

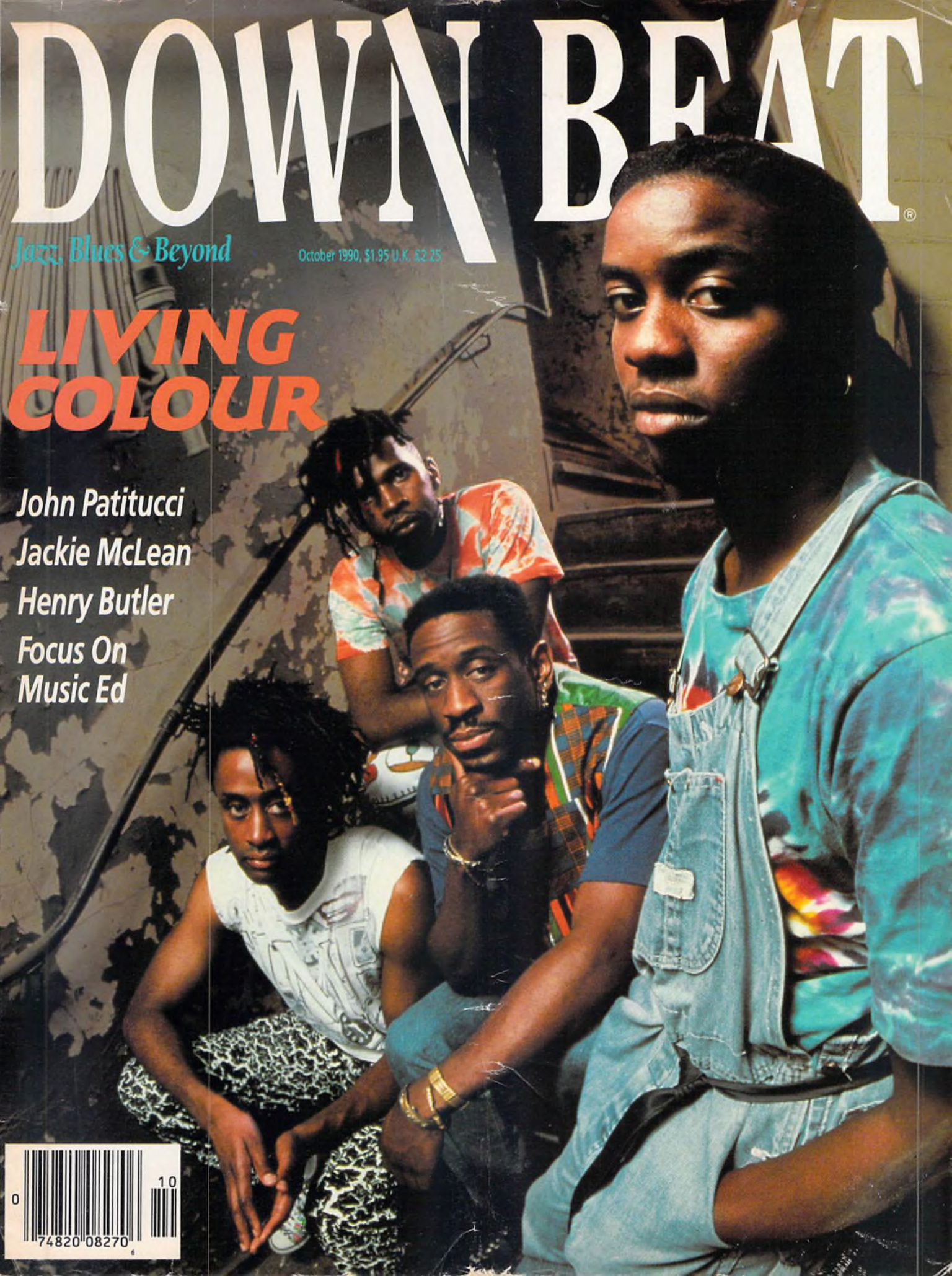
DOWN BEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

October 1990, \$1.95 U.K. £2.25

LIVING COLOUR

John Patitucci
Jackie McLean
Henry Butler
Focus On
Music Ed





MICHAEL LAVINE

Living Colour



MITCHELL SEIDEL

John Patitucci



MITCHELL SEIDEL

Jackie McLean



PAT JOLLY

Henry Butler

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Cover photograph of Living Colour by Gene Ambo.

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LIVING COLOUR

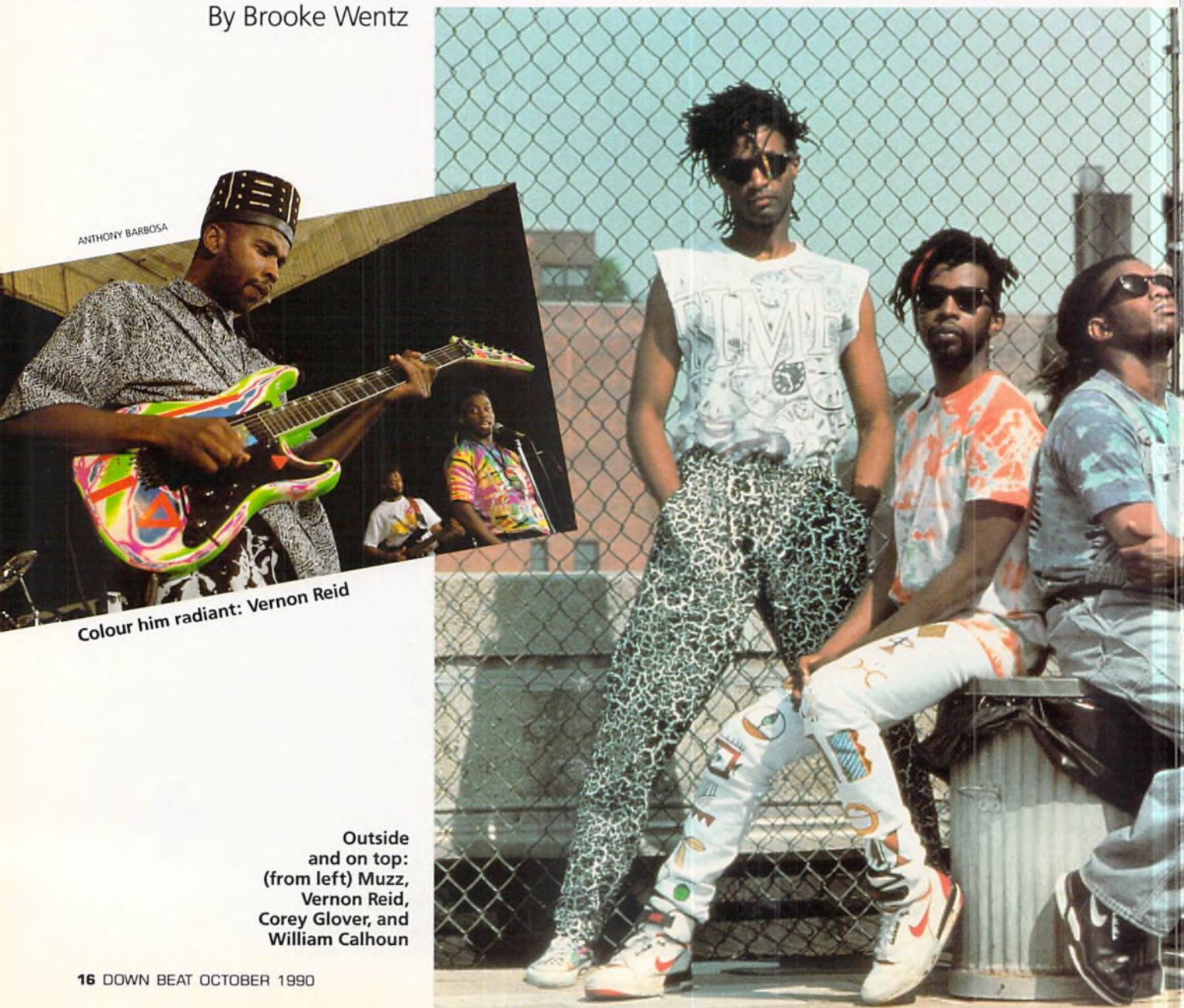
OUTSIDE THE LINES

By Brooke Wentz

Conviction plus integrity plus amplification equals Living Colour: a powerful band with wild energy and widely divergent musical tastes. With an onslaught of popularity, it's now time for them to win a long-term constituency. Their new album, *Time's Up*, explores more than just Rock with a capital R; it introduces other choice musical influences—African prayers, Harry Partch-like microtones, and downtown-jazz improvisation—paralleling the diversity of each member's own personal musical savorings.

"When we get on the bus," explains lead singer Corey Glover, "we all bring our own music and trade tapes. Mr. Calhoun is our jazz aficionado." Drummer William Calhoun follows by saying that Mr. Glover is the big-band music and show-tunes expert. Meanwhile, guitarist Vernon Reid is sliding down in his chair, nodding his head to the mastery of Cecil Taylor's *In Florescence* and earlier duets with Max Roach. Bassist Muzz Skillings quietly chimes in applause for Tuck and Patti.

This diversity and openness toward music of all genres defines an innate direction of Living Colour's sound—a yellow-brick road



ANTHONY BARBOSA

Colour him radiant: Vernon Reid

Outside
and on top:
(from left) Muzz,
Vernon Reid,
Corey Glover, and
William Calhoun

into the hearts of an even wider audience. Although their previous record, *Vivid*, and a tour with the Rolling Stones brought them a certain star-status, Living Colour has come up against many obstacles: As an all-black, four-piece rock band without an ounce of '60s-tinged r&b crooning or bitch-disrap, they are a seeming anomaly to the music industry because they never fit into any easily-defined music category. Yet, Living Colour exploded onto the music scene in late 1988—the same time Arsenio Hall hit television, and Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing* hit the big screen; a time when black artistry was making a visible impact on America's mainstream venues.

Officially christened in 1986, Living Colour had various personnel prior to the current lineup. Vernon Reid—a primarily self-taught guitarist who studied with Rodney Jones and drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson from 1980 to 1984, as well as Joseph Bowie's hard-edge funk band Defunkt in the late 1970's—started Living Colour as a trio in 1984 (see *DB* May '89; "Blindfold Test" Dec. '87).

"I went through a bunch of people. It was J.T. Lewis [drummer for Sting, Tina Turner, and Herbie Hancock's *Rock-It* tour], Carl James [bassist for Steve Winwood and Wayne Shorter], then Greg Carter on drums and Alex Mosely, who went on to join Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam and calls himself "Spanador,"" recounts Reid. In late 1984, he was working with Shannon Jackson and the Jay Hoggard Quartet and met Corey Glover at a birthday party. "We started

talking and realized we had similar interests in music."

Reid then met bassist Muzz [his legal moniker] at a Black Rock Coalition meeting, and drummer Calhoun at a gig with Delmar Brown and Kenwood Dennard in the group Bushrock. At the time, Calhoun was playing for Harry Belafonte. "We hit it off really well and ran into each other in Brooklyn at an African street festival, exchanged numbers, and I gave him a tape to hear what we were doing.

"In one week," Reid continues, "J.T. disappeared, and Will learned the music the day of the gig. We rehearsed on a Saturday and played Maxwell's in Hoboken. It was Will's first gig and a couple of weeks later it was Muzz's first gig. Corey split to do [the film] *Platoon*, and Mark Ledford stepped in when we went to Europe to play the Moers Jazz Festival in 1986."

Living Colour played locally from 1987 to '88, amassing an avid following around the New York metropolitan area and college circuit. "The one thing we had," Glover confides, "was that everyone was committed to playing. We all loved this music. When I first heard the songs, I realized this was the kind of music I wanted to play and be a part of for a very long time."

"People were flipping out about the music," boasts Calhoun. "This was a beginning sign of something that I knew was different. People at the labels were excited about the music and the band, but when it came down to a final decision, they said, 'Well, they are too this and too that . . . I love the music but there is no way it will sell.'"

In September 1987, Living Colour signed with Epic after being rejected by "everybody." "Epic didn't come to us saying this record is going to explode, and we didn't expect it to explode," says Reid. "We knew we had some work to do. The same buzz we got from locals, we had to give to the people in Raleigh, N.C.," adds Glover. "So we went to Raleigh, to Jacksonville, to Atlanta, and did it again and again and again, until the people got the same feeling they did when we played CBGBs or Tramps, or Princeton or Haverford."

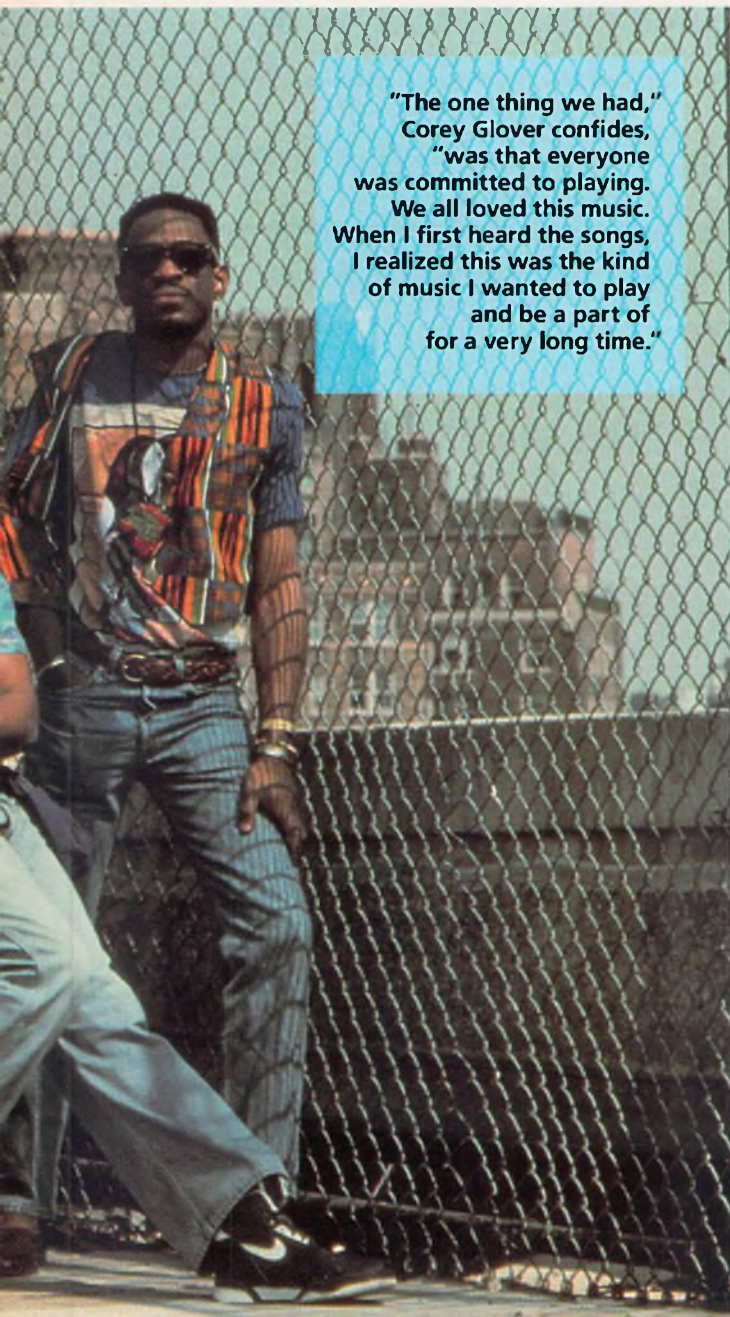
Ironically, as their following grew, MTV and radio's reluctance to play the music held steadfast. Not until avid listeners began requesting Living Colour's songs was a video even considered. It wasn't until the second video, *Cult Of Personality*, and then *Open Letter To A Landlord*, that Living Colour saw much recognition. When *Vivid* came out, a local promoter in the Philadelphia area, Biff Kennedy, had a custom-made cake frosted identical to the album cover. "Little things like that make all the difference," says Reid, "because he carried that same dedication into company meetings."

The buzz spread to radio stations across the U.S. "Video sales fed radio, which fed sales," explains Muzz. "It was a whole cyclical thing, and hard work by us and other people involved."

The enormous amount of press, airplay, and hype the band has received denounces previous assumptions about "black music" and "rock music." *Vivid* sold over 1.6 million copies, a phenomenal figure for a new act. *Time's* *Up* should sell many more.

Was it the black-rock aspect of Living Colour that planted a defeatist mentality into the minds of label reps? Only our racist subconscious knows for sure. As one of 18 Black Rock Coalition bands, Living Colour is the most widely known. Reid, a founding member of the Coalition (with journalist Greg Tate), maintains, "It really bothers me that the same sorts of things that were being said about Living Colour are being said to other groups like Michael Hill's Bluesland—an excellent songwriter and an amazing band. He is carrying on the blues tradition and now that Living Colour is successful, they all congratulate us—and at the same time they won't let in the next people.

"The one thing we [BRC groups] are trying to promote is the idea of diversity in music. There are a lot of white rock & roll bands, and nobody says, 'You know, there are too many white rock & roll bands.' It is just part of the prevailing reality. We need more diversity in music. It wouldn't hurt rock & roll to have 10, 20, or 50 black or mixed bands, or even more Hispanic or Asian rock bands. It wouldn't hurt rock & roll for there to be diversity. In fact, it is because of the diversity that rock & roll even exists.



"The one thing we had," Corey Glover confides, "was that everyone was committed to playing. We all loved this music. When I first heard the songs, I realized this was the kind of music I wanted to play and be a part of for a very long time."

"One hopeful thing is people of different races playing together, like in the band King's X. There is a band, Follow For Now, who just got signed to Chrysalis. Arista signed Urban Dance Squad, and Eye & I soon will be with Epic. It is the beginning, but we want to see much more."

Granted, production by Mick Jagger on *Vivid* helped Living Colour gain recognition. Jagger produced "Glamour Boys" and "Which Way To America" as demos in May 1987, after he checked out Living Colour at CBGBs. He had previously heard about the band through Roger Davies, Tina Turner's manager. Jagger met Reid at an audition for Jagger's *Primitive Cool* album. "Mick walked

"We are influenced by different styles of music, like the Stones. But once we hit the stage, we were not opening for the Stones any more—we were Living Colour on a gig."



ANTHONY BARBOSA

up to me and said, 'I've heard a lot about you, and that your band is really good. I'm going to come and check your band out.' And I said, 'Yea, you, Mick Jagger, are going to check me out. Ha!'" But Jagger came out a few weeks later with guitarist Jeff Beck to see the band. Reid subsequently played on Jagger's "Peace For The Wicked."

Even though Jagger produced two tracks on *Vivid*, the connection really kicked in when Living Colour was asked to open for the Stones' *Steel Wheels* 1989 tour. The tour became a personal as well as musical journey for Living Colour's members. "It instilled a faith in me to continue doing what we are doing," Calhoun expresses. "We are influenced by different styles of music, like the Stones. But once we hit the stage, we were not opening for the Stones any more—we were Living Colour on a gig."

During the tour, the band's guitar technician's 12-year-old daughter knew verbatim the lyrics to "Memories Can't Wait" (from *Vivid*). "We were playing only guitar fragments, and her father didn't know what we were doing," Glover emphasizes. "She was really listening and told him." The band was floored: "It is great for a kid to relate to 'Cult' or 'Broken Hearts' [also from *Vivid*] on that level, because as music lovers, as kids, we tend to focus in on images, like James Brown's scream . . . or his splits."

"Part of it, too," says Reid, "is a sense of just continuing something. Music did that for us. I will never forget hearing [Sly Stone's] 'Family Affair' for the first time. It was so different from other music. Or [Led Zepellin's] 'Black Dog' or [the Beatles'] 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds'—a whole new window opened up. And being a part of that tradition is a magical thing."

The new album, *Time's Up*, is a magical thing. The hard-driving rhythm section is in top form, while the clarity and ingenuity of production supersede most rock recordings. Juicy, hard-edged rock tunes blend together bits of pre-recorded text, children's voices, and Beatles *Revolver*-esque instrumentals. "It's part of the progression," says Muzz. "Under Cover Of Darkness"—featuring jazzman Don Byron on baritone sax and clarinet, the Black Swan String

Quartet, and Queen Latifah on vocals—mixes rich sonic multiples with topical lyrics on sex and seduction. A eulogy to Elvis Presley ("Elvis Is Dead") is augmented by Maceo Parker on saxophone and a rap by Little Richard. Elvis invaded Reid's dreams one night when a statue of Elvis (an award Living Colour received at the International Rock Awards) seemed to jump up from across the room.

"Type," the first single, epitomizes Living Colour's sound: tough, rocking, with menacing minor chords that switch to majors. Vocalist D.K. Dyson of Eye & I is featured on "This Is The Life," while vocalists Annette Daniels and Rosa Russ sing on "Pride." But "Solace Of You," featuring rap artist Doug E Fresh and vocalist Derin Young, is a great Afro-beat tune. And "Ology 1" and "Fight The Fight" might just win the hearts of many an avant gardist.

Not a traditionally mainstream band, Living Colour has become mainstream over the last year. Support and praise from colleagues is phenomenal: Carlos Santana, Ozzy Osbourne, Bonnie Raitt, Anthrax, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Ray Davies, Patti LaBelle, and David Bowie all praise the band's creative output. The biggest charge Reid received was from Shannon Jackson: "It was like hearing a compliment from my father. I spent so much time with him and learned so much playing with him. It meant a lot!"

On the other hand, those tapes they're trading on the bus must be mighty potent: Living Colour salutes the vocal group Take 6, Afro-pop's Ray Lema's *Nangadeef*, Public Enemy's *It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back*, De La Soul's *Three Feet High And Rising*, rock funkies Fishbone's *Truth And Soul*, heavy metal's King's X *Gretchen Goes To Nebraska*, Cecil Taylor, Bonnie Raitt's *Nick Of Time* as well as Peter Gabriel's Real World record label. With such honesty fueling their creative output, Living Colour is winning the hearts of many. As heard on *Time's Up*: "Music is not an art form as much as it is a means of communication." **DB**

LIVING COLOUR SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

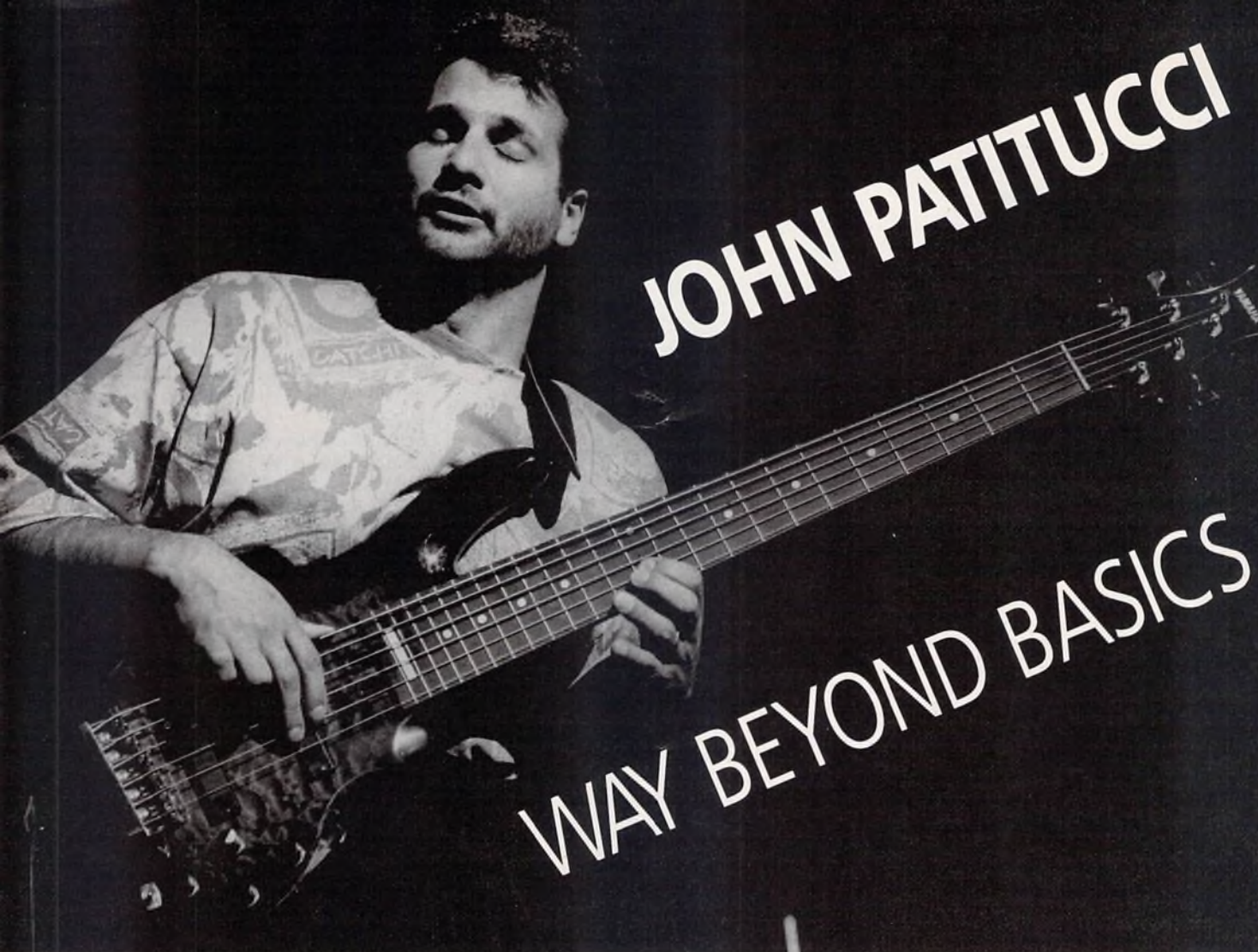
- as a group**
TIME'S UP—Epic 46202
VIVID—Epic 44099
- Vernon Reid**
SMASH & SCATTERATION (with Bill Frisell)—Minor Music 005
with Ronald Shannon Jackson
and the Decoding Society:
EYE ON YOU—About Time 8T1003
NASTY—Moers Music 1086
STREET PRIEST—Moers Music 01096
MAN DANCE—Island/Antilles AN1008
BARBECUE DOG—Island/Antilles AN1015
DECODE YOURSELF—Island/Antilles 90247
TABOO—Virgin/Venture VE47
with various others:
- THE BIG GUNDOWN* (John Zorn)—None-such 79139
THERMONUCLEAR SWEAT (Delunct)—Hannibal 1311
YO BUM RUSH THE SHOW (Public Enemy)—Def Jam 40658
QUESTION OF TIME (Jack Bruce)—Epic 45279
MARIAH CAREY (Mariah Carey)—Columbia 45744
GREED (Ambitious Lovers)—Virgin 90903
SPIRITS DANCING IN THE FLESH (Carlos Santana)—Columbia 46065
RENAISSANCE MAN (Jamaaladeen Tacuma)—Gramavision GR8308
PRIMITIVE COOL (Mick Jagger)—Columbia 40919

LIVING COLOUR'S EQUIPMENT

William Calhoun plays Pearl custom Z Series drums (CZX): 10 x 10, 12 x 12, and 13 x 13-inch toms; a 16 x 16 floor tom and 18 x 18-inch floor tom, and a 18 x 22-inch kick drum. He uses a 3.5 x 14-inch piccolo snare and a 8.5 x 14-inch snare, as well as a set of timbales. The heads are mostly Remo pinstripe. Zildjian cymbals are used exclusively: a 20-inch mega bell ride, 19-inch crash ride, 17-inch thin ride, 18-inch K crash ride, 22-inch Z ride, and a 20-inch China Boy low cymbal. His hi-hats are a 13-inch 2 K and a 14-inch New Beat bottom. Calhoun's drum rack contains an S-1000 HD Akai sampler (for sound effects only) and he uses a Zildjian mic'ing system.

The majority of Vernon Reid's guitars used on *Time's Up* were custom Hamers. Others include a '59 Les Paul reissue, a '59 ES-347, a Gibson Byrdland, and a custom-made Ransom with two Seymour Duncan JB's and Hot Rails. His rack includes Pearce transistor preamps, two ADA MP-1 tube preamps, and a Mesa/Boogie Quad preamp. For power amps, Vernon uses a Mesa/Boogie Strategy 400 power amp and a VHT 2150 tube power amp with 150 watts per side. His effects system includes a Digitech DSP-256, IPS 33B intelligent harmony machine, Eventide H3000 SE, Alesis Quadverb, Digitech MEQ Dual 14 MIDI EQ, and a Mesa/Boogie MIDI Matrix switching system.

Muzz plays a variety of custom basses, including Specter, ESP, and Hamer. His rack has a Mesa/Boogie Bass 400, a Mesa/Boogie Strategy 400 and SWR SM400 with a T.C. Electronics effects unit, and an Eventide H3000 SE. Speaker cabinets are SWR Goliaths, Hartke, with Mesa Boogie 2 x 15-inch bullet tweeters.



JOHN PATITUCCI

WAY BEYOND BASICS

MITCHELL SEIDEL

By Zan Stewart

Sticking with a single musical approach just isn't going to get it for bassist/composer John Patitucci, and it never has. Since he first began playing at age 11, the musician best known as an important cog in Chick Corea's Elektric and Akoustic Bands has found his affections flowing to an array of popular and classical styles.

It follows then that when the 30-year-old Patitucci had an opportunity to present himself as a leader—he now has three solo albums out on GRP, including the just-released *Sketchbook*—that “broad-based personality” was definitely the one he chose to express.

“When it comes time to do my music, there are a lot of jazz and pop roots that go really deep, so I don't want to limit what I can draw from,” he says. “I want to use all the colors on my palette.”

Sketchbook, like *On The Corner* and *John Patitucci* before it, explores a number of contemporary avenues, from Ornette Coleman-tinged expanded straightahead tunes to riveting funk and lyrical pop (see “Reviews” Sept. '90). “Right now, I'm hearing all these musics and I'm enjoying them,” he says. “And I feel I can be authentic in these styles I choose, because I have played them, both with other bands and in studio work. If you get a chance to play in a lot of situations,

you keep working on those styles.” Patitucci, in steady demand as a recording sideman, has performed with Everything But The Girl, Bonnie Raitt, Barry Manilow, Brenda Russell, Airto Moriera and Flora Purim, Tom Scott, and Eddie Daniels.

The multi-musical approach was endorsed by both Patitucci's older brother Tom, who was the bassist's first teacher when they were youngsters growing up in Brooklyn, N.Y., and, later, Chris Pohlman, with whom Patitucci studied at age 13 when his family moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1972.

“Chris helped me in my development by encouraging me,” he says. “I would hear these different kinds of music, from Motown to the Beatles to bebop, and I would get very excited about them. Chris told me if I wanted to be authentic in these styles, then to work hard and play with as many diverse and interesting artists as I could. That's been a goal of mine since the beginning, that's what I've prepared myself for.”

In many ways, working with Corea, as he has since 1985, is the ideal arena for Patitucci. “I'm always excited by playing with

him, because he's always stretching and expanding,” the now-Los Angeles-area resident says. “With Chick, you can play jazz trio and it's the real thing, you're not fooling around, he's one of the *cats*, and yet he's interested in other kinds of music. I like that concept and maybe that's why we get along so well. I dig it that he can play Latin, Mozart, trio, with modern machines—he's into it all.

“And if you want a perfect argument against settling into one groove, not settling down, he's never done that and it hasn't hurt him. [Being diverse] goes against the grain. People want things in a tidy, predictable box. They expect to hear what you did before, but I don't want to bore my audience. If you don't come up with surprises, yes, they'll say it's a bunch of different kinds of music, but they still don't know what it's going to be next. That's what I respected about Coltrane. He kept changing and evolving. Miles has done that.”

Patitucci views *Sketchbook* as another step in his own artistic evolution. [On the album, I'm] “expanding and stretching in all directions, both as a writer and as a player. I just hope people can see the growth,” he laughs.

The bassist brought along many of the players who had played on his past solo albums: saxman Michael Brecker,



High-quality employment: Patitucci jams with boss Chick Corea

keyboardists John Beasley and Dave Witham, and drummers Alex Acuna and Vinnie Colaiuta; and newcomers, too, like guitar ace John Scofield and drummers Peter Erskine and Terri Lyne Carrington, all of whom made major contributions to the final result. "I feel its an honest record and the musicians really played their hearts out. And maybe by sticking with some of the same crew, that's a way of establishing continuity, rather than by having the music be the same."

Like almost every musician who has ever lived, Patitucci has reservations when he hears his own work played back. "When I listen to my playing, there are always things that I would change," he says. "In terms of the overall record, it's hard to listen to it for the first few months without being overly critical. It's like, 'Why didn't I do this, why didn't I do that?' In your mind, you're hoping it's your best work, your best solo, but you're a human being and you have to live with yourself."

One aspect of his life that Patitucci can definitely live with is his association with GRP. "I'm really free in terms of what I can do there," he says. "There are no demands, I just write music and record it. It's such a blessing, getting to record music I like with guys I respect and admire. And in a day when a lot of very good players are without record deals, to get with a label like GRP that's doing well and that will get the albums out there worldwide, that really helps."

And while Patitucci says his records sell solidly, establishing himself as a solo artist takes time. "It's going well, my records sell more each time, but the career builds slowly," he says. "It's not like pop, where you have one record that sells a million copies. I'm trying to grow as an artist, rather than have money as the main objective. With jazz, you have to be committed to what you're doing musically, be interested in communication and reaching people, but doing it in more of a long-term way. I want it to be honest from me to them. I'm not trying to do or be something that's not in my heart."

The slow-growth process extends to Patitucci's own Los Angeles-based band, which features keyboardists Beasley and Witham. At the same time being, the bassist prefers to

work the band in California, and hold back on national touring. Why? In a word, finances.

"It's difficult to start out as a bandleader, pay your musicians a good salary, and not lose money," he says. "It's not like I'm an older guy who's established a reputation. So I'll start small, do a couple of things here and there in California, see if there's an audience. If promoters ask me to bring the band out, well, that's different. For now, I'm trying to lay back and be patient."

In the meantime, Patitucci is hardly inactive. There's a lot of session work when he's in Los Angeles—he and his wife, Killeen, live in the L.A. suburb of Long Beach—and he's plenty busy with Corea. This summer, the bassist was in the midst of an Elektric Band tour of North and Central America that will ultimately provide him with about five months work. And very nice work at that, for traveling with Corea, guitarist Frank Gambale, saxophonist Eric Marienthal, and drummer Dave Weckl is high-quality employment, so says the former Brooklynite.

"It's a very 'up' band, straight and clean, and that enables everybody to put their energy into the music," he says. "Chick, whom I think is one of the greatest composers and pianists in the history of music, is an inspiration. He's on the go all the time. Like, he might be on the bus and have his computer out with music-printing software, printing out a score. He's wailing."

Though Patitucci doesn't like being away from his family and friends, he finds the advantages of being on the road can't be denied. "When you play every night, the music has a chance to grow by leaps and bounds," he says. "And since Chick's music is so intense, you're really getting a workout, so that after a month or so, you feel more free and your fingers are really going."

Patitucci got into music because he was enthralled with his older brother, who played guitar. "I wanted to do everything he did, so when I got really excited about music, he said to me, 'Why don't you play bass? That way, we can play together.' So until I was 15, I played electric bass, mostly to pop tunes, whatever was on the radio. Then in

high school, I started on acoustic."

In the Bay Area, the slender string player studied jazz with Chris Pohlman, and later, while attending San Francisco State College, with Bennett Freedman. There he studied classically with Charles Siani and when he moved to Orange County in 1978, he continued his classical program with Abe Luboff and his jazz education with John Prince, both on the faculty of Long Beach State University.

At first, Patitucci worked steadily in small Orange County clubs, then gradually made his way into the Los Angeles musical arena, where he's been a major figure since the early '80s.

Current activities for the bassist have included work on the Jerry Goldsmith-composed film score for the upcoming *The Russia House*, where he's spotlighted in some duo performances with saxophonist Branford Marsalis. "I'm starting to do more films, and that I really like," he says. On the back burner are possible projects with Michael Brecker—"We've established a nice rapport doing my albums."—and some possible touring of Japan. "I've been approached by a promoter but nothing is definite yet."

So, the multi-musical life of John Patitucci motors along smoothly. "I'm one very fortunate guy," he says simply. **DB**

JOHN PATITUCCI'S EQUIPMENT

Patitucci uses a Pollman acoustic bass, "with a double dot. I've always had that one," he says. He has, however, several electric basses: a Yamaha custom-made six-string "that the company made for me," and its fretless counterpart, and a five-string as well. He also plays four-string and five-string models made by Manhattan-based Roger Sadowsky. And there's a Warwick five-string from Germany. Both are strung with D'Addario Strings. "They gave it to me. It has a different kind of wood," says Patitucci.

To get his sound off the bandstand and into the crowd, Patitucci employs, as you might have guessed, a diverse array of amplification. "For electric work, I use a Yamaha preamp, with a Yamaha power amp and a Rev-5 reverb," he says. "I have a biamp system, with 500 watts to the low end and 500 watts to the high end, and its crossed-over inside the Yamaha preamp. For speakers, I use a Bag End 18-inch cabinet with a Gauss speaker on top of two 12-inch Electro-Voices that are in another Bag End cabinet." For acoustic playing, Patitucci uses a Walter Woods amp with a Bag End cabinet fitted with a 15-inch Electro-Voice speaker.

JOHN PATITUCCI SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

As a leader

SKETCHBOOK—GRP 9617
ON THE CORNER—GRP 9583
JOHN PATITUCCI—GRP 9560

with Chick Corea Akoustic Band

CHICK COREA ACOUSTIC BAND—GRP 9582

with Chick Corea Elektric Band

INSIDE OUT—GRP 9601
EYE OF THE BEHOLDER—GRP 9564
LIGHT YEARS—GRP 9546

with Eric Marienthal

CROSSROADS—GRP 9610
ROUND TRIP—GRP 9586
VOICES OF THE HEART—GRP 9563

with Eddie Daniels

NEPENTHE—GRP 9607
TO BIRD WITH LOVE—GRP 9544

BACK ON EARTH

Jackie McLean is back, thank heaven. For 20 years he's been living in Hartford, Connecticut, where he heads the Afro-American music program at the University's music school. He's just three hours from New York by train—but to provincial Manhattanites, he might as well live on Mars. So jaded Gothamites got shaken up this spring, when Jackie moved into the Village Vanguard for a week. By the morning after he opened, the word was all over town: You better get down there, 'cause he's *burning*. "What were they expecting?" Jackie asks, genuinely puzzled by the fuss. "Some academic saxophone?"

No, it wasn't that. It's just that he'd been low-profile for so long, folks didn't know what to expect. The once prolific recording artist had put out one album in the '80s, a mid-decade, co-op date with McCoy Tyner. Now, suddenly, he's on two new albums. His own is *Dynasty*, with his working band—drummer Carl Allen, bassist Nat Reeves, South African pianist Hotep Galeta—plus son Rene McLean on soprano and Jackieish tenor. (Way off the scene, Rene's now living in Mafikeng, South Africa.) Jackie's also on *Birdology*, a Parker tribute album arranged for septet by trumpeter Don Sickler (see "Riffs" p. 12) and recorded live in Paris last year (see "Reviews" p. 27).

Jazz needs Jackie McLean now. As everyone knows, this is an age of stylism, of reinvestigating old masters and classic genres (at the expense of progress, but hey, we won't get into that). Jackie Mac has always been a model for intelligent neo-classicism, delving into bop, Mingus music, modal and free jazz. McLean characterized himself best to Richard Brown, in the 10/79 DB: "I have never been in the forefront of any new style, but I have been able to align myself with [different styles] and maybe add to them." Exactly—if you delete "maybe."

Every fan knows the story of his formative years. His first inspirations were tenor players Pres and Dex. ("But I fell in love with Ben Webster, too; something in his sound infected me.") His attraction to the bigger horn's presence may help explain the plump sound he gets on alto. Listen to Gordon's 1945 riff tune, "Dexter's Deck," which young Jackie loved, and you'll hear the seeds of his juicy sound and rhythmic bounce. ("I'm like a drummer playing the saxophone," McLean says. "I want to write a book or make an album called *The Saxophone Is A Drum*.") Next, he heard Bird—hung with him, idolized him. As a result, he was tagged by some critics as a Parker clone. The debt is unmistakable, but even on his first jazz date—Miles Davis' July '51 *Dig* session—he had his own timbre and way of phrasing. (Try the medium blues "Bluing," where he follows Sonny Rollins, another avowed inspiration.) McLean is a textbook example of how to make the tradition personal: how to swim in the mainstream, acknowledge your influences, and still make your own statement.

One July noon, Jackie greeted a visitor at his comfy, typically suburban Hartford home, across the street from a wooded city park. He was dressed for eye-popping comfort: bright red tanktop, baggy Hawaiian-pattern shorts, white kneesocks, and scuffed slippers. At 59—he was born 5/17/31, not '32 as some sources claim—he looks fit. He's not skinny by a long shot, but notably thinner than he's been at times. He talks with enthusiasm, frequently breaking into an infectious grin behind his round professorial glasses.

One might have expected him to be bitter about the way the rules have changed. Back when, he took flack for sounding like Bird even when he didn't. Nowadays, players who mimic the giants—that was my Sonny Rollins, now here's my John Coltrane—are praised for their deep wisdom and humility. His protégés make straightahead records for big labels like Verve (the Harper Brothers, who studied with him in Hartford) and RCA (his young chum Christopher Hollyday, who identifies Jackie as a stylistic model, and put four McLean tunes on his first album). But the one record Jackie made as

a leader for RCA was his funk/disco disaster, *Monuments*. ("Yeah, a lot of people still put me down for that. I love it today, I hate to admit it.") His new *Dynasty* is on a small indie label, Triloka, though Jackie's quick to add they treat him very well. There was a time when McLean could be a little, well, kvetchy—as in the 1980 film *Jackie McLean On Mars* (on video from Rhapsody Films). But not now. He's a happy man.

"Well, you know, I get some offers to come out and record. It's not like anybody's ignoring me. I could be recording for some companies, they just don't want to pay me any money. The Harper Brothers have a good contract, I think that's great. Christopher is great, it's wonderful that he has a good company he's recording for."

As for the personal stamp, Jackie says younger players arrive—or will arrive—at an individual sound the same way he did: by a synthesis of what preceded him. "I hear individuality in a lot of them. For instance, Vince [Herring, one of his favorite young altoists] is a synthesis of Cannonball and Trane—and Bird, a little Bird. He's quite different from Kenny Garrett, who plays



MARK MILLER

JACKIE McLEAN

By Kevin Whitehead

another way. And Christopher plays another way. When I hear him I don't think he sounds so much like me."

Writers and musicians sometimes talk as if only major players leave the big footprints. But minor players can be key influences, too. Jackie mentions two he knew from his old Harlem neighborhood. By example, altoist Ernie Henry showed him how to draw on Bird and still be yourself. "Ernie didn't sound like Bird to me, though he came out of that language and tradition. His solo on Tadd Dameron's 'Our Delight' [1947]—beautiful, well constructed, perfect solo—turned my ears. I listened to that solo a lot, memorized it. I think he's one of the great alto players. He just didn't get enough exposure."

The records Henry made for Riverside in 1956 and '57 (the year he died) have earned him some well-deserved if not widespread acclaim. Less known was pianist Valdo Williams. In the late '40s, says Jackie, "He was the first guy playing kind of a free concept other than Thelonious, who I thought was always freer than everybody else, even back then. Valdo's solos were very close to what you hear Cecil Taylor playing. When he played a song like 'All The Things You Are,' a blues, or whatever, he would play the correct chords, and accompany all the soloists in the traditional way. But when his solo came, he would stretch out and play against the form. If it was a 36-bar form, he would fill up 36 bars with his chorus, but it wouldn't be based directly on the chords as such. He would be playing much freer, freer than anybody I'd ever heard at that time."

Williams left New York for Montreal in the early '50s. But his music planted the seeds for the outward-bound approach McLean began moving toward a few years later. By 1956, he'd already written a couple of pieces—"Inding" (aka "Quadrangle") and "A Fickle Sonance"—on which he'd intended the blowing sections to be completely free: no chords, no modes, no nothing. But when it came time to record them, even years later, he'd chicken out, adding chords or modes for structure. He figured his bands would balk.

McLean's tentative moves toward free play made him welcome Ornette Coleman when he hit the scene. "I wasn't drawn to Ornette for his saxophone playing, I was drawn to him more for his concept. It was like he was underlining something that I had already thought about. Ornette was my biggest hero, [because] he took a stand for something and stood his ground, took all the pies that were thrown at him."

Few of his bop contemporaries gave Ornette so much credit. In 1967, when Jackie recorded *New And Old Gospel* with Ornette as a sideman, he got some very negative feedback. Jackie had wanted it to be a two-alto date, "for the contrasting styles." (He loves dual-alto albums. He's made them with John Jenkins and Gary Bartz, and Triloka is planning a McLean/Phil Woods summit.) But Ornette was concentrating

Ornette was concentrating then on his heartfelt-but-raw trumpet, and that's what he played on the album. "I like that record a lot. [But] I had fights with trumpet players that week. Lee Morgan gave me hell. 'You mean you made a record with Ornette playing trumpet, what's wrong with you? You want a trumpet player, man, I'm a trumpet player.'"

During the '60s and '70s, Jackie alternated between freer/modal and more straight-ahead dates. Significantly, the only one of his many unavailable albums he mentions he'd like reissued is *'Bout Soul*, one of his most outward-bound Blue Notes, with Rashied Ali on drums. And he particularly likes his 1974 duets with drummer Michael Carvin, *Antiquity*, which seemed influenced equally by Pharoah Sanders exotica and AACM "little instruments" dates.

Still, he doesn't decry the rather narrow view of the tradition taken by the bebop brat pack, who see the '60s as an aberrant period when jazz got side-tracked. In a way, he's with them. His own late-'60s free days dead-ended, he says, when every piece wound up sounding the same, whether it began uptempo or as a ballad. "It turned out to be one big song we played all night, with different entrances. We always entered through a [different] door and came to the same room." So he headed back toward greater structure. Besides, he says, the heyday of free jazz was tied up with the turmoil of the '60s—you had to be there. These days, when he speaks of "the tradition," he uses the term to mean only playing on chord changes—playing *inside*—which is what he does now.

Curiously, in another context, he points out how assigning particular labels to the music can be woefully divisive—something he learned from his intensive reading of the jazz literature and from listening to old records, byproducts of his teaching career. To him, jazz is a continuum beginning with ragtime (Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" contains "the same kinds of blues and jazz lines that are still being played today") and the syncopated orchestra of black bandleader James Reese Europe. He argues that Europe's "Too Much Mustard" and big-beat "Castle Walk," from as early as 1914, contain the first jazz captured on record—not the 1917 Original Dixieland Jazz Band sides usually cited. Close listening bears him out.

Anyway, McLean's ability to embrace contradiction is one of the things that has made his career so fascinating. He won't be pigeonholed. There probably isn't a fan out there he hasn't exasperated at one time or another, from *New And Old Gospel* to *Monuments* to his newfound orthodoxy.

Toward the end of the day, Jackie takes me to meet two loves of his life. One is the Artists Collective, based in an old northside brick schoolhouse. He guest lectures here, and is a frequent visitor. It's a classroom program where, after school hours and during the summer, some 600 inner-city

kids a year are taught social and job skills, and learn about American music and African dance. (Back at home, Jackie had proudly displayed drawings of a projected new building for the Collective, to be built next year.) It's run by his wife of 36 years, Dollie McLean. ("Dollie and I are like swans—married for life.") He gives her all the credit for the Collective; she says his fame gave her the clout to get it going: "I hooked it onto his name."

Out front, as the kids leave for the day, Jackie makes a fuss over a few of the longtime regulars, playing mother hen. It's no put-on. You can tell it's genuine from how warmly the kids respond to him.

Driving me back to the train station, Jackie says that giving something to the community—to the University, to the Collective—is as important to him as being remembered as a great saxophone player. But in the long run, it's all related. He says he owes it to his college students to keep playing his best, especially now that he's pushing 60. "I better play that saxophone as well as I can, because those kids are there. They want to hear that." As he says, he doesn't want to hear any upstart ask, "Oh—you used to be Jackie McLean?" Every note he plays proves he still is. **DB**

JACKIE McLEAN'S EQUIPMENT

On most of the dates Jackie has recorded since 1964, he plays a Selmer Mark VI alto, given to him back then in Japan. (Starting in the late '70s, he played some Yamaha prototypes for awhile.) His horn's fitted with an ebonite Berg Larsen mouthpiece, specially modified by Phil Barone, so that "the high notes are big and the low notes come out." He uses hard Bari plastic reeds, and a plastic ligature. "I'd be lost without it." But he can't recall who makes it.

JACKIE McLEAN SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Jackie McLeans on a zillion records; this list focuses on currently available U.S. issues on which he's a leader, and a few others referred to in the text.

as a leader

DYNASTY—Triloka 181
 MONUMENTS—RCA 1.3230 (out of print)
 ODE TO SUPER (with Gary Bartz)—SteepleChase 1009
 DEMON'S DANCE—Blue Note 84345
 'BOUT SOUL—Blue Note 84284 (out of print)
 NEW AND OLD GOSPEL—Blue Note 84203 (out of print)
 ONE STEP BEYOND—Blue Note 84137
 TIPPIN' THE SCALES—Blue Note 84427
 LET FREEDOM RING—Blue Note 84106
 JACKIE'S BAG—Blue Note 84051
 A LONG DRINK OF THE BLUES—OJC 253
 MAKIN' THE CHANGES—OJC 197
 STRANGE BLUES—OJC 354
 McLEAN'S SCENE—OJC 098
 JACKIE McLEAN & CO.—OJC 079
 4, 5, AND 6—OJC 056
 LIGHTS OUT!—OJC 426

as co-leader with Michael Carvin
 ANTIQUITY—SteepleChase 1028

as co-leader with John Jenkins
 ALTO MADNESS—OJC 1733

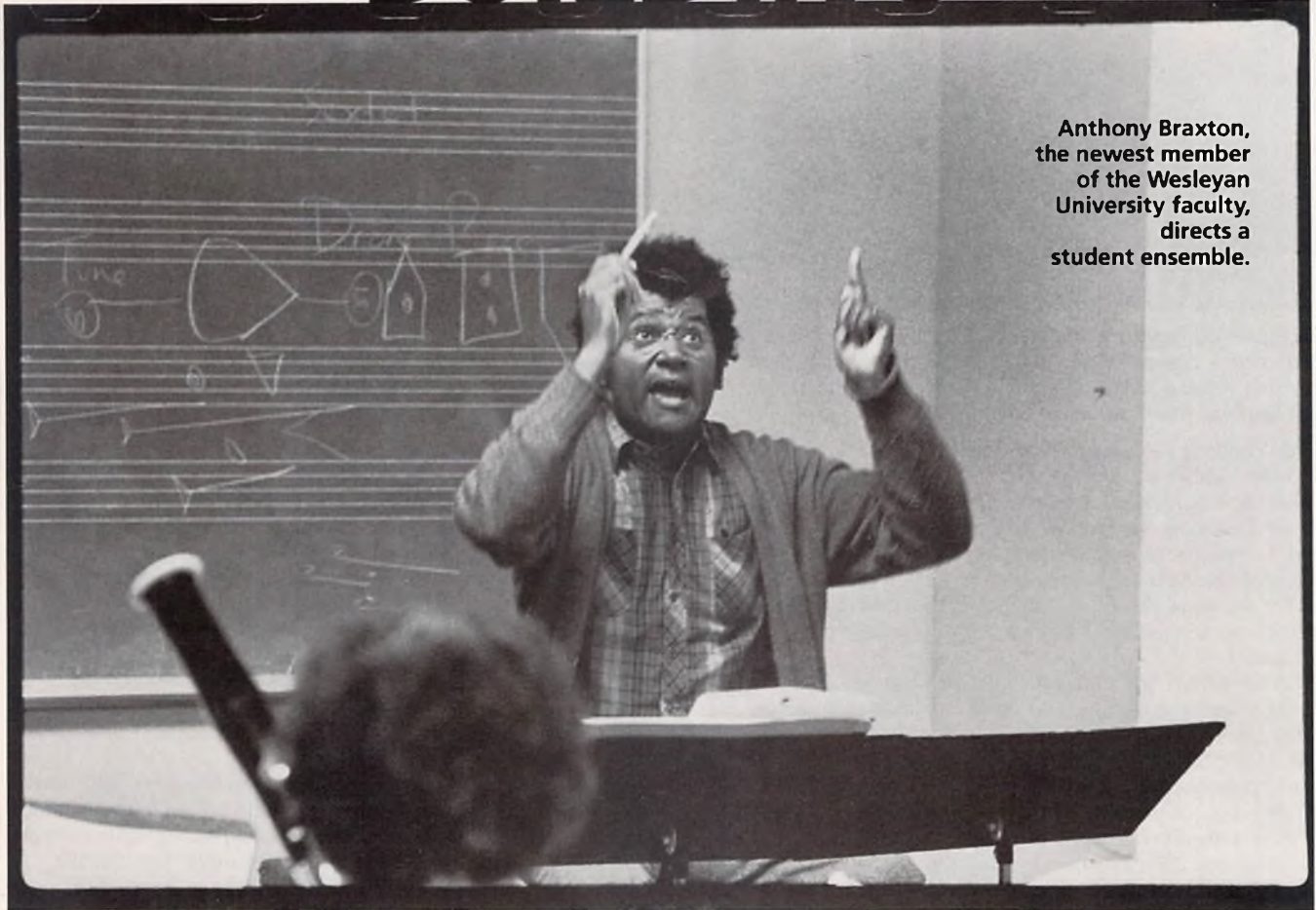
with Don Sickler

BIRDLOGY—Verve 841 132

with Miles Davis

DIG—OJC 005

BUILDING



Anthony Braxton, the newest member of the Wesleyan University faculty, directs a student ensemble.

SHELIZEN

Musical Structures

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY —Broadening Horizons

"We consider ourselves a world-music community," says John Barlow, chairman of Wesleyan University's music department. "It's not just a supermarket mentality, you can't just go down one aisle of Indonesian music and decide that's the only thing you're going to study. We want students to come away with echoes in their ears of the cultural music world."

Saxophonist/composer Anthony Braxton is the newest member of this Middletown, Ct. faculty, taking the place of Bill Barron, who died last December. Barron built the school's jazz program with its sequence of courses ranging from theory and harmony to advanced composition and orchestration, and a big band to play student compositions. Artists-in-residence have included saxophonists Sam Rivers and Ken McIntyre and drummer Ed Blackwell (see "Caught" May '90).

But while Barron's program remained independent from the world-music program as a whole, Braxton, who considers himself a world musician, is forging a stronger link to the school as a whole. Barlow feels that Braxton's deep connection with world music "epitomizes what is new and exciting in the jazz world."

The department's facilities include a recording studio, electronic music studio, and instrument workshop. The music library, built in 1985, holds an extensive catalog of both scores

and recordings, and is the archive of the Northeast Division of the Society for Ethnomusicology.

Thirty to 40 students receive bachelor's degrees each year after completing a curriculum largely designed by themselves. Most go on to do graduate work—Wesleyan offers a doctorate in ethnomusicology—while some become musicians. "But one of my favorites," adds Barlow, "went on to become a surgeon."

For more information, call (203) 347-9411. —Elizabeth Kehler

CAMPBELL COLLEGIATE —Learning to Excel

In Canada, people take their music education seriously. Take Campbell Collegiate in Regina, Saskatchewan as an example. A few years ago, the school's musical roster consisted of one non-jazz concert band of 20 players and a concert choir of 30. Now, Campbell Collegiate has grown to five stage bands, four concert bands, two jazz vocal groups, and one concert choir recruited from an enrollment of 1100. They've been scoring big at regional festivals. And not only have they been earning their invites to Musicfest Canada with first-place finishes, but simultaneously in all three festival divisions: stage band (jazz); concert band; and choral, both jazz and concert.

At the 18th annual finals held in Winnipeg last May, four of the



Campbell Collegiate band director Brent Ghiglione (middle) and choral director Stewart Wilkinson (right) receive the first DB Award for Excellence in Music Education at Musicfest Canada from publisher John Maher.

hard-driving, hard-swinging jazz bands came away with medals, as did both vocal groups. But as the best trophy of all, Campbell Collegiate was handed a first-ever **DB Award for Excellence in Music Education**. For the Collegiate gang, however, the **DB** award represents a special achievement that promises a rich potential beyond the classroom. Already, the bands have performed regularly at local community concerts as well as opened for venerable guests such as the Woody Herman Orchestra.

"In the next couple of months I will be showcasing my band at a local conference of music educators," explains jazz director Brent Ghiglione, who is the new IAJE Saskatchewan president. "What we'll be doing is giving people some idea about how to start a jazz program."

Learning from seasoned performers is an important part of the process. Canadian musicians Tommy Banks and Rick Garn recently came in for two days to work with all seven jazz groups. Different musicians will be invited each year as guest teachers.

According to Ghiglione, a self-proclaimed band junkie, "it's like a dream. I have two great partners at the school, great kids, great teachers, and a really supportive administration. We all put in a lot of hours, and do whatever it takes to get it right."

—Susanna L. Miller

HEMET JR. HIGH SCHOOL —Laying the Foundations

In the California Southland, halfway between Los Angeles and San Diego, a long tradition of jazz education in the schools is really paying off for Hemet Jr. High.

In California's public school system, no jr. high or high school program offers students more chances to play than at this school. Band director and music teacher Melvin Smith has spent 27 years at the school building a solid program of jazz and classical studies, private music instruction, and lots of opportunities to jam. The school had a chance to show off all the hard work at the 1990 Musicfest U.S.A., held this year in Oakland, Ca. In their first year at this international competition, Hemet was named the Outstanding Jr. High School Ensemble, an award sponsored by the National Association of School Music Dealers.

"And this is against older, more experienced bands," adds Smith, who cites age and grade differences between junior high and high school students in Canada and the U.S. It also might have helped that his "ensemble" consisted of 24 players. "There's too many good players here," Smith explains, "so we doubled the group."

This high level of play does not come without lots of preparation. Each student is required to participate in both the classical and jazz bands, plus attend two to three private lessons per week. Teacher Smith personally gives around 100 lessons every week. It's during these lessons that the students work on charts, practice with Jamey Aebersold material, or stretch into improvisation. He admits that some study hours are now music hours, but the students don't mind, and the program has full support from the local school district. With over 200 students involved from the fourth grade up, the future of jazz education is very encouraging.

Even though the jr. high and high schools will be dividing into two schools next year, Mr. Smith has laid a strong foundation for his jazz studies program. He has no doubts that the same system that has produced the winner of Conn's award for Outstanding Trombonist at Musicfest—bass trombone player Kevin Wallis—will continue to evolve and grow over the years. Hemet, California may not be on the jazz circuit, but thanks to the public school's jazz programs, there should be enough good music to keep the Southland swinging for years to come.

—Michael Handler

The award-winning Hemet Jr. High School band, directed by Melvin Smith (middle row, far left).



To Realize Ecstasy

HENRY BUTLER

By Bill Milkowski



NEIL RICKLEN

Boxes are stacked around Henry Butler's spacious loft in Park Slope, the charming brownstone neighborhood in Brooklyn where he's lived for the past three years. The movers are on the phone, quoting their exorbitant rates for a 900-mile haul. Henry winces at the quote but knows he has no other choice. He's gotta move.

Henry's moved around a lot in his career. Born in New Orleans in 1948, he left his hometown at the age of six to study music at the Louisiana State School for the Blind in Baton Rouge. After receiving a bachelor's degree as a voice major at Southern University in Baton Rouge, he moved to Lansing, Michigan to pursue a master's in vocal music at Michigan State. He returned to the Crescent City in the mid-'70s and began teaching at the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts, then in 1980 split for Los Angeles, where he hooked up with drummer Billy Higgins and bassist Charlie Haden in a modern jazz setting. That led to his 1986 debut album on MCA/Impulse, *Fivin' Around*, featuring Higgins and Haden.

Moving East in 1987, Henry delved deeply into the intoxicating jazz scene of New York City. "When I first came here I think I spent almost every night in the clubs for two months straight," he fondly recalls. "Just gettin' my face around, meeting people I'd been admiring for years . . . Hank Jones, Tommy Flanagan, McCoy [Tyner]. And to see them as often as I've seen them here in New York, it's not possible anywhere else. I mean, it's one thing to talk to Clifford Jordan on the phone from Los Angeles, but it's another thing to hang out with him at his house at four o'clock in the morning, just socializing and playing."

Yes, Henry thrived in the city. He dug the intensity. He was on the scene and loving it. "You know, just to be able to go to a club and hear cats like Mulgrew Miller and John Hicks every night of the week . . . that's something I'm gonna miss when I move."

By the time this issue hits the newsstands, Henry will be firmly ensconced in the jazz studies department at Eastern Illinois University, located about 185 miles outside of Chicago in the small town of Charleston. Far from the Big Apple, even farther from his hometown. But he carries the spirit of those two cities—New Orleans and New York—with him wherever he goes. The musical spirit, that is. Sitting at the grand piano in his loft space, he summons up the left-hand thunder of McCoy Tyner, one of his biggest influences. Then without missing a beat, he segues into a N'awlins groove, pointing out the differences between Professor Longhair's left-hand patterns and James Booker's more baroque stylings. A true scholar with a myriad of

musical interests, Henry hopes to impart some of his wisdom to the students at Eastern Illinois this fall.

But while Henry Butler is well-grounded in the history of the music and the repertoire for piano, from Chopin and Mozart to Fats Waller and Fess [Professor Longhair], he warns against taking the clinical, academic approach to music education. "I think maybe we rely on education too much rather than trusting our intuition," he says. "When jazz was young there wasn't this whole body of work to rely on, so those artists kept moving ahead and creating. Now we've gotten four, five decades or more of the music under our belts. There's always this stuff to go back and look at and analyze, and there's a danger in that. I mean, it's great to show your students, 'Let's look at John Doe and see what he does in the 52nd measure of this piece.' But the more you do that, the less you are inclined to do something on your own in that 52nd measure.

"So what I want to do with my students, in addition to giving them a solid foundation, is to help them to build ingenuity. You really have to build that creative energy within you. The artist, by doing, strengthens his creativity and his artistry. So the more you start to rely on John Doe or Jane Doe to do it for you and to show you how it's done, the less you're gonna want to do it yourself."

He points to singer Bobby McFerrin as the perfect modern-day example of someone who trusts his intuition and constantly builds creativity by doing. "He is probably one of the most unique people on the scene right now," says Henry. "He takes a lot of chances and that's what I like about him. He'll do anything. And to me, that's the hallmark of an artist. When you have the art in you, the music is in your bones. You know that you can do anything and it'll work."

Henry Butler has the music in his bones. He trusts his intuition and is constantly taking chances. Just when you had him pegged as a Tyner-inspired purveyor of modern jazz (on the strength of *Fivin' Around* and the impressive MCA/Impulse followup, *The Village*, featuring Jack DeJohnette and Ron Carter), he turns around and cranks out *Orleans Inspiration*, a good-timey, r&b offering recorded live at Tipitina's, the showcase club in the Crescent City. On that Windham Hill debut, Henry settles in with such homey fare as Chris Kenner's "Something You Got," Fess' classic "Mardi Gras In New Orleans," and his own homage to James Booker in "Dr. James." The Meters' guitarist Leo Nocentelli is along for the funky ride, tearing it up on Fess' other signature, "Tipitina's," and contributing the earthy

original "Come Back Jack."

Says Henry of his return to the rootsy stylings of Fess and James Booker, "This album has been in my mind for a long time. Actually, I wanted to do this album first, before I did the two straightahead jazz records. The title cut was written in 1980, just after I left New Orleans. Some of the other tunes, like 'Dixie Walker' and 'Dr. James,' were written in the mid-'80s before the *Fivin' Around* album."

Another strong offering on *The Village* was the Alvin Batiste composition "Music Came." Says Henry of that piece composed by his mentor from Southern University, "It really gets to the heart of where black people are at in this country. I mean, we're really people without a country at this point. We call ourselves Americans but there's not always serious and true representation on our behalf. So I really like what he says in the lyric: 'Far from the shores of our native land, never had a family to hold my hand/ Wherever I may be, the universe provides for me/The vibes of the cosmos set me free . . . music came.'

"And it's true. We've had to turn to music, basically, to release a lot of the stresses and to forget about some of the experiences that we've had to encounter in this life. So that will always be a special piece for me."

Batiste has been a special person in Henry's life. After Henry enrolled at Southern, the virtuoso clarinetist and scholar took the young pianist under his wing and opened up a whole new musical universe for him. Before Batiste, Henry had grown up with classical music, the New Orleans r&b sounds of Eddie Bo, Tommy Ridgley, and Ernie K-Doe while getting a smattering of jazz education at the Louisiana State School for the Blind. At Southern, Batiste turned him onto the music of John Coltrane, Bud Powell, Art Tatum, and Charlie Parker as well as the nontempered musics of Bulgaria and the Middle East.

"Going from Tommy Ridgley to Bud Powell was quite a leap, but after a while it began to sink in. Later I started transcribing some of McCoy's solos and some of Tatum's solo work. I appreciated Bud Powell and Art Tatum and the others, but McCoy really stuck with me, probably because of the way he played grooves. I had also studied percussion in school, so I was naturally interested in McCoy's very percussive approach to the piano. His style was so unique. Nobody else at that time tried to emulate him. Most of the people that I was listening to before McCoy were kind of sweet and mostly inside. But when I finally heard McCoy, it grabbed me.

"And I began to use some of his ideas about playing rhythmically while also playing melodically as a springboard, as a source of inspiration. So while I might use some of the flavorings that McCoy uses, I still wouldn't want to play like him. I don't like the idea of clones and copycats. There are a lot of musicians who make it their life's work to study external sources that way. I do appreciate those external sources but I want to go on from there by focusing on the internal or intuitive thing."

After leaving Southern in 1971, Henry studied briefly with keyboardist George Duke, who at the time was working in Cannonball Adderley's group. "He was a very eclectic person and I think he understood me right away. We worked on some of his compositions and others by Joe Zawinul. George was very encouraging. After studying with him for a while, I came away realizing that I had a lot more confidence in myself . . . that if I practiced more and just kept at it, I might turn into something as a musician."

The following summer, while working on his master's at Michigan State, Henry began studying with pianist Harold Mabern. "He's a very percussive pianist, but different from McCoy," he recalls. "The patterns that he plays in his right hand are very different. I started to realize that there were all kinds of variations on being percussive and being melodic on the instrument. It actually started to confirm in me that each person has to find his or her own niche in the music world, or in life, period."

Feeling more confident about his developing voice, Henry returned to New Orleans and in 1975 began studying with

Professor Longhair. "I was teaching at NOCCA at the time and Batiste set up this meeting with Fess. So I went over to his house and, like a lot of things in New Orleans, it became more of a festive thing, a joyous occasion rather than strict lessons. I'd spend the whole afternoon there and he seemed happy to share what he had. He wasn't a wordy man, at least not in my presence. He did a lot more demonstrating. He'd go, 'See, you can do this,' then play a lick of his. Sometimes he'd want me to play it back to him just to make sure I had it. So he showed me his shuffle patterns, the way he uses parallel thirds and sixths in his playing and how he uses trills. He's definitely an innovator and I was thankful to pick up a few things from him."

While at NOCCA, Henry was on staff with Ellis Marsalis and came in contact with such promising students as Wynton Marsalis and Kent Jordan. "Wynton was not one of my students but we always knew of all the students' progress and what they were working on. So I always knew that he was going to be a good player."

And now Henry's moved on to the teaching ranks at Eastern Illinois. But he remains active as a player, touring around as a solo artist in his free time and occasionally appearing with a band to recreate the music on *Orleans Inspiration*. That album he wishes he could have done over.

"It was fun, it was great, but [as with my first two albums], if we had a realistic budget and realistic time, we could've done much better with it. It was just another one of those situations where it could've been better planned. I mean, the rhythm section could've used more than two days of rehearsal. Even one more day would've helped. And I really wanted to have real horns on the album instead of synthesizer. But because of the way things were moving along, we didn't have the time and, you know . . . that's just the way of life.

"But I'll tell ya, I learned from these three albums I've done. It just seems like everybody wants a winner but nobody wants to put something into winning. Everybody wants their ship to come in but nobody wants to pay the fare. There are all kinds of people involved in planning a record and making it happen. And if I could get everybody to put out as much as I put out, I think the results would be different.

"So basically, I've learned that I don't need to compromise my artistry like that anymore. From now on, I want to be in control of the music that I'm issuing. What I'd like people to hear from me in the future is something that I'm not just happy about but that I'm ecstatic about. So on my next project, I will make my best efforts to realize ecstasy."

He hints at a solo piano project. In his liner notes to *Orleans Inspiration*, Windham Hill pianist and longtime Butler admirer George Winston hints along the same lines. The question is, what context? Jazz standards? Schumann piano pieces? More interpretations of Scott Joplin, like his take on "The Entertainer" from *The Village*? Henry speaks with reverence for Ellington's sacred music and speculates that he might commission different composers to come up with long forms for strings, rhythm section, and voice for him. And then there's his fascination with operatic cantorial, and Slavic vocalization techniques, not to mention his ongoing interest in MIDI.

Who knows what to expect from this multi-talented artist on his next project? But whatever it is, it's bound to be graced with vision, inspiration, and soul.

DB

HENRY BUTLER'S EQUIPMENT

Henry's main grand piano is a Mason & Hanlin. He also plays a Korg M-1 synth, which he used on *The Village* and *Orleans Inspiration*. He also owns a Korg T-3 synth, a Kurzweil D-250, a Roland D-110 rack-mounted synth module, a Roland MC-500 sequencer, an E-Max sampler, a Roland SDE-2500 digital reverb unit, a Linn drum, an Oberheim DMX, and a Macintosh SE computer. At home he works up demos on a Fostex 8-track machine or records solo piano direct to a Sony DAT machine.

HENRY BUTLER DISCOGRAPHY

ORLEANS INSPIRATION—Windham Hill Jazz WD-0122
THE VILLAGE—MCA/Impulse 2-8023
FIVIN' AROUND—MCA/Impulse 5707

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



JACKIE McLEAN

DYNASTY—Triloka 181-2: *FIVE; BIRD LIVES; A HOUSE IS NOT A HOME; THIRD WORLD EXPRESS; DANCE LITTLE MANDISSA; J. MAC'S DYNASTY; KNOT THE BLUES; ZIMBABWE; KING TUT'S STRUT; MUTI-WOMAN.* (70:19 minutes)

Personnel: McLean, alto sax; René McLean, tenor sax, soprano sax, flute; Hotep Idris Galeta, piano; Nat Reeves, bass; Carl Allen, drums.

★★★★

BIRDOLOGY

BIRDOLOGY—Verve 841 132-2: *BIRD LIVES; YARDBIRD SUITE; PARKER'S MOOD; CHASIN' THE BIRD; BIG FOOT; DONNA LEE.* (51:47)

Personnel: Jackie McLean, alto sax; Johnny Griffin, tenor sax; Cecil Payne, baritone sax; Don Sickler, trumpet; Duke Jordan, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Roy Haynes, drums.

★★★ ½

The level of Jackie McLean's talent for jazz expression, measured on a bushel of four- and five-star records (standouts are several Blue Note sessions from the '60s and a meeting with Dexter Gordon titled *The Source*, released here on Inner City in 1976) is nothing short of alps-on-alps high. For too long, though, the altoist/educator has elected to keep an almost invisible profile stateside, leaving us to speculate whether he'd slipped creatively.

Relax. The titan still performs at those lofty heights (see pp. 21-22). The preferred *Dynasty*, recorded in late 1988, swells with the authority, inspiration, and untiring energy of a wiser-than-ever-before master. His tone's distinctly acerbic, as always, and his penchant for the blues continues to awe. McLean's phrasing is a perpetual study in forceful inventiveness, poised on the challenging edge between bop and "outside" freedom-ringing. A musician whose creative juices flow when stirred by younger players (recall Tony Williams, Bobby Hutcherson, Charles Tolliver), he's rounded up an impressive strong bunch in Carl Allen, Nat Reeves, and Hotep Idris Galeta. The session also benefits from the presence of his son René, certainly no introvert when improvising. The songs are a sturdy lot, unbending to the player's urgencies, with a special nod going to Galeta for contributing "Knot The Blues" and "King Tut's Strut." Fine music—out will somebody please show the yahoo recording studio "audience" the door?

McLean flutters his mighty Bird wings at the TBB Jazz Festival (France) tribute to Monsieur Parker in mid-'89. He gets room to fly on five of six egalitarian blowing vehicles, a safe and

predictable repertoire, and acquits himself well, if rather low-level conservatively. McLean's stark building of suspense in his choruses on "Parker's Mood" is a highlight of the evening. Gentlemen named Johnny Griffin, Cecil Payne, Duke Jordan, Ron Carter, Roy Haynes, and Don Sickler (a talented trumpeter/arranger)—most of whom, of course, knew and worked with Parker—don't disappoint either. A better-than-good ornithological celebration. (reviewed on CD) —*Frank-John Hadley*



SONIC YOUTH

GOO—DGC 9 24297-D2: *DIRTY BOOTS; TUNIC (SONG FOR KAREN); MARY-CHRIST; KOOL THING; MOTE; MY FRIEND GOO; DISAPPEARER; MILDRED PIERCE; CINDERELLA'S BIG SCORE; SCOOTER + JINX; TITANIUM EXPOSE.* (49:56 minutes)

Personnel: Thurston Moore, guitar, vocals; Kim Gordon, bass, vocals; Lee Ronaldo, guitar; Steve Shelley, drums; Chuck D., vocal (cut 4); J. Mascis, background vocals (2, 5, 6); Don Fleming, background vocals, percussion (1, 7); Nick Sansano, percussion.

★★★★ ½

Safe mooring is just beyond reach when listening to Sonic Youth's latest. Longtime fans of the post-punk foursome were fearing sell-out when the group struck a deal with David Geffen's DGC label after six albums of lyrical and musical freedom, anarchy, and fun. But nothing to worry about as the band continues to grate, grind, sweetly obliterate rock conventions, and tell wonderfully quirky stories in this grab-bag collection of rough-hewn songs. While indie label acts like REM and Camper Van Beethoven made the transition into the pop mainstream and invigorated it in the process with their major-label successes, Sonic Youth's foray into the big-time probably won't translate into mass acceptance. Too bad, because this is exactly the kind of fiery energy, clever weirdness, menacing undertow, and fearless experimentation that the rock world needs for its revitalization.

Instead of murdering its songs with guitar bombs (noise for the sake of ear-splitting noise), Sonic Youth uses axe blare selectively: as a drone, as an expression of explosive rage, as the voice of impending destruction, and even, on the melody-less one-minute "Scooter+Jinx," as the soundtrack for two punks gleefully racing go-carts in a circle.

Likewise, Sonic Youth's song lyrics defy the shock-treatment punk formula (the menu of shocking subjects has dwindled). Instead the band opts for thoughtful, bizarre, witty, stupid, funny pieces. Kim Gordon becomes Karen

Carpenter on "Tunic," says good-bye to her brother Richard, hello to Janis and Elvis, and sings in a monotone her haunting song of freedom looking down from heaven where she's rediscovered her drum playing. Thurston Moore ponders what it would be like having sexual feelings for a saint on "Mary-Christ" and uses titanium as a metaphor for marriage on "Titanium Exposé." Then there's the adolescent graffiti doodlings and journal scribbles on "My Friend Goo," the cameo appearance by Public Enemy rapper Chuck D., and the UFO song, "Disappearer."

This album is miles away from pop music (it's hard to imagine any one of these tunes ever showing up in the Top 40) with its unpredictable tempo leaps, the fidgeting with speaker noise and feedback, and the stumbling through instrumental excursions that succeed by a combination of drive and joy. Guitars tuned dissonantly, rambling psychedelic leads, unsophisticated instrumentation, strange and delightful song codas—all this warps the rock music Sonic Youth plays in just the right way. Goo is not an easy listen, but it is immensely rewarding. (reviewed on CD)

—*Dan Ouellette*



BLUESIANA TRIANGLE

BLUESIANA TRIANGLE—Windham Hill Jazz WD-0125: *HEADS UP; LIFE'S A ONE WAY TICKET; SHOO FLY DON'T BOTHER ME; NEED TO BE LOVED; NEXT TIME YOU SEE ME; WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHIN' IN; FOR ALL WE KNOW.* (43:03 minutes)

Personnel: Dr. John (aka Mac Rebennack), piano, Hammond organ, guitar, vocals; Art Blakey, drums, vocals (2, 7), piano (7); David "Fathead" Newman, saxophones and flute, backup vocals (3); Essiet Okon Essiet, acoustic double bass, backup vocals (3); Joe Bonadio, percussion, drums (7).

★★★★

Stone crazy. Who would've guessed that prissy Windham Hill Productions would release one of the season's most colorfully wrought and downright lusty albums? Who'd ever think Mac "Dr. John" Rebennack, a New Orleans piano hero who copped a Grammy last year, and his sax-playing r&B associate "Fathead" Newman would get *feature* roles in a session also starring—ahem!—consummate jazzman Art Blakey? Hearing is believing: *Bluesiana Triangle* (see Aug. '90).

Blakey, who *knows* the blues undergirds jazz, is every bit at ease superintending the inflections and accents of what Taj Mahal calls

"down-into-the-body music" as Rebennack is preaching the jazz gospel and Newman is soulfully blowing through stylistic borders. Aided by Jazz Messenger Essiet Okon Essiet, an astute bassist with a grizzly fat tone, the ad hoc threesome has a grand ol' time throwing care to the wind on numbers they'd arranged only minutes before the tape rolled.

Only the most miserable grouch wouldn't crack a smile over the Triangular delight cascading throughout the Rebennack arrangement of N'awlins legend Cousin Joe's "Ticket": the Gris-Gris man sings *bons mots* with walk-on-gilded-splinters nonchalance. Fathead adds easy Texas roadhouse sax, Blakey looms large on traps and even croaks a few witticisms. (His oddball vocal charm fills "For All We Know.") On "Shoo Fly," the hard-bop expert's insolent tom-tom rumbles, swinging snare snaps, rim attacks, and Zildjian annotations underpin Rebennack's singing—till Blakey resolutely advances his pummel-and-pause grandeur for several gripping minutes. Fun is the cornerstone of these and other jam tunes, including a fresh, church-meets-gutter version of "Saints Go Marchin'."

Possibly Newman's soprano and flute don't stick to the ribs as his tenor saxophone does. Maybe Rebennack's overdubbed guitar and organ vitiate the "feel" of this live-in-the-studio date. And perhaps at times the roisterers are out of synch with each other. Most assuredly, though, *Bluesiana Triangle* swaggers out of the left field of the blues libido an unpolished little gem. (reviewed on CD)

—Frank-John Hadley



AL RAPONE AND THE ZYDECO EXPRESS

ZYDECO TO GO—Blind Pig 3790: YVETTE UB DANCING; BLACK BAYOU; OUR HEARTS WILL DANCE; GOOD OLE CAJUN MUSIC; SPRINGTIME; ZYDECO TO GO; LA VIERGE; CHERE DU LOONE; KALINDA; MAZUKA; TOUSAINT SHUFFLE; BAYOU CALLIN' ME. (35:38 minutes)

Personnel: Rapone, accordion, vocals, bass; including Roy L. Chantier, vocals; David Nelson, guitar, vocals; Bobbie Webb, sax; James Hurley, fiddles; Leonard Gill, bass; Jamie Lease, Darrel Brasseaux, drums.

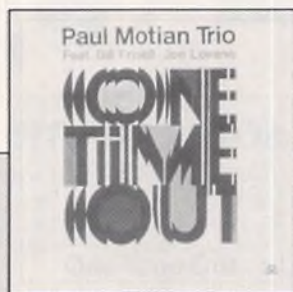
★★★★

Al Rapone, brother of Queen Ida and Grammy-winning producer of her early records, has a zydeco surprise around every corner on *Zydeco To Go*. Rapone has kept to the zydeco tradition (its very essence is in its gumbo of styles) by putting together an excellent collec-

tion of distinctive songs that cover a wide range of musical territory. There's a straight zydeco r&b cooker, a slow and gutsy blues number with Cajun spices liberally sprinkled throughout, and a couple of festive dance tunes that sound freshly imported from the Caribbean ("La Vierge" has a great syncopated vocal line in the chorus and "Kalinda" has a catchy, percussive steel-drum feel to it).

Rapone also innovatively expands the zydeco vision to include country, bluegrass, and Tex-Mex flavorings. This is the best Cajun-zydeco album to come out in quite some time. Rapone speaks my mind on the title cut when he sings, "I gobbled up the gumbo . . . I even took a mason jar of zydeco to go." This is one hot dish for a take-out order from your local record store. (reviewed on cassette)

—Dan Ouellette



PAUL MOTIAN

ONE TIME OUT—Soul Note 121 224-2: ONE TIME OUT; IF YOU COULD SEE ME NOW; FOR THE LOVE OF SARAH; THE STORYTELLER; PORTRAIT OF T.; MORPION; MONK'S MOOD; GOOD IDEA; CIRCLE DANCE. (49:20 minutes)

Personnel: Motian, drums; Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone; Bill Frisell, electric guitar.

★★★★

PAUL MOTIAN ON BROADWAY—Vol. 1—JMT 834 430-2: LIZA; SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW; THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE ME; WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED LOVE; MY HEART BELONGS TO DADDY; LAST NIGHT WHEN WE WERE YOUNG; I CONCENTRATE ON YOU; SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME; SO IN LOVE. (44:00)

Personnel: Motian, drums; Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone; Bill Frisell, electric guitar; Charlie Haden, bass.

★★★★

How is it that certain artists can transform the familiar into something unfamiliar, and with such delightful results? It's not that Motian & Co. turn things upside down or wreak havoc in some sort of avant-garde blitzkrieg. Quite the contrary. Apart from Motian's seven originals from *One Time Out*, the music on these two discs clearly demonstrates a high degree of originality as well as a clear desire to caress the rich melodic and harmonic textures of such notable composers as Gershwin, Porter, and Monk. Taken with Motian's pieces, there exists a merging of two worlds: tradition meets tomorrow.

The striking tenor saxist Joe Lovano, heard elsewhere as a relative experimentalist, sounds like a keeper of the flame apart from Motian's uptempo originals. This is due, in part, to

guitarist Bill Frisell's Jim Hall-on-acid excursions. Consider "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" from *On Broadway*. Everyone knows this famous Harold Arlen number from *The Wizard Of Oz*. Motian's take ensures a healthy dose of Ozness mixed with a certain wizardry, suggesting that melody makers Lovano and Frisell's various walks along the yellow-brick road may be faintly reminiscent of Dorothy's journey but with an unmistakable twist. Yesterday's wanderlust meets today's wandermust.

Broadway's program is decidedly serene next to *One Time Out*. Motian's rambling, all-fall-down stickwork adheres nicely to gently off-killer arrangements of America's songbook. Haden's assured basslines are impeccable, while Lovano's boozy tenor clings to each and every standard. Frisell plays the young upstart, the most immediate connection with a musical present/future gone haywire. Gentleness mixes with wit, charm, and an obvious love for the music of these classic American composers.

Conversely, with the lovely exceptions of Tadd Dameron's "If You Could See Me Now," "Portrait Of T.," and "Monk's Mood," *One Time Out's* rife with aggressive trampolinisms: ups-and-downs, scurries here and there, go-for-broke explorations of Motian's elastic tunes. Not that the band ends up with nothing but fragments after the dust settles. Hardly. Craft, musical instinct, and a dynamic view of structure triumph over the urge to fall apart at the seams. In this case, it's Motian's specific contributions to rhythm and melodic construction, an approach begun in earnest after his celebrated stint with pianist Bill Evans. The music swings, growls, and caresses. There is space, and there is traffic. This is refreshing, bottomless jazz; after all, who needs a bass when the sky's the limit?

The familiar and the unfamiliar meet in extraordinary displays of tradition turned on its head. (reviewed on CD)

—John Ephland



MARIAN MCPARTLAND/ BENNY CARTER

MARIAN MCPARTLAND PLAYS THE BENNY CARTER SONGBOOK—Concord CCD-4412:

WHEN LIGHTS ARE LOW; I'M IN THE MOOD FOR SWING; A KISS FROM YOU; KEY LARGO; ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE; SUMMER SERENADE; DOOZY; LONELY WOMAN; ONLY TRUST YOUR HEART; EVENING STAR; EASY MONEY. (52:49 minutes)

Personnel: McPartland, piano; Carter, alto saxophone (cuts 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11); John Clayton, bass; Harold Jones, drums.

★★★★

In the old days, a first-time meeting of two such

twin peaks as Marian McPartland and Benny Carter might have been a confrontation—bop against swing or something like that. These days, though, veterans like these two prefer to embrace. If it all lacks the tension of an action melodrama, it has the approachability of character study.

Carter's sunny sound and slippery, serpentine phrasing continue to be incredibly sturdy. He circles his melodies and ties bows on them, then unwraps them chorus by chorus. On middle or fast tempos, he will send a phrase skipping up the scale and gently tap the last note over the net with pinky extended and a witty aside. He can be both a charming and a fearsome (e.g., "Doozy") improviser. On this collection, he is four-fifths charm going on five. As befitting an honored guest, he makes himself appropriately scarce on five of the 11 cuts, which are left in the custody of the McPartland trio.

Though a player of formidable reputation herself, and well-earned, Marian McPartland remains beguilingly star struck in the presence of such icons as Carter. She is on her toes here, out to delight as well as surprise her guest at every turn. On ballads she is an orchestra of thoughtful, leisurely pastels. But when flogged along by a snappy tempo, as on "Doozy" or especially "Easy Money," she swings with dead-on drive. (reviewed on CD)

—John McDonough



TURTLE ISLAND STRING QUARTET

SKYLIFE—Windham Hill 0126: *SKYLIFE*; *SENIOR MOUSE*; *YOU NOTICED TOO*; *BLUES FOR OAKTOWN*; *GETTYSBURG*; *DEXTERIORS*; *TREMORS*; *MR. TWITTY'S CHAIR*; *GRANT WOOD*; *ENSENADA*; *CROSSROADS*.

Personnel: Darol Anger, violin; Dave Balakrishnan, violin; Katrina Wreede, viola; Mark Sumner, cello.

★ ★ ★ ★

MODERN MANDOLIN QUARTET

INTERMEZZO—Windham Hill 1091: *RAVEL'S EMPRESS OF THE PAGODAS*; *BERNSTEIN'S COOL*;

SHOSTAKOVICH'S POLKA; *COPLAND'S HOEDOWN*; AND WORKS BY SUCH EUROPEAN COMPOSERS AS HAYDN, KODALY, AND BACH. (48:00 MINUTES)

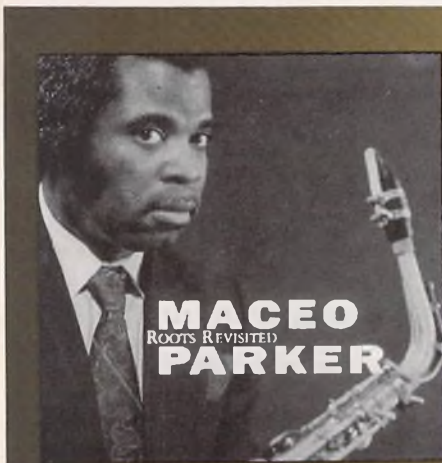
Personnel: Mike Marshall, mandolin; John Imholz, mandocello; Paul Binkley, mandola; Dana Rath, mandolin.

★ ★ ★

I can't help but associate violinist Darol Anger with mandolin/guitarist Mike Marshall. They came up together in the David Grisman quartets of the late '70s and early '80s, and recorded duo projects which evolved, more or less, into the group Montreux. With Montreux in limbo, they separately pursue acoustic projects with similar goals.

During and after their Grisman years, Marshall and Anger played everything: bluegrass, "new acoustic music" (souped-up instrumental bluegrass-derived fusion), jazz, classical, blues, everything. The Turtle Island String Quartet has a similar mission—to boldly play what no string quartet has played before. Marshall's Modern Mandolin Quartet has the aim of expanding popular conceptions as to the uses and limitations of the mandolin—a mando manifesto.

By breaking away from established repertoire and projecting a playful, trendy image, the Kronos Quartet opened the door for new chamber groups like TISQ and MMQ. TISQ



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steps further away from the classical book, selecting some intriguing covers (Chick Corea's "Senor Mouse" and Robert Johnson's "Crossroads") and originals far removed from traditional chamber music. Anger and Dave Balakrishnan share most of the arranging and writing credits. They favor American folk musics and rich harmonies. Whether jazz, blues, country, or whatever, the playing has a swing and swagger that Stephane Grappelli would appreciate. Never formal or abstract, this may be as much fun as you can have with a string quartet. (reviewed on cassette)

BIG DEAL

by Art Lange

Big bands have had a tough go of it, really, since the end of WWII; but, economics aside, musical success has always been dependent upon the same requirements: a sound, a style, an identity. Soundalikes seldom have staying power. And in order to forge that individual identity, you need a single vision. Big bands have never run well on democratic principles; they should be overseen by a benevolent authority who shapes the ensemble's sound and character. Of late, the best way to do this is to avoid the traditional trap of conventional charts pitting section versus section, instead of using it as an extended sound source, with a flexible concept of structure and texture.

A clue to the intentions of the **Dave Stahl Band** (*Live At Knights*; Abee Cake CD-3005; 61:27 minutes: ★★★) can be heard in one of the leader's introductions—"This number was written for the Maynard Ferguson Band about 25 years ago." The 16-piece band fits comfortably into the Ferguson/Buddy Rich mid-'60s mold—straightahead, punchy, mostly in-house arrangements (from a half-dozen pens) of ballads and flagwavers with a bit of show-band bombast. No outstanding soloists, though "Theme For Three Maniacs" lets trumpeters Stahl (a high-note specialist à la Maynard), John Eckert, and Brian Lynch show off lotsa chops.

The slap-happy stride piano that invigorates the opener, "Making Lunch," suggests a looser approach to big band conventions from the **Ken Schaphorst Big Band** (*Making Lunch*; JCA CD-101; 45:29: ★★★½). The leader, not listed as playing an instrument, supplied all the charts; best is the rubbery reworking of Oliver Nelson's "Stolen Moments," which he gives a personal stamp without totally destroying the tune. His use of tuba and french horn may have been influenced by the Gil Evans of the '50s, and there's some tongue-in-cheek Breukerisms in the "Chant/The Lashing Of Tongues/Prayer" suite, as well as some "free" interludes that don't flow convincingly, and some unfortunate overblown Kentonisms. Ambitious, with potential.

The **Bob Belden Ensemble** (*Treasure Island*; Sunnyside CD-1041D; 76:11: ★★★½) has a catalog of credits that reads like a Big Band Who's Who—Herman, Goodman, Rich, Akiyoshi, Jones-Lewis, et al. Belden obtains some warmer sounds than the norm, adds

MMQ takes an inverse approach, embracing conventional repertoire with unconventional instrumentation. Players assume the parts assigned in a string quartet, but the instruments are members of the mandolin family. Marshall is the featured player, soloing on the Bach piece, but Paul Binkley and John Imholz contribute imaginative arrangements, especially the Bernstein (from *West Side Story* with finger-snaps) and the luminous Ravel (I heard kotos, maybe shamisens).

When the arrangements are less successful, as with Debussy and Kodaly, it may be that

some attractive twists to a basically conservative idiom, especially on his "Treasure Island Suite," which displays some felicitous early Evans influence along with jolting improvs. His take on "Basin Street Blues" is a nice departure, and there's an understated Wayne Shorter-ish lyricism on "Pas De Deux."

The **New York Composers Orchestra** (*New York Composers Orchestra*; New World CD-397-2; 61:09: ★★★) boasts an all-star lineup, designed as an outlet for varied extended concepts, odd structures, unusual but accessible outlooks. Keyboardist Wayne Horvitz's three works come off best—"Prodigal Son Revisited" contrasts rip-roaring variations on the blues tune with repetitive minimalist riffs; "The House That Brings A Smile" separates two moving dirges for the Band's Richard Manuel with a Balinese-type movement; "With The Hammer Down" is a passacaglia gone slightly askew. His chart on "Fever" is spooky, with wry Ray Anderson trombone. Robin Holcomb's "Nightbirds: Open 24 Hours" suggests noirish chamber music textures. All the pieces have something to offer, aided by excellent recording.

The NYCO shares a pair of brassmen (Herb Robertson and Steven Bernstein) with the **Walter Thompson Big Band** (*Not For Rollo*; Ottawa CD-070487; 54:18: ★★★), but the latter takes unusual instrumentation a step further, with tuba, two french horns, and a string section consisting of violin, two guitars, cello, and bass. Thompson likes to distort expectations; textures are often sparse, arrangements quirky—like the odd Latin quotes, "out" interludes, and environmental sounds woven through "Mango Tango," or "Blue Battle"'s atonal intro that swells and subsides with free-ensemble episodes. Thompson's alto and melodic contours are frequently Braxtonian, engaging, and undeniably weird.

At the opposite end of the conceptual spectrum is the **Mike Gibbs Orchestra** (*Big Music*; Virgin CD-27; 41:31: ★★), a hip concoction, crafted with obvious expertise for excitement, and produced to a fare-thee-well. The participants are all familiar, as is the music—funk with a sledgehammer beat, a cool Milesian mode bathed in Evans electronics, a commercial Sanbornesque ballad. Included are three drum programmers, two keyboardists, and five guitarists. Is it just me, or does the excitement seem artificial?

And back again to the downright goofy. For *Metropolis* (BVHaast CD-8903; 60:02: ★★★), **Willem Breuker's Kollektief** is augmented by the eight Mondriaan Strings

some works for bowed string instruments just don't translate well for plucked string instruments, which rarely provide the same vocal resonance. In its best moments, including the beautifully executed Brahms and Villa Lobos, I accepted "Intermezzo" on its own terms and not as a novelty record.

The important question is, do you have to love the mandolin to like the Modern Mandolin Quartet? No, but you *do* have to love the mandolin to love this record the way it was meant to be loved. Add at least one star if you do. (reviewed on CD) —Jon Andrews

and Dutch vaudevillean Toby Rix, who plays klezmer tunes on harmonica (he out-toots Toots) and a Haydn trumpet concerto movement on bicycle horns. Elsewhere, amongst the Morricone and Weill transcriptions, are two extended works, a painstaking recreation of a Paul Whiteman concert hall extravaganza, Ferde Grofe's "Metropolis" (a Gershwinesque plundering of '20s "popular" and "serious" musics) and Breuker's "Spanish Wells," following his own formula of high-energy solos, anthemic themes, and the unexpected (here, a hoedown violin cadenza).

Gil Evans is probably the most influential post-WWII big band figure, so **Laurent Cugny** was wise to go right to the source with his **Big Band Lumiere** for *Golden Hair* (EmArcy CD-838 773-2; 59:11: ★★★½). This second volume (see "Reviews" Apr. '89) from Nov. '87 is a treasure trove of Gil's singular gifts—arrangements that breathe, that insinuate and not specify, that take their sweet time to deliver their seductive secrets. The combination of tuba, french horn, flutes, muted trumpets, and synth is Evans' trademark, but the music's exquisite pacing, deft dynamics, and panoramic textures are also attributes of genius.

George Gruntz has led various hand-picked ensembles since 1972; this edition of his **Concert Jazz Band** (*First Prize*; Enja CD-6004-2; 63:37: ★★★½) is a state-of-the-art swing band, with attractive material showcasing strong soloists, stretching stylistic boundaries without snapping them. The music mirrors Gruntz's own character—cosmopolitan and congenial and challenging; what other big band do you know has no trombones, but two french horns, two euphoniums, and tuba? Or can call on four flutes? From the laid-back savior faire of "So Easy" to the high-spirited dixieland strut "Fishin' With Gramps," this one's a grabber.

Muhai Richard Abrams' Orchestra (*The Hearinga Suite*; Black Saint CD-120 130-2; 41:10: ★★★★★) is more of an orchestra than a big band. An unconventional but totally convincing draughtsman, Abrams uses his exotic palette to paint gracious portraits and lush landscapes, or trace the inscape of his thoughts with chamber-music fluidity. "Oldf-talk," for example, is a marvelous ballad, basked in pastel colors, that shrewdly blossoms to include freshly voiced horns and reeds; or "Hearinga," with fanciful "Sorcerer's Apprentice" interludes that kick into swing gear. The music is captivating from start to finish. (all reviewed on CD) DB



ALLMAN BROTHERS

SEVEN TURNS—Epic E 46144: GOOD CLEAN FUN; LET ME RIDE; LOW DOWN DIRTY MEAN; SHINE IT ON; LOADED DICE; SEVEN TURNS; GAMBLER'S ROLL; TRUE GRAVITY; IT AIN'T OVER YET.

Personnel: Gregg Allman, organ, vocals; Dickey Betts, guitars, vocals; Butch Trucks, drums, tympani; Jai Jaimoe, drums, percussion; Warren Haynes, slide guitar, electric guitar, vocals; Johnny Neel, piano, organ, harmonica, vocals; Allen Woody, electric basses; Mark Morris, percussion; Duane Betts, guitar (cut 8).

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

Seven Turns, the first new Allman Brothers album in nine years, is a return to the classic form of *Idlewild South*. Plenty of strong blues workouts and Southern boogie rave-ups, and no wimpy, soft-rockers in sight. And, thankfully (for old ABB fans), no surprises. Meaning, the Brothers have not been swayed by any of the current trends in music (i.e., no house music cuts, no rap tracks, no sequencing, no techno-funk). They stick with the old formula and come up with the goods on nine cuts. For fans, it's a welcome sound.

A key player on this session is Warren Haynes. His warm, singing slide guitar on Betts' "Let Me Ride" and the funky blues of "Loaded Dice" expertly fills the void left by the passing of Duane Allman nearly 20 years ago. And his fluid mingling with Betts' Les Paul on the title cut evokes memories of Duane and Eric Clapton on "Layla." Haynes, who worked in Betts' late '80s band, helps to recreate the signature harmonized guitar melodies on the hook-laden "Shine It On" and the album's lone instrumental, "True Gravity," which veers away from the Southern blues theme and heads dangerously close to the realms of L.A. happy jazz.

A key player behind the scenes is producer Tom Dowd, the same guy who presided over the Brothers' classic early-'70s sessions. Wise move. Dowd, a skilled engineer with keen ears, knows how to recreate the live feel of the band. Unlike 90 percent of the young engineers in rock today, he doesn't insist on drowning the guitars in reverb and placing big-as-a-house backbeats in your face. Hence, this album *feels* really good. And, of course, there's Gregg Allman, one of the great white blues shouters of all time. He revives memories of "Whipping Post" on the slow minor blues, "Gambler's Roll," and wails on the Chicago-flavored "Low Down Dirty Mean," a chugging blues that recalls Muddy Waters' "Mean Ol' Frisco."

No new ground broken here. No two-handed tapping flurries on the guitar. No overt studio tricks. No impossible polyrhythms and pretentious suites. Just four-to-the-floor with feeling. (reviewed on LP)
—Bill Milkowski

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BOBBY RADCLIFF

DRESSES TOO SHORT—Black Top CD BT 1048: UGH!; BONEHEAD; STICK AROUND; YOU HAVEN'T HURT ME; GOING HOME TOMORROW; NEXT WOMAN I MARRY; DRESSES TOO SHORT; KEEP LOVING ME BABY; ALUMONY BLUES; HARD ROAD TO TRAVEL; KOOL AND THE GANG. (41:43 minutes)

Personnel: Radcliff, vocals, guitar; Dave Hofstra, Steve Gomes (cuts 2,3), bass; Richard "Dickie" Dworkin, Per Hanson (2,3), drums; Ronnie Earl, guitar (2,3); Ron Levy, organ, piano; Mark "Kaz" Kazanoff, tenor and baritone saxes; Mr. Excellio, Saxy Boy, tenor sax.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

GARY MOORE

STILL GOT THE BLUES—Charisma 2-91369: MOVING ON; OH PRETTY WOMAN; WALKING BY MYSELF; STILL GOT THE BLUES; TEXAS STRUT; TOO TIRED; KING OF THE BLUES; AS THE YEARS GO PASSING BY; MIDNIGHT BLUES; THAT KIND OF WOMAN; ALL YOUR LOVE; STOP MESSIN' AROUND. (53:18)

Personnel: Moore, guitar, vocals; Andy Pyle (1-4,6,7,9,11,12), Bob Daisley (5,8,10), bass; Nicky Hopkins, piano (4,8,10); Mick Weaver, piano (1,3,12), electric piano (9), Hammond organ (11); Don Airey, Hammond organ (2,5,7,8), keyboards (4), piano (6); Graham Walker (1-4,6,9-12), Brian Downey (5,7,8), drums; Albert King (2), Albert Collins (6), guitar; George Harrison, slide and rhythm guitar (10), backing vocals (10); Frank Mead, harmonica (3), tenor sax (2,7,8), alto sax (2,6,7,10), saxes (12); Nick Pentelov (2,7,10), Andrew Hamilton (6), tenor sax; Nick Payn, baritone sax (2,6-8,10); Raoul D'Olivera (2,7), Stuart Brooks (6), Martin Drover (10), trumpet; Gavin Wright, string section leader (4,9).

★ ★ ★

Seasoned guitarists Bobby Radcliff and Gary Moore bust their guts. Radcliff is a committed bluesman who's labored for years in New York City saloons, only recently launching sorties outside the Apple. Amen for that. Moore, a Belfast-reared hard-rock warrior, now has decided to exhume and celebrate his blues roots, make a bid for acceptance beyond hellish concert arenas. Good for him.

Supported by several Black Top Records r&b stalwarts and his regular group (not to mention superlative guitarist Ronnie Earl and a few Broadcasters on two numbers), Radcliff delivers the goods with *Dresses Too Short*, his second album and first to receive wide distribution. The firebrand's Fender shudders, dithers, and fulminates in a rough, deep-seated

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36

COMBO CLASSICS

by Jack Sohmer

Only two months prior to Art Tatum's untimely death in November 1956, he had completed recording a series of combo dates that, for the first time in his career, required this most virtuosic of all jazz piano soloists to function as a member of a group, backing up and interweaving with some of the most widely respected musicians of that or any other day. To be sure, Tatum had participated as a featured sideman in all-star assemblages before, and typical of these were the dates issued in the '40s on V-Disc and Commodore, upon which Tatum shared the bill with other award-winning soloists; but these were either concert hall or studio jams, not the cohesive units that producer Norman Granz had in mind when he initiated the series under discussion and which is now available in a six-CD boxed set entitled *Art Tatum: The Complete Pablo Group Masterpieces* (Pablo 6PACD-4401-2; 7 hrs, 24 min.: ★★★★★).

Originally issued on Clef, Verve, and Pablo, these sessions stand as unique examples of Tatum's ability—and willingness—to work at least part of the time in a supportive, although never subordinate, role with other outstanding jazzmen. This, then, is not the Tatum of the mid-'40s Trio, whose breathtaking brilliance all but rendered inconsequential the efforts of Tiny Grimes and Slam Stewart as they struggled mightily to keep up with their master's ever fertile imagination. Rather, this is Tatum the co-leader, so to speak, the consummate musician whose breadth of genius extends so far as to even include generosity of spirit. For as surpassingly proficient as are such soloists as Benny Carter, Roy Eldridge, Lionel Hampton, Harry Edison, Barney Kessel, Buddy DeFranco, and Ben Webster, it would not have required too much effort on his part for Tatum to overwhelm them completely had he only been of a mind to do so.

But the point is that he did not do so, nor did he even attempt to playfully confound the rock-steady rhythm men—bassists John Simmons and Red Callender, and drummers Louis Bellson, Alvin Stoller, Buddy Rich, Jo Jones, and Bill Douglass—who throughout play with swing and sensitivity and a conservative respect for the unswerving 4/4. A more liberated approach to the beat by either the bass players or the drummers would not only have been redundant, but in light of Tatum's own all-encompassing orchestral style, it would also have worked to the detriment of the overall sound.

Benny Carter, whose lustrously polished command of harmony and structure most closely equals Tatum's, was unquestionably at his creative peak on the series' inspired first session, which took place on June 25, 1954. Expectedly, his tone and intonation are flawless, but also commendable is his

never-doubted, but rarely demonstrated fluency with the slow blues, an idiom in which neither he nor the pianist had ever been over-exposed. With Bellson, these two play the 14 titles that comprise disc one. With a different backing, Eldridge alternates between muted and open horn on his 10 tracks, quickly overcoming a mild case of cold chops to deliver some of the most impassioned playing of his career. Disc two ends with four tunes by Tatum, Hampton, and Rich, who continue their session to completion on disc three. Hamp is then joined by Edison, Kessel, and Callender for



Art Tatum: consummate musician

the first eight tracks on disc four, which are followed, in overlapping fashion throughout the remaining discs, by 10 piano trio titles, 11 tracks by a quartet featuring DeFranco, and, with the same rhythm, the final 10 by Webster, whose sumptuousness of sound alone remains to this day the most profound and lasting impression of this magnificent series of recording sessions.

It should also be mentioned that the reputations of both Hampton and DeFranco were considerably enhanced by virtue of their successful pairings with Tatum. In the first case, it was to prove that this paragon of showmanship and exuberance was also capable of thoughtful extended improvisations that revealed not only a ready response to Tatum's advanced harmonies and rhythms but an unfortunately long concealed lyrical sense as well. And with DeFranco, it was to forever relegate to the absurd any charges that this master of bop clarinet was incapable of playing with warmth or genuine feeling. They both did themselves proud.

Among the 80 selections contained in this album are 13 previously unreleased performances, including 10 alternate takes of which six are to be heard on the DeFranco and Webster sessions and two on the Eldridge. DB

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A NOTE ON FRANZ KOGLMANN

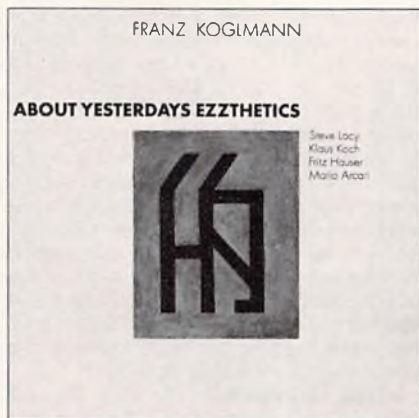
Every act of art – an attempt to intensify our perception of life, and, thus, life itself – is a distortion of things „as they are.“ Such creative distortion can be mild or willful, healing or harmful, surprising or simply reassuring. Great art can be all of these at once.

Though music is the most abstract of art forms, Franz Koglmann's music is unique because it is uncommonly literal... which is not to say programmatic or pictorial. It is somehow misleading, as it is satisfying, to put him in a lineage of such as Jelly Roll Morton, Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus, Gil Evans, George Russell, because he is as different from them as they are from each other. But like them, his compositions are rich in beautifully ambiguous images, which originate in a place so personal that they allow us to respond to them personally. They exist as substance and suggestion, in his magical ability to blur the distinctions between form (intellect) and feeling (emotion).

Each of his recordings on hat ART is a special, distinct experience, with its own particular moments of drama, seduction, mystery. They inhabit so many varying moods and modes precisely because of his willingness to acknowledge seemingly contradictory impulses – to trust the „reality of the imagination“ – and to share his creative instincts with strong musicians, who become not interpreters but collaborators.

For all of its poetic ambience – sounds which understand shadows but brave the clear light of day – his is a deeply human music, a triumph of character.

– Art Lange
January 1990



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 34

kind of ecstasy too seldom encountered in this age of superficial, smoke and verbiage blues guitar. Fitting the templates of order and creative intelligence over his crowded bursts of simultaneous leads, bass lines, and chords, the Washington D.C. native indulges his passion for Buddy Guy and Magic Sam without aping the greats. Moreover, Radcliff works up

BEAT ME, DADDY: POETRY READINGS TO JAZZ

by Fred Bouchard

We've seen few pairings of jazz and poetry since the Beat Generation (the Ishmael Reed/Kip Hanrahan collaboration a heartening exception), so this half-dozen batch of CDs revives a worthy medium in our woefully anti-literate age. The first is pure '50s, the second sets beat texts to contemporary music, the third loosely homages a poet's aura and era, and the last three let the era's main voice speak out again, 30 years after his madcap rambles and 20 after his death.

Weary Blues (Verve 841 660-2; 44:34 minutes: ★★★★★) consists of 15 poems by **Langston Hughes** (read amiably and conversationally by the poet), seven in a suite to settings for sextet scored by **Leonard Feather**, eight written by **Charles Mingus** and played by **Horace Parlan's** Quintet. Originally recorded in March of 1958, the Hughes settings are universal in their bluesy, hopeful perceptions of what it meant to grow up black in America before World War II. The Feather sides feature growled call-and-response commentary by three remarkably vocal horns: Red Allen's muted trumpet (which I vividly recall "talking" sotto voce in my ear), Sam Taylor's blunt and breathy tenor musings, and Vic Dickenson's head-shakin' trombone, with a little Al Williams barrelhouse piano. The Mingus tracks benefit from the composer's drive and the leader/pianist's wit and grace. My impression is that Feather's tracks better match the poems' blue cadences, while Mingus' highly-wrought rhythms compete with them. But while Feather's simple riffing opens windows for Hughes' innate warmth and wit to shine through, Mingus backlights his inner ironies. Hear Mingus' stark solo bass switch from snub, brash streetwalking to sadly keening arco wonderment on "A Dream Deferred."

Allen Ginsberg's *The Lion For Real* (Island/Great Jones CCD 6004; 53:58: ★★★★★) pairs the elfin, bell-clear tones of the witty, kooky Mad Prince of the Beat Poets in droll settings. Producer Hal Willner tops himself in departing from his successful formula of having wildly diverse and imaginative combos set tunes of Thelonious Monk, Kurt Weill, or Nino Rota. Here the unifying force is Ginsberg's reedy, emphatic voice reading his poems to backup bands drawn from a pool of over a dozen musicians.

Ginsberg's early poems are really rhapsodic

a true sweat inspiring verse behind a stealthily incisive, stirring voice that's roughly a cross between Magic Sam's and Jimmy Johnson's. By dint of his powers, he elevates good songs (e.g., Otis Rush's "Keep Loving Me Baby") and pedestrian ones ("Alimony Blues," in particular) to the point where the entire program screams out for repeated plays. Let's just say *Dresses Too Short* provides the jolt of a bungy

jump off the 59th St. Bridge.

Moore's *Still Got The Blues* exists as decent blues-rock entertainment. The former Thin Lizzy member who gave the jazzy mid-'70s Jeff Beck a run for his money with Jon Hiseman's Colosseum II showboats his imposing technique here as an end in itself, and his butter-knife vocals never cut to the heart of a song. But when the guitarist mollifies his heavy-metal

and metrical; later on he lost the lyric gift, went soft and self-indulgent. But no matter: decadence breeds luscious overripeness. Witness Steve Swallow's louche disco backdrops to raw homosexual fantasy and Buddhist bombings. The match of the Willner-Ginsberg wild-eyed eclecticism is both sweet and focused. While veiled homages to poets present and past whizz by—Wyatt, Yeats, Corso, Donne, Whitman, Kerouac—microcosmic worlds spring forth from the tiny army of arranger/performers.



Allen Ginsberg: wild-eyed eclecticism

So when Ginsberg's elfin rantings wear thin, there's always the outrageous music, "musical chairs" small groupings drawn from a pool of New York avant gardistes. Best bits are Bill Frisell's Nino-Rotaesque singsong of childhood love, hearing his guitar gently rust; Gary Windo's strident, ghostly lion; Michael Blair's danse macabre as a xylophone skeleton; Lenny Pickett's galumphing multi-dubbed calliope under metaphysical musings. The rich palette and heady verse make the mind whirr in this madcap classic.

Mark Murphy's *Kerouac, Then And Now* (Muse MCD 5359; 47:12: ★★★★★½) plays fast and loose with the easy, beat (read: bop) spirit that Kerouac personified in beat San Francisco, that western limit of America where both emigrated as young men. There's less pure poetry in this set than capturing of the flavors of the Bay Area, as Murphy's eclectic enthusiasms and juxtaposed medleys (hey, Jack!) allow him to handle with ease readings of Kerouac's mad car ride (shades of *Bullitt* from Big Sur) and comedian Lord Buckley's hip rap taking off Mark Antony's eulogy from *Julius Caesar*. Like Kerouac's work, Murphy's is restless, brilliant, irreverent, fun; Murphy teeters on high-wire phrases like Kerouac does on a

conceit. Finally, the ballads have it: Strayhorn's heart-wrenching "Blood Count," tributes to Eddie Jefferson, a breathtaking medley of "Night We Called It A Day" and "There's No You." Murphy, as usual, spins a well-thought-out kaleidoscope with limited resources—just the very flexible trio of that very tasty pianist, Bill Mays, who doubles in many roles on synthesizers. I wonder how he might have "knocked our lobes" with a Hal Willner budget? Yea, Murphy is "a worthy stud, a hipper cat has never blown, he always levels with us."

Jack Kerouac—orphan of the '50s, devotee of bebop and graduate of hard knocks—speaks for himself and a searching young America on *The Jack Kerouac Collection* (Rhino "Wordbeat" R-70939; 3CDs and 32-page book; 133:00: ★★★★★). In this complete set of his commercial recordings (1958-'59), Kerouac tumbles down the walls between perceptions of The Three Groovers (Bird, Monk, Diz) and The Three Stooges (Moe, Larry, Curly), reported by him, as ever, from intimate observation. The handsome, kooky Canuck from Lowell, Mass. lived truly and deeply each individual, incandescent moment of his existence. America's youth today and all those seeking self-discovery would do well to read *On The Road*—out loud. And then go live it.

Like a fine jazz soloist, Kerouac sounds his best in open declamation, flat-out, uptempo. He writes by ear and reads himself best, with gusto for rough and ready analogy, hyperbole, onomatopoeia. He was cool and crazy, like Pres. He voices neither pity nor complaint, sings what he sees and feels with unbridled joy of expression, airs his impassioned yet dispassionate, awkward yet poignant, views on any and all issues. Forward momentum is half his fun. Cadences syncopate. He grooves on jazz apocrypha, rewrites history, telescopes it—zunga, munga, bang! His peers (Burroughs, Ginsberg, Steve Allen, and pundits) dote on his memory as saint, martyr, and damn good writer.

In this big Rhino box, lovingly assembled upon the 20th anniversary of his death (10/21/69), Jack runs riot. For those too busy to go for it, Jack zips you in a beat-up Caddy limo coast to coast, gets you to understand "Salt Peanuts," riffs, squalls, jives, goes wild with words. He trades haikus with Zoot, head to head, ruminates baldly as Al Cohn "elicits gloom and doom from the black piano" with spare 2-5 blues, yawps lonesome into the yawning maw of chaos his two cents' worth, clowns and guffaws while producer Bob Thiele harrumphs, lectures tongue-in-cheek to wanna-be-hip collegiates, and, like Dylan Thomas (a more resonant and less kinetic fellow orator), does not go sober into that good night. (all reviewed on CD) **DB**

bluster, takes it slow and easy on the self-penned "Midnight Blues" and a version of "Go Passing By," Moore's high regard for the blues becomes palpable. The album further pleases for Albert King's scooping phrases on his own "Oh Pretty Woman" and for the frosty sting second-guest guitarist/maestro Albert Collins gives "Too Tired," a Johnny "Guitar" Watson tune. (reviewed on CD) —*Frank-John Hadley*



DAVE WECKL

MASTER PLAY—GRP GRD-9619: *TOWER OF INSPIRATION; HERE AND THERE; FESTIVAL DE RITMO; IN COMMON; GARDEN WALL; AURATUNE; SOFTLY, AS IN A MORNING SUNRISE; MASTER PLAN; ISLAND MAGIC.* (48:25 minutes)

Personnel: Weckl, drums; Anthony Jackson, bass (cuts 2-5, 8, 9); Jay Oliver, keyboards (all except cut 7); Eric Marienthal, soprano and alto saxes (2, 3); Jerry Hey, trumpet (1-3); Peter Mayer, guitar (2, 4, 6); Michael Brecker, tenor sax (5); Chick Corea, piano (8) and synthesizer (5, 9); Bill Reichenbach, trombone (1, 3); Tom Kennedy, bass (1, 7); Scott Alspach, trumpet (6); Roy Kennedy, piano (7); Steve Gadd, drums (8).

★ ★ ★

Somewhere along the way, Dave Weckl must've had a click track surgically implanted in his brain. The cat is so precise it's frightening, so technically proficient it's numbing. He is a living, breathing, quantized machine. He is Robo-Drummer.

There's a contingent of folks who like this approach to the drums. Many of them live in California. A large segment of them are young chops-obsessed, aspiring drummers . . . the same kind who worshipped Billy Cobham and Steve Gadd in the '70s. Suffice it to say that nearly all of them would unhesitatingly give this album five stars on the strength of Weckl's drum battle with Gadd alone ("Master Plan"). The rest of us will tend to look beyond the obvious chops and ask ourselves the fundamental question: Does this stuff move me? And although I admire Weckl's achievement,

my bottom line would have to be . . . no.

"Tower Of Inspiration," Weckl's homage to the funky Tower Of Power band, is merely textbook funky. That is, he's playing funk style, but it ain't funky. It don't feel funky. It sounds rushed, academic, and detached. No sense of real, true interplay here. Never mind that the tune is a patchwork quilt of clichés (fragments ripped off from Michael Jackson's "Shake Your Body Down To The Ground" and Herbie Hancock's "Hang Up Your Hang Ups"). Besides that, the players have no personality. Hence, it leaves me cold, as does much of the material.

Again, you simply can't deny the pervasive chops, particularly on "Festival de Ritmo," "Island Magic," and every young drummer's wet dream, "Master Plan." But after being bombarded by all this flawless technique for 48:25 minutes, I had an uncontrollable urge to hear something sloppy.

Weckl does loosen up a bit on a straight-ahead trio rendition of "Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise," performed with his old St. Louis mates, Tom and Ray Kennedy. But even that is rushed. The more spacious "Auratune" shows the most potential for real music-making. On that tune, Weckl finds a pocket and relaxes. The rest of the time it's chops up the ying-yang. I guess when he was younger, Weckl must've heard the rallying cry, "Give the drummer some!" I would suggest just the opposite. (reviewed on CD) —*Bill Milkowski*

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CRAFT & THE LAB BAND

by John McDonough

The college lab band answers to the academy, not the marketplace. It is the hothouse flower of every school's jazz program and takes its cues from the rehearsal bands, which may be why lab bands sound so maddeningly perfect and alike—like "glistening limousines of sound," as

Whitney Balliett once summed up Stan Kenton. But if their mission is to perfect craft, they do it well. And some of the music is more than an obstacle course of exercises. It's enjoyable.

The **U. of Northern Colorado Lab Band 1** has produced a pair of CDs with similar personnel, *Alive VIII* (Night Life NLR 3005; 40:07 minutes: ★★★★★) and *Alive 1989!* (Sea Breeze SB-2040; 58:10: ★★★★★). Both are concert performances in which the music is invariably louder than the reaction to it. But they're of a fairly high order. Michael Cox on tenor saxophone and Dav (sic) Hoof on alto

get the majority of the solo space. On *Alive VIII*, "Bang That Wall" is a fast blues that gives Hoof a good piece of writing in which to wail with grace and bravado. Fox's best work is alongside trombonist David Glenn on "Revenge Of The Cow." The other CD, *Alive 1989!*, has some swashbuckling trombone by Brad Schmidt and the ever-present Hoof, who is superb on "Shuffle Scuffle," and Cox, who howls at the moon until dawn on "Upside Downside."

Two UNC charts, "In The Tradition" and "On The Edge," are borrowed from the **One O'Clock Lab Band** of the **U. of North Texas**. Both are heard on its current CD, *Lab 88* (North Texas Jazz LA8801-NS; 47:50: ★★★★★). Here are eight musical statuettes, as perfectly crafted and polished as they are immobile on their pedestals. It's impossible not to admire the staccato precision and blood-stopping brass of these numbers. But they are objects of appreciation, not love. And none more so than the slow pieces such as "Fortune," which are played with a solemnity the music doesn't really support. Even the best of the writing, "Meet Mr. Cooper And Sons," sounds nervous and tense. Relax, one wants to say. Loosen up, it's only jazz.

The same could be said for the crackerjack **New Zealand Youth Jazz Orchestra** on *The Land Of The Long White Cloud* (Sea Breeze SB-3006; 56:05: ★★). The leader is Matt Catingub, a 29-year-old prodigy who once recorded a big band LP in which he played and overdubbed *all* the parts. He wears so many hats here—arranger or composer on seven tracks; soloist on various instruments on six—the band becomes almost a backdrop. Although there are some flashes of interest, the attempt to cover so much leaves the album, ironically, without a voice at its center.

The **U. of Kentucky** gives a fine accounting of itself on *Live Into The '90s* (Mark Recording MCC-639: ★★★★★). Although the solo work will turn no heads, the band plays with a lightness, almost restraint, particularly on side one. The brass achieves power without piling on bulk and volume. The saxes are airy, sheer, and legato. Side two is more varied. "In The '80s" is a long, dense, rather pompous piece with serious intent. The highlight, though, is "Royal Tomatoes," a fragile a capella reed ensemble. (reviewed on cassette)

The **Fredonia Jazz Ensemble** has produced a first-rate date with *Upstate Upstarts* (Mark Recording MCC-582: ★★★★★½). It swings with confident professionalism through seven well-chosen pieces, including a fresh Don Menza gem. Kevin Peters' singing alto work is a plus. And "Shanty Town" is a brief, good-natured novelty that calls up Gladys George's floozy in the 1939 oldie *The Roaring Twenties*. (reviewed on cassette)

Maybe the reason college lab bands sound so slick these days is the early start they get. Consider *Blues And Beyond* by East St. Louis' **Lincoln High School Jazz Band** (Lincoln LHS-BB-89: ★★★★★). Although badly flawed by muffled sound, enough comes through to demonstrate a formidable discipline and spirit. They've listened closely to the Basie/Nestico formulas of "The Heat's On" and "The Blues Wind Machine." Russ Gunn's flugelhorn is a standout on "Stapes," and the closing slow blues is emotionally convincing. (reviewed on cassette)

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The **Los Angeles County High School for the Arts** recording, *Jazz II* (custom issue LACHSA-2: ★★), manages to use nearly 30 young players in a freewheeling program that ranges from a fine concept on "Sentimental Mood" to the open-ended and overly-long clamor of "Killer Joe," which cannot digest the diversity of voices it tries to swallow. In sum, good musicianship with too much rock in its head ("Baked Potato" is a positively dreadful listening experience) and not enough jazz. The inmates seem to be running the asylum here. (reviewed on cassette)

The youngest of the groups to catch our ear is the **Gemini Junior High School Jazz Band**—that's seventh grade, in case you've forgotten—recorded at *The 43rd Annual Mid-West International Band And Orchestra Clinic*, 1989 (Mark Recording MW89MCD-16; 33:01: ★★★★★). The playing is impressively mature

on a menu of modest tunes ("Li'l Darlin," "In The Pocket," "True Blue"). The emphasis is on swing first, precision second, although there's nothing sloppy about the band. If the reed ensembles could stand a bit more attitude, they're still a pleasure to hear.

Finally, we come to *The CalArts Jazz Ensemble* (CalArts/Capitol DPRO-79119; 69:21: ★★★★★). Though a virtuoso small unit of shifting personnel, it's a means to an end. For this is really a student-composition lab where the mandate is originality of form. The frontiers are wide, ranging from evocative, orchestrated poetry ("Four Glimpses Of Night") to a cross-current of mood and tempo shifts that arrives at an intriguing alto-tenor dialog ("Anticipation"). You don't necessarily have to like every surprise in order to enjoy the larger sensation of being surprised. (all reviewed on CD except where noted) **DB**

SONNY'S BRIGHTEST

by Kevin Whitehead

Are you mystified by the raves showered on the merely-okay recent albums by **Sonny Rollins**? Then return with me to the '50s and '60s, when the tenorist was at his glorious peak.

Some of the greatest, most concentrated Rollins is found on his bare-bones trio dates of 1957 and '8, including *Way Out West* (OJC) and *A Night At The Village Vanguard* (Blue Note). The last of that series, was *Freedom Suite* (OJC 067; 41:13 minutes: ★★★★★) with bassist Oscar Pettiford and the percussion orchestra known as Max Roach. Here, Sonny's got it all: amazing drive, a dramatic sense of pacing, his best brawny, limber timbre, and the ability to ingeniously rework a tune instead of just paraphrasing it or jamming on the changes ("Will You Still Be Mine?"). Not to mention the far-reaching, 19-minute title suite and a pair of slow and fast waltzes. Short as it is, this facsimile edition features an extra take of "Till There Was You."

Backtracking a bit, *Newk's Time* (Blue Note 84001; 34:32: ★★★★★) is a 9/57 quartet date with Wynton Kelly's well-fed chords, Philly Joe Jones' rich cymbalism, and the underestimated bassist Doug Watkins' insistent propulsion. Displaying his big Dexter-inspired tone, Rollins swims effortlessly through brisk tempos; on medium romps ("Asiatic Raes"), he whips off staccato phrases like stones fired from a slingshot. Rollins also shows off two sporting tendencies for which he's rightly esteemed: playing unlikely selections with sly, dry humor ("Surrey With The Fringe On Top"); sneaking in outlandish quotes (like "March Of The Siamese Children" at the end of "Tune Up").

All The Things You Are (1963-1964) (RCA/Bluebird 2179; 66:52: ★★★★★) contains the complete album *Sonny Meets Hawk*, supplemented with three tracks each from *Now's The Time*—Herbie Hancock's on



JAN PERSSON

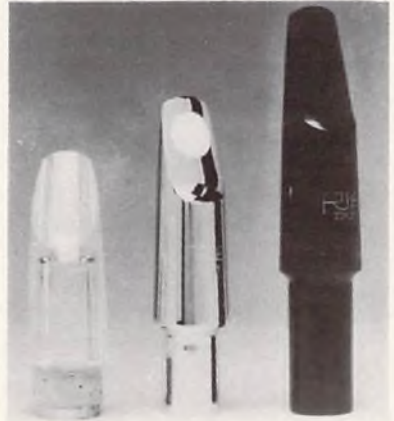
piano—and *The Standard Sonny Rollins*. (Three other tracks from the latter are on an '86 *Rollins Bluebird*, RCA 5634; presumably the remainder of these albums will turn up in time.) The twin-tenors session with Coleman Hawkins is a wondrous oddity. According to one participant, Rollins was out to knock the unflappable Hawk off balance, which might explain Sonny's playfully garish honks and squeals. True or not, the master responded with some young—and sometimes very Sonny—ideas of his own. This is one meeting that's more than the sum of its parts. As a bonus, you can examine the similarities between the lean piano styles of Paul Bley (on the Hawk date) and the young Herbie.

A sequel of sorts to the great trio dates is 5/66's *East Broadway Run Down* (MCA/Impulse 33120; 38:37: ★★★★★½). For half of it, Freddie Hubbard's added to the core trio. The great Jimmy Garrison-Elvin Jones rhythm team gives the music a character very different from the myriad Coltrane sessions they buoyed. The quartet's long title track features some terrific bass walking by Jimmy; the raggedy interplay with Freddie gives "Run Down" a healthy messiness today's jazz could use more of (Sonny's included). Like Monk, Rollins knows harsh sounds can be beautiful. But on Rodgers and Hammerstein's little-known "We Kiss In A Shadow," Sonny repeatedly caresses the melody, understandably in love with its contours. *EBRD* may be the last great Rollins album—unless his next one's as good as Son-struck scribes will claim. (all reviewed on CD) **DB**

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ANITA BAKER

COMPOSITIONS—Elektra 9 60922: *Talk To Me; Perfect Love Affair; Whatever It Takes; Soul Inspiration; Lonely; No One To Blame; More Than You Know; Love You To The Letter; Fairy Tales.* (50:38 minutes)

Personnel: Baker, vocals; Ricky Lawson, drums (cuts 1, 4, 5, 7); Stephen Ferrone, drums (2, 3, 6-9); Nathan East, bass; Greg Phillinganes, piano; Vernon Fails, keyboards; Michael J. Powell, guitar; Paulinho da Costa, percussion; Earl Klugh, guitar (7); Perri, background vocals (2, 4, 7).

★ ★ ½

Baker is the smoothest, slickest, and most successful soul diva in the contemporary urban music market these days. Her songs are steeped in romance, her broad-ranged voice tenderly wraps around the steamy lyrics about

love affairs/love miracles/love afflictions, and her band successfully softens any edge that may intrude on the sultry tranquility. Which is all to say that there's not a whole lot new going on in this album, Baker's second offering since her immensely popular and deliciously enrapturing breakthrough album, *Rapture*.

Baker's voice soars as she longs, pleads, convinces, but she's using the same flight patterns on most of these songs. Her pining begins to sound like an annoying whine and the songs—for all their romantic intentions—seem bereft of genuine emotion. There's a lyrical monotony to the pieces (the theme of love in only a few pastel shades) and a tiring redundancy of the word "baby," which is sung at least once on every song and dozens of times on some numbers. Plus, the single "Talk To Me" sounds like a retread of earlier Baker hits.

Baker saves the album from being a total rerun with three noteworthy pieces: the soulful "Lonely" (with its petit skip and swing and impressive piano work by Greg Phillinganes), the jazzy "Love You To The Letter" (exquisite vocal ad libs by Baker, cool brush work on drums by Stephen Ferrone, and more fine piano tinklings by Phillinganes), and the most emotionally-revealing and lyrically-developed number, "Fairy Tales" (where Baker unleashes her band to have some fun in the ending). Here's hoping for more risks like these and less safe tunes on her next outing. (reviewed on CD)
—Dan Ouellette



**JIMMY LYONS/
ANDREW CYRILLE**

SOMETHING IN RETURN—Black Saint 120 125-1: *Take The "A" Train; Something In Return; Sorry; J.L.; Nuba; Fragments I.*

Personnel: Lyons, alto sax; Cyrille, percussion.

★★★★★

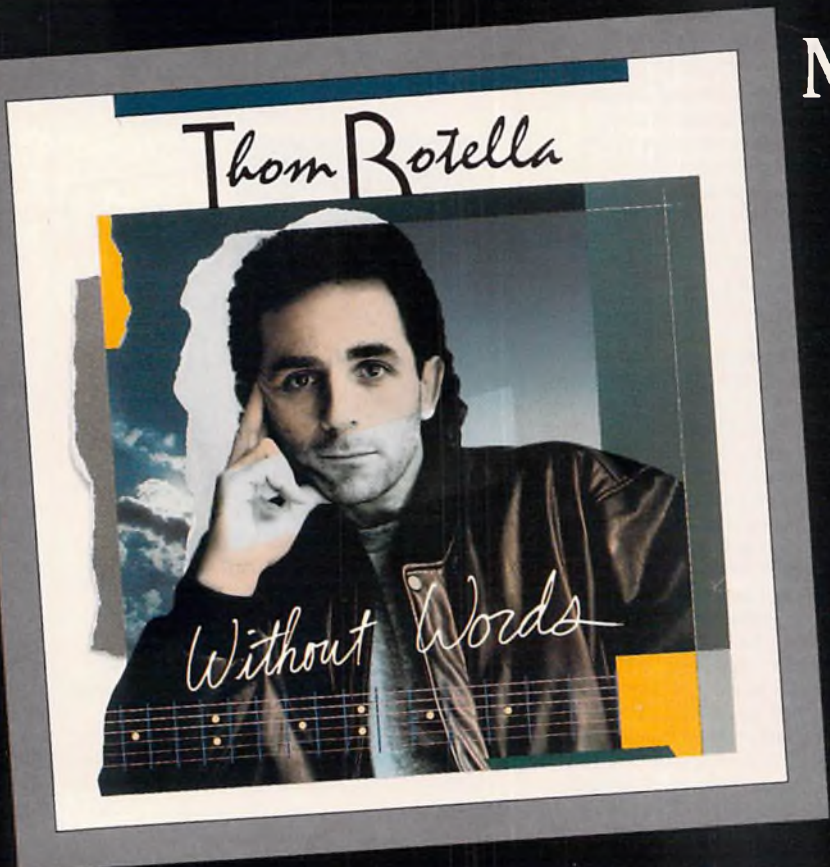
**IRENE SCHWEIZER/
ANDREW CYRILLE**

IRENE SCHWEIZER/ANDREW CYRILLE—Intakt 008: *Smashing Napf; Soft Inside; From Staefa To Willisau Via Music; As Time Goes By; Fiction Of The 13th Kind; A Monkish Encore.*

Personnel: Schweizer, piano; Cyrille, percussion.

★★★★★

Something In Return and Irene Schweizer!



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Andrew Cyrille confirm what should be universally known by now—Andrew Cyrille is a master percussionist, a veritable one-person orchestra. *Something In Return* is a valuable addition to the discography of both Cyrille and the late, truly great Jimmy Lyons. Cyrille's vibrant encounter with Swiss pianist Irene Schweizer is a fine introduction, for those who still need it, to this important exponent of European free music.

Something In Return documents a 1981 concert, and an essence of the American avant garde 10 years ago. It captures the vitality of a new decade—the decade, it was hoped, that new music would finally get over—as represented by adventurous venues such as Soundscape (the recording site), and the vitality with which Lyons and Cyrille explore new expanses and swing the shit out of "Take The 'A' Train." Lyons soars throughout: just when you think he's reached the apex of a solo, he consistently takes it up another notch. Cyrille opts for a dovetailing, conversational approach, always simmering, but rarely boiling over. The empathy between these two artists was always obvious in Cecil Taylor's Unit and their trio with Jeanne Lee, but *Something In Return* isolates it gloriously.

Irene Schweizer is a beneficiary of Cecil Taylor's liberation of the piano: certainly, whole hunks of Taylor's earlier, bouyant intricacies, circa *Looking Ahead*, and his latter-day volcanic masses of sound crop up in Schweizer's work. But it is the infusion of a Central European

lyricism, and the impish spin on clichés like the chromatic, two-beat vamp of "As Time Goes By," and the rhapsodic chords that open "Fiction Of The 13th Kind," that sets Schweizer apart from the Taylor clones. She elicits consistently strong performances from Cyrille, especially on marathon melt-downs like "Fiction," where even the low-volume, call-and-response section, featuring Cyrille's rim effects, has a bristling intensity. Still, Schweizer has many facets, including the smouldering romantic revealed on the intro of "A Monkish Encore," all of which are well-forwarded on this recording. (reviewed on LP) —Bill Shoemaker



KENNY WHEELER

THE WIDOW IN THE WINDOW—ECM 843

198: ASPIRE; MA BELLE HELENE; THE WIDOW IN THE WINDOW; ANA; HOTEL LE HOT; NOW, AND NOW AGAIN. (61:17 minutes)

Personnel: Wheeler, trumpet, flugelhorn; John Abercrombie, electric guitar; John Taylor, piano; Dave Holland, bass; Peter Erskine, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

DOUBLE, DOUBLE YOU—ECM 815 675: FOXY TROT; MA BEL; W.W.; THREE FOR D'REEN—BLUE FOR LOU—MARK TIME. (49:21)

Personnel: Wheeler, trumpet, flugelhorn; Michael Brecker, tenor sax; John Taylor, piano; Dave Holland, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

Quiet as its kept, Kenny Wheeler's one of the best jazz trumpeters (and flugelhornists) around. He has a gorgeously pealing tone, and plays sinuously sculpted lines quite unlike anyone else's. (Like Roy Eldridge, he draws inspirations from saxophonists' mobile, leaping lines and behind-the-beat phrasing.) He likes to dart out of his fat, middle register, to touch majestic high notes which may be dissonant on paper but always sound lyrically right.

One reason he's not better known is that he does some of his best work for other leaders, like Dave Holland (as on the superb *The Razor's Edge*, ECM). Wheeler's own records as leader are a mixed bag. *Widow In The Window*, his latest, succumbs to the old ECM

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stereotype—creative tension is restrained beneath a placid surface. According to Steve Lake's notes, this quintet had just come off the road, where the music got pretty hot; regretably, they toned it down in the studio. There are some very pretty tunes, notably "Aspire," which leaps about without losing its poise, the way Kenny's solos do. But the band never quite ignites.

Better and more varied is the '83 recording *Double, Double You*, recently reissued on CD. A rather different quintet plays more of his

leisurely, lyrical pieces (like "W.W."), but also some designed to exploit Michael Brecker's hard-edged drive. Brecker fans take note: his long solo in the middle of the 23-minute medley

is one of his smokingest outings on record. And Dave Holland gets to dance around a couple of irresistibly shapely bass riffs on "Foxy Trot."

PARELLEL REALITIES

by Jack Sohmer

I t must have been a long row to hoe for blues fans, these years of waiting around for Mosaic to begin reissuing their kind of music. But their patience has finally paid off generously in the form of a six-CD, album-sized boxed set entitled *The Complete T-Bone Walker Recordings, 1940-1954* (Mosaic MD6-130; 6 hours, 46 minutes: ★★★★★). The enclosed booklet, which is identical to the one accompanying the nine-LP set (Mosaic MR9-130), opens with an informative biographical essay by Helen Oakley Dance, author of the definitive *Stormy Monday: The T-Bone Walker Story* (Da Capo Press), and concludes with a discography of all of the material included in this 144-track package.

Born in Dallas in 1910, only six years before Charlie Christian, **T-Bone Walker** learned the blues firsthand from such legendary prototypes as Blind Lemon Jefferson and Leadbelly. Attracted early to the world of professional performance, he might have gone on to become a career song & dance man on the chitlin circuit had it not been for the opportunity he had in 1935 to jam with Christian in Oklahoma City and study with the young jazzman's teacher, Chuck Richardson. So it is not a matter of coincidence at all that there are so many points of commonality to be found in the playing of the two men. And just as Christian's crisp, swinging style of single-line articulation and riff-based blues phrasing contributed something new to the world of jazz, so did Walker's horn-like jazz conception exert its own influence on the parallel world of the blues.

Of course, even before that, T-Bone had learned a lot from the work of Lonnie Johnson, whose unamplified, incisive attack and bristling ideas were widely heard in the '20s on records by Louis Armstrong, the Chocolate Dandies, and Duke Ellington, as well as the many recorded under his own name. Johnson's smooth timbre and sophisticated enunciation would also appear to have influenced T-Bone's singing style, as did that of Leroy Carr, the foremost urban blues singer of the late '20s and '30s. Certainly, by the end of that decade, T-Bone's approach to both the guitar and his singing and composing had already moved far beyond the country blues he had been exposed to in his childhood, and had come to embody all of the elements soon to characterize modern, postwar city blues.

His preferred background was also redolent of the changing times, for his combos invariably featured a trumpet player capable of soloing convincingly in



T-Bone Walker: fresh, inspired, eclectic

the Cootie Williams plunger-muted style and a tenorman with a strong Southwestern penchant for deep-toned, blues-drenched moaning and stomping. These qualities are immediately apparent in the playing of trumpeters Red Kelly, Teddy Buckner, George Orendorff, Jack Trainor, and others, while the even more frequently showcased tenor solos are handled, with varying degrees of dedication to Ben Webster, Illinois Jacquet, and Ike Quebec, by noted swing-band veterans Jack McVea, Bumps Myers, Eddie Davis, Maxwell Davis, and Lee Allen.

It is clear that all of the necessary ingredients are here for what would soon be called rhythm & blues, but yet there is a distinct difference between the two genres. Where much of the latter quickly became seduced into a vortex of self-regenerating clichés, Walker's music was still fresh and inspired. His hornmen were real jazzmen who fully enjoyed working in a blues band that offered them so much solo space, and his rhythm sections, as populated by such versatile musicians as pianists Lloyd Glenn and Willard McDaniel, bassist Billy Hadnott, and drummer Oscar Lee Bradley, were all as at home with the blues as they were with jazz.

However, another indication that the times were changing can be seen in the fact that Walker did not record only blues; tellingly, he also performed ballads (with a blues inflection, to be sure), swing tunes, boogie-shuffle jumps, and even an occasional jive novelty à la Louis Jordan or Nat Cole. But the unmistakable road sign appears toward the end of Disc VI with such titles as "Pony Tail" and "Teen Age Baby"—a far cry indeed from "Mean Old World" and "Low Down Dirty Shame," two of the early classics that open this set.

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Could this be Wheeler's year? He has a large ensemble record due out around the time you read this; he, and a very different version of *Widow's "Ana,"* are on a new Alexander von Schlippenbach orchestra record (for ECM). A cynic might suggest the only thing this gifted trumpeter needs to make it big is a recent high-school diploma. Alas, he's a youthful 60. If you're tired of peachfuzz brass whizzes who sound a little unformed and unsure of a direction, check out a mature master with a distinctive voice of his own. (reviewed on CD)

—Kevin Whitehead



MACEO PARKER

ROOTS REVISITED—Minor Music 801015: *THEM THAT GOT; CHILDREN'S WORLD; BETTER GET HIT IN YO' SOUL; PEOPLE GET READY; UP AND DOWN EAST STREET; OVER THE RAINBOW; JUMPIN' THE BLUES; IN TIME.* (50:55 minutes)

Personnel: Parker, alto sax, piano, and organ (cut 8); Fred Wesley, trombone; Pee Wee Ellis, tenor sax; Vince Henry, alto sax (1); Don Pullen, organ (1-7); Rodney Jones, guitar; Bootsie Collins, bass, guitar (8); Bill Stuart, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

FOR ALL THE KING'S MEN—4th & B'way 444 027-1: *SAX MACHINE; LET 'EM OUT; TELL THE WORLD; LET 'EM OUT (FIRST CUT); SAX MACHINE (BONUS SAXED VERSION).*

Personnel: Parker, alto sax, organ, vocals; Fred Wesley, trombone; Bobby Byrd, vocals; Bootsie Collins, bass, guitar, synthesizer, drum programs, vocals; Joel "Razor Sharp" Johnson, synthesizer, vocals; Jeff Bova, Chong Spradley (3), synthesizer; Bernie Worrell, Synclavier (1, 5); Nicky Skopelitis, Fairlight; Sly Stone, piano, organ, synthesizer (3); Timothy "T-Bone" David, percussion (1, 5); Carolyn Stanford, *Armenita Walker*, Cynthia Girty (3), backing vocals.

★ ★ ★ ★

Lord knows—just ask James Brown—there's only one Maceo. He's no bebopper, reborn or otherwise. His roots are the church and the blues, David "Fathead" Newman and Hank Crawford, and the late Cannonball Adderley; his sound is a joyful, cutting ribbon of light and heat burnished by grit and soul. His riff-based attack is melodic, unraveling and reweaving themes rather than running chords, and primarily rhythmic, relying on finely-shaded nuances of timing and displacement to communicate—kinda like his longtime boss' vocals, amazingly enough.

With Mr. Brown imprisoned for fleeing cops with blazing guns across a state line, Maceo

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46



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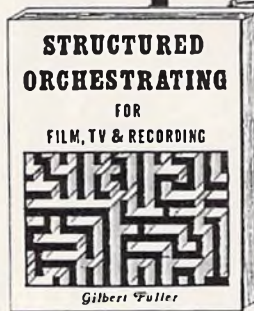
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THE BLUES AS REAL LIFE

by David Whiteis

Blues In The Mississippi Night (Rykodisc RCD 90155: ★★★★★) is a recording of a candid conversation, interspersed with spontaneous musical performances, among three blues artists—guitarist **Big Bill Broonzy**, pianist **Peter "Memphis Slim" Chatman**, and harmonica master **John Lee "Sonny Boy" Williamson**—recorded in New York by folklorist Alan Lomax in 1946. At the time, the three were living in Chicago. Lomax had booked them at Town Hall while they were in New York, in addition to bringing them into the Decca Records studios to cut these sides as part of his ongoing project to document life in the pre-civil rights South.

Aficionados have known about this recording for years; it was eventually released in the late '50s on United Artists. Despite the "folk" spontaneity, the artists were obviously cognizant of what was going on. Broonzy assumes the role of interviewer with articulate, quick-witted resourcefulness; Memphis Slim, relaxed

and jovial with an underlying sense of weariness that became more pronounced as the memories became more painful, provides a sparkling onrush of cascading piano patterns.

The three play and sing traditional field hollers and work songs interspersed with well-known blues. Williamson, after telling the true story behind "Good Morning Little Schoolgirl," sings a version of lyrics best known as "My Black Name Blues" which, he says, he made up while laboring in a work gang down South. His lithe, warbling harp is featured prominently throughout. Memphis Slim weighs in with a remarkable version of "Stagolee," while Broonzy confines himself primarily to speaking eloquently and then comping behind the others, although he does sing heartfelt snippets of traditional music here and there. (I hear a bass on some of these numbers, although it's not credited; the sound seems too rich and deep to be the bass strings of Broonzy's guitar.)

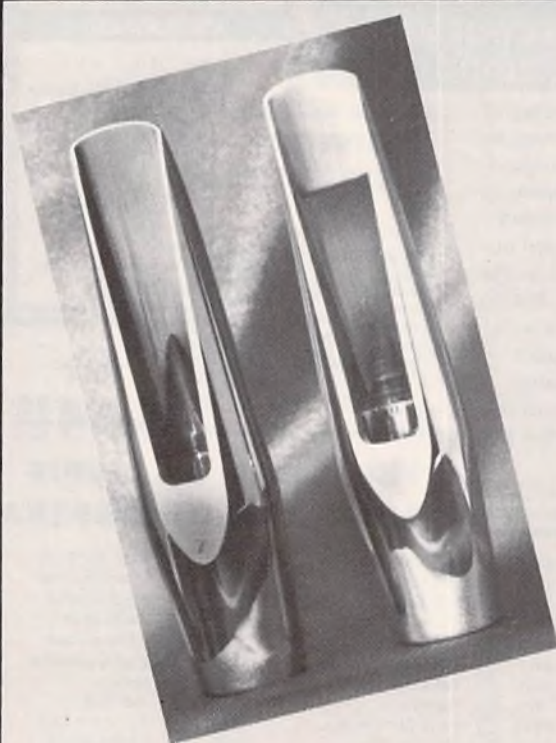
But the real story here is the talk: it progresses from wistful reminiscences about childhood romance to wrenching honesty about Southern life. Ideas are passed around, developed, and shared like riffs. Some of the stories told and the images evoked retain their horrific

unbelievability over 40 years later; one can understand the artists' insistence in '46 that their identities be kept confidential to protect their families.

Yet the resilience and humor of the blues shine through even the bleakest moments: folk tales are laced with irony, curses are directed at mules who serve as proxies for the untouchable white boss. Perhaps most significantly, the warm fellowship that permeates the session expresses the dignity of both the musical tradition and its proponents.

Some will quibble with the written transcriptions, especially a few phonetic spellings; the assistance of someone well-versed in Southern dialect would have been helpful. Also, Lomax has inserted items from his collection of Southern Black folk music to illustrate points raised by the bluesmen. Included is a booklet with an introduction by Lomax, bios on all three bluesmen, footnotes, and the aforementioned transcriptions of their conversations. The music (especially "Another Man Done Gone") is fine, but it interrupts the flow of conversation, and these three need no one to expand upon their eloquence. This is the blues as real life, as it was in 1946, and still is. (reviewed on cassette) **DB**

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KILLER TOMATOES, PART 2

by Gene Santoro

The best-known fruits of the Tomato catalog may be the blues (see "Reviews" Sept. '90), but from its beginnings the label was broadly eclectic. The dizzying cross-section of musical possibilities makes the selections below seem arbitrary. Sometimes they're included because they're better recordings, sometimes simply to suggest the wealth of material lurking beyond the reach of any cursory survey. Take a bite wherever it appeals, and enjoy.

Harry Partch was a gloriously American, self-invented eccentric who detonated the conventions of European-derived classical styles to create something new in the New World. Like Ives, Copland, and Henry Cowell, Partch was self-consciously forging what he heard as a uniquely American voice. Deeply attracted to Oriental and African music and literature, pre-Christian mysticism, and American folklore, Partch was also drawn to the physicality of what he considered "natural" sounds. So he rejected the well-tempered tuning system, and devised a 43-note scale and such odd, sculptural instruments like the chromelodeon and marimba eroica to play it.

A two-CD set, Partch's *Revelation In The Courthouse Park* (2696552; 84:45: ★★★★★) is actually a new release (recorded live in 1987) that reaffirms Tomato's commitment to quality recordings of all kinds. An adaptation of the ancient Greek tragedian Euripides' *The Bacchae*, which deals with tensions between religious fanaticism and rationalism, *Revelation* translates that dialectic to contemporary America. (It's a jump that's easier to imagine now than in 1949.) Transforming the Greek choruses into revival meetings, for instance, Partch opens resonant connections between past and present. At the same time, his approach to the Greek text is far from worshipful: he shortens and excises, interpolates previously non-existent passages and characters. As the Partch instruments keen, wail, shimmer, and thud below, the whole ingenious structure redefines every aspect within it.

John Cage studied with Schoenberg and Cowell, Partch's great West Coast contemporary; there he began his lifelong infatuation with foregrounded percussion and altered sonic effects. Written between 1939 and 1950, *Three Constructions* (2696172; 35:03: ★★★★★) could've been penned by a post-1960s minimalist or noisemonger—which isn't surprising, considering Cage is a godfather of both movements. Jay Clayton's eerie, dry voice unwinds for two pieces over the chattering Donald Knaack Percussion Ensemble. *Four Walls* (2696594; 59:01: ★★★★★) is what many would think of as more characteristic Cage: it's about silences as much as sounds, revolves mostly around piano with some vocals by Clayton, and was composed, like much of Cage's work, for dancer Merce Cunningham, with whom Cage collaborated since the late '30s. If the pointillism of some "scenes," clearly echoes Eastern influences, the rolling piano chords of others equally clearly demonstrate Cage's determination, like Cowell's and

Partch's, to create a new American synthesis out of European stylings.

Collaboration (2696382; 43:28: ★★★★★) marks a modern jumping-off point for the political protest song. It's a meeting of two prominent left-wing artists, **Hanns Eisler** and **Bertolt Brecht**. The German Eisler, like the American Cage, studied with Schoenberg; also like Cage, Eisler appreciated how Schoenberg's music reflected its time without wanting to duplicate his teacher. So he wrote song-forms—for political rallies, for cabarets—that piercingly, mordantly underlined the ironies of his lyricist's pointedly witty texts, covering topics like sexism, abortion, and war. In 1948, Eisler, like Brecht, a Communist, was deported from the U.S., a decade after he'd fled Hitler's Germany, after being called before the infamous House Un-American Activities Committee.

Jon Hassell's *Earthquake Island* (2696122; 40:23: ★★½) is one of the better offerings from the trumpet-wielding world-fusioner's output. It's also one of those albums whose sources—Stockhausen, Indian and African and Brazilian music, Miles' *On The Corner*—outshine its own elaborations of them, despite extremely capable input from Hassell himself, percussionist Nana Vasconcelos, and bassist Miroslav Vitous.

Sam River's *Waves* (2696492; 44:08: ★★★★★) opens with his free-piano intro to a piece called "Shockwave," which reminds us that the saxman is a musician of many parts and widespread, if subterranean, influence. Challenging his formidable invention to find its peaks are bassist Dave Holland, Joe Daley (on tuba and baritone horn), and drummer Thurman Barker; their challenge succeeds. Recorded in 1978, *Waves* is a mini-glossary of the languages jazzers like Trane, whose influence bleeds across this album's wide-ranging sounds, had appropriated up to the loft-free period. It's also a jaw-dropping illustration of how carefully the best so-called free-jazzers listened to the feverish crosstalk on the bandstand, and how that fever sprang from and yielded compositional results.

Space Minds, New Worlds, Survival Of America (2696512; 38:49: ★★★★★) is one of the densest, most rewarding albums **Leroy Jenkins** has ever made. Like Rivers and other post-AACMers of the time, in 1978, Jenkins was busy appropriating the languages of Africa and Europe directly into his music. So deliberately bleary sonic effects and serial compositional methods cohabit these ambitious pieces with engaging ease, thanks to sidemen Anthony Davis, George Lewis, Richard Teitelbaum, and Andrew Cyrille.

Killer trombonist Lewis is—with Thad Jones, Stanley Cowell, Reggie Workman, Lenny White, Warren Smith, and Cecil Bridgewater—a key ingredient on **Heiner Stadler's** *A Tribute To Monk And Bird* (2696302; 78:30: ★★½). Instead of self-indulgence and nostalgia masquerading as "tributes," Stadler, to his credit, opts for a massive reimagining of the six tunes he picks, slicing and dicing themes, for example, across different instruments or parts of the arrangement, harmonizing solos for backdrops. Like the Rivers and Jenkins, this two-CD set, originally released as an "homage" in 1978, will make you rethink what's happened to musical languages since the AACM. These cuts will never sound the same. **DB**

HAT HUT RECORDS PRESENTS



TRIOS X 4

We can thank Sonny Rollins for the historical imperative of the pianoless (ie: sax/bass/drums) trio; he may not have invented the format, but he found advantages to its nooks and crannies, defined it, refined it, and came perilously close to perfecting it.

Those who chose to follow in Rollins' footsteps—especially including these four devoutly particular examples—have nevertheless discovered alternate paths. These often stress the trio's inherent deceptive nature—suggesting simplicity, while in actuality embracing further modes of complexity... or at least the potential for greater (elastic) interaction and frank harmonic freedoms. (Think of the vastly different attributes of pianoless Mulligan, Mingus, and acoustic Ornette groups, earlier and later, among others.)

Primarily, the *process* is emphasized, arrangements are intuited and literally caught-in-the-act, requiring a special structural shrewdness, a surefooted confidence, all-but-endless invention. Braxton's spontaneous determinism on *hat ART CD 6025*, Coe's oblique romanticism on *hat ART CD 6046*, Portal's dramatic narratives on *hat ART CD 6022*, Murray's expressionistic epics on *hat ART CD 6020*, are indivisible from the subplots ordained by the character of the trio itself, and, thus, their collaborators—which allows us the lovely experience of acknowledging the nuances of Oxley's fluidity with Coe compared to Braxton, Favre's color and sustenance, and Cyrille's mastery of tension and release, not to mention a reexamination of the bassist's role between Roidinger, Laurence, Francioli, and Dyani...

What's new? As in any art that is meaningful, referential, and visionary, none of it, and all of it.

— Art Lange
February 1990

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43

and his men have the chance to stand on their own, like they did during the early '70s in various configurations—Maceo and the Macks, Maceo and the Kingsmen, Fred Wesley and the JBs. So they played around Europe and New York all summer, pumping these discs to happy audiences and hoping to create their own niche after all their years of servitude to JB. Judging by crowd reaction, they succeeded (see "Caught" Sept. '90).

Taken together, these albums—at 30-odd minutes, *For All The King's Men* is actually a long EP—give you a pretty good picture of the

insides of Maceo's talented head. *Roots Revisited* is just what it says: an overview of the musical elements that fundamentally shape his world. So there's Ray Charles and Charles Mingus and Jay McShann and Sly Stone and, yep, Harold Arlen, all swirled together in an unaffected '60s style. Maceo skips and circles and leapfrogs around the tunes with gutsy delight, abetted by fine playing from the all-star cast. (reviewed on CD)

For All The King's Men is the pop side of the coin: all synthed up and ready to rap and dance. The kicker here is "Let 'Em Out," about you-know-who. "Let him out/So we can get

paid," runs one Maceo-rapped verse. Good Gawd, hnnnh! Yeah. (reviewed on LP)

—Gene Santoro

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Personnel: Mark Egan, bass; Danny Gottlieb, drums; Clifford Carter (cuts 1-3, 5, 10), Mitchel Forman (6, 7), keyboards; Manolo Badrena, Airta Moreira, Cafe, percussion; Bill Evans, soprano sax (2, 3, 6, 7); Stan Samole, Manzer guitar harp (5, 10); Jeff Mironov, guitar (2, 3); Flora Purim, vocals (5).

★ ★ ★

Elements began in 1981 as a means of expression for Gottlieb and Egan, who were then sidemen with the Pat Metheny Group. It's now a top priority for the bassman and drummer. *Spirit River* starts off innocently enough—Gottlieb's kick drum egging his bass foil on as Carter's assorted voices hover over, shouting, sighing. Egan's soulful lead work and Gottlieb's playful emergence over the sequenced drums give it a quick jumpstart. "Streets Of Rio" starts off sounding like a *Cosby Show* soundtrack, but Bill Evans digs deep to pull it up by its bootstraps.

Latin instruments and rhythms are once again a big part of Elements' sound. "Puerto Sagua" is a rich tapestry with Gottlieb relishing his place amidst the colorful percussion. Badrena and Moreira don't mesh too well during their brief solo interlude, but Stan Samole's harp guitar picks up the pieces and puts it all back together.

The ballad "Let's Pretend" has the heart of a lion. Gottlieb gets all over the cymbals, keeping the flow breathy and open for Egan's antics and Evans' gutty soprano. It may be Gottlieb's best playing on the album, although from the mix you'd never suspect the drummer was co-leader. Airta is given a wide forum here, maybe too much space—it's almost as if they solved their songwriting woes by just turning it over to the percussionist. Admittedly, his vocal and tamborine solo, "Calunga," is an amazing, almost magical piece of work.

"Carnivaloco," dedicated to Jaco Pastorius, is an inspired jam, played wild and crazy like JP would've liked it. If that spirit had haunted three or four other tracks we'd have a more exciting collection here. As it is, there's still a feeling that a lot of talent is laying in wait. (reviewed on CD)

—Robin Tolleson

1 COLEMAN HAWKINS ORCHESTRA. "Half Step

Down Please" (from *BEBOP REVOLUTION, Bluebird, 1947*) personnel as guessed, except Fats Navarro, trumpet.

It sounds like Hawk with Dizzy, but it's not as good as Dizzy. Hmm, J.J. [Johnson] licks, but more raucous than he. Are these the real guys or imitators? Sounds about five, six horns, Tadd [Dameron] might have been involved. If it's the main men, it's below their level of playing. I'd give that 3 stars, at best.

2 GEORGE RUSSELL. "So What" (from *So WHAT, Blue Note, 1983*) Mike Peipman, trumpet; Dave Mann, soprano saxophone.

I don't hear humanity coming out of what I've heard so far. I'd like to hear the horns a little more up-front than the rhythm in the balance. These [static] lines interest me less than lines based on moving tonalities. Rhythmically it feels good, but there's no variety of mood. Trumpet players using high registers for effect in solos distort the curve of their lines. The [drone] bass begins to wear on me, coming as I do out of my period in jazz. The horns sound more into today's lick playing than creative improvising. They don't need this much time to make their statement. To my taste, 2½.

3 DUKE ELLINGTON. "Tutti For Cootie" (from *THE GREAT PARIS CONCERT, Atlantic, 1963*) Cootie Williams, trumpet.

Lovely spirit, nice contrast. Sounds like Sam Woodyard, my favorite of Duke's drummers. That's Cootie—a voice talking to you. It comes from the heart; you use instincts, not head. There's so much space, the backgrounds don't get in the way. Hmm, sax section just glorious, five human beings, full and rich. "Social function" phrasing from the trumpets: dotted 8ths and 16ths. Sounds like Ray Nance now. Saxes behind the second solo don't warm my heart as before. Great, loose jazz feel. 4½.

4 FLETCHER HENDERSON. "Riffin'" (from *Hocus Pocus, Bluebird, 1936*) Roy Eldridge, trumpet.

Sounds like mid-'30s, when the horns were voiced thin, not fat. I grew up enjoying this music, but I don't get much from this except history. About a 3 for the period. I prefer the richness of the Ellington section with all the high reeds. It could be Lunceford. Hmm, might be Roy [Eldridge], but I don't hear those "green animals" I like to hear coming out of his horn.

HERB POMEROY

by Fred Bouchard

Music teachers come and go, but Herb Pomeroy has been the rock on which Larry Berk built Berklee College of Music in Boston, for these 35 years. An early student himself, Pomeroy hit the road with the Hampton and Kenton bands (1953-'54) before returning to academe in 1955. He was trumpeter/arranger for Varty Haroutunian's quintet and octet ('56-'60), and led his own 13- or 16-piece bands ('55-'63, '76-'90). Pomeroy also ran MIT's big band ('63-'85). Recent reissues have brought out some early solo work with Charlie Parker (1953, Blue Note/Storyville), John Lewis (1960, Atlantic), but not yet his first band's *Life Is A Many Splendored Gig, Band In Boston*, and *The Band & I* (with Irene Kral) ('58-'59, United Artists).

His newest 13-piece band recently recorded with producer Helen Keane. Though his legendary classes on Ellington Arranging and Line Writing have stiff prerequisites and are overbooked, Pomeroy modestly insists, "I'm a musician



first—trumpeter, arranger, band-leader—and I happen to teach."

Pomeroy was given no prior information about selections, and commented as they spun. In view of his 5-star preferences, my diet of big bands featuring trumpeters may have proved too heavy. About the BT, Pomeroy said: "Gee, I'm embarrassed! 35 years I stand in front of kids and tell 'em what to do, now I'm being shown!"

5 TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI. "American Ballad" (from *KOGUN, RCA, 1978*) Britt Woodman, trombone.

Introductions like this are not my cup of tea: they're too involved with sound. What did it mean in relation to the trombone statement? Sounds scotch-taped together. I don't like background, I like melody. I get a little bit of Bill Harris there—that's nice! Could also be Carl Fontana, my roommate [in Hampton's band, 1954]. I miss the inner parts on the recording. Nice woodwind playing, but it sounds like part two, [also] unrelated to the trombone. Except for the beginning and the end, I like it, so 3½.

6 BILL POTTS. "Summertime" (from *JAZZ SOUL OF PORGY & BESS, United Artists, 1959*) Harry Edison, trumpet; Al Cohn, Zoot Sims, tenor saxophones; Charli Persip, drums.

All my comments are negative here. Excitement is obvious excitement; they're rushing the time—very "white." Background and solos too loud. I can't stand arrangers writing melody behind soloists. The music never breathes: it's played and heard by human beings who breathe. Leave spaces between phrases for players to develop and listeners to digest. Drum recording had

nothing to do with reality. This is a zilch.

7 COUNT BASIE. "Volcano" (from *THE COUNT, Encore, 1939*) Buck Clayton, trumpet, composer.

Sax section warm, hairy, buzzy: people groaning about something nice, or bad. Could that be Buck, Sweets [Edison]? Trumpet solo relates nicely to the character of the music. As simple as this is structurally, it's musical and alive. Even though it's old, they've done a good job of balancing the music. Nice contrast of all the elements: trumpet punctuations, low saxes, piano tinkle. It has a Basie flavor. For what they set out to do, 4.

FB: What would you have given five stars?
HP: Billie Holiday, Bill Evans/Jim Hall duos, Bill's trio, Miles Davis' *Birth Of The Cool* ("Israel") and his collaborations with Gil Evans, Gil with [Claude] Thornhill, I'd have reveled in "A Tone Parallel To Harlem" for the 1,000th time, Sonny Rollins' *Way Out West*, Charlie Christian, Teddy Wilson's "After You've Gone" with Benny Goodman. I tell my students: I really don't like big bands, they subordinate individualism too much. I like smaller bands, and want a sax section to be the sum of its individual voices. Like Duke's. DB