

WINNERS! 55th ANNUAL READERS POLL

DOWN BEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

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Bird

REMEMBERING

50 YEARS AFTER
CHARLIE PARKER'S
1st RECORDINGS

RED RODNEY

enters DOWN BEAT's Hall of Fame

LOS LOBOS

DON GROLNICK



Photo by HERMAN LEONARD



Charlie Parker



Red Rodney



Los Lobos



Don Grolnick

Features

16 CHARLIE PARKER: GOLDEN BIRD

Charlie Parker continues to fascinate us 35 years after his death. **Bob Davis** sheds new light on his first recordings—made 50 years ago in Wichita and Kansas City—while **Becca Pulliam** investigates the surfacing of the legendary Dean Benedetti tapes (see page 60), and **David Whiteis** talks to Bird's first boss, Jay McShann. Excerpts from *DB's* 1949 interview with Bird reveal more about this brilliant and contradictory figure.

21 55th ANNUAL DB READERS POLL

Red Rodney is elected to the Hall of Fame, Wynton wins top jazzman honors for the umpteenth time, and new categories bring some surprising results.

26 LOS LOBOS: THE WOLF PROSPERS

How do you follow up on an album of roots music—in this case, Mexican? *La Bamba* is but a fond memory as L.A.'s Los Lobos continue its journey to even rockier terrain. **Josef Woodard** has it up-front.

28 DON GROLNICK: DREAMWEAVER

Better known in the studios of such pop artists as James Taylor, Carly Simon, and Steely Dan, composer/producer/pianist Don Grolnick is a jazzier through and through. **Honest Michael Bourne** has the goods.

Departments

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

8 **chords & discords**

10 **news**

13 **riffs**

31 **record & cd reviews:** Los Lobos; Dave Holland; Sonny Boy Williamson; Don Grolnick; Ruby Braff; Ruby Braff & Dick Hyman; Take 6; William Clarke; Neil Young & Crazy Horse; Neville Brothers: The Old Guards of New Orleans; Sun Ra; Dallas Jazz Orchestra; San Diego State Univ. Jazz Ensemble; Miles Davis: CDs Chase The Miles Down; Defunkt; Vincent Herring; Marc Ribot; George Benson & The Count Basie Orchestra; Nino Tempo.

53 **blindfold test:** Joe Lovano, by Bill Milkowski.

54 **caught:** Chicago Jazz Festival, by Dan Ouellette; Bonnie Raitt, Charles Brown, NRBQ, by Dan Ouellette; Sun Ra, by Stephanie Stein; Ornette Coleman, Josef Woodard.

61 **ad lib:** "The Music's Still Happenin'," by John Corbett.

63 **pro shop**

64 **pro session:** "Herbie Nichols' Solo on 'Furthermore'—a Piano/Bass Transcription," by Roswell Rudd.

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

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WILD BEAT Bird

The Rediscovery of Charlie Parker's 1st Recordings

50 Years After They First Took Flight.

By Bob Davis

When Charlie Parker died at 34 of his double-time way of life, anonymous graffiti in New York City denied the fact as spontaneously as the alto saxophonist composed his wondrous solos. "Bird Lives!" it proclaimed, and he has lived on in three forms: in the memories and accounts of those who knew the man; in the all-pervasive influence of his overarching style on the second movement of modern jazz; and, most especially, through his musical legacy on recordings.

As it turns out, "Bird Lives" applies to a still-growing body of previously unknown Parker recordings which have been discovered and issued since his death. One of the most significant finds is the set of sides he made in 1940 on a Saturday afternoon in Wichita, Kansas with pianist Jay McShann and friends. They are among the earliest documents of the genesis of his genius, and they enable us to hear and know the 20-year-old Parker when he was on the verge of breaking through to his great stylistic innovation.

When the music was finally issued in America, the liner notes were by the usually reliable Dan Morgenstern. In this instance, however, he made several errors about the nature and circumstances of the recordings. The errors have been picked up and further circulated in subsequent biographies of Parker. The correct information emerged earlier this year in the course of interviews with McShann, jazz historian Frank Driggs, and two fans of the great McShann band of the day, Pete Armstrong and Bud Gould. Along with their friend and fellow fan, Fred Higginson (who couldn't be interviewed due to illness), they arranged for the session and were present when it happened. Thanks to them, we now have the accurate account of how the historic recordings came about, and how they were rescued from obscurity and released into the sunshine of public appreciation. It is a remarkable story of trust, friendship, and the sharing of joy within the jazz community.

Armstrong and Higginson were juniors at Wichita University. Trombonist/violinist Gould, who had graduated as a music major, belonged to Alpha Gamma Gamma Fraternity with Armstrong. Gould was playing in the house band at local radio station KFBI. Armstrong and Higginson first "saw Jay McShann's small band at the Plaza in Kansas City in 1939. We were thrilled by what we heard," says Armstrong. "They came back raving to me," says Gould, "and then I heard the band on a broadcast. So naturally, when Jay's big band came to Wichita, I went to hear them with Pete and Fred. I was awe-struck. They all played great, but I couldn't believe what I was hearing from Charlie Parker."

The 12-piece band was back playing a week at the Trocadero Ballroom. Contrary to the original account, the session at KFBI was not played for pay as transcriptions for broadcast by the station. Nor was Higginson its manager. Armstrong and Higginson had been allowed to record the band at the Trocadero the previous August. Unfortunately, the cardboard discs yielded poor results. In hope of getting better fidelity, they asked Gould to arrange for the use of the KFBI studio. He did so through the station's musical director, Vern Nydegger. The date was November 30, 1940.

Although Gould was not a member of the McShann band as originally assumed, he did sit in on the session. His trombone is featured on "Wichita Blues" (in part, the basis of Parker's "The Hymn" on Dial from October of 1947), and his violin is heard on

"Honeysuckle Rose." Armstrong and Higginson also got to do their bits. They are the "vocalists" who introduce "Honeysuckle" à la Alphonse Trent's "louder and funnier" routine.

In addition to the leader and Parker, the members of the McShann Orchestra who jammed on the recordings were Gene Ramey on bass, Gus Johnson on drums, William J. Scott and Bob Mabane on tenors, and Orville Minor and Bernard Anderson on trumpets. The other four members of the band elected not to make the session because "they just didn't care to be in on our party scene," says McShann. "Contrary to the album notes, it had nothing to do with the station being unable to afford the whole band. KFBI wasn't paying any of us anyway." He also recalled, and Gould and Armstrong agreed, that there was only one date at the station, not two as originally reported.

"We agreed to do it," McShann says, "just for kicks and because we liked those fellows. They wanted a momento of their



Jay McShann (far right), Bird, et al., at the KFBI studios on November 30, 1940.



JAY McSHANN & BIRD

"Man, Where You Been All The Time?" Jay McShann and the Encounter With Bird

Jay McShann was already an established master on the thriving Kansas City scene when he first heard Charlie Parker. Bird had been gigging around the Ozarks with George Lee's band, and had returned to Kansas City for some musical and personal stimulation. "There wasn't too much happening [in the

Ozarks] in the daytime," McShann remembers, "and the nightlife—after they got through with the gig, that was it!"

"I was in town and I just wanted to meet all the musicians. I just walked down the streets and I heard a different sound. That's the reason I asked him, I said, 'Man, where you been all the time?' He said, 'I live here in Kansas City!'"

Bird played in McShann's aggregation, off and on, from 1937 to early 1943. Unlike many exploratory young players, Bird seems never to have forced his genius on others. Even as he went his own way, he remembered that the cohesiveness of the unit is as important as the soloists' individualism. "All you have to do is listen to the records and you can see that there was nobody in the band playing the steps that Bird was playing," affirms McShann. "But Bird made it fit."

That's only one of the facets of Charlie Parker's musical personality that McShann wishes had been explored in Clint Eastwood's 1988 biopic, *Bird*. McShann never saw the movie, but he knows from word of mouth what most who've seen it confirm: "It didn't portray him as a

musician, as you'd expect it to. You want to see and hear about the great things that he was doing musically." More than Eastwood's film did, *Round Midnight*, *Let's Get Lost*, even *Lady Sings The Blues* and *The Glenn Miller Story* attempted to portray their heroes in the context of their music, its growth and development, and the joy they derived from it.

McShann, meanwhile, continues to play with joy and undiminished capacity. He has some new material coming out on Sackville, and Chiaroscuro producer Hank O'Neil is also getting ready to release some new McShann sides. He tours regularly, although Kansas City is still his home base and he's achieved something of an elder statesman status there, a living link to the glory days of boogie woogie and Kansas City jazz who's survived intact thanks to his musical resourcefulness and refusal to let himself be pigeonholed. He says he's only carrying on in the tradition in which he came up, and he's not about to stop. "In Kansas City, we played it all. We played boogie woogie, we played the blues, we played swing; cats *swung!* Jazz—they played all ways!"

—David Whiteis

musical pleasure from us, and we wanted to hear ourselves on records. We wanted to please each other. At the time, we didn't dream they would ever surface. We had a ball hearing the playbacks, especially since we seemed to acquit ourselves fairly well after the party," McShann laughs. The reference was to a gathering at the fraternity house, where they indulged in generous quantities of a drink they dubbed a "Brown Lady" in honor of the one who was present. "I tell you, we were feeling no pain by the time we got to the station," McShann said.

Not until 1957 did the recordings begin to surface. Gene Ramey happened to recall for Driggs (and McShann confirmed) that Parker was with them when they recorded a jam session at a radio station in Wichita in late 1940. Driggs instantly realized the significance of the event. Parker's debut on records was long supposed to have been with the McShann Orchestra for Decca on April 30, 1941. The Wichita items would in fact predate them by



FETE ARMSTRONG/FRANK DRIGGS COLLECTION

several months, but they had never come to light. Could it be that they still existed after so many years?

With hope battling fear, Driggs wrote to Higginson in Manhattan, Kansas, where he was a professor of English at Kansas State University. Higginson wrote back that—EUREKA!—he still had the precious missing links complete and still playable. In 1959, he agreed to let Driggs arrange for the public to have the music and sent the seven 10-inch acetates to him. (Driggs did not make "the trek to Wichita," as was originally reported.) In 1974, after major American record companies rejected the opportunity, the sides were issued by Don Schlitten on the Onyx label as *Charlie Parker First Recordings*. Although it has been unavailable for many years, Schlitten plans on re-issuing the material on his current Xanadu label "in the near future."

On the seven performances Parker solos on all but one. I cannot agree with Morgenstern that Parker "is already himself," at least not completely. This Parker would not have provoked the silly controversy that attended his music starting in the mid-1940s. He is still clearly the son of his forefathers, Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, Art Tatum, Buster Smith, and, most obviously, Lester Young. Only four years earlier, after a disastrous attempt to jam with Bill Basie's men at the Reno Club in Kansas City, Parker was humiliated by Jo Jones' cymbal tossed at his feet in ridicule. In the summer of 1937, while with George E. Lee's band in the Missouri Ozarks, Parker learned Young's extraordinary tenor solos note-for-note from the Basie small-band records (under the name, "Jones-Smith, Inc.") from October, 1936. Lest you take at face value Parker's denial of the Lesterian influence in his interview with *DB* in 1949, hear not only the state of his musical soul in Wichita, but also his 1946 solo on "Oh, Lady Be Good," when he paid direct tribute to Young, who was

present in the band with Parker at the Jazz At The Philharmonic concert. Parker loved to put critics and journalists on.

Yet, the young man in Wichita is no Young clone. The character traits, the elements of the style by which Parker moves from one note to the next, reveal a formidable musical persona, and in some respects, an already distinctive one. His tone is his own. He has flawless technical command of his horn, and his speed and articulation are phenomenal. His ideas flow forth in a linear manner, and for the most part, with well-ordered, fertile inventiveness. He not only knows the harmonies, but he also makes the changes with the explorations of the higher intervals of the chords, which he later said he discovered at Dan Wall's Chili House while jamming on "Cherokee" in 1939. And his melodic rhythm, his sense of phrasing and accenting the unfolding notes, enables him to swing with exceptional freedom from the ground beat, although not yet consistently in the mature Parkeresque style that would soon unfortunately be described as bebop.

Which is to say that the Parker innovation was essentially a rhythmic breakthrough. There are hints of it in certain isolated passages on the 1940 recordings, particularly on "Body And Soul," at the end of his solo on "Oh, Lady Be Good," and in his last episode just before the end of "Honeysuckle Rose." But Parker's unique alteration of stresses on weak and strong beats does not permeate an entire solo until Bird's flight with the McShann Orchestra on "Hootie Blues" for Decca on April 30, 1941. Remarking on that solo in *The Jazz Tradition* (Oxford Univ. Press), Martin Williams writes that he "introduces almost everything Parker was to spend the rest of his life refining." The difference in overall stylistic effect is a stunning revelation of how close he was, yet how far he had to go—and *went* in just five months—toward imagining himself completely forth on the basis of President Lester Young, who had imagined himself forth on the basis of Father Louis Armstrong. Indeed, for all the comparisons of Bird with Prez that have been made concerning this pivotal period, it can be said—and McShann agrees—that Parker's debt to Armstrong was a direct as well as an indirect one. The world of jazz, like the world in general, has been built on the shoulders of giants.

Another document of Parker's musical lineage that has come to light since the Wichita find is a somewhat earlier recording of him playing unaccompanied solo variations on "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Body And Soul." The paper disc was made in Kansas City—reportedly in 1937—by Parker's friend, Clarence Davis, but he couldn't be sure of the year. To my ears, Parker sounds very much like his playing in Wichita. Since he returned to Kansas City for his father's funeral in May, 1940 after a sojourn to Chicago and then New York that began in late 1938, I would suggest that the recording was made in 1940, just a few months before those in Wichita.

Fifty years later at 74, McShann, who lives in Kansas City, is still playing and singing around the world. Minor and Anderson also live in Kansas City. Johnson makes his home in the Denver area, and Mabane is in Montana. Scott and Ramey are deceased. Armstrong is active in his printing business in Wichita. Higginson is in Manhattan, Kansas. Nydegger is secretary of the Wichita Musicians Union. Gould is a retired professor of music from Northern Arizona University at Flagstaff living in nearby Sedona. Last September he introduced SuperSax at the annual "Jazz on the Rocks Festival" in Sedona. The band premiered Med Flory's transcriptions of Parker's solos on "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Body And Soul" from the Wichita recordings in honor of their 50th anniversary.

As for Charlie Parker, his claim to immortality lay in the fact that he practiced a kind of dying in his art. Fortunately, record producers practice life-saving in theirs. What the records after Wichita affirm is that the man called Bird was one of the protean eagles of jazz fiercely committed to improvisation as a way of musical life. Beautiful surprise was Charlie Parker's constant quest, and so each flight passed for the sake of the next. Except for those that happened to be recorded. DB

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No Bop Roots In Jazz: Parker

BY MICHAEL LEVIN & JOHN S. WILSON



Charlie Parker
"You've got to live it"

New York — "Bop is no love-child of jazz," says Charlie Parker. The creator of bop, in a series of interviews that took more than two weeks, told us he felt that "bop is something entirely separate and apart" from the older tradition; that it drew little from jazz, has no roots in it. The chubby little alto man, who has made himself an international music name in the last five years, added that bop, for the most part, had to be played by small bands.

"Gillespie's playing has changed from being stuck in front of a big band. Anybody's does. He's a fine musician. The leopard coats and the wild hats are just another part of the managers' routines to make him box office. The same thing happened a couple of years ago when they stuck his name on some tunes of mine to give him a better commercial reputation."

Asked to define bop, after several evenings of arguing, Charlie still was not precise in his definition.

"It's just music," he said. "It's trying to play clean and looking for the pretty notes."

Pushed further, he said that a distinctive feature of bop is its strong feeling for beat.

"The beat in a bop band is with the music, against it, behind it," Charlie said. "It pushes it. It helps it. Help is the big thing. It has no continuity of beat, no steady chug-chug. Jazz has, and that's why bop is more flexible."

He admits the music eventually may be atonal. Parker himself is a devout admirer of Paul Hindemith, the German neo-classicist, raves about his *Kammermusik* and *Sonata for Viola and Cello*. He insists, however, that bop is not moving in the same direction as modern classical. He feels that it will be more flexible, more emotional, more colorful.

He reiterates constantly that bop is only just beginning to form as a school, that it can barely label its present trends, much less make prognostications about the future.

The closest Parker will come to an exact, technical description of what may happen is to say that he would like to emulate the precise, complex harmonic structures of Hindemith, but with an emotional coloring and dynamic shading that he feels modern classical lacks.

Parker's indifference to the revered jazz tradition certainly will leave some of his own devotees in a state of surprise. But, actually, he himself has no roots in traditional jazz. During the few years he worked with traditional jazzmen he wandered like a lost soul. In his formative years he never heard any of the music which is traditionally supposed to inspire young jazzists — no Louis, no Bix, no Hawk, no Benny, no nothing. His first musical idol, the musician who so moved and inspired him that he went out and bought his first saxophone at the age of 11, was Rudy Vallee. ...

Charlie's horn first came alive in a chili house on Seventh Avenue between 139th Street and 140th Street in December, 1939. He was jamming there with a guitarist named Biddy Fleet. At the time, Charlie says, he was bored with the stereotyped changes being used then.

"I kept thinking there's bound to be something else," he recalls. "I could hear it sometimes but I couldn't play it."

Working over *Cherokee* with Fleet, Charlie suddenly found that by using higher intervals of a chord as a melody line and backing them with appropriately related changes, he could play this thing he had been "hearing." Fleet picked it up behind him and bop was born.

Or, at least, it is reasonable to assume that this was the birth of bop. All available facts indicate this is true. But Parker, an unassuming character who carries self-effacement to fantastic lengths, will not say this in so many words. The closest he will come to such a statement is, "I'm accused of having been one of the pioneers."

But inescapable facts pin him down. He says he always has tried to play in more or less the same way he does now. His earliest records, which were cut with Jay McShann in 1940 (on Decca) back him up on this. They reveal a style which is rudimentary compared to his present work, but definitely along the same lines: light, vibratoless tone; running phrases, perkily turned; complex rhythmic and harmonic structures. ...

After his brief exhilaration over Vallee, Charlie heard no music which interested him, outside of boogie-woogie records, until he quit high school in 1935 and went out to make a living with his alto horn at the age of 14. As has been mentioned, he was under the influence of none of the jazz greats. He had never heard them. He was influenced only by the necessity of making a living and he chose music because it seemed glamorous, looked easy, and there was nothing else around.

This primary lack of influence continued as the years went by. The sax men he listened to and admired — Herschel Evans, Johnny Hodges, Willie Smith, Ben Webster, Don Byas,

Budd Johnson — all played with a pronounced vibrato, but no semblance of a vibrato ever crept into Charlie's style.

"I never cared for vibrato," he says, "because they used to get a chin vibrato in Kansas City (opposed to the hand vibrato popular with white bands) and I didn't like it. I don't think I'll ever use vibrato."

The only reed man on Charlie's list of favorites who approached the Bird's vibratoless style was Lester Young.

"I was crazy about Lester," he says. "He played so clean and beautiful. But I wasn't influenced by Lester. Our ideas ran on differently." ...

Relaxation is something Charlie constantly has missed. Lack of relaxation, he thinks, has spoiled most of the records he has made. To hear him tell it, he has never cut a good side. Some of the things he did on the Continental label he considers more relaxed than the rest. But every record he has made could stand improvement, he says. We tried to pin him down, to get him to name a few sides that were at least better than the rest.

Bird: Lester Didn't Influence Me

"Suppose a guy came up to us," we said, "and said, 'I've got four bucks and I want to buy three Charlie Parker records. What'll I buy?' What should we tell him?"

Charlie laughed.

"Tell him to keep his money," he said. ...

Parker feels very strongly on the subject of dope in all its forms. He told us that while he was still a young boy in Kansas City he was offered some in a men's room by a stranger when he hardly knew what it was. He continued to use it off and on for years until his crackup in 1946, and says bitterly that people who prey on kids this way should be shot.

Parker told us flatly: "Any musician who says he is playing better either on tea, the needle, or when he is juiced, is a plain straight liar. When I get too much to drink, I can't even finger well, let alone play decent ideas. And in the days when I was on the stuff, I may have thought I was playing better, but listening to some of the records now, I know I wasn't. Some of these smart kids who think you have to be completely knocked out to be a good hornman are just plain crazy. It isn't true. I know, believe me."

Parker struck us as being direct, honest, and searching. He is constantly dissatisfied with his own work and with the music he hears around him. What will come of it, where his quite prodigious talent will take him, even he doesn't know at this stage.

But his ceaseless efforts to find out, to correct, to improve, only bode well for himself and that elderly progenitor, jazz.

MORE PARKER COVERAGE ON PAGE 60

DO THE *Write In* THING

DOWN BEAT's 55th Annual Readers Poll



Red Rodney

SURVIVOR



DOUGLAS HAMER

HALL OF FAME

- 196 Red Rodney
- 118 Lee Morgan
- 91 Dave Brubeck
- 87 Gerry Mulligan
- 85 J.J. Johnson
- 82 Betty Carter
- 82 Maynard Ferguson
- 82 Phil Woods



WILLIAM P. GOTTLEB

Red Rodney is more than a survivor. He was and is a creator. With so many of the bebop trumpet giants no longer among us—Fats Navarro, Kenny Dorham, Clifford Brown, Lee Morgan, and too many others—only Dizzy himself and Red carry the torch. On his 63rd birthday, Sept. 27, Rodney offered an upbeat picture of his present and future.

His contributions as an innovator were barely noticed during his service with name bands—locally in Philadelphia, later with Thornhill, Herman, and others—but it was enough to attract the respect of Charlie Parker, who, by hiring him in 1949, brought a measure of fame that has served him in many ways. (He had already earned the approval of Dizzy, his first idol, who took him to New York and introduced him to Bird.)

"I was petrified on that first night with Bird," he recalls, "because Miles and Fats were in the audience. But at the end of the set they came over and said, 'Hey, man, great! It was wonderful to feel accepted.'"

Red's roller-coast career involved the almost inevitable bout with drugs (despite Parker's attempts to discourage him), but after cleaning up he turned to the world of society club dates and pop music in the

1950s, then during the 1960s was mainly in Las Vegas. His jazz credentials caught up with him, and by the dawn of the 1980s he was working with his own quintet, which for several years was aided by the presence of Ira Sullivan. Later came Garry Dial and Dick Oatts ("They are like my children").

"I have a brand new band now," he told me. "I have this wonderful pianist, David Kikowski, who's 24—Garry Dial recommended him—and Chris Potter, from Columbia, S.C., who's 19, plays all the reeds and great piano. He's won a presidential scholarship and a Zoot Sims scholarship. This is a sensational young man. And I have Jimmy Madison, my drummer for the past year, and Chip Jackson, who was Elvin Jones' bass player.

"It's strange, but I seem to be playing better than ever. I have these youngsters who kick me in the rear and challenge me. Some people begin to slip after 50, but maturity and a clean and healthy home life seem to have helped me. I really feel good about my life today."

The days of just survival are over for Red Rodney. In 1990, he thrives with his band's election as 1990's top Acoustic Jazz Group and his own elevation to the **DOWN BEAT** Hall of Fame.

—Leonard Feather

JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 154 *Aura*, Miles Davis (Columbia)
- 151 *Trio Jeepy*, Branford Marsalis (Columbia)
- 133 *Epitaph*, Charles Mingus (Columbia)
- 102 *Code Red*, Red Rodney (Continuum)
- 91 *Blue Route*, Abstract Truth (Acoustic Concepts)
- 75 *Time On My Hands*, John Scofield (Blue Note)
- 74 *Question & Answer*, Pat Metheny (Geffen)
- 70 *New Beginnings*, Don Pullen (Blue Note)
- 68 *Art Deco*, Don Cherry (A&M)
- 68 *Deep In The Shed*, Marcus Roberts (RCA/Novus)

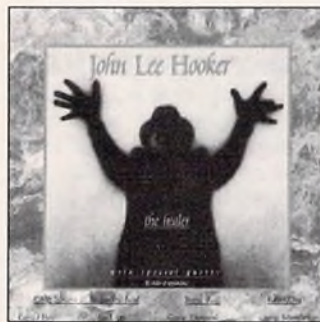
POP/ROCK ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 201 *Nick Of Time*, Bonnie Raitt (Capitol)
- 56 *Back On The Block*, Quincy Jones (Qwest)
- 53 *Wild Weekend*, NRBQ (Virgin)
- 39 *Do!litt!e*, Pixies (Elektra)
- 35 *Spike*, Elvis Costello (Warner Bros.)
- 35 *Freedom*, Neil Young (Reprise)



BLUES/SOUL/R&B ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 201 *The Healer*, John Lee Hooker (Chameleon)
- 156 *Back On The Block*, Quincy Jones (Qwest)
- 78 *Keep On Movin'*, Soul II Soul (Virgin)
- 33 *In Step*, Stevie Ray Vaughan (Epic)

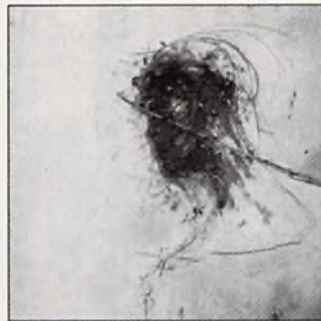


RAP ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 322 *Fear Of A Black Planet*, Public Enemy (Def Jam)
- 186 *Please, Hammer, Don't Hurt 'Em*, M.C. Hammer (Capitol)
- 102 *Back On The Block*, Quincy Jones (Qwest)

WORLD BEAT ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 133 *Passion*, Peter Gabriel (Geffen)
- 85 *Cruel, Crazy, Beautiful World*, Johnny Clegg & Savuka (Capitol)



JAZZ MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

- 361 **Wynton Marsalis**
- 263 Benny Carter
- 228 Miles Davis
- 196 Pat Metheny
- 119 Branford Marsalis
- 91 Red Rodney
- 91 Cecil Taylor
- 63 Marcus Roberts
- 63 Stan Getz
- 61 Jack DeJohnette
- 60 Phil Woods

BLUES/SOUL/R&B MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

- 213 **B.B. King**
- 186 Ray Charles
- 174 Aaron Neville
- 147 Johnny Lee Hooker
- 96 Stevie Ray Vaughan
- 93 Prince
- 60 Albert Collins



GINA M. STEFFEN

POP/ROCK MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

- 151 **Elvis Costello**
- 126 Bonnie Raitt
- 119 Sting
- 116 Lou Reed
- 112 Prince
- 70 Peter Gabriel
- 63 Eric Clapton
- 63 Billy Joel
- 46 John Hiatt

RAP MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

- 350 **M.C. Hammer**
- 63 Ice-T
- 49 Kool Moe Dee
- 42 Public Enemy
- 35 Queen Latifah



TOM COPI

WORLD BEAT MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

- 101 **Peter Gabriel**
- 96 Johnny Clegg
- 91 Milton Nascimento
- 87 Eddie Palmieri
- 80 Youssou N'Dour

ACOUSTIC JAZZ GROUP

- 196 **Red Rodney**
- 155 Phil Woods
- 152 Wynton Marsalis
- 111 Harper Brothers
- 109 Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers
- 100 Branford Marsalis
- 99 Chick Corea Akoustic Band
- 94 World Saxophone Quartet
- 88 Tony Williams
- 75 Keith Jarrett

ELECTRIC JAZZ GROUP

- 451 **Chick Corea Elektric Band**
- 434 Miles Davis
- 357 Pat Metheny
- 140 Ornette Coleman & Prime Time
- 133 Yellowjackets
- 116 John Zorn & Naked City
- 77 Bill Frisell
- 77 John Scofield
- 51 Zawinul Syndicate



TOM COPI

BIG BAND

- 348 **Count Basie**
- 330 Mel Lewis
- 294 Sun Ra
- 207 Abstract Truth
- 105 Illinois Jacquet
- 57 Gene Harris
- 51 Toshiko Akiyoshi
- 51 Maynard Ferguson
- 51 Rob McConnell
- 45 Bob Mintzer

ROCK GROUP

- 203 **Rolling Stones**
- 168 Living Colour
- 137 Miles Davis
- 49 U2



LORI STOLL

MICHAEL PUTLAND/BRETTA

BLUES/SOUL/R&B GROUP

- 414 **Neville Bros.**
- 216 B.B. King
- 81 Ray Charles
- 57 Soul II Soul
- 55 Robert Cray



RAP GROUP

- 357 Public Enemy
- 95 2 Live Crew
- 70 M.C. Hammer
- 60 Run D.M.C.
- 39 De La Soul

WORLD BEAT GROUP

- 87 Jerry Gonzalez
- 85 Johnny Clegg & Savuka
- 84 Tito Puente
- 82 Eddie Palmieri

COMPOSER

- 203 Benny Carter
- 182 Carla Bley
- 154 Henry Threadgill
- 123 Toshiko Akiyoshi
- 116 Ornette Coleman
- 91 Abdullah Ibrahim
- 91 John Vanore
- 88 Garry Dial
- 88 Pat Metheny
- 81 Chick Corea
- 56 Wayne Shorter
- 49 Bobby Watson



MITCHELL SEIDEL

ARRANGER

- 312 Benny Carter
- 259 Toshiko Akiyoshi
- 161 Carla Bley
- 133 Frank Foster
- 126 Henry Threadgill
- 123 John Zorn
- 102 Don Sickler
- 81 Sun Ra
- 32 Quincy Jones

TRUMPET

- 683 Wynton Marsallis
- 459 Red Rodney
- 413 Miles Davis
- 224 Rayse Biggs
- 175 Tom Harrell
- 91 Lester Bowie
- 88 Don Cherry
- 88 Dizzy Gillespie
- 88 Wallace Roney
- 84 Freddie Hubbard



HERB SNITZER

TROMBONE

- 400 Steve Turre
- 370 Ray Anderson
- 232 J.J. Johnson
- 104 Bill Watrous
- 84 Robin Eubanks
- 70 Curtis Fuller
- 48 Carl Fontana
- 32 Bob Brookmeyer
- 28 Jimmy Knepper



TIMOTHY WHITESON

FLUTE

- 357 James Newton
- 339 James Moody
- 185 Dave Valentin
- 178 Frank Wess
- 150 Lew Tabackin
- 101 Herbie Mann
- 80 Hubert Laws
- 63 Henry Threadgill
- 52 Sam Rivers



HYOU VIELZ

CLARINET

- 641 Eddie Daniels
- 431 John Carter
- 402 Buddy DeFranco
- 119 Alvin Batiste
- 104 Phil Woods
- 81 Kenny Davern
- 35 Jimmy Hamilton



HERB SNITZER

SOPRANO SAXOPHONE

- 488 Steve Lacy
- 370 Wayne Shorter
- 333 Branford Marsalis
- 133 Dave Liebman
- 112 Jane Ira Bloom
- 65 Bob Wilber
- 48 Kenny G
- 45 Courtney Pine

ALTO SAXOPHONE

- 537 Phil Woods
- 188 Ornette Coleman
- 188 Frank Morgan
- 107 Benny Carter
- 106 Bobby Watson
- 87 David Sanborn
- 70 Kenny Garrett
- 63 Steve Coleman
- 52 Jackie McLean
- 43 Christopher Hollyday
- 43 Lee Konitz



ENHO FARBBER

TENOR SAXOPHONE

- 567 Sonny Rollins
- 536 Stan Getz
- 210 Branford Marsalis
- 203 Michael Brecker
- 192 David Murray
- 155 Joe Henderson
- 52 Joe Lovano
- 52 Wayne Shorter
- 49 George Adams

BARITONE SAXOPHONE

- 490 Gerry Mulligan
- 250 Hamiet Bluiett
- 214 Nick Brignola
- 67 John Surman
- 60 Ronnie Cuber
- 49 Howard Johnson



ACOUSTIC PIANO

- 259 Tommy Flanagan
- 256 Oscar Peterson
- 192 Marcus Roberts
- 186 McCoy Tyner
- 151 Geri Allen
- 151 Cecil Taylor
- 144 Don Pullen
- 119 Herbie Hancock
- 105 Chick Corea
- 91 Keith Jarrett
- 63 Barry Harris
- 63 Mulgrew Miller



ORGAN

- 514 Jimmy Smith
- 101 Jimmy McGriff
- 98 Joey DeFrancesco
- 74 Carla Bley
- 72 Sun Ra
- 47 Barbara Dennerlein
- 38 Charles Earland
- 37 Jack McDuff
- 32 Don Pullen
- 32 Shirley Scott

SYNTHESIZER

- 327 Joe Zawinul
- 276 Chick Corea
- 268 Herbie Hancock
- 197 Sun Ra
- 155 Lyle Mays
- 70 Wayne Horvitz



HYOU VIELZ

ACOUSTIC GUITAR

- 222 Jim Hall
- 190 John McLaughlin
- 128 Joe Pass
- 64 Kenny Burrell
- 56 Ralph Towner
- 43 Pat Metheny
- 43 Emily Remler
- 34 Egberto Gismonti
- 28 Tuck Andress



TOM COPP

ELECTRIC GUITAR

- 342 Pat Metheny
- 232 John Scofield
- 172 Bill Frisell
- 100 Mike Stern
- 80 Jim Hall
- 74 Kenny Burrell
- 36 Joe Pass
- 26 Stanley Jordan

ACOUSTIC BASS

- 490 Charlie Haden
- 315 Dave Holland
- 294 Ray Brown
- 259 Ron Carter
- 238 Rob Wasserman
- 140 Milt Hinton
- 116 Charnett Moffett
- 73 Eddie Gomez
- 73 John Patitucci
- 66 Rufus Reid
- 63 N.H.O. Pedersen
- 63 Buster Williams

ELECTRIC BASS

- 490 Steve Swallow
- 406 Marcus Miller
- 332 John Patitucci
- 235 Rob Wasserman
- 136 Stanley Clarke
- 95 Bob Cranshaw
- 66 Jamaaladeen Tacuma



BRIAN MCMILLEN

DRUMS

- 504 Jack DeJohnette
- 413 Max Roach
- 234 Tony Williams
- 137 Art Blakey
- 122 Roy Haynes
- 119 Billy Higgins
- 116 Joey Baron
- 102 Elvin Jones
- 99 Marvin "Smitty" Smith
- 88 Jeff Watts
- 63 William Hooker
- 63 Dave Weckl
- 56 Louie Bellson
- 53 Peter Erskine



HYOU VIELZ



HYOU VIELZ

PERCUSSION

- 448 Airtó Moreira
- 291 Tito Puente
- 269 Naná Vasconcelos
- 109 Mino Cinelu
- 109 Trilok Gurtu
- 66 Famoudou Don Moye

VIBES

- 416 Milt Jackson
- 396 Gary Burton
- 226 Bobby Hutcherson
- 54 Lionel Hampton
- 54 Jay Hoggard
- 42 Terry Gibbs
- 40 Mike Mainieri

VIOLIN

- 444 Stephane Grappelli
- 204 John Blake
- 146 Jean-Luc Ponty
- 110 Billy Bang
- 40 Michal Urbaniak

MISCELLANEOUS INSTRUMENT

- 382 Toots Thielemans (harmonica)
- 92 Bob Stewart (tuba)
- 70 Howard Johnson (tuba)
- 70 Astor Piazzolla (bandoneon)
- 66 David Murray (bass clarinet)
- 52 Michael Brecker (EWI)
- 44 Steve Turre (conch shells)
- 42 Andy Narell (steel drums)
- 15 Hank Roberts (cello)

MALE SINGER

- 413 Joe Williams
- 315 Mel Tormé
- 283 Bobby McFerrin
- 154 Mark Murphy
- 77 Ray Charles
- 63 Frank Sinatra
- 56 Aaron Neville
- 53 Al Jarreau



BRIAN MCMILLEN

FEMALE SINGER

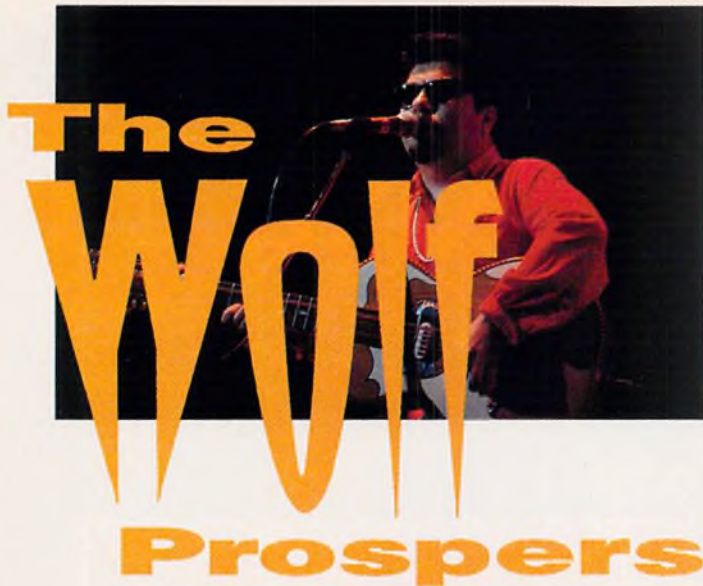
- 479 Betty Carter
- 245 Carmen McRae
- 227 Ella Fitzgerald
- 203 Cassandra Wilson
- 137 Sarah Vaughan
- 108 Sheila Jordan
- 84 Anita Baker
- 39 Abbey Lincoln

VOCAL GROUP

- 885 Take 6
- 458 Manhattan Transfer
- 109 Hendricks Family
- 109 Ladysmith Black Mambazo
- 77 Jackie & Roy
- 60 New York Voices



GRACE BELL



The Wolf

Prosper

UNDA-MATLOW/PX-INTL

By Josef Woodard

Born in East L.A., bravely switch-hitting between bedrockin' r&b and traditional Mexican and Norteno music, Los Lobos would seem to be cut from the mold of cross-cultural crusaders. But they sing of inner-city struggles in poetic terms, deftly weaving in and out of their Mexican and North American musical instincts without hammering out a political message in every beat.

Alongside bands such as the Blasters and X and the general Los Angeles-based, post-new wave, Los Lobos crept out from humble beginnings to critical acclaim in the mid-'80s. Guitarist/lead singer David Hidalgo and drummer Louis Perez mastered the art of writing songs that had immediate appeal while carrying symbolic depth charges on *How Will The Wolf Survive?* and 1987's *By The Light Of The Moon*. They, along with guitarist/singer Cesar Rosas, bassist Conrad Lozano, and saxist/keyboardist Steve Berlin, had carved out a unique musical m.o.

They were the logical choice—maybe the only choice—to cut the soundtrack to 1987's *La Bamba*, the bio film on Richie Valens, the Chicano pop star of the '50s who bridged the Latino-white pop-music gap. In a case of pop chart *deja vu*, "La Bamba" shot up into the top slot and elevated Los Lobos to a mass recognition. Suddenly, a nagging question arose: how would the Wolves survive success?

Now comes *The Neighborhood*, a stunning piece of work that furthers the ambitious game plan Los Lobos has laid out for itself—clinging to both traditional Mexican folk roots and their own rock and r&b roots, while striking an original sound in the bargain. On the new album, they move laterally across the idioms, from the elliptical, swampy grit of "Down On The Riverbed" to the poignant folk-rock of "Emily" and "Take My Hand," to the artful synthesis of music from both sides of the border on "The Giving Tree" and "Be Still." With the title tune, a dose of inner-city street reality caps off an album that stays mostly in the realm of the poetic. In short: Los Lobos is back in full force.

Was the *La Bamba* episode something of a wrench in the works, at least in terms of the artistic persona Los Lobos had been carving out for itself up until *By The Light Of The Moon*?

"We were sidetracked, but we don't look at it with regret," Perez insists, "because so many good things came out of it. The reality is that we had a song sung in Spanish by a bunch of Chicanos from East L.A. with an Hispanic name, that was on the top of the charts for two-and-a-half weeks. Everybody heard that in the summer of '87. That's pretty significant, on an artistic and political level. It opened the door to a lot of Latin music, to a certain extent. Those are real positive aspects coming out of that. Of course, there's also the problem of being typecast."

So, rather than suck up to the typecasting, the band plunged into the traditional Mexican music which it had been weaned on long before anyone in West L.A. had ever heard of Los Lobos. *La Pistola Y El Corazon*, a collection of venerable old tunes sung in Spanish, was the unlikely follow-up to *La Bamba*—not a shrewd marketing move by any means, but an honest shoring up of roots and a persuasive argument for the underrated inventiveness in the tradition.

As Perez relates, "That did something to us that was also healthy—to dig back deep into our roots and find our identities once again. It was very healthy for us to sit around and talk about old times and play the music that we first abandoned rock & roll for in the first place. Then we went back to rock & roll, and here we were again with question marks."

"It's funny," offers saxist Steve Berlin, "looking back on the *La Bamba* phase, it was such a dream-like state that it's almost hard to remember. You know those movies where the kid gets picked up by the ankles by a balloon and flies up? That's the closest I can come to an image for it."

Coming down to earth without losing a touch of the cosmic, the group has managed a considerable feat on *The Neighborhood*. Oddly, the working process had its basis in *La Pistola*. "We learned a lot," says Perez, recording [*La Pistola*] in five days in the studio. "We learned how to feel comfortable. Those early takes really count instead of doing take after take."

If finding a spontaneous spark was important in the early stages, laying on the finishing touches was equally crucial. An increasingly dense swirl of sound envelopes "Angel Dance." A bevy of traditional instruments—accordion, violin, bajo-sexto, mostly played by the multi-talented Hidalgo—are carefully woven into the rock-band palette.

The very nature of the newer songs, at once simply stated and loaded with understated meanings, is a shift from past practices. "On *By The Light Of The Moon*," Hidalgo explains, "the songs we wrote were more like storytelling—stories and pieces of life. On this album, we tried to be more economical, to get straight to the point more."

As collaborations go, the Hidalgo-Perez songwriting team appears to be on solid ground. This doesn't mean, though, that they spend endless hours in the throes of songcraft. Perez: "We don't have the luxury of time to sit around with a couple of guitars and work on songs together. We live less than a mile away from each other, but we rarely see each other. We communicate whenever we can, with cassettes—melodies and ideas.

"David will work on something for awhile, and finally get something that's a pretty concrete idea before I get my hands on it, and vice versa. If there's something that looks like it will fly, we'll put it together. There were a lot of songs that never went beyond the demo form, real skeletal things that we didn't get the chance to finish. But for the most part, we zoom in on things pretty quickly. I kind of envy the people like Elvis [Costello], who can turn on the faucet and the songs come pouring out."

Hidalgo takes the floor: "I've always been a fan of blues musicians or, say, Hank Williams, and the way they express themselves. Their lines sound so simple, but I think, 'Why couldn't I have thought of that? Gee, I wish I wrote that.' They say things in a perfect way, no frills. Dave Alvin's got that way with deceptively simple songs. He knows his craft."

Perez jumps in: "Some of these guys have been so great at doing it just from the starting gate . . . I hate 'em," he laughs. "Tom Waits. Richard Thompson—'Two Left Feet.' Why didn't I write that?"

Once demos of potential Los Lobos songs are made, the material goes through further phases of evolution. Part of the slowness of the process can be chalked up to the discriminating way the band does its dirty work. "We take the songs apart," Berlin explains, "beat them up, put them together, throw them down, and see if they come back. We're pretty brutal."

Does said internal brutality account for the three-year gap between original Los Lobos projects? "It wasn't that we didn't want to get it out sooner," Berlin reports. "It's just, like many things in the universe called Los Lobos, they're done when

they're done. Nothing you or me or anybody else can do about it. It's something I had to learn the hard way. I'd say, 'Let's go, let's go . . .'. They just do it when it's time to do it. It's a very zen-like operation."

Perez notes that "as our manager knows, we work very much on intuition and what feels right. It drives people nuts. People like to see schedules. As much as they try to push us into this disciplined way of doing things, we go off the edge and don't know exactly what we're doing.

"The imagination is so out of control, how can you expect to try to align it with any business sense? For the life of me, I can't believe that this building is standing," he gestures to the walls of our conference room in the Warner Bros. building where we're talking, "if it's foundation is based on people's dreams and imaginations."

A smooth guitar player, in contrast to fellow Lobo Cesar Rosas' rougher edge, Hidalgo blends country/folk ease with blues/rock muscle. "Guitar was the first thing that got me into music, ever since I was a five-year-old kid and heard Duane Eddy. I said, 'I want to do that.' I loved the sound of it. Everyone I ever listened to has soaked in. I've always been a fan. The more lyrical kind of playing, the more economical playing appealed to me—not so much flash. Early on, I liked Peter Green, Hendrix, Clapton. I liked a lot of the country guys, too. On Saturday afternoons in L.A., there used to be three or four hours of country music. We used to sit around watching guitar players on *The Buck Owens Show*."



ANN SUMMA

As typified by the growling low tones on "Deep Dark Hole," from the new album, he seems to have a special fondness for the area south of the fifth fret, the underrated low range of the guitar. As Berlin jests, "We have to remind David sometimes that there is life above the 10th fret. On stage sometimes, he'll do a whole solo not even visiting the B string."

Hidalgo occasionally does studio work for special projects, such as for Peter Case and Buckwheat Zydeco. He added guitar layers to Leo Kottke's fine album *My Father's Face*, at the behest of producer T-Bone Burnett. "To do that session was a great opportunity. I was really into it." At one point in the recording, Hidalgo pulled out a bajo-sexto to show Kottke—who was promptly seduced by the low, stately sound. "I tuned it up for him and let him play it. After that, he says, 'Ah, this hurts me deep,'" Hidalgo laughs at the memory, "and he had this big smile on his face. Later on, I saw him at the NAMM show buying a six-string bass so he could go way down." Sure enough, you can hear a new-found suffusion of low-end on Kottke's new one, *That's What*.

With a supple tenor voice that is deceptively straightforward-sounding, Hidalgo also sings up a storm; his strong, pure voice is one of the main attractions of Los Lobos. "When we started Los Lobos and were doing traditional Mexican folk music, I didn't sing very much, mostly because my Spanish was pretty bad. It took a while to get up the confidence to try to get better at Spanish. I didn't sing much for awhile. It wasn't until we started writing songs that I started singing."

Los Lobos is the product of its wide musical scope. Hidalgo relates that "even back before this band started, we were influenced by people like The Band. [The Band's Levon Helm lends his signature vocals to 'Little John Of God.'] I didn't realize it until later on, that we were doing a lot of similar things. Not that we necessarily sounded like them, but the concept of a band that switches instruments and pulls in things from everywhere made a connection."

Perez illustrates his point about their unbiased musical filter: "We're sitting in the middle of this amusement park in Milan listening to an Italian band playing polka, watching kids and old people dancing to this band made up of two saxophonists, bass guitar, accordion, and drums. It just sounded great. People are just moved by certain things, and you just want to run out and do something. You don't know what it's going to relate to. A visual image might stick in your mind that will lead to a song theme or it might just be a couple of words that sound right together."

The Neighborhood marks their first project which presents the Mexican-American influences in a stylistic merger, rather than keeping the two elements separate but equal. "We've been working on it for years," says Hidalgo. "'La Pistola Y El Corazon' was the first attempt to write something in that style. That more or less broke the ice and led to 'Be Still.' We took it a step further by putting a drum set in there. That was real exciting for us; we said, 'We've got to do more stuff like this.' We're going to try to explore that further, use traditional instruments and mix things up a little bit more."

The pressure cooker of urban life, impacted upon restless creative youth, has bred rap and punk, both forms in which rage bubbles up near the surface. Los Lobos heeds a different agenda, tapping into subtler emotional strains and wafting idealism. "We're always trying to be peacemakers," says Perez. "Even within the band, we know where each other's space is. We're very democratic in the way we go about things."

Hidalgo expands on the thought: "It relates to the way we were brought up and the whole sense of community we were talking about—trying to keep things together, whether in the family unit or the neighborhood. It comes through in our writing, too. We write about things from that angle."

"And it's out of a need to communicate," adds Perez, "to express a certain feeling. We never chose to write as if coming from this insular situation: 'We're Chicanos and this is our pain.' We'd rather write in a way that can translate to different people's lives. It has been intentional from the very beginning to write in a more universal voice.

"I want to be able to communicate something to people—so that they'll feel that they're not out there on their own. It's in that vulnerability that people can sense a certain honesty or sincerity—if I can use those words—in what we do." DB

LOS LOBOS EQUIPMENT

Louis Perez plays a Sonor Light drum kit, Paiste cymbals, and Pro Mark Natural sticks. David Hidalgo alternates between Stratocasters, Telecasters, and "an occasional Les Paul." Chandler Industries from Northern California provided a body and neck, as well as a rack-mount Tube Overdrive. Live, he's using Bandmaster Reverb amps with two 12-inch cabinets. For effects, he uses a Boss tremolo pedal and digital delay, and a Chandler delay. At home, he has a complement of fuzzboxes, plays Hohner accordions, and a Kramer Ferrington acoustic guitar.

Steve Berlin plays a Selmar Mark VI tenor sax and late '30s model Buescher baritone, with mouthpieces made by Kirk Heisig, from Santa Cruz. He also plays a Korg CX3 organ—"That was their fake B-3, which I dearly wish they would make again"—and a Hohner clavinet. Berlin's latest rave is for the Korg WAVE station. In terms of effects, he uses a Quaderverb, an Aphex compressor on his sax, and a BBE sound enhancer.

LOS LOBOS SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

THE NEIGHBORHOOD—Slash/Warner Bros 26131
LA PISTOLA Y EL CORAZON—Slash/Warner Bros 25790
LA BAMBAMBA—Slash/Warner Bros. 25605
BY THE LIGHT OF THE MOON—Slash/Warner Bros. 25523
HOW WILL THE WOLF SURVIVE?—Slash/Warner Bros 25177



DON GROLNICK

DREAMWEAVER

By Michael Boatman

2008 MHI

Don Grolnick should have called his new album *It's About Time!* Though it's actually called *Weaver Of Dreams* and it's not the first album with Grolnick's name above the title, after 20 years as a protean pianist and working as arranger, composer, or producer for everyone from James Brown to James Taylor, Linda Ronstadt to Yoko Ono, and so often side-by-side with the Brecker brothers, this is (at last) Grolnick's definitive debut as a bandleader. Indeed, he's a leader of leaders, joined by tenor saxist Michael Brecker, trumpeter Randy Brecker, trombonist Barry Rogers, bass clarinetist Bob Mintzer, bassist Dave Holland, and drummer Peter Erskine. I mean, if you want your music played, you want your music played by the best!

"It was a complete pleasure," said Grolnick. "I thought carefully before I called the people. One thing I wanted was people who could play the parts beautifully but always add something personal, put themselves into the parts, even mess around and loosen up the parts without my having to say too much. It was not a problem at all being a leader of leaders. Mike, Randy, Barry, Bob, and Peter are all close friends of mine. We've worked together a lot. Dave and I played maybe once but we didn't know each other. I've always loved the way he played, so it was a particular pleasure to play with Dave. We rehearsed two days, recorded three days, and I mixed for two days. It was the most fun I've ever had in my whole life" (see "Reviews" p. 32).

The Brecker brothers said much the same about Grolnick's music.

"Don has the ability to write some profound things that are very simple at the same time," said Michael. "That's a real gift. He's a great writer, a great player, and I've always liked Don's sense of humor."

"I enjoy the complexity and simplicity that he's able to derive from his compositions," said Randy. "They're simple melodies but with somewhat more complex harmonies. He's written some memorable melodies but the subtle complexities of the harmonics make the melodies stand out even more. And always Don's sense of humor comes through."

As for his playing, Grolnick hardly solos when he plays for such pop musicians as Linda Ronstadt or James Taylor, his most frequent gigs over the years, but what he plays is always so right — and remarkably so. "Don admittedly rarely practices," Randy stated, "and what he plays is just what comes to him. It's not stuff he's amazingly worked out. He has chops but he doesn't spend any time working on improvisations. It's just that he's always thinking of music, and to me, the beauty of his playing is that it's really compositional. He knows how to compose a solo. Even those times when I'll play with him and he'll say he hasn't been playing in months — his regular gig with James Taylor doesn't stretch him out a lot — Don still sounds great."

Randy first played with Don almost 30 years ago. "We went to the Stan Kenton band camp in the summer of 1962," said Randy. "I was 16 and he was 15. I remember rehearsing with Don in a couple of small groups. He was already a good player, the most sought-after piano player in the camp."

He'd fallen in love with jazz early on. "There was a jazz club in the '50s called the Cork and Bib in Westbury very near where I lived," said Grolnick, born in 1947 on Long Island. "My father used to take me there. I saw Bill Evans with Scott LaFaro there. I saw Horace Silver when Joe Henderson was in the band. My father played Freddie Green-style guitar and took

me to see Count Basie when I was eight. I went nuts! My uncle took me to Carnegie Hall to see Erroll Garner, and my father also took me sometimes to Birdland when they had a peanut gallery. It was cheap and you could be underage, just drink a Coke. I saw Trane there and a lot of people. I didn't have friends in high school who were interested in jazz, but I just kept getting the records."

Grolnick's first instrument was the accordion, quite popular in the '50s, but he switched to playing the piano his grandparents happened to have. "I wasn't sure piano was the thing for me. I was interested in tenor players and played saxophone in high school, but then I dropped that. Now it seems like piano was the instrument for me, good for composing, arranging, producing — so maybe there was more conscious choice than I remember. I just loved anything that swung really hard — Wynton Kelly, Erroll Garner, Count Basie, Bill Evans, Herbie Hancock, also Trane and Sonny Rollins among tenor players."

Though he was as good a pianist as Randy Brecker remembers from the band camp, when he came to college he wasn't certain he wanted to be a musician. Grolnick enrolled in Tufts as a philosophy major — but soon was thinking about music more than thinking about thinking. "Somewhere in there music became an obsession — and I never finished Tufts."

While matriculating philosophically in the latter '60s, he played a college jazz festival at Notre Dame — where he won a piano award and first heard the winner of a saxophone award, Michael Brecker. Michael and Don were aware of each other but didn't become friends until Grolnick settled in New York at the turn of the '70s and eventually joined both brothers in the

proto-fusion band Dreams.

"We had auditions," said Randy, "and Don was one of the first to come by. We liked his playing right off. He played us a couple of his tunes and had a good sense of humor. He was really funny, so we hired him." Barry Rogers played trombone in Dreams, so Grolnick's new album is that much more a reunion.

Grolnick stayed when Dreams evolved into the Brecker Brothers Band and, like the brothers, he soon became a regular around the New York studio scene and was playing just about everything musical — except his own music.

"It seems, in retrospect, that I played less on jazz records and mostly on pop records. I did some James Brown records — though he wasn't there, much to my regret. I first worked with James Taylor in the early '70s, Roberta Flack, Phoebe Snow, a bunch of Steely Dan records. All those years blend in my memory but the records that stick out are the records that were more r&b as opposed to the white-bread records. I even did some country records, B.J. Thomas and stuff like that. All of us in the early '70s were having fun with the studio scene, but I'd never listened to anything but jazz until I was in my 20's and I was trying to learn to play a different kind of music. I could hear some session players who'd grown up as jazz players and they'd play some r&b or rock & roll things, but I could hear the jazz in there and I never wanted to do that. I wanted to play that stuff authentically and worked very hard on it — but it was disconcerting when I'd run into people who only knew me from rock & roll records. It was exciting at first but after a while it came upon me that that wasn't what I wanted to be doing anymore. I stopped five years ago doing jingles and all-purpose record dates with whoever calls. Sometimes you'd get a call on the service and you wouldn't know who it is and when you show up, that's the first time you realize who you're playing with and what kind of music it is."

Even when the studio became a drag, Grolnick at least enjoyed the road. He first traveled with Linda and James in the mid-'70s, also with Bette Midler, once with the Brothers and even toured Japan with Yoko Ono.

Grolnick and Michael Brecker returned to Japan in the latter '70s with bassist Eddie Gomez, drummer Steve Gadd, and vibraharpist Mike Mainieri together as the band called Steps. They recorded several Japanese albums, another session live at Seventh Avenue South, the jazz joint the Brothers operated, and then Grolnick split. Grolnick again played Japan in 1989 as musical director of a band with four tenor saxes — Stanley Turrentine, Ernie Watts, Bill Evans, and the inevitable Michael Brecker — gathered together for the Live Under the Sky festival.

Grolnick and Michael Brecker have enjoyed an active musical relationship for 20 years and nowadays Michael doesn't work so much with Don Grolnick the pianist as Don Grolnick the producer. "He's pro-

duced all three of my albums," said Michael. "I like collaborating and Don is fun to collaborate with. We're strong in different areas and I also like to borrow his thought processes. He smoothes my rough edges and I'm able to ruffle up his smooth edges and we have a nice balance. He also hears things harmonically that I haven't thought of. He's been very important to my recordings. I couldn't have done them without him."

Grolnick composed tunes on each of Michael's albums but doesn't play. "I actually prefer when I'm producing not to play. Sometimes the two things go together. If it's my song they're playing it makes sense for me to play. But it's nice to be in the booth and not be thinking of the piano."

He's also produced albums for Peter Erskine, Bob Berg, John Scofield — and himself. That he waited all these years before recording as a bandleader was only natural for Grolnick. "Don works at his own pace," said Randy Brecker. "That's something else I respect about him. He's really uncompromising. When he's ready, he'll get out there."

And otherwise, he's out there with James Taylor or, occasionally, Linda Ronstadt. Grolnick worked on Linda's 1990 album *Cry Like A Rainstorm — Howl Like The Wind* that features Linda's duets with Aaron Neville, and he's playing and arranging rhythm sections for a forthcoming Aaron Neville solo album, but for the last several years he's worked usually with James Taylor. "I've played on four or five of his albums and I produced *Never Die Young*, his most recent one. That's the only pop album I've produced, and I'm going to be working on his next album. James always gets good people and all kinds of musicians like James. It's not a jazz gig. I only have one or two little solos but I'm kind of the bandleader so some creativity comes out if I fool around with the arrangements. Basically, the changes you can make from night to night are extremely small and subtle. It's nothing like the jazz approach. It's a different kind of discipline. It's very similar to being a classical player. You try to get to some state where you pay attention to very fine points of dynamics. It's important that the thing cooks, that the time feel is good. And you'll find a little place one night when you can change your part a little and the whole thing won't fall apart. I love playing his music but I couldn't do it all the time. At some point, I chafe and feel the need to go out and blow!"

That's what Grolnick hopes to be doing more and more: blowing. Michael and Randy said they'd even come on the road if they can work out the time, but whoever's playing will be playing Don's music.

"I've moved from thing to thing but always my original childhood aim was to make jazz records. It's funny how careers go. You get called to do something and it seems interesting and you do it and it leads

to something else and you enjoy it — but you forget your original intentions. What I had to do to make my records was to realize that I had to take time off and take a stand or a lot more time would go by. I guess you get a little older and realize you don't have forever to do what you want. It seems like the direction I'm going now is playing jazz, doing my own stuff. I won't say I won't work with James anymore, but primarily I want to play jazz and write music. I have ideas for other kinds of albums and I'd like to write beyond albums, do some things for dancers or the movies."

Weaver Of Dreams is just a beginning for Don Grolnick — and being on Blue Note brings him full-circle to Grolnick's beginning with jazz. "I made the record myself and shopped it around and it's great to be on Blue Note. That tradition is so good, all those records I loved when I was a kid. When the record came to the house, just seeing it with that label was a great feeling." **DB**

DON GROLNICK'S EQUIPMENT

"I'm basically a piano player. My preference is a nice Steinway grand piano. I also like a Hammond B-3 organ, which they don't make anymore, but when I find one, I play one. I try to avoid synthesizers whenever possible and so far I've pretty much succeeded."

DON GROLNICK SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

WEAVER OF DREAMS — Blue Note
CDP7 94591

with Bob Berg

SHORT STORIES — Denon 33CY-1768
(producer)

with the Brecker Brothers

COLLECTION VOLUME ONE — Novus
3075-2-N

with Michael Brecker

MICHAEL BRECKER — Impulse MCAD-5980
(producer)
DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME — Impulse
MCAD-42229 (producer)
NOW YOU SEE IT — GRP GRD-9622 (producer)

with Peter Erskine

TRANSITION — Denon 33CY-1484
MOTION POET — Denon CY-72582 (producer)

with Linda Ronstadt

SIMPLE DREAMS — Asylum 6E-104
WHAT'S NEW — Asylum 60260
LUSH LIFE — Asylum 60387
FOR SENTIMENTAL REASONS — Asylum
60474
CRY LIKE A RAINSTORM—HOWL LIKE THE WIND — Elektra 60872

with Steely Dan

THE ROYAL SCAM — ABC ABCD 931
AJA — ABC AB-1006
GAUCHO — MCA MCA-6102

with Steps

SMOKIN' IN THE PIT — Nippon Columbia
45CY-2865-66
STEP BY STEP — Nippon Columbia 28CY-2867
PARADOX — Nippon Columbia 28CY-2868

with James Taylor

NEVER DIE YOUNG — Columbia CK 40851
WALKING MAN — Warner Bros. W-2794
THAT'S WHY I'M HERE — Columbia FC 40052
FLAG — Columbia CK 36058
DAD LOVES HIS WORK — Columbia CK 37009

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



LOS LOBOS

THE NEIGHBORHOOD—Slash/Warner Bros. 9 26131-2: *DOWN ON THE RIVERBED*; *EMILY*; *I WALK ALONE*; *ANGEL DANCE*; *LITTLE JOHN OF GOD*; *DEEP DARK HOLE*; *GEORGIA SLOP*; *I CAN'T UNDERSTAND*; *THE GIVING TREE*; *TAKE MY HAND*; *JENNY'S GOT A PONY*; *BE STILL*; *THE NEIGHBORHOOD*. (45:23 minutes)

Personnel: David Hidalgo, vocals, electric and acoustic guitars, requinto jarocho, tiple, accordions, 6-string bass, bajo-sexto, violin, Hawaiian steel, koto guitar, drums, percussion; Cesar J. Rosas, vocals, electric and acoustic guitars, 12-string electric guitar, bajo-sexto, huapanguero; Louis F. Pérez, Jr., drums, percussion, guitars, jarana, hidalguera; Conrad R. Lozano, Fender precision bass, 5-string bass, guitarrón, upright bass, vocals; Steven M. Berlin, tenor, baritone, and soprano saxes, organ, clavinet, percussion; Jerry Marotta, drums (cuts 1, 3); Danny Timms, organ and Wurlitzer (1), piano (12); Alex Acuña, shekere (1), hand drums (3), percussion (4); John Hiatt, vocals (1, 10); Jim Keltner, drums (2, 9-13), percussion (6, 11, 13); Levon Helm, vocals (2, 5), mandolin (2); Mitchell Froom, harmonium (4).

★★★★ ½

This neighborhood has debilitated crack addicts and lethargic alcoholics, somber lovers suffering painful heartaches, and impoverished people immobilized by depression. Yet it also is a community with hope in the midst of its struggles. This is best expressed on the title cut of Los Lobos' fourth album (the first since group members probed their traditional Mexican musical roots on *La Pistola Y El Corazón*). The tune is a catchy, r&b-flavored prayer, an intriguing anthem to the strength of love and hope, a proud striding toward a better future. The theme of finding the calm in the eye of a storm also appears on the beautifully textured "Be Still," an exotic number with the Mexican *huapango* triad folk rhythm.

The tension between what is and what can be pervades the album. But don't expect the musical accent to be on the down side. With the exception of the sobering, heartfelt ballad, "Take My Hand," and the touching acoustic number about the specialness of developmentally-disabled children, "Little John Of God," the album is a feast of dance rhythms. There are husky r&b numbers, a few tunes tinged with country (where David Hidalgo's fiddle playing shines), a killer rockabilly singalong, and a Cajun-influenced waltz (the swaying beat and Hidalgo's rhythmic accordion squeezing gives "The Giving Tree" its celebratory tone).

Los Lobos dips deep into the blues-r&b well for musical inspiration, both for lyrical structure

(repeating lines in the verses of many songs) and its scorching beats (the cover of blues great Jimmy McCracklin's "Georgia Slop" is a full-tilt romp), "Jenny's Got A Pony"—some Mitch Ryder influence here?—is a fun jam session at a rowdy in-studio neighborhood bash, and "I Walk Alone" packs a blue bug that bites. Album bonus points for vocal contributions of Levon Helm and John Hiatt even though bonus points are hardly necessary for this very impressive outing. (reviewed on CD)

—Dan Ouellette



DAVE HOLLAND

EXTENSIONS—ECM 841 778-2: *NEMESIS*; *PROCESSIONAL*; *BLACK HOLE*; *THE ORACLE*; *101° FAHRENHEIT* (SLOW MELTDOWN); *COLOR OF MIND*. (59:01 minutes)

Personnel: Holland, bass; Steve Coleman, saxophones; Kevin Eubanks, guitar; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums.

★★★★★

At this late date, there's no need to reiterate Dave Holland's credentials as one of jazz's most consistent, if softspoken, visionaries. Any short list of the folks he's worked with and a quick listen to, say, '88's *Triplicate* (ECM), should take care of that.

For *Extensions*, Holland has augmented his usual trio with Eubanks. It's no insult to the guitarist to say that playing with Holland has helped focus his ideas better. Certainly both he and Coleman seem to benefit audibly from being within Holland's architectural frame, from undergoing whatever alchemical combination of discipline and artistic input (Holland, Eubanks, and Coleman each contributed two of the album's tunes) the leader uses. And then there's Holland's virtuoso-as-team-player example: he can be rock or stream with equal deftness, pull the rhythmic line taut or, with a twitch of his sharp ears and awesome technique, play it out with a vengeance until it's time to reel you in.

Whatever the reasons, *Extensions* is stretched to the breaking point with engaging sounds. Not flash: the solos are part of each tune's weave—don't rip it up just for show, push and pull its shape cooperatively. That describes the album's overall form as well. While each composer clearly maintains his own voice, their sum somehow creates a continuity of feel, speaks from an underlying shared sensibility, that makes this more than a collection of songs.

In part, the continuity springs from the funky beats that undulate perkily throughout *Exten-*

sions; they're the disc's skeleton. In part, it springs from the gently evocative, dialogic atmospherics (bolstered by Eubanks' now choppy, now inchoate guitar and often sparked by "Smitty" Smith's turn-on-a-dime drumming) that deftly and sympathetically surround the incisively probing solos. In part, it springs from the way serrated instrumental lines tend to be stacked asymmetrically, creating a pulsing momentum and breathing spaces.

The interaction of all these ingredients fleshes out the tunes; they become living, realized compositions, not just lines to hang solos from. Which is why you'll go back to listen again and again. (reviewed on CD)

—Gene Santoro



SONNY BOY WILLIAMSON

KEEP IT TO OURSELVES—Alligator 4787: *THE SKY IS CRYING*; *SLOWLY WALK CLOSE TO ME*; *ONCE UPON A TIME*; *DON'T LET YOUR RIGHT HAND KNOW*; *MOVIN' OUT*; *COMING HOME TO YOU BABY*; *I CAN'T UNDERSTAND*; *SAME GIRL*; *GETTIN' TOGETHER*; *WHY ARE YOU CRYING?*; *GIRL FRIENDS*; *WHEN THE LIGHTS WENT OUT*.

Personnel: Rice "Sonny Boy Williamson" Miller, harmonica and vocals; Matt "M.T." Murphy, guitar; Memphis Slim, piano; Billie Stepney, drums (cut 5).

★★★★ ½

This is a set of long-lost cuts from harmonica master Rice Miller, aka "Sonny Boy Williamson No. 2." Miller is generally acknowledged as one of the four modern geniuses of blues harp, the other three being John Lee "Sonny Boy" Williamson (from whom Miller appropriated the name), Big Walter Horton, and Little Walter.

Miller (or Williamson, as he was universally known) is featured here in an intimate setting, either unaccompanied or backed by pianist Memphis Slim and/or guitarist Matt "M.T." Murphy (with drummer Billie Stepney added on one track). The recordings were made in 1963 in Copenhagen, and initially released on the Danish Storyville label. They allowed Williamson to explore more fully the low-key, intimate side of his musical personality that always seemed to lurk beneath his usual rowdy strut, and they provide a penetrating, hilarious, and deeply moving portrait of one of our premier blues artists.

From the first cut ("The Sky Is Crying"), Williamson seems determined to communicate deeply with both his sidemen and the listener. Asides to Murphy and Slim are frequent; Williamson's voice ranges from his usual throaty vibrato to a near-whisper, and his harp

displays the entire range of his magnificent gifts—hawk-like screaming one minute, middle-register chug-chug-chugging the next, and finally a sweet-toned warble that lends credence to the stories that Williamson had once picked up pointers from Big Walter. His metronome-like feel for time is present throughout—the lack of a drummer is barely noticed.

A song-by-song breakdown in this case is somewhat beside the point—it's all straight-ahead acoustic blues, notable especially for Murphy's adherence to the traditional forms, despite his vaunted versatility and flash. Memphis Slim plays and sings with the sublime elegance for which he was famous; with players like these, superb musicianship is a given.

It's the songs themselves that make this recording special. Williamson inverts, convolutes, and teases the English language with devilish wit, borrowing from his own vast canon as well as various standards and folk sayings to craft an outrageous folk poetry that sometimes recalls Jack Kerouac's description of Dean Moriarty in *On The Road*: "There was nothing clear about the things he said but what he meant to say was somehow made pure and clear." Williamson was creating "spontaneous bop prosody" before Kerouac was out of grammar school.

For those in the know, this recording reveals an important facet of Williamson that might have otherwise remained hidden. It's also the perfect initiation for newcomers to the musical

world of Rice Miller: witty, inventive, and informed by one of the most outrageous and creative imaginations in all of blues. (reviewed on LP) —David Whiteis



DON GROLNICK

WEAVER OF DREAMS—Blue Note CDP 7 94591 2: *NOTHING PERSONAL*; *TAGLIONI*; *A WEAVER OF DREAMS*; *HIS MAJESTY THE BABY*; *I WANT TO BE HAPPY*; *PERSIMMONS*; *OR COME FOG*; *FIVE BEARS*. (51:11 minutes)

Personnel: Grolnick, piano; Michael Brecker, tenor sax; Randy Brecker, trumpet; Bob Mintzer, bass clarinet; Barry Rogers, trombone; Dave Holland, bass; Peter Erskine, drums.

★★★★★

This is Grolnick's masterpiece. After devoting

the last 20 years of his career as a studio session player and producer (Steely Dan, James Taylor, Carly Simon, to name but a few of his ongoing associations) he has emerged with this gem of uncut modern jazz. Inspired by the likes of Mingus, Cannonball, Trane, and Bill Evans, *Weaver Of Dreams* is a far cry from the more fuzak-y offerings on Grolnick's 1983 Windham Hill album, *Hearts And Numbers*.

Produced and arranged by Grolnick, the album is startlingly fresh and full of soul, highlighting six Grolnick compositions and featuring some of the strongest Brecker solos thus far (both Randy and Michael) on record. Plus, Bob Mintzer's bass clarinet solo on an irreverent version of the standard "I Want To Be Happy" is worth the price of admission in and of itself.

"Nothing Personal," a cut that appeared on Michael Brecker's debut album on Impulse, is effectively rearranged here for four horns. "Taglioni" has a loose Liberation Orchestra-type ensemble feel to it. Easily the most daring piece on the album, its rubato sections with squeaking dissonances evoke Albert Ayler's rough-edged excursions. On the title cut, an obscure standard rendered here as an easy, swinging trio vehicle, Grolnick displays a sure left hand and a mercurial right. And the moody opus, "His Majesty The Baby," features some remarkable blowing by trombonist Barry Rogers before culminating in a wide-open-blowing section with all four horns wailing at the tag. Randy Brecker's trumpet sounds luscious on

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the lush ballad "Persimmons," which Grolnick composed some years ago for the original Steps band. And Michael Brecker fans are going to want to check out the swinging uptempo vehicle "Or Come Fog" (based on the changes to Harold Arlen's "Come Rain Or Come Shine") for some burning hard-bop-styled tenor. Dave Holland, a strong subliminal presence throughout, is featured on the album closer, "Five Bars," a Mingus-like bluesy ballad.

A prolific composer who's contributed to albums by Brecker, John Abercrombie, Peter Erskine, and others on the New York scene, Grolnick gets a little help from his friends on *Weaver Of Dreams*, his excellent Blue Note debut. (reviewed on CD) —*Bill Milkowski*



RUBY BRAFF

BRAVURA ELOQUENCE—Concord Jazz
4423: *Ol' Man River*; *Smile*; *Who'll Buy My*

Violets; *Lonely Moments*; *Here's Carl*; *God Bless The Child*; *It's Bad For Me*; *I've Grown Accustomed To Her Face*; *Make Sense*; *I'm Shooting High*; *Orange*; *Persian Rug*; *Trav'lin' Light*; *Royal Garden Blues*; *Judy Medley: The Man That Got Away*; *San Francisco*; *Over The Rainbow*; *If I Only Had A Brain*. (58:37 minutes)

Personnel: Braff, cornet; Howard Alden, guitar; Jack Lesberg, bass.

★ ★ ★ ★

RUBY BRAFF/ DICK HYMAN

MUSIC FROM MY FAIR LADY—Concord Jazz
4393: *Wouldn't It Be Lovely*; *With A Little Bit Of Luck* (slow); *With A Little Bit Of Luck* (fast); *I'm An Ordinary Man*; *The Rain In Spain*; *I Could Have Danced All Night*; *Ascot Gavotte*; *On The Street Where You Live*; *Show Me*; *Get Me To The Church On Time*; *Without You*; *I've Grown Accustomed To Her Face*. (53:08)

Personnel: Braff, cornet; Hyman, piano.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½



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Wynton Marsalis now embraces melody-playing, a classically rich brass timbre, and the legacy of Armstrong Fine. But it's all old news to cornetist Ruby Braff, who's practiced that same religion for almost 40 years. Braff's tacks are unabashedly derived from Pops. You could make a list: the fat vibrato, plump sound up and down, the leaps from one end of his range to the other, the behind-the-beat swing, and penchant for repeated notes. But the effect is different; Braff—who likes to hang out in his lower register, far from Louis' triumphant high notes—comes across as more relaxed, less bursting with excitement. He has his own genial style.

Braff has said that "improvisation is adoration of the melody," a point driven home by the ballad tempos he favors (on the trio date, only "Royal Garden Blues" and Ruby's riff tune "Here's Carl" begin to hurry) and by the pretty pieces he picks. His dignified reading of Charlie Chaplin's maudlin "Smile" shows he knows the difference between sensitivity and self-pity—he doesn't go for the heartbreak that the lyric nurses. Swing atavist Alden and vet Lesberg solo with taste—Jack, arco, sometimes—but you'll remember them more for the carpet they roll out for Ruby to stroll across.

"Accustomed To Her Face" is reprised from last winter's duet set with Dick Hyman, who can hold his own with Ruby, spur him on to greater heights, and help him have more fun. Hyman's stride basses give Braff an extra kick, so that he makes even the recitative "I'm An Ordinary Man" sound like a wonderful melody. Lerner and Loewe's mid-50s *My Fair Lady* may have been the last musical with more than one song anyone'd wanna whistle. The duo put its tunes through odd paces. On "Rain In Spain," Hyman's tangoing and descending chromatics echo Darius Milhaud's '20s Brazilian pieces; Ruby slips quotes from "Willow Weep" and "'A' Train" into "Wouldn't It Be Lovely." Why would musicians whose styles are based in the '20s quote songs from the '30s and '40s while playing music from the '50s in the '80s? To remind us that the art of old masters breathes on. (reviewed on CD)

—Kevin Whitehead



TAKE 6

SO MUCH 2 SAY — Reprise 25892-2: *So Much 2 Say*; *I L-O-V-E U*; *Something Within Me*; *Time After Time (The Savior Is Waiting)*; *Come Unto Me*; *I Believe*; *Sunday's On The Way*; *I'm On My Way*; *Where Do The Children Play*. (37:06 minutes)

Personnel: Alvin Chea, Cedric Dent, Mark Kibble, Claude McKnight III, David Thomas, Mervyn Warren, vocals; James Blair, drums (cut 9); Matthew Morse, synclavier (9).

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

Hey, they can flat-out sing, everybody knows that. There's a high degree of difficulty—the harmonies they're singing are very close, not just thirds or fifths. But the arranging is the big surprise here, full and so daring. There's nobody 2 really compare Take Six 2. They out-soul Manhattan Transfer in a minute and are far more adventurous than the Nylons.

The band goes to pains to inform listeners that the sounds heard on this disc are not made by DX-7s, guitar synths, or drum machines. They're all organically-generated sounds. From the mouths and minds of the talented young men come all "percussion," "trombones," and sound effects. From the opening flight of jazz vocal fancy, "So Much 2 Say," they want everyone to know that there's nothing out of reach.

They play around with sampled voices on the wild, opening romp before settling into some funky grooves that fit them equally well. "I L-O-V-E U" confirms their funk capabilities, with Mervyn Warren belting, snarling, and cooing, and even features a rap recitation of I Corinthians 13. "Something Within Me" starts off like "Amazing Grace," then gets into a shuffle that sounds like the Mighty Clouds of Joy. Enter a syncopated rasta rap and some impassioned lead vocals by Kibble, Chea, and McKnight. Nods to Stevie Wonder and Aaron Neville crop up, but all in all the voices are quite distinctive.

They bring an upbeat gospel message to the proceedings that may turn some people off, but it's certainly a source of inspiration to the singers. "I Believe" was co-written by gospel Grammy-winner Bebe Winans, and the words to "Come Unto Me" were taken directly from the Bible. "Sunday's On The Way" is a fingersnapper with very cool narration and a positive message. When the devil ("Big D," they call him) tempts you, it may seem like Friday night, but Sunday's on the way.

There's never been any question about these guys' abilities since they strutted on the scene, but here the soul is catching up and starting to go right along with the talent. That's a knockout. (reviewed on CD) —Robin Tolleson

DON GROLNICK

"ONE OF MY FAVORITE COMPOSERS."
—MICHAEL BRECKER

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WILLIAM CLARKE

BLOWIN' LIKE HELL—Alligator AL-4788: LOLIPOP MAMA; LONESOME BEDROOM BLUES; GAMBLING FOR MY BREAD; GREASY GRAVY; TRYING SO HARD; CASH MONEY; MUST BE JELLY; SWEET ANGEL'S GONE; LOOKING TO THE FUTURE; DRINKING BY MYSELF; BLOWIN' LIKE HELL. (48:18 minutes)

Personnel: Clarke, harmonica, vocals; Alex Schultz, guitar (cuts 1, 2, 4, 6, 7), bass (6); Zach Zunis (3, 5, 8, 10), Rick Holstrom (8), John Marx (9, 11), guitar; Fred Kaplan (1, 3-5, 8-10), Steve F'dor (7, 2), piano; Willie Brinlee, acoustic bass; John Young, electric bass (8); Eddie Clark, drums; Jon Viau, baritone and

tenor sax (3, 5, 8); John Marotti, trombone and trumpet (3, 5, 8).

★ ★ ★ ★

Honest, gritty, foot-stompin' Chicago-styled blues done up by this band of L.A. devotees led by Clarke, a honkin', hard-driving harpist. This rough, raucous approach to the blues ain't pretty like the Robert Cray brand. And there's no novelty appeal à la Little Charlie & The Nightcats, his Alligator labelmates. It's just straightahead, no-nonsense juke-joint blues in the Junior Wells/Buddy Guy vein.

Clarke's slightly grungey, amplified harp feels just right on the aptly-named "Greasy Gravy." He offers a touch of Delta feel on the instrumental "Cash Money" and swings on the sly, after-hours jazz-club groove of "Must Be Jelly." Though he's obviously a superb technician, Clarke knows how to squeeze the juice out of a single note on shuffles and slow blues numbers. He's most effective in the latter category on "Drinking By Myself," a mournful dirge that also features his most heartfelt, inspired vocal on the record.

Guitarists Alex Schultz and Zach Zunis play it sly and economical, à la Hubert Sumlin, rather than trying to chop out all over the place. And Willie Brinlee's lumbering, upright basslines anchor the session the way Willie Dixon anchored so many classic Muddy Waters sessions.

Authentic juke-joint feel, whether it's shuffles, boogies, or slow blues. And Clarke also shows a knack as a songwriter with nine originals, done up in the tradition of his elders, James Cotton, Little Walter, and his mentor, the late George "Harmonica" Smith. A dynamic debut from a new face on the scene. (reviewed on CD)
—Bill Milkowski



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RAGGED GLORY—Reprise 9 26315-2: COUNTRY HOME; WHITE LINE; F*!#IN' UP; OVER AND OVER; LOVE TO BURN; FARMER JOHN; MANSION ON THE HILL; DAYS THAT USED TO BE; LOVE AND ONLY LOVE; MOTHER EARTH. (62:44 minutes)

Personnel: Young, guitar, vocals; Frank "Poncho" Sampedro, guitar, vocals; Billy Talbot, bass, vocals; Ralph Molina, drums, vocals.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

No tricks here. No computer games or rockabilly posturing as in past recent efforts. This is straight 4/4 rock & roll, Crazy Horse style—sloppy, grungey, brimming with melody and full of fire. It's the sound of old friends having

JAZZ & BLUES PAPERBACKS

from Da Capo Press

fun.

This lineup of Crazy Horse dates back to the 1976 album, *Zuma*, but the project itself evokes Young's 1969 classic *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere*, which yielded the hits "Cowgirl In The Sand" and "Down By The River." From the tuneful "Country Home" and "White Line," both written in the '70s, to the self-incriminating "F!#in' Up," there's plenty to savor here, lyrically as well as instrumentally.

Young's guitar work throughout *Ragged Glory* is fairly astounding. Shards of feedback and squealing, tortured harmonics add angst to nearly every cut. The effect is particularly spine-tingling on "F!#in' Up," an edgy anthem for losers. And on the two 10-minute workouts, "Love To Burn" and "Love And Only Love," he lets it rip with a kind of devilish glee. Imagine Jack Nicholson plugging in a Les Paul, cranking up his amp to 10 and flashing that infamous shit-eating grin.

The sickness factor of Young's grungey guitar work is balanced by sweet, four-part vocal harmonies. But the tunes never submerge into sap. Young is always there with howling feedback and sustain, providing that edge. Picture Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young backed by Sonic Youth and you get the picture. Of course, that was the basic scenario for *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere*, *Zuma*, and *Rust Never Sleeps*, all great Crazy Horse albums.

Crank this one, stand back, and savor the sweet sickness of Young's renegade vision. (reviewed on CD) —*Bill Milkowski*



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THE OLD GUARD OF NEW ORLEANS

by Josef Woodard

Bonnie Raitt wasn't the only long-overdue toast of this year's Grammy awards; the **Neville Brothers**, America's rightful guardians of the New Orleans flame, were duly recognized for their first great record, *Yellow Moon*. To boot, nonpareil vocalist Aaron Neville also garnered a Grammy for his duet on Linda Ronstadt's last album. Things are looking up for the family band whose very collective existence was hard-won—if probably inevitable—and whose recorded output is uneven at best.

Live, the band's emotional power and encyclopedic breadth has never been questioned. Of late, with a newly galvanized sense of purpose along with a sudden wealth of Nevilles-related CD reissues, the potency of their recorded documentation is catching up to their noble rep.

Yellow Moon was a certain kind of mysterious wonder, by far the most focused project from the Nevilles. It was also one of three beguiling jewels (including Daniel Lanois' own *Acadie* and Bob Dylan's *Oh Mercy*) produced by Lanois in a makeshift studio/house in the Crescent City. The follow-up album, *Brother's Keeper* (A&M 75021 5312 2; 55:57 minutes: ★★★★★), barbers the earlier album's compelling ambience for a more broadly-stroked collection of tunes. The diverse directions of the four brothers—Aaron, Art, Charles, and Cyrille—can work for or against the band's identity. Here, the Brothers find creative accord, between themes of social indignation (as on "Sons And Daughters," mostly a poetic tirade over a drum pulse), threads of r&b, reggae, c&w, ethereal sound colorings, and subtle second-line pulses.

Staying *au courant* isn't high on the Brothers' priority list. The throbbing bass lines and organ pads feeding "Witness" evince Billy Preston and Sly Stone, and the general groove factor on the album steers clear of the garden variety pop or r&b standards. Aaron's testimonial, range-hopping voice embraces "Fearless" and also kicks off the title cut, after which the Brothers swap phrases. Closing the set, Leonard Cohen's beautifully epigrammatic "Bird On a Wire" serves as an anthem of forbearance. But Cohen's languid folk song is electronically transformed via loping, sequenced patchwork. Some innocence is lost, some regained, and that's the Neville story in a song.

To catch up with the evolution of the Neville Brothers, *Treacherous* (Rhino R2 71494; 2 discs; 102:48: ★★★★★) is indispensable. The compilation is a concise, if highly selective, musical history leading up to the Nevilles' eventual sibling revelry, from Art Neville's mid-'50s hit, "Mardi Gras Mambo," with the Hawkets, to Aaron Neville's flaming phoenix solo career, to the Meters' rhythmic siege, to the tribalistic joy of the Wild Tchoupitoulas to the Brothers'



The Brothers: (clockwise from bottom left) Charles, Cyril, Aaron, and Art.

consolidation in 1977.

For the ever-seductive **Meters**, led by Art Neville and later featuring young Cyrille Neville on percussion, social concern didn't have nearly the appeal as a good, raw, organic sense of fun and funk. They were growing out of their longstanding cult status and were wooing larger audience shares thanks to their Rolling Stones tour. Hearing the Meters revived on CD illustrates how the rough edges of their loose-knit kineticism was later smoothed over once Aaron Neville's creamy soulfulness and the Brothers' divergent influences came into play. *Good Old Funky Music* (Rouner 2104; 39:08: ★★½) is a set of previously unissued tracks, mostly produced by New Orleans veteran Allen Toussaint and including a gumbo funky reading of Hank Williams' "Jambalaya." *Look-Ka Py Py* (Rouner 2103; 32:33: ★★★★★) is vintage Meters, featuring the classic title cut. The taut interplay of Art Neville, guitarist Leo Nocentelli, bassist George Porter, Jr., and drummer Zigaboo Modeliste was at an all-time high.

While the Meters were waging rhythmic havoc, all **Aaron Neville** had to do was open his mouth to unleash one of the best, sweet-but-bold sounds in modern pop music. *The Classic Aaron Neville* (Rouner 2102; 44:22: ★★★★★), a varietal collection comprised of Allen Toussaint-produced cuts, covers the period from the late '60s to the mid-'70s and kicks off with a rawer version of the hit that put his name into currency, "Tell It Like It Is." The mid-80s project *Orchid In The Storm* (Rhino R2 70956; 19:59: ★★★★★) clocks in under 20 minutes and suffers in the material department. But Aaron embodies the rarest strata of pop vocalists ever recorded, dignifying anything he touches. Recently, he has sung "Stardust" (with Rob Wasserman) and the Mickey Mouse theme song (on Producer Hal Willner's *Stay Awake*). As the saying goes, he could sing the phone book and leave no dry eyes in the house.

Could it be that, after so many false starts and unjust marginalization, America is in the process of Nevillization? Stranger things have happened. (all reviewed on CD)

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PURPLE NIGHT—A&M 75021 5324 2: *JOURNEY TOWARDS STARS; FRIENDLY GALAXY; LOVE IN OUTER SPACE; STARS FELL ON ALABAMA; OF INVISIBLE THEM; NEVERNESS; PURPLE NIGHT BLUES.* (66:05)

Personnel: Ra, piano, synthesizer, vocals; Don Cherry, pocket trumpet; June Tyson, violin, vocals; Michael Ray, trumpet, vocals; Fred Adams, Ahmed Abdullah, Jothan Collins, trumpet; Al Evans, trumpet, flugelhorn; Tyrone Hall, Julian Priester, trombone; Reynold Scott, baritone saxophone, flute; James Spaulding, alto sax, flute; Marshall Allen, alto sax, flute, percussion; John Gilmore, tenor sax, percussion, vocals; James Jackson, bassoon, African drum; Earl C. "Buster" Smith, Eric "Samarai" Walker, Thomas "Bugs" Henderson, drums; Elson Nascimento, surdo, percussion; Jorge Silva, repinique, percussion; Rollo Rodford, electric bass; John Ore, acoustic bass.

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

OUT THERE A MINUTE—Restless/Blast First 7 71427-2: *LOVE IN OUTER SPACE; SOMEWHERE IN SPACE; DARK CLOUDS WITH SILVER LININGS; JAZZ AND ROMANTIC SOUNDS; WHEN ANGELS SPEAK OF LOVE; COSMO ENTICEMENTS; SONG OF TREE AND FOREST; OTHER WORLDS; JOURNEY OUTWARD; LIGHTS OF A SATELLITE; STARSHIPS AND SOLAR BOATS; OUT THERE A MINUTE; NEXT STOP MARS.* (66:38)

Personnel: Ra, keyboards; John Gilmore, tenor sax; Marshall Allen, alto sax; other Arkestra members not listed.

★ ★ ★ ★

Earlier this year, when I caught Sun Ra live, he looked more fragile than usual, needing extra support from Arkestra members to parade around the audience during one of the band's percussive excursions. I was worried that age was finally catching up with the eternal interstellar wanderer. Chalk it up to road fatigue because, relaxed within the confines of the studio, Sun Ra has put together a superb package of compositions for his sophomore A&M effort, *Purple Night*. The album opens with a delicate piano piece and closes with a likewise melodically attractive number that is essentially a piano/upright bass duet steeped in the blues. In between there's plenty of the quirky Sun Ra magic: pieces infused with drama, beauty, and humor; free-jazz improvisational flights charting courses full of vicious maelstroms as well as pockets of placidity; off-key, rough-hewn voices espousing Sun Ra's esoteric and droll cosmic philosophy.

The Arkestra is incredibly tight, especially during the free-for-all "Of Invisible Them," an extended ad lib—with an urgent, rather than playful, tone—of polyrhythmic percussion gallops, unison squeaking and honking horn runs, and inspired solos, including Don Cherry's



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— Gary Burton

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pocket trumpet scrawls. Sun Ra is in fine form on the piano as he offers shards of piano tumblings throughout the album, and John Ore on acoustic bass ably serves as the spine of the big band when it goes trekking. Big plus is the inclusion of Sun Ra's classic intergalactic waltz, "Love In Outer Space."

A rudimentary version of "Love In Outer Space" (unpolished solo improvs and no lyrics) is the lead-off number of *Out There A Minute*, an excellent collection of rare Sun Ra tracks released on his own obscure El Saturn label during the late '60s. The clown-mystic personally chose the 13 pieces, ranging from psychedelic jazz and warped swing to inspired cacophony with lots of stunning instrumental curve balls. Great stuff if you can tolerate the less-than-pristine sound quality of the CD. Particularly annoying is the background hiss on "Starships And Solar Boats." (reviewed on CD) —Dan Ouellette



DALLAS JAZZ ORCHESTRA

THANK YOU LEON—DJO, Box 743875, Dallas TX 75374: *BACK IN TOWN; ANAND; MIAMI BEACH; WILLOW WEEP FOR ME; LATIN DREAM; ALISON'S TUNE; BASIN STREET BLUES; REGGAE BLUES; TICKLE TOE; YESTERDAY; BIKINI BEACH; THANK YOU LEON.*

Personnel: Leon Breeden, clarinet; Tim Ishii, Karolyn Kafer, Jeff Colfin, Tom Hayes, Randy Firth, Glen Koster, saxophones; Galen Jeter, Steve Rudig, Byron Parks, Thomas Shabda Noor, John Leonard, trumpets, flugelhorns; Joe Jackson, Donovan Moore, Dave Perkel, trombones; Matt Ingam, bass trombone, tuba; Gary Freeman, keyboards; Chris Clarke, bass; Tony Pia, drums; Kim Plakto, guitar; Rusty Wells, percussion; Jeanette Spurgers, french horn.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY JAZZ ENSEMBLE

DON'T MAKE NOISE!—AM/PM AMCD 303: *DON'T MAKE NOISE; TATTOO; TWILIGHT TIME; SEPULVEDA SWING; MANY HAPPY RETURNS; MOMENT TO MOMENT; CINDY'S SS; SAMBA DEEZ, SAMBA DOZE.* (45:15 minutes)

Principle soloists: Derek Cannon, trumpets; Bill Yeager, trombone; Art Fisher, Less Jennings, Colin Mason, reeds; Rick Helzer, piano; Bill McPherson, guitar; Oliver Shirely, bass.

★ ★ ★

With the Dallas Jazz Orchestra's *Thank You Leon*, the good news is the clarinetting. "Willow Weep" is played with such a transparent forthrightness, it seems almost like a gospel piece, thanks to the superbly graceful work of Leon Breeden, whose big, bottomless sound is a marvel. He is also heard on a wonderful "Basin Street" and the '30s Basie classic, "Tickle Toe," where he fills, but does not copy, the choruses originally played by Lester Young. It's a rare lab band willing to spotlight a clarinetist these days. Rarer still, one this good. It marks this as one of the best lab recordings I've ever come upon. This despite the bad news: "Miami Beach," which falls into a long and weary Latin funk groove that seems never to end; a percussion filibuster called "Reggae Blues"; and a pastiche of rock & roll licks called "Bikini Beach." But that clarinet playing. Wow! (reviewed on cassette)

The San Diego State University Jazz Ensemble is another smooth undergrad unit with some witty and mature soloists in the reed section. Specifically, Colin Mason and Art Fisher, who wind around each other on "Sepulveda Swing" in a cagey double-alto exchange of bons mots and one-upsmanship that has both charm and substance. Pianist Rick Helzer's run through his own "Many Happy Returns" is also a high spot. The writing is generally tasteful and on the muted side, as these bands go, save for "Cindy's SS," a guitar number that is too fusion-oriented for a band as good as this to bother with. The engineering is studio-bound and a bit dead, which I think may be one reason why lab bands often are accused of me-tooism. (reviewed on CD)

—John McDonough



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by Howard Mandel

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Birth Of The Cool (Capitol CDP 7 9286 2; 35:57 minutes: ★★★★★), recorded in 1949 and '50, has long been acclaimed for its nonet arrangements, virtuosic solos, and solid but understated swing. The charts by Gil Evans, John Lewis, Gerry Mulligan, and John Carisi are among the best in the American repertoire, remaining cliché-free to this day. Twelve tunes—my favorites: Jeru's "Rocker" and George Wallington's "Godchild"—are beautifully played; this project was a labor of love. The original monophonic taping was good, so the blend of tuba, french horn, Mulligan's bari and J.J. Johnson's 'bone swirling beneath soloists' concise and cogent remarks is now audibly richer. Miles, chops up, is in glorious transit from playing with Bird; drumming by Max Roach and Kenny Clarke is more airy,



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crisp, and pronounced than on LP; the bass takes on a virtually physical presence, and the piano comping (by Al Haig or John Lewis) is clearer. The CD reshuffles song order for no apparent reason, and substitutes a perspective by Pete Welding for notes by Simon Korteweg; Mulligan's comments remain. A treasure.

Volumes 1 and 2 of *Miles Davis* (Blue Note CDP 7 81501 2; 58:27: ★★★★★/81502 2; 39:40: ★★★★★½) respectively present the trumpeter's first ('52), third ('54), and second ('53) sessions for the label in "complete recorded order." With a previously unissued alternate take, five great, definitive tracks with Horace Silver, Percy Heath, and Art Blakey and nine with pianist Gil Coggins, Oscar Pettiford, Kenny Clarke, plus J.J. and Jackie McLean (these two sat out "Yesterdays" and "How Deep Is The Ocean"), *MD Vol. 1* is the choice. But hear Jimmy Heath replace McLean, and the groups' comparable approach to repertoire on 2. These discs contain standards of jazz interaction and improvisation, as well as Miles' newly mature, technically accomplished voice: dry and pointed, tough and vulnerable, dramatic and lyrical. Rudy Van Gelder's engineering shines.

Beyond Davis' Prestige era and first albums for CBS to his March '61 music, there's the Teo Macero-produced studio date with Hank Mobley, Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers, Jimmy Cobb, overdubbed John Coltrane, and the uncredited Philly Joe Jones, *Someday My Prince Will Come* (Columbia CK 40947; 42:03: ★★★★★/Mobil Fidelity MFCD 828; 42:19: ★★★★★). The consumer can choose sound quality or documentation. Ira Gitler's notes on the Columbia CD are informative; Mobile Fidelity's licensed release sounds somewhat less harsh in the treble range, but is without notes and is mistimed. Still, either's better than worn vinyl.

As its title suggests, *Someday* is among Miles' most romantic, bluesy, and intentionally seductive programs. He (and everyone else) selects notes with care, attends to dynamics, allows space for the music to sigh. A star is reserved for ambition. Except for Trane, and Davis' muted musings, the session's a commercial realization rather than an artistic exploration. It's a lovely groove, though, so nice to

come home to. . .

Must have been cool to go out to hear *Miles Davis In Person, Friday Night At The Blackhawk, San Francisco, Volume 1* (Columbia CK 44257; 53:29: ★★★★★½) and *Saturday Night, Volume 2* (Columbia CK 44425; 57:37: ★★★★★½). CD representation of the club sound is predictably superior to LP, especially when one focuses on the rhythm team of Kelly, Chambers, and Cobb. Restored in the re-releases are Mobley's tenor solo on "All Of You" (on 1), a complete sax solo on "Well You Needn't," edited sax solo on "If I Were A Bell," and complete bass solo on "Fran-Dance" (on 2). Ralph Gleason's notes are retained—my LPs don't have any personnel listings. In sleekness this quintet anticipates Miles' next, younger, more harmonically open and rhythmically elastic combo. But these sets are exemplary: dig tightly-wound Miles, mellow Mobley, and after-church Kelly on "Blackbird," "So What," "Oleo," etc.

As *DB* editor John Ephland writes in the liner notes, *Nefertiti* (Columbia CK 46113; 39:12: ★★★★★) was "the fourth and final all-acoustic studio installment" from Miles' mid- to late '60s Hancock-Carter-Williams-Shorter quintet, as well as "a collection of music composed by others bearing the distinctive sound" of the master. Recorded in the summer '67, it seems perched on a cusp. The compositions by Wayne, Herbie, and Tony are distinctive, their performances perfectly pitched, and Miles' treatments are innovative; the cyclical melodies, subdued in mood and sonically bejeweled, are well served by CD sound. What's wrong? Miles hasn't yet mastered his trumpet's role within the new style. Loose ensemble passages are effective, but solos revert to regular rhythms. Slated to lift off, the band remains ready on the launch pad.

Not so *Filles De Kilimanjaro* (Columbia CK 46116; 56:32: ★★★★★), recorded by the same combo and replacements Chick Corea and Dave Holland one year later. The Fender Rhodes electric piano's sound dates this music as if it were a harpsichord; ostinatos and cycle structures are established, then abandoned; Williams' drums are backbone, punctuation, and commentary all in one. Davis' sense of placement is marvelous, but he is far from alone. The CD's digital remixes of "Frelon Brun" and "Mademoiselle Mabry" seem to add something—maybe new richness of tone increases their sumptuous languor.

Pangaea (Columbia C2K 46115; two discs: 41:50/46:52: ★★★★★) is the long-delayed first U.S. release of Miles and electrified, percussion-heavy company live in Osaka Japan 1975, his last outing before a five-year retreat from public life. Free of any inhibitions, Miles' trumpet-with-pickup screams, whines, and wah-wahs at the vortex of a firestorm provided by guitarists Pete Cosey and Reggie Lucas, bassist Michael Henderson, and congero Mtume. Sonny Fortune is an alto siren over Al Foster's relentless pulse of the disc-long "Zimbabwe"; "Gondwana," with flute, water-drum, and koto moments, offers the contrast of dead calm. Miles haunts the now uninterrupted 40-plus minute takes like a spectre surveying scorched earth. Except for details on the bottom, this one production sounds as good loud on imported CBS/Sony pressings as on CD. Kevin Whitehead's exemplary liner notes make up for diminished graphics. **DB**

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HEROES—DIW-838: *GOT TO GIVE; RAIN FLOWER; FOXY LADY; I WANT YOUR GIRLFRIEND; MANIC DEPRESSION; MR. BOND; POISE; CONTROL FREAK; D-BATMAN; MILESTYLES.* (47:25 minutes)

Personnel: Joe Bowie, trombone, conga, lead vocals; Kim Clarke, bass, vocals; Bill Bickford, guitar, vocals; John Mulkerin, trumpet, vocals; Kenny Martin, drums, vocals; Mary Bruschini, vocals (cut 1).

★ ★ ★ ½

Joe Bowie and his crew have always fallen between the cracks—funky but lacking the throwdown factor of P-Funk and Bootsy, edgy

but fairly tame by Bad Brains standards, too jazzy for pop, too poppy for jazz. What Defunkt is about (and has been for the past 12 years) is putting a sardonic edge and a provocative slant on dance music (courtesy of Joe's irreverent lyrics and outrageous trombone solos).

Less decadent than the late '70s edition of the band, this latest lineup keeps that tradition going strong on *Heroes*, their followup to 1988's *In America* for Antilles. As a frontman, Bowie is neither as slick as Morris Day or as charismatic as Prince. His somewhat limited vocal powers convey a kind of angst that contributes to the band's edge and his wild bone solos would be considered rude and invasive by the fuzak crowd. He is the punk in this funk. At his best ("Poise"), he's mysterious, cryptic, sexy. At his worst (trying to sing covers of Jimi Hendrix's "Manic Depression" and "Foxy Lady"), his voice betrays him. His rap about the world's ills on "Mr. Bond" comes off as moralistic and slightly sanctimonious. He seems more convincing playing the cad on "I Want Your Girlfriend."

Joe splashes raucous trombone solos throughout this record and is complemented by Bill Bickford's raging guitar work (particularly on Bickford's "Got To Give," perhaps the most accessible piece in Defunkt's 12-year history). "Control Freak," a frenzied, foreboding vamp, will remind old Defunkt fans of "Strangling Me With Your Love." Most original pieces are "D-Batman," a dark concept piece with shades of Cameo-style funk that incorporates the Neal Hefti TV "Batman" theme, and a Bobby McFerrin-styled a cappella vocal number, "Milestyles." And kudos to Kim Clarke. Her funky basslines provide the backbone to this band. (reviewed on CD) —*Bill Milkowski*

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VINCENT HERRING

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE—Musicmasters 5037-2-C: *THE ATHLETE; V.H. 1; AMERICAN EXPERIENCE; ALMOST LIKE THE FIRST; ANNE'S MOOD; SWEET GEORGIA BRIGHT; YOU KNOW MY EYES; METROPOLIS BLUES; ELATION; PEACE.* (60:07)

Personnel: Herring, alto, soprano saxophones; Dave Douglas (cuts 1, 2, 4-6, 9, 10), Tex Allen (3, 7, 8), trumpet; Clifford Adams, trombone (3, 7, 8); Bruce Barth (1, 2, 4-6, 9, 10), John Hicks (3, 7, 8), piano; James Genus (1, 2, 4-6, 9, 10), Marcus McLauren (3, 7, 8), bass; Mark Johnson (1, 2, 4-6, 9, 10), Beaver Harris (3, 7, 8), drums; Rodney Jones, guitar (2); Monte Croft, vibes (5), vocal (10).

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

One night Vincent Herring walked up to Nat Adderley on the bandstand and said, "Man,

Cannonball is my favorite saxophone player, and I know all the tunes." Right off, you can hear that it's true. The gritty, bristling, swaggering bebop ride on Tex Allen's "The Athlete" is a foretaste of the altoist's penchant for soulful involvement and hot blowing. Rodney Jones' "V.H. 1" registers bluesier, with Herring's biting attack and robust swing again echoing Cannonball.

So it goes, through Allen's title tune, which really does have an early-American, Revolutionary War-period flavor, right up to Herring's "Anne's Mood," which features his soprano. The second half of the program checks in with more alto, and Herring's "Elation" turns out to be the best performance because of its soaring tempo and climactic intensity. This is definitely not the Steve Coleman and Greg Osby school of modern alto.

The album includes two bands, one from an '86 session on three tracks and one from '89 on the others. Everybody has the thermostat turned to "hot." You can tell that Dave Douglas digs Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw and that Bruce Barth prefers McCoy Tyner with a dash of Wynton Kelly. Mark Johnson is a spark plug, too, always pushing the soloist. Only Monte Croft's vocal on Horace Silver's "Peace" seems out of character for the album.

Thus said, the question remains: Is this set too derivative of times and players past? One has to say no, because the influences are more spiritual presences than note-for-note models. Consequently, there's joy in hearing these musicians cook in their own juices. And Herring,

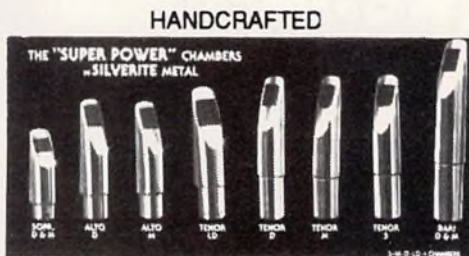
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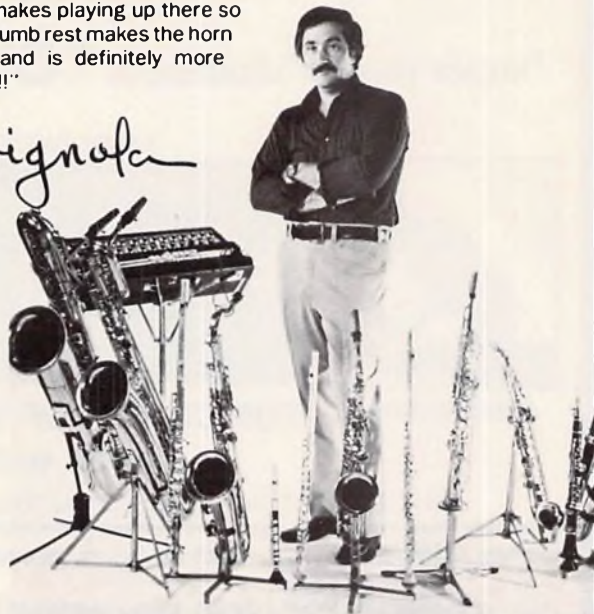
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record & cd reviews

25 at this writing, can flat-out cook. (reviewed on CD) —Owen Cordle



MARC RIBOT

ROOTLESS COSMOPOLITANS—Island 422-842 577-2: I SHOULD CARE; SHORTLY AFTER TAKE-OFF; THE WIND CRIES MARY; FRIENDLY GHOSTS; THE COCKTAIL PARTY; NEW SAD; A MIND IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE; BEAK LUNCH MANIFESTO; WHILE MY GUITAR GENTLY WEEPS; NATURE ABHORS A VACUUM CLEANER; MOOD INDIGO; HAVE A NICE DAY. (47:07 minutes)

Personnel: Ribot, guitars; Anthony Coleman, keyboards; Brad Jones, Melvin Jones, bass; Roy Nathanson, saxophone; Don Byron, clarinet; Curtis Fowlkes, trombone; Richie Schwarz, drums; Arto Lindsay, David Sardi, guitars.

★ ★ ★

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with a heart of . . . well, maybe not gold, but at the very least, a fine shiny alloy. He puts his Telecaster through some harsh paces, emphasizing the instrument's timbral brightness and percussive qualities. As a conceptualist, Ribot locates unexpected new routes between idioms and balances the tics of the guitar trade with a wiseacre avant-garde approach. Having played with Tom Waits and Elvis Costello, Ribot is by now a sideman of some renown and a wild-eyed, new-music guitarist coming up in that world.

A good Ribot primer is *Rootless Cosmopolitans*, the debut release by the guitarist's band.

The Cosmopolitans specialize in jagged-edge, odd-time honky tonk tunes—take, for instance, "Beak Lunch Manifesto," 5/4 on the halfshell. There is more than crackpot rhythm math at stake, though: a tender side creeps into the mix, as on the aptly entitled ballad "New Sad."

Ribot also cleverly upends electric rock guitar chestnuts, doing a loopily syncopated, blandly narrated rendition of Hendrix's "The Wind Cries Mary," and then waxes icily poignant on a solo reading of "While My Guitar Gently Weeps." "Mood Indigo" opens with diminished chords galore and grows progres-

sively zanier. Not surprisingly, Ribot's own tunes swerve artfully to the left of normal. "A Mind Is A Terrible Thing To Waste" is an amped-up mock-up of a jazz break tune, full of chromaticism run amok. "Have A Nice Day" (CD track only) is sheer speed-metal jazz mayhem, a gag number with a thorny Zappa-esque bridge line tossed in.

Not for the squeamish or the lyrical-minded, Ribot's mad medicine show turns musical roots asunder. The band brushes right up against anarchy, but finds some last-minute escape routes—be it humor, mad energy, or sonic invention—that lead them straight into the realm of feisty musical originality. (reviewed on CD)
—Josef Woodard

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WITHOUT A SONG; READY NOW THAT YOU ARE; HOW DO YOU KEEP THE MUSIC PLAYING; GREEN DOLPHIN STREET; BABY WORKOUT; I ONLY HAVE EYES FOR YOU; PORTRAIT OF JENNIE; WALKING MY BABY BACK HOME; SKYLARK; BASIE'S BAG. (41:15 minutes)

Personnel: George Benson, guitar, vocals; George "Sonny" Cohn, Byron Stripling, Johnny Williams, Mike Williams, Bob Ojeda, trumpets; Mel Wanzo, Mike Williams, Bill Hughes, Clarence Banks, trombones; Frank Foster, Kenny Hing, Danny Turner, David Glasser, Johnny Williams, saxophones; Carl Carter, Barry Eastmond, piano; Cleveland Eaton, Ron Carter, bass; Duffy Jackson, drums; Carman Bradford, vocal; cut 5: Randy Brecker, Jon Faddis, Larry Farrell, Paul Fouise, Earl Gardner, Keith O'Quinn, Jim Pugh, Lew Soloff, horns; Terry Burrus, Dave Witham, keyboards; Richard Tee, bass; Ralph MacDonald, Bashiri Johnson, percussion.

★ ★ ★

If the entire Count Basie band isn't enough to turn George Benson back into a full-time jazz musician, I guess he's really lost to us. The opening chorus of "Ready Now That You Are" strikes what should have been the perfect keynote for the entire album, especially in Benson's blend with the Basie saxes. But it's fleeting. Actually, Benson plays remarkably little open solo guitar here. The only instrumental is a neat little Benson-Basie showcase called "Basie's Bag." Instead, he plays parallel lines to his scat vocals on "Ready Now," "Green Dolphin Street," etc., plus brief, ephemeral solo passages between his singing on several of the nice ballads.

Benson deserves credit, nonetheless. If we are to take him seriously as a singer within the jazz realm, and not just as another pop Motown clone, the Basie band and a handful of good songs make it easier than most of the records that have won him his large audiences. I hate to play the insufferable critic, sneering down from his ivory tower at popular taste, like a character out of Oscar Wilde. But there it is. Anyway, for those who've drifted away from Benson since his paydirt days in the late '70s, this CD is probably as worthwhile an occasion as we're going to get to come back for a second look. And it's fine—not exactly what we might hope for in the best of all possible worlds; but a good deal better and more mature than the music he's been extruding for too long.

Two ringers stretch the program to 10 cuts—a pretty "Portrait Of Jennie" with strings (no relation to the 1949 movie) and a piece of Jackie Wilson junk completely out of sync with the album concept. (reviewed on CD)

—John McDonough



NINO TEMPO

TENOR SAXOPHONE—Atlantic 782142-2: *DARN THAT DREAM; THIS MASQUERADE; LOVE WILL FIND A WAY; YOU ARE SO BEAUTIFUL; ANYONE WHO HAD A HEART; YOU ARE EVERYTHING; CAUGHT IN THE RAPTURE; IT NEVER ENTERED MY MIND; MORNIN'; ALWAYS.* (45:45 minutes)

Personnel: Tempo, tenor sax; Buddy Williams, Tony Beard, drums; Ron Carter, Anthony Jackson, Peter Washington, Wayne Brathwaite, bass; Robbie Kondor, Shane Keister, synthesizer; Barry Miles, keyboards, synthesizer; Jay Berliner, John Tropea, Bruce Nazorian, guitar; Rachele Cappelli (cut 2,6), Roberta Flack (4,8), vocals.

★ ★ ★

Nino Tempo has had a long recording break. It was the mid-1960s when he scored big with "Deep Purple," and the world's been through quite a few musical fads since then. But when the prevailing saxophone sound is still a Coltrane/Michael Brecker concept or a Sanborn-ish r&b growl, there's got to be a place somewhere for Tempo's full-bodied tone, and simple, sophisticated style.

Mixing jazz and pop standards, Tempo sounds like Stan Getz on a metal mouthpiece. It's Getz-like in tone, phrasing, and approach. "Darn That Dream" is given such a lush reading—Tempo's sax connects solidly and does a great tune more than justice. He picks up steam nicely on "Love Will Find A Way," and drives the melody of "Anyone Who Had A

Heart" hard. The rhythm section does some of its best ensemble work, led by the crisp and jangly guitar work of John Tropea.

The Roberta Flack/Barry Miles arrangement of the Billy Preston/Bruce Fisher tune "You Are So Beautiful" (remember Joe Cocker's hit rendition?) takes it to a completely new place. Otherwise the vocals are somewhat lackluster and don't further the album's cause, at least from the standpoint of a jazz album. Rachele Cappelli doesn't do anything with "Masquerade" that George Benson didn't do with his

version.

Tune selection could've been more up-to-date and inventive—the pop selections are mostly from the 1970s and have been done to death. The string arrangements date it too and make it sound a bit CTI-ish. It's to Tempo's credit that he climbs beyond all that much of the time with a sincere, soulful sound. The saxman stays within sight of the melody most of the time, like the "old school" of jazz singers who respect a song and interpret rather than overthrow. (reviewed on CD) —Robin Tolleson

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1 CHARLIE ROUSE. "When Sunny Gets Blue" (from *UNSUNG HERO*, Epic) Rouse, tenor sax; Gildo Mahones, piano; Reggie Workman, bass; Arthur Taylor, drums.

Sounds like Charlie Rouse. His tone, rhythm, and articulation . . . he really plays everything so clearly and his phrasing is so fine. Rouse was one of my real heroes. And to come to New York and be in the same room with the sound you grew up listening to really inspired me to try and develop my own sound, really capture that concept. Not just playing notes, trying to really have a personality. Have your ideas and your sound be one thing. And players like Rouse really had that. There's a certain thing about players in Charlie's generation . . . they played dynamics, they really sang a song in a different kind of way. The music flowed out of them. It's a real spiritual thing when they play a melody. And Charlie is a perfect example of that. He caresses each note, whether he's playing with a hard sound or at a whisper. He's not just rushing through his notes. I gotta give Charlie Rouse 5 stars. You can't play like that unless you really love to play.

2 SONNY ROLLINS. "Reflections" (from *SONNY ROLLINS, Vol. 2*, Blue Note) Rollins, tenor sax; Thelonious Monk, piano; Art Blakey, drums; Paul Chambers, bass.

Yeah, Sonny and Monk. This certain period with Monk was really incredible. In a way, Rollins played a lot sparser with Monk than he did on his other things. With Wynton Kelly he played a lot more through-phrases. With Monk he plays a lot longer notes and really comes off of what Monk plays. He's improvising and developing ideas at the moment with the other things that are happening around him. He doesn't just play what he knows over the tune. He lets the song tell him what's happening. Not only the song but the feeling of what's happening at the moment. And of course, Monk is playing a lot of the melody behind him, he's playing really strong rhythm and is leading from phrase to phrase. And that all influences Sonny's rhythm and his ideas. In a way, Rouse was a more straightahead player. He would take lines and develop them, whereas Sonny really plays from phrase to phrase with a different kind of aggressiveness. He also puts things together with a different rhythmic approach, but throughout the whole horn. His rhythm and melody really come together at a real clear point. Definitely 5 stars for Sonny Rollins.

3 MICHAEL BRECKER. "Escher Sketch" (from *Now You See It . . . Now You Don't*, GRP) Brecker, tenor

JOE LOVANO
by Bill Milkowski

Born in Cleveland, Joe Lovano grew up listening to the honking tenor of his father, Tony "Big T" Lovano. Later he would come under the sway of Joe Henderson, Sonny Rollins, and John Coltrane, to name but a few of his major influences. He began a residency with the Woody Herman band in 1976 and appears on five records with the Herd.

In 1980 he began his steady membership with the Mel Lewis Orchestra. That same year, Lovano also became a member of Paul Motian's incredibly flexible, dynamic trio with guitarist Bill Frisell. The three have recorded several stunning records together for ECM, JMT, and Soul Note. More recently, Lovano has recorded and toured as a member of John Scofield's band, with Charlie



Haden's Liberation Orchestra, with Peter Erskine, and as the leader of his own quintet.

This was Joe's first Blindfold Test.

sax; Victor Bailey, bass; Jimmy Bralower, drum programming; Don Alias, percussion; Jim Beard, synthesizers.

Michael Brecker? Michael's another player today who really has his own sound and distinctive personality. Sometimes I'm not so crazy about the music that he's in. To me, it's just a lot of overdubs and trying to find the perfect solo or something. It's not as spiritual and as deep, conceptually, for me. I think he plays his butt off, man. He's an impeccable musician, on EWI as well as tenor. He's really developed from the Horace Silver days to find his own music that he feels is him. I give him a lot of respect for that. This particular piece is coming out of a certain Weather Report kind of thing, taking the beat and turning it inside out. The concept I give 3 stars. Music like this leaves me cold in a certain way because I don't feel like everybody's making music together. It's like you play your part and I play my part and it somehow all comes together in the end.

I think playing together and creating music as a unit is a lot more daring and deep spiritually, and more rewarding for me as a musician. The playing is great and everybody sounds really efficient and articulate, but it's just not the same as the real interplay with the music that I look for when I play.

4 OLD AND NEW DREAMS. "Rushour" (from *PLAYING*, ECM) Dewey Redman, tenor sax; Don Cherry, trumpet; Charlie Haden, bass; Ed Blackwell, drums.

Old And New Dreams. Dewey! He's one of my all-time favorite musicians. I've had the chance to play with him in the Liberation

Orchestra the last few years and it's really a treat sitting next to him and hearing him every night. Dewey is really an inspired player. The concepts and the things he plays in, it's complete feeling. His ideas just come so free. For me, he's the most inspired player to hear today live. I know every time I go to hear Dewey, whatever night it is, whatever set, he's gonna be dealing, playing his ass off. I give Dewey 5 stars. He's a real spiritual player. He's not a real technical wizard on the saxophone. He plays ideas and feeling, and those are things that I really treasure in music. I'm working to develop in that direction myself.

5 BRANFORD MARSALIS. "Spartacus" (from *CRAZY PEOPLE MUSIC*, Columbia) Marsalis, tenor; Jeff Watts, drums; Kenny Kirkland, piano; Robert Hurst, bass.

That's Branford's new album. I think Branford, out of all the young cats playing today . . . he's a true improviser. He takes everything that's happening and uses it to create his solos. He's always playing different, always finding new approaches. I enjoy his playing quite a lot. I think he's starting to find some music that he can develop in. And the group also is a really swinging unit, man. They've been playing together for a long time and you can really hear that unity on this cut. The thing I really like about Branford and his whole approach is, he's really swinging all the time and he's coming from really trying to catch that spark, you know? And hearing him on this record . . . he's dealing a lot more than he has in the past. This is the kind of music I really dig. It's spiritual and there's a lot of interplay. 5 stars. DB