But from there he segues into the lament, "The Long Way Home," where his rich, singing attack and slow slides from one note to the next are unmistakably derived from the Ellington band's Johnny Hodges. Yet Watson is nothing if not a stylist; he doesn't replicate the masters' styles, he blends them to taste. He sounds like an improbable mix of suave Hodges and raucous freeboppers.

Which, in a way, he is.

One sunny day in February, Bobby Watson sat in his apartment in the Midtown artists' high-rise Manhattan Plaza, and talked in his soft-spoken but animated way about how that stylistic synthesis evolved. Born in Lawrence, Kansas, on August 23, 1953, he grew up outside of Kansas City. As a kid, he played piano, then clarinet, then tenor. His first inspiration was his father, a man of many talents who played a little tenor himself. Watson, Sr. is the inventor that song (and Bobby's new album) is named for; he holds patents on an all-natural self-extinguishing cigarette and the Rock & Twist exercise gizmo you may have seen advertised on TV.

Bobby played reeds in a family band—he's the oldest of six brothers—and in his maternal grandfather's church. "There's a whole tradition of gospel saxophone players out there," Watson says, "like Brother Vernard Johnson, who's very popular. But I never went in for that wide vibrato Vernard uses—I have my own style, more smooth."

He got into jazz and took up the alto while in high school. While in junior college in K.C., Bobby hung out with a student guitar player he'd run into at clinics: Pat Metheny. "I was going to finish

college at North Texas State, but when Pat came home from the University of Miami on spring break, he said, 'You better go to Miami: they have all these shows and cruises, and Miami Beach, and more of an emphasis on small groups.'" He took Pat's advice. At school in Florida, Watson met the bassist who'd be his partner for the next decade—Curtis Lundy. They formed a band backing singer Carmen Lundy, Curtis' sister.

"That was my first six-night-a-week gig—it lasted a whole summer—and it did more for me than years of practicing. That's when I started to turn some corners, working on my sound more. The trumpet player used to ride me, 'You should do long tones.' So just to spite him, I'd do them every night. I didn't realize I was helping myself. One night"—he snaps his fingers—"something changed, I got my sound. I said, 'That's it, I'm going to New York, I'm ready now.' Within a month, I was gone.

"When I got here—August 24, 1976—nobody was interested in anybody else. I said to myself, 'This isn't like going to school, you're not gonna come here and expect to have something in four years. I don't know *when* I'll get something in this place.' But I was going out and sitting in every night—I made it my business. When I'd sit in, people would say, 'Who are you with?' 'Nobody, I just got here.' They thought I was already with somebody. That was encouraging."

Just weeks after he arrived, he was sitting in with trombonist Curtis Fuller at Storyville when this drummer Fuller used to work for also sat in: Art Blakey. "Art asked me"—Watson sinks into Blakey's gravel growl—"Whatcha doing? How'd you like to join the Messengers?" Looking back on it, I'm probably one of the only guys he's asked who wasn't beating the doors down. When I told everyone Art had asked me to join, nobody believed me." After all, Blakey hadn't had an alto player in years.

Bobby became the Messengers' musical director in the fall of '77, and stayed with the band until 1981, when he was edged out to make room for then-altoist Branford Marsalis. "Art probably would have fired me if it hadn't been for Jim Greene, the road manager at the time who recently passed. I was more avant garde when I first got to New York. In Miami, I'd go out listening to birds, and try to play their calls on my flute and saxophone—I'd read that Eric Dolphy did that. I had some bird calls I could do, and some other freaky sounds. I was trying to make my own statement, but not everything I played was swinging. Art would say, 'Ya sound like you're playing out of an exercise book.' I'd play 'Moanin',' trying to cram all these notes in, and Art would call me over to the drums and say, 'Bobby—let the punishment fit the crime. *Please?*'"

"Jim Greene used to take me out between sets, like a fighter. He'd say, 'I was with you, baby, but in the third chorus when you went up on that high note, doing that funny stuff?' I'd say, 'Yeah, I remember that.' 'You lost me, baby, you lost me.'" Watson explodes into laughter. "'I was with you till then, then you lost me.' That made a big difference, to know that this cat was listening to everything I did, and that I was going to hear about it. He got me into picking my notes, slowing down and learning how to swing.

"Jim made me listen to Pres—'Listen to how Pres tells a story'—and to Johnny Hodges. He'd point out cats you could follow on alto—Hodges, Benny Carter, Bird, Cannonball. I always gravitated toward Cannon—that big, fat, bouncing sound. Alto is like trumpet, a lead instrument; you have to be able to articulate a thousand different ways." Watson (who's played lead alto with Panama Francis and Charli Persip's Superband) has that articulate quality. At Birdland, on "Karita," he played one whipsaw run up the horn, almost at a whisper, in which every note was perfectly distinct.

Critics began comparing him to Johnny Hodges early. Billy Strayhorn's "Chelsea Bridge" was his Messengers' ballad feature for awhile. "I go into that mode on ballads," says Bobby. "I try to get as sexy as I can. Hodges had that sexy, warm, very mature sound. He doesn't sound like a high school student."



BOBBY WATSON'S EQUIPMENT

"I had a Selmer Mark VI alto—mint condition, never been played—that got stolen off a train in Zurich on my last tour. At around the same time, I tried Yamaha's new Custom YAS-875, and I bought one and have been playing that ever since. My Selmer Mark VI soprano was a gift from Patrick Selmer." Watson uses Vandoren A-35 and S-35 medium-open mouthpieces, and Java Vandoren 3½ reeds.

BOBBY WATSON SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

THE INVENTOR—Blue Note 91915
NO QUESTION ABOUT IT—Blue Note 90262
THE YEAR OF THE RABBIT—New Note 1008
LOVE REMAINS—Red 212
ROUND TRIP—Red 187
APPOINTMENT IN MILANO—Red 184
PERPETUAL GROOVE—Red 184
ADVANCE—Enja 4082
GUMBO—Amigo 851 (co-led with Curtis Lundy)
BEATITUDES—New Note 1001 (co-led with Curtis Lundy)
ALL BECAUSE OF YOU—Roulette 5010
ESTIMATED TIME OF ARRIVAL—Roulette 5009

with The 29th Street Saxophone Quartet

LIVE—Red 223
THE REAL DEAL—New Note 1006
WATCH YOUR STEP—New Note 1002
POINTILLISTIC GROOVE—Osmosis 6002

with Art Blakey

STRAIGHT AHEAD—Concord Jazz 168
RECORDED LIVE AT BUBBA'S—Who's Who 21019
WYNTON MARSALIS AN AMERICAN HERO—Who's Who 21026
WYNTON—Who's Who 21024 (issued under Marsalis' name; Watson present but not listed)
ALBUM OF THE YEAR—Impulse! 33103
LIVE AT MONTREUX AND NORTHEAST—Timeless 150
IN MY PRIME, VOL. 2—Timeless 118
IN MY PRIME, VOL. 1—Timeless 114

NIGHT IN TUNISIA—Philips 800 064

with Kamal Abdul Alim

DANCE—Slash 279

with Panama Francis

EVERYTHING SWINGS—Slash 233

with Frank Gordon

CLARION ECHOES—Soul Note 1096

with Louis Hayes

LIGHT AND LIVELY—SteepleChase 1245

with John Hicks

NAIMA'S LOVE SONG—DIW 8023

with Klaus Ignatzek

MONK'S VISIT—Hep 2036
LIVE IN SWITZERLAND—Nabel 8627

with Peter Leitch

PORTRAITS AND DEDICATIONS—Crisp Cross 1039

with Carmen Lundy

GOOD MORNING KISS—BlackHawk 523

with Curtis Lundy

JUST BE YOURSELF—New Note 1003

with Ray Mantilla

DARK POWERS—Red 221

with Lou Rawls

AT LAST—Blue Note 91937

with Sam Rivers

Winds of Manhattan

COLOURS—Black Saint 0064

with Superblue

SUPERBLUE—Blue Note 91731

SUPERBLUE—Blue Note 92997

Bobby Watson also plays, uncredited, on the soundtrack to Spike Lee's *SCHOOL DAZE* (EMI-Manhattan 2-48680).

But Watson didn't become heavily associated with "Rabbit" in people's minds until promoter Cobi Narita asked him to do a Hodges tribute in 1987. His preparation led him to an appreciation of the splendid Ellington small-group spinoffs, recreating them with a nine-piece band. (The concert recording's on *The Year Of The Rabbit*.) Through that project he met plunger trombonist Art Baron; Watson now gigs with Baron's ongoing revival project, The Duke's Men. And Bobby plays Duke's Hodges feature, "Warm Valley," as a duet with guitarist Peter Leitch on Leitch's latest record. Does Watson worry about being typecast? "Nah," he laughs. "'Cause I know I'll never sound that good. I can't escape myself, man. Which is cool."

I tell Watson one thing I like about his playing is that he recalls both Hodges and '60s energy players. "I think it should be part of your artillery to have both. You want to get down and get fiery, you can't do it with a Hodges tone. And you can't get really romantic with that other sound." Innovators like Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane, Watson says, had to have a strong color as soloists, because they had to break through old molds. "Like, say Ornette was yellow, and Coltrane was red. But now, we don't have to be just one color as musicians."

He'll deftly contrast colors within a piece. Soloing on his "Heckle And Jeckle" at Birdland, he set up a call-and-response pattern between two distinct alto voices, developing two lines at once. "Jimmy Knepper pointed it out to me. He heard me play the head of 'Blues For Alto,' where I play high and then low, answering myself. He said, 'Why don't you keep soloing like that? Answer yourself for a couple of choruses.' I get a lot of ideas from people, make me seem like I'm all smart and stuff."

The labels Watson has recorded for as a leader since leaving Blakey are scattered all over Europe and the U.S.: Amigo is Swedish, Enja German, Red Italian. America's New Note was originally an indie set up by Curtis Lundy, money man Dennis Sullivan, and Watson; it's now a co-op label, for which each artist finances his own releases.

He's done four records for Red. On three, he's backed by far and away the best unit he encountered while touring Italy as a single in 1983: Milan's now defunct Open Form Trio—pianist Piero Bassini, bassist Attilio Zanchi, and drummer Giampiero Prima. The two albums they recorded at a 1985 studio date—*Appointment In Milano*, spotlighting Watson's compositions, and *Round Trip*, are to these ears his best records.

Like too many American jazz musicians, Watson may be better known in Europe than at home. Watson says The 29th Street Saxophone Quartet—which he joined in 1983, and which is as close to his heart as his own group, Horizon—is "bigger than bubble gum" on the continent. Most recently, he's made two albums for Blue Note. The first, 1988's *No Question About It*, was a bit flat compared with his Reds. There's a reason: Bobby had written the music around trombonist Slide Hampton, whom he'd been working with a lot at the time, but Hampton backed out of the project at the last minute.

1990's *The Inventor*, Watson admits, is his bid for radio exposure: Horizon's pianist Ed Simon plays some sweetening synthesizer. Bassist Carroll Dashiell plays electric stick bass as well as upright. But there's still plenty of no-nonsense blowing from Watson and trumpeter Melton Mustafa, and gorgeous Hodges-esque balladry; drummer Victor Lewis always swings.

"Alto and trumpet is cool, but I'm a composer, too. Certain compositions have a certain color; I put these things in there 'cause they fit, no other reason."

"I'm a hardcore jazzman, and proud of it. But I've sat in with so many musicians who don't play jazz, ever since I first went with Art. I've sat in with Brazilian musicians, with bouzouki cats, with Africans. I could just jump right in this open, folksy music, and have a ball. Then I'd go back to my gigs and it'd be like [chanting a mock dirge], *changes, changes, everywhere changes*. 'Why do I have to have a change on every bar? Why am I working myself so hard?' I've made enough records so people know I can play. If somebody wants to come up on stage with me tomorrow, we can take 'Cherokee' through all 12 keys, no problem. But life is too short, man. I need some fun in my music."

DB

Frets "Я" Us

DB's 3rd Annual Guitar Roundup

Jim Hall

Veteran jazz great Jim Hall has been turning up in some interesting settings lately. A few years ago he shared the stage at The Village Vanguard with fellow guitarist Bill Frisell. His latest album, *All Across The City* (Concord 384), has the synthesized tones of keyboardist Gil Goldstein. They're not exactly people you'd expect to hear playing with Hall.

"I—almost consciously—never wanted to get older and stuck in an era or way of playing. I like to stay open to things, partly

with the melody, he sort of would orchestrate it underneath me, kind of like an instant band," Hall said. "One thing that came out of it is that we're still trying to do an album together." He also includes Pat Metheny in those plans, explaining that they also played together in concert once.

On many tunes from the latest album, Goldstein envelopes Hall in a variety of sounds, resembling everything from voices to strings, which may be indicative of the guitarist's future direction. The technology exists for Hall's current group, using Goldstein's keyboards, to approximate those sounds. "That's a thought, but it is different to work with four real cello players as opposed to a synthesizer. But I'm going to experiment with that stuff with Gil and see how it turns out," he added.

"I like this quartet that I'm working with a lot—[drummer] Terry Clarke, [bassist] Steve LaSpina, and Gil. I would like to explore that potential more, rather than just have it be a group that plays about 15 tunes a night forever." —*MITCHELL SEIDEL*



MITCHELL SEIDEL

because of my background," Hall explained, adding that his own jazz and conservatory experience made him conversant from Bach to bebop and beyond. "I have a fairly wide background in music which goes beyond 'In A Mellow Tone.'

"Over the years, I've been around some marvelous players who, as they got older, kind of got rigid. I don't know—frightened or something—and that always seemed kind of a shame to me."

The Vanguard gig came about after a concert with Frisell that "went so well and was so much fun," Hall decided to ask him along when the late club owner Max Gordon wanted to book "something larger than a trio," he explained. "He's such a great accompanist . . . if I play a single line

grooving, a good ostinato is going, and people are screaming, that's great."

A self-described musical "war veteran," Hamm has played on the road with an Elvis impersonator, on jazz gigs, and "blue ruffle tuxedo gigs" on the East Coast. The son of a musicologist and a voice teacher, Hamm was weaned on a variety of bassists during the '70s, including Chris Squire and Stanley Clarke (whose bright tone Hamm shares), Percy Jones, and, of course, Jaco Pastorius.



DICK ZIMMERMAN

Stuart Hamm

As bassist for guitar whiz Joe Satriani, Stuart Hamm has gained considerable acclaim for his unique instrumental tack—a combination of driving rock energy, intricate two-handed tapping techniques, and dazzling rhythmic filigree. At the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium in January, Hamm held down the rhythm section fort and, during a solo spot, displayed his legendary (ambi-) dexterity. And the crowd went wild.

Hamm has two albums on Relativity to his credit—*Radio Free Albemuth* and the recent *Kings Of Sleep* (both titles relating to his sci-fi obsession). But the Satriani gig has afforded him the widest exposure. "I get to work out some of my tapping techniques to approximate the guitar lines on the [Satriani] record," he says backstage at the Civic. "A lot of what I do is pound out eighth notes and ostinatos, and I have no qualms about that: If it's

"The late '70s was a great time to be a bass player. It's all a vocabulary. You learn this guy's licks and that guy's licks until you know the alphabet, and then you can put together your own words. I tell kids today, 'Try to be original, but don't feel bad. The best way I learned to play was by copping licks off of records.'"

After a stint at Berklee, Hamm moved about and worked various gigs. He wound up in California, where his first claim to fame was his work on fellow Berklee alumnus Steve Vai's cult album, *Flex-able*. Once on the West Coast, Hamm found himself gravitating towards the rock side of things, feeling alienated from the pop-oriented jazz environment. "Boston had a really thriving jazz scene—going for the burn. Here, it was all that jacuzzi jazz

[hums an anemic melody]—it didn't have that spark. It wasn't as exciting as playing with Steve Vai."

Of his characteristic traits, Hamm is perhaps best known for his use of the two-handed tapping technique, which extends the range of the electric bass in a more logical way than on guitar. "I wanted to work out that 'Peanuts' theme by Vince Guaraldi. That was really the starting point [of the tapping]. The great thing about practicing is that you might think, 'There's absolutely no way I can play this thing.' But patience gets you there, if you take it really slowly. Then when you get that down, you realize that it's only the tip of the iceberg.

"As a technique, it doesn't really mean that much, unless it enables you to get more music out of the bass."

—josef woodard

Gatemouth Brown

Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown has made a career out of avoiding the traps of stereotype and genre. From his early days drumming with William



LISA SEIFERT

Benbow's Brown Skin Models and other Texas-area territory bands in the '40s to his current shows featuring him on both guitar and fiddle, Brown has confounded critics and delighted listeners with his wide-ranging musical enthusiasm and stylistic proficiency. His leads are fluid and graceful with the underlying blues grit of the Texas roadhouse tradition, but he's likely to break into the bluegrass fiddle standard "Orange Blossom Special" or a c&w ballad to finish off the set.

Despite his eclecticism, Brown is usually categorized as a bluesman, and he owes much to jazz. His early influences include Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, Louis Jordan, and others. "Oh man, many of 'em!

I do trumpet lines. I do piano lines. I do whole horn section lines. I make chords sound like the horn section.

"Freddie Green [of Count Basie fame] was a rhythm man, one of the greatest in the world. I approach it from a lead guitar, and I try to go further into horn lines rather than guitar lines. The way I voice my instrument and the way I play my instrument, it's more like a horn."

Brown's recorded output reflects his attitude. Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown *Sings Louis Jordan* (Black and Blue 33.053) features Arnett Cobb and Milt Buckner behind Gate's swinging guitar work and bluesy vocals. Other recordings have included such jazz stalwarts as Milt Hinton and J. C. Heard, as well as smooth blues keyboardist Lloyd Glenn. As always, though, Gate remains unpredictable: *The Bogalusa Boogie Man* (Barclay 90.035) is a straightforward country-rock effort, while his current Alligator release, *Standing My Ground* (AL 4779), recreates the joyful diversity of his live act, incorporating everything from hoary standards ("Got My Mojo Working") to jumping Cajun dance numbers and the ever-present influence of postwar Texas blues.

Brown speaks often of himself as a "teacher"; he wants to bring affirmation to listeners who, he feels, get precious little of it. Through myriad instruments and styles, Gate dedicates himself to redeeming music that he feels is bogged down in negativity and greed. Even when he used to play blues harp, he remembers it was "with a lot of feeling and understanding." The life-affirming joy of discovery at the heart of jazz improvisation is the essence of the music Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown plays. —david whiteis

Roger McGuinn

While the hyped-up folk-rock revival of the late '80s seems to be dying, the career of one of its musical progenitors is about to re-ignite. Roger McGuinn—who helped spark the original movement with The Byrds' 1965 cover of Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man"—may be the new decade's first comeback star, thanks to a resurging interest in the "roots" of rock and a guitar sound that has influenced musicians ranging from Tom Petty to R.E.M., from Fleetwood Mac to The Eagles.

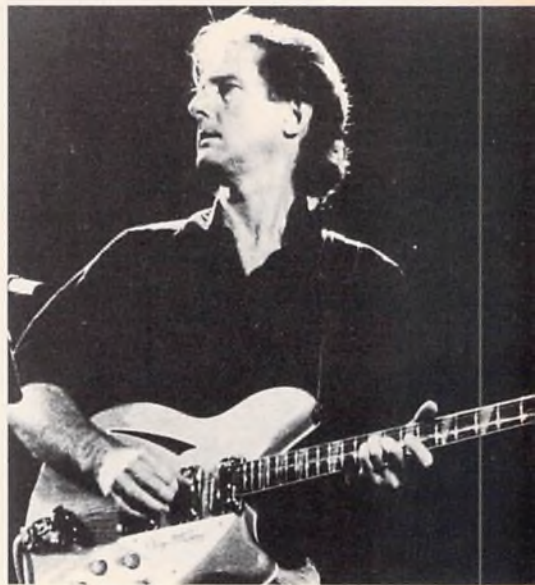
On the guitar sound's genesis, the 47-year-old McGuinn describes it thusly: "The Rickenbacker has more of a ring to it, and I just was attracted to that." McGuinn plays one of 1,000 limited-edition Rickenbacker 12-strings equipped with a built-in compressor. "I messed around in the studio with different gadgets—equalization and compression. There are a lot of good overtones inherent in the 12-string guitar, but the Rickenbacker has some extra things going on, because of the

construction of it."

Some of that sound is likely to show up on his first album as a leader (for Arista) in more than a decade. Tom Petty, who co-wrote the song "King Of The Hill," is expected to produce one or more tracks, and Elvis Costello—on whose latest album, *Spike*, McGuinn played on the track "This Town"—sent McGuinn a song titled "You Bowed Down," accompanied by a three-page letter explaining the song. "It's got Rickenbacker 12-string lines in it, and the melody is very much like things I've done in the past," says the American rocker.

Also on the way is a CBS boxed-set, expected to include Byrds hits, assorted McGuinn tracks with Byrds members and others, and "some really obscure stuff"—unreleased recordings of performances at London's Royal Albert Hall, in Liverpool, and the Monterey Pop Festival.

McGuinn, who appeared on The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's Grammy-winning *Will The Circle Be Unbroken, Vol. 2*, made the latest of several Byrds reunion appearances recently—with David Crosby and Chris Hillman—at "The Roy Orbison Tribute Concert to Benefit the Homeless" in Los Angeles (see "Caught," p. 56).



Since 1980, McGuinn has, for the most part, been out of the music-industry mainstream, doing occasional solo gigs, among others. Living in Morro Bay, Ca., until '86, he and his wife/manager Camilla have since relocated to Indian Rocks Beach on Florida's west coast. "I'm fairly anonymous here. I do get recognized occasionally, but it's not enough to worry about."

As far as the revival of folk-rock goes, "I think it's as simple as the fact that dance music can only go so far. After awhile, you decide that you just get starved for something to think about," says Roger McGuinn. "I figured it was time for it a while back. In fact, I think it's about 10 years late." —philip booth

Leni Stern

“I feel like guitar has always been my love,” said guitarist Leni Stern, “but composition has always been my gift.” So it’s no wonder that Stern’s band features another guitarist. What she wants in the forefront is not so much the sound of her instrument as the sound of her band playing her music.

“I love the interplay of two guitars. It’s the perfect complement. I always feel a piano is a little too much and a horn is a little too little but another guitar is just right. There’s a lot of things that work with two guitars, and I’m doing it also to have my own sound.”

Stern’s sound is the highlight of her newest Enja album, *Closer To The Light*, released in the U.S. by Mesa/Blue Moon. It has a sound more impressionistic than the usual fusion. “What we were after is one texture created by four people, not one soloist but a group.” Wayne Krantz is the other guitarist. “I think he’s the next cat. He’s the opposite to me, a real complement to me. Wayne plays aggressive, angular, very rhythmical, and



with a lot of fire.” Stern’s guitar is breezier, almost like a voice. They’re joined in Stern’s working band by bassist Paul Socolow and drummer Zach Danziger.

What’s curious is that as much as she loves playing with another guitarist, she never plays with the guitarist she loves, her husband Mike Stern—except at home. “He’s one of my favorite guitar players, but he feels it’s healthier for a marriage not to work together. I’m going along by myself but he’s helping me get around in the business—just to make sure I’m not falling into sharks.”

Actually, theatre more than music was the business of Leni Stern when young in Munich. She studied mime with Marcel Marceau, founded an acting company, acted on television, and in the mid-’70s

came to Boston for work at Berklee in film scoring. She nonetheless played guitar all the while.

“I started playing classical piano when I was little but it was my mother’s choice. It was helpful for composing and arranging but the guitar was much more an instrument to express my feelings.” Stern’s feelings for jazz came naturally around the active Munich jazz scene, even more so at Berklee under the influence of teacher Charlie Banacos. Bill Frisell inspired Leni to create an individual style, introduced Leni to Mike, and played on her first album, *Clairvoyant*.

The Next Day featured pianist Larry Willis but it’s with Krantz on *Secrets*, her 1989 record, and *Closer To The Light* that she’s best fulfilled herself. Most of the music is Stern’s—though Krantz composed both title tracks. Featured are some friends guesting on several tracks: bassist Lincoln Goines and drummer Dennis Chambers, both now regulars with husband Mike, also percussionist Don Alias and saxman David Sanborn.

She’s heartened about the changes in Germany and this summer will return with Krantz and drummer Billy Cobham for a big band concert in Frankfurt. But most often nowadays Stern’s musical home is the 55 Bar in Manhattan. “I just want to work as a musician and entertain my audience with an evening’s worth of good music,” said Leni Stern, happy to have a band all her own with a sound all her own.

—michael bourne



JONETTE NOVAK

surprising ways. He will often begin developing an idea by recording a basic acoustic guitar track, with longtime collaborator Marc Anderson’s percussion pulsing underneath, “to set a nice ground to solo over with the electric. Often, the lead line will end up being much more interesting than the old acoustic guitar track. Then you have to take a leap of faith, kill that which is boring, and assume the energy of the electric guitar will sort of spawn its own backing.” Sometimes, he’ll add an acoustic guitar track inspired by a screaming, Hendrix-style electric lead line.

One of Tibbetts’ major guitar influences was former Canned Heat/Chicago blues-rockers Harvey Mandel. Mandel’s early use of right-hand fretboard tapping techniques inspired the 16-year-old. “It looked like he was playing the guitar wrong, but it sounded like he was playing blues from Saturn or something.”

Although he does have a daily practice routine, Tibbetts is also a believer in putting the guitar aside to avoid or escape musical ruts. Two years ago, he spent a summer in Indonesia teaching and studying drumming, an experience which has permanently altered his acoustic playing style. “I began to think of the guitar as a harmonic percussion instrument. You may wear the finish off your guitar, but who cares?”

When it comes to equipment, Tibbetts’ guitars of choice are a vintage 12-string Martin D12-35 (which had been played by his father, a union organizer and folk guitarist), his grandfather’s 1908 Gibson six-string, a ’70s Fender Stratocaster, and a dobro of uncertain vintage.

A highly inventive, sometimes unorthodox guitarist, Tibbetts is not obsessed with technique for its own sake. “There comes a certain point when you realize you aren’t going to be the world’s greatest guitar player. But when you give that up, it’s a relief and you’re your own person again. Then you can really carve your own niche.”

—dan emerson

Steve Tibbetts

Steve Tibbetts is an unlikely guitar hero. A self-taught player who blends rock, folk, classical, and “ethnic” influences, the 35-year-old virtuoso plays relatively cheap, secondhand instruments. He seldom performs onstage, spending most of his time in a nondescript St. Paul studio—a former insurance agency office—creating and recording instrumental tracks using low-tech equipment, “found sounds,” and simple effects.

Despite his low-profile lifestyle, Tibbetts’ genre-blending, difficult-to-categorize albums have won critical raves: the re-release of his ECM debut album, *Yr*, had received ★★★★★ (see *DB*, Sept. ’88), and his latest, *Big Map Idea* (★★★★½; Feb. ’90), continues the trend. In between, Tibbetts has released three other albums for ECM: *Northern Song*, a spacious, largely acoustic work recorded in Oslo under producer/owner Manfred Eicher’s direction; *Safe Journey*, a more experimental blending of screaming electric guitar and meditative acoustic tones; and the densely textured, intense *Exploded View*, from ’88.

As a songwriter and arranger, Tibbetts mixes acoustic and electric guitar sounds in

This year marks the beginning of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival's third decade. Locally, the Jazz Fest has evolved into an annual ritual almost on a par with Mardi Gras, while also drawing an ever-growing, worldwide clientele. Such growth underscores the persistence of a curious global trend which might best be described as "New Orleans chic"—a fascination with all things from both New Orleans itself, and the entire Cajun/Creole section of South Louisiana. At the Jazz Festival—with its 12 simultaneous stages, regional foods, and folk crafts—New Orleans addicts can get a quick, concentrated fix.

Garden

By Ben Sandmel

This trend has accelerated dramatically, thanks mainly to the prominence of regional music in 1987's summer-smash film, *The Big Easy*. The Neville Brothers, Beausoleil, Buckwheat Zydeco, the late Professor Longhair, Terrance Simien, and others all received largely unprecedented exposure. Today, three years later, that movie's immediate impact has subsided, but the trend has not. Zydeco music can now be heard in numerous national TV ads such as Burger King and Levi's 501 Jeans. New Orleans r&b is used, for no apparent thematic reason, in feature films such as *Rain Man*. This year's list of Grammy winners was top-heavy with Louisiana artists, including Harry Connick, Jr., Dr. John, and Aaron Neville. But 10 years ago there was just as much deserving talent in Louisiana. In that pre-chic era, however, national consciousness was minimal.

South Louisiana certainly boasts one of America's most rich, unique, and exotic regional cultures, so it's logical that the world at large finds this area fascinating. The question arises, however, why does such fascination thrive today? Of course, such timely factors as *The Big Easy* and the growth of the Jazz Fest—held this year from April 27 through May 6—as well as the Cajun food fad initiated by Chef Paul Prudhomme have all brought Louisiana into the public eye.

There's also a slightly cynical, secondary speculation. As America grows increasingly bland, homogenized, and mired in mediocre mass culture, legions of bored people instinctively seek something new and exotic. The fact that refreshingly different South Louisiana has only recently come into vogue may reflect a "cultural flavor of the month" mentality in mainstream America. Native American culture is also in vogue, periodically, while Southwestern Hispanic music, cuisine, and decor are all quite marketable lately. Shopping-mall construction far exceeds the

The Radiators garnish the New Orleans base of their Fishhead Music with country harmonies, laidback psychedelia, and Southern rock twin guitars.



CHIP SIMONS

number of new Santa Fe-style adobe structures being built these days—but which architectural style gets more praise in trendy design journals?

Accordingly, the current fascination with Louisiana may well go the way of hula hoops, surf music, and slam-dancing, with sun-dried tomatoes, blue corn chips, and "world beat" albums in hot pursuit. (Many national food critics, for example, have already issued post-mortems on the Prudhomme school of Cajun cuisine.) If national attention does grow fickle, though, this will not reflect poorly on the intrinsic, enduring quality of Louisiana's music and culture.

The fact is that South Louisiana has long been a creative music center. A few selective highpoints include the wealth of early-20th century jazz developments, the Golden Age of '50s r&b, and Clifton Chenier's development of modern zydeco. These milestones, though revered now, did not get much ink while they were happening. Today's equally significant achievements—such as the resurgence of the brass bands, Cajun music and zydeco, and the wealth of talent graduating from the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts (NOCCA)—are quite well documented, fortunately. The misconception continues, though, that New Orleans is ripe with opportunities for working musicians. The reality which remains is that while gigs and studio work are available, most locals who truly hit big—such as the Marsalis brothers and Harry Connick, Jr.—do so only after moving to a major music-industry center. Various civic self-help groups keep trying to turn New Orleans into a comparable industry hub, but nothing substantial has materialized.

The Neville Brothers have stayed put. A New York or L.A. base might have improved sales of their critically-acclaimed *Yellow Moon*, which has sold only modestly—around 318,000 copies—by major-label standards. Then again, maybe not. Eclectic pianist Henry Butler finally found success by working in both New York and L.A., and with several well-received jazz sets on MCA. Ironically, Butler's latest album—*Orleans Inspiration* (on Windham Hill)—brings him back, full circle to New Orleans r&b and funk, à la Professor Longhair, James Booker, Fats Domino, and The Meters.

This same rich vein is successfully mined by guitarist and singer Earl King on *Sexual Telepathy* (Black Top). King has made considerable contributions to the New Orleans r&b canon, writing songs like "Trick Bag," "Lonely, Lonely Nights," and "Let The Good Times Roll" (the one which Jimi Hendrix cut, as opposed to the similarly titled-tunes associated with Sam Cooke and Louis Jordan, respectively). Some other notable new releases include The Rebirth Brass Band's *Feel Like Funkin' It Up*, Johnny Adams' *Walkin' On A Tightrope*, Beausoleil's *Live! From The Left Coast*, and Mardi Gras "Indians" Bo Dollis and The Wild Magnolias' *I'm Back At Carnival Time!*, all on Rounder. All of these artists will appear at the Jazz Festival; these days it's hard to check out the Indians on Mardi Gras Day without getting run over by film crews, so Dollis and the Magnolias' Festival gig presents a good opportunity.

The above-mentioned albums were all recorded locally. Trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis, by contrast, has been doing most of his production work out of town—most recently for pianists

of delights

AN
INSIDE LOOK
AT THE
MUSIC
OF NEW
ORLEANS



Marcus Roberts and Kenny Kirkland. Marsalis will front his own contemporary unit at the Jazz Festival. In addition, he's been playing traditional gigs in the French Quarter, touring occasionally in Fats Domino's horn section, and "generally stretching out. People tend to look at music with too much separation, and categories," Delfeayo comments, "especially with our family. But you can always learn something on any kind of gig."

Meanwhile, Ellis Marsalis—the head of the talented clan—has returned to New Orleans from Richmond, Virginia, where he had moved to take a professorial position. At that time, he felt that New Orleans was short on opportunities and appreciation, for both musicians and music education. But when the University of New Orleans set up an endowed position known as the Coca-Cola Jazz Chair, Marsalis came home. "I believe one of the main challenges in trying to develop jazz programs today is that you never really know what someone is talking about when they say jazz," he says. "It's the music which I believe is America's only original contribution to world culture."

While Marsalis has moved onto higher education, he's renowned for the brilliant high schoolers who studied with him at NOCCA. Besides sons Wynton and Branford, other pupils include Harry Connick, Jr., Terence Blanchard, Kent Jordan, and Donald Harrison. The current crop of talented teens includes trumpeter Nicholas Payton (whose father Walter is a noted bassist) and saxophonists Peter Meehan and Clarence Johnson, Jr.

Teenage talent is often the essence of rock & roll, but some of South Louisiana's best rockers are middle-aged. A case in point is rockabilly singer Joe Clay, who cut a few sides for RCA in the early '50s (recently released on the Country Music Foundation anthology *Get Hot Or Go Home*). Clay then disappeared for a quarter-century, driving a school bus, but re-emerged a few years back in fine, frantic form. Although a generation younger, New Orleans' Radiators are hovering in the Jack Benny age-range; after a decade of local obscurity, this funky, creative band now enjoys an ever-increasing national profile, thanks to two albums on Epic. While New Orleans is rarely perceived as a rock town, the local scene is both extensive and sophisticated. Perhaps the next hometown talent to hit big will be a duo known as The Fate Brothers.

A truly thorough discussion of South Louisiana's rich music scene could easily fill an entire **DB** issue, at least. If the scene is at times romanticized, such adulation is essentially deserved. The Jazz Festival has played a key role in promoting this mentality. Like any major event, it has some flaws—but they quickly fade when balanced against the musical wealth that's presented. For those whose appetites are whetted by the Festival lineup, the next step, if possible, is to hang for awhile and check it all out in its natural setting.

Louis' children: Donald Harrison and Marlon Jordan.

Garden of delights . . .

DONALD HARRISON
MARLON JORDAN

Sounding Like New Orleans

"To understand and play jazz, you have to start here [in New Orleans] or come here," declares saxophonist Donald Harrison. The Crescent City native, who left New Orleans in 1979 to pursue his career, now spends about half his time in his hometown and the other half in Brooklyn. "You always sound like a New Orleans musician," says Harrison, "and being here is just going to make that stronger."

Though money is usually claimed to be the motivation for so many jazz musicians leaving New Orleans, Harrison says his purpose was "not economical at all; it was a need to grow as a musician, a need and urge to play." The dual influences of the two cities can be heard in the adventuresome saxophonist's approach. "I'm in between the guys who play the old style and the guys that play all the way," says Harrison.

The doors of opportunity in the modern jazz world were pried open to New Orleans musicians by Wynton and Branford Marsalis, and furthered widened by Harrison and former musical partner, trumpeter Terence Blanchard. Now, says Harrison, another musician, trumpeter Marlon Jordan, is pushing them even further. "Marlon never had to leave and he got a record deal," says Harrison. In March, CBS released Jordan's debut album as a leader, *For You Only* (Columbia 45200), which will include jazz standards and original compositions. Like his mentor Wynton Marsalis, Jordan also plans to continue working in the classical field.

At this, the beginning of his career, the 19-year-old trumpeter is determined to keep New Orleans as his base. "I'll be away from New Orleans, but not in New York," he says. The musical and generally amiable atmosphere of New Orleans is as important to Jordan as it is to Harrison. "I like New Orleans better . . . my family is here, and there's a better atmosphere to get by yourself to practice," says Jordan, adding with a laugh, "it's warmer, too." Of those who went before, Jordan says, "They had to leave to get exposure. Now they [the music world] know there are serious musicians here—not just dixieland but other styles." Mimicking the sentiment, Harrison says, "We established the fact that there were musicians in New Orleans," while he also acknowledges the nurturing talents of drummer Art Blakey, saying, "Art Blakey put us on the map."

Though the importance of growing up in, and retaining ties to, New Orleans is uppermost in both of these artists' musical minds, the benefits of heading out are also realized. "I like the atmosphere of a tour," says Jordan, who received a career boost in 1988 when just after graduation from the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts (also attended by Harrison)—he toured Japan, opening for greats such as Miles Davis, Sun Ra, Pat Metheny, and David Sanborn. "I like that life, that's really when you learn, when you're playing." Harrison reflects the importance of New York in his music when he says, "You get your base in New Orleans, but the people that make the music move on and go different places are in New York." —geraldine wyckhoff



IRMA THOMAS

Soul Queen Of New Orleans

If you love soul music, but are burned-out on over-played oldies, try Irma Thomas. Part of New Orleans' vibrant music scene in the early '60s, her hit recordings with Allen Toussaint on Minit Records—"Don't Mess With My Man," "Wish Someone Would Care," and "It's Raining"—had a modern soul sound, but with a powerful blues influence.

Thomas has had her share of ups and downs. Royalty checks for her original works and reissues were few and far between—when there were any at all—and she felt ripped off when a note-for-note cover of her "Time Is On My Side" became a hit for a bunch of mop-haired, British upstarts: The Rolling Stones. And then there was the time *Jet* magazine captioned Irma's picture "Carla Thomas."

Thomas now joins ranks with Tina Turner and Ruth Brown, women who have made significant contributions to the r&b scene of the '50s and '60s and have returned decades later with fresh energy and maturity. Irma's two recent releases, *The New Rules* (Rounder 2046) and *The Way I Feel* (2058), rival her classic sessions. In these days of safe-as-milk soul music, what I like about Irma and her band is their emotion; there are some guts in their music, they dance on the edge.

But there's no confusion now. Some singers may be more famous, but few are more beloved. Her soulful voice and open stage presence—she talks to her audiences and even welcomes requests—has earned her a loyal following. Back home in New Orleans, she's considered a next-door neighbor, and they're proud of their neighbor's exposure on this year's nationally-televised Super Bowl festivities. She's optimistic about the future of her career. "What's for you, you'll get. Destiny is destiny, no matter what. You may not get it when you want it, but whenever it comes, it's okay." Time is on her side.

If you venture to New Orleans to see Irma Thomas in concert, be sure to bring your white handkerchief. You'll want to join in the "second line," that jubilant sea of hankies waving in tribute to her warm and wonderful talent. To hear Irma is to witness one of r&b's finest, in the prime of life having the time of her life. Long live the Queen! —terri hemmert

NATHAN WILLIAMS BOOZOO CHAVIS

Zydeco Goes Nationwide

"If you want to have fun, man, you got to go way out in the country to the zydeco!"

"Bon Ton Roulet" by Clarence "Bon Ton" Garlow 1950.

You no longer have to go "way out in the country" to hear America's most vibrant regional music. Zydeco, the rhythmic accordion-based music played by the French-speaking blacks of South Louisiana and East Texas has gone nationwide on the coattails of Rocking Sidney's 1985 hit, "My Toot Toot."

No two artists better represent the varied and diverging styles of zydeco today than Boozoo Chavis and Nathan Williams. A native of the Dog Hill area outside Lake Charles, Wilson Boozoo Chavis is one of the founding fathers of zydeco. In fact, Chavis' 1954 recording, "Paper In My Shoe," was the first zydeco "hit." He cut his teeth on the rough world of postwar dance halls along the Gulf Coast before virtually disappearing from the scene around 1965. Since reemerging in 1984 with a new band, Chavis has become the most popular act in the sprawling dance halls of South Louisiana. His shows are signaled by a landscape of late model cars and pickups spilling across the prairie.

Boozoo Chavis and His Magic Sounds play an unadulterated form of French blues and "stomp down" zydeco. Chavis explains, "I grew up playing house parties and dances around Lake Charles in the late '40s, and I've been playing the same music ever since." Indeed, from the indecipherable French and English vocals to the wheezing of his diatonic accordion, Chavis' music has changed little since his first recordings. It is a pounding and unabashedly primitive music geared towards dancing, not listening, and rhythm, not melody.

If Boozoo is zydeco's longest standing practitioner, Nathan Williams is its most rapidly ascending star. Williams, age 27, got his first accordion and lessons from zydeco veteran Stanley "Buckwheat" Dural just nine years ago. Williams and The Zydeco Cha Chas have moved from the house band at El Sidos—brother Sid Williams' club in Lafayette—to headlining venues around the country. But Williams still tends the meat counter at the family grocery and still packs the dance floor at El Sidos with down-home originals like "Everything On The Hog Is Good."

Unlike Boozoo Chavis, who spent decades building a reputation on the regional club circuit, Williams' ascendancy to national recognition has been largely based on a handful of excellent recordings for Rounder. Using the more versatile piano accordion and tenor saxophone, Williams moves easily between ska-like soul ballads, country waltzes, and driving r&b.

If you can't make it "way out in the country" to see Nathan Williams and Boozoo Chavis perform, the best place to hear them is on *Zydeco Live!* (Rounder 2069). Recorded at an aging zydeco dance hall in the tiny prairie town of Lawtell, this is zydeco the way it was meant to be enjoyed, unrestrained by the confines of the studio.

—macon fry

RICK OLIVER



NATHAN WILLIAMS

BOOZOO CHAVIS



RICK OLIVER

MILT HINTON



HERB SWITZER

JUDGE FOR YOURSELVES!

By Howard Mandel

The Judge is holding court at the bar at Zinno's, a moderately chic Italian restaurant in Greenwich Village. The gavel with which the Judge wields his authority, a $\frac{3}{4}$ ths-size Matteo Goffriller curly maple-backed bass built in the 1740s, is resting for the moment on the bandstand, next to a baby grand piano.

"After high school graduation I went to John Marshall Law School," explains Milt Hinton, 79-year-old grand master of the lower registers. "But I only did one semester there. Then I went across the street because Crane College had a music department, I could get in a band, and they needed a bass horn player. So I blew my legal career!"

And the world of jazz was glad. Because in the decades since he handed down that decision, Milton John Hinton—aka Sporty, Fump, the Judge—has resounded at the heart of big bands led by Cab Calloway, Count Basie, and Duke Ellington, among others, and under soloists ranging from Billie Holiday to Branford Marsalis. He's made more than 600 recordings. He integrated television, radio, and studio session orchestras with the support of the late John Hammond and Jackie Gleason. He's upheld the highest instrumental standards whether studying with symphony musicians or teaching at the

college level. He's documented a fast-vanishing way of American life with a sensitive camera, oral histories, and his own memoirs.

You can read it in *Bass Line*, Hinton's beautiful 328-page photo album and autobiography, co-written by David G. Berger, published by Temple University Press (see "Book Reviews," Jan. '89). Or you can seek out the Judge, whose eyes glisten, whose enthusiasm flares, who won't stop 'till he drops.

"I've got a slap rap Dave Berger helped me with," the Judge confides, and launches it: "I was born in Mississippi/In the year of 1910/I moved up to Chicago/And never went back again. . . ."

"Milt is the shit! The senior player! That's why I chose him," testifies tenor terror Branford, who brought his respected elder together with drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts for the double-disc set *Trio Jeepy*. Having no working band, Marsalis had considered employing Percy Heath, Ray Brown, Major Holley, and Ron Carter. Then brother Delfeayo reminded him of a bassist their dad Ellis used to bring home for dinner.

"I'd been checkin' out Cab Calloway LPs 'cause Chu Berry is on 'em, and I heard Milt doin' stuff I never heard a bass player of my generation or the generation just

before me doin'—getting the *meat* of the sound, which you don't get if you're used to amplification and depending on a pickup," Marsalis reports.

"I hear younger bassists with that thin tone, playin' those long notes it's possible to hold with a pickup. That strong bass pulse, the *swing* on those old LP's even when the drummer was just playin' with brushes: it's not obvious, but Milt is consistently *baaad* on those LP's. It comes from the slap, which historically gave the music a little extra *pump*. It's the original thump—thumb popping on a Fender bass. Maybe it comes from Delta blues guitar. It has some of the same feel. Milt comin' from Mississippi, you *know* he heard that."

On *Trio Jeepy*, Hinton breaks from the brisk walk he establishes under "Three Little Words" into a two-toned solo. His bass is centered and clear, but also projects—when he wants it—a percussive rasp suggesting the rattle atop an African kora or the shells on the gourd of a mbira.

"At first, the bass was given a percussive role, the same way tuba was used," the Judge writes in *Bass Line*, recalling an early '30s turning point in jazz. "Some of it was because the bass players around had switched from tuba and didn't

know much about the techniques of playing string instruments.”

Hinton, however, had begun at age 13 on violin. His lessons from local teachers and at Hull House community center (where he met a teenaged Benny Goodman) account for his foundation in reading, and his expertise with a bow. He credits his mother for creating his self-discipline; she made him practice.

“Whenever I took a solo in those days, I slapped,” Hinton continues in *Bass Line*. “Bill Johnson was the first person I ever saw do it. Pops Foster and [Wellman] Braud slapped and so did Steve Brown. . . . Being younger than these guys, I wanted to outdo them.

“There was one number called ‘Mama Don’t Allow’ which featured each guy in the band. When it was my turn I’d really put on a show. Johnson, Braud, Brown, and Pops were doing single slaps, but I got to the point where I could do double and even triple slaps. I also worked out a way to put the bass between my legs while I was playing and I’d ride it like a horse.”

Ever a showman, Hinton delivers a lyric called “Old Man Time” to the closest tables of Zinno’s diners as though he’s telling a story to dear friends. In emphasis, he gestures with his right hand, plucking the Goffriller high on its neck with his left. Pianist Jane Jarvis, former organist for the Mets at Shea Stadium and a vice-president of Muzak, comps softly. There’s a warm glow in the crowd; maybe they *are* Milt’s dear friends. Everyone talks to him during his break. Someone asks what he tells “wannabe” musicians.

“I talk to them about my experiences and try to tell them what’s required of a professional musician. Being able to read music, because there’s no time for rehearsal, only time for artistry. Being punctual—because you can’t play if you’re not there. Being able to work with, cooperate with people. That sort of stuff.

“And I’m happy to say some wonderful young bass players have come out from under me. I’m very happy to see that, because each generation has to do better than the generation before, or else there’s no progress.”

The Judge hasn’t just counseled bassists. At Manhattan’s Hunter and Baruch colleges he’s instilled classic jazz values in every kind of instrumentalist. Thirty-four-year-old percussionist Kevin Norton, who’s gigged at downtown’s Knitting Factory with pianist Wayne Horvitz and reedman Marty Ehrlich in the Milt Hinton quartet, is one of the Judge’s admiring students.

“Maybe 20 musicians in class—saxes, trumpets, whatever—and Milt had us form groups out of that pool,” Norton states. “He didn’t teach scales, though he’d say you should learn them. He’d talk about the spirit of the music. He says it’s not how many notes you play—that jazz is the art of listening.

ERIC FARBEE



THE JUDGE’S FURNITURE

Milt Hinton has had more than one bass—and stories galore about basses in *Base Line*. But one anecdote not included speaks of the Judge’s open and practical mind.

“To be creative, try things nobody else has done—and be criticized for it—is part of the process,” he says. “Something new is always criticized until it’s accepted. Like I was the first bass player from my era with academic training, who knew how to bow properly. I was put down—but I wanted to be able to play *anything*, and that required I go to teachers.

“When the Fender bass came out, I’d been playing acoustic bass for 25 years. And I couldn’t conceive it—it was a bastard instrument as far as I was concerned. The strings weren’t tuned properly, but that wasn’t a problem—it was just too new for me, and I didn’t want to play it. Then one of my students said, ‘Hey man, when I look at you, all I see is a big bass. For you to put something down as new is a drag.’ When somebody who believed in me said that . . . I sneaked out and bought an electric bass, and went in the basement and turned on a rock station and practiced with the radio.

“One day my dear friend Dick Hyman called me to do a jingle. He said, ‘Bring the electric bass.’ I walked in there with this sidewinder, and everybody else had their usual instrument. When we started to play, the engineer said, ‘Judge, give me a little more highs.’ I went up an octave higher to play. I didn’t know what he was talking about. So my dear friend Barry Galbraith reached over and turned on the amplifier.”

MILT HINTON SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

THE JUDGE’S DECISION—Exposure 6231910
BASICALLY WITH BLUE—Black & Blue 33096
HERE SWINGS THE JUDGE—Famous Door HL 104
THE RHYTHM SECTION—Epic LN 3271
BASSES LOADED—RCA LFM 1107
MILT HINTON QUARTET—Bethlehem BCP 10

with others

TRIO JEEPY—Columbia CX2 44199 (Branford Marsalis)
MANHATTAN BLUES—Candid CCD 79036 (Ricky Ford)
TRIPLE PLAY—RCA/Bluebird 5903-1-RB9 (Johnny Hodges)
JAY AND KAI—Columbia CL 973 (JJ Johnson and Kai Winding)
NEW YORK BASS VIOLIN CHOIR—Sirata-East 8003
EASY LIVING—Blue Note BLJ-84103 (Ike Quebec)
HEAVY SOUL—Blue Note BLP-4093 (Ike Quebec)
PEE WEE RUSSELL-COLEMAN HAWKINS ALL-STARS—Candid CM 8020
GEORGE RUSSELL AND HIS SMALL-TET—RCA LPM 1372
LADY IN SATIN—Columbia CJ-40247 (Billie Holiday)
HARLEM ROOTS—Storyville 6000 (Cab Calloway)

“And *he* listens. He’d ask me for Mingus and Monk tapes—he’d heard them, but wanted to know more, dig deeper, which is great. He’s into new material. I did this LP, *The Judge’s Decision*, on Exposure, his own label, and we played ‘Digga Digga Do’ with ‘Giant Steps’ changes on the bridge, and the opening and ending free. He hears it when it’s coming from someplace, like the way Mingus’ free stuff relates to the blues.

“The band on that record—Jay D’Amico on piano, Michael Walters and Sam Furnace on saxes, Milt, and me—played a ‘World of Milt Hinton’ show for Jack Kleinsinger’s Highlights In Jazz at New York University. I guess I’m prejudiced,” admits Norton, “but we were among the best of the night. Well, the duos Milt played with Branford were really hot, too. And Milt did stuff with Cab Calloway that brought down the house.”

Hinton is proud. “In February, Black History Month, I was on National Public Radio for five minutes every day, and went to all these schools as a role model for young black kids.” (Speaking of NPR, Branford was the emcee for Hinton’s oral history of remembrances, produced for radio, in the form of 28 three-minute segments. They were offered to local stations by NPR.) No goody-two-shoes, in *Bass Line* he tells tales of gambling, drinking, drug use, and fooling around. Still, Hinton’s been happily married to Mona for 50 years, and never compulsive or abusive. His faith’s in work, play, people, and progress.

“Music is an auditory art,” the Judge asserts. “It’s how you sound. If you don’t sound good, I don’t want to play with you. There’s no color to music, and no age bracket, either. Which is why playing at The Knitting Factory did me as much good as playing the *Trio Jeepy*.

“Young people come to research me because they want to know more about Chu Berry, who passed years ago. Not play like him, but to see what he was doing and what he accomplished. This is what music is about. We *should* know what our forefathers—Bix and Freddie Keppard and Louis Armstrong and Jack Teagarden—were doing, the way we know about George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

“Photography? I wanted to document our wonderful country and the beautiful changes that have been made in it. Not just show the bad parts, but show what we have done beautifully. We haven’t done enough—I’m not satisfied with that. But we’ve come a long way, baby. Let’s go farther.”

To go farther: the Judge has the will, but he’s a realist. His slap rap ends: “I’m the oldest bass player standing/I’ve got shoes as old as you/We had a wonderful time/ When I was in my prime/Now I’m tired/So Mona, take me home.” ‘Round midnight, Milt Hinton wraps it up, zips his precious Goffriller in its case, heads off into the darkness for Mona in Queens. Court at Zinno’s is adjourned.

DB

record & cd reviews

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



JACK DEJOHNETTE

PARALLEL REALITIES—MCA-42313: *JACK IN*; *EXOTIC ISLES*; *DANCING*; *NINE OVER REGGAE*; *JOHN MCKEE*; *INDIGO DREAMSCAPES*; *PARALLEL REALITIES*.
Personnel: Jack DeJohnette, drums, keyboards; Pat Metheny, guitar, guitar synthesizer; Herbie Hancock, piano.

★★★★★

All-star outings can be thrilling blowing sessions. They can also be stillborn by virtue of crossed signals, battling humility (or hubris), or a confused sense of direction.

The mating of DeJohnette, Metheny, and Hancock turns out to be something altogether different, a highly original project in which the elements come together in a marvel of empathy. In that the three have gained mastery of their respective instruments and have been in and out of the mass public eye, one could expect either an openly commercial project or a defiant avant garde jab at the established order. Instead, the upshot is one of the most beguiling (and, if it matters, not at all "unmarketable") stylistic riddles in current jazz.

DeJohnette's name as leader is only a legal technicality. Here we have, as the song says, three of a perfect pair: The prodigious player/thinker DeJohnette has been involved in such classic Metheny "side" projects as *80/81* and *Song X*; Hancock—whom, word has it, Metheny saw at a straightahead gig in New York and was compelled to record with—presages Metheny's interest in cool rhythmic permutations and subtle musical subversions.

For the most part, the beauty of the material here is slow-burning. Each cut seems to have some ulterior motive, a conceptual scheme that underlines its apparently calm surface. Hancock contributes no compositions, but his immaculate and discreetly mischievous solos amount to self-contained compositions, like all good solos. All due respect to the lower frequencies, no bassist is necessary, and the perfunctory synth bass lines suffice nicely.

Usually, the rhythmic element is somehow askew, as on "Nine Over Reggae"—the title referring to its (literally) odd metric design. DeJohnette's opening number, "Jack In," is another of his quirky odes to Metheny (à la his "PM's AM" from his *Audio Visualscapes*); what begins with a trademark Metheny triadic vamp drops off into unexpected patches of the collage and Hancock's brio.

Deceptive simplicity is the reigning m.o.; Metheny's "Dancing" is fast not in an overt way, but alternates between rapid right-hand pedals from Hancock and a slow-fast relationship between the melody and the pulse (the technique so often deployed by Metheny's mentor, Ornette Coleman, but here in a more openly

romantic light). "John McKee" is almost a direct tribute to the '60s Blue Note period when Hancock was a house pianist. The title cut ventures the furthest "out" (akin to Metheny's "The Calling" from *Rejoicing*), affording all a chance to explore some uncharted terrain.

In its own, much more sedate way, *Parallel Realities* asserts itself with the force of Metheny's last great album, *Song X*. Just when the merger of pop and jazz ideals seems to have hit a cross low comes a significant reshuffling of dogeared archetypes. Which is to say, the album swings in its own time. (reviewed on cassette)
 —josef woodard



NICK LOWE

PARTY OF ONE—Reprise 1-26132: *YOU GOT THE LOOK I LIKE*; *JUMBO ARK*; *GAI GIN MAN*; *WHO WAS THAT MAN*; *WHAT'S SHAKIN' ON THE HILL*; *SHING-SHTANG*; *ALL MEN ARE LIARS*; *ROCKY ROAD*; *REFRIGERATOR WHITE*; *I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU KEEP ME ON*; *HONEYGUN*.

Personnel: Lowe, lead vocals, bass; Dave Edmunds, guitar; Jim Keltner, drums; Ry Cooder, guitar, mandolin; Paul Carrack, organ, synthesizer; Audey Delone, piano, acoustic guitar; Bill Kirchen, guitar; Ray Brown, acoustic bass (5).

★★★★ ½

DAVE EDMUNDS

CLOSER TO THE FLAME—Capitol CDP 7 90372: *CLOSER TO THE FLAME*; *FALLIN' THROUGH A HOLE*; *DON'T TALK TO ME*; *EVERY TIME I SEE HER*; *STOCKHOLM*; *KING OF LOVE*; *I GOT YOUR NUMBER*; *NEVER TAKE THE PLACE OF YOU*; *SINCERELY*; *TEST OF LOVE*; *STAY WITH ME TONIGHT*. (38:58 minutes)

Personnel: Edmunds, lead vocals, lead guitar, keyboards; Jim Keltner, drums; Phil Chen, bass; Chuck Leavell, keyboards; Dave Charles, drums, percussion; The Memphis Horns (Wayne Jackson, Andrew Love, Jim Horn, Jack Hale).

★★★★★

These two mates have been prime purveyors of "roots" rock and r&b-based pub rock in the U.K. for the past 20 years. Their paths crossed in Rockpile, a late '70s band influenced by The Everly Brothers, and they've gone on to enjoy commercial successes as solo artists and producers. On their latest offerings (debuts for new labels), they stick to the basic philosophy they've maintained from the beginning: keep it simple, catchy, full of feeling, and bring it in under four minutes.

Both are highly satisfying albums, with Lowe getting the extra half-star for his unrelenting wit and ingenuity on a set of 11 originals. Edmunds produced both projects, exercising the kind of

stripped-down sensibility that emphasizes songs, not solos.

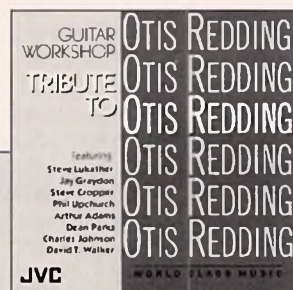
Edmunds, the Welch singer/guitarist with an undying love of American rock & roll, dips deeply into the Stax bag on several tunes from *Closer To The Flame*, courtesy of The Memphis Horns. Most effective are "Don't Talk To Me," a funky pop offering reminiscent of "Mustang Sally," and the raw-edged title cut, perhaps Edmunds' catchiest number since he zoomed to the top of the charts 20 years ago with a rendition of Smiley Lewis' "I Hear You Knockin'."

On the rockabilly rave-up, "King Of Love," and on his lone original, "Stay With Me Tonight," Edmunds goes for that authentic echo-laden Sun Records sound. The guitarist also works in some cool finger pickin'-licks on two country-flavored numbers, "Test Of Love" and "I Got Your Number." And for catchy, crisp pop, you can't beat "Every Time I See Her," a 3½-minute gem. No-nonsense guitar-bass-drums rock with killer hooks. (reviewed on CD)

Nick Lowe is a songwriting machine. He jokingly refers to himself as Songs-F-U-s, and on *Party Of One* he pulls out a bunch of gems. Taking a more eclectic approach than his old Rockpile partner, Lowe spins out Stones-ish rock ("The Look I Like"), country rockers that would go over bigtime down in Virginia ("Jumbo Ark"), countrified ballads that would wear well on Merle Haggard ("What's Shakin'"), quirky novelty tunes like the Devo-esque rock-a-boogie of "Shing-Shtang," and the gonzo rockabilly numbers, "Refrigerator" and "Honeygun." Clever lyrics, cool guitar work by Ry Cooder, and typically tight ditties, neatly wrapped by producer Edmunds (reviewed on cassette)

This is consummate, uncompromising pop craftsmanship by two of the best in the field.

—bill milkowski



GUITAR WORKSHOP

TRIBUTE TO OTIS REDDING—GRP VDR-1659:

I CAN'T TURN YOU LOOSE; *SITTIN' ON THE DOCK OF THE BAY*; *THESE ARMS OF MINE*; *RESPECT*; *I'VE BEEN LOVING YOU TOO LONG*; *GOOD TO ME*; *LET ME COME ON HOME*; *TRIBUTE TO A KING*.

Personnel: David T. Walker, Steve Cropper, Steve Lukather, Jay Graydon, Phil Upchurch, Arthur Adams, Dean Parks, and Charles "Icarus" Johnson, guitar; Jerry Peters, piano, synthesizer; Booker T. Jones, Hammond B3, synthesizer; Jeff Porcaro, James Gadson, John Robinson, and Nate Neblett, drums; James Jamerson, Jr., Abraham Laboriel, Scott Edwards, and Kevin Brandon, bass.

★★★★ ½

Judging from the recurrence of older repertoire

HAT HUT RECORDS PRESENTS



NEW MUSIC FROM EUROPE: THREE VIEWS

What is "New Music"? Since the *Ars Nova* of the 14th century, the term has been all but impossible to define, and the music harder to categorize, as, generation by generation, European composers have added an ever wider, wilder, array of outside influences to conventional practices. And the 20th century alone has seen, in theory and in use, more radical alterations and additions than over the previous 500 years combined: serialism, ethnic musics, electronics, expanded instrumental techniques, and, from America, jazz - which reintroduced improvisation to the European classical sensibility.

But what remains constant in "New Music," from century to century or, as the 20th century accelerates into the 21st, decade to decade, is the individual composer's willingness to explore uncharted territory, find fresh sonic combinations, reveal meaningful experiences in compositional energy. Among those European composers who have accepted this challenge, three of the most personal, provocative, and prismatic are Franz Koglmann, Maarten Altena, and Georg Gräwe.

Franz Koglmann's music (hat Art CDs 6003, 6018 & 6033) cannot be divorced from its environment - Vienna, a city of immense musical, philosophical, and literary traditions. Thus his compositions are haunted by apparitions - his Second Viennese School forefathers; painters and poets who see fantasy where reality ends; Freud, who sought the key to consciousness in dreams - to a noirish soundtrack of ghost waltzes, echoes of classicism, and surrealist jazz.

The Dutch bassist/composer Maarten Altena's compositions (hat Art CD 6029) have the wiry, circuitous logic and wit of a Calder mobile - continuity hanging by an attentive thread - with a new view displayed every time inspirational winds blow a new solo. But Stravinsky's influence - both his pre-Second World War scores and post-Webern conversion - has infiltrated Altena and cohort's music, so that lean, concise structures and pungent expressions prevail.

Georg Gräwe's dynamic piano - an expansive amalgam of Charles Ives and Cecil Taylor - plants the motivic seeds for his ensemble's fireworks... (hat Art CD 6028) brilliant explosions of mercurial voicings and events. The German composer emphasizes gestural immediacy; the basic vocabulary may be 20th century European, but the heroic polyphony speaks Free Jazz, and Phil Minton's expanded vocal techniques improvise a da-doesque mock-opera.

Koglmann, Altena, and Gräwe share little, stylistically, save perhaps the ability to obscure the distinction between composition and improvisation, and the desire to extend the resonances of European musical tradition into the future, each in his own way. Such imagination and integrity preserves the "new" in New Music. - Art Lange, August 1989

hat ART: A WORK IN PROGRESS

The production has been made possible by a generous financial assistance of Swiss Bank Corporation, Basle/Switzerland. Hat Hut Records LTD, 4106 Therwil/Switzerland



in current release, the further away the '60s get, the dearer they seem. On this affectionate, no-nonsense tribute to the music of Otis Redding, the players bow to the charm of Redding's fertile mid-'60s career, thanks in part to the presence of soul survivors Booker T. Jones and Steve Cropper. For the most part, the project stays in the tradition, unlike, say, the recent JMT album *Cold Sweat Plays J.B.*, in which James Brown gets a brand new bag (see "Record & CD Reviews," Nov. '90). The new Redding tribute makes for a solid instrumental companion piece to last year's Atlantic compilation, *The Otis Redding Story*.

On this guitar celebration, tone and vibrato tell a lot of the stylistic story. Steve Lukather's stamp, a heavily distorted sound and loosey-goosey rock feel, is the antithesis of David T. Walker's dry urgency. Likewise, L.A. studio hound Jay Graydon (the underrated soloist whose moment of glory came on Steely Dan's "Peg" solo) turns up the timbral raunch amidst the soulful gospel groove of "I've Been Loving You Too Long."

Studio vet Dean Parks' guitar solo on "Respect," graced with a nice warm fuzz, strikes a happy middle ground. Parks and Charles "Icarus" Johnson bridge a more modern approach with the stinging, blues-steeped style of Steve Cropper (on "Sittin' On The Dock of The Bay," which he co-wrote with Redding), Phil Upchurch, and Arthur Adams. This guitar summit is an unpretentious essay on both the staying power of Redding's music and the evolution of the electric guitar in a soul setting. (reviewed on cassette) —josef woodard



COURTNEY PINE

THE VISION'S TALE—Antilles 7 91334-2: INTRODUCTION; IN A MELLOW TONE; JUST YOU, JUST ME; A RAGGAMUFFIN'S STANCE; THERE IS NO GREATER LOVE; SKYLARK; I'M AN OLD COWHAND FROM THE RIO GRANDE; GOD BLESS THE CHILD; AND THEN (A WARRIOR'S TALE); OUR DESCENDANTS' DESCENDANTS; CP'S THEME; C JAM BLUES; GIANT STEPS. (69.03 minutes)

Personnel: Pine, tenor, soprano saxophone; Ellis Marsalis, piano; Delbert Felix, bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

The one time I heard Courtney Pine in person, I thought he had a large vocabulary and nothing much to say, although the tone of it was angry. This impression had not been conveyed by any of his albums, including this one. In fact, this is the "most accessible" (i.e., melodic, based mostly on familiar material, with well-known sidemen) album he has made, although no one will mistake him for Stan Getz.

Pine's predominant influence remains John Coltrane, but at least on this album there's a letup from the faster-is-better approach. Pine's tone isn't as full-bodied as Trane's was, but by the same token, he sounds more flexible. In this sense, "In A Mellow Tone" is arguably the best track. The bent notes and constricted tone suggest Chicago tenor men Von Freeman and Eddie Harris. Pine's sense of pacing creates a relaxed groove.

"Just You, Just Me" conjures up the sparring, Branford Marsalis-like approach to Coltrane, as does Pine's "A Raggamuffin's Stance," a trio track sans Ellis Marsalis. "There Is No Greater Love," on soprano, slides along almost as deliciously as "Mellow Tone," with the pianist's Flanagan-Kelly-Barron-like tastefulness to boot. And "Skylark," a soprano-and-piano duet, shows Pine's most restrained, melody-based playing.

The rest of the CD owes more to Trane, but even here, a suppleness mellows the kind of lines and energy that appeared so grotesquely imitative and destructive in the concert I saw. The refinements in these performances are a mark of increasing maturity in a remarkably gifted player. Perhaps it took a Marsalis-like aura in the studio to promote these assets, with Delleayo producing, Ellis comping and soloing with a sense of history in his touch. Felix holding the center steady, and Watts playing flexible Elvin to Pine's Trane. Judging from Watts' in-person performances, he could have overpowered this date, but thankfully he doesn't.

Delleayo's liner notes, on the other hand, seem heavy-handed (i.e., the profundity of it all). It's an easy trap for a liner note writer to fall into, a trap which the music mostly avoids. (reviewed on CD) —owen cordle



J. J. CALE

TRAVEL-LOG—Silvertone/RCA 1306-2-J: SHANGHAID; HOLD ON BABY; NO TIME; LADY LUCK; DISADVANTAGE; LEAN ON ME; END OF THE LINE; NEW ORLEANS; TIJUANA; THAT KIND OF THING; WHO'S TALKING; CHANGE YOUR MIND; HUMDINGER; RIVER BOAT SONG. (42:50 minutes)

Personnel: Cale, guitars, bass, vocals; Doug Belli, bass; Tim Drummond, bass; Jim Karstein, drums, percussion; Jim Keltner, drums, percussion, organ; Christine Lakeland, guitar, organ, background vocals; Jay Mithauer, drums; Spooner Oldham, keyboards; Hoyt Axton, background vocals (cut 6); James Burton, guitar (6); Al Capps and The Al Capps Orchestra, arrangements and orchestrations.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

This is one of those rare albums where you
CONTINUED ON PAGE 36

BACK TO THE ORGAN BANK

by Larry Birnbaum

From the beginning, it was a grab bag of clichés—blues and gospel, swing and bop—patched together and marketed as "soul jazz." Its common denominator was the organ, introduced as a novelty by Count Basie and Fats Waller and developed by specialists like Milt Buckner and "Wild Bill" Davis until it fell into the hands—and feet—of Jimmy Smith, who created and popularized a new genre. The '60s were a golden age for organ funk, but aside from Smith himself, the B3 bunch got little critical respect, and many funksters succumbed to computerized keyboards and disco-jazz in the '70s. Now that the seismically powerful, barely portable Hammond B3 is out of production, this poor man's synthesizer is suddenly back in fashion, and in the wake of a hard-bop revival that's made even the earthier sounds of the '60s respectable.

Jimmy Smith, Jimmy McGriff, and Charles Earland all hail from Philadelphia, the organ funk capital of the world. McGriff, who switched to organ from bass, was a protégé of Smith; Earland, who switched from tenor sax, was a protégé of

McGriff. All three have new albums (McGriff's in collaboration with saxman Hank Crawford) that harken back to their respective heydays without dwelling in the past. **Barbara Dennerlein** hails from Munich, West Germany, and she's been playing organ since she was 12; on her new album, she gives the Philly sound a contemporary twist, with a little help from American friends.

Smith's *Prime Time* (Milestone M-9176: ★★★), his first album in four years, features guitarist Phil Upchurch and saxophonists Herman Riley, Rickey Woodard, and Curtis Peagler. They bop the blues with conviction, but the mix is thoroughly dominated by Smith's churning organ, whose harmonic sophistication and deft, propulsive phrasing have never been topped. He pays tribute to Kenny Burrell, Duke, Bill Doggett, and Bobby "Blue" Bland but stamps his own greasy imprint on every note. There's no denying it swings, but after thirtysomething years, Smith's formula needs more than a hint of Monk to bring it up to date.

McGriff and Crawford's *On The Blue Side* (Milestone M-9177: ★★★½) is their third recent duo release. Cleaner and less cluttered than Smith's album, it's jazzier and more refined than either leader's early work. With Jimmy Ponder on guitar and Vance James on drums, they mesh flawlessly, grooving through a set of jazz and r&b standards, including Chuck Jackson's "Any

Day Now," Billy Hill's "The Glory Of Love," and Lester Young's "Jumpin' With Symphonic Sid." It's almost too perfect, missing the ragged intensity of Crawford's classic Ray Charles sessions or McGriff's initial, Albert Collins-inspiring recordings for Sue.

Earland's *Third Degree Burn* (Milestone M-9174: ★★★) is his second Milestone date in as many years, with urban-contemporary material like Michael Jackson's "The Way You Make Me Feel" and The Winans' crossover gospel hit, "Heaven." Saxists David "Fathead" Newman—another Ray Charles alum— and Grover Washington, Jr., who made his debut on Earland's *Living Black* LP, are featured, but Earland steals his own show with thick washes of color no synthesizer could match.

Dennerlein's *Straight Ahead!* (Enja R2 79608; 69:15 minutes: ★★★★★) is her first U.S.-distributed album, following two self-produced German LPs. Trombonist Ray Anderson, guitarist Mitch Watkins, and drummer Ronnie Burrage often overshadow the leader's spare but soulful organ, as Watkins pushes the blues to the psychedelic breaking point while Anderson squawks vocalized melodies that render the customary sax accompaniment obsolete. But on a tour de funk like her own "Stormy Monday Blues," Dennerlein gets all the way down with the Champale sound, grinding her Hammond with a saucy swing as tangy as a Philly cheese steak. **DB**

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FORM STRETCHERS

by Art Lange

Forget the Cold War; the '50s were a hotbed of artistic experimentation and integration. Abstract expressionism in painting, method acting in theater, the Beats in literature—and in music, the term "Third Stream" was coined to cover attempts at intertwining jazz and classical procedures and philosophies. As instrumentalist, conductor, composer, and musicologist, Gunther Schuller was (and still is) in the midst of many of these maneuvers, in the company of form stretchers like Gil Evans, John Lewis, George Russell, Charles Mingus, Jimmy Giuffrè, Gerry Mulligan, and other kindred souls.



Gunther Schuller conducts Orange Then Blue, with son George on drums and Howard Johnson on tuba.

Though widely acclaimed for his books *Early Jazz* and *The Swing Era*, Schuller's compositional reputation today is probably stronger in classical circles. Had his "jazz" charts—primarily from the '50s, recorded for the first time on '88's *Jumpin' In The Future* (GM Recordings 3010 CD; 43:52 minutes; ★★★★★)—received greater circulation at the time, however, who knows where the state of jazz composition might be today? His arrangements of standards like "Blue Moon" and "Summertime," not to mention Charlie Parker's "Anthropology," reveal subtle, suggestive alterations of color and harmony; he shares his instrumental palette with (and perhaps owes a conceptual debt to) Gil Evans' charts for Claude Thornhill (via Ellington, of course). But the best pieces, with the most modern implications, are Schuller's own. "Night Music," "Teardrop," the title tune, and his fantasia on "When The Saints Go Marchin' In" are not only marvelously evocative, but offer a sense of melody, balance, design, and texture unique to jazz writing then and now. The band—basically an augmented

version of Boston's Orange Then Blue—does yeoman duty on the difficult ensembles, though some of the solos could have used greater punch, and a point of view. This problem is somewhat alleviated on their own new live disc *Where Were You?* (GM Recordings 3012 CD; 70:38; ★★★★★), thanks to guest tenorman George Adams, who makes his presence felt with typical urgency. But, unlike on their debut '85 LP, their material lets them down here. Miles' "U'n'l" is simply not a memorable enough theme to sustain a 13-minute performance, and the collective arranging credit on this and Paul Motian's similarly sketchy "The Owl From Cranston" suggests they'd do better with a single guiding sensibility behind them. "Friday The Thirteenth," too, suffers from an arranging lapse and droops into mere novelty. Fortunately, their strengths are displayed on the two Mingus compositions and the un-Monkish but thoughtful "Ba-Lue-

Bolivar-Ba-Lues-Are."

For a taste of expansive repertory, Orange Then Blue could look back to father-figure Schuller's involvement in the 1957 *Brandeis Jazz Festival* (CBS/Sony 25DP 5327; 54:10; ★★★★★), where six classical and jazz composers were commissioned to write "big band" charts. Recently reissued in pristine sound on CD in Japan, it should open ears even 33 years after the fact. Mingus' "Revelations" has real character, and George Russell's "All About Rosie" is a crisp, coolly calculated reminder of his early, now neglected, successes. Even the rigid formalism of Harold Shapero's "On Green Mountain" and Milton Babbitt's "All Set" benefit from the loose, swinging, technical mastery of the jazz performers—and Bill Evans' participation is especially noteworthy; his "Rosie" solo and the one that deftly emerges out of the classical writing in Schuller's "Transformation" not only stand on their own as expressive gestures, but suggest still untapped potential in similar endeavors. (reviewed on CD)

DB

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 34

recognize its specialness on the first listen. There's not a weak number in this rhythm-and-blues-based collection which consists of 14 beauties recorded over the course of five years (1984-'89). Cale's laid-back, soulful vocals and his unadorned but imaginative guitar solos help make this album a stunning success. Most of the songs are sparsely arranged and possess a sensibility of spontaneity and informality (unrehearsed endings, stray instrumental noodlings during fade-outs, and a band member from time to time casually voicing approval in the background). The result is that the majority of the album sounds like a live studio session with several perfect first takes included in the final package.

Cale, who heavily influenced the popular (i.e., AOR) blues stylings of Mark Knopfler and Eric Clapton (who struck gold with Cale's "After Midnight"), never strays too far from the r&b zone. Yet he creates a diversity in his material by consistently coloring it with country, southern rock, and jazz influences. "New Orleans" is flavored with dixieland band rowdiness (including a wonderful tuba bass line), Cale's spicy guitar licks, and, surprisingly, even a string arrangement that works incredibly well. Then there are a couple of blues shuffles (including the great acoustic tune "River Boat Song"), a few numbers where Cale flashes a tart slide ("Humdinger" is a slow-moving but fun love song of sorts), and several smooth upbeat pieces where Cale's solos swing. Two numbers, the moody but cooking "Lady Luck" and the lowdown "End Of The Line," feature exquisite brush work by the drummer (not specified in the liner notes).

The album is loosely held together by the travelogue theme. While most of the songs have nebulous settings and dwell on standard issues of love, these are tunes about or inspired by such places as Tijuana, Tupelo, Shanghai, and New Orleans. But the true uniting force behind the album is Cale's ability to not only write consummate songs, but to brilliantly perform them. His style isn't to polish them with production glitz, thereby sucking the soul out of them. Instead, he offers them up in their raw beauty. (reviewed on CD) —dan ouellette



IVO PERELMAN

IVO—K2B2 2769: *SLAVES OF JO; ON THIS STREET; THE CARNATION AND THE ROSE; THE DAY YOU WILL WANT ME; CIRCLE DANCE; TEREZA OF JESUS; POINT OF SAND.* (48:01 minutes)

Personnel: Perelman, tenor saxophone; Airto, percussion; Flora Purim, vocals; Peter Erskine,

drums; Don Preston, piano and synthesizer; John Patitucci, acoustic bass (cuts 2,6), electric six-string bass (1,3,5); Buell Neidlinger, acoustic bass (1,5), arco bass (2), electric bass (3,6); Eliane Elias, piano (4,7).

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

The spirit of Albert Ayler hovers over this startling debut by Ivo Perelman, a gifted 29-year-old from Sao Paulo, Brazil, who possesses one of the most distinctive and imposing tenor voices to come along in years. An impassioned player given to dramatic flights of "out" playing, his boundless energy, searching nature, and searing falsetto register clearly place him in the Ayler-Pharoah Sanders camp. And that intensity is underscored by a strange lyricism that invites the listener in even as it challenges.

On the album's opener, "Slaves Of Jo," Ivo enters with a nod to Ayler, blowing a simple, sing-songy line before totally deconstructing the piece and heading to higher ground, urged on by Don Preston's dense block chords and Flora Purim's vocal prodding. Patitucci roams freely on electric six-string bass while Neidlinger and Erskine hold down the groove. They switch roles on the sparser "On The Street," where Erskine is allowed freedom to roam while the dual acoustic bassists anchor the piece and keep Ivo from sailing off into the ether.

The rambunctious reedman threatens to explode on "Tereza Of Jesus," an energized waltz that features some virtuoso turns on acoustic bass by Patitucci along with some Cecil-styled clusters and rolling on the ivories by Preston. Preston often supplies a renegade edge to this project, particularly with his surreal synth work on "The Carnation And The Rose," a throbbing samba beat number that might be subtitled, "Albert Ayler Goes To Carnival." And Ivo responds eagerly to such subversive cues.

On two duets with his hometown colleague, pianist Eliane Elias—"The Day You Will Want Me" and Milton Nascimento's "Point Of Sand"—the saxophonist reveals a tender, romantic side. Other than that, it's full steam ahead into the stratosphere. (reviewed on CD)
—bill milkowski



MAX ROACH/ DIZZY GILLESPIE

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METAMORPHOSIS; JUST DREAMING; NAIROBI; ALLEN'S
ALLEY; THE THEME; THE SMOKE THAT THUNDERS; OOP
PA PA DA; INTERVIEW. (2 CDS: 126:06 MINUTES)

Personnel: Roach, drums, percussion; Gillespie, trumpet, vocals.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

MAX ROACH/ ANTHONY BRAXTON

ONE IN TWO • TWO IN ONE—hot ART CD
6030: ONE IN TWO—TWO IN ONE, PART I; ONE
IN TWO—TWO IN ONE, PART II. (74:58)

Personnel: Roach, drums, percussion, gongs,
tuned cymbals; Braxton, soprano, soprano, &
alto saxes; clarinet; contrabass clarinet; flute.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Heard in tandem, *Max & Dizzy* and *One In Two*...—the latter a reissue of a 1979 Willisau Festival performance—point up Max Roach's bridging of generations, and of sensibilities often, and erroneously, portrayed as being at odds with each other. These two extraordinary encounters detail how Roach's formalism—the use of well-considered statements that lend themselves to deliberate, yet imaginative development—is the foundation of his ecumenical art. It is the legacy of Papa Jo Jones and Big Sid Catlett, and the wonder of hearing these two recordings together is how Roach's formalism is as cogently applicable to the work of Anthony Braxton as it is to Dizzy Gillespie's.

Reading the liner note reference that *One In Two* is completely spontaneous is enough to produce a whiplash-inflicting double-take, given the cohesiveness and subtlety of Roach and Braxton's interplay in the exposition of an extremely wide range of materials. There are some exquisite sequences, such as the first movements of "Part I"—sculpted soprano bouyed on gongs and cymbal washes; ground-swelling traps and alto; climactic torrential cadences accented by staccato soprano phrases—and there is plenty of jazz-informed give-and-take, such as the exhilarating call-and-response section at the end of the performance. Despite the groundbreaking nature of his collaborations with Cecil Taylor and Archie Shepp, Roach's work with Braxton is proving to be the most durable of his summits with the avant garde.

The fact that Roach and Gillespie's preparation for their marathon was limited to "talking it down" a couple of times is enough to make your head spin 360 degrees, à la *The Exorcist*. *Max & Dizzy* is spellbinding, not because it is overtly, ponderously profound, but because it is driven by the warm and jaunty rapport between these two old friends. During this roughly 90-minute workout, of which only about a third is comprised of previously recorded material, Roach's decades-deep inventory of accented backbeats, cross-rhythms, and tricks-of-the-traps provides vibrant fabric for flights by Gillespie that are searingly razor-sharp one moment, delightfully smeared and streaked the next. With unflagging energy and resourcefulness, Messrs. Roach and Gillespie make history again, and make it sound easy. (reviewed on CD)
—bill shoemaker

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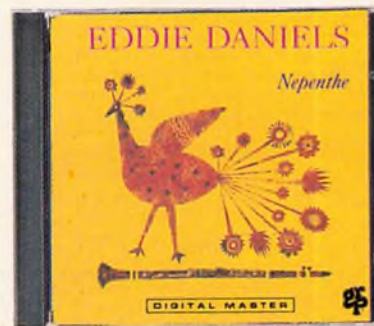
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MILES DAVIS

BIG FUN—CSP A2 21398; GREAT EXPECTATIONS; IFE; GO AHEAD JOHN; LONELY FIRE. (2 CDs: 1 hr. 38:54 minutes)

Personnel: Davis, trumpet; Herbie Hancock (cut 1), Chick Corea (1,4), electric piano; Joe Zawinul, electric piano, *Farfisa* (4); Lonnie Smith, piano (2); Harold I. Williams, piano, sitar (2); John McLaughlin, guitar (1,3); Ron Carter (1), Michael Henderson (2), Dave Holland (3,4), bass; Harvey Brooks, Fender bass (1,4); Steve Grossman (1,3), Carlos Garnett (2), Wayne Shorter (4), soprano sax; Sonny Fortune, soprano sax, flute (2); Bennie Maupin, bass clarinet (1,2,4), flute (2); Billy Cobham (1,4), Al Foster (2), Billy Hart (2), Jack DeJohnette (3,4), drums; Airtio Moreira (1,4), Mtume (2), percussion; Khalil Balakrishna (1,4), Bihari Sharma (1), electric sitar, tambura, etc.; Badal Roy, tabla (2).

★ ★ ★ 1/2

I never could figure out Miles' approach to reaching black music listeners during the late '60s and early '70s, when this music was recorded for Columbia. Cries of selling out, of attempts to reach a mass audience with more "contemporary" sounds always baffled me because, aside from its "pseudo-trance music" qualities, most of *Big Fun*—a CD reissue from '74—comes across as experimental, not calculated. About the only thing reeking of commercialism here is yet another in a series of silly cartoon covers by somebody named Corky McCoy.

Okay, maybe most of us could have played bass on a lot of what's here, but simpler in one sense doesn't a best-seller always make. If memory serves, "hits" tend to come in bite-sized, easy-to-swallow doses, with a regular (rock) beat, pervasive electric guitar, vocals—you know, something you can dance to. If Miles was looking for the Top 10, he missed it four-out-of-four on this one by an average of 20 minutes per. Certainly not your typical pop, rock, or soul, the man who trumpets had already stopped calling his music "jazz."

As with *In A Silent Way*, *Bitches Brew*, and *On The Corner*, *Big Fun* takes risks with relatively large (shall we say, bulky?) groups of musicians. Yes, some of it is tedious, repetitive to a fault, lilting one moment, limp the next. "Great Expectations/Mulher Laranja" (the secondary title's a new one on me) rambles on and on, complete with a bass line suggesting the early stages to Henry Mancini's "Peter Gunn"; Michael Henderson's bystander bass lines on "Ife" seem to trip over the equally simple drumming of Al Foster, and "Lonely Fire" runs the risk of losing its flame time and again, thanks to only slight embellishments on a pared-down melody. In a sense, what we've

got here is music that wanders with no apparent beginnings, middles, or ends.

So what's the Big Deal about *Big Fun*? Well, in addition to Miles' (sometimes reckless) risk-taking, there is indeed a sense of adventure, of taking chances with so much talent, and with such skeletal designs. *Big Fun* reinforces the notion that Miles' primary contributions to music have come via orchestrating, organizing, enabling. How this music was put together proves to be as interesting as any solo or ensemble work. There's intrigue, as Chick and Herbie navigate their ways through "Great Expectations" various sonic layers and moods (the second half is Joe Zawinul's "Orange Lady"); mystery, as Wayne and Miles explore the haunted remains of their music together on "Lonely Fire"; even Miles' funky wah-wah on "Ife" lends itself well to the genre.

Speaking of wah-wahs, John McLaughlin's electric guitar is a signal presence, especially on "Go Ahead John," Miles' most obvious allusion to The King of Soul, James Brown. Conjuring up images of Brown's "I Can't Stand Myself" and "I Got The Feelin'," from '67 and '68, respectively, "Go Ahead John" shuffles, swirls, gets down, and runs rampant, with some very creative editing, courtesy of producer Teo Macero. McLaughlin's all-too-brief, blues-drenched solo is the highlight of this collection. As a whole, *Big Fun* makes for some curious and oftentimes rewarding . . . fun.

Incidentally, the digital sound quality is consistently high throughout. Ron Carter's acoustic bass, for example, rings true on "Great Expectations" (*Big Fun* is available through One Way Records: 1-800-833-3553.) (reviewed on CD)

—John Ephland



NOTTING HILLBILLIES

THE NOTTING HILLBILLIES—Warner Bros. 4-26147; RAILROAD WORK SONG; BEWILDERED; YOUR OWN SWEET WAY; RUN ME DOWN; ONE WAY GIRL; BLUES STAY AWAY; WILL YOU MISS ME?; PLEASE BABY; WEAPONS OF PRAYER; THAT'S WHERE I BELONG; FEEL LIKE GOING HOME.

Personnel: Mark Knopfler, guitar and vocals; Brendan Croker, guitar and vocals; Steve Phillips, guitar and vocals; Guy Fletcher, keyboards and vocals; Paul Franklin, pedal steel guitar.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

The Notting Hillbillies align themselves with a relatively new brand of roots revivalism—as espoused by producers T-Bone Burnett and especially Daniel Lanois—that doesn't scrimp on dreamy ambience. Then again, Dire Straits' Mark Knopfler has long shown a penchant for folk values filtered through atmospheric haze. In both his sleek folk-rock work with the Straits

and on such film soundtracks as *Local Heroes*, Knopfler zeroes in on his deceptively traditional-sounding music from unexpected angles. On this, Knopfler's moonlighting project, *The Notting Hillbillies* serve up a curious strain of western swing and assorted country variants. Americana meets the netherworld. You could dub them the Paris, Texas Playboys.

It's not nearly as true to its idiomatic sources as it might seem. The traditional "Railroad Work Song" rolls along on slippery rails of pedal steel. "One Way Girl" has a campy calypso pulse, while the vocal textures of "Blues Stay Away" and "Please Baby" evince a son of the Sons of The Pioneers suppleness.

Knopfler's imprimatur guarantees *The Notting Hillbillies* more attention than it might otherwise get, but he remains relatively interwoven into the sonic fabric—he's just one of the boys in the band. You can instantly recognize that out-of-phase Stratocaster sound or that Scottish twang on occasion, but mostly, Knopfler (also a co-producer) contributes his attitude, his abiding love for lyrical sheen. (reviewed on cassette) —*josef woodard*



JERRY GONZALEZ & THE FORT APACHE BAND

OBATALÁ—Enja R2 79609: *INTRO; NEFERTITI; OBATALÁ; EVIDENCE; SIEMPRE JUNTO A TI; EIGHTY-ONE; JACKIE-ING.* (66:43 minutes)

Personnel: Gonzalez, trumpet, flugelhorn, congas; John Stubblefield, tenor saxophone; Angel "Papo" Vasquez, trombone, Larry Willis, piano; Edgardo Miranda, guitar; Andy Gonzalez, bass; Steve Berrios, drums, bata, chekere, coro; Milton Cardona, bata, lead vocal, chekere; Hector "Flaco" Hernandez, bata, chekere, conga, coro; Nicky Marrero, timbales, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

TITO PUENTE

GOZA MI TIMBAL—Concord Picante CCD-4399: *AIREGIN; CHA CHA CHA; PENT UP HOUSE; PICADILLO A LO PUENTE; ALL BLUES; ODE TO CACHAO; STRAIGHT, NO CHASER; LAMBADA TIMBALES.* (41:01)

Personnel: Puente, timbales, timbalito, marimba, vibraphone, chekere; Sonny Bravo, piano; Sam Burtis, trombone; Mary Fettig, Mitch Frohman, soprano & tenor sax, flute; Robbie Kwock, David Piro Rodriguez, trumpet, flugelhorn; Jose Madera, congas, percussion; Bobby Rodriguez, bass; Johnny Rodriguez, bongos, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Hard times for Latin music, it seems, are good times for Latin jazz, which has flourished with the decline of New York's salsa scene, just as it did in the aftermath of the mambo era. Not yet as popular as Brazilian fusion, Latin jazz is coming on strong, and without the benefit of novelty. Afro-Caribbean and African-American music have intertwined for generations, awkwardly at times, but with increasing sophistication as Latin musicians delve deeper into the jazz heritage—and vice-versa. Tito Puente's Latin Jazz Ensemble and Jerry Gonzalez' Fort Apache Band have both been around for

nearly a decade, but each represents a different stage of the music's development. Puente, on *Goza Mi Timbal*, caps a long career with an outstanding performance in an idiom he helped pioneer. Gonzalez, on *Obatalá*, takes that idiom to a higher plane, subsuming jazz and Latin elements to achieve a transcendent fusion.

Puente took off from Machito's early "Cubop" experiments with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, refining his own classic mambos with progressive jazz harmonies. With his Latin Jazz Ensemble, he's gained greater ac-

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cess to the international jazz audience and wider exposure for the bi-cultural talents of his shifting roster of topnotch sidemen. Goza *Mi Timbal* is evenly divided between Latin compositions, all but one by Puente, and jazz standards by Sonny Rollins, Miles Davis, and Thelonious Monk. Tito crackles on timbales and the band cranks like a dynamo, but in this case the whole is simply the sum of its parts—jazz tunes plus Latin rhythms—rather than a true synthesis.

Gonzalez, originally inspired by Cal Tjader's Latin jazz combo, studied trumpet and congas

simultaneously, steeping himself in both jazz and Latin traditions from the outset. Despite an eye-popping resume as a jazz and Latin sideman and two critically acclaimed albums with The Fort Apache Band, he won little public attention until the recent release of his brilliant Thelonious tribute, *Rumba Para Monk* (Sunnyside 1036; see "Record & CD Reviews," Mar. '90). *Obatalá*, recorded live at the Zurich International Jazz Festival, opens with a haunting, Steve Reich-style introduction and flows seamlessly through treacherous arrangements of tunes by Monk, Wayne Shorter, and Ron Carter

(a couple of which were featured on previous Fort Apache sessions), as well as Afro-Cuban chants. Gonzalez is in equally fine form on trumpet, flugelhorn, and congas, and the Apaches, in their latest incarnation, are superb, leavening ethereal textures with arresting rhythms and entrancing solos. It's jazz, it's Latin, and it's great music, which is all that really matters in the end. (reviewed on CD)

—Larry Birnbaum

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CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE

ACE OF HARPS—Alligator ALCD 4781: *THE BLUES OVERTOOK ME; MEAN OLE FRISCO; SHE MAY BE YOUR WOMAN; KIDDEO; RIVER HIP MAMA; YESTERDAYS; LEAVING YOUR TOWN; HANGIN' ON; HELLO, PRETTY BABY; MY ROAD LIES IN DARKNESS.* (44:21 minutes)

Personnel: Musselwhite, harmonicas, vocals; Andrew Jones, Jr., guitar; Artis Joyce, bass; Tommy Hill, drums; Jimmy Pugh, keyboards.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

Husky vocals. Wailing harp. Thick, meaty guitar chops. Unrelentless full-tilt boogie beat. Add them all together and you have a hard-driving, muscular, urban blues package that evokes the image of a smoky working-class blues bar with its indelible smell of stale beer. Veteran harmonica ace Charlie Musselwhite has been without a domestic album for six years, but steamrollers his way back onto the blues scene with these rowdy and boisterous numbers that, for the most part, are better suited for dancing than just listening. Musselwhite is not a harmonica stylist as much as he is a hard-blowing howler who breathes passion into the rocking tunes he serves up. He's also a growling, demonstrative vocalist who unabashedly gets mean 'n' nasty as he sings about whisky, fast women, and drowning in the blues.

The rip-snorting numbers feature Musselwhite's electrifying harmonica excursions and guitarist Andrew Jones, Jr.'s power-packed riffs. However, some of the numbers suffer from solos that get too drawn out. In addition, while the seven cooks provide a strong backbone for the album, they don't exhibit much musical variety. The songs that do are the highlights of the collection. Strategically interspersed throughout the album, they give brief glimpses into Musselwhite's ability to cover a diversity of blues stylings. He goes the slow and melancholic route on the heartbreak blues number "She May Be Your Woman," offering up subtle and sensitive harp phrasings. "Yesterdays" is a mesmerizing instrumental piece where Musselwhite approximates the somber sound of

an accordion on his harp.

The final cut, "My Road Lies In Darkness," is a reflective acoustic guitar-led song based in the country blues tradition. Musselwhite makes the right choice and lays down his harp for this number, which doesn't require a plaintive moan. Of all the rockers, I cast my highest vote for "River Hip Mama," where Musselwhite not only unceremoniously cranks out rambunctious blues but also unleashes some hefty vocals in such humorous lines as "She's a rangy girl, man, she's long and tall/She sleeps in the kitchen with her feet out in the hall." (reviewed on CD) —*dan ouellette*



EDDIE GOMEZ

STREET SMART—Columbia CT 45397: *STREET SMART; LORENZO (FOR LORENZO HOMAR); I'CARAMBA; IT WAS YOU ALL ALONG; BLUES PERIOD; DOUBLE ENTENDRE; CARMEN'S SONG; BELLA HORIZONTE; BESAME MUCHO.*

Personnel: Gomez, basses; Dick Oatts, reeds; Kenny Werner, keyboards; Steve Gadd, drums, percussion; Richard Tee, Rhodes piano (cuts 1,8); Barry Rogers, trombone (1,3,8); Randy Brecker, trumpet, flugelhorn (3,4,7); Hugh McCracken, guitar (1,5,6), harmonica (5); Steve Thornton, Nicky Marrero, percussion (3,8); Jack McDuff, organ (5).

★ ★ 1/2

Even a business-as-usual date by one of the jazz world's great bassists should have a little more spunk and bounce to it, but despite technical controls aplenty in the meticulous production, there is a fear of flying in the very conception. Much bento box, little sushi. Bases are covered: blustery funk attention-getters opening each side, okay blues with

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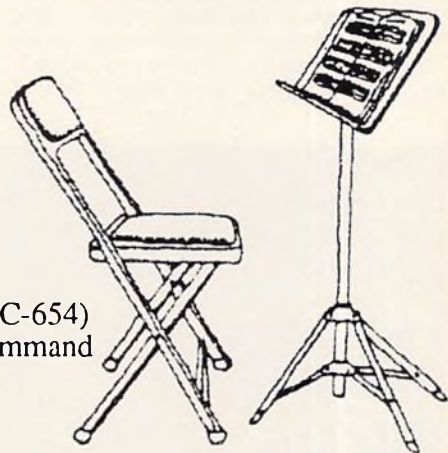
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Brother Jack, sleepers, Latins. Balladry involves out-of-thin-air Randy Brecker statements of 40 seconds or so that nearly achieve poignancy. The major voice is Dick Oatts', who sounds properly curt and tough on tenor, sweet and sweeping on alto, limber and lithe on soprano, but unleashes nothing here smacking of passion.

Two octet Latin numbers (one samba, one salsa) bubble along pleasantly with kicks from Thornton and Marrero. A dreamy "Besame Mucho" with flute and "strynthgs," that is . . . "synth/strings" (and a faceless chorale), lets Gomez pluck a little coda. The ensemble voicing emphasizes horn and rhythm, so the middle—where piano and guitar normally go—is curiously hollow: Gomez steps in here at

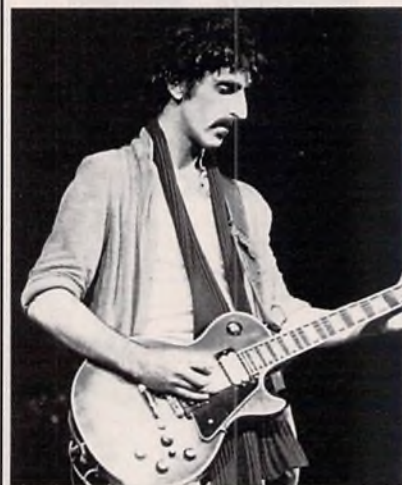
times, and sounds his usual firm, orotund, witty self. Kenny Werner's role, ably filled, is to supply synth color and strings. Most of these men have recorded better work within the last year.

Best tracks are "Lorenzo" and "Blues." The pretty, searching "Lorenzo" for quartet only, shows that Gomez really does have some gift for creating melodies; they stretch that one to six minutes. McDuff and the blues: what can you say? Good feelings spread to Gomez and Oatts and McCracken's mouth harp—familiar but not perfunctory. Problem is, there's not enough material of substance in Gomez' seven thin originals to sustain much interest. The ballads are pretty, the funk is foot-happy, but you've heard it all before. (reviewed on cassette)
—fred bouchard

SON OF FZ ON CD

by Bill Milkowski

The following 17 CDs on Rykodisc, spanning 21 years, reveal a few things about **Frank Zappa**: His guitar playing has improved dramatically since the '60s while his social commentary has become more pointed and preachy in recent years (see Apr. '88's first roundup of FZ material); and, the musical standards of his '80s bands have risen far above those of their '60s counterparts. It's not likely that the disheveled crew from the original Mothers of Invention could do the "difficult music" suites or intricate segues that appear on more recent works. So, in effect, the new and improved FZ is a more irascible, condescending polemicist with more chops, genius or no genius.



On *Absolutely Free* (RCD 10093; 40:63 minutes: ★★★), Frank's second album with The Mothers, recorded in late '66 and released in May '67, he flaunts the influences of '50s rock, r&b, and Edgar Varese (sometimes in the same piece). His guitar playing throughout is primitive but full of raunchy abandon, emulating guitar hero Johnny "Guitar" Watson, who would become a Zappa collaborator 10 years later. A musical highpoint here is the ambitious 7½-minute suite, "Brown Shoes Don't Make It," which seamlessly blends a Varese-like use of dissonance and complex rhythmic constructions with Beach Boys motifs. And to further establish his renegade stance to the industry, Zappa slaps this warning on the back cover: "You must buy this album now. Top 40 will never ever play it!" A credo he holds to this day.

1972's *Waka/Jawaka* (RCD 10094; 36:12: ★★★½) can be considered Zappa's jazz album, following in the wake of Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* and *Jack Johnson*. The lengthy excursion of "Big Swifty" sounds like a jazz version of a Grateful Dead jam, with trumpeter Sal Marquez evoking images of Miles on muted trumpet and George Duke stretching out on an electric piano solo. The 11-minute title cut, however, is stiff and lame by comparison, just slightly

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hipper than *The Tonight Show Band* playing "Eye Of The Tiger." This rigid chart is distinguished, nonetheless, by keyboardist Don Preston's quirky Mini Moog solo and the interactive drum work of Aynsley Dunbar. For some contrast to these two "serious music" suites, Zappa throws in two comedic vocal numbers, a bluesy romp called "Your Mouth" and a buoyant country rock number, "It Just Might Be A One-Shot Deal," featuring Sneaky Pete Kleinow's crying pedal steel guitar. Some challenging music here with bits of humor, and no proselytizing.

Rykodisc combines Zappa's two most commercial albums, 1973's *Overnight Sensation* and 1974's *Apostrophe*, onto one CD (RCD 40025; 66:33: ★★★½). These tightly-crafted, clever tunes reached out to a new audience of high schoolers and college age kids hungry for sarcasm and absurdity. "Don't Eat The Yellow Snow" and "Stink Foot" tickled their collective funnybone while "Cosmic Debris" and "Apostrophe" (featuring an extended fuzz-bass showcase by Jack Bruce) wet their appetite for basic blues-based rock. Some social commentary about the mind-numbing effects of television on "I'm The Slime" and some food for thought on "Uncle Remus," but in general the lyrics are less menacing, the music less adventurous.

The live, double-CD set, *You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore, Vol. 2* (RCD 10083/84; 2 CDs, 2 hrs. 2:52: ★★★★★), captures the great Zappa band of George Duke, Tom Fowler, Chester Thompson, Ruth Underwood, and the insane Napoleon Murphy Brock in festive spirits with chops honed to a sheen for a September 22, 1974 concert in Helsinki, Finland. This is the same band that recorded the fine, funny *Roxy And Elsewhere* in December of '73. Some of the material here is repeated from that album, but after a year on the road together they really got the tunes under their fingers. The stage banter between Duke, Brock, and FZ is hilarious (check out "Room Service"). Great soloing by Zappa on "Inca Roads" and the previously unreleased "Approximate." There's mondo-wah grunge with two-handed tapping frills and wicked blues inflections. Zappa flaunts his compositional prowess on lengthy instrumental suites like "RDNZL," and the 24-minute extravaganza, "Dupree's Paradise." This versatile band could cut the serious stuff yet throw down some real funk, blow in a jazz vein (check Duke's solo on "RDNZL") and partake in the absurd humor.

Less than a year later, Zappa reunited with his pixilated colleague Captain Beefheart for a world tour. *Bongo Fury* (RCD 10097; 41:07: ★★★★★½) documents their two nights at the Armadillo World Headquarters in Austin, Texas. The same basic band of Duke, Fowler, Underwood, Brock, and Thompson is augmented by slide guitarist Denny Walley, who works in well with Beefheart's Howlin' Wolf tendencies on "Advance Romance" and "200 Years Old." Two Beefheart recitations with free-music accompaniment, "Sam With The Showing Scalp Flat Top" and "Man With

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43

The Woman Head," recall the beat antics of Lord Buckley while the kinetic "Debra Kadabra" sounds like a jam with Savoy Brown, Decoding Society, and Popeye's Poopdeck Pappy. Adventurous, inspired, slightly insane.

Around the same time, Zappa released the fine studio album, *One Size Fits All* (RCD 10095; 43:00: ★★★½), which featured the same '74 touring band augmented by the funky vocals of Johnny "Guitar" Watson on two cuts—the Delta-bluesy putdown of West Coast trailer-park life, "San Ber'dino," and on the blues section of "Andy," a tune whose intro sounds like "Son Of Peaches En Regalia." Some nifty FZ soloing on "Po-Jama People" and some real burning by Duke on "Inca Roads," the album's highlight. This album is a tight, great-sounding producer's triumph by Frank.

The 1984 album, *Them Or Us* (RCD 40027; 71:05: ★★★), rocks harder than jazzier FZ offerings like *Waka/Jawaka* yet also reflects Frank's ongoing fondness for '50s rock and doo-wop (heard on a faithful rendition of the 1956 tune, "The Closer You Are" and a reggae-fied remake of "Sharleena," a tune featured on his 1971 album, *Chunga's Revenge*). "Guitar" Watson makes a humorous appearance on "In France," a tune about personal hygiene

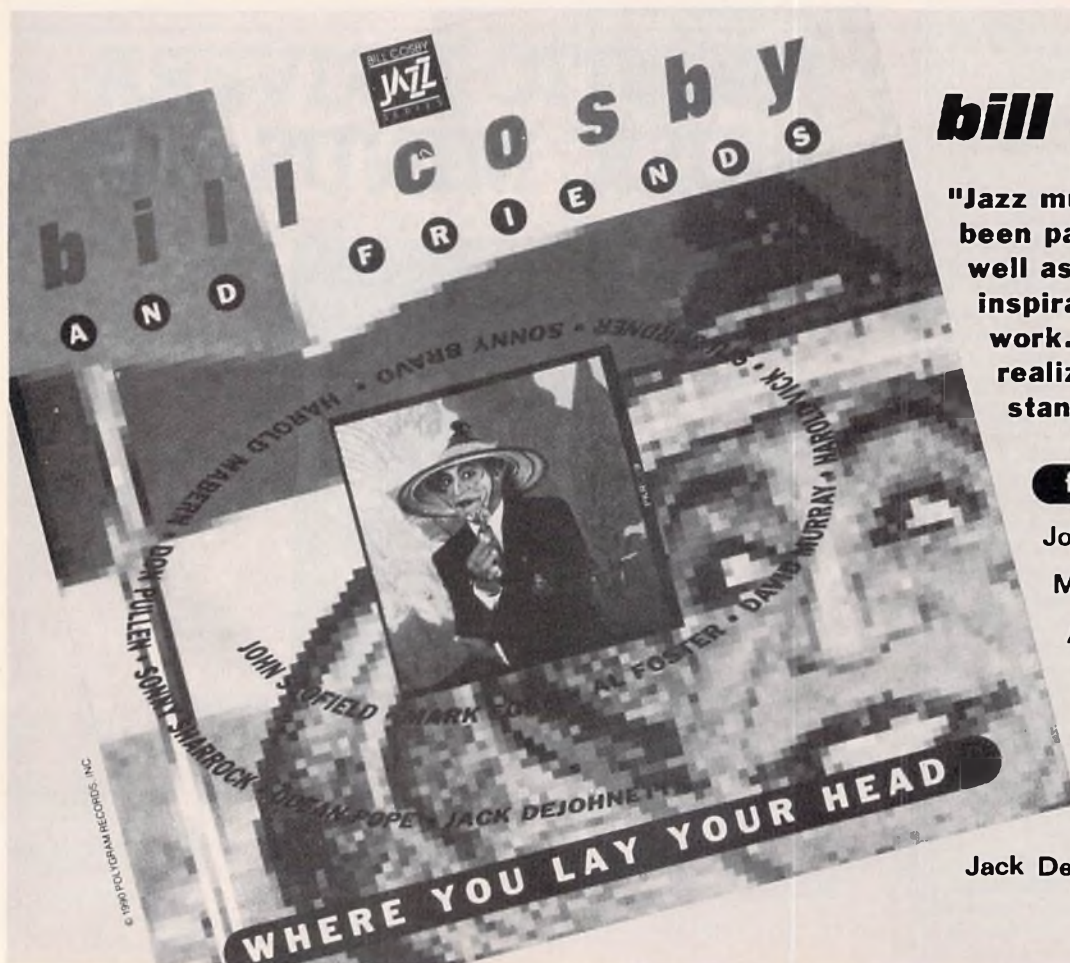
abroad, and gunslinger Steve Vai is turned loose on the heavy-metal jam, "Stevie's Spanking," which also features a high-tech speed solo by Frank's son Dweezil. An added treat here is a straight-faced cover of "Whipping Post" with Bobby Martin doing his finest Gregg Allman impression. And on two difficult music suites, "Marqueson's Chicken" and the ballet piece, "Sinister Footwear," Vai plays impossible lines while FZ solos with abandon on top.

Zappa's 1984 opus, *Thing-Fish* (RCD 10020/21; 2 CDs, 1 hr. 31:08: ★★), is a misguided attempt at musical theatre. Rambling, pretentious, offensive, and boring, it's a one-joke concept using Ike Willis in the role of the Thing-Fish (an aberrant take on the Kingfish character from *Amos 'N' Andy*). Bitter and mocking, in addition to being musically limp, it waxes vitriolic on such topics as feminism, homosexuality, the video-religion industry, and the inherent blandness of over-educated white folks.

FZ's 1985 effort, *Frank Zappa Meets The Mothers Of Prevention* (RCD 10023; 43:52: ★★★), is a blatant attack on Tipper Gore, Sen. Fritz Hollings, and all those members of the PMRC who would try to censor rock music. An uneven offering, it documents Frank's first use of the Synclavier as a means of piecing together digital sound bites into mind-boggling collages. The

Synclavier pieces here, "One Man, One Vote" and "Little Beige Sambo," are nervous-sounding exercises that come off as sophisticated versions of the digitized music emanating from video games. "Porn Wars" is Frank's crowning achievement. A forboding Synclavier-constructed collage that might be subtitled, "Attack On My First Amendment Rights," it effectively blends in spoken-word testimony from the Senate Committee hearings on pornography and obscenity in rock & roll. A frightening pastiche of speeded-up voices and eerie horror music motifs. And on the lighter side, there's the brilliant parody of the jingle-music scene, "Yo Cats," with Ike Willis doing his smarmy Sammy Davis, Jr. lounge jazz bit.

Jazz From Hell (RCD 10030; 34:44: ★★★½) is roughly a half hour of serious listening with no snide asides, clever putdowns, or toilet humor. With the Synclavier doing his bidding, instead of imperfect humans, Frank spins odd, whirling, impossible lines on "The Beltway Bandits" and the title cut. "Damp Ankles" is a dark soundscape reminiscent of FZ's works for symphony and "Massaggio Galore" is a pastiche of jackhammer rhythms and sampled mayhem that may grate on the nerves. The fascinating rubato abstractions on "While You Were Art II" represent perhaps the best example of the



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Synclavier's potential for music-making. And for a bit of contrast to the perfection of the machine, FZ tosses in "St. Etienne," a six-minute guitar solo with band.

For those Frank fanatics who can't get enough of his signature guitar stylings, there is *Frank Zappa: Guitar* (RCD 10079/80; 2 CDs, 2 hrs. 12:20: ★★★½), a live, double-CD set of his solos from 1979 to 1984. FZ contends that the solo as a means of spontaneous composition is a dying art. He's one of the few renegades who is keeping that concept alive with flaunting blues chops, whammy-bar wailing, sick tones, two-handed techniques, fluid legato statements, Middle Eastern scales, and plenty of nasty, grungy extrapolations. The guitar equivalent of Dean Benedetti's Bird tapes—just the solos. For fanatics only

You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore, Vol. 1 (RCD 10081/82; 2 CDs, 2 hrs. 17:39: ★★★) is a live, double-CD compilation of tunes from as far back as 1969 on up to '84. You get a taste of several different Zappa aggregations, plus you get to sample the loose bantering and comedic asides that are a key part of every Zappa concert. A '69 performance by the original Mothers on "Sweet Leilani" sounds like a Sun Ra take on that Hawaiian pop tune. A marathon version of "Yellow Snow" features a cameo appearance by a drunken Brit in the audience who spouts angry poetry when FZ hands him the mic. On one number, FZ recites the respective diseases of the band members and during a brief silent spot on "Heavenly Bank Account," his diatribe about evangelists lining their pockets with money, he yells out, "Tax the churches!" You really can't do this sort of stuff on stage anymore. Frank's adeptness in the studio is revealed here by the amazingly smooth segues and tight transitions from cut to cut, in some instances leaping from '69 to '84 without breaking stride.

Frank's most recent musical document, from 1988's *Broadway The Hard Way* tour (RCC 40096; 71:13: ★★★½), features a high-powered horn band and incorporates digital sampling technology but suffers from an over-abundance of proselytizing. His targets are also very specific—Rev. Jesse Jackson ("Rhymin' Man"), former Surgeon General Dr. Everett Koop ("Promiscuous"), Michael Jackson ("Why Don't You Like Me?"), Richard Nixon ("Dickie's Such An Asshole"), Pat Robertson and Jim Bakker ("Jesus Thinks You're A Jerk"), Ronald Reagan ("When The Lie's So Big"). Too much ranting here, not enough rave-ups. There are a couple of musical treats, however, including a faithful reading of Nelson Riddle's theme from *The Untouchables* and a cool version of Oliver Nelson's "Stolen Moments," which cleverly segues into The Police's "Murder By Numbers" (just to show where they ripped it off from . . . touché!) with a guest-vocal appearance by Sting himself.

Narcissistic genius, cantankerous social commentator, industry renegade, and part-time guitar hero, ol' FZ has certainly made his mark on 20th century pop music. And he can defiantly say, "I did it my way." **DB**

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SAIL AWAY—Contemporary C-14054: *EONS; GLASS MYSTERY; DREAM IN JUNE; SAIL AWAY; BUFFALO WINGS; IT ALWAYS IS.*

Personnel: Harrell, trumpet, flugelhorn; Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone (cuts 1,2,5,6); Dove Liebman, soprano saxophone (3); John Abercrombie, guitar (3,4); James Williams, piano; Ray Drummond, bass; Adam Nussbaum, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**GEORGE ROBERT-
TOM HARRELL**

LOVELY EYES—GPR 1002: *THE LONG TRAIL; QUEST FOR PEACE; VISIONS OF GAUDI; LONELY EYES; SENSUAL WINDS; ONE FOR THAD; OPALING; CORAL SEA; ADRIENNE.* (58:17 minutes)

Personnel: Robert, alto, soprano saxophone, clarinet; Harrell, trumpet, flugelhorn; Dado Moroni, piano; Reggie Johnson, bass; Bill Goodwin, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

When you watch Tom Harrell, the music appears almost defiant: the triumph of fire and beauty over the player's fragile health. When you only hear him, you realize that the music is smooth. Then his control seems more remarkable.

These are mature albums, full of melodic grace both in Harrell's playing and writing. *Sail Away* has the edge because it is more adventurous, better balanced between tension and relaxation. *Lonely Eyes*, with the same quintet that recorded *Sun Dance* (on Contemporary) in 1987, is more laid-back.

Since leaving the Phil Woods Quintet, and when he has recorded previously sans Woods, Harrell has been less bop-oriented. His compositions imply this because they are modal or contain combinations of brisk chord changes and modal interludes. On *Sail Away*, he wrote all the tunes, and they cover the Art Blakey/Horace Silver sound as well as latter-day post-bop. On *Lonely Eyes*, he and George Robert split the writing, with Dado Moroni adding one tune, too.

Both albums feature musicians who have moved beyond technique to the core of the music. Joe Lovano is stunning, a combination of East Coast and West Coast tenors (Joe Henderson on "Eons," "Buffalo Wings," and "It Always Is"; the Woody Herman tenors on "Glass Mystery"). On the same album, Dave Liebman goes outside with a wild, slithering, shrieking solo on "Dream In June." John Abercrombie follows with his thoughtful, combative punch and electric sound. Elsewhere,

James Williams focuses the groove around his solid left-hand pulse and radiating and sometimes decorative right-hand figures. Ray Drummond and Adam Nussbaum are always in the pocket.

When Harrell solos, it's always a concentration of beauty, no matter the tempo or mood. The right melodic ideas surface, or, as Bill Goodwin, *Sail Away's* producer, is quoted as saying in the liner notes, "There's nothing really that I don't consider to be very beautiful in Tom's music."

Goodwin co-produced *Lonely Eyes* with Robert. On drums he contributes a balance between a neat groove and interactive commentary. This album is cooler, with less contrast between performances, perhaps because the Swiss-born Robert possesses a melodic temperament similar to Harrell's. He flows, and at times his alto reminds you of Woods (his former teacher), Frank Morgan, Art Pepper, and Cannonball Adderley. Moroni's romantic sound and touch—out of Bill Evans, Wynton Kelly, Hank Jones, and Tommy Flanagan—are further empathetic factors. And, of course, Reggie Johnson is a team player who adds to the overall feeling that this is a band and certainly not just another record-date jam session.

People have compared Harrell to trumpet great Clifford Brown, who introduced a more fluent linearity to bebop. Harrell demonstrates a similar connection with post-bop jazz on these albums, with all the maturity and affirmation of the human spirit Brown conveyed (reviewed on LP and CD, respectively)

—owen cordle



OSCAR PETTIFORD

MONTMARTRE BLUES—Black Lion 760124: *MONTMARTRE BLUES; BACK IN PARADISE; WHY NOT? THAT'S WHAT!; WILLOW WEEP FOR ME; MY LITTLE CELLO; STRAIGHT AHEAD; TWO LITTLE PEARLS; BLUE BROTHERS; THERE WILL NEVER BE ANOTHER YOU; LAVERNE WALK.* (51:31 minutes)

Personnel: Pettiford, bass; Allan Bortchinsky, trumpet (cuts 1,3,5-6,10); Erik Nordstrom, tenor saxophone (1-3,5-7,10); Louis Hjulmand, vibraphone (except 4); Jan Johansson, piano (except 8); Jorn Elniff, drums (1-3,5-6,10).

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

SESSIONS 1958-60—Delta 11 096: *POOR BUTTERFLY; BUT NOT FOR ME; O.P.; A SMOOTH ONE; BLUES IN THE CLOSET; BLUES II; INDIANA; CELLO FOR CELLO TWINS; SUMMERTIME; LOW IDEA; SOPHISTICATED LADY; TREFFPUNKT BLUES; STUFFY.* (63:16)

Personnel: Pettiford, bass (all cuts except 8), cello (8,10); Dusko Goykovich (2,12-13), trum-

pet; Rolf Kuhn (1,3-4), clarinet; Hans Koller (3,5), Don Byas (6-7), Lucky Thompson (11-13), tenor saxophone; Koller, Helmut Brandt, Rudi Flieri, Jonny Fiegl, baritone saxophone (10); Attila Zoller (5), electric guitar; Hans Hammerschmid (10-13), piano; Jimmy Pratt (1,3-4), Kenny Clarke (5-8,10), Hartwig Bartz (9,11-13), drums; Monica Zetterlund (9), vocal.

★ ★ ★ ★

Oscar Pettiford was a link between the first great bass virtuoso Jimmy Blanton and the most expressive bassist of them all, Charles Mingus. Before 1958, he'd put in time with Charlie Barnett's and Ellington's big bands and Monk's little one; he'd co-lead an early bop group with Dizzy, organized his own units, and recorded with Mingus—Oscar was on cello, the pioneer jazz cellist. In '58, he went to Europe on a tour and stayed.

Oscar settled for awhile in Baden-Baden, West Germany. His *Sessions* is drawn from the German Delta label's "Jazz Legacy Baden-Baden" series; this volume documents broadcast recordings made on four dates with American and European musicians, in varied settings: from duo with trumpeter Goykovich ("But Not For Me") to four growling bari saxes plus rhythm ("Low Idea"—that track and the "Summertime"-variant "Cello Twins" are his only plucked cello outings here). *Sessions* showcases O.P.'s skills at small-group orchestration and his commanding bass.

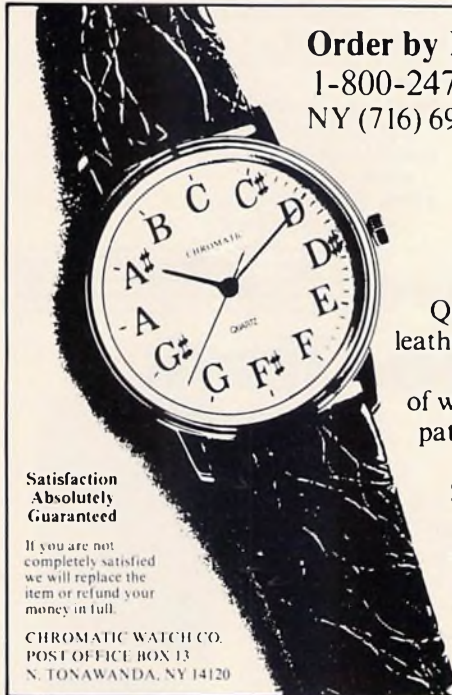
There's no room here for a track-by-track yak, but one should note the ease and polish of the European players—at a time when their competency was still being debated in some quarters—and in particular the warm sound and cool conception of the too-little-noted clarinetist Rolf Kuhn. The great tenorist Don Byas stretches out on a medium "Blues It" and zippy "Indiana"; fellow expatriate Lucky Thompson's soft, delicate soprano sonority on two '59 tracks curiously parallels Steve Lacy's. It's one of many indicators here of how pervasive the cool esthetic was in the late '50s, East Coast snobbery notwithstanding.

After Baden-Baden, O.P. landed in Copenhagen; the *Montmartre* recordings were cut with Danish and Swedish musicians, mostly in July '60, two months before his death from a viral infection at age 37. As above, his plump, projecting sound, propulsive phrasing, and quasi-singing solos show why Mingus admired him. This disc also demonstrates his unassuming skill as an arranger; on "Laverne Walk" the horns don't enter until it's time for their solos, halfway through or later. The piano-vibes-bass cuts have an MJQ, chamber-music feel (they include "Pearls," where Nordstrom appears for only one low-moaning episode, off-mic). The full sextet is energized by the mix of Nordstrom's warm ballad tenor, or uptempo Hawk-inspired sound, with the underwater shimmer of Hjulmand's heavy-vibrato vibraphone. "Why Not? That's What!" is Oscar's bare facelift of "So What," but Botchinsky's mute work pays apparent tribute not to Miles but Sweets Edison. Nordstrom and Johansson's rapid 6/8 "Straight Ahead" shows Europeans weren't fumbling over triple meters either. (No reason they should—they'd been waltzing for a century.) Two nice recitals by one more giant cut down before his time. (reviewed on CD)

—Kevin Whitehead

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Charlie Christian changed the role of the guitar in jazz while with Benny Goodman between 1939 and '41, playing single-note horn-type lines and getting away from the chord/melody approach. No longer simply a background percussive force in music, a strumming current to propel a band along, the guitar has since (with some good promo from Elvis Presley and The Beatles later on) taken its place among the most important instruments in contemporary music. But even Christian might today be surprised by the number of guitar-led jazz groups there are.

Chris Flory mixes equal measure taste, swing, and soul on his Concord debut as a leader, a musically fulfilling date. This friendly rhythm section (Mike LeDonne, organ and piano; Phil Flanigan, bass; Chuck Riggs, drums) knows how to set up the featured player and likes to give each note its due, laying back on the beat. "Soft Winds" is a little bit cool, "Avalon" swings hard as Flory chords a solo, and the ballads like "Tenderly" or the guitarist's own "Lee's Blues" are lowdown and from the gut on *For All We Know* (on CD:51:43 minutes).

I like the sound of the trombone and guitar together on another Concord release, *The Alden/Barrett Quintet Salutes Buck Clayton* (CD:57:19). But be forewarned, this is not something that should be tried at home, unless in the capable hands of a guitarist like **Howard Alden** and a boneman like Dan Barrett. Clayton's material, new and old, spry like "Mink Avenue" or straightforward like "Abbotsford Road," gives bandmembers plenty of room to roam. When Chuck Wilson kicks in on clarinet they get to sounding mighty dixielandish. Alden's treble tone is in direct opposition to the bone, a nice effect on "Love Jumped Out" and "In A Parisian Mood," but on "Winter Light" he switches to a round tone that warms up the room all by itself.

Erich Avinger's *Heart Magic* (CD:52:21; Heart Music, c/o Bartling & Assoc., 8550 Katy Freeway, Suite 128, Houston, TX 77024) is new age fusion, which we might be hearing a lot of soon, for better or worse. Guitarist Avinger plays classical acoustics, electrics, sitars, mandolins, piano, bamboo flutes, and recorders, and plays them well enough, although the musical theme gets a little fuzzy after awhile. There's a little too much ear candy in the backdrops, and things could stand tightening up, but I guess the noodling, non-committed Windham Hill solo is the wave of the future.

On *Air Dancing*, **Larry Coryell's** quartet does some fine stepping (CD:63:50: jazzpoint AM Bild 2, D-6927 Bad Rappenau, West Ger-



Steve Khan

many). It's heavy playing by Billy Hart, Buster Williams, and Stanley Cowell, but they make it sound easy. And the guitarist has never sounded better, his notes strong, clear, and direct. His ad lib at the end of "Prayer For Peace" is marvelous. This is a live set from Paris, and the quality of the CD makes it sound like front-row seats. It's hard to tell where Coryell likes to be more, slipping over a lightning-quick groove like Coltrane's "Impressions," or languishing a bit on the title track. He's one with the music, and this is an eclectic set, including originals by all bandmembers and an 11-minute version of Gershwin's "Rhapsody In Blue."

Chuck Loeb and Andy LaVerne concoct some nice musical moments on their release *Magic Fingers* (CD:54:21: Digital Music Products, Inc. Park Square Station, P.O. Box 15835, Stamford, CT 06901). The band definitely grooves, and with drummer Dave Weckl on the beat (rather, *off* the beat), you know there's going to be some free interpretation of time. There's definitely a lot for guitar lovers. Loeb's "23rd & 15th" is a lovely solo feature, there are unison lines with Brazilian vocalist Carmen Cuesta on "The Mission," the soft acoustics on "Europa," and futuristic funk on "Magic Fingers." Loeb's "Maybe" might be the best track, a strong but subtle rag fueled by Weckl's Latin lope, the one he modified from Mr. Gadd. Call today!

Wolfgang Muthspiel (see "Riffs," April '90) has a world of guitar talent, and seems to have patterned this group after recent Steve Khan and John Scofield bands. His trio (plus two) funks like Miles a bit on the opening number of *Timezones* (CD:54:47). Quite respectable funk, too, with tenorman Bob Berg sitting in. "Chip" puts the group into a freer space, where everyone gets solo room. "Everything Happens To That Dog" is a funny piece, and "Blue Morning Rays" (CD only) shows a fresh breath in songwriting, not the predictable twists and turns, that is quite enjoyable.

French guitarist **Bireli Lagrene** was known for his acoustic prowess before releasing a hot fusion date last year with drummer Dennis Chambers and other American notables. *Highlights* is a sampling of Lagrene's work from 1980 to '86, and features acoustic duets with Philip Catherine and Vic Juris, a nice give-and-take with Larry Coryell and Miroslav Vitous, some of the finest European fusioners, and some 1986 recordings with Jaco Pastorius that faintly recall the bassist's greatness, showcasing more of Lagrene's commanding technique. A tango, foxtrot, and dirge make this a far-reaching set, but nothing seems

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to be out of Lagrene's grasp.

New York City guitarist **Peter Leitch** plays from the heart on *Portraits And Dedications*, a personal set of originals, an appreciative salute to those who've meant most to him. "Pepper," a rollicking swing tune, is for Pepper Adams. "Modes For Wood" is for Woody Shaw, who, like Adams, gave Leitch a gig and encouragement when he needed it. Drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, always colorful, swings and holds nothing back, and bassist Ray Drummond provides a solid harmonic foundation for the lead work of Leitch and alto man Bobby Watson. The guitar creeps around at times, on others it yanks the music ahead, and on the burning "Colorado," his slightly muffled, round tone is just the right glue to connect the fiery, attentive combo. (reviewed on LP)

Kevin Eubanks has tried just about everything during his GRP days, much of it with excellent results. There's been straightahead, fusion, a commercial attempt with George Benson, and some nice MIDI guitar on 1988's *Shadow Prophets*. He touches on some acoustic, Brazilian flavored jazz here on *Promise Of Tomorrow* (with help again from "Smitty" Smith), but his heart seems to be in some funky jazz, with drummer Gene Jackson getting to rare back and fire. On "Angel With The Blues," "Cullerton Street," "Hope," and "Haze," they've all got the right amount of edge, musicality, and continuity to sustain. Eubanks is speaking loud and clear. (reviewed on cassette)

On *Five Forces*, **Peter O'Mara** guides his group through a series of well-constructed funky jazz instrumentals, with punches that the Brecker brothers would be proud of. All the players on this Munich, West Germany-recorded date are proficient. Saxman Tony Lakatos plays many of the lines with O'Mara, leaving a touch of space between the two voices. Drummer Elmar Schmidt knows how to set up a lick, and kicks a good strong backbeat. Keyboardist Gerd Wilden chooses his layering colors well. He stays in an accompanist role for the expressive O'Mara much of the time, leaving to offer some hip fuzz solo lines on the inside-out "Big Thrill." O'Mara is at home bending the blues on "Letting Go" or keeping up a sequencer-like pattern during part of "Pitter Patter," a dynamically demanding piece. (reviewed on LP; Koala Music Productions GMBH., Vor den Hockenkuhlen 23, D-2105 Seevetal 6)

Guitarist **Orhan Demir's** trio release *Windmill* (Hittite Records, 9 Crescent Pl., Suite 1221 Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4C 5L8) has some burning bebop and physically impressive playing, but that doesn't always translate directly to listener satisfaction. Demir is fast—we're talking like John McLaughlin here—but he does it on the burners like "Category Three" as well as ballads like "Windmill," where a change of sound and approach would have been welcome. Demir's playing will be stronger when he learns not to rely so much on the single-note line. Those still in a Tony Williams Lifetime mode may like sections of this one. (reviewed on LP)

Steve Khan's *Public Access* (CD:67:02) is the latest effort from his fine Eyewitness group. It's the same band he's had, with Dave Weckl replacing Steve Jordan. There's more of Manolo Badrena singing here, with Jordan's

rock-solid backbeats giving way to Weckl's more flamboyant approach. The amount of space in the music, a plus during Eyewitness, is still present, thanks largely to bassist Anthony Jackson's judicious placement of his subway notes. Khan flutters from idea to idea on "Butane Elvin," as Weckl jigs and jags and Badrena makes the wildlife come alive. Khan shines in a quiet way on a ballad by his father (composer Sammy Cahn), then drives the band out with a 6/8 Latin theme that features the splashy Weckl. This one could stay in the CD tray for a long time.

Guitarist **Tommy Bolin** could riff with anybody when he was right—take his work on Billy Cobham's *Spectrum* album, for example. *The Ultimate* (52:14 & 57:16), a two-CD collection of the late guitarist's work, chronicles his career through the lesser-known bands Moxy and Zephyr, stepping in for Joe Walsh in The James Gang and Richie Blackmore in Deep Purple, as fusion sideman with Cobham and Alphonse Mouzon, and as a bandleader. Before he died in 1976, Bolin was a master of electronic effects and the searing blues-rock voice. "People People" and "Dreamer" are good tracks from his solo career, but one glaring omission from this set is "Marching Powder," an odd-time instrumental from *Teaser* that features Narada Michael Walden, David Sanborn, and Jan Hammer.

There's nothing so forthright about **Guitar Roberts** (aka Loren Mazzacane) on *Blues* and *In Pittsburgh*. Rather than bombard the listeners with the typical twangs and bends, Roberts draws them in with his own twisted, ethereal, understated ideas, performed on a guitar that's radically de-tuned to serve his solo ideas. *Blues* was inspired by the "Dark Paintings" of Mark Rothko, and like the artwork, Robert's compositions are unassuming and raw. Dark maybe, but not bleak. The *Pittsburgh* set features vocal collaborator Suzanne Langille helping open the heart. And with a backup band on his *Blues* album, guitarist **Robert Crotty's** guitar sound is more Leadbelly and Blind Lemon Jefferson than Robert Cray. His lyrics don't demand resolution—he is what he is, the product of his blues. There are no hidden meanings behind "TB Blues" and "Trouble In Mind." It's all right there on his sleeve. (all three reviewed on LP; St. Joan Records: P.O. Box 390, New Haven, CT 06502) **DB**

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New Releases

(Record Companies: For listing in the monthly New Releases column, send two copies of each new release to **DOWN BEAT**, 180 West Park Ave., Elmhurst, IL 60126.)

RCA/BUEBIRD/NOVUS: Lena Horne, *Stormy Weather*. Tommy Dorsey, Yes, *Indeed!* Jack Teagarden, *That's A Serious Thing*. Django Reinhardt, *Djangology 49*. Mike Stevens, *Set The Spirit Free*. Steve Lacy, *Anthem*. Brecker Bros., *Collection, Vol. 1*.

1 MAGIC SAM. "You Don't Love Me" (from *MAGIC SAM LIVE*, Delmark) Samuel Maghett, guitar.

Without that man, I don't know if I would have got into a recording studio. Magic Sam. Loomis and Roosevelt Road, when Sam was there it was called Mel's Hideaway—that's where Freddie King got that title of "Hideaway" on his biggest song. After that, Sam played a place called Tay-May. I learned from Sam, and I imagine if he were living he would say he learned from me. With Luther Allison and people like that coming in, we would play all day and all night—there wasn't such a thing as bands taking breaks. We'd be in line just tryin' to get heard, reaching the guitar from Magic Sam to Buddy Guy to Otis Rush to Luther Allison to Freddie King. We had so much energy, man—from 12 o'clock on Sunday till four a.m. Monday morning it'd be guitar playing. I'd give Sam 4½ on that. He was one of the premier young guitar players along with Luther, Otis; we were all about the same age. Guys like that got to be recognized.

2 T-BONE WALKER. "Cold Cold Feeling" (from *T-BONE WALKER*, Blue Note) Aaron T-Bone Walker, guitar.

You really want the stars on that one? [laughs] Yeah, that's T-Bone. From what I've been told, T-Bone is actually the father of fingering the guitar down the neck without a clamp and playing blues. I was told that by some of the older people who knew more about him than I do. We once were playing blues open E-natural [demonstrates], then we put a clamp on it which is equal to an open D-natural, wherever you play. Then they were using the knife instead of the bottleneck for the slide, and I think "T" came out and grabbed that guitar and went to make the number-one finger the bar for the blues like the jazz players did for the big chords, and I think he was one of the first people who made these blues chords [plays them] that way. Even B.B. [King] will tell you he got a lot of those licks from him. I would have to give him 5, man, no doubt about it. He did more with a guitar than I think a monkey can with a coconut.

3 CHARLIE CHRISTIAN. "Blues In B" (from *CHARLIE CHRISTIAN*, Columbia) Charlie Christian, guitar; Benny Goodman, clarinet; Lionel Hampton, vibraphone.

Charlie Christian? [sees album] "Blues In B," man. Where you get these records from? I gotta get back in my book and find stuff like this. Benny Goodman, Lionel Hampton, man, some hell of a guys playing on this one; that's some good stuff, too. Gotta give Charlie 4½. He's like a T-Bone with that

BUDDY GUY
by Jim DeJong

Nearly 5,000 people came to see guitarist Buddy Guy and singer/harmonicist Junior Wells perform acoustic blues at last year's sixth annual Chicago Blues Festival. Later that evening, to a screaming crowd of nearly 90,000 fans, Buddy and his band played a searing set of the electric Chicago blues that, through rock translators like Eric Clapton and Carlos Santana, have helped to change the course of modern music. An hour later, he was tearing it up a few blocks away, opening his new club, Legends—the latest in a respected lineage of neighborhood bars that have been the city's forum for blues.

First recording for Cobra, Buddy became a mainstay at the Chess studios during its heyday, with Muddy Waters, Little Walter, and Howlin' Wolf. Buddy had an affinity for the way such legends approach a song, translating what they needed from a guitar. His later records on Vanguard, several with Junior Wells, and a busy tour schedule have opened new ears in Europe, Japan, and Africa since then; but he hasn't recorded in 12 years, his last release in the U.S. being



MARC POKEMPIETZ

Stone Crazy, for Alligator. Buddy's working on that, rehearsing with saxman Gene "Daddy G" Barge to develop some things he's been wanting to do. Last February, he and Robert Cray joined Eric Clapton for the last three days of an 18-show set of appearances at London's Royal Albert Hall.

This was Buddy's first Blindfold Test. While we were cueing up, he was fingering a handsome hand-made hollow-body guitar given to him by a young Japanese fan. Throughout the test, he periodically mimicked or embellished the guitar lines on the recordings.

stuff. I listened to him, but I really went to school with people that were left around to teach me about people like that. You walk up to B.B. King and ask him anything at all, this is the first guitar he'll bring up to you. As a matter of fact, if you catch him in his room, he's got this kinda tape sitting there. Who can say a guy like B.B. King could be wrong when it comes to playing the guitar? You have to give a guy what's due him, and I would have to say 4½ stars. Fathers of the guitar. As far as I'm concerned, they brought the guitar out in front, and they deserve it.

4 ERIC CLAPTON. "Have You Ever Loved A Woman" (from *LAYLA AND OTHER ASSORTED LOVE SONGS*, RSO) Eric Clapton, guitar.

Yeah, that's gotta be Eric Clapton there. [plays] I knew in the first three licks that had to be Eric Clapton. He plays such smooth and clean guitar, so similar to B.B. King. You never hear any mistakes in there like I missed that string or that particular note in there. He's one of the best that I've ever seen, just do it to death. Whatever the guitar's got in it, he gets that note out; that's what makes him Eric Clapton. I'd have to give that 5-plus, 'cause he's tops, man, and who can take that away from him? He's got the sound. [plays a bit on the guitar]

5 JIMI HENDRIX. "Killing Floor" (from *LIVE AT WINTERLAND*, Rykodisc) Jimi Hendrix, guitar; Jack Casady, bass.

Yes. [laughs] Go ahead, man. Yeah, Jack Casady. Yeah, that Hendrix, man, hot stuff. He could ring up heaven with the way he turned that thing on. That's a tune I made with the Wolf.

I have to always give Hendrix a 5. He did a lot for the type of music that's being played now with the wah-wahs and stuff. He was at the right place at the right time and deserves everything he can get. Can't say anything but good things about Jimi. He had exploded in England and I had finally made it to New York to play, and he cancelled a gig to come see me play. I was very fond of him for that and we became friends before he passed away. I didn't have the slightest idea that he'd made statements that he had copied some licks from me. That naturally makes somebody like me feel warm. He turned the distortion and wah-wah sound into something that people had to listen to; and that's what this music is all about—making people listen to you when the public wasn't accepting what you're playing.

On second thought, you'd have to give him 5½ for having taken our music and making somebody listen to you. He put it to them so they had to listen. DB

profile

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KAZUMI WATANABE

FUSION FLASH FROM THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN MAKES THE MOST OF TECHNOLOGY WITH A NEW TRIO.

by Bill Milkowski

A maelstrom of sound engulfs the packed house at The Bottom Line in New York. Dense textures, pulsating rhythms, multi-layered harmonies, crystalline arpeggios, and metallic tones. The sound is huge, impressive, orchestral in scope. It's hard to believe that all this is being created live on stage by only three musicians, playing in real-time without sequencers or backing tape.

Each of the accomplished players—guitarist Kazumi Watanabe, bassist Bunny Brunel, drummer John Wackerman—is covering two parts simultaneously, an incredible feat made possible by the latest advances in MIDI technology.

All this MIDI magic and sharing of chores is necessary to reproduce the multi-layered sounds of Watanabe's most recent Gramavision release, *Kilowatt*. More focused and composed than the jam-oriented *Mobo* sessions of 1983 (a loose, two-record affair that included the likes of Marcus Miller, Omar Hakim, Sly Dunbar, and Robbie Shakespeare all playing on the same track), and more densely-textured and intricately-arranged than the 1986 *Spice Of Life* project or its 1987 followup, *Spice Of Life Too* (featuring bassist Jeff Berlin and drummer Bill Bruford), *Kilowatt* is perhaps Kazumi's most versatile, fully-realized work to date.

Special guest appearances by saxman Wayne Shorter on the cuts "Capri" and "Bernard" help to give *Kilowatt* an added lyrical quality that his raucous jam albums sometimes lacked. Of course, in concert, Kazumi has to assume Wayne's sax role by triggering a sampler through his Korg M-3 MIDI converter attached to his Paul Reed Smith guitar. Says Brunel of his guitar-playing partner, "I think Kazumi is the most versatile player I've ever worked with. He's really comfortable with so many different styles. He can switch from Jimi Hendrix to George Benson to Ray Parker Jr. or Jeff Beck, which is what gives the album so many different colors."

An early pioneer of guitar synthesizer, Kazumi now feels that the technology has finally caught up to his ideas. "I wasted lots of time and money trying to find a good guitar synthesizer. Each year it's getting better and better and now I'm very happy with this Korg M-3 system. It doesn't have the tracking problems that some of the older systems of a few years ago used to have.



So I do enjoy the technology, but I think it's not the most important thing. For me, improvisation is still the most important part of the music."

Born and raised in Tokyo, Kazumi studied classical piano while also soaking up the American sounds of The Ventures (he does a souped-up version of their "Walk, Don't Run" on his 1983 Gramavision album, *Mobo I*). He began playing guitar around 1967 and cites Wes Montgomery, Jimi Hendrix, and Larry Coryell as early influences. "Larry was an especially big idol for me," he explains, "because back then he was playing bebop-idiom phrases with loud and distorted Jimi Hendrix-type sounds. He was joining the two musics of jazz and rock and this was very interesting to me."

His first professional gigs around Tokyo were in strictly straight-ahead jazz settings, including a brief stint in saxophonist Sadao Watanabe's band. But soon after he purchased his first wah-wah and distortion pedals, Kazumi was off and flying in fusion-land.

Kazumi made his debut as a leader at the age of 17 with *Infinite*, recorded in 1971 for the Toshiba/EMI label. His breakthrough year came in 1976 when he was named No. 1 guitarist by Japan's prestigious *Swing Journal*. His 1978 albums, *Mermaid Boulevard* (Alfa) and *Lonesome Cat* (Nippon/Columbia) were both recorded in the States and featured some illustrious American sidemen—the former featuring such West Coasters as drummer Harvey Mason, saxophonist Ernie Watts, keyboardist Patrice Rushen, and guitarist Lee Ritenour; the latter with an East Coast outfit comprised of drummer Lenny White, bassists Cecil McBee and Alex Blake, and keyboardist George Cables.

It was around this time that Kazumi and Bunny Brunel first met and played together on the West Coast. Recalls Bunny, "He needed a band to do some touring in support

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of his album. He came by to hear my band and he said he really liked my playing. The next day we rehearsed for a few hours and it really clicked instantly. So we played the gigs, but then we went our separate ways — me with Chick Corea, then with Herbie Hancock, and later a trio I had with Alphonse Mouzon and Larry Coryell; Kazumi with Mike Mainieri, then Steps Ahead, and later with Jaco Pastorius. And we didn't play together again for 11 years, but when we got together for this record, it clicked right away again."

In 1979, Kazumi toured with the Japanese pop supergroup, Yellow Magic Orchestra, and that same year recruited YMO keyboardist Ryuichi Sakamoto to play on his *Kylyn* and *Kylyn Live* albums. Mainieri produced his 1980 album, *Tochika*, and the 1981 followup, *Talk You All Tight*. The following year he toured Japan with Steps Ahead and in 1983 joined Jaco's Word Of Mouth band for another tour of Japan.

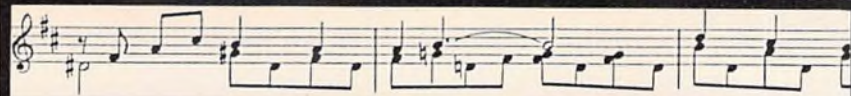
Of his time with Jaco, the guitarist said, "Sometimes he acted crazy, but other times he was clear and always thinking about the music. And when he was really 'on,' he played his bass like a bird flying. It was a great experience for me to play with Jaco. I learned a lot from him on that tour."

Kazumi made his big splash Stateside in '83 with his Gramavision debut, the reggae-and-funk-flavored *Mobo I*, featuring the ultimate Islands *riddim* tandem of Sly and Robbie. *Kilowatt* is his seventh album for the label and marks the beginning of yet another phase in his ever-evolving career.

One project we're not likely to see in the States is Kazumi's Benkyo Band, made up of three guitarists and a rhythm section. As he explains, "We three are all the same age but we grew up with different styles. One guitarist, Osamu Ishida, is a Memphis-style rhythm & blues player. He left Osaka as a teenager and came to Memphis to learn about Memphis soul music. Another guitarist, Junshi Yamagishi, is a blues player in the style of Albert King. He made a record with Bobby Womack and also plays around Los Angeles with Shuggie Otis. And me? I'm the jazz player.

"So we get together maybe once or twice a year to do these concerts in Japan," he continues. "It's a chance for us to play material we don't normally play. For instance, the blues player never had a chance to play 'Stella By Starlight,' but at this concert he plays it. And I, who play mostly jazz, finally get a chance to play 'Purple Haze.' So it's a fun experience for us all."

Kazumi also performed acoustic guitar duets in Japan with John McLaughlin, whose playing he considers "amazingly great." And he's done the occasional classical recital in Tokyo. But in the States, you'll have to catch him with his *Kilowatt* power trio, which, for fusion fans, is a hot ticket indeed. DB



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