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Jazz, Blues & Beyond

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ROACH, BAKER, WECKL & MORE

*Ornette's
Prime Time*

Randy Weston

Hothouse Flowers



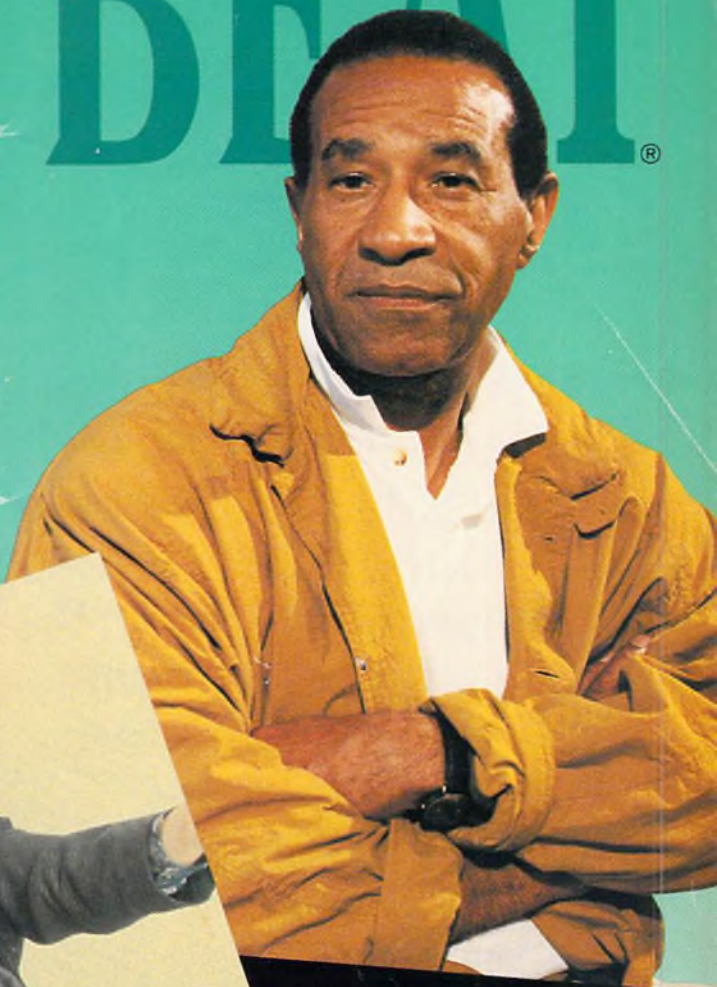
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IN BEAT

ORS

RE





Max Roach

MARC POKEMPNER



Randy Weston

TOM COPI



Jay Hoggard

MITCHELL SEIDEL



Hothouse Flowers

Features

16 MAX ROACH/GINGER BAKER/DAVE WECKL

Three drummers, three generations of drumming. Max, Ginger, and Dave—their approaches are so diverse, it's incredulous that they all play essentially the same instrument. **John Ephland, Josef Woodard, and Robin Tolleson** stare in disbelief.

22 RANDY WESTON: PAN-AFRICAL REVIVAL

Fresh on the heels of a very well-received CD trilogy, jazz pianist Randy Weston stands as a beacon to the current wave of world music artists, having preceded them by at least 25 years. **Fred Bouchard** relates.

24 RHYTHM Rx

They all come to the world (and we mean world) of percussion with exciting agendas. **DB** salutes five of today's best in our annual percussion roundup.

28 HOTHOUSE FLOWERS: MUSIC POLLINATORS

A new wave has been crossing the Atlantic. With a fresh mix of ethnic Irish rock, Hothouse Flowers' "Gaelic blues" are spreading, as **Brooke Comer** discovers.

30 PRIME TIME: PRIMEVAL UPDATE

Perennial winner in the **DB Critics Poll Electric Combo** category, *Prime Time* eliminates the distinction between soloist and accompanist. **Howard Mandel** learns how it's done.

Cover photographs by Marc Pokempner (Roach), Thi-Linh Le (Baker), and Ron Moss (Weckl).

Departments

6 **on the beat**, by John Ephland.

8 **chords & discords**

10 **news**

13 **riffs**

32 **record & cd reviews:** Branford Marsalis; Ed Thigpen; Texas Tornados; Keith Jarrett; Jazz Passengers; McCoy Tyner; Randy Weston: Weston Four Directions; Ron Carter: Magna Carter; Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters; Pepper Adams; Nick Brignola; Don Pullen: Push And Pull; Steve Coleman and Five Elements; Flying Down To Rio; Michael Brecker; DIX Improvisations, Victoriaville, 1989; Live At The Knitting Factory, Vol. 3; Tribute To Chet Baker; Bruce Cockburn; Anthony Braxton: Eddying Figures; Carl Stalling Project; John Coltrane: Trane Wrecks; Don Cherry.

56 **blindfold test:** Mike Mainieri, by Bill Milkowski.

57 **profile:** Carl Allen, by Bill Milkowski.

58 **caught:** Classical Jazz At Lincoln Center, by Kevin Whitehead; Umbria Jazz Festival, by Fred Bouchard; Eye & I and PBR Street Gang, by Bill Milkowski; Nice and Montreux Jazz Festivals, by Michael Bourne.

63 **pro shop**

64 **pro session:** "The Sax Doctor Returns To The Green Heart Of Italy," by Fred Bouchard.

66 **ad lib:** Radio Miles.

70 **auditions:** Young musicians deserving recognition.

DOWN BEAT

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By John Ephland

Max Roach stands at the crossroads. Could the late pianist Bill Evans have had him in mind when he said that those who see best into the future are those who see best into the past? A tricky place to be, the crossroads. Certainly not your usual turning-point kind of crossroads, because Max seems to be in a perpetual state of turning, taking various roads, always returning to the center, his center. I think Evans was, and Roach is, onto something.

Consider the following. Nowhere else in jazz (I use the term loosely) do you find a legend (I don't use the term loosely) recording duets with Dizzy Gillespie (another legend) one moment and Cecil Taylor and Anthony Braxton (legends already to some) the next. Of the celebrated 1940s/early '50s Charlie Parker groups, only Miles Davis has had a creative flourish similar in artistic magnitude to the drummer/composer/bandleader. More than Dizzy, John Lewis, Monk, Mingus, even Miles, it is Max Roach who truly sees in many directions from the crossroads, capable and willing to return as well as advance; to maintain his straightahead jazz Quartet (with Cecil Bridgewater, Odeon Pope, and Tyrone Brown) alongside such adventures as his Double Quartet (the Quartet plus the Uptown String Quartet, which includes his daughter, violist Maxine Roach), and percussion forays with the eight-drummer M'Boom (20 years strong) and the Japanese percussion group Kodo (see "Riffs" Mar. '90). He's composing the music for *The Life And Life Of Bumpy Johnson* (a world-premiere "bopera" collaboration with writer Amiri Baraka and the San Diego Repertory Theatre). In December, Max will be an artist-in-residence for the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, going to schools across the country promoting music education. Scheduled for early next year, he'll be collaborating with Fab 5 Freddie, the MTV rap-music host, in a program titled *From Bebop To Hip-hop*.

And then there are the awards. In addition to winning DB's Critics Poll for best drummer starting up again since 1980 to the present, there's the MacArthur Fellowship award (a first for jazz) and a Meet The Composer/Reader's Digest Commissioning Program Grant (both from 1988). Max is also a recipient of honorary doctorates from the New England Conservatory of Music and Wesleyan University in Connecticut. A professor in the Department



max roach MR.

of Music and Dance at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst since 1973, this past spring, Max-a-million performed commissioned works with the Penfield Music Project (see "News" July '90).

Literally a thumbnail sketch, but you get the picture.

Crossroads. Obviously, this guy ain't sittin' at the corner of 12th St. and Vine, twiddling his thumbs. Take his celebrated collaborations with Cecil Taylor (see "Caught" Mar. '90). Roach's embracing of musical conversations and new musical environments is key to understanding his ever-developing, ever-consistent drum style.

"I could play with a person like Bud Powell, which is totally different than playing with a person like Cecil Taylor. Or to play with Charlie Parker and then to work with Anthony Braxton. That's a radical change. I think that change is really stimulated by the musical environment one is in at the time; especially in this music."

But how does it come out in the wash, with Cecil, for example? "Well, you see, what he does is what people used to say about John Coltrane: it's like 'sheets of sound.' And with Cecil doing it, it's a little different. I get a different feeling from him. He just throws sound at you. It's all in your face constantly." The drummer gestures near his head. "And you have to equal that. He's one of the very few where you don't feel like it's, well . . . planned.

"I find, sometimes, if I use the short phrases against his torrents of sound, I get more going. I just create my own line. The contrasts. I always try to balance it out like that. You have to



Photo Enid Farber

MAXIMUM

listen, or else he backs you up against the wall. With Cecil, you have to fight for your life."

Sounds like someone to avoid, musically speaking. "Well, you know, the person I respond to is not someone who sounds like Bud Powell or Charlie Parker, but a person who sounds just the opposite, someone who brings something new, like they did, to the world of music. I enjoy playing with Anthony Braxton more than I would playing with someone who plays just like Charlie Parker."

A change in approach to drumming? "I've always had in my mind not to be a timekeeper as a percussionist. I felt that percussion had more to say than that. I felt percussion could stand on its own. That's why, in the '50s and '60s, I started doing those solo things, like *Conversations* [Milestone 47061] and *Drums Unlimited* [Atlantic 1467], with certain principles in mind—the architecture and structure, the form. A poet is not melodic and harmonic. However, poetry's a thing of beauty and has a rhythm to it. And so, I approached my drum solos with spaces and periods and question marks." The change is there, if only implied.

But there's more: his solos have always had an ability to *sing*. As Max stated to Kevin Whitehead in these pages back in '85, "I don't go for specific pitches on the drum kit. Many times, the high and low sounds of the drum set—sounds of indeterminate pitch—fold themselves into a seemingly melodic pattern. When I play solos on the drum set, I look for design, structure, and architecture; perhaps that's what produces the illusion that it's melodic." Note the reference to drums as *musical* instruments.

Apart from the business and art of drums and drumming, Max holds intriguing, refreshing views on the musics that directly affect him and his world. A few examples:

Given his lifelong interest in the political aspects of music, it isn't surprising that, for Max Roach, "Negro spirituals are the heaviest protest music I have ever heard."

What then of the blues? "The blues came out of people who were artistically inclined."

As for the musical importance of rap and rappers, "I don't separate them from Louis Armstrong or Charlie Parker."

Leave it to Mr. Maximum to draw the connections, to see the underlying unity within African America's musical traditions.

Unlike certain crossroads, the perspective Max Roach enjoys involves many choices, not just one. It's the past and the future seen clearly from today's perspective. For Max Roach, to be a drummer can, and does, mean many, many things. **DB**

MAX ROACH'S EQUIPMENT

Max still swears by Ludwig. Included is a 5½-inch metal snare, and 9 × 13 and 8 × 12-inch aerial toms mounted on a 22 × 14-inch bass drum. His floor tom toms are two 16 × 16-inches, one of which is a pedal tom.

For cymbals, Max continues to use A. Zildjians: a 13-inch over 14-inch hi-hat, an 18-inch ride to his left, and 17- and 19-inch rides on his right, all of which are floor-mounted.

MAX ROACH SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

For a more complete listing of Max's recorded works, see **DB** Oct. '85. Since 1985, recordings have been reissued on CD (in some cases, with new catalog numbers) in addition to new works. **DB** reviews of recent reissued and new material can be found in parentheses next to some of the following.

as a leader

BRIGHT MOMENTS—Soul Note 121159 (w/ the Double Quartet)

THE LONG MARCH—4-hat ART 4026 (live duo performances)

QUARTET—Fantasy/OJC 202

with Dizzy Gillespie

MAX & DIZZY: PARIS 1989—A&M CD 6404 (May '90)

with Anthony Braxton

ONE IN TWO-TWO IN ONE—hat ART CD 6030 (May '90)

with Sonny Rollins

FREEDOM SUITE—OJC CD 067 (Oct. '90)

with Thelonious Monk

COMPLETE GENIUS—Riverside R-022

with Clifford Brown

BROWNIE: THE COMPLETE—EmArcy 838 306-2 (Apr. '90)

with Charlie Parker

VERY BEST OF BIRD—2-War 2WB-3198
BIRD: THE COMPLETE CHARLIE PARKER
ON VERVE—837 141-2 (Mar. '89)

ginger baker SWINGING LIKE MAD

By Josef Woodard

In the mid-'60s, Ginger Baker appeared on the rock drumming scene like a sage come downtown from the outskirts. His fluttering heartbeat for the synergistic rock trio Cream gave new definition to the role drums could play behind blues/rock-based music. After Cream, Baker veered off, stopping briefly in Blind Faith, forming his experimental big band Airforce, and playing with Fela and other African musicians. For most of the '80s, he was tending olives in Italy—partly as a therapeutic move to kick his longstanding heroin habit.

Enter bassist/producer/alchemist Bill Laswell, who scouted out Baker in 1986 and drew him back into musical action. Besides working on Laswell-produced projects, Baker and Laswell's musical entourage cut Baker's debut solo album, *Horses And Trees*, in a day of unused studio time. Suddenly, Ginger Baker was back in the groove, a new-music groove.

There are a few things that Ginger Baker can do with exceptional ease. He can prune olive trees with a diamond cutter's precision; he plays polo with killer instinct (and keeps three horses); and he plays drums like a mofo, finding righteous syntheses of obsessional intensity and rhythmic acuteness.

It is on the outskirts that you can find Baker now. With his four dogs yapping in the yard, Baker comes walking out of his modest ranch house in the hot, remote, desert-like town of Saugus, California: 45 miles and a world away from Los Angeles proper. Baker, while ostensibly idolized by heavy metal drummers feeding off of Cream, is happy to remain just outside the spotlight (and as far from heavy metal as possible). Baker's most recent public exposure is his enigmatic new solo album, *Middle Passage*, produced by Laswell (see "Reviews" Aug. '90).

"I'm very happy with the new record," he notes. "It's world music. All the musicians have come from totally different

backgrounds. To me, that shows there's hope for the world, maybe. Music crosses all barriers and all borders. Bill, [guitarist] Nicky [Skopelitis], and those players . . . those people I have a lot of respect for and a lot of empathy with. They're very laid back. The album tracks were done in three days and we didn't spend more than three hours in those days. If [the chemistry] works, it's easy."

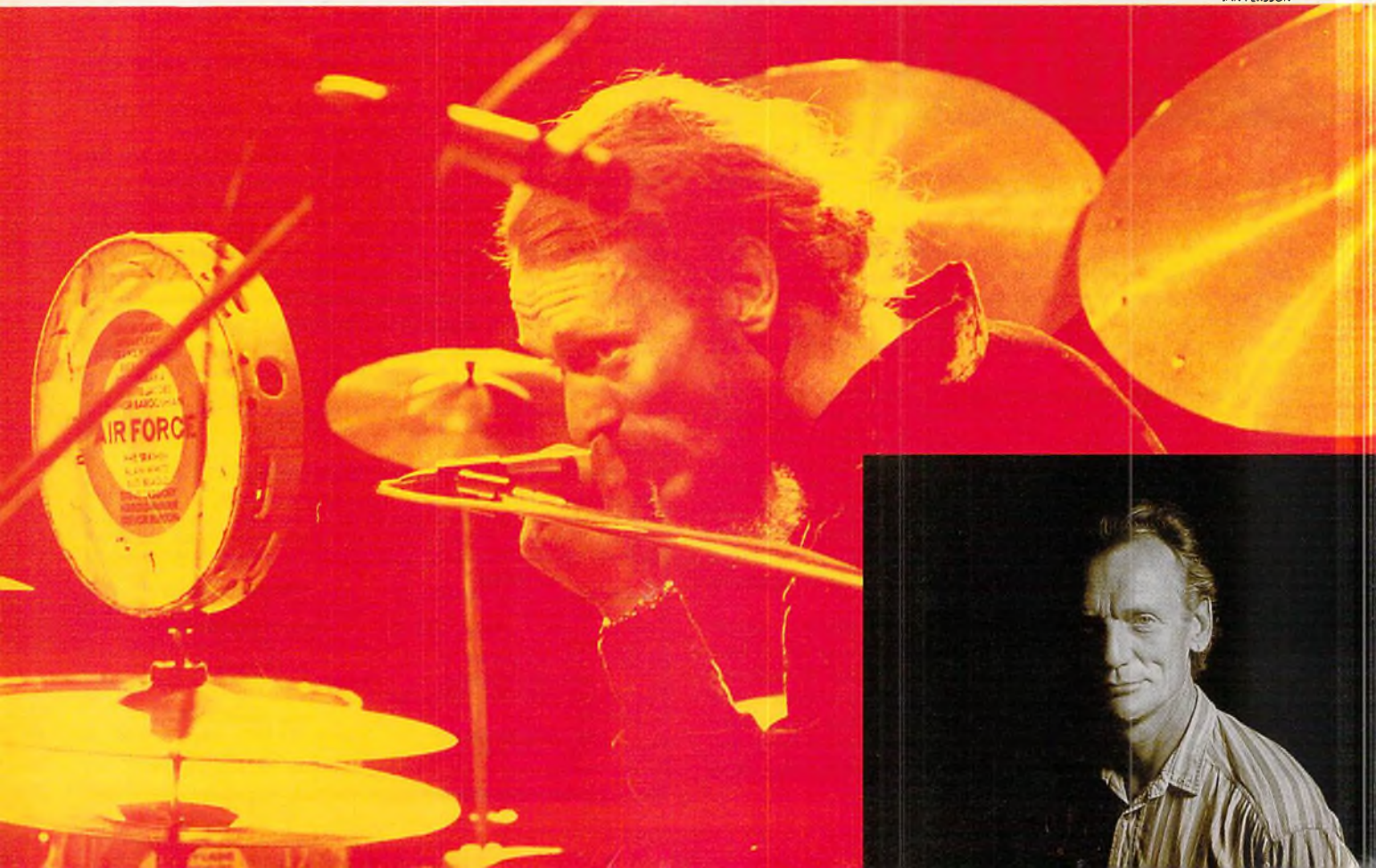
Their recording methods weren't entirely orthodox. "We got that incredible drum sound by setting the drums up in the bathroom in the studio."

Laswell's working process has to do with generating atmospheric tracks, and working quickly (like a jazz date, but emphasizing textures over solos). "Bill is talking to me through the cans, saying, 'Can you do a little bit of this or that,' and then he'll cut it to fit. We're in the days of computers and digital wonders. These things aren't a problem anymore. I'm all for using the technology of today. I'm sampling my own drum sounds."

One track on the album (he slyly refuses to say which one) is a duet between Baker the drummer and an interactive computer rhythm. "The computer was doing things it didn't know it was capable of doing. It was swinging like mad."

The Baker family wasn't very musical. Ginger's father, a bricklayer, died in WWII at the age of 28. Eventually, Ginger traded his dreams of becoming a professional cyclist for a trap set. After school, Baker started working with various traditional jazz bands in England. "Baby Dodd's still my favorite drummer," Baker confesses. "He was the first guy to marry the Western military techniques and the African sense of time. The funny thing is that they go together like that," he says as he makes a web with his hands. "Jazz music is a collision of two cultures: it's as black as it is white."

IAN PERSSON



Touring around Europe, Baker got his trad jazz chops in order, but was becoming more interested in modern jazz, the stuff of Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane. "I read the basic harmony and Schillinger books at the same time, both of which have had a great influence on my writing. The first arrangement I wrote was a big-band version of 'Surrey With The Fringe On Top.'"

After joining the house band at London's influential Ronnie Scott's club, Baker found himself in the vortex of the developing British rock ferment. He joined Alexis Korner's Blues Inc. band, after his admirer Charlie Watts left the band. Watts linked up with Mick Jagger and Brian Jones and the Rolling Stones were born. A few years later, after Baker and bassist Jack Bruce had played with organist Graham Bond's organization, the young guitarist Eric Clapton came into the picture and Cream arose.

Bring up the subject of Cream, and you open a floodgate of bitterness. Suffice to say, Ginger Baker was at least one-third of what made Cream a great rock band. Possibly more. And yet, the main memories of the band for Baker now seem to be those of legendary high volume and meager financial return.

Baker is disgruntled about the lack of recognition for his own creative contributions to the band's material—for instance, the 5/4 bolero introduction to "White Room" or the distinctive, slow inside-out beat he added to "Sunshine Of Your Love." "What really riles me is that most people thought that Cream was Eric Clapton's band. Not only do I not get much financial reward for the whole thing, I don't get any credit from either of the other two. Which is why I don't really speak to them very much."

Gripes allwithstanding, there remains the impressive, improvisationally fluid musical evidence left by Cream. As the third Creamer, Jack Bruce, said in an interview earlier this year, when he had Baker playing on tour with him: "The Ginger thing is interesting because we've got this rhythmic style, which we've developed separately, really."

That inimitable "Ginger thing," keeping low to the tonal ground with his toms and spicing up rhythms without forsaking the groove, is intact on *Middle Passage*—an accessible avant garde pastiche. At present, Baker is working on a much more commercial project and is also doing some touring with the techno-rap group Masters of Reality. For all of his physical prowess as a player, Baker is sold on the musical viability of computers. "You get some basic African patterns coming out of a computer and it sounds incredible. Time is time," he says, like a mantra. "Time is time is time."

"I'm more a feeler than a thinker," Baker surmises. "If you study and you know what's happening, if you get yourself a technique, then anything you feel comes out. That's the idea of getting technique."

"When Philly Joe Jones heard me play in London, he came up to me and said, 'Man, you tell a story when you play.' That's the biggest compliment I've ever had, because I loved Philly Joe Jones. Playing drums is the same as playing a horn. You're saying something musically." **DB**

GINGER BAKER'S EQUIPMENT

Baker plays a Ludwig Super Classic kit, with two 20-inch kick drums, two 16-inch floor toms, and three rack toms, sized at 14, 13×9, and 12×8. He uses three snares: a Ludwig sunburst maple snare, a copper-shelled Ludwig, and an old Leedy snare. For cymbals, he has the same Zildjian ride and high-hats that he bought in 1966. He also has a 16-inch K crash cymbal, a 13-inch flat top, and two 8-inch splash cymbals. For EFX cymbals, he uses an 8-inch #1 and a 10-inch #1. He uses Zildjian Ginger Baker model 7a sticks and Ludwig Rocker drum heads.

GINGER BAKER SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

MIDDLE PASSAGE—Axiom 539-864
HORSES AND TREES—Celluloid 6126
GINGER BAKER'S AIRFORCE—Polydor 837349

with Cream

FRESH CREAM—RSO 827576
DISRAELI GEARS—RSO 823636
GOODBYE CREAM—RSO 823660

LIVE, VOL. 2—RSO 823661

LIVE, VOL. 1—827577

STORY OF—Polydor 2PLL 2658127

STRANGE BREW, THE VERY BEST OF—RSO 811639

WHEELS OF FIRE—2-RSO 827578

with Blind Faith

BLIND FAITH—RSO 825094

dave weckl

TURNING THE BEAT AROUND

By Robin Tolleson

Weckl's the hottest of the young turk drummers today. Sure, you could make a case for the aggressive Dennis Chambers, and Vinnie Colaiuta's facility is legendary. Lesser-known-but-awesome players like Sonny Emory and Gerry Brown must be considered. But for all-around knowledge of styles, amazing ideas that come at Formula One speed, and a rock-solid approach to putting the stick into the head, Dave Weckl is as bad a cat as the drumming community has seen in some time.

His impact on the drumming community has been as powerful as Steve Gadd's was in the mid-1970s. On his first solo album, *Master Plan* (see "Reviews" Oct. '90), Weckl gets to line up next to Gadd, one of his main influences since Chick Corea's *Leprechaun* album. "Steve was a major influence on any drummer in the world who was interested in getting better," Weckl says. "And that was part of this master plan. I always dreamed of being able to play drums with him." The drummer set up the session with the same rhythm section as on *Leprechaun*—Anthony Jackson on bass, Corea on keys. "I just included myself," he laughs. "It had nothing to do with cutting each other. There was no, 'top this.' It was more a continuation of one musical statement."

Master Plan is a most impressive debut outing as leader. Weckl brags about how it doesn't sound like just a drummer's album. That may be true, but the first question on most peoples' minds will surely be, "Who's the drummer?" "I try to make it as musical as possible," Weckl says, "yet as intense and interesting as possible, drumwise. I work a lot at making anything note-y I play stand for something musical. A lot of time it will be a flurry of notes to create an emotion or color or a certain feeling for an instant in the piece. But a lot of times the music is orchestrated around a drum lick, or vice versa. It's really more than anything an emotional statement that I'm trying to make a musical one."

"Tower Of Inspiration" is an obvious tribute to the great funk band Tower Of Power, but it also shows off Weckl's feel for big-band music. "The way we tied in hits and horn-section stuff with the drums gives it a big-band element, versus what might be called 'hip fusion.' It's always been fun for me to kick a big band." Weckl's uncanny knack for turning the beat around is in evidence as well. "It's a whole other spice, and creates another incredible rhythmic feeling immediately," he says. "If I start running out of ideas or don't know what to play, the first thing I think about is, 'displace.' Displace the beat in 16ths or triplets. Even if you just use the rhythm accents, you've all of a sudden got some incredible stuff."

Weckl shows off his stuff on the 7/8 ripper, "Island Magic." "That was written because I do enjoy playing in 7. It's one of the odd-time signs that sort of makes sense to me musically. I love the salsa beat and was messing around a few years ago with a salsa beat that was in 7, and we wrote a tune for that."

THE LINE LE



Master Plan was a completely different challenge for Weckl. He'd written, produced, contracted, engineered, and performed on records before, but never all at once. "It was total absorption in the project," says the drummer, who composed most of the material with his longtime friend, Jay Oliver, and recorded it in his hometown of St. Louis. "I didn't want to let down the drumming fans, but didn't want it to be an out-and-out drum album," he says. "I write from the drum set. I come up with the groove ideas that I want to play first, and from there the form of the tune comes out—the bass line and harmonic structure." Weckl and Oliver would put ideas down on computer instantly, and could then hear them back and play along (Macintosh SE30s with Performer software). "It's a great aid. I don't have to remember what I was talking about or trying to put down before," Weckl says.

There's a generation of drummers now that isn't familiar with Steve Gadd, that thinks Narada Michael Walden is just a producer of hits by Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey, and thinks Weckl invented all those licks. Weckl hopes that young drummers will take their craft seriously. And study the masters like he did. "Decide what kind of music you want to create from your drum set, and what the purpose is," Weckl says. "Don't buy electronic drums just to own an electronic setup. That doesn't make any sense. Learn how to play the acoustic drums, the techniques, the instrument, then start worrying about your sound, what kind of sound you want."

One recent musical highlight for Weckl was participating in the Buddy Rich Tribute Show (videotape available on DCI). "Buddy's the one that made me concentrate on technique, and how important it is to realize the physical capabilities of the drums. Things that you wouldn't think were possible, Buddy was doing, and I wanted to do that." Weckl was also astounded by the rest of the talent onstage—Louie Bellson, Steve Gadd, Gregg Bissonette, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Dennis Chambers. "I just sit back and laugh when Dennis plays," says Weckl, with the utmost respect. "The stuff he does is funny, it's so ridiculous. That day, Dennis and Louie and I were there after the soundcheck, and there were three hours before they opened the doors. Three drum sets were on the side of the stage and nobody was around but us, so we sat and traded fours for three hours straight."

Who would be the ideal drummer for Chick Corea's electric and acoustic endeavors? A guy who had aspired to play for Maynard Ferguson's big band. A guy who'd played in a band named after a Corea tune, "Nitesprite." A guy who took Buddy Rich to heart,



LISSA WALES

but has also played with the likes of Tania Maria, Michel Camilo, and Madonna. All of the above? That's Weckl.

The drummer will be touring with Corea's Elektric and Akoustic bands through the fall. It's become a very intuitive gig. "So much so that it's taken for granted how incredible it can be playing with the same guys all the time—especially of *that* calibre," the drummer says. "It's the closest thing to not having a care or worry in the world and playing anything you want. That's the position I've always wanted to be in."

DB

DAVE WECKL'S EQUIPMENT

Weckl plays Yamaha Recording Custom series drums. His rack toms are 8 × 8-inch, 8 × 10, and 8 × 12. He has two floor toms on his right, one 11 × 13, the other 13 × 15. He plays one floor tom on the left side of his hi-hat, 16 × 16. The bass drum is 22- × 16-inch. He plays a Piccolo brass-shell snare in most concert situations, but *Master Plan* saw him use an old Kent snare.

The drummer prefers Zildjian cymbals, and helped design his K Custom ride (20-inch). He also uses 15- and 18-inch brilliant Dark crashes, a 17-inch brilliant China Boy, a 12-inch brilliant K Dark splash, and 13- or 14-inch hi-hats, usually a K top, Z bottom. The cymbal under his crash on the right side is an 18-inch Dark brilliant crash with a 14-inch A swish sitting on top. "It's a great trash-can lid effect," he says. "Like a very dead swish cymbal with a lot of attack, very percussive." Weckl also keeps a closed hi-hat set up on his right side.

He uses Yamaha hardware, including a chain-drive double bass drum pedal with felt beaters. His sticks are Vic Firth Dave Weckl signature series (between a 5A and 5B, according to the drummer).

Weckl uses two racks full of electronic gear onstage to monitor his own drums and expand the tonal capabilities. Included are noise gates, compressors, effects units, graphic EQ, digital reverb, two Akai S-900 samplers, and Simmons SDSV. He has a Roland Octapad, but most effects are triggered by the acoustic drums with Fishman Triggers (Larry Fishman and Rick Nelson, Fishman Transducers, Inc.). He's been quite interested in sound reinforcement since 1979. "I was sick of going to clubs and hearing drums that sounded like cardboard. And feeling like I had to beat the hell out of the drums to get them to sound. I didn't want to play that way." Weckl suggests getting to know some basics of sound reinforcement. "So many people don't have the slightest idea what mid-range or low-range frequency makes their drums sound good, sound better. The easiest way to learn that is to get a real good sound engineer in the studio and let him teach you."

DAVE WECKL SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

MASTER PLAN—GRD 9619

with the Chick Corea Band

Chick Corea: INSIDE OUT—GRD 9601

AKOUSTIC BAND—GRD 9582

John Patitucci: ON THE CORNER—GRD

9583

Eric Marienthal: CROSSROADS—GRD 9610

Frank Gambale: THUNDER DOWN UNDER—JVC/GRP 3321

with Chuck Loeb/Andy Laverne

MAGIC FINGERS—DMP CD472

Randolph Edward Weston occasionally felt the tattoo of his father's long ruler on his knuckles when the rangy 6'2" teenager opted to shoot hoops or shag flies rather than log practice time on the piano in the family's Brooklyn home. Rhythms have impressed themselves on Weston throughout his life: the plinks and plunks of guru Thelonious Monk's piano in his midtown apartment, his first magical encounters with African musicians in Lagos, Nigeria in 1961.

Parental paradiddles of African literature and music were aimed at his brain, for Randy was his father's student. Frank Edward Weston, of Panama and Jamaica, was as well-versed in the writings of Marcus Garvey as he was in calypso and jazz. "My father took me to see Duke [Ellington] and Andy Kirk at the Sonia Ballroom and Brooklyn Palace. We'd hear [calypso bands] Duke of Iron and Macbeth in Harlem. My mother was born in Virginia and we listened to her spirituals. I grew up in a very rich culture, a rich period. Top shelf. You couldn't be ordinary and record in those days."

Africa has been in the forefront of Weston's cultural discipline since childhood (born, 4/6/26, Brooklyn); he is unique in his firsthand exploration of his African roots, through thick and thin. He has traveled and played in 18 African nations (so far), notably Ghana, Mali, and Senegal; lived years in Tangiers, Morocco (just across the Straits of Gibraltar from Algeciras, Spain); owned a nightclub there from 1968-72, returning often for musical and spiritual (they are one) inspiration.

And whether he's playing montuno in Marrakesh, calypso in Casablanca, or bebop in Brooklyn, it's all African to Weston. "Africa is like a huge tree," he says, "with branches to Brazil, to Cuba, and America. The approach to music is identical: rhythm, polyrhythm, call and response."

Now that African interests have come home to roost in the consciousness of American musicians and listeners, Randy Weston is relishing the resurgence of his own music.

1990: Weston teamed up with drummer Max Roach and his son Azzedin on percussion to kick off the "African Inspirations" summer jazz series at the Brooklyn Museum this past July. A spate of festivals, including Atlanta and Montreal. A September booking at the Village Vanguard—his first in 18 years.

1989: A newly-recorded trilogy of CDs, *Portraits* (for Polygram), recorded in Paris last fall, each presenting musical portraits of Ellington, Monk, and himself in startlingly bold, stark, dark colors (see "Reviews" p. 35).

1987-89: Weston has been the subject of a documentary film in each of the last three years, *Jazz Entre Amigos* for Spanish television, *Randy In Tangiers* for Spanish and French TV, and *African Rhythms* for WGBH-TV in Boston. (A solo program for 'GBH, *Randy Weston: A Legend In His Own Time*, aired first 10/82.)



Randy Weston's Pan-African Revival

By Fred Bouchard



Few musicians have as imposing a presence on (or off) the bandstand as Randy Weston. The man, after all, now stands 6'8". His hand spans an octave and a half. (His smile is twice as wide.) His range spans the entire keyboard, with powers of persuasion at both ends. A grand piano under his sway may tremble and shake with rumbles of desert thunder, then ring and tinkle with the singsong of children of the Casbah or Borough Hall.

Weston wears flamboyant ceremonial robes or simple bright *dashiki* with pride. Like Monk, he "gets high on skies" (read: has a yen for headgear); Muslim *kufi*, Yoruba cap, or Panama straw hat are proud badges of his heritage. "I was taught young about ancestor worship," said Weston, who wants to "let people know where the music came from. It's very comfortable to work in those wide sleeves!"

His deep awareness of the piano's percussive powers, a force paramount in his music, stems from African roots, through the lineage of Ellington and Monk, both of whom played hard piano. From Duke, Weston learned to play the piano as orchestra, getting the full palette from each octave and strength through massive chords. From Monk he learned compositional angles, wrinkles, the ineffable combination of beat

and interval that sticks in your mind's craw. Also: "From Duke I learned commitment, from Monk perseverance."

Ellington and Monk have profound African connections, of which Weston gradually became aware. Duke's jungle music took root in the late 1920s. "As Duke said clearly," Weston states, "he had been playing African music [his whole career]. Africans have put their sounds into European instruments or whatever was available. When the drums were taken away from us [slaves], we poured it into trombones and saxophones. Duke captured the sounds of our people, that strength and beauty." (Weston acknowledges influences of other pianistic royalty: the Count (Basie), the King (Nat Cole), and Art Tatum, whom Fats Waller referred to as "God.") "Those five made the biggest impact on me," declares Weston.)

A mighty force in post-war music, Coleman Hawkins hired a most unusual pianist in T. Monk. Weston saw them on 52nd Street, at the Downbeat or Three Deuces around 1945-46. "[Hawk's] 'Body And Soul' was my love, one of the greatest solos ever. Hawk always had the youngest, baddest cats on piano. [Through him] I discovered Hank Jones, Sir Charles, and Monk. When I heard the colors of 'Ruby, My Dear,' I said, 'Wow!' "[Bassist] Ahmed [Abdul-Malik]'s father



DONNA PAUL



was Sudanese. We'd go down to Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn to the Arabic section to hear the cats play ouds. We were searching for new sounds. We'd get into quarter and eighth tones. But here was Monk doing it, with spirit power, with magic! The same chord in other hands wouldn't do it. He was the most original I ever heard; he played like they must have played in Egypt 5,000 years ago. For me it was pure African piano."

Weston gigged around New York in the early '50s with Cecil Payne and Kenny Dorham, and had the distinction of recording the very first Riverside album for Bill Grauer and Orrin Keepnews in 1954, a 10-incher with bassist Sam Gill, *Cole Porter In A Modern Mood*. "They wanted solo, I wanted a trio," explained Weston. "We compromised."

It was during this period that Weston wrote most of his best-loved tunes: "Saucer Eyes," "Pam's Waltz," "Little Niles." Of "Hi-Fly," his greatest hit, recorded by scores of jazz artists, Weston says: "It's an African rhythm that came out of my head, a funny tune. It's a tale of being my height and looking down at the ground."

A visit to Lagos in 1961 further opened his ears to Africa. "I had recorded *Uhuru Africa* with Melba [Liston, composer/trom-

bonist] in 1960; it was dedicated to the new African nations. With us were Lionel Hampton's octet, Nina Simone, Ahmed Abdul-Malik, Langston Hughes, Booker Ervin, Scoby Strohmman, and tapdancers Al Mimms and Leon James. [Percussionist Michael] Olatunji took us back to his village. Those 10 days were fantastic!"

Of today's African music, Weston is especially affected by the Gnoauans, Sufi Moslem emigres to Morocco from Egypt via West Africa, who played with him in New York. Weston says: "They are healers—in prayer and in celebration of life. Their music is spiritually motivated, and they play several hours nonstop. Their main instrument is the *guembri*, a three-string banjo they play like Jimmy Blanton played the string bass. Their master player carries it everywhere, has to know all the colors, create all the spirits."

"You can hear blues [in their music], Brazil, and the gospel. We divide and separate it in the new world, they have it all whole. We are the branches, they are the root. They reach levels of music that we know nothing about. When I play their music it's only an adaption, yet people hear and feel a spiritual experience. They preserve the music of early black Americans better than any other group in the world."

"Today we don't have as much spiritual

power in the music as there was in the '30s and '40s. One time I heard Mahalia Jackson, and I cried and cried. Going back to Africa also affected me, and people notice it. I'm not playing any notes differently that I did 30 years ago. It's a matter of absorption; when you're around [the musicians] every day, they rub off on you, it enters your spirit. It's feeling and spirit that make my music different.

"Music is the first thing that changes when a people migrate. Our messages from God come out first in the music. African music is so advanced that we're just beginning to get the picture. It's the continent of rhythm and sound. I never heard so many variations on 6/8 as I did from Atlas Berbers and Congolese.

"I developed a lot playing with African drummers: Candido, Chief Bey, Big Black, Olatunji, my son Azzedin. Eric Asante [Weston's current Ghanaian percussionist whom he met in Europe] had never played jazz before, only African disco bands, but you hear that his whole concept of rhythm is African."

Weston's Boston connection goes back years, when through Duke's sister Ruth Boatwright he met Elma Lewis, Director of the National Center for Afro-American Artists. Her center commissioned Weston's *Three African Queens*, which he premiered with the Boston Pops in 1981. Lewis says of Weston: "When Randy came to play in Boston, he said that he would rather not call his music jazz. When I asked him what he wanted to call it, he hesitated, groped a bit, and then said, 'A spiritual awakening. A restoration of our memory.'

"As an adolescent culture, we Americans like to think we have no past, no differences. But our past and our differences are there, and we should appreciate them."

Randy Weston pursues the appreciation of his differences with boundless vigor and joy. "I'm trying to play the piano like an African drum," Weston says simply. "If I can get that together, I'll be alright." **DB**

RANDY WESTON'S EQUIPMENT

At home in Brooklyn, Weston plays a Steinway baby grand. In Marrakesh, Morocco, he has a Bechstein. His all-time favorite, played with the Boston Pops and on *Portraits*, is a Bosendorfer Imperial: "The big baby! That was instant love!"

RANDY WESTON SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

AFRICAN COOKBOOK—Atlantic SD 1609
AFRICAN NIGHT—Owl 01 (France)
BERKSHIRE BLUES—Arista 026
BLUE MOSES—CTI 6016
GET HAPPY—Riverside 6063M
THE HEALERS (with David Murray)—Black Saint 120118
JAZZ A LA CAFE BOHEMIA—OJC 1747
LITTLE NILES—United Artists UA/Blue Note 5011
PIANO A LA MODE—Jubilee 1060
PORTRAITS OF ELLINGTON—Polygram 841 31 312
PORTRAITS OF MONK—Polygram 841 31 313
SELF PORTRAITS—Polygram 831 31 314
TANJAH—Polydor PD 5055
ZULU—Milestone 2-Milestone 7206
BLUES TO AFRICA—Freedom 741014
CARNIVAL—Freedom 741004

SKIN DOCTORS

RHYTHM RX

Roy Haynes

Violin was his first instrument. Roy Haynes, whose hot chops have charged up the rhythm sections of Charlie Parker, Billie Holiday, John Coltrane, Sarah Vaughan, Gary Burton, Chick Corea, and is now on tour with Pat Metheny, was a born drummer. As a child in Boston's Roxbury section, "I played on everything I could find." In spite of, or perhaps because of, his percussive tendencies, Haynes' mother forced violin lessons on her reluctant son. "I was putting as much rhythm as I could into the violin. I was playing *all* wrong."



MICHAEL HANDLER

Haynes—the winner of a Grammy in 1988 for *Blues For Coltrane* with McCoy Tyner and David Murray, and a Ludwig/Zildjian endorser today—didn't even have a full kit when he got his first professional job at age 16. Later, he joined Luis Russell's band at Harlem's Savoy Ballroom, and toured with Lester Young before he joined the band that opened Birdland—the one with Charlie Parker.

"Roy is one of the easiest drummers to play with, and the most interesting," says Metheny, who recorded *Question And Answer* with Haynes and bassist Dave Holland (see "Reviews" Sept. '90). At age

13, Metheny used the rhythmic groove Haynes played with Tyner as a model. In 1968, on Chick Corea's *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs*, Haynes popularized the flat ride cymbal, and "the clarity he brought forth pointed the way to a whole new direction in drumming," Metheny recalls. "It was Roy and Max, then Roy and Elvin, then Roy and Tony [Williams]. Now it's Roy and Jack [DeJohnette]. His rhythmic precision makes you play with a certain energy unique to him. Roy's the cat."

Whether he's touring with his own band, or recording with Metheny, Haynes has no formula for the magic his playing renders except to follow the advice of comedienne Moms Mabley: "If it don't fit, don't force it." His experiments with odd meters were pre-Brubeck, and he played world beat—in the form of Cuban rhythms—in Charlie Parker's band. The encore one night recently in Chicago at Joe Segal's Jazz Showcase was "Anniversary Waltz," and while Segal danced with a waitress in the back of the club, Haynes organized the audience in a humalong. "It's just a song I like," said Haynes. "Everybody was doing it—the band was doing it, and the audience was doing it. But it seemed happy. It felt good."
—Brooke Comer

Marilyn Mazur

Growing up in Denmark, Marilyn Mazur studied classical piano and dance. At some point, she began searching for a medium that combined the two disciplines. "I was looking for an instrument that was more physical than piano," she recalls. "And I noticed that there were no women playing percussion or drums at the time, so I kind of gravitated toward that."

That was 1973, when Marilyn was all of 19 years of age. But her mind was made up. "I was fed up with studying classical piano, so I started studying percussion." Over the years, Marilyn worked as a percussionist with various European artists, collecting various gongs, bells, hand drums, and assorted percussion from all over the world. More recently, she got a



MITCHELL SEIDEL

dose of international exposure from playing with Miles Davis, a gig that evolved over the course of a few years.

"When I first joined Miles' band a few years ago, I was mostly playing acoustic percussion," she says. "I played for a year during that phase, then I came back a few years later and got into the electronic stuff, which was a lot of fun. I had a Roland Octapad triggering a Prophet sampler and for a period I was also using a homemade trigger mat so that I could actually dance on the different sampled sounds," thus combining her passions for dance and percussion.

Marilyn left Miles' group in January of '89 to form her own group, Future Song, a sextet that has been playing the European festival circuit and has recently recorded for an as-yet-unnamed Eurolabel. "There are two drummers in the band," she says. "I'm working closely with a Norwegian guy named Audun Kleive, who plays with [guitarist] Terje Rypdal a lot. There's also an American singer, a Yugoslavian keyboard player, a bass player, and trumpeter. It's pretty special. It's sort of symphonic in principal. The idea is to make a kind of 'painting music' with an emphasis on colors and textures."

She's quick to add, with a laugh, "It's not at all commercial."

In Future Song, Marilyn plays assorted percussion instruments slung over a hulking, custom-made sculpture, which adds a measure of theatricality to the band. On the side, she continues to play the traditional traps set in collaboration with other European artists, including trumpeter Palle Mikkelborg (she appears on the Mikkelborg-produced Miles project, *Aura*, on Columbia).

Marilyn's most recent collaboration was with her husband—a newborn baby delivered last October. She says, "For a while, I'll probably be pretty busy with that. And the other thing is, I got a grant from the Danish government for composing. So that kind of goes well with staying home for a while and taking care of this kid. So it might be a while before I come over to the States again . . . but you never know with me." —Bill Milkowski

Jay Hoggard

"When people think of African music, they immediately think of drums," says vibraphonist Jay Hoggard. "But certain African xylophone systems—the *mandinka* from Senegal and Guinea, the *lobi* from Ghana—are primary instruments in those cultures. Elements of this music are among my primary sources for inspiration." Throughout an spirited interview, Hoggard (a six-time TDWR winner in DB's Critics Poll) added other major sources that have helped him become one of the preeminent vibraphonists today. The "patriarchs" of the vibes—Lionel Hampton, Red Norvo, Milt Jackson—and such jazz giants as Ellington, Monk, and Mingus are high on his list.

"The vibraphone is still kind of a rarity, though it has predecessors in many

cultures throughout history," explains Hoggard, who majored in ethnomusicology at Wesleyan University (see DB Oct. '90) in the '70s. This rather unwieldy instrument has gained a lot of popularity since it was developed in Chicago in the early 1920's. Hoggard, now in his mid-30s, was raised in Mt. Vernon, New York and was compelled to study the vibraphone as a teenager after he had a vivid dream of himself playing one. An introduction to Ellington a couple of years earlier had already clinched his desire to become a musician.

Since then, Hoggard's dream has manifested itself with many outstanding musicians, including Dizzy Gillespie, Sam Rivers, James Newton, and Kenny Burrell, who he currently performs and records with. Two years ago, he returned to Wesleyan, where he teaches and is writing his masters thesis about the vibraphone (its history, and a pedagogical approach for technique and improvisation), in addition to performing.

Hoggard's ethnomusicological studies have always intertwined with his growth as a performer. "It clearly came into focus on *Overview* [Muse 5383]. I can hear specifically where I'm using rhythmic, melodic, and spatial approaches from African influences." *Little Tiger*, his forthcoming album on Muse and 10th as a leader, will undoubtedly show the same commanding presence Hoggard displays on *Overview* and on Burrell's *Guiding Spirit* (Contemporary 14058—see "Reviews" Sept. '90). His influences and his own concepts integrate seamlessly, underscored with a sense of swing that indelibly connects him with the jazz legacy. "I try to think of myself as a standard bearer—not only of the instrument, but of the music—into the 21st century. Hopefully," he adds with a gracious laugh, "I can do it with the humility that comes from knowing that everyone is part of this lineage." —Stephanie Stein

MITCHELL SEIDEL



Kenny Aronoff

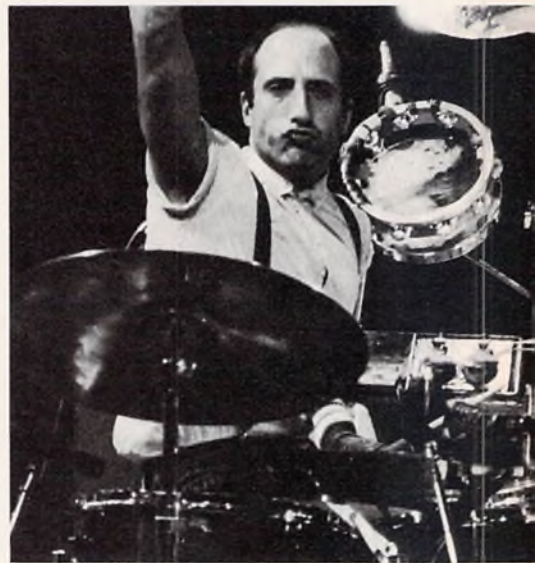
It's not uncommon for a rock drummer to claim a mixed musical background anymore. But when you hear Kenny Aronoff with John Cougar Mellencamp, in the variety of roles Jon Bon Jovi puts him through on the *Young Guns II* soundtrack, or backing up artists at Farm Aid IV or the Roy Orbison Tribute, his classical and jazz background rises to the surface.

"By the time I was a senior in high school, I was playing with a jazz trio, and my ritual was to play the whole *Giant Steps* album by Coltrane," he says. Aronoff went to the Indiana Univ. School of Music to study orchestral percussion with George Gaber and at the Aspen and Tanglewood Music Festivals with the likes of Vic Firth, Leonard Bernstein, and Arthur Fiedler. His motto was "Either Bebop or Bartok."

He took his first drum-set lessons in 1977, at the age of 23, with Alan Dawson.

Aronoff was playing drums with a fusion band when he heard about an audition with a singer named John Cougar. "I started thinking, 'This is what I've always wanted to do. I've lost focus.' What got me excited about drums in the first place was seeing [the Beatles' film] *A Hard Day's Night*. Doing records, touring, Dick Clark, the whole thing. I practiced six hours a day to learn the *Johnny Cougar* record, making a full cycle back to 10 years old, playing basic rock & roll.

"I had to go back and learn the art of 'less is more.' I focus on the sound and playing the right rhythm, because feel is everything. I'm the fuel in the band, and if



US&A WALLS

I run real good, then the band runs real good."

A lot of Aronoff's parts merge percussion and drums, or isolate certain parts of the drum kit. "It's not like any jazz drummer can sit down and play rock. Listen to the 18 singles we've done. You won't hear the same beat on 'Jack And Diane' as on 'Hurt So Good' or 'Crumblin' Down.' Different beats give the songs different complexions," he says. "To show the music respect and the drums respect, you've got to know what the song's about, understand the feel and the tempo of the song."

Aronoff feels lucky to be playing in a band with Mellencamp, and still be doing work with Bob Dylan, Iggy Pop, Jefferson Airplane, Elton John, or Indigo Girls. He's glad that he was self-taught on drums and went back later to get a musical education. "I've got that *street* in my playing. If it's a session sight-reading charts, I'm in. And if it's a session where there are no charts and the artist just wants to get a good feel, I'm in." After a busy year, Aronoff looks forward to John Cougar Mellencamp getting his band back together in 1991. "He's *all street*," the drummer laughs.

—Robin Tolleson



MICHAEL WILDERMAN

Ignacio Berroa

When Dizzy Gillespie asked Cuban expatriate Ignacio Berroa to be his drummer just one year after he moved to the United States in 1980, it wasn't Berroa's extensive knowledge of Afro-Cuban percussion techniques that most impressed Gillespie.

"The Cubans understand our music better than we do," Gillespie said recently, pointing out that Cuban musicians have been learning about jazz from records for decades.

"When I was 11," says the 37-year-old Berroa, "my father, who was a violinist, brought some jazz albums into the house. From the minute I listened, I knew I wanted to be a jazz drummer. I fell in love with the music, and with the instrument. The rule in Cuba is that everybody plays congas, timbales, and so forth. So I'm the exception, rather than the rule."

Once Cuba's most sought-after drummer, Berroa's career soon soared after his arrival in the United States 10

years ago. He's not only played with many of the best Latin band leaders, such as Mario Bauza, Machito, Tito Puente, and Chico O'Farrill, but he is in demand by players in a wide variety of styles, from bebop to rock. He has recorded and toured with Paquito D'Rivera, McCoy Tyner, Jack Bruce, Hilton Ruiz, and Claudio Roditi, and has also worked with the late Jaco Pastorius and Jorge Dalto, Michael Brecker, and Michel Camilo.

Berroa plays with Gillespie's quintet, sextet, and the United Nation Orchestra, a 15-piece all-star ensemble conceived to showcase Latin and Caribbean influences in mainstream jazz. They recently recorded *Dizzy Gillespie And The United Nation Orchestra Live At The Royal Festival Hall* (Enja 6044). Like his fellow band members in the United Nation Orchestra (e.g., D'Rivera, Roditi, Jon Faddis, and Danilo Perez), Berroa is equally at home with bebop, Brazilian, and Afro-Cuban styles.

About the cliché that you have to be Cuban to play Cuban music the right way, Berroa says, "I don't buy that; and for me, the reverse is also true. If you closed your eyes and heard me play straightahead jazz with Chick Corea on piano and Eddie Gomez on bass, I'm sure you wouldn't notice that the drummer is from Cuba."

—Diane Gordon

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HOTHOUSE FLOWERS

Musical Pollinators

By Brooke Comer

If, as market researchers are quick to point out, the youth of the '90s are soul searchers instead of status seekers like their predecessors, its no surprise that Hothouse Flowers are being touted as the band of the decade. Ten years ago, pop had become a formula, copied to the point of redundancy. Slick synth tracks didn't even need vocals to call attention to the material world that was gearing up.

Hothouse Flowers pay heed to emotional need—a popular '60s theme, but replayed with more imitation than innovation today—and offer nurturing advice with lyrics like

"It doesn't really matter if you're all jumbled up inside as long as you know love is endless and the world is wide. Give it up, share it out. Help; you can talk about it," from "Give It Up," off their recent album, *Home*. But its not just lyrics that distinguish the Flowers from their colleagues, past and present. The band fuses eclectic sources, culled from their native Ireland, African rhythms, and American gospel and blues to create music with a sound and style of its own.

"Hothouse Flowers" sound like a good

name for a band with strong roots in jazz, and though guitarist Fiachna O'Braonain admits to a moderate dose of jazz influence—infused mostly by sax player and Coltrane fan Leo Barnes—the name, regardless of its connotations, wasn't selected as a tribute to any genre. Back when the core of the band, O'Braonain and keyboard/vocalist Liam O'Maonlai, was playing with other musicians and evolving into an act that required a solid name, O'Maonlai had the notion of flowers in mind. Later, while browsing through a record store, he came across a song titled "Hothouse Flowers," and without specific affinity for the tune or its origins, adopted the name. "He just liked it," O'Braonain explains.

Barnes, who used to have his own big band, "is seriously into jazz," says O'Braonain, "and he made us listen to John Coltrane, Randy Brecker, and Charlie Parker, which turned out to be inspiring." O'Braonain isn't as enthusiastic about the jazz funk from drummer Jerry Fehily's background. "It isn't something we're crazy about. We've got a good mix of blues, soul, gospel, and traditional Irish music." There is, he insists, no specific description that sums up the Flowers' music. "People are fond of categorizations. They call us Celtic soul or Irish blues. But really, we just play *our music*."

The band—which also includes bassist Peter O'Toole, and formed when O'Maonlai and O'Braonain met in music classes at their

Fiachna O'Braonain

Leo Barnes

Peter O'Toole

Liam O'Maonlai

Jerry Fehily



"People are fond of categorizations. They call us Celtic soul or Irish blues. But really, we just play *our music*."

Gaelic speaking school—has always maintained a kind of creative autonomy while becoming increasingly diversified musically. It would have been easy for the Flowers to stay closer to their traditional Irish roots than they did. Both founding musicians excelled on instruments like the tin horn and the bodhran (a goatskin tambourine, on which O'Maonlai became an all-Ireland champion); and when the two took to the streets of Dublin, calling themselves the Incomparable Benzini Brothers, their "Gaelic blues" regularly won enough fans to fill a pub.



Compared to the staid chops that traditional Irish music was reduced to after the late '60s "Irish music renaissance" died down, the Benzini Brothers were a breath of fresh air in Dublin. "Irish music was being played in a rigid, unemotional way, like a lot of so-called Irish music that's played in bars in America. It's more touristy than the genuine article." A fan of the energetic Bothy Band, "who put a lot of soul back into traditional Irish music," O'Braonain used his own influences, culled from such favorites as Jimi Hendrix, James Brown, the Band, Aretha Franklin, and John Cougar Mellencamp, taking his style beyond the narrow confines traditional Irish music strictly adhered to.

Was there a conscious effort to expand into multi-cultural music? "We're always looking to expand in terms of whatever comes our way," says O'Braonain. Along came African music. The nexus isn't surprising in view of the fact that Irish and African music share an interesting connection, "a lot like Irish music and American bluegrass," observes O'Braonain, who adds that "some Irish words are thought to stem from the African language." This common language is not Anglo Saxon but Celtic, "an Indo-European language that evolved to a certain degree in India and Africa as well as Europe." The dimensions of such a multi-textured linguistic history may well be explored in a subsequent album. "It's something we're thinking of," O'Braonain notes, "though we don't really make firm plans. We

write songs as we go. During sound checks, we jam and ideas come up that we record on DAT tape."

O'Maonlai and O'Braonain, fluent in Gaelic, were quick to pick up on the rhythms African and Irish music share. More potential influences were brought home by a traditional Irish musician friend of O'Toole's, who spent some time in Africa with the Masai tribe. "They do a lot of chanting," O'Braonain explains, "generally in the key of D. He'd bring his Bouzouki [ancient Ireland's answer to a guitar] out, tune it to D, and play along with their chants." This kind of marriage between ethnic musics is evident on *Home*. On the song "Water," the Flowers found Philip Pyke, an Indian fiddle player to play the didjeridu—an aboriginal instrument. "The chorus is a kind of chant, and the didjeridu gives the sound a Celtic, or Irish feel," O'Braonain observes. But he denies that Irish music is a foundation for the Flowers. "We mix and gather different influences that we all bring together. Traditional Irish music is one of those influences, but it's not necessarily the foundation."

Personal stories are the predominant theme in the Flowers' work. "They're the only theme," O'Braonain insists, adding that there's optimism, too. "We try and look at the positive side. 'Christchurch Bells' was intentionally imbued with a 'soothing effect,'" according to O'Braonain. "Give It Up" is about renewal and communication. Though O'Braonain denies that there are any jazz tunes on the album, he describes many *Home* tracks as an attempt to address the spiritual and psychic pain induced by the dehumanization of a fragmented society.

The Flowers love to improvise and never adhere to any strict notation. "A lot of what we do is instinctive. Something turns the green light on that says, 'We like this, or we don't like that,' and that's the only criterion for what we do or don't do."

Writing isn't a formal process, either. "We jam, fiddle around, and try different instruments." Though "Hardstone City" was written in Dublin, "its not about how we feel about the city. We just started jamming, got a riff and the song evolved from there." The Flowers don't write out notes in letters, "we just put down the key or the chord change, and our notes get to be quite chaotic." But in chaos lies an unchallenged freedom. "Even if we play the same thing every night," says O'Braonain, "we'll just take off in different directions, like jazz. I love that kind of freeness."

To insure that "that kind" of freeness is transmitted intact when recording, the Flowers opted for more live takes than overdubs in the studio. "One thing we all agreed about on *Home*, we didn't want to have too many overdubs," says O'Braonain. "We wanted to try and keep the music to ourselves." Even though he's interested in the idea of adding strings, "and striking a balance between what we sound like live and what we could do in the studio," he has a personal preference for songs like "Sweet

Marie," recorded completely in live takes. "Dance To The Storm" is as intact as can be, having been put to tape live from a remote truck while the band gigged on stage to a packed arena. "Dance" was written over an extensive time period: "We came up with the lyrics in America, and kept changing the tempo for a more upbeat sound."

In contrast to "Dance," "Shut Up And Listen" was written and cut in a quick two-hour session. The Flowers had dropped in on producer Daniel Lanois at his New Orleans home. O'Braonain admired the man who'd produced, among others, the Neville Brothers, U2, and Peter Gabriel. "He's a brilliant musician and technician, very adaptable in any recording situation. He doesn't go by the book, and he can capture the essence of a live band," which he did during the Flowers impromptu visit. Lanois was cutting *Oh Mercy* for Bob Dylan when the band dropped in, but he obligingly turned his talents toward his friends the Flowers.

Today's synthesized pop music isn't terribly vogue in Ireland. "I'd like to see pop music go back to its original meaning — to just being popular music."

"There was," O'Braonain remembers, "magic in the air that morning."

But magic seems to follow the Flowers everywhere, pollinating their creative endeavors. O'Braonain admits that Irish music has a lucky lineage. "It's never been affected by fashion, or commercialism. It's music for fun." Pop music—which is heavily synthesized today—isn't terribly vogue in Ireland. "I'd like to see pop music go back to its original meaning—to just being popular music," says O'Braonain. He'd like to see human stars regain the glory, "but the big stars on the pop charts today are the computers and synths." Irish bands in general "don't get concerned with stardom. We just enjoy ourselves and tour. Stardom isn't as real as your family or where you come from." DB

HOTHOUSE FLOWERS DISCOGRAPHY

PEOPLE—London/PolyGram Records 828101
HOME—London/PolyGram 828197

HOTHOUSE FLOWERS' EQUIPMENT

Keyboardist/vocalist Liam O'Maonlai plays a Hammond organ. Fiachna O'Braonain plays a wide range of acoustic and electric guitars, from MacBrides to Fenders. Peter O'Toole plays both a Music Man and a Fender bass, while Leo Barnes plays a Selmer saxophone. His favorite reeds are made by Omega and Rico. Jerry Fehily plays Pearl drums with Zildjian cymbals.

ORNETTE COLEMAN'S PRIME TIME

By Howard Mandel

Prime Time is: seven improvisers negotiating unpredictably-accented, forward-rushing, ever-pulsing meters; whose distinct melodies and diverse timbres knot, snarl, and loosen like so many roads converging at a traffic circle; whose harmony regards dissonance as a cosmic unison; whose state-of-the-notion gadgetry works towards harmolodics, the revolutionary theory proposed by band leader Ornette Coleman, a composer/instrumentalist with one of the most engaging speculative minds of our era.

P rime Time is the DB Critics' 1990 Best Electric Jazz Band, comprising three guitarists (one on bass), a multi-keyboard player, a sampling drummer (average age of these five is 32), a self-taught Indian tablaist—and the alto sax virtuoso, wailing trumpeter, keening violinist whose inspired songs, risky chamber works, and panoramic symphony present the most ambitious oeuvre out of jazz since Mingus came from Duke's shadow.

No other band remotely like Coleman's Prime Time was at 1990's New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival (the Riverboat Hallelujah Ballroom was the site of PT's one U.S. concert this year) or at

New Music America Miami, Dec. '88 (an equally rare appearance). But in its investigatory pursuit of ensemble order through personal expression and its primeval fusion of blues and joy, Prime Time updates the foundations of jazz for a post-nuclear, space-exploring, information-overrun world. In its effort to create musical structures without regard for *a priori* conventions—as a team trying to transcend limits—Prime Time is a paradigm new-music troupe.

From its 1976 manifesto, *Dancing In Your Head* (Horizon 0807), through its 1988 album, *Virgin Beauty* (Portrait 44301—see "Reviews" Oct. '88), Prime Time's evolving personnel has reinstated polyphony, polyrhythms, and collective improvisation—elements of jazz that preceded Louis Armstrong's declaration of the soloist's preeminence. Ornette, especially on alto and as the clarion voice in Prime Time's complex mix, is a riveting soloist. But as his student (and PT's newest member) pianist David Bryant reports, "Ornette's not getting rid of the soloist. He says he's getting rid of the accompanist"—by elevating the role to the soloist's height.

With Bryant playing MIDI-ed synth, samplers, and organ, guitarists Chris Rosenberg and Ken Wessel, Steinberger bassist Albert MacDowell, Badal Roy on tabla, and percussionist/producer Denardo Coleman together creating an interactive universe through which Ornette darts at the speed of thought, Prime Time confounds expectations while delivering thrills. "You changed my life!" cried one youth as the New Orleans crowd, used to jazz-jazz, roots rock,

PRIMEVAL UPDATE



Chris Rosenberg

Ken Wessel

Dave Bryant

Al MacDowell

Badal Roy

Ornette Coleman

r&b, and Zydeco based on standard chord changes and second-line syncopations, awarded PT a long, standing ovation.

Still, Prime Time's performance profile is low. "For my father, it's the *quality* of the presentation that's important," explains Denardo, who assumed spokesman responsibilities in the '80s (and besides Prime Time albums, produced a hit for folk-rockers Timbuk 3). "When an offer's on the right level, we'll be there." Outside of the States, Prime Time had two European concerts and played Coleman's *Skies Of America* symphony twice in Italy during 1990.

"All engagements are first-rate," classically-trained guitarist Rosenberg concurs. "Ornette doesn't like to work in smokey bars."

"Unlike most musicians, he doesn't have the burning desire to connect with his public at any cost," says Bryant, "If Ornette could have us on retainer, available to rehearse day or night, he'd do that. Rehearsal is his favorite. He hates to commit himself to the public performance of a piece. It's like he wants to say, 'Yeah, okay, this is what we did this time, but you've got to realize it could sound like *this*, too.'"

Harmolodics is the subject of Ornette's rehearsals. Denardo says they are "laboratory sessions where we test and get ideas. Everybody in the band's secure in their own voice, eager to add to the total sound. Of the new guys, Chris' and Ken's knowledge and command of their instruments is good, they're in harmony with each other, and they're enthusiastic. David's been studying with my father quite a while, so he worked in naturally. The music's still opening up to him, but he had the vibe."

"I wasn't sure Prime Time had a place for me, but I figured someday he'd hire a keyboard player," demurs Bryant, who's been corresponding, phoning, and visiting Ornette from his home in Boston since '82, and began rehearsing with the band last March. "Nobody ever asked Ornette what he'd want to hear from keyboards; I thought he didn't use them for the same reasons I was frustrated with keyboard instruments—equal temperament and problems with phrasing. There are advantages *and* limits to the keyboard." He's had to develop a vocabulary of split tones and slurs, and restrain his 10-finger abilities.

"Ornette hadn't used keyboards since '59," adds Rosenberg, "but he seemed to feel sufficient time had passed. He said with the introduction of synthesizers, 'The piano grew up.' David broadens our horizons, our multi-timbral and pitch possibilities."

Rosenberg was recommended to Ornette in '88, and after unusual auditions (once he improvised with Ornette on a Bach cello suite), suggested his duet partner Wessel for the "funk-bebop guitar chair." Both guitarists have advanced degrees from the Manhattan School of Music; prior to Prime Time both were mid-level freelancers, Rosenberg arranging for music-theater actors (his wife's one), Wessel touring with Arthur Prysock's organ trio.

"Ornette gets you beyond licks and bags, to play yourself," Wessel asserts. "It's been good for me—I have more of my own voice than I did a couple years ago." He says, though, nothing's gained without struggle.

"Ornette likes the background of information and density. With seven people improvising spontaneously, you get some very exciting peaks, and also the opposite. It's a challenge to play, and also to listen to. You can't predict the next thing, but if you open yourself up, it takes you where you've never been in a concert before."

Even Badal Roy—the resolutely *un*-traditional tablaist of Miles Davis' early '70s albums, Mahavishnu John McLaughlin's *My Goals Beyond*, and Dave Liebman's underrated *Lookout Farm*—must stretch in Prime Time.

"With Miles it was: start now, play one line, *groove*. Hold that one line on tabla," says Roy, who's naturally cheerful and grounded. "Ornette wants me to never play the same thing more than four times. I can get a groove going, but he says, 'I'm always changing; keep playing so I can keep playing around you.' For Ornette, 30 seconds of the same thing is too long."

Coleman admits no "same thing." As Bryant suggests, "A lot of what Ornette freed up with his acoustic quartet was about soloing without chord changes. With Prime Time, he's using the techniques for soloing without changes for orchestral purposes."

Or as 30-year-old bassist Al MacDowell (who Ornette snatched out of high school in 1975) says, "Harmolodics is music *before* it's orchestrated. Jazz is live composing on the spot; harmolodics is that, but even with a melody, it's not what you can play according to somebody else. If Ornette plays a C, he may be in C maj, but maybe C min or F; and he might be playing any of three clefs. Harmolodics is my interpretation of what his playing possibilities are." MacDowell's debut album, *Time Peace* (Gramavision 79450), features both his own band, Time Peace, the Colemans, and PT alumni.

Since Bryant replaced bassist Chris Walker, Prime Time's become lighter, calmer, more transparent. As individuals, they're directed to play independently of each other rather than lock into traditional functions and musical relationships, but they don't just spin in their own circles. With Ornette at its hub, Prime Time creates a sphere of sound that inflates to envelope the listener. And it's more than a soap bubble: Coleman's band makes music of substance. The time's nigh, if not prime, to hear it. **DB**

PRIME TIME'S EQUIPMENT

Chris Rosenberg uses two guitars: a Gibson Barney Kessel model and an Alvarez electric classical guitar. "I have some processing, some effects—a chorus, distortion, and compressor," he says, "but I really prefer a clear and clean sound." Kenny Wessel plays a Sadowsky Stratocaster-like guitar custom built by the Manhattan luthier who's worked on his instruments for a decade. Its features include three DiMarzio pickups, split single or double coil in any combination. He uses a Gallien-Krueger amp or goes directly into the sound board; he has a Proco Rat Distortion box, Alesis Microverb, Boss delay, and chorus flange pedal by TC Electronics of Sweden—"A low-tech setup in today's guitar-player world."

Al MacDowell's custom Steinberger electric bass, full-bodied, white, with a whammy bar, is graphite, which mutes resonance and overtones. "Even if you drop it down a flight of stairs, it won't go out of tune," he says. Playing lead bass with his own group, MacDowell uses a Yamaha equalizer, DIG delay, and compressor through a 1200-volt amp; with Prime Time he plugs into smaller Gallien-Kruegers. Keyboardist David Bryant plays a Korg Sampling grand piano, with 88 weighted keys—"It samples electric piano sounds and other sounds, too"—plus an Oberheim Matrix 6—"for ballads, sustained strings, ethereal sounds"—MIDI-ing between them on a Roland D-550. In New Orleans with Prime Time and on gigs with his trio Shock Exchange, he's carried a Korg BX3 organ. Badal Roy plays "at least five right-hand drums, which are called tabla, tuned CDGF and A^b—Ornette plays in A^b a lot—and two bayan, left hand, bass drums, which I don't tune to pitches, but should give a bass sound that touches my heart."

Denardo Coleman's combination acoustic-electric drum kit has evolved since he toured the Simmons electric drum plant in England in 1983. "When samplers first hit, they were for keyboards, so I adapted keyboard technology to percussion," he says. He employs conventional snare and kick drums, and cymbals, but uses up to a dozen electronic pads as triggers for samples he takes of sounds he "finds interesting." Denardo's hardware includes an Akai F900 sampler, Ensonic EPM sampler programmed to interface with an Eltocon hard drive, a Roland MC-500 sequencer, Akai MV 76 automated MIDI mixer, Akasi PEQ 6 equalizer, Yamaha XPS 90 sound processor (a standard unit with delays and reverb), Octapads for program changes, and Roland drum pads for triggering assorted electronics. It all goes through a Roland PM-16-to-two channel mixer for what's sent to the sound board.

Prime Time has a custom-built Nemesis monitor system, originally developed for studios by a British firm (and, according to Denardo, "aptly named"). Through it, each member of Prime Time dials up his own mix "for more sensitive listening."

record & cd reviews

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



BRANFORD MARSALIS

CRAZY PEOPLE MUSIC—Columbia CK 46072: *SPARTACUS*; *THE DARK KNIGHT*; *WOLVERINE*; *MR. STEEPEE*; *ROSE PETALS*; *RANDOM ABSTRACT (DIDDLE-IT)*; *THE BALLAD OF CHET KINCAID*. (64:39 minutes)

Personnel: Marsalis, tenor and soprano sax; Bob Hurst, bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums; Kenny Kirkland, piano.

★★★★ ½

What a difference a couple of years makes! Go back and listen to the opening cut from Branford's 1987 album, *Renaissance* (Cole Porter's "Just One Of Those Things"). Then check out the opening cut from his 1988 album, *Random Abstract* (Wayne Shorter's "Yes And No"). Sounding rushed, frantic, and mechanical, you'd think he was getting paid by the note on those sessions.

What happened in between those overly-eager, coming-of-age outings and this more mature offering was last year's pivotal *Trio Jeepy*, the album that taught Branford Marsalis how to relax (best exemplified by the cuts "Housed From Edward" and "Gutbucket Steepy"). Though *Jeepy* was panned in these pages (see "Reviews" Oct. '89), that trio session with Milt Hinton and Jeff Watts was an important experiment for the young tenor player, functioning as a kind of deprogramming from the cult of technique. Now Branford applies some of those lessons learned on *Crazy People Music*, his most fully self-realized statement to date.

From the first few notes of "Spartacus," the album's energized opener, you can immediately hear the difference. Rather than racing through scales in clinical fashion, he takes his time, breathing more easily, and phrasing more vocally. His tone is warmer, his sound broader than in past outings. He still tends to wrap himself in Coltrane's sheets of sound, as on "Mr. Steepee" (very reminiscent of "Mr. P.C." in the opening bars) and on "Random Abstract (Diddle-It)," but there's a depth of emotion and introspection in his playing now (particularly on Hurst's moody "The Dark Knight" and Keith Jarrett's "Rose Petals") that was strangely lacking on both *Renaissance* and *Random Abstract*. His sense of humor is also in big supply on the album's two soprano vehicles, the jauntily "Wolverine" (dig the quote from "Shortnin' Bread") and a sly reworking of "The Ballad Of Chet Kinkaid," theme song for Bill Cosby's '69-'71 sitcom.

Whereas on *Random Abstract*, Branford was "doing" Trane, Wayne, and Bean, this time out he reveals himself. There's a newfound self-assuredness in his playing here, and plenty of

heart. In short, *Crazy People Music*, his sixth outing for Columbia, is the closest that Branford has come to finding his own voice. (reviewed on CD)
—Bill Milkowski



ED THIGPEN

YOUNG MEN AND OLDS—Timeless CD SJP 330: *STRIKE UP THE BAND*; *YESTERDAYS*; *SUMMERTIME*; *NIGHT AND DAY*; *SCRAMBLE*; *SHUFFLIN' LONG*; *OH MY GOSH*; *DARK BEFORE THE DAWN*; *I SHOULD CARE*. (58:41 minutes)

Personnel: Thigpen, drums; Branford Marsalis, tenor saxophone; Bill Easley, soprano, alto saxophones; Terence Blanchard, trumpet; Sir Roland Hanna, Ronnie Mathews, piano; Rufus Reid, bass; Bobby Thomas Jr., percussion.

★★★★

Presumably recorded last year following a celebrated stint at the Village Vanguard (see "Caught" July '89), Ed Thigpen's *Young Men And Olds* crew is identical save for the fine addition of Bill Easley on alto and soprano, Sir Roland Hanna and Ronnie Mathews taking their turns at the piano. The band gelled then, and they gel here on a set of standards, three by Thigpen, and Mathews' "Dark Before The Dawn."

Ever the supportive rhythm player, Thigpen the leader sets the stage for well-played solos throughout. Reid is equally sensitive in helping to make this session sound like it was produced by an ongoing working band. Marsalis sounds relaxed, almost Beanesque, particularly when the tempos are lilting, as on "Night And Day." Blanchard's controlled tone works well against Marsalis in this regard (note the tempered-yet-flared blowing on "Strike Up The Band," a tune not thought of as a jazz number, per se). In fact, one might say the most distinctive sound to be found on *Young Men* is the unison lines Blanchard and Marsalis provide.

Thigpen's three pieces ("Scramble," "Shufflin'," and "Oh My Gosh"), set as they are roughly halfway into the program, can be seen as a sort of breezy, lighthearted spin through straightahead, r&b/funk, and Latin idioms, respectively. Thigpen's solos, unfortunately, are few and relatively brief, as on "Oh My Gosh" (in tandem with Thomas).

Both Mathews and Hanna know the territory well, supporting one moment leading the next. Each offers finessed, solid playing.

Thigpen's tasteful, swinging, sensitive, and well-recorded drums continue to amaze. Not a player given to flash and chops, his style remains thoroughly eloquent and is a testimonial to all drummers that listening comes first.



TEXAS TORNADOS

TEXAS TORNADOS—Reprise 9 26251-2: *WHO WERE YOU THINKIN' OF*; *(HEY BABY) QUE PASO*; *LOREDO ROSE*; *A MAN CAN CRY*; *SOY DE SAN LUIS*; *ADIOS MEXICO*; *IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE THINKING*; *SHE NEVER SPOKE SPANISH TO ME*; *DINERO*; *BABY! HEAVEN SENT ME TO YOU*. (31:36)

Personnel: Doug Sahn, vocals, piano, bajo sexto, acoustic and electric guitars; Augie Meyers, vocals, Vox organ, Hammond B-3 organ, accordion; Freddy Fender, vocals, electric guitar; Flaco Jimenez, vocals, Horner Corona diatonic accordion; Ernie Durawa, drums, tambourine; Mike Buck, George Rains, drums; Richard Bennett, electric guitar, acoustic guitar, requinto; Louis Ortega, electric guitar, background vocals; Derek O'Brien, electric guitar; Jimmy Day, steel guitar; David Grissom, acoustic guitar; Speedy Sparks, Louis Terrazas, Jack Barber, bass; Oscar Tellez, bajo sexto; Luis Bustos, baritone sax and tenor sax; Charles McBurney, trumpet; Rocky Morales, tenor sax.

★★★★

SANTIAGO JIMENEZ

EL MERO, MERO DE SAN ANTONIO—Arhoolie CD-317: *ESTER DE MI AMOR*; *LOS BARRANDALES DEL PUENTE*; *PA QUE ANDAS DICHIENDO*; *CHIPINA*; *MORENA*, *MORENITA*; *CALIFORNIA POLKA*; *FLOR DEL DALIA*; *PORQUE ERES MUJER CASADA*; *EL ALACRAN*; *POR QUIEN ME DAJAS*; *TEJANO HUAPANGO*; *LOS HUAJOLOTES*; *CADA VEZ QUE LA TARDE*; *NEGRA AUSENCIA*; *ROSA DE SAN ANTONIO*; *MERCADO EL PASO*; *EL TONO DE MI RANCHO*; *POR TI MUJER*; *CUMBIA NORTEÑA*; *AUTOTONILICO*; *TIENES QUE PAGAR*; *VIVA SEGUIN*. (66:43)

Personnel: Jimenez, Jr., diatonic accordion, vocals; Juan Vieca, string bass (1-17); Mauricio Balderas, bass (18-22); Juan Arocha, vocals; Juan Garcia, bajo sexto; Juan Bosquez, drums.

★★★★

The impetus for this excellent album of songs by Texas Tornados (a supergroup of border-country greats: Flaco Jimenez, Doug Sahn, Augie Meyer, and Freddy Fender) was a one-time gig (billed as a Tex-Mex Revue) they played together last December at Boz Scaggs' club in San Francisco. It was the first time all four shared a stage. The magic and fun they and their audiences experienced in those shows translates exceptionally well onto this

studio disc that is a rich mix of Tex-Mex, country, blues, and rock styles.

Each artist is a headliner in his own right—Sahm and Meyers, a potent one-two combo in the '60s pop act Sir Douglas Quintet before embarking on solo careers; Fender, a Tex-Mex country star; and Jimenez, the son of norteño music pioneer Santiago Jimenez and internationally renowned exponent of the accordion-anchored genre—and rightfully each takes his turn in the spotlight here. The slow, blues-drenched country tunes "A Man Can Cry" and "If That's What You're Thinking" are classic Fender. Sahm rocks on "Adios Mexico" and "Who Were You Thinkin' Of" (the latter given the Sir Douglas trademark Vox organ treatment by Meyers), and Meyers winds up and uncorks a couple of his own romping numbers. And in the album's spicy Tex-Mex centerpiece number, "Soy de San Luis," Jimenez (why in the world is he only playing on five of the 10 tunes?) unleashes a squeezebox storm with rippling rhythms and spine-tingling high-note sustains. The biggest flaw in this album is its brevity.

For listeners who like their conjunto (aka norteño, aka Tex-Mex) music straight, Arhoolie has released a new CD compilation of previously released and unissued polkas, rancheras, cumbias, and waltzes by Flaco's brother, Santiago, Jr. Not only is the collection superb cantina dancing music, but this more traditional slant on Tex-Mex is perfect for Sunday morning listening (more spirit and rapture than a Brandenburg concerto). Even the slow waltzes, especially the tango-tinted "Negra Ausencia," are infused with joy. Santiago expressively soars on his accordion on the rancheras and flies through percussive frills on the cumbias and haupangos. Band members are top-notch: Juan Viesca thumps the strong bass lines on his string bass while Juan Garcia drives the uptempo pieces into a stampede with his galloping strums played on the bajo sexto (a heavy 12-string guitar). But the best of the batch are the five polkas that are so festive and fast, it's near impossible to not get swept up in the ecstasy. (reviewed on CD)

—Dan Ouellette

KEITH JARRETT PARIS CONCERT

KEITH JARRETT

PARIS CONCERT—ECM 839 173-2: OCTOBER 17, 1988; *THE WIND; BLUES*. (50:19 minutes)

Personnel: Jarrett, piano.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

FORT YAWUH—MCA/Impulse 33122: (*IF THE MISFITS (WEAR IT); FORT YAWUH; DE DRUMS; STILL LIFE, STILL LIFE*. (41:40)

Personnel: Jarrett, piano, tamborine, soprano saxophone; Dewey Redman, tenor saxophone, Chinese musette, maracas; Charlie Haden, bass; Paul Motian, drums, percussion; Danny Johnson, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ½

The Impulse reissue of *Fort Yawuh* on CD is quite welcome, because this Jarrett band raised hell. The bass and drum accompaniment to the leader's solo on "Misfits" is perfectly out of sync, and Redman's story is told in its

own time, too. They prove how well they can play "against" each other again on the title track, headed in separate directions, so it seems, but rolling it into one musical statement. Jarrett's soprano takes hold and gives the proceedings a good shake.

Haden and Motian are an exceptionally swinging rhythm section, whatever type feel they're playing. They just seem to coast over the gospel-funk groove of "De Drums." Jarrett starts "Still Life, Still Life" with a beautiful solo. The entry of the band pumps the intensity up further, as these players take nothing for



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granted, and interpret this music with a special flair. Recorded at the Village Vanguard before what sounds like a very intimate gathering, this is a nice reminder.

As expressive and powerful as his group was, Jarrett has been known to generate the same emotional outpourings in solo concert. And on CD you can hear all of him—the grunts, whistles, and moans—on *Paris Concert*. It's very personal. About 11 minutes into the 37-and-a-half minute "October 17, 1988" (the date of the show), Jarrett is totally engrossed in it, vocalizing a separate soulful soundtrack that punctuates his piano line.

Classical elements act like an ether sweeping over, while minutes later the pounding low chords get harmonic juices mingling. Laying a powerful rolling undergroove with his left hand, Jarrett amazes with his far-flung right-hand explorations. There are moon missions, jungle treks, and hot desert caravans that never seem to run dry of ideas. It's an amazing piece.

Although Jarrett gives about everything he has on "October 17, 1988," he completes the CD with a Russ Freeman/Jerry Gladstone piece, "The Wind," and a blues. "The Wind" is a shorter, lighter-spirited tune that still grants the pianist room to breathe. Even on "The

Blues," what comes through as much as the man's heart (sizeable) may be the discipline, the value put on each note. This is what too much of the Noodle Age stuff isn't—provocative. (reviewed on CD) —Robin Tolleson

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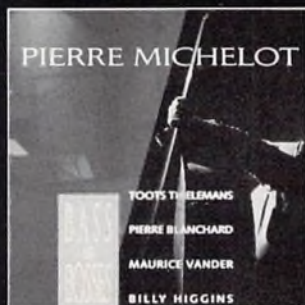
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C. Escoude, France's guitar master with the unique style that blends the soulful gypsy warmth of swinging groove of Wes Montgomery.



JAZZ PASSENGERS

IMPLEMENT YOURSELF—New World/CounterCurrents NW398-2: *You're The Fool; Cha-Ha; Little Italy (La Passione); The Faker; Seven Guys With A Reason; Augie The Rat; Peace In The Valley; March 19th; Indian Club Bombardment; Easy To Love.* (51:39 minutes)

Personnel: Roy Nathanson, tenor, alto saxophone, clarinet; Curtis Fowlkes, trombone, vocals; Jim Nolet, violin; Marc Ribot, guitar, e-flat horn; Bill Ware, vibes; Brad Jones, bass; E. J. Rodriguez, drums, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ½

Collectively, the Jazz Passengers can build up a head of steam, raise a ruckus, ooze into ultra-cool, but nothing ever stays the same for too long. They're proficient soloists, but this really isn't a blowing band—they prefer to set the listener into a fun house mise-en-scene. This is songwriting as shock tactics. They'd be the perfect pit band for "Follies From Hell" (see "Riffs" June '90).

Examples: "You're The Fool" starts out as a languid tango that eventually segues into a gnawing staccato interlude that leads into Fowlkes crooning and band vocal interjections. "Little Italy" recreates the New York neighborhood as a Morricone merry-go-round of sound sources—some environmental ambiance, an electric mandolin, bells from an ice cream vendor, violin à la Venuti, wah-wah trombone, harsh guitar slashes. . . . Did I make a wrong turn somewhere? On "March 19th," an empathetic trombone/sax duo is interrupted in mid-phrase by nine seconds—*nine seconds*—of the Waldwick High School Marching Band (they're credited in the sleeve). "Peace In The Valley" might be a '90s style "Rockin' In Rhythm" rewritten by Capt. Beefheart.

Sometimes the sudden juxtapositions grow tiresome, and sometimes they're just not weird enough. (I do dig their airy violin/vibes/guitar textures.) They seem to sense the listener's alienation and offer as balm the closing (Cole Porter's) "Easy To Love." Introduced as ". . . a song with a beginning and a middle . . ." they tackle it straightahead, but refuse to let loose of the final vamp. I'm sure they regret that a CD doesn't have run-on grooves like an LP, so the music could go on forever. They may be the Jazz Passengers, but they sure enjoy taking us for a ride. (reviewed on CD) —Art Lange



McCOY TYNER

THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE—Blue Note 7 93598 2: *THE GREETING; NAIMA; I MEAN YOU; HERE'S THAT RAINY DAY; THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE; JOY SPRING; LUSH LIFE; SWEET AND LOVELY; SONG FOR MY LADY; WHAT'S NEW; SEARCH FOR PEACE; BLUES ON THE CORNER; MY ONE AND ONLY LOVE.* (66:08 minutes)
Personnel: Tyner, piano; John Scofield, guitar (cuts 3, 4, 6); George Adams, tenor saxophone (12, 13).

★ ★ ★ ★

PLAYS ELLINGTON—MCA/Impulse 33124:
DUKE'S PLACE; CARAVAN; SOLITUDE; SEARCHIN'; MR. GENTLE & MR. COOL; SATIN DOLL; GYPSY WITHOUT A SONG; IT DON'T MEAN A THING; I GOT IT BAD; GYPSY WITHOUT A SONG (ALTERNATE TAKE). (48:28)
Personnel: Tyner, piano; Jimmy Garrison, bass; Elvin Jones, drums; Willie Rodriguez, Johnny Pacheco, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ½

McCoy Tyner once said, "After a while it [the acoustic piano] becomes an extension of yourself, and you and your instrument become one." On record the providential union was achieved during the five years (1960 to '65) Tyner spent speaking so eloquently in the hallowed John Coltrane Quartet. The reissue *Plays Ellington*, originally released in 1965 as one of four Impulse trio sessions outside the Trane modal-maelstrom, tells of the pianist's restful self. A second recent Tyner CD, *Things Ain't What They Used To Be*, points to the profound maturity of his voice today.

WESTON FOUR DIRECTIONS

by Kevin Whitehead

Pianist **Randy Weston** has recorded his masterpiece—a triptych. Taken together, *Portraits Of Duke Ellington* (Verve 841 312-2; 53:37 minutes: ★★★★★½), *Portraits Of Thelonious Monk* (Verve 841 313-2; 53:01: ★★★★★), and *Self Portraits* (Verve 841 314-2; 49:21: ★★★★★)—recorded in Paris on three consecutive days in June 1989, with bassist Jamil Nasser, jazz drummer Idris Muhammad, and Ghanaian hand-drummer Eric Assante—are both Weston's genealogical chart and a map of the road he's travelled, from New York to North Africa.

Weston doesn't sound like Ellington or Monk, any more than they sound like one another, but it's fair to say Weston bears the same relationship to Monk as Monk does to Duke. All share a diamond-hard attack and lean profile—a highly pianistic approach in which the weight of individual notes is more important than flaunting chops. On the Ellington set, Randy will echo Duke's cavernous bass jabs ("Sepia Panorama"), his twinkling high notes and love of Latin rhythms (the nursery-rhymey "Limbo Jazz," taken as a New Orleans calypso). He can evoke Monk just as deftly, but even where his fingers follow Monk's steps ("Functional"), he doesn't parrot; his voicings and authoritative touch are his own. He plays perhaps the most original take yet on "Misterioso," freely breaking up the schematic rhythm of Monk's familiar walking-sixths. Going against the grain, he lets you hear it afresh; Nasser's steady walking preserves its straight-ahead blues spirit. Like Monk and Duke, Weston knows the infinite malleability of the blues—these are blues records.

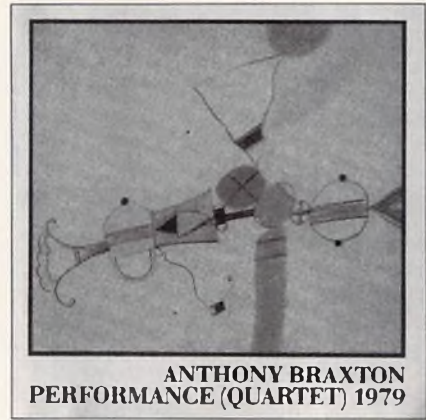
Then there's the other half of his identity—the African qualities born of his years in Tangiers. His band decks him out in African dress: on both tribute albums, he makes his first appearance over two minutes into the openers ("Caravan," "Well, You Needn't"), preceded by the heavy but complex interaction of the dual drummers. His piano follows the drums figuratively as well as literally. (Which is not to sell short Nasser's fat and natural-sounding bass, the music's spine. "Functional" best demonstrates his fundamental blues-sense, deep tone, and timbral plasticity.) Weston makes the piano part of a percussion section in which each bandmember has a role to play—witness his own "Portrait Of Frank Edward Weston."

That tune's on *Self Portraits*, the best place to hear how he's absorbed Monk's and Duke's lessons. Randy's "Berkshire Blues" has a Monkish trajectory, but he also plays barrelhouse phrases that reach far back beyond either pianist. A couple of solo tracks are as pretty as Ellington piano ballads, but more dark, less delicate; on "Gawana In Paris," he flies over a hypnotic, camel-trot bass vamp.

Jazz A La Bohemia (OJC 1747; 45:38: ★★★★★), recorded live in 1956, catches Weston at a formative stage. The Monkish tendencies are already in evidence ("Just A Riff"); the dancing calypso "Hold 'Em Joe" foreshadows his African-percussive phase; Randy's "Chessman's Delight" could pass for a tune by the era's other great hard-edged pianist, Herbie Nichols. But on the ageless ballad "Once In A While," his filigrees behind Cecil Payne's bari sax remind us Weston was then in the thrall of Art Tatum; he has some of Art's busy tics but not the redeeming dazzle. The muffled sound favors neither Weston, Payne, nor drummer Al Dreares, but Ahmed Abdul-Malik's walking bass is up front. Weston '56 was a pianist of promise; Weston '89 is a master. (all reviewed on CD)

DB

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—Art Lange/February 1990



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The 25-year-old Tyner brings to his translations of Ellington songs suggestions of the technique and certitude that would ensure his place in the jazz piano pantheon. While hearing chords in modern terms, he holds a certain reverence for the Ducal melodies, and his improvisations shy away from taking risky routes. Swingly abetted by fellow Tranemen Elvin Jones and Jimmy Garrison, Tyner gives more expression to radiant impulses than to those complex, light-dark recesses of being. This well-done and orderly album—where the featured musician wears the influences of Art Tatum, Bud Powell, T. Monk, Duke, Trane—is ruffled only by the CD bonus track "It Don't Mean A Thing," which the mighty threesome plangently push till its fade.

Twenty-five years later, Tyner bores into Mercer Ellington's "Things Ain't What" using runs in the treble and sinistral chord declamations to open Chinese boxes of controlled passion.

This '90s Blue Note recording proffers interpretations of several more jazz warhorses and the occasional original. These loom collectively as testimony of his great facility and emotional largess. Tyner and Steinway go it alone for the bulk of the program, creating and resolving tension within a personalized language informed by the blues, gospel, and Harlem stride. A more peaceable player the last decade or so, Tyner's contemplations here are unequivocal and involving ("Search For Peace"). The Tynerish clichés of recent times—stylized clusters, mechanical runs, etc.—are generally held in check. And unlike last year's *Revelations*, he's sometimes joined by other musicians—two equals. John Scofield's guitar enriches three duets. Ol' crony George Adams' questing tenor goads Tyner on the pianist's "Blues," then sighs unsentimental disclosures of romance during "My One And Only Love." (reviewed on CD) —*Frank-John Hadley*

MAGNA CARTER

by Owen Cordle

A couple of new duet albums and a reissue of quasi-avant garde music from 1961 give us a portrait of **Ron Carter**, the bassist with the huge wow-ing sound and well-constructed lines. It's largely a pleasing portrait, reminding us of the rhythmic and tonal qualities he developed in the Miles Davis Quintet of the mid-'60s, the sensitivity he's brought to his frequent duets with guitarist Jim Hall, and the sense of direction he's exhibited in his own bands. Taken together, these albums show how far Carter has come in making the bass a solo and conversational voice.

With tenor saxophonist Houston Person on *Something In Common* (Muse MCD 5376; 51:19 minutes: ★★★★★½), he expresses everything with clarity and assured logic. Person plays directly and simply, leaving big holes for the bassist to fill. This leads to a synergistic relationship. Carter becomes a complete rhythm section behind the saxophonist—much more than just a bassist walking, but never a garrulous competitor. The duo likes the blues (Sonny Rollins' "Blue Seven" and their improvised "Blues For Two"), bebop ("Joy Spring" and "Anthropology"), and good ballads ("I Thought About You," "Good Morning Heartache," et al.). Then there's "Mack The Knife," easily an abused song on the lounge circuit, but here suggestive of the declamatory strength and swinging impulse of Rollins & co. on *Saxophone Colossus*. Neither participant stumbles on the album, a feat all the more impressive because of Person's unadorned approach.

Carter's sense of order and textural variety also prevail on *Duets* (EmArcy 838 097 2; 49:11: ★★★★★), an album with vocalist Helen Merrill and, occasionally, percussionist Victor See-Yuen. The singer's voice is all nuanced melody, willowy phrasing, and sensual tone on "I Fall In Love Too Easily," "A Child Is Born," "Autumn Leaves," "My Funny Valentine," and others



TOM COPI

of similar import. Cat-like vocal steps meet giant slides, earth-shaking vibrato, gliding double stops, and fat phrases in the bass. There's a bow to the avant garde on "I Don't Stand A Ghost Of A Chance With You," with Carter conjuring up the spirits of the title. Throughout the album, Ms. Merrill is an actress with words and melody, hip but never self-congratulatory. She doesn't take the same risks that Sheila Jordan takes in the voice-and-bass context, but she and Carter fill up the music very well.

The earlier album, *Where* (New Jazz OJCCD-432-2; 36:08: ★★), shows an incompletely formed Carter on both bass and cello in the company of reedman Eric Dolphy, pianist Mal Waldron, bassist George Duvivier, and drummer Charli Persip. Carter's bowed solos sound muddy and his pizzicato playing lacks the mature definition and sureness of his later work, but he was a comer even then. Dolphy, on alto sax, bass clarinet, and flute, is characteristically explosive, but ultimately only so-so here. Waldron is wry, Duvivier solid and sure-footed, Persip busy and happy. The music (two tunes by Carter, two by Randy Weston, Sy Oliver's "Yes, Indeed," and the standard "Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise") purports to be eclectic with avant garde leanings. In retrospect, Carter and the music have grown. (all reviewed on CD) **DB**



RONNIE EARL & THE BROADCASTERS

PEACE OF MIND—Black Top BT 1060: *I WANT TO SHOUT ABOUT IT; I WISH YOU COULD SEE ME NOW; PEACE OF MIND; T-BONE BOOGIE; WAYNE'S BLUES; BONEHEAD TOO; MORE THAN I DESERVE; CAN'T KEEP FROM CRYING; I CRIED MY EYES OUT; NO USE CRYING; STICKIN'; WAYWARD ANGEL.* (48:22 minutes)

Personnel: Earl, guitar; Darrell Nulisch, vocals, harmonica; Tony Zamagni, organ; Dave Maxwell, piano; Steve Games, bass; Per Hanson, drums; Greg Piccolo, tenor sax; Doug James, baritone sax.

★ ★ ★ ★

You won't hear Ronnie Earl recycling guitar licks from song to song here. He boogies, shuffles, struts, stomps, cooks, and jumps through a variety of blues numbers flavored by Texas, Chicago, and country blues styles and chooses just the right places to sting notes, to spin out frenzied runs, to rifle into an angry wail; to caress chord progressions, and muscle out heavy-toned leads. Plus, he's not afraid to hush his guitar to a whisper, expressing a deep wound and oozing the pain out.

At times this album is solemn, quiet, and painfully introspective, at other moments wild and rowdy; Earl's songs evoke images ranging from dark, smoky, depressing bars thick with the stench of stale beer to lush countryscapes on a lazy humid afternoon. Earl makes you cry listening to a slow number, then transports you out of a blue zone into an ecstatic dance groove with an upbeat boogie.

And while diversity of sound has a lot to do with the success of Earl & Co.'s music, the key to *Peace Of Mind* lies in its integrity. Heart and soul are in these songs, packaged into a collection that both pays homage to Earl's blues godfathers (T-Bone Walker, Muddy Waters, and Buddy Guy, among others) and testifies to his recovery from alcohol and drug abuse.

Performed live in the studio, the album shows off how tight a group he has assembled. Singer Darrell Nulisch (ex-vocalist for Anson Funderburgh and the Rockets) serves up great baritone vocals and Tony Z. sparkles and ripples on organ throughout. But the real story is Earl, who at 37 and with only 15 years of guitar playing under his belt, has been turning the heads of such blues greats as B.B. King and Eric Clapton. His stint in Roomful of Blues didn't hurt, but his r&b mastery comes from more than just a lot of gig-playing and dues-paying. The man is intimate with what it takes to play the blues, a fact that speaks loud and clear in his guitar on this impressive album. (reviewed on CD)

—Dan Ouellette



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PEPPER ADAMS

CONJURATION/FAT TUESDAY'S SESSION—

Reservoir CD 113: CONJURATION; ALONE TOGETHER; DIABOLIQUE II; CLAUDETTE'S WAY; DYLAN'S DELIGHT; DR. DEEP; OLD BALLAD; QUITTIN' TIME; DOBBIN; TIS. (69:13 minutes)

Personnel: Pepper Adams, baritone saxophone; Kenny Wheeler, trumpet and flugelhorn; Hank Jones, piano; Clint Houston, bass; Louis Hayes, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

NICK BRIGNOLA

ON A DIFFERENT LEVEL—Reservoir CD 112: TEARS INSIDE; HOT HOUSE; DUKE ELLINGTON'S SOUND OF LOVE; ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE; BACKWOODS

SONG; KEY LARGO; SOPHISTICATED LADY; SOFTLY AS IN A MORNING SUNRISE. (62:46)

Personnel: Brignola, baritone saxophone; Kenny Barron, piano; Dave Holland, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Though he's been active on the scene for some 30 years, Nick Brignola's only waxed a handful or so of albums as a leader—and I've yet to hear one that's not exciting, or surprising, or both. Possessor of a remarkable, refined technique on an unwieldy horn, he matter-of-factly employs its full range, *musically*, with no jarring shifts of register, no jolting unevenness of tone. But beyond his enormous facility, Brignola emotes; at "up" tempos, he burns.

Here he's put together a hip program—an Ornette blues, a Mingus homage to Ellington, slices of Duke, Dameron, Benny Carter, a couple of standards—full of felicitous touches. "Tears Inside" begins as a baritone/bass duet, segues into a baritone/drum barrage, then the rhythm section kicks in with savage determination. "Hot House" is undiluted bop; "All The Things You Are" inviolate swing. "Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love" oozes romance. And unexpected modulations refresh "Softly As In A Morning Sunrise"—too, the rhythm section lights firecrackers every few bars, and catch the fiery, unfettered bari/drums cadenza (with a debt to Coltrane/Elvin, you bet). Brignola's his usual emphatic self throughout, but if *On A Different Level* is, indeed, on a different level, you can thank his cohorts. Barron's as always consistently interesting; bassist Holland's walking actually *pushes* the music forward, physically; and DeJohnette discovers energizing ways to update his "conservative" role. Mainstreamers, take note.

Ditto the reissue (with 20 additional minutes) of the late, lamented Pepper Adams' *Conjuration*. There's more than a whiff of *deja vu* captured in whatever a CD uses as grooves; by design or serendipity the quintet is reminiscent of the Detroit-laden groups Adams co-led with trumpeter Donald Byrd 25 years earlier (Jones and Hayes make the Motor City connection this time around, and "Tis"—the Adams/Byrd staple—is a dead giveaway). That band debuted with a Five Spot recording; Fat Tuesday's supplies this one's friendly live club ambiance, circa '83.

Adams shared with Brignola definite Coleman Hawkins roots, though his tone grew gruffer with age. He really attacks the bottom end of his axe—the title tune includes bassoon-like inflections. Kenny Wheeler makes a pleasant front-line foil; he's *not* a trumpet technician, but a player of ideas, who bends his adroitness to expressive ends, offering warmth to Pepper's piquancy. And Hank Jones sparkles. Whether the material is a devilishly difficult bop-romp ("Diabolique II"), a bright-tempoed bruiser ("Dobbini"), or one of Adams' noirish, nostalgic waltzes ("Claudette's Way," "Dr. Deep"), the solos are personal, and prime.

In 1977, Adams and Brignola collaborated on a marvelous Beehive LP, *Baritone Madness* ("Donna Lee" remains the ultimate baritone chops-buster). As compatible—and competitive—as their playing was, it's too bad this was a one-shot. Meanwhile, these discs stand as tributes to what was, and to the here-and-now. (reviewed on CD)

—Art Lange

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PUSH & PULL

by Gene Santoro

Don Pullen is turning out to be one of jazz's success stories for the '90s: last year's *New Beginnings* (on Blue Note) garnered reams of positive press (see "Reviews" Oct. '89). But even more important is how Pullen shapes his tender, boppish, gospelly, knuckle-busting, scrubbrush-across-the-keys piano work into a unique, consistent, and challenging voice.

He draws on his roots: early exposure to gospel and blues; classical training; discovery of Ornette and Dolphy; double-life during the '60s as a free pianist and r&b organist; three years with Mingus (who was himself always searching to juxtapose opposites); a decade-long association with George Adams (an unfortunately underrated titan who is no less adept at synthesizing wildly different vocabularies in a single solo; to my ears, he's one of David Murray's prime influences). As Kevin Whitehead noted here last year (DB Nov. '89), "To Don Pullen, playing inside and outside is all one." The three CDs below

show how broad the range implied in that synthesis can be.

1980's *Earth Beams* (Timeless CDSPJ 147; 39:53 minutes: ★★★★★½) captures a lot of the fire Pullen complains got left off other George Adams/Don Pullen albums. While Cameron Brown (one of the countless underrated jazzers) and the late, great Dannie Richmond swell and sway and lope and drive with elastic grace, the group's titular heads mix and matching diverse ideas: the Trane-inspired head of the title track, which finds Adams churning cascades while Pullen darts and feints boppish lines with only a hint of backhand; the skewed balladizing of "Magnetic Love Field," which pits twisty sax bleeps and whinnies and gusts against imploding keyboard yawps.

Pullen's two compositions typify his understated thematic clarity. "Saturday Night In The Cosmos" takes its initial leaf from the book of gospel-derived soul-jazz, but Pullen methodically tears those pages up with his between-the-keys glisses. And "Sophisticated Alice" layers that oh-so-basic Bo Diddley beat with four-way improvising that points back to Mingus and the free era's crosstalking even as Pullen thickens his harmonies within the deceptively simple fingerpopping frame.

This year's *Random Thoughts* (Blue Note CDP 7 94347; 53:14: ★★★★★), like *New Beginnings*, is a trio date, this time with bassist James Genus and drummer Lewis Nash, whose association with McCoy Tyner makes him well-suited to dealing with the percussive techniques Pullen has distilled from his Monk-like search for a way to bend notes on the rigid piano. The expansive title track illustrates Pullen's adroit, witty, rhythmic sophistication in the tension it creates between the deliberately stiff walking bass and the fluidly accenting piano (answered periodically by the drums) cycling and probing—shades of Mingus' "Rotary Perception." Then, too, the flamenco feel of "Indio Gitano" and the self-evident title of the gentle ballad, "The Dancer," underline again Pullen's longstanding fascination with dance, which parallels Cecil Taylor's.

New York Duets (Music & Arts CD 629; 64:00: ★★½), from '89, matches Pullen with classical-pianist-turned-saxist/flutist Jane Bunnett, who's no Dolphy or Adams. Still, there's plenty of adventurous, thundering, and lyrical keyboards surrounding her and on their own. Best moments: Pullen's hilariously skidding opening and solo on "Little Rootie Tootie." (all reviewed on CD) **DB**

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DB-4



STEVE COLEMAN AND FIVE ELEMENTS

RHYTHM PEOPLE (THE RESURRECTION OF CREATIVE BLACK CIVILIZATION)—RCA/Novus 3092-2-N: *RHYTHM PEOPLE; BLUES SHIFTING; NO CONSCIENCE; NEUTRAL ZONE; AIN'T GOIN' OUT LIKE THAT; STEP'N; DANGEROUS; ICE MOVES; THE POSSE; ARMAGEDDON.* (57:44 minutes)

Personnel: Coleman, alto sax and vocals; James Weidman, piano and keyboards; David Gilmore, guitar and guitar synth; Reggie Washington, electric bass; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums;

Robin Eubanks, trombone (cuts 2,4,6,7,10); Dave Holland, acoustic bass (2,5-7); Cassandra Wilson, vocals (10).

★ ★ ★ ★

In his quest to develop a new vocabulary, Steve Coleman seems determined to avoid playing in four at all costs. There's a flawless logic at work here. The mathematical perfection of how the various odd-metered patterns converge and interlock with crisp synchronicity would suggest that this material might have been demo-ed on Coleman's computer. Yet, for all the exacting science and intellect involved, these tunes come off as organic, funky. Good luck trying to find the one, though.

Coleman's provocative compositions are highly evolved vamps that come out of the James Brown "Good Foot" school and are laced with intricate unison lines and polyrhythms, subtle harmonic movement, and disciplined stop-time statements. This is fresh, ear-stretching fare that defies categorization. While Coleman is an extremely fluid alto player who has obviously absorbed the body of work that Charlie Parker left behind, his writing avoids bebop clichés at every turn. He's making rhythmic innovations of his own with a new breed of fusion music that acknowledges Bird as well as Ornette Coleman, J.B., African percussion ensembles, Return To Forever, and Public Enemy.

This material might have come off as sterile and coldly calculated if Coleman had resorted to using sequencers and drum machines. But with Marvin "Smitty" Smith manning the traps, the music breathes and comes to life through his dynamic touch.

The title cut is a menacing take on J.B.'s "Cold Sweat" with Coleman's slippery alto darting in and out of the groove as he plays tag with Gilmore's angular guitar lines. On two numbers, the aggressive "No Conscience" and the edgy funk of "Dangerous," Coleman interjects some arcane rapping on top of the polyrhythms, then answers his own words with some urgent sax work. His best alto showcase comes on "Ain't Going Out Like That," a turbulent odd-metered, funk-based offering propelled by Smitty's heavily syncopated playing and anchored by Dave Holland's round, booming basslines.

Robin Eubanks, who serves as the perfect foil for Coleman's bright alto with his warm-toned trombone, gets to stretch on the molasses-slow "Blues Shifting" then does Fred Wesley proud on the J.B.-inspired funk of "Step'N." Throughout the project, guitarist Gilmore plays several roles, laying down funky rhythm and single-note parts in classic J.B. fashion, playing call-and-response with Coleman's sax and soloing with a MIDI setting that triggers a keyboard note alongside the actual guitar note played, which is best heard on "Ice Moves" and "The Posse." James Weidman's use of piano instead of synth adds warmth to the proceedings, and his spacious comping style (particularly on "Step'N") helps to open up the form and enhance the impact of Coleman's angular horn arrangements.

Well-crafted, expertly executed, full of energy and nuance, Steve Coleman's RCA/Novus debut is the most accomplished project to come out of the M-Base laboratory thus far. (reviewed on CD)
—Bill Milkowski

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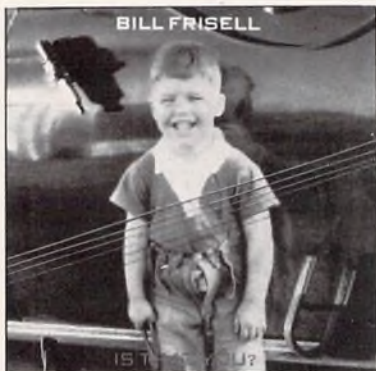
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FLYING DOWN TO RIO

by Larry Birnbaum

The current tide of Brazilian music shows no sign of ebbing; jazz-fusion, especially, has been so swamped that you can't always tell where it leaves off and Brazilian pop begins. Although the Brazilian sound shares an undulating African lilt and a bittersweet European lyricism, there's a variety beneath the surface a batch of recent CD releases can only hint at.

Airto Moreira, Brazil's best-known musical export, has been overshadowed lately by newer faces, but on *Struck By Lightning* (Venture CDVE 44; 48:12 minutes; ★★★★★), he brings a new sophistication to the electrified samba-jazz he helped pioneer. His percussive mastery is undimmed, his mixed Brazilian/American



Airto

band is mahogany-solid, and his English and Portuguese vocals are surprisingly sure-throated (wife Flora Purim sings on the title track). Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock add depth and luster to three Airto-penned tunes.

Herbie Mann brought the bossa nova to the U.S. even before Stan Getz, but blandness prevails on *Caminho De Casa* (Chesky JD40; 53:43; ★★½), Mann's third album with his group Jasil Brazz. Featuring Brazilian guitar ace Romero Lubamba and Sonny Rollins pianist Mark Soskin, it's slickly performed and recorded, with material by some of Brazil's top pop composers, but the cheery charts and Mann's chirpy flute are lighter than life.

Mann's former guitarist **Ricardo Silveira** followed crossover dreams from Rio de Janeiro to Berklee College and then L.A., where he's recorded his latest album. A friend and admirer of Pat Metheny, he threads jazz, funk, and blues licks through *Amazon Secrets* (Verve Forecast 843 602-4; 49:05; ★★★), with star turns by Branford

Marsalis, Don Grusin, and Terri Lyne Carrington. Flashes of inventiveness, rippling and shimmering through glove-tight arrangements of Silveira's satin-smooth compositions, narrowly escape the new-age blahs.

Another of Metheny's friends is **Toninho Horta**, but in this case the admiration is more evenly mutual. Horta's samba schooling shows on Metheny's recent work, while Pat's guest solo on *Toninho Horta* (World Pacific CDP 7 93865 2; 44:50; ★★★★★½) could be confused with one of Toninho's own. Fusion is just one color in Horta's palette, however, and guitar just one of his instruments. A credible pianist and compelling singer/composer, he paints vivid washes of tropical color, with string arrangements as lush and cloying as the Amazon rainforest.

Singer/composer/guitarist **Djavan's** tuneful, rock-flavored style swept Brazil and recently won him a stateside label deal, prompting the rival release of his 1980 album *Seduzir* (World Pacific CDP 7 48206 2; 38:04; ★★★★★). A full-blown pop extravaganza, replete with pan-African hooks, passionate vocals, and colorful, eclectic orchestrations, it captures the peak intensity of his early career. But on his third U.S. album, *Puzzle Of Hearts* (Columbia CK 45435; 40:45; ★★★), the fire burns cooler as he croons recycled melodies in English and Portuguese over his all-Brazilian band's silky fusion textures.

The son of a pop idol, Luiz Gonzaga, Jr., better known as **Gonzaguinha**, grew up in a Rio slum. A superb poet, he sings movingly of love and joy—and of Brazil's African heritage, its endangered ecology, and its homeless street children—on *É* (World Pacific CDP 7 91688 2; 37:40; ★★★★★½), which provides English translations in the liner notes. Rainy, tough/tender vocals and punchy charts rescue even routine material, and on catchy gems like "Tancara" and "Corações Marginais," Gonzaguinha radiates charisma.

Sao Paulo-born **Ana Caram** was studying in Rio when she was discovered by Antonio Carlos Jobim; she was singing in Finland when she met Paquito D'Rivera, who brought her to New York. Both Jobim and D'Rivera make guest appearances on her U.S. debut, *Rio After Dark* (Chesky JD28; 58:48; ★★★), where she straddles an uneven line between Brazilian and American pop. Her jazzy, scatting vocals soar acrobatically in Portuguese, but her bossa stylings of moon-in-June lyrics in English never get off the ground.

Master guitarist **Luiz Bonfá** applies classical technique to his own jazz- and folk-flavored compositions. *Non-Stop To Brazil* (Chesky JD 29; 46:55; ★★★★★½), his first recording in 15 years, features new and old tunes, including two Bonfá wrote for the film *Black Orpheus*—"Samba De Orfeo" and the classic "Manhã De Carnaval" ("Morning Of Carnival"). At once mellow and mesmerizing, his guitar, once described by Jobim as "a little orchestra," is accompanied only by percussionist Café on all but three tracks.

Bonfá's low-key sophistication influenced **João Gilberto**, whose haunting version of "Manhã De Carnaval" can be found on *The Legendary João Gilberto* (World Pacific CDP 7 93891 2; 75:50; ★★★★★). This definitive 38-track collection of the singer/



João Gilberto

guitarist's groundbreaking 1958-'61 recordings also includes the two that kicked off the worldwide bossa craze—"Desafinado" and "Samba De Una Nota Só" ("One Note Samba"). In collaboration with Antonio Carlos Jobim, who had yet to perform his own compositions, Gilberto toned down the percussive bombast of the samba, seasoned it with cool jazz, and added his own intimate, insinuating vocals. The results have never been surpassed.

Gilberto's bossa dominated the Brazilian scene until the late '60s, when an electrified generation of musicians launched the *tropicalia* movement, pumping up the beat and adding influences from the Beatles to Billie Holiday. *Brazilliance: The Music Of Rhythm* (Rykodisc RCD 20153; 68:33; ★★★★★½) is a sampler of the past decade's post-*tropicalia* sounds, featuring some of the same artists as found on David Byrne's *Beleza Tropical*, plus others—like **Martinho Da Vila** and **João Bosco**—of equal stature. Various rhythms are presented, but the stress is on samba, in all its buoyant diversity.

While the samba has overshadowed other Brazilian styles, the mercifully brief fad for the bastardized lambada may have done genuine regional music some good. The squeezebox-powered *forro*, for example, is similar enough to lambada that five songs on the compilation *Asa Branca: Accordion Forro From Brazil* (Rykodisc RCD 20154; 60:31; ★★★★★) are reprised in a final "Bonus Lambada Medley." From its folk-trio origins in Brazil's northeast, *forro* evolved into a somewhat schmaltzy modern pop form, with stars like **Dominguinhos**, whose quavering accordion sometimes suggests Cajun music, and the late **Luiz Gonzaga**, Gonzaguinha's father, whose heart-tugging "Asa Branca" (included here) has become the anthem of the northeast. (all reviewed on CD)

DB

plaints against each other, but nobody deters from their appointed funky task. There are some fine, loose-blowing moments by Brecker that occur after the beat's been completely turned around. The tune uses programmed drums and the considerable synthesizer talents of Jason Miles, and swings like another of JM's projects, Miles Davis' *Tutu*.

While on the prowl in "Minsk," Brecker finds a simple, intriguing melody and isn't afraid to play it three times. His work blending Akai EW1 lines with the tenor are some of the best uses of the new sax technology that I've heard. With the help of Judd Miller's EW1 programming, it sounds like he's playing duets with muted

trumpet at one point. Brecker burns in any situation: ballad, funk, fast, or darker bop, and he seems to enjoy searching for the better solo, the better sound to express himself with.

Drummer Nussbaum really stands out. His duet with Brecker on "Peep" is a highlight. He's got ample power, as he showed with John Scofield's trio (check out *Shinola*), and his loose but determined drive pilots this ship well. Omar Hakim (featuring some very nice brush-work) is always topnotch.

Joey Calderazzo continues to show growth on *Now You See It*, taking some hair-raising rides at the piano. Jim Beard makes good things happen for the band with his synths,

and Victor Bailey, who'd worked with Brecker before in *Steps Ahead*, is a superbly solid and tasty bassist, with no aversion to answering a rhythmic or harmonic challenge.

Producer Don Grolnick's "Dogs In The Wine Shop" gets a different feel by using three percussionists rather than a drummer, and on Beard's "Quiet City," Hakim and Don Alias accompany a sequencer track. The composition is sturdy, but Brecker seems to get off on working with a live drummer. His best playing is on the tracks with the most interaction. There's a lot of "playing" done here with a lot of talented people. (reviewed on CD)

—Robin Tolleson

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VARIOUS ARTISTS

DIX IMPROVISATIONS VICTORVILLE

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Groups: LaDonna Smith/Davey Williams (1-3); Hans Reichel (4,5); Paul Plimley/Lisle Ellis (6); New Winds (7); J.D. Parran/Ned Rothenberg (8); Rothenberg (9); Maggie Nichols/Lindsay Cooper/Irene Schweizer (10).

★ ★ ★ ★

LIVE AT THE KNITTING FACTORY, VOL. 3—

A&M 5299: NOTHING YOU CAN DO CAN HURT ME; DISCUSS IT; BRUXA; INSOMNIA; YOU MUST CHOOSE; THE UGLE WAITER; THE WEDDING DANCE; NOTABILITY; RICTUS; Z.O.G.; OH NO; KANDINSKY. (61:16)

Groups: Doctor Nerve (cut 1); No Safety (2,11); Gentle, Safe and Natural (3); Thomas Chapin Trio (4); Negativland (5); Brandon Ross' The Overflow (6,12); Don Byron Plays the Music of Mickey Katz (7); Marilyn Crispell & Andrew Cyrille (8); Slan (9,10).

★ ★ ★ ★

If you're in the business of presenting wildly diverse music—like the folks at NYC's Knitting Factory, maybe the world's best new-music club, or Quebec's Victoriaville fest, maybe the world's best new-music hoedown—putting out live samplers can be tricky. Do you stitch a crazyquilt that suggests your venue's stretch, or assemble a program that flows from one idea to the next like a good free improvisation? As these discs show, you can do either.

The Knit set rambles all over, from the octet Dr. Nerve's funky minimalism with horn solos, to Negativland's spoken-word tape montages

(taking off from an old anti-pay-TV spiel), to altoist Chapin's hotly vamping, post-free jazz, and the art thrash of the Zorn-fronted trio Slan. Clarinetist Byron snakily blends with Brandon Ross' whining guitar, then steps center-stage to play some of Mickey Katz's laughing klezmer. The album's centerpiece and magnum opus is a cyclonic free improvisation by two masters, drummer Cyrille and pianist Crispell, who very slowly but very firmly step up the energy from start to finish. The sampler is a little uneven—No Safety's skewy pop is featherweight—but that's how things go at the Knit.

Dix Improvisations follows a more easily traced pattern—duo solo duo trio duo solo trio—beginning with the viola/voice & guitar duo of Smith and Williams, free music's most endearing pair. Their miniset deftly moves through atonality, pretty harmony, and deep Delta blues. A three-cut segment starts with the colorful wind trio New Winds (see "Reviews" Dec. '89), and subtracts one member and then another, till you're left with Rothenberg alone, circular-breathing his trancing alto. Where the Knit's cast is mostly NYC-based, the players here are from five countries—the knockabout Plimley/Ellis piano/bass duo is Canada's own. The long, complex, closing voice/reeds/piano improvisation—Cooper plays a mean bassoon—is a paradigm of the disc's, and free music's, careful attention to texture, contrast, and change. Vic'ville's Octoberfests refute the lie that freeplay's day is past. (reviewed on CD)

—Kevin Whitehead



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VARIOUS ARTISTS

SOME OTHER TIME—Triloka 180-2: *BROKEN WING; SUNDAY SONG; ALONE TOGETHER; YOUNG & FOOLISH; LEAVING; IN YOUR OWN SWEET WAY; SOME OTHER TIME; INBORN; PARADOX; MY FUNNY VALENTINE.* (64:20 minutes)

Personnel: Richie Beirach, piano, musical director; Michael Brecker, tenor sax (cuts 2,8); Randy Brecker, trumpet or flugelhorn (1,3,5,6,9,10); George Mraz, bass (1,3-9); Adam Nussbaum, drums (1,3-7,9); John Scofield, guitar (1,5,9).

★ ★ ★ ½

A little skepticism never hurts when dispensed contemplating an album bearing the word *tribute* in its main or secondary title. Sure, the players honoring one musical personage or another (perversely, the deceased get preferential treatment) may be top-drawer, assuredly of good intent, but the proceedings nevertheless usually lack for cogency, organization, artistic judgment, and a sense of discovery. Most salutes belong encased by dusty glass in an unexceptional museum.

Not so *Some Other Time*, a focused and peaceably persuasive studio homage to Chet Baker put together by onetime Baker pianist Richie Beirach and the earnest folks at Triloka. Innately musical, investigating several identified-with-Chet tunes from an unsentimental vantage point, Randy Brecker's brass work moves easefully between rippling affirmation and quiet lyricism; unlike the late trumpeter, he doesn't carry modern malaise in his horns, and this bodes well for us. Brother Mike on tenor gently buoys up "Sunday Song" and "Inborn" with searching, modulated solos that seem woven into the very fabric of the Beirach compositions. The other youngish participants—Beirach, George Mraz, Adam Nussbaum, John Scofield—likewise delineate pleasing musicality and emotional resonance, including, yes, heartfelt regard.

For my taste, the involvement of an older, must-free hand like Gerry Mulligan, George Coleman, or Jimmy Heath would have proved beneficial, perhaps loosening up a few passages of mincing formality, as well as linking the tribute better to the honorable Baker bop past. Plus, hearing Beirach and gifted friends tackle songs composed by Russ Freeman and Dick Twardzik, early Baker associates, might have been most interesting. (reviewed on CD)

—Frank-John Hadley

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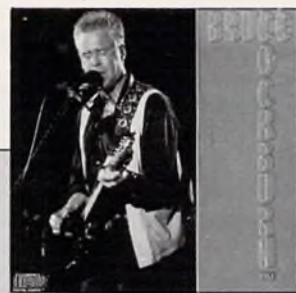
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Personnel: Cockburn, electric and acoustic guitars, harmonica, bodhran, windchimes, lead vocals; Fergus Jemison Marsh, Chapman stick, MIDI stick, background vocals; Michael Sloski, drums, percussion, background vocals.

★ ★ ★ ½

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48

EDDYING FIGURES

by Bill Shoemaker

1991 marks **Anthony Braxton's** silver anniversary in creative music. Only in his mid-40s, Braxton has a staggering oeuvre of 350 compositions and eight volumes of writings. This batch of recent releases, including reissues of two pivotal recordings, covers a contextual spectrum few composer/instrumentalists have examined; yet, it only represents a portion of Braxton's activities.

Braxton's solo alto saxophone music is well-represented by the double-LP-only reissue of the once controversial *For Alto* (Delmark DS-420/421: ★★★★★), and *19 (Solo) Compositions, 1988* (New Albion NA 023 CD; 51:38 minutes: ★★★★★). Though *For Alto* was only Braxton's second recording, his solo vocabulary of multiphonics, pointillistic intervals, and scalar lyricism was already in place. This set of breathy balladic fragments, streams of molten sound, and reconstituted blues elements has stood the test of time. It deserved a digital remastering to eliminate ghosting, as well as a CD issue, neither of which, unfortunately, Delmark provided.

The go-for-broke intensity on much of *For Alto* appears to have been leavened by the years. While *19 Compositions* can't be considered tame, it forwards a more burnished attack, generally shorter durations, and now-familiar materials. Maybe it's a sign of mellowing middle-age that even the Ayleresque plasticity of "106A," the multiphonic densities of "119G," and the buzzing timbre of "118F" fit seamlessly into a program with the supple "138B," which is subtitled not with a descriptive "tripletonic" of "triadic spiral," but with the evocative "African Violets."

While *19 (Solo) Compositions, 1988* is a recommended point of entry for newcomers to Braxton's solo music, *Performance (Quartet) 1979* (hat ART CD 6044; 71:13: ★★★★★) and *Eight (+3) Tristano Compositions 1989* (hat ART CD 6052; 74:56: ★★★★★) serve the same function for, respectively, Braxton's quartet music and his work "in the tradition." *Performance* is a concert excursion through some of Braxton's most robust, witty, and colorful compositions from the '70s. The exuberant virtuosity and humor of trombonist Ray Anderson, the pyrotechnics of percussionist Thurman Barker, and the fluent bass of John Lindberg spurred Braxton on at every turn, resulting in a case-in-point for concert recordings.

In a word, the *Tristano* set, a tribute to Warne Marsh, is hot. *Tristano's* compositions are particularly fitting vehicles for Braxton, as their serpentine lines are akin to Braxton's more rococo quartet pieces. But, Braxton transforms these compositions with a palatable emotionalism and a rousing rhythmic drive. His cohorts are equally inspired: Rova's baritoneist John Raskin revels in the idiom, pianist Dred Scott's extraordinary debut is marked by quicksilver solos and two-fisted comping, and Cecil McBee and Andrew Cyrille are their typically masterful selves. This is the best of Braxton's jazz repertoire recordings.

Seven Compositions (Trio) 1989 (hat ART

CD 6025; 58:21: ★★★★★) is built upon the fluid, conversational interaction between Braxton, drummer Tony Oxley, and bassist Adelhard Roidinger. The program of Braxton pieces, mainly from his quartet book, a "post-diatonic" Oxley original, and a rummaging of "All The Things You Are," has a loose, simmering feel, due, in large part, to the non-stop patter of Oxley, a Euro-pioneer in propelling an ensemble with coloration and microscopic detail. Though it is titled *Seven Compositions*, this program really showcases Braxton the improviser.

The piano has a strong, important role in Braxton's musical evolution—his first catalogued composition is for solo piano, and he reportedly plays in a fluent, transmogrified lounge style. *Compositions 99, 101, 107 & 139* (hat ART CD 6019; 68:30: ★★★★★) and *Duets Vancouver 1989* (Music & Arts CD-611; 45:27: ★★★★★) feature exceptional performances by, respectively, Marianne Schroeder and Marilyn Crispell. Schroeder's reading of "139" reveals Braxton's notated pieces for solo piano to have a fully-realized, post-serial identity, flush with eddying figures and surprising shifts in mood and texture; her authoritative presence is also felt in duet with Braxton ("101"), and in their trio with trombonist Garrett List ("107").

Crispell ups the ante in her approach to Braxton's music, as her gifts as a composer/improviser, combined with her bracing, conservatory-correct technique, account for a command of Braxton's music that no other pianist has as consistently demonstrated. Her pace-setting performance on the non-stop *Duets Vancouver 1989* has a palpable energy. It's this quality that prompts occasional comparisons to Cecil Taylor; but, throughout this program, Crispell's motivic orientation and tactical use of clusters, crossovers, and percussive octaves are clearly her own.

Braxton's tenure at Mills College created a proximity to the members of Rova that resulted in two contrasting CDs: a powerful program with the entire quartet, *The Aggregate* (Sound Aspects SAS CD 023; 69:03: ★★★★★), and a more low-keyed encounter with now-former Rova altoist Andrew Voigt, *Kol Nidre* (Sound Aspects SAS CD 031; 35:10: ★★★★★). Clocking in at 46:13, "129" is a huge canvas of bristling structures, animated and sustained by Braxton and Rova's brinkmanship; the full force of Braxton and Rova is room-rattling. Braxton contributed the lively, post-bop "85" and the pliant "87" (both conceived as woodwind/bass duets) to the date with Voigt, who more than holds his own.

Finally, the LP-only *Ensemble (Victoriaville) 1988* (Victo 07; 41:19: ★★★★★) documents the unique benefits and pitfalls of assembling an ensemble of international figures for a one-time-only festival appearance. You can't go wrong with the likes of saxophonist Evan Parker, trombonist George Lewis, trumpeter Paul Smoker, vibist Bobby Naughton, bassist Joelle Leandre, and drummer Gerry Hemingway—their individual strengths carry the elastic reading of "141"; yet, "142" seems like a rough edit. Had Braxton the same rehearsal opportunities with this ensemble as he had with Rova, however, the results would have been legendary. (reviewed on CD except where noted) DB



CECIL TAYLOR

THE EIGHTH—hat Art 2036: *CALLING IT THE 8TH I-III*; *CALLING IT THE 9TH*.

Personnel: Taylor, Bösendorfer piano; Jimmy Lyons, alto saxophone; William Parker, bass; Rashid Bakr, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Eighth is the complete 1982 Freiburger Jazztage performance from which an edited version, *Calling It The 8th* (hat Musics 3508), was released in 1983. Since this is the only recording issued to date of a particularly striking edition of Taylor's Unit, the release of *The Eighth* reconfirms the shamefully inadequate documentation of a national musical treasure.

It is understandable that Gary Giddins should, in his *Village Voice* review, suggest that producer Werner Uehlinger be questioned for his handling of this material: few of Taylor's listeners can afford to indulge in the redundancy of both sets. But what, then, would Giddins prescribe for American producers, whose reissue programs he consistently praises, for failing to record new Taylor material for almost a decade? The handling of this excellent concert recording, apparently a mixture of marketing convenience and an archival urge, is somewhat beside the point. The point is that we only had to wait three years for the original, a mere wink of the eye in the reissue racket.

The edited version of *Calling It The 8th* proves to be less of a cut-and-paste proposition than expected, the only excision being approximately 25 minutes following the opening vocal chant. Taylor's extended trio passage, which details his rigorous rapport with William Parker and Rashid Bakr, actually succeeds another, more lightning-paced exposition, that is sandwiched by two arguably definitive Jimmy Lyons solos. Still, the editing radically altered the piece's structure, and truncated Lyons' central role.

Both albums have the unedited performance of *Calling It The 9th*, which now seems like a tentative afterthought. Despite its appreciable qualities (including fits-and-starts cadences, plaintive melodic contours, and ruminative pacing), its 11-minute duration is barely time for the Unit to bring the material to the boiling point. As demonstrated by *Calling It The 8th*, it is somewhere beyond this boiling point that Taylor's most potent magic takes hold.

With the untimely death of Jimmy Lyons—a loss that becomes greater with time—*The Eighth* assumes larger proportions. His energy and invention is boundless on this recording, and the restoration of his aforementioned solos is reason enough to seek this album out. Hopefully, hat Art will reissue the remainder of its sizable portion of Lyons' work as a leader, as well.

—bill shoemaker

MAY 1987 DOWN BEAT 27
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EPOCH RECORDS New York NY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 46
Canadian singer/songwriter Bruce Cockburn may not be a household name on the pop music scene, but last year he managed to touch down in 13 countries for over 100 concerts. His latest album, and 19th overall, includes 14 songs recorded from two Toronto shows. It attests to Cockburn's guitar mastery (lots of crisp guitar solos), his brilliance as a poet/lyricist, his non-proselytizing embrace of Christianity, and his unflagging concern for global issues. Plus, Cockburn steps out and injects some humor into the package, most notably by covering Eric Idle's droll ditty, "The Bright Side Of Life," from the Monty Python film *The Life Of Brian*.

There are problems, some of which relate directly to the inherent liabilities of touring with only two accompanists. Background vocals are weak and the tunes where Cockburn blows a harmonica for instrumental variety fall far short of the studio versions from previous albums. To compound the harmonica short-coming, Cockburn botches "Maybe The Poet" by giving it a new, rock-out arrangement. However, these lapses are minor. Cockburn's guitar work on "Tibetan Side Of Town" is absolutely dazzling and he unleashes sparkling fretwork on the buoyant "See How I Miss You."

Interestingly enough, one of the highlights, "Silver Wheels," a jazz-inflected tune with well-crafted lyrics, was written 14 years ago (right after the release of Cockburn's first live collection, *Circles In The Stream*). It's an exquisite reminder that he's no new kid on the scene but a veteran tunesmith. (reviewed on CD)

—Dan Ouellette



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Personnel: Hal Willner, producer; various others.

★ ★ ★ ★

Hal Willner is probably best known for reimagining the music of underappreciated composers in oddball ways. This album is something quite different. Carl Stalling started as a theater organist, wrote the soundtrack for the first sound animation, Walt Disney's "Steamboat Willie," convinced Disney to launch his "Silly Symphony" series, and was hired by Warner Bros., the producers of *Looney Tunes*, in 1936. From then until his retirement in 1958, Stalling ransacked Warners' vast library of pop tunes and, with a full orchestra at his disposal—and sometimes as little as a week to score six minutes of animation—turned into a major cutup.

Willner has taken Stalling's incidental music and edited various pieces of it together to create and sustain moods, feels, ideas. It takes a while—if you're a *Looney Tunes* fanatic like I am—for the music to detach itself from the cartoon images it's always accompanied, but Willner's success comes in how he manages to allow it to do just that. Once that happens, you're hooked: the zany sense of humor shaping goofy, sharp-eared parodies of everything from classical-music motifs to swing-era ditties, the strange voicings and choices of instruments subverting rules and expectations. No wonder John Zorn, Mr. Musical Jumpcut, thinks Stalling is one of the great 20th-century musical voices.

Which is Willner's point. Like Nino Rota, Ennio Morricone, and Henry Mancini, Stalling isn't thought of as a "serious" composer because the literati think the medium he worked in is trash. But the best thing about music—about culture in general—is that it doesn't respect artificial boundaries between "high" and "low." The best thing about Stalling is that he keeps cracking you up even if you take his music seriously. (reviewed on cassette)

—Gene Santoro

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TRANE WRECKS

by Kevin Whitehead

In one sense, no artist has been better served by the CD reissue boom than **John Coltrane**—the Fantasy and Impulse catalogs alone brim with his stuff. But he hasn't been well-served by nostalgic/expedient CD facsimiles of old LPs, since so many Trane LPs were compiled from various sessions. By now—several reissue cycles after their first release—we deserve definitive Coltranes that unsnarl the jumble. At the very least, those old albums should be supplemented on CD by available alternates or unreleased takes from the same sessions. Will no label do for Coltrane what Verve and Savoy have done for Bird?



CHARLES STEWART

The CD Coltrane "Live" *At The Village Vanguard* (MCA/Impulse 39136; 36:33: ★★½) demonstrates what not to do. Trane's epic week at the club in November 1961 yielded 22 tracks, 17 of which were eventually scattered over more than 10 sides. At the very least, MCA could have dipped into the pool to fill out this three-cut program, meagre even by LP standards. The comprehensive, chronological issue of all the Vanguard material fans have requested remains elusive. An MCA publicist says it's not scheduled for release anytime soon; a query whether such a set is planned or in production went unanswered.

The verbatim replication of the old liner notes and credits means Reggie Workman is still misidentified as the bassist on "Chasin' The Trane"; as discographer David Wild pointed out in notes to a '70s compilation, it's really Jimmy Garrison. Having let stand what needed changing, MCA screwed with what should have been left alone: the sound. None of the CDs surveyed have been remixed, but most have been re-equalized, to beef up the highs and lows. Usually the difference from the old LP is negligible or distracting. Here Elvin Jones' cymbals are overemphasized, on "Chasin'" especially, and the bass is boomy.

What makes sloppy treatment so vexing is the music's classic status. (The star rating averages the music's quality with how well it's been reissued.) The Trane-Dolphy pairing—Eric plays bass clarinet on "Spiritual"—was dismissed as anarchistic "anti-jazz" by one period critic. Nowadays, it's so easy to hear how the horn players acknowledge McCoy

Tyner's open chords, even neo-cons dig it.

No engineer or producer takes credit for the CD of 1965's *OM* (MCA/Impulse 39118; 29:07: ★½), and no wonder. The old analog sound beats the harsh boom-boom digital, but that ain't the worst of it. This was a one-take, non-stop performance. The original LP faded out at the end of side one and faded up on the flip; there was a slight overlap to preserve continuity. That break could easily have been spliced over for CD. Instead, those fades—with a three-second break between—are reproduced intact. Perhaps someone wanted to stretch the CD's awesome length. Musically,

there's some nicely frantic Trane tenor and inspired nuttiness—someone in the quartet-plus-three (including Pharoah Sanders) uses a baaa-sheep noisemaker, anticipating AACM little instruments—but there's also a lot of filler.

Better sonically and musically is Trane's next recording, *Meditations* (MCA/Impulse 39139; 40:38: ★★½). The sound's unchanged from the LP, save that the CD has been remastered at lower volume. The sextet roils along with more inspiration than the *OM* unit. (The personnel is the quartet plus Pharoah and Rashied Ali—making his first appearance with Coltrane. Ali joins Elvin on drums.) Few free-jazzers top

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Trane for the same sustained heat and passion, though others have been more adept at channeling the music through varied moods and textures. In the late '70s, Impulse issued *First Meditations*, an illuminating quartet version of this music recorded two months earlier. Complete, it would not quite fit on the same disc as this classic version—but the much less in-demand *OM* would have.

Soundwise, 1965's *The John Coltrane Quartet Plays* (MCA/Impulse 33110; 37:46; ★★★½) is unaltered. So is the four-tune program, which has a nice flow, from the "Favorite Thing"-y soprano waltz "Chim Chim Chiree" to the tenor prayer "Song Of Praise." It catches the classic quartet close to its churning, poly-rhythmic, powerful but tender peak. Still, why not include the "Chiree" and "Nature Boy" alternates and Anthony Newley's "Feelin' Good" from the same sessions? (The latter two were on a '70s anthology.) One suspects the people at MCA—like folks at at least one other major—don't know what's in their own vaults. (When they put both volumes of *Africa Brass* on one CD, they still left off a Cal Massey piece from same the session—released on a '70s twofer—which would have fit as well.)

Musically, 1963's *Live At Birdland* (MCA/Impulse 33109; 39:03; ★★★★★½) has a slight edge, because of unfailingly excellent tunes, like Mongo Santamaria's lilting "Afro Blue." (To MCA's credit, this may be the first Trane album not to attribute the tune to the leader. Thanks to David Henderson of Berkeley for indirectly calling this to my attention.) "Afro Blue" and Trane's "The Promise"—a far cry from the intricacies of "Giant Steps"—are as simple and captivating as children's songs, perfect for Trane's incantatory ruminations. "I Want To Talk About You" is one of his classic ballads. A few folks grump that Tyner gets most of the solo space, but that's 'cause the leader's statements are unusually compact. Of the Impulses surveyed, this is the only one on which digital remastering improves the sound; the bass is unchanged, but the timbral nuances of Elvin's cymbal work speak more clearly. The sonic picture's a little brighter and less murky, not tinny. (But were none of the earlier "Alabama" takes release-worthy?)

Prestige's 13 late '50s Coltrane LPs were another riot of mixed-up sessions. A single studio date's music turned up on as many as four albums; an LP might dip into as many as three such dates. Fantasy (owner of the Prestige catalog) did a good job straightening them all out in an admirable series of Coltrane twofers in the '70s; their current OJC CDs and LPs revert to the old first-issue crazy-quilts—which did do a good job of scouring out the vaults. The four CDs reviewed here were discreetly remastered by Phil DeLancie.

Dakar (OJC 393-2; 39:40; ★★★★★), from a single April 1957 session, is an overlooked gem of the Coltrane canon, his tenor flanked by the roaring/moaning baritones of Pepper Adams and Cecil Payne. They're backed by the excellent Mal Waldron (displaying Monkish ideas and voicings), Doug Watkins, and a Blakey-ish Art Taylor. Trane's own mature sound—the soaring quality so often achieved so simply, by leaning on the odd long note or letting vertical flurries fly—is already well formed, months before his enriching tenure with Monk. No alternates are known to exist; this set may not be long, but it's complete.

The Last Trane (OJC 394-2; 36:03: ★★½)—not the last recorded, but the last Prestige issued—comes from three sessions. The 8/16/57 blues "Slowtrane" is from a two-tune date with bassist Earl May and Art Taylor; Trane's true to his own voice, but acknowledges the trio format Sonny Rollins then utilized so effectively. "By The Numbers"—12/26/58 with Red Garland, Paul Chambers, and Taylor—is a leisurely variant of "Now's The Time." Two 1/10/58 numbers with Donald Byrd—a lyric "Come Rain Or Come Shine" and very up "Lover," with some superhuman P. C.—leave you wanting a bigger taste of that session. (Most of it's on *The Believer*, not yet OJC'd.)

Four of eight tunes Trane's quintet recorded 7/11/58 are on *Standard Coltrane* (OJC 246-2; 34:47: ★★★★★), which had been issued in toto on the twofer *The Stardust Session* (which is slightly too long to fit on one CD, by the way). The ballad orientation may be the reason Miles' name is understandably invoked whenever trumpeter and flugelhornist Wilbur Harden's name comes up, but he had some of Brownie's crackle, too. Originally from Alabama, Harden worked in blues bands before coming to New York with Yusef Lateef; in 1958, he and Coltrane also recorded two sessions under Harden's leadership for Savoy. Soon after, he was sidelined by illness and disappeared from the scene. Coltrane's in fine, soaring form. He steams at 3/4 speed on "Spring Is Here," where Harden shows he noticed how Trane built tension with long notes. Chambers is back; Jimmy Cobb's on drums; Garland's doleful chords are sublime.

Two more cuts from that date and three from 12/26/58—with Taylor in for Cobb—are on *Bahia* (OJC 415-2; 36:29: ★★½). A bumping, three-note ascending bassline marks the syncopal "Bahia" as the work of Ary Barroso, who also penned "Brazil." Spirited exchanges with Taylor eat up "Goldsboro Express"; the gentle sweetness in Coltrane's character sings through "My Ideal" and "Something I Dreamed Last Night," from December, with Harden added—at least, the credits and Wild's Coltrane discography say it's Harden. It sounds to me like the young Freddie Hubbard, who played on another tune (not here) taped the same day. Again, slices of sessions that leave you hungry for the whole pies.

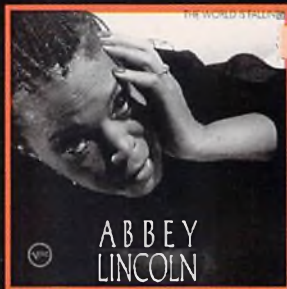
Coltrane and Don Cherry's *The Avant-Garde* (Atlantic CD 90041-2; 36:12: ★★★★★) was and is misnamed; that monicker has probably kept anti-free bigots at bay, and disappointed a few firebreathers. Ornette's music is an obvious model; three of the five tunes are his, and his drummer Ed Blackwell and bassist Charlie Haden (replaced by Percy Heath on three tracks) give it Coleman's springy, joyous feel. Ornette's/Cherry's free-tonal lines imply chord changes, but nowhere near as systematically as Trane's do; he (and Heath) hear in a more vertical manner than do Ornette's men. Yet any tension that results had positive effects. This is a very fine, enduring date, with some of Cherry's tastiest stuff on record; his harmon work on "The Blessing" is a career high-point. (It boasts some lovely Coltrane soprano, too.) Cherry must still like the album; he revived "The Blessing," Monk's "Bemsha Swing," and much of its feel for '89's *Art Deco*. Sound is faithful to the original. But why not tack on the alternates of "The Blessing" and "The Invisible," with the bass players switched?

Like Sonny (Roulette 7939012; 57:38: ★★★★★), distributed by Capitol, brings together two lesser-known, less-than-LP-length sessions. Trane's 9/8/60 L.A. date—four tracks, including two takes (one newly issued) of his flamenco-flavored ballad "Exotica"—is both enjoyable and important. It's his first recording with McCoy Tyner at the keys; Steve Davis is the bassist, the drummer Ornette's own Billy Higgins. "One And Four" is better known as "Mr. Day," one of Coltrane's most fetching (and simple) blues: a sleekly modern field holler. (He recorded it again in October for the excellent *Coltrane Plays The Blues*—see "Reviews"

Dec. '89.) On the other (six-track) session for Jubilee, from November '58, he's sideman with the groundbreaking tubist Ray Draper. Spanky DeBrest and Larry Ritchie are on bass and drums. John Maher (no, not our publisher) is the proverbial "one-handed" bop pianist; his solos are all northpaw. They're dotted with very infrequent chords that seem not so much perfunctory as courtesies paid to his left hand, as if to politely acknowledge its presence. Maher's taken lumps from critics, but his linear statements foreshadow the literally one-handed solos Herbie Hancock played with Miles. Sound's good. (reviewed on CD) **DB**

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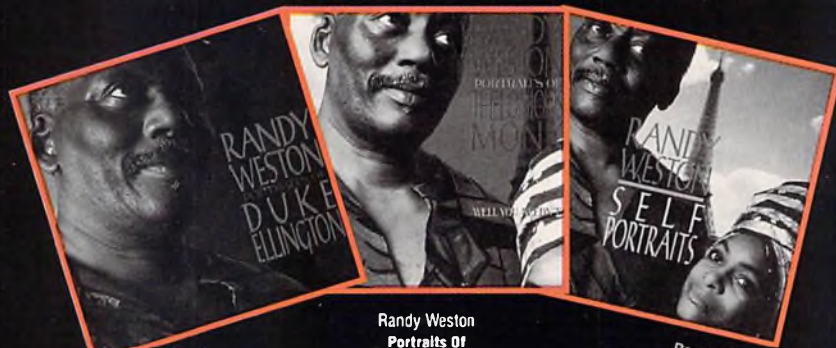
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Selected personnel: Cherry, pocket trumpet, Doussri' gouni, wood flute, syndrum pods, melodica, piano, voice; Carlos Ward, alto saxophone; Peter Apfelbaum, tenor saxophone, piano, synthesizers, percussion; Karl Berger, marimba; David Cherry, Frank Serafine, synthesizers; Bob Stewart, tuba; Ed Blackwell, drums; Nana Vasconcelos, percussion; Ingrid Sertso, Allen Ginsberg, Anthony Hamilton, voices.

★ ★ ★ ½

Peripatetic trumpeter Cherry has recorded solo, duo, with quartets and big bands; he's played freebop and electric jazz, and was making pan-ethnic "world music" before the term had been coined. *MultiKulti*—recorded at six sessions in New York, San Francisco, and Santa Monica—is a little like every Cherry record rolled into one. "Trumpet," "Flute," and the mock-mouth-harp "Melodica" are self-explanatory solos; "Piano/Trumpet" 's an over-dubbed ditty with an Abdullah Ibrahim feel. On the reggae-fied "Birdboy," Don's puckish harmon-muted or open horn wings over a layered electronic landscape. On "MultiKulti Soothsayer," he sings/speaks a sardonic tale of a spiritualist for hire ("Demons I will even fight/If the price is right"), backed by his African "hunter's guitar" and airy synths.

Cherry's globe-hopping underscores the fact that diverse musics have a lot in common; the sweep from "Piano/Trumpet" through the Afro-Latin "Rhumba MultiKulti" is his Far South Suite; four ways of listening to the African diaspora. On Peter Apfelbaum's tunes "Until The Rain Falls" and "Divinity Tree," he's backed by Peter's Bay Area aggregate, the 15-piece Hieroglyphics Ensemble. The former, a sub-Saharan lament sung by Ingrid Sertso, also bears Abdullah's traces; the latter is an amiable amalgam of Afro-pop and Sun Ra horns.

Bob Stewart's loping tuba lifts two tracks on which he appears. One hopes Cherry's next album will be for his quartet with Ward, Stewart, and Blackwell, featured on Ward's "Pettiford Bridge." Despite its title, it has a tasty, early-Ornette flavor. This brisk round-the-world junket is a bumpy trip, with some stops more memorable than others. Cherry's playful spirit is the only constant, but that's kind of the point. Dashing through multiple cultures, this smart traveller never loses sight of himself. (reviewed on cassette)

—Kevin Whitehead

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

will become president for the term '92-94 . . . middle-aged: to celebrate its 40th anniversary, Elektra Entertainment is issuing *Rubaiyat*, a compilation of contemporary Elektra artists covering tunes from the label's distinguished past. You haven't lived till you've heard **Faster Pussycat's** version of Carly Simon's "Your're So Vain" and the **Gipsy Kings'** flamenco reading of the Eagles' "Hotel California." Produced by **Lenny Kaye**, one quarter of the net profits will be divided between Save the Children, the United Negro College Fund, and Greenpeace . . . sing for your supper:

Kentucky Fried Chicken presents the third annual *Billboard* Song Contest. Open to amateur songwriters in seven categories, the Grand Prize is \$25,000, a trip for two to the Montreux International Festival, a record deal, and other neat stuff. Deadline is 11/30. Details: Box 35346, Tulsa, OK 74153 . . . jazz pix: Pomegranate Art Books is publishing their second collection of **Lee Tanner's** photos as well

as a jazz photo address book. Meanwhile, Lee's mounted *The Jazz Image 2* at Kimball's East (Emeryville, Ca.), featuring the work of **Milt Hinton**, **Veryl Oakland**, and **Giuseppe Pino** . . . label debut: Epoch Record's first release is six-string bassist **Tony Clmorosi's** *NY International*, featuring **Randy Brecker**, **Michal Urbaniak**, and **Baba Olatunji**. The vocal track with **Carmen Lundy**, "Into The Night," is getting a lot of airplay in NYC. Upcoming releases feature the contempojazz group **Polyhedra** and Brazilian vocalist **Gabriela Anders** . . . stick it, Tipper: **Stash**



records is putting this warning sticker on all its releases . . . no



ENID FARBER

BLOWING OUT THE CANDLES: Just returned from a tour of Europe with the Harlem Blues and Jazz Band, George Kelly celebrated his 75th birthday with the Swing Now Trio (drummer Bryant DuPre pictured) at Sidetracks in Queens. A veteran of Jay McShann's band and the Savoy Sultans, Kelly also had a cameo in the movie *Moscow On The Hudson* with Robin Williams. The Sunday brunchers sang "Happy Birthday," but it is not recorded how Kelly blew out the candles on his cake.

charge: the first-ever **St. Louis Jazz Festival**, 11/21, features **Hilton Ruiz**, **Oliver Lake**, **Geri Allen**, and Wynton's favorite, the **Lincoln H.S. Jazz Band** of East St. Louis. Details:

(314) 367-7275 . . . schooled: trombonist **J.J. Johnson** will present a series of five master classes at Ball State, Indiana State, and Oberlin College next spring . . .

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blindfold test

1 THE JAZZ PASSENGERS. "Peace In The Valley" (from *IMPLEMENT YOURSELF, New World*) Bill Ware, vibes; Curtis Fowlkes, trombone; Roy Nathanson, clarinet; Brad Jones, bass; Marc Ribot, guitar; E.J. Rodriguez, drums, timbales; Jim Nolet, violin, composer.

Beautifully executed, sounded well-rehearsed. It was a complex piece of music to play. It sounded like these cats have played together for a while. Compositionally, it seemed like a series of little musical vignettes that were just strung together. Usually these kinds of pieces don't quite hold together as a complete piece, but this one did. I felt the vibraphonist took the least amount of risks in his solo. The violinist and the soprano saxophone player took a few more chances than the vibist, who played more in the bebop idiom. I would've liked to have heard him play some more broken and abstract arpeggios, which would've reflected what the piece was all about. He played it straightahead and sounded well-polished. He had a good command of the instrument and sounded well-versed in that particular idiom he was playing. Generally, the musicianship was at a very high level. As a composition, 4½ stars.

2 GARY BURTON. "Doctor" (from *DREAMS SO REAL, ECM*) Burton, vibes; Pat Metheny, 12-string electric guitar; Mick Goodrick, guitar; Steve Swallow, bass; Bob Moses, drums; Carla Bley, composer.

Yeah, that was happening. This is one of the loveliest settings for a vibraphonist, that sound of vibes and guitar together. It takes a really delicate balance . . . giving and taking a little bit, not making the chords too wide, not taking up too much space, allowing each one to breathe. And this was an excellent example of that. Very challenging, a lot of polyrhythms and time signatures. The vibraphonist sounded excellent. Complete command. I don't know who the vibraphonist was but technique-wise he was definitely coming out of the Burton school. Well-performed. The composition was excellent. I'd have to give it 5 stars.

3 REPERCUSSION UNIT. "Dream Toon" (from *IN NEED AGAIN, CMP*) Jim Hildebrandt, marimba, cuica; John Bergamo, gongogul; Gregg Johnson, tabla, frying pans, mixing bowls, triangle; Lucky Mosko, vibes; Larry Stein, drums; Ed Mann, DX7 II, Akai S-900 sampler, composer.

MIKE MAINIERI

by Bill Milkowski

Vibist Mike Mainieri has been in the business seemingly all his life, beginning at the tender age of 14 with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra. He toured with Buddy Rich until 1966 and soon after began delving into the uncharted waters of fusion with one of the seminal jazz-rock outfits, Jeremy & The Satyrs, led by flutist Jeremy Steig. Another bold experiment was White Elephant, a 17-piece band that included bassist Tony Levin, drummer Steve Gadd, the Brecker Bros., and several other jazz hippies on the late '60s Village scene. In the early '70s, Mike was a first-call vibist in the studios, appearing on countless jingles and pop sessions.

In the late '70s, he recorded three critically-praised albums for Arista before forming the group Steps with Michael Brecker, Steve Gadd, Eddie Gomez, and Don Grolnick. The band later changed its name to Steps Ahead,



altered personnel, and gradually began shifting its focus from acoustic to electric jazz (see *DB* July '89). Last year's *N.Y.C.*, its seventh album as a group, incorporated MIDI technology and world-music influences. A prolific composer and accomplished arranger, Mainieri has also racked up several production credits over the years, ranging from Carly Simon to Kazumi Watanabe to rap artists.

This was his first Blindfold Test.

Reminds me of this group of Canadian percussionists, sort of abstract constructionists. It seems obviously sequenced. I felt it could have been more interesting. They could've had more fun with it. I think that's what this piece is all about. It was an interesting piece to follow. I'm not sure I could listen to an entire album of this music. I'd give it 2½ stars.

4 GEOFF KEEZER.

"Curveball" (from *CURVEBALL, Sunnyside*) Steve Nelson, vibes; Keezer, piano, composer; Charnett Moffett, bass; Victor Lewis, drums.

Well, there's no doubt that was burning. Compositionally, I'd give it 4 stars. It was interesting but not quite as challenging as the [Burton] piece. Just from the sheer burning factor, I might have to go above the 5-star level on this one. I don't know who the vibraphonist was but it sounded like someone out of the Hutcherson school. I love the idea of exploring those long lines on the instrument. As every vibist knows, you're playing a three-octave instrument and it's real easy to run out of room. Hutcherson was great at creating the illusion that the line is just going on forever, something that comes more naturally to sax players because of the wider range of that instrument. And that's what I got from this player. He kept

surprising me every several bars, taking it up and up and up. Excellent player. Hard-swinging.

5 FRANK ZAPPA.

"T'Mershi Duween/The Dog Breath Variations/Uncle Meat" (from *YOU CAN'T DO THAT ON STAGE ANYMORE VOL. 2, Rykodisc*) Ruth Underwood, marimba; Zappa, guitar, composer; George Duke, piano; Tom Fowler, bass; Chester Thompson, drums; Napoleon Murphy Brock, alto sax.

That was wild. Very interesting piece. Some Zappa-influenced music. It was Zappa? Yeah, definitely some serious mallet technique there. I mean, you have to be an excellent reader to step on his bandstand. That's the hot seat in that band, the mallet chair. There's only a few cats that could sit comfortably in that chair, and I'm not one of them.

For vibraphonists, it's incredibly challenging music to play. That must've been Ruth Underwood. She can read anything. For a minute there, she and the Rhodes player were playing so well together I thought it was somebody who had their marimba MIDI-ed. Then I heard the separation of notes and thought, "Wow." On the money, in terms of performance. High level of musicianship, and the piece was excellent. I'm a big fan of Zappa's. 5 stars. DB

CARL ALLEN

NYC'S STRAIGHTAHEAD JAZZ
DRUMMER OF CHOICE IS
SPREADING THE GOOD WORD TO
SCHOOL KIDS.

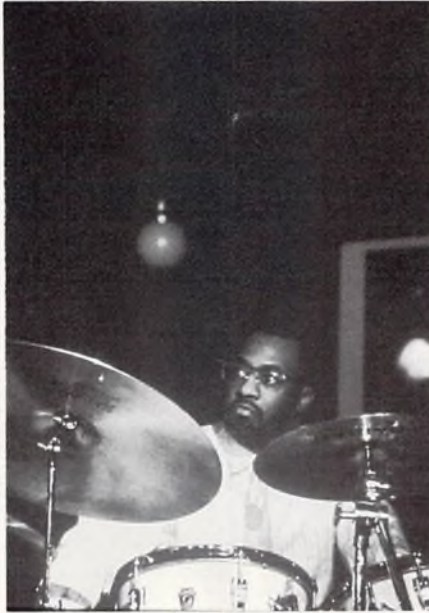
by Bill Milkowski

Since arriving in New York eight years ago and snaring a gig with Freddie Hubbard, drummer Carl Allen has racked up some pretty impressive credits. He is currently a member of Freddie's quintet while also holding down the drum chair in quartets led by George Coleman and Jackie McLean. He was a member of the Donald Harrison/Terence Blanchard Quintet and appears on their two Columbia releases, *Black Pearl* and *Crystal Stair*. In addition to playing on three Freddie Hubbard Blue Note albums (*Double Take* and *The Eternal Triangle* with Woody Shaw and *Life Flight*), he recently recorded *Dynasty* with the Jackie McLean Quintet for Triloka (see "Reviews" Oct. '90) and appeared at a tribute to the alto sax great as part of the "Classical Jazz at Lincoln Center" series in New York (see p. 58).

All of which makes the 29-year-old drummer eminently qualified to speak on the art of jazz, which he's been doing a lot of lately. As the spokesman for Jazz Against Drugs, a lecture/clinic program he developed to educate and warn young people about the dangers of substance abuse while hipping them to the cultural significance of jazz music, Allen is literally taking it to the street, talking to kids of all backgrounds in the various cities he hits while touring with Freddie, Jackie, and George. The motto for Allen's lectures: "You don't have to be high to swing."

As he explains, "Jazz musicians have been plagued with the reputation of being drug addicts in numbers higher than the rest of society. Being a jazz musician by profession and never having used drugs, there is a personal desire for me to play a role in attempting to abolish this horrible myth."

Given that attitude, you can imagine his reaction to Clint Eastwood's depiction of the jazz aesthetic in *Bird*. "That movie was just a travesty, in my opinion. If someone goes into the theater or rents the video and they want to learn about who Bird was, they're gonna come out even more ignorant, more confused. So it's important to educate people about why this person was important, who he was, and to try and help them see what he *could* have possibly done if it had not been for drugs. Part of the problem is, most people feel they have to experience something firsthand before they can learn it for themselves. And what I'm trying to teach kids through this program is that we



JUDY SNEED

can learn from other people's mistakes, specifically when it comes to drug and alcohol abuse."

Allen has visited high schools, community centers, and detention centers on the road, spreading the good word about jazz to youngsters who wouldn't know Duke Ellington from the Duke of Earl. "Sometimes, initially, they're not very attentive," he admits. "When I start talking to them, their first reaction is, 'Well, that's old jazz. That's not what's happening now—Kenny G, Spyro Gyra.' And you try to explain to them about the elements of jazz, where cats like Kenny G and Spyro Gyra come from. I'll play records for them and let them know that in jazz you have a wide base of music and that there's probably something in there they will like. And then I might take a nursery rhyme like 'Three Blind Mice' and do a jazz version of it to bring it to a level that they can understand and accept and feel like they can be a part of. Because again, for a lot of people, this music has been presented like this form of music that's just out of reach for everyone until you become 50 or 60. Kids tell me all the time, 'Well, that's old people's music. We don't wanna deal with that till we retire.' So you have to try to break down some of those myths. And I think by doing that it helps the kids to understand more about what's happening."

A committed emissary for jazz, he adds, "This music is not on MTV, so we have to take it to the people. The bottom line is this music really deserves more respect and more justice. People need to understand that this music is alive, which was one of the great things about the Classical Jazz at Lincoln Center. One of the problems we have in art is that we wait until someone dies to give them some type of respect. And we have a lot of great artists like Jackie and

George Coleman, Ray Bryant, Slide Hampton, Benny Golson, and a pile of cats who are really, seriously dealing with some music but are not getting the respect they deserve. So the Lincoln Center series is great because it showcases these great artists where people can see that this stuff is very much alive and very important to our culture."

Allen brings an undying love and respect for the music to the bandstand each time he plays. "As Jackie told me one time, 'This music will humble you. As soon as you come off the bandstand and there's somebody telling you how great you are, just go home and put the record player on. You'll get humbled real quick if you got any kind of sense at all.' And when I was younger, I *would* listen to people when they'd be gushing all over me with, 'Man, you can really swing!' But you have to go through that period of dealing with your ego before you can really deal with the music, which is what cats like Jackie are doing every day."

Carl gets into the music pretty deeply himself on two albums he recorded as a leader for the Japanese Alfa label. *Dream Boat* is a smoking quintet affair that showcases trumpeter Roy Hargrove and alto saxophonist Kenny Garrett alongside pianist Donald Brown and bassist Ira Coleman in a program of five standards and five originals, including the "Maiden Voyage"-inspired title cut. His follow-up for that label, this year's *Piccadilly Square*, has the same personnel with Vincent Herring replacing Garrett on alto and Freddie Hubbard featured on the title cut, an Allen original, and "In The Heat Of The Night." (*Dream Boat* is available in the U.S. through Timeless Records, with *Piccadilly Square* still under negotiation.)

Says the swinging young drummer of those two projects, "I wanted to have a feeling happening at the session where cats felt like they were very much a part of the date as opposed to just contributing as a sideman. I don't want it to sound like a 'drummer's record.' I don't want it to just be bashing all over the record. I want to cultivate a group sound and get that strong interplay thing happening. All the cats that work with me, I encourage them to write and bring in new arrangements, just to keep it fresh so that we have more than just one approach to the music. One cat may be hearing something modal, which is valid. One cat may be hearing something bebopish, which is valid. Another cat may be hearing some Monk stuff, which is valid. And I want to bring all those elements together in my band rather than just focus on a particular style."

He adds, "My ultimate goal as a drummer is to get to a level like Art Blakey and Art Taylor and Billy Higgins and these cats where that every time I sit down behind a set of drums, it's swinging. Once I get to that, everything else falls into place." DB