

DOWN BEAT

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Jazz,

Blues & Beyond

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BENSON, BASIE, *Beautiful*

Michael Brecker
Brian Eno & John Cale
Oscar Peterson
The Legacy of Art Blakey
Victor Lewis



74820 08270



George Benson



Michael Brecker



John Cale and Brian Eno



Victor Lewis

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DOWN BEAT

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GEORGE BENSON



MITCHELL SEIDEL

Back To Basics, Back To

by Michael Bourne



Big Boss Band, the new George Benson album, is jazzier than most—and it's only natural. He's singing and playing guitar with that perpetual jazz machine, the Count Basie Orchestra. Benson produced the recording himself. He added some studio horns to the rocking "Baby Workout" and Robert Farnon's shimmering strings to "Portrait Of Jennie." But everything else he sings, he sings with Frank Foster and the band. He premiered some of the songs at the North Sea Jazz Festival last summer when Ella Fitzgerald was unable to perform and, impromptu, Benson joined the CBO.

We talked about the CBO, the album, among other things, in the recording studio of Benson's beautiful estate in New Jersey.

Michael Bourne: *So, whose idea was it for the project?*

George Benson: I performed a concert with Count Basie at Carnegie Hall seven or eight years ago, and something wonderful happened, something I'd never felt before. I'd never really worked with a big band, especially one as incredible as the Count Basie Orchestra. Count Basie hinted that night that he wanted to record with me. I remember going home and writing this song, which ended up on the album, "Basie's Bag." I caught up with him when he was coming through town again and went backstage, and he listened to me play the song live for him. He was knocked out and I was so happy he liked it. He said to call Frank Foster right away to get to work on this record. We got together a few other tunes, but then Count Basie passed away. Things came to a halt, but since Frank had written a couple of arrangements, I said, "Let's go in the studio anyway." We recorded "Beyond The Sea," which ended up on the album *20/20*.

And then, a few years later, I called Frank and said, "Let's get back on this." Frank and I thought about songs that would be suitable for the band, that would relate to jazz people and to people who weren't necessarily jazz fans but recognize the classics, and songs we would enjoy doing.

M.B.: *All the great singers have worked with the Basie band. What's it like to have that sound behind you?*

G.B.: In many bands, the lead singer is carrying so much weight that he's the whole record. Not so with the Basie band. When you stop, the *energy* doesn't stop. It swings with you or without you. It doesn't need *you*. It's got legs. Some songs, it doesn't make any difference who sings. It's the song that makes it. In this band it's the arrangements and the sound of those sections. Then you add those great songs on top of all that *character*. These guys are seasoned veterans. When they play, it means something.

M.B.: *This wasn't overdubbed. You recorded with the band in the studio live.*

G.B.: I knew better than to try any other way. This band has such a great feeling, they inspire things that could never happen without them.

M.B.: *One of the highlights is your scat on a Frank Foster original, "Ready Now That You Are."*

G.B.: I thought about Ella Fitzgerald when I was doing that. That's her meat, scatting. I thought I'd do something that might spark the band. I wasn't going to use that on the record, and why it worked was that I wasn't worried about it. I thought I'd just go crazy, and it knocked the band out. They came flying over and said, "Man, that was mean!"

I put the guitar on later. That's one of the few times I've done that. I don't think it has enough life when you do it that way, but this song has so much energy. I came here to my studio and put it on. I did just the reverse on "Green Dolphin Street." We did the whole thing live with the band but I wished I'd put a little more vocal on top, so I did.

M.B.: *When you sing and play at the same time, do you sing and play the same melody or harmonize?*

G.B.: In most cases, I'm playing in unison with my voice. In very few cases I'll sing an octave over the guitar, or vice versa. On rare occasions I'll do it in harmony, but I've done it subconsciously. It's hard enough doing it in unison.

"This Masquerade" and "On Broadway" are my best cases when I've just done it off the cuff with the guitar in my hands. My guitar can do things my voice can't do. It can soar and makes my voice try to follow, and I end up singing in octaves my voice can't do when I'm just doing the vocal. When I'm doing it with the guitar, my voice doesn't stop. It follows the guitar all the way up the scale and down. I don't know how I'm able to get that much range, but I can.

M.B.: *You didn't play guitar at all when you sang with the Basie band at NorthSea. Were you nervous filling Ella's shoes?*

G.B.: I didn't try to fill Ella's shoes, but it was a great honor being considered to take it on. If anyone had asked me besides George Wein I would have said no, but he felt we could do it and everybody was up for it. We had no rehearsal except for what we'd done in the studio, but the great vibe was still there. I sang five or six songs, and the one with Carmen Bradford, "How Do You Keep The Music Playing," people loved. She'd already burned down the house before I got up there. And the Orchestra sounded better than I'd ever heard them.

M.B.: *You'll never be able to have the sound of this record with your regular band. No synthesizers will ever sound like the Basie band.*

G.B.: No, but we'll play the songs. I'll be doing the Nat Cole song, "Walking My Baby Back Home." That was one of my favorite songs by Nat.

M.B.: *You've done an impression of Nat in your concerts for years, and one of the most memorable George Wein concerts in New York was the tribute to Nat with Natalie Cole and you.*

G.B.: I sang "For Sentimental Reasons" and the audience gasped.

I was really trying to do Nat. I'll never forget that Maria Cole came back and said, "You sang just like my husband!" There are a whole lot of people who miss Nat Cole.

M.B.: *And yet, so many kids don't know who Nat was.*

G.B.: When I was in Scotland, my manager said I shouldn't do the Nat Cole impersonation because the audience was loaded with kids. He didn't think they knew who Nat Cole was. I said, "They're gonna learn today!" I sang "Unforgettable . . ." and the whole audience sang back " . . . that's what you are!" I couldn't even hear myself sing. I can't imagine that people don't know who Nat Cole was. He was one of the top musicians of my lifetime; and as a singer, he's still unequalled.

M.B.: *Nat was the Jackie Robinson of American entertainment. There's a movie in his fight against racism, in his triumph as an artist, in his dying of cancer, and you've wanted to play Nat. What's happened?*

G.B.: We've made some offers but some points were brought up by people close to him. And the major one was that people look for dirt. They've done it to all the greats. Whenever they do a story they always look for something that has nothing to do with the music. We're talking about music and they're talking about dirt. I think the story is his musicianship and what he went through to get his music to the public, what many artists went through at that time. And how cigarettes killed one of our greatest people. If they'd jumped on cigarettes 30 years ago, he might still be alive. Someone close to Nat said they'll destroy his wonderful legacy, and that's why a movie never got off the ground.

M.B.: *Do you consider yourself a guitarist first or a singer first?*

G.B.: I sang first. I made records when I was 10 for RCA Victor as a singer. My first record was a little boy's version of the Ray Charles song "It Should've Been Me."

M.B.: *That's what you were, but what are you first?*

G.B.: I think my lasting contribution would be the guitar. No matter what I've done, even smash singles as a vocalist, I'm still a

The Breath Of Life

"I couldn't believe it when I heard the names," said George Benson about the pantheon of singers who've worked with the Basie band. All the "names" have recorded or sung in concert with the CBO, especially the first-name-only greats: Ella, Sarah, Billie, Billy, Frank, Tony, Mel, Ray, not to forget Joe Turner and Benson's favorite, Nat Cole.

Often singers recorded with the CBO but without CB himself. Ronnell Bright was the pianist on Sarah's aptly-titled 1958 album, *No Count Sarah* (Mercury 824 057). George Gaffney played piano with the band on Sarah's now-classic 1981 album, *Send In The Clowns* (Pablo 2312-130). Ella recorded with and without: the 1963 album *On The Sunny Side Of The Street* (Verve 821 576) and the 1979 album *A Classy Pair* (Pablo 2312-132) with Basie, the 1979 Montreux concert *A Perfect Match* (Pablo 2312-110) with Paul Smith at the piano but Basie himself for the encore.

Of all the singers through the years, no one worked (and from time to time, *works*) more often with the band than Joe Williams. Highlights from the '50s, including "Everyday I Have The Blues," are gathered together on a Compact Jazz release (Verve 835 329), and a 1956

"They inspire the singer; they'll spoil you." —Joe Williams

recording of standards, *The Greatest* (Verve 833 774), is also available again.

"Other bands try to play 'tight like Basie' but the difference is that the Basie band is so well-rehearsed they know how to be loose," said Williams. "The whole thing happens in the interplay between the orchestra and the singer. If that's together, the audience can feel it." (For more with Joe, see "Reviews" p. 33.)

Count Basie died in 1984, but the band plays on. Frank Foster now fronts the CBO—and earned Grammy awards for the 1987 recording with Diane Schuur (GRP GRD-9550). Carmen Bradford now sings most often with the band and, like Joe Williams, is destined for a great career beyond the band. Carmen is featured on *Long Live The Chief* (Denon 1018) and *The Legend, The Legacy* (Denon 73790), and steals both recordings.

"There is definitely a magic about them," said Carmen. "Frank's arrangements are so beautiful that sometimes I feel like my feet aren't even on the floor . . . I feel so inspired to have them kicking me in the behind so my voice can soar above the brass. It's a lot of fun and a great honor to be able to follow the tradition."

One singer who's worked with the band over the years is Jon Hendricks.

Sing A Song Of Basie (MCA 29049), the first important album of Lambert, Hendricks & Ross, offered vocalese variations of Basie classics. "Basie defined what swing really is," said Jon. "Dave Lambert and I grew up loving the intense swing that came from the percussiveness of that music. That's why we picked Basie's music." Joe Williams joined LHR with Basie for *Sing Along With Basie* (Roulette 59041). "Basie's style [as a pianist] was sparse but he fed you the right thing at the right time," said Jon. "Just as you'd start to run out of ideas, he'd do some little thing and you'd get 15 new ideas."

Thad Jones was the musical director when the Manhattan Transfer recorded Jon's lyrics to two Basie songs with the band on *Vocalese* (Atlantic 7 81266). And it's only natural that Jon's newest recording *Freddie Freeloader* (Denon 81757 6302) includes "Jumpin' At The Woodside" and two new songs, "Fas' Livin' Blues" and "The Finer Things In Life," with Frank Foster and the band (see "Reviews" p. 32). "I wrote those songs with the band in mind," said Jon, "but I'm always thinking of the band. No words can describe what it's like to sing with the band. It's incomparable. It's like the breath of life itself." —Michael Bourne



guitar player—though a lot of people don't know I play guitar. They come to hear what they know, "Give Me The Night" and "Turn Your Love Around" and "This Masquerade," and they ask me, "Why'd you play so much guitar?"

M.B.: *One of the people most instrumental in your career was John Hammond. He worked with Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Aretha Franklin, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, not to forget the Basie band and you.*

G.B.: The biggest thing John Hammond did for music and for me was putting Charlie Christian with the Benny Goodman band. Timmie Rodgers came to hear me play at the Palm Cafe on 125th Street in 1965 and said he knew who discovered Charlie Christian and said he was going to send him to hear me. He walked in the door the last night. I heard that he hated rock & roll, but the club owner had said, "If you play one jazz tune, you're out of here!" We were playing all the funk things. James Brown sat in many times after he'd done three shows at the Apollo down the street. We had a go-go girl, so we had to play dance music. But when he came in, right in the middle of a dance tune, I turned to the dancer and said, "Get down." We started playing one of my originals, a thing called "Clockwise." Before he sat down, he was going crazy. And sure enough, when I came off the bandstand John had a napkin and said, "Sign right here. I guarantee it's as good as a contract with Columbia Records."

M.B.: *John Hammond eventually arranged for you to play with Benny Goodman.*

G.B.: He tried to get Benny Goodman to listen to me for years and finally, in 1976, we did a tribute in Chicago and I was invited to sit in for Charlie Christian. That was a most exciting evening because the first records I heard were by Benny Goodman with Charlie Christian. That's what got me to play guitar in the first place.

M.B.: *I'll never forget the tribute to John Hammond in New York, when Benny joined you unannounced. And also that night, Stevie Ray Vaughan was playing to climax the show. He was just blasting through these humongous speakers, and then you came out with only a little amp—and blew him away!*

G.B.: People don't know I can play that music, but I have a wealth of stuff that I've played over the years that I can call on. Stevie

kicked booty that night. He was a tremendous blues player. But I went out there recklessly and I think that's why it went over.

M.B.: *You've played all this variety of music, but I'm curious what music you listen to.*

G.B.: I'm excited by solo violin. They can do more things with more dexterity than any other instrument. They can play things that are articulately ridiculous. I like classical violin, gypsy violin, folk violin. My favorite artist right now is Fritz Kreisler. Prior to him, I listened to a lot of Jascha Heifitz. He was a technical wizard and played beautifully also. Fritz Kreisler brings me to tears, some of the things he played. He was like the Charlie Parker of the violin. And also I listen to Art Tatum. Nobody has topped these guys. We have some great people now but nobody is in that category.

M.B.: *You're a guest with some great people on the Quincy Jones album Back On The Block.*

G.B.: "Birdland" was a real challenge. Q made me learn it on the spot and I played it off the cuff. I was so wrapped up in it I didn't realize the band had stopped playing and I was wailing by myself. They were all just staring at me!

M.B.: *You also join Bobby McFerrin, Al Jarreau, and Jon Hendricks to vocalize the solos on "Freddie Freeloader" on Jon's new album.*

G.B.: He gave me Cannonball's solo. He wrote lyrics to every note and that was one of the hardest things I've ever recorded. I liked my improvised solo on "Rhythm-A-Ning" better. That was off the cuff and had more energy.

M.B.: *It's curious—and heartening—that you've sold countless records as a pop singer but your most recent records are jazz records. Last year, Tenderly with McCoy Tyner. This year Big Boss Band with the Basie band. Doesn't this freak Warners?*

G.B.: I had a choice to put out the new album after a pop or r&b thing, but since I have one more album to go with Warners, I decided why battle all the rap and stuff out right now? I said I wanted to do another album of serious music. I felt I'd started something with *Tenderly* and I wanted to continue to make a solid footing into the jazz stream. I think jazz is the most valuable root I have. It's the identification that has done me the most good. It hasn't sold the most records, but jazz has established me as an artist. That's the greatest title you can pay me, to call me a jazz artist. **DB**

GEORGE BENSON'S EQUIPMENT

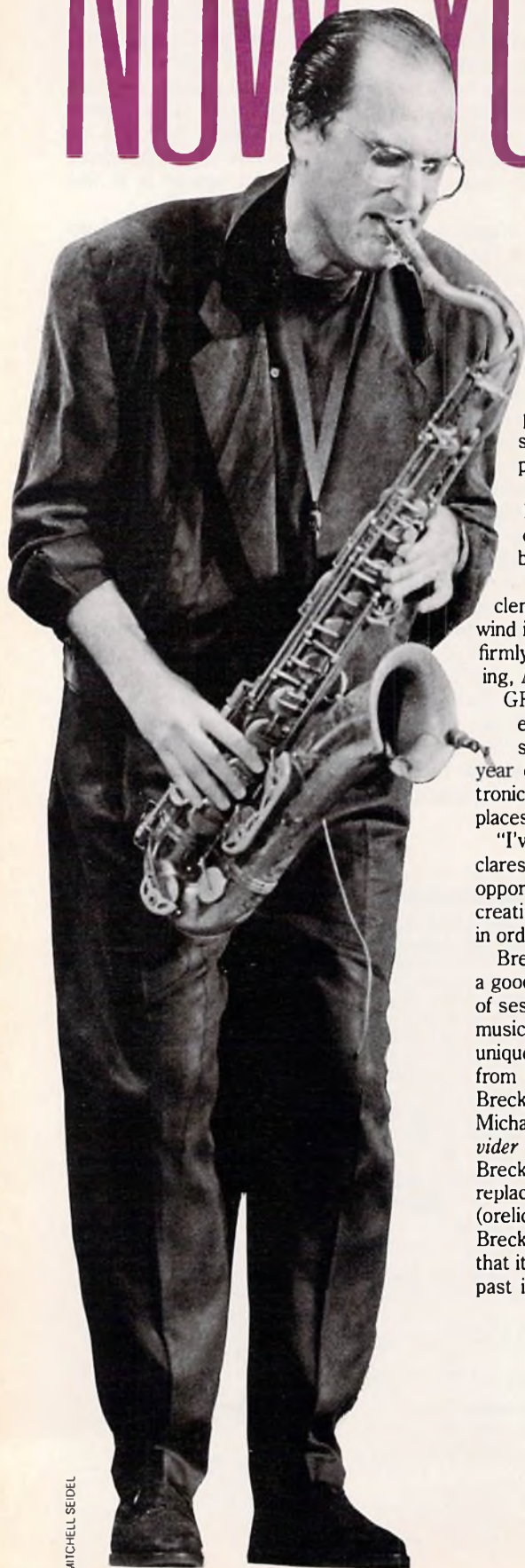
"I play the newest version of what is known as a GB-10. We call it the GB-12 because it's the 12th anniversary of my involvement with Ibanez Guitars. We added a half-inch to the body size, did some embroidery work to spruce it up, used some fine woods. It's a limited-edition, only a few hundred of them." Dean Markley makes Benson's strings, light gauge 12s and medium-heavy 13s. "Martin also made for me some darcos, like the ones on the *Breezin'* album. That was difficult because the guys who made them then had a special process and they're gone.

"Ibanez designed my pickups, a takeoff of the humbucking Johnny Smith style." Benson's sound system includes an ADA amp and preamp, also ADA speakers on each side of the bandstand. "Each cabinet has two 12-inch speakers, one parallel with the floor, the other with a 30-degree angle that throws the sound in the air. I have speakers on both sides so I'm never lost."

GEORGE BENSON SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- as a leader**
- BIG BOSS BAND—Warner Bros. 26295
(with Count Basie Orch.)
 - THE NEW BOSS GUITAR—Prestige 461
 - THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME—A&M 0803
 - TELL IT LIKE IT IS—A&M 0815
 - THE OTHER SIDE OF ABBEY ROAD—A&M 0821
 - BEYOND THE BLUE HORIZON—Columbia 40810
 - WHITE RABBIT—Columbia 40685
 - BODY TALK—Columbia 45222
 - BAD BENSON—Columbia 40926
 - IN CONCERT CARNEGIE HALL—Columbia 44167
 - GOOD KING BAD—Columbia 45226
 - BENSON AND FARRELL—Columbia 44169 (with Joe Farrell)
 - THE SILVER COLLECTION—Verve 823 450
 - IN FLIGHT—Warner Bros. 2983
 - WEEKEND IN L.A.—Warner Bros. 3139
 - GIVE ME THE NIGHT—Qwest 3453
 - TENDERLY—Warner Bros. 25907-2
- with Earl Klugh**
- COLLABORATION—Warner Bros. 1-25580
- with the CTI All-Stars**
- THE CALIFORNIA CONCERT—Columbia 40690
- with Jon Hendricks**
- FREDDIE FREELOADER—Denon 81757 6302
- with Quincy Jones**
- BACK ON THE BLOCK—Qwest 26020
- with Miles Davis**
- MILES IN THE SKY—Columbia PCT-9628

NOW YOU SEE HIM...



MITCHELL SEIDEL

Tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker and his quintet are wrapping up an 18-day tour with a gig at downtown D.C.'s Ritz. As the group ventures into a fertile purgatory of jazz somewhere between hard-bop and contemporary fusion, a peculiar yet appropriately poignant note of irony is struck. The eerie neon Matisse jazz print series along the club's black-walled upper reaches is aglow as Brecker raises Coltrane's ghost against a crackling electronic and percussive backdrop.

The hard-blowing reedsman, tenor clenched in one hand and EWI (electronic wind instrument) grasped by the other, has firmly come into his own. His latest recording, *Now You See It . . . Now You Don't* on GRP (see "Reviews" Nov. '90), has quietly gotten the critics' attentive nods, serving notice that Brecker's three-year odyssey as leader and acoustic/electronic explorer is taking him to many musical places.

"I've been very grateful," Brecker declares. "In the past few years, I've had the opportunity to pursue a lot of areas of creativity. I've been given a lot of support in order to do that, and it feels good."

Brecker spent virtually all of the '70s and a good part of the '80s doing such a variety of session work that he gained the rep of a musical "gun-for-hire," a job with its own unique hazards. A recent example comes from a 1989 recording session in which Brecker recorded a sax solo for singer Michael Bolton's CBS recording *Soul Provider* on the cut "Georgia On My Mind." Brecker's solo was ultimately canned and replaced by one performed by Kenny G (orelick). When asked about the experience, Brecker had no comment other than to note that it was "business" and he had moved on past it. A CBS Records spokesperson ex-

plained that, when it was decided that Kenny G would co-headline Michael Bolton's tour, marketing concerns dictated that the "Georgia" single be redone and released to coincide with Kenny G's appearance during the song's live performance. She added that the session solo change in no way changes Bolton's respect for Brecker.

Kenny G notwithstanding, Brecker's general success in the studio and on various band gigs eventually led to him experimenting with the EWI, an instrument he's claimed as another facet of his artistic voice.

But hard-core fans of tenorman Brecker have expressed concern about the amount of time he spends with his EWI and synthesizer programming, while some newer followers think he should give himself over more to the EWI instead of the brass axe. Brecker, a man destined to follow his instincts, straddles these divergent streams with a determination to play both instruments to the best of his considerable ability.

"It's funny, but the EWI's increased my interest in acoustic playing, in the saxophone," explains Brecker. "That extra door opening made the saxophone feel all that much fresher. It gave me another outlet. Up till then, I'd been feeling somewhat trapped, and this somehow gave me a new approach to the saxophone."

"What it really has done is it's increased the hours I have to put in on the instruments because, on a given day I'm home and not touring, I get up and do my morning rituals and I hit the saxophone first. Before I push any buttons, I spend time on the instrument practicing and working on it—just working out harmonic things and working on my technique, and then I'll usually work on writing and then, somewhere, the EWI comes into play; I'll work on programming it. That's enough to fill up a day, just between writing and practicing. It just means that I have to be that much more focused."



MITCHELL SEIDEL

NOW YOU DON'T

MICHAEL BRECKER

By Wayne K. Self

And with the EWI, Brecker has a little help from his friends, notably Max Risenhaver, a percussionist he described as "very good on synths"; Judd Miller, who's been a strong presence on Brecker's first two efforts ('87's *Michael Brecker* and '88's *Don't Try This At Home*, both on Impulse); Sam Zambito; and Jimmy Bralower who, along with Miller and Zambito, contributed mightily to the electronic aspects of *Now You See It*. Don Grolnick, keyboardist and longtime Brecker collaborator, is another person Brecker credits for the polished results of his latest recording.

NYSI's tour de force, "Escher Sketch (A Tale of Two Rhythms)," is the tune which gave the album its title. Brecker wanted first to record it with live musicians, but couldn't financially pull it off. Instead, he used a sequencer to mix live traps with a drum machine.

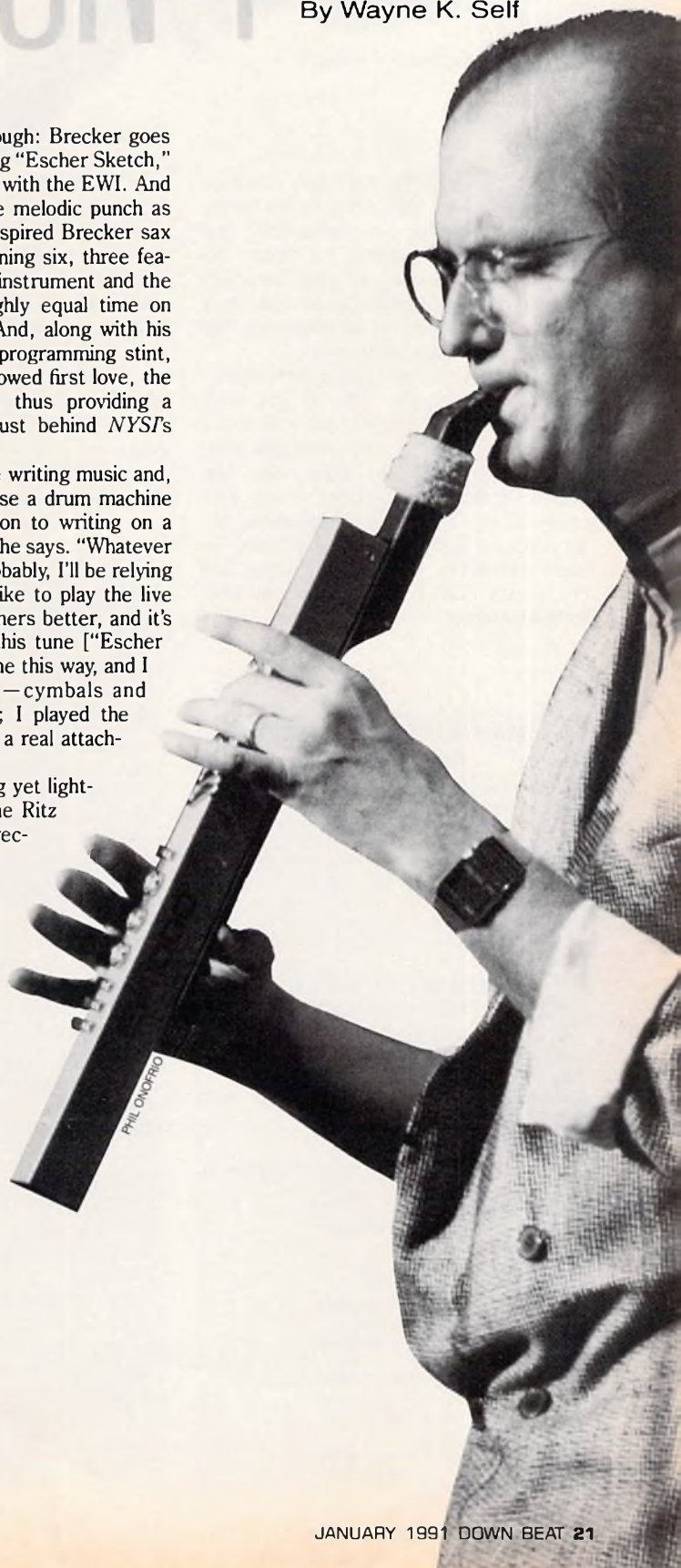
The idea of the tune is that it's in two times at once—two 4/4 rhythms or, another way to look at it, a 6/4 against a 4/4 rhythm. Two different feels, two different tempos. It's basically the way I've heard music for a long time. As I'm feeling more comfortable with my own writing and the fact that I've been leading a group for awhile, I've been able to take more chances with my writing and the things I've been doing. This is one of them; it's kind of a work-in-progress. I'm always hearing different kinds of rhythms going through something on the radio or music I'll listen to at home. I have a few of these at home now. This is the first one that I've ever recorded.


"It was explained to me in a way while I was writing it. As I described it to a friend, he mentioned M. C. Escher, and it dawned on me that it was a kind of musical adaptation of two-images-in-one. His way of explaining it was 'figure versus ground.' The listener can hear the song either way—in one time or the other—or hear both at once, in which case it really becomes three-dimensional. It was a lot of fun writing and recording it."

Make no mistake, though: Brecker goes full tilt on the tenor during "Escher Sketch," switching up throughout with the EWI. And "Minsk" packs quite the melodic punch as well, along with some inspired Brecker sax solos. Among the remaining six, three feature tenor as sole lead instrument and the other three divide roughly equal time on each to sax and EWI. And, along with his "Escher Sketch" drum programming stint, Brecker unleashes his avowed first love, the drums and percussion, thus providing a noticeably powerful thrust behind *NYSI's* drive.

"I'm going to continue writing music and, as a tool, occasionally use a drum machine and sequencer in addition to writing on a piano and a saxophone," he says. "Whatever process it takes. But probably, I'll be relying more on live drums. I like to play the live drums; I like live drummers better, and it's really that simple. For this tune ["Escher Sketch"] it had to be done this way, and I used live percussions—cymbals and stuff. I love drummers; I played the drums for years. I have a real attachment to the drums."

In the midst of a sizzling yet light-hearted early set at the Ritz that October night, Brecker had a confession to make to his touring band—all of whom (except guitarist Wayne Krantz) participated





PHIL ONOFFIO

Don't try this at home . . .

on *NYSI*: bassist Jay Anderson, smoking keyboardist Joey Calderazzo (soon to release his own Blue Note recording), and stalwart drummer Adam Nussbaum. To band and audience alike, Brecker broke into a comic moan to bewail the fact that he'd miss the group due to an upcoming Paul Simon tour (see adjoining story).

"I've been enjoying touring with them a lot," Brecker relates. "They've got some great chops and I love playing with these guys. It's becoming a very, very tight unit; we can really read each other well. The music is really improvised, yet we rely a lot on dynamics. The tunes are important but we don't get locked up by the writing. We really stretch out. It's been a lot of fun, and I'm sorry I won't be playing with my band for a little while."

MICHAEL BRECKER'S EQUIPMENT

Michael Brecker plays a Selmer Mark VI tenor sax with a Dave Guardala mouthpiece (specially designed for him—see "News" Dec. '90). He uses #3 Dave Guardala reeds. His other axe is an Akai EW1-1000 Synthesizer (see "Pro Session" Nov. '89). It's MIDI-ed to an Oberheim Matrix 12, a Yamaha TX802, Korg MIR, a Prophet VS, and an Akai S100HD. Michael uses a Shure Brothers SM98 microphone with a Shure wireless system for the sax.

MICHAEL BRECKER SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

For a more complete listing of Michael's recorded works, see *DB* June '87.

as a leader

NOW YOU SEE IT . . . NOW YOU DON'T—GRD CD 9622

DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME—MCA 42229

MICHAEL BRECKER—Impulse 5980

with Paul Simon

THE RHYTHM OF THE SAINTS—Warner Bros. 926098

with Don Grolnick

WEAVER OF DREAMS—Blue Note 94591

with Steps Ahead

MAGNETIC—Elektra 50441

with Billy Joel

INNOCENT MAN—Columbia 38835

with Claus Ogerman

CITYSCAPE—Warner Bros. 23688

with Pat Metheny

80/81—2-ECM 815 579

with Chick Corea

THREE QUARTETS—Warner Bros. 3552

with Steely Dan

GAUCHO—MCA 6102

with Kenny Wheeler

DOUBLE, DOUBLE YOU—ECM 815 675

According to Brecker, *Now You See It* afforded him the opportunity to document his growth on the EWI and synthesizer while simultaneously allowing him to broaden his musical palette. There were even indications that his thought processes are working towards something unusual for him: the making of a standards album.

In addition to positive record company experiences, he and his wife Susan are proud parents of a two-year-old daughter, Jessica. "Somehow, having that strong base of sup-

port—from the record companies, from my family—has given me a lot of freedom to be able to explore. There's so many variables and so many things are changing," Brecker says. "I can't tell you what I'm going to be doing a year from now, but having a strong base makes the variables of being a musician more tolerable." **DB**

THAT RHYTHM THING

Michael Brecker's affection for the drums has a lot to do with his most recent departure: recording and touring with singer/songwriter Paul Simon. Simon's latest release, *The Rhythm Of The Saints* (Warner Bros.), intermingles his inimitable songsmithing with the rhythms and textures of South America and Africa. He recruited Brecker, wanting his trademark tenor sound for the project.

Apparently, the chemistry was right between the two because Simon ultimately invited Brecker to tour with his group, featuring a host of Brazilian percussionists, South African guitarists (including the noted Ray Phiri), and two other well-known Americans: keyboardist Richard Tee and drummer Steve Gadd. The record is causing excitement among pop and world-music critics. At presstime, the tour was scheduled to begin in Canada in December, eventually hitting several U.S. venues, and finally heading overseas to end sometime in March.

The Rhythm Of The Saints, heavy on Brazilian rhythms, finds Brecker eager to reap the musical benefits from the tour (for which he was about to go into rehearsal for at press time).

"*The Rhythm Of The Saints* is a remarkable record. We really hit it off! We [Paul and I] found working together to

be very satisfying, and a lot of fun—at least I did, anyway," Brecker laughs. "I hadn't been doing a whole lot of studio work in the past few years except for special things, and this was a very special project.

"Actually, he initially invited me down just to listen to what he had done, and I was really excited about it," he continues. "He played me the tracks and sang me the songs, and I loved it! I wanted to be involved; I thought it could be a real creative experience—which it was. And then he subsequently asked if I'd like to go on tour with him. We talked about it at some length, that it could work out musically so that I could feel like I would get to play. I feel strongly about the new album; he's a great songwriter and I'm excited about the prospect of touring with him. This is going to be quite a change for me.

"He's really put together a big percussion section," Brecker adds. "I'm going to have a chance to live and play with both African and Brazilian musicians, which I never really had an opportunity to do before, and I'm hoping to learn from it. I love to ask questions, so I'm going to try to take the opportunity to learn as much as I can about African rhythms and music. There's so much there. . . . This is a chance to learn it from the guys who really play it. It's a really interesting band that Paul's put together. I feel very privileged to be a part of it." **Wayne K. Self**



12
If you were to drop the needle on a random sampling of the music Brian Eno has created over the years, what would be surprising is not simply how instantly recognizable all of the recordings are, but the fact that one man—especially one who routinely describes himself as a non-musician—has successfully involved himself in so wide a variety of forms of personal expression. And not simply musical expression. For the past few years, he's spent most of his public time constructing visual art installations across the globe, expanding into the physical world the philosophy of his "ambient music"—untenable soundscapes equally deserving of deep listening as they are of relegation to the background.

Wrong Way Up (Opal/Warner 26421) is the latest surprise. It's a contentious collaboration with John Cale that resulted in an exuberant pop album showing a side of Eno the public hasn't really heard since 1977, when he released *Before and After Science*, the last in a series of pop albums he released following his exit from the art-rock group Roxy Music. Since that time, though he's increasingly focused

his own creative projects on ambient music and visual art, his influence on pop music has actually magnified through production work with artists like David Bowie, Talking Heads, Devo, and U2, each of whom spent time under his theoretical tutelage, and left quite changed.

In recent years, much of Eno's musical attention has been focused on Opal Records, a label which, like his earlier venture into the record business, Obscure, releases diverse works by both experimental and pop musicians—among them Harold Budd, Daniel Lanois (his co-producer on the U2 albums), and Jon Hassell. In 1989 Eno traveled to the Soviet Union to produce an Opal album by John Cale—co-founder with Lou Reed of the Velvet Underground—called *Words For The Dying*. A collection of orchestral settings for poems by Dylan Thomas, the record closed, inexplicably, with a playful, if dolorous, pop tune credited to both Eno and Cale, "The Soul Of Carmen Miranda"—one of three, as it turns out, the two of them penned.

In what began as an attempt to expand on the success of "Carmen," *Wrong Way Up* collects 10 new pop songs Eno and Cale recorded earlier this year. Cale was just coming off the final work on *Songs For Drella*, a tribute to Andy Warhol he composed with Reed. And Eno, it turns out, hadn't been an entirely inactive pop artist of late, explaining during his interview tour of the States in support of the album, "I've been recording country songs for a long time. I don't usually do anything with them. I just record them and keep them to myself. I've done a very nice 'Ring Of Fire.'" One of these home-studio tracks, a cover of William Bell's "You Don't Miss Your Water," is featured on the soundtrack album

NICK WHITE

By Marc Weidenbaum

to Jonathan Demme's *Married To The Mob*—but it took Cale's firm insistence to get Eno to return to his roots for a whole record.

"We weren't worried about trying to be different," explains Cale from New York City, where he's lived primarily since he came to the U.S. from his native Wales in the late '60s. "The only thing I went into the record with that I wanted to contribute to Eno's personality was a recording situation where you could hear every nuance of what he was singing—that is, there would be no vocal dubbing and just him, solo. I mean, it's kind of a personal regret that I never pursued it vehemently enough."

Wrong Way Up opens with "Lay My Love," something of an artistic declaration of personal freedom: "I spin relentless variation," sings Eno. "I am the sea of permutation." It's an effortless tune, sung on the deadpan, nearly nasal, tight harmonies reminiscent of Eno's '70s pop albums. The first verse hints at the chorus, waiting for a second repetition of the melody to actually resolve itself. After its third repetition, the arrangement opens brief windows for guitarist Robert Ahwai to introduce some tasty, heavily echoed figures. Ahwai's one of several musicians—including Eno's brother Roger on keyboards, Daryl Johnson on bass, Ronald Jones on percussion, Nell Catchpole on

The acoustic piano featured on the cut "Crime In The Desert" serves as a good point of comparison. It's a fleeting, New Orleans-style romp on the high end of the keyboard, sounding something like the infamous piano scene in the film *Reefer Madness*. Cale's memory of the riff's impetus is brief: "I'm happy to work blind. It's just that I have to feel that if I'm working blind I'm able to nurture that. And once I've gotten in a particular spot, then I can relax inside it and it moves along nicely. But it's the scurrying around looking for it that kind of gets difficult."

For Eno, that piano motif invokes an exceptionally detailed memory. Cale played the basic riff with its complicated chord pattern into a sequencer, which Eno edited down into a cycle with some kind of structure and dumped onto the 24-track recorder. Cale added another track and with further editing by Eno, the result was a song with a 26-bar verse and an 18-bar chorus, "or something like that," explains Eno. "But, in some ways, the full-length version of that would have been great just for his piano performance."

Which is probably the simple suggestion Cale was making at the time. "With Brian," he explains, "I think what happened is that he would listen to what you said, but he really didn't have much patience with it. His idea of listening to what you said was eventually, you know, slam the door and come out with a solution. I haven't figured out yet what Brian's notion of cooperation, or collaboration, is."

Despite such differences, *Wrong Way Up* remains a remarkable pop album, at times soothing ("Spinning Away"), unsettling ("In The Backroom"), and downright danceable ("Crime In The Desert," "Spinning Way"). For all its affinity with both Eno and Cale's early solo work, it's also uproariously contemporary, and sounds fine on a party tape right alongside the Fine Young Cannibals (a comparison both musicians take as a compliment). Yet, on *Wrong Way Up*, wherever you drop what is now a proverbial needle, you'll find a unique voice. **DB**



DENNIS KEELEY

**BRIAN
ENO/
JOHN
CALE**

violin, and Dave Young on bass and guitar—Eno and Cale called in to the sessions for a day to fill out the arrangements. It's a model, if not a downright formula, for the album's success. But its pleasant mood belies both the gist of its lyrics—"I am the crow of desperation"—and the tense circumstances of the entire album's recording. The very use of the word "love" sparked a debate.

As Cale explains (Eno steers away from the subject), *Wrong Way Up* did not make for an enjoyable collaboration. Of "Empty Frame," from whose lyrics the album title is gleaned, Cale recalls: "We were trying to nibble away at all these songs and I just sat down at the keyboard and MIDI-ed up some sounds and Brian started belting out this number. He sounded closer to Jackie Wilson than anything. He was tremendous, and it was like I had to practically grab on to his shirttails and say, 'Don't do anything with it; just leave it the way it is; it's perfect!' And then I went home at the end of the recording and he changed it a little bit, but some of that belting vocal is still in there; it really portrays something positive and energetic that two people going in opposite directions can do."

Which is a pretty good summation of the whole album. In his attempt to bring a sense of immediacy to the proceedings, Cale stumbled on the real difference between his and Eno's work habits: their perceptions of inspiration. Cale, an early student of Aaron Copland who's performed with John Cage and La Monte Young, revels in distraction, and lives on a creative edge kept fresh by a peripheral, albeit self-conscious, attention to detail. For Eno, inspired moments provide source material for meditation and construction—they're the beginning, not the end, of the creative process.

JOHN CALE SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

WORDS FOR THE DYING—Opal/Warner Bros. 26024
HONI SOIT—A&M 4849
GUTS—Island 9459
VINTAGE VIOLENCE—original Columbia album reissued as Edsel 230

with the Velvet Underground

WHITE LIGHT/WHITE HEAT—Verve 825119
THE VELVET UNDERGROUND & NICO—Verve 823290

with Brian Eno

WRONG WAY UP—Opal/Warner Bros. 26421

with Lou Reed

SONGS FOR DRELLA—Sire/Warner Bros. 26025

BRIAN ENO SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

MORE BLANK THAN FRANK—Caroline 1519
THURSDAY AFTERNOON—Caroline 1518
MUSIC FOR AIRPORTS—Caroline 1516
MUSIC FOR FILMS—Caroline 1515
APOLLO—Caroline 1514
BEFORE AND AFTER SCIENCE—Caroline 1513
DISCREET MUSIC—Caroline 1520
ANOTHER GREEN WORLD—Caroline 1512
TAKING TIGER MOUNTAIN (BY STRATEGY)—Caroline 1511
HERE COME THE WARM JETS—Caroline 1510

with John Cale

WRONG WAY UP—Opal/Warner Bros. 26421

with Roxy Music

FOR YOUR PLEASURE—Atco 36134
ROXY MUSIC—Atco 36133

with Robert Fripp

(NO PUSSYFOOTING)—Caroline 1522
EVENING STAR—Caroline 1560

with David Bowie

LOW—reissue of RCA album due in spring '91 as Rykodisc 0142
HEROES—reissue of RCA album due in spring '91 as Rykodisc 0143

with Harold Budd

PLATEAUX OF MIRROR—Caroline 1567
THE PEARL—Caroline 1521

with David Byrne

MY LIFE IN THE BUSH OF GHOSTS—Sire 6093

OSCAR

Peterson

By John McDonough

The
Best
of
Intentions

oscar Peterson's fellow pianist, provocateur, and Canadian, Glenn Gould, often complained that "the performer" and "the musician" were an incompatible pair in the person of "the artist." Gould's solution was to abandon performing and seclude himself in the studio, where he spent the rest of his days turning down concert offers and spinning musical webs in reclusive privacy where his only audience was a recording engineer.

Peterson, of course, has never threatened anything so draconian. His two most recent albums, in fact (*Oscar Peterson Live!* on Pablo and *The Legendary Oscar Peterson Trio Live At The Blue Note* on Telarc—see "Reviews" p. 31) are live recordings. But the point still is relevant, because it raises the issue of how much the presence of an audience can intervene on a performance. This is especially relevant, perhaps, in Peterson's case, for he spent the better part of a decade at the center of those 1950s Jazz At The Philharmonic concerts.

Could any artist *not* be influenced by the enthusiasm of those JATP audiences? Oscar says yes, and you'd better believe him.

"My audience has nothing to do with anything I do when I'm on stage," he insisted recently in a phone interview from Toronto. "And it never has. I don't think it's a matter of being insensitive to the audience either. I'm sensitive only to my group when I go on. What happens on stage is my concern. What happens in the audience is theirs."

When a performer faces an audience, it is, to a degree, a contest of wills between the individual and the crowd. To be sure, most paying audiences—and they pay dearly these days—bring with them an abundance of good will for the performer. But this does not necessarily settle the question of whose influence will control the encounter—the audience's expectations or the performer's prerogatives. Ultimately, of course, in the best of worlds among the best of musicians, it is sheer, overwhelming, unrepentant, performer ego that must control a performance. And Peterson's resources of ego are as formidable—and as essential to his craft—as his musical visions and keyboard virtuosity.

"Here's my premise," he says, "and maybe one person will understand what's going on in my life. I *intend* to play at a high level. When I first became a musician, I intended to be in the upper echelon of pianists.

"I have to say this about JATP, too, and it's time it was said. Those concerts do not represent any kind of musical aberration to me; not in any shape or manner. Because the music was played the way each performer intended to play it. It was not a circus. Some of my most memorable moments as a musician



In the beginning: the '50s Trio with Ray Brown and Herb Ellis

were in those concerts. As to how the audience reacted, or the critics, that was their choice, not the performers'. So judge the musician according to his intentions."

The other side of Peterson's argument, of course, is what if the musician's intentions are misguided? What does the critic say when he feels the artist is not the best custodian of his own talent? There is implicit in the critic's mandate, I think, a certain license to play Pygmalion occasionally. As for Peterson, however, he has accomplished what must be every artist's dream. He has won a remarkably broad, general audience on his own terms and with his "intentions" virtually intact.

A far greater burden, it seems, for any artist who's been as good for so long as Peterson has is the romance factor, the failure to be as new in 1991 as he was in 1951.

"That's the other problem with a lot of player evaluation," he says, speaking more for others than himself, "and as I grow older [Peterson turned 65 last August] it deepens. Many writers look upon certain artists as . . . how should I say it? . . . as suspect. It's not that they put them down as much as they just pass them by. 'So-and-so played what we've come to expect' and that's that. Well, first of all, if people have come to expect this, then what's the problem? And secondly, if the artist intends to play what he plays, it seems to me that he's being judged—and penalized with faint praise—on the grounds that his own spirit is coming through. I don't think this is correct."

Peterson's point here is very good. The same sense of familiarity that sustains the posthumous reputations of Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker in a nimbus of legend tends—ironically—to devalue the work of the living artist, for whom familiarity may breed indifference. The player who finds his voice and stands by it for 30 years is often received by critics with a yawn of ennui at best or implications of stagnation at worst.

But what is the alternative? Musicians such as Miles Davis may be hailed for keeping up with the times. But are they to be entirely trusted? I admire those who've found their voice and built it into something great. In fact, I can think of nothing more insidious to the value of a mature musician than the notion that he must grow with the times. Who says? His record company? The marketing department? And what about when the "times" shrink? Peterson's response is simple: "I only know one way to play the piano."

Fortunately, he has been largely shielded from this kind of manipulation and intimidation by remarkable management. How different Peterson's career might be today without Norman Granz, who first brought him to this country in 1949. How cluttered his recorded work might be with endless "concept" albums were it not for the general integrity that Granz brought to Peterson's Clef/Verve albums and the extraordinary Pablo years.

"There has been a belief among some," says Peterson, "that Diz, Ella, Basie, myself, and others were stymied by Norman's desires; that he prevented us from rising to whatever heights they thought we should have risen to. This is ridiculous and absolutely untrue. We had total artistic freedom. Name any major label founded on that principle."

What perhaps has confounded Peterson's critics most, however, has been his consistent and seemingly immutable excellence. It is this that is most suspect—all manner of keyboard craftsmanship and the vast repertoire of pianistic idioms. (He is living proof of the familiar proposition that there are no new ideas, only new combinations of old ideas.) It's as if such impenetrable virtuosity and discipline violates the folk images of jazz that still linger in the shadows of its "noble savage" mythology—a notion, let's remember, that comes perilously close to well-intended but hard-core racism. Technique of Peterson's



magnitude is assumed by some to be a kind of smoke screen of acrobatics; an engineering sleight of hand whipped up to conceal something that's not really there—emotion, substance, content, or whatever jazz is supposed to have. Read this, for instance:

"The 'virtuoso' sign flashed incessantly, and hid the fact that the chief content of his solos was packed into the first eight or ten bars; what came after was largely ornamentation and hyperbole."—Whitney Balliett, 1977

In a way, I can understand such frustration. By giving his audiences so much so fast, Peterson runs the risk of letting them walk away with nothing. The density and intelligence of his music becomes more than even the thoughtful listener can process. And Peterson never stumbles; if only he'd stumble!

As a writer who is obliged to fess up with an opinion from time to time, I have to say that such rarified consistency is one of the banes of the critic's beat. How many times and in how many ways can one say an artist is unendingly and maddeningly perfect?

"When have you caught me on a bad night?" Peterson recently asked a critic.

"I haven't," the writer replied. "That's my problem."

"And it isn't going to change," says Peterson. "The day I feel I can't come up with it, that's the day I don't go out past the lights. This is hard to talk about without sounding like a super ego. People don't understand, but I simply don't think negatively about what I'm going to do."

Not that Peterson is immune to criticism, especially his own. "Nobody's fail-safe," he says. But his standards are his own and virtually invisible, even to the keenest listener. After one concert not long ago, Peterson walked off stage to a shower of praise from musician friends. He thanked them for their kindness, walked to his dressing room with his trio, closed the door, and proceeded to give everybody hell, including himself. "The standards I was shooting at that night and in those pieces probably were not reached to my satisfaction."

But the crowd never sensed the pianist's sense of failure. Why? Because he sets the standards of performance, not the crowd. "The point is," he says, "is my level of satisfaction the same as the audience's?"

The question is rhetorical. His answer: "I hope not."

DB

OSCAR PETERSON'S EQUIPMENT

Oscar Peterson has used a Bosendorfer Imperial concert grand piano since the early 1970s, when it was introduced to him by Hans Georg Brunner-Schwer, the man who recorded Peterson's 15 MPS albums. Its firm touch is compatible with his strong attack. "I think it has the most articulate and honest voice of the pianos I've played," he says. "And it's my choice."

OSCAR PETERSON SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as leader

- (the Victor Canadian sides, 1945-49—are expected to be reissued on Bluebird, late 1991 or early '92)
- O.P. LIVE!—Pablo 2310-940
- THE LEGENDARY O.P. TRIO, LIVE AT THE BLUE NOTE—Telarc CD-83304
- OSCAR PETERSON PLAYS COUNT BASIE—Clef MGC-7080
- ON THE TOWN—Verve 8287
- AT THE CONCERTGEBOUW—Verve 8268
- NIGHT TRAIN—Verve 821 724
- MY FAVORITE INSTRUMENT—MPS 2120671-8
- THE WAY I REALLY PLAY—MPS 2120670
- TRACKS—MPS 2120879-6
- HISTORY OF AN ARTIST—Pablo 2625-702
- MONTREUX 1975: BIG SIX—Pablo 2310-747
- OSCAR PETERSON JAM—Pablo 2308-208
- THE TRIO—Pablo 2310-701
- IN RUSSIA—Pablo 2310-711
- THE LONDON CONCERT—Pablo 2620-111
- ONE O'CLOCK JUMP, 1953—Verve 815 153
- THE EXCITING BATTLE, 1955—Pablo 2310-713
- RETURN TO HAPPINESS, TOKYO 1983—Pablo 2620-117
- THE NORMAN GRANZ JAM SESSION (FUNKY BLUES)—Verve VE-2-2508

with various artists

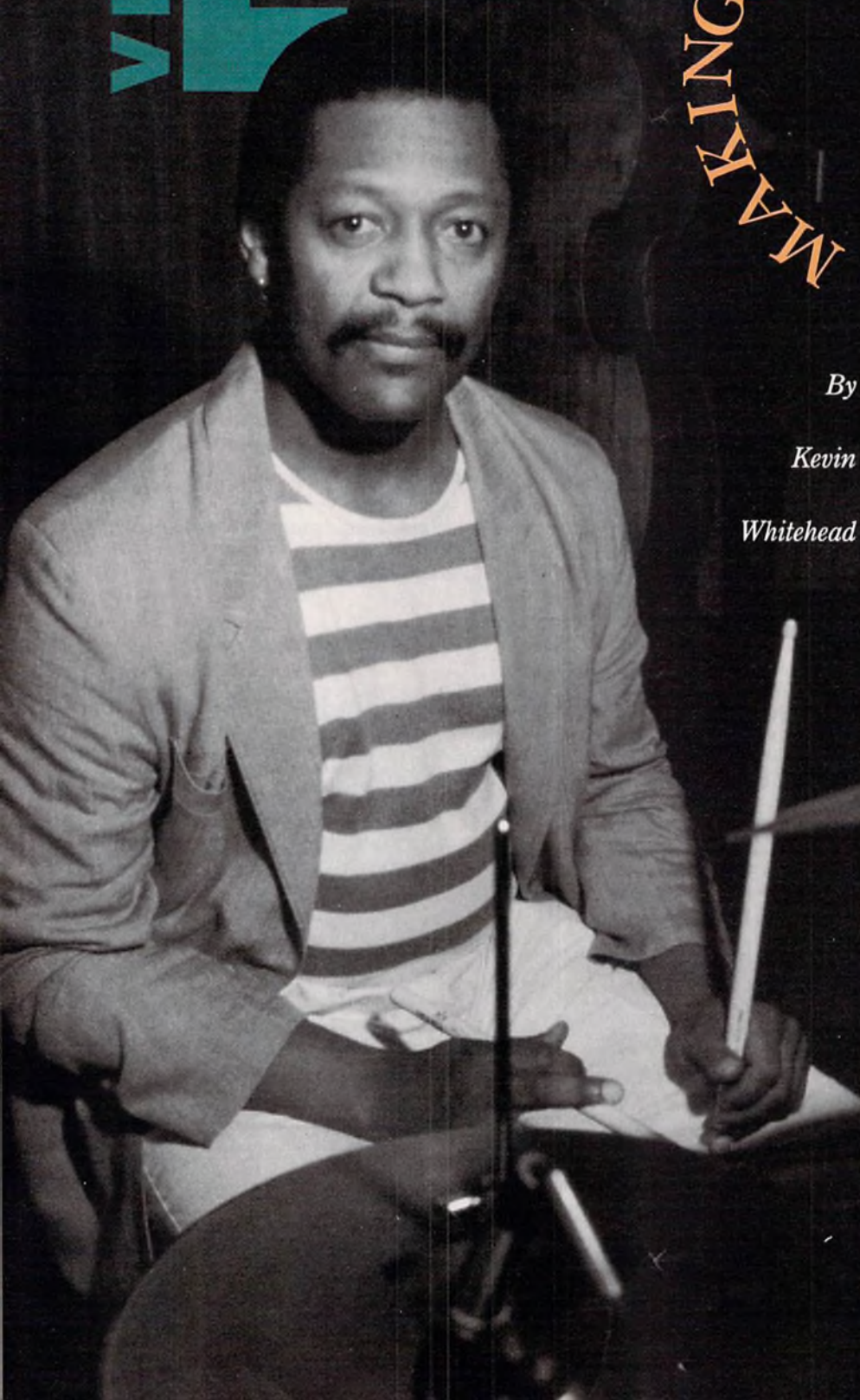
- ROY ELDRIDGE 4—Pablo 2308-203
- STAN GETZ AND THE O.P. TRIO—Verve MGX 8251
- THE PRESIDENT PLAYS—Verve 831-670
- LIONEL HAMPTON, THE COMPLETE QUARTET—Verve 813 091
- SATCH AND JOSH (w/Count Basie)—Pablo 2310-722
- & DIZZY GILLESPIE (duet)—Pablo 2310-740
- AIN'T BUT A FEW OF US LEFT (w/Milt Jackson)—Pablo 2310-873
- FACE TO FACE (w/Freddie Hubbard)—Pablo 2310-876
- BENNY CARTER MEETS—Pablo 2310-926

with JATP

- BLUES IN CHICAGO, 1955—Verve 815 155

VICTOR LEWIS

MAKING THE CHANGE



By

Kevin

Whitehead

Is drummer Victor Lewis the hardest working man in show business? Certainly no other freelancer in jazz stays busier. Lewis reached critical mass last spring, working two-and-a-half months straight without leaving New York. His gigs included two weeks with Tommy Flanagan, one week with David Murray, one more each with Mingus Dynasty, pianist Niels Lan Doky, and with Horizon, the band he now co-leads with Bobby Watson—who likes to introduce Victor to audiences as “the uncrowned king of the drums.”

Last summer, Lewis flew in from Cyprus one day, and two hours later was rehearsing for a live recording at Birdland with guitarist John Hart. As soon as that was in the can he was back out on the road with Horizon, then spent two weeks teaching at a clinic Gunther Schuller runs every August in Sandpoint, Idaho. He came back to New York for two days at the end of the month, to play the Mingus/Schuller *Epitaph* at an outdoor concert. At the Chicago Jazz Festival the next weekend he played back-to-back sets, Mingus Dynasty followed by *Epitaph*. Then he flew home for two weeks at the Vanguard—one with Dynasty, one with Horizon—followed by a week at Condon's with Steve Turre (while recording with Horizon during the day), then flew to Toronto for a week with Kenny Barron before Barron took his quintet into the Vanguard. . . .

You get the idea. This writer got the idea when it took two months to arrange an interview with Lewis, though we both live in Manhattan. Victor wasn't pulling a star-trip; as he says, his parents raised him to be polite, and he's accomodating, forthright, and funny once you get his attention. Still, he hardly needs to talk to a journalist—he's got more work than he can handle, just playing jazz. (He doesn't play jingles anymore, and hasn't done a funk session in over two years.) He doesn't need publicity and doesn't have a big ego to feed.

“I'm very grateful to be working so much,” Victor Lewis said when we sat down to lunch in a Greenwich Village restaurant, one summery day early in October. “I'm what you call a lazy workaholic—unless I'm in a high-pressure state, I get lazy. I do some of my best writing when I come in from working at a club at 3 o'clock in the morning and have a recording date at 10 a.m. Maybe I thrive on adrenaline and stress.”

To understand why Lewis is in such demand, you have to see him at work—for instance, with pianist Kenny Barron at the Vanguard. Victor really likes the place—it's a few minutes walk from where he lives, and his drums are tuned to the room. ("I developed hearing my drums at the Vanguard, because when I first got them I used to play here a lot with Woody Shaw. They sound good in this joint.") Other drummers I've talked to revere it as well, although the drummer's corner of the bandstand is hidden from most of the house by a large pillar. Victor explains with a straight face that the drummer's nook is "cozy and secluded—and people can't get at you with their eggs and tomatoes."

Barron's first set on Wednesday opens with a medium-fast tune. John Stubblefield takes the first solo. Lewis immediately sets up a three-way rhythmic conversation among tenor sax, bass drum, and snare. When Stubblefield plays something particularly fine, Lewis answers with a loud snare crack or cymbal crash—a drummer's "Amen!" or "I heard that!" When Eddie Henderson takes over, Lewis switches to a more staccato approach, mirroring the trumpeter's broken lines. As Eddie lets his rests grow longer, Victor dives in to fill the spaces;



they fall into spontaneous half-bar exchanges. Barron solos next, and Lewis softens his attack, his more even flow matching the pianist's long lines. For Cecil McBee's bass spot, Lewis concentrates on closed hi-hat and the rim of his snare drum, playing clipped sounds that stay out of the bassist's low frequency range. He also taps the edge of a cymbal with the side of a stick, yielding the thick, metallic, almost nasal sound that's one of his signatures.

Victor sounded so musical in the set—prodding, sympathizing, answering, encouraging—it didn't sink in till later that he didn't play anything a technique freak would drool over. It was all about taste. (Stubblefield says Lewis is a great player because he's a great composer—his tunes have turned up on albums by Horizon, Stubblefield, Shaw, and David Sanborn.)

"I think I'm more of a texture player than a technical player," Lewis had said over

lunch. "I don't think in terms of chops, but of more abstract things. If the saxophone player goes, 'Raaaooooom'" [a crude roar], I may respond with a sound that's the technical equivalent of my three-year-old daughter flailing at the drums. So I go for sounds and—very important—I play to chord progressions. I choose the sounds I want to get from the drums according to the sound or mood of a chord. If it's real dissonant, I might go for a harsh sound. Or if it's a very pretty chord, I might ping lightly on a cymbal. I'm more into playing music than I am into playing the drums. Drums are what I decided on as my voice, but if I could play acoustic bass as well as I play drums, I'd like to do that for a couple of years, and experience the music from that perspective. I have an affinity for music from all points of view."

In fact, bass would have been his first choice as an instrument. But when he began playing music—at two-and-a-half, he says—a $\frac{3}{4}$ -size cello was the closest thing to a bass that he could handle. (He was born in Omaha, May 20, 1950.) He took four years of piano lessons starting at age seven—when he began picking up the reading skills that allow him to play complex scores like *Epitaph*—before taking up the drums at 12.

"I grew up listening to Stravinsky, Charlie Parker, and the Supremes. Both my parents were jazz musicians, bless their souls, but they'd also studied classical, and instilled in me the idea that the consummate musician was one who could take care of business in any situation. I've played circuses, the *Bob Hope Show*, jingles, and a lot of other things that weren't jazz—the more experience you can draw from, the better. The experience of trying to keep up with a circus clown, to make a cymbal crash when he would fall, is something you can apply to jazz if the situation is right."

Lewis studied classical percussion at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, but dropped out with a semester to go, to devote all his time to playing. Encouraged by multi-reedist Bennie Maupin—whom he'd met when Herbie Hancock's band played through Lincoln—he came to New York in the fall of 1974, "with my drums, my suitcase, and \$200." Three months later he made his first jazz record, trumpeter Woody Shaw's *The Moontrane*, having met Shaw through another Hancock sideman he'd met in Nebraska, bassist Buster Williams. In the late '70s, Lewis played straightahead with Shaw and funkier stuff with David Sanborn, but he's played more out stuff too—he recorded with Oliver Lake early in '75, played duo with Julius Hemphill, and did a session for

Shaw's *Iron Men* album with Anthony Braxton and Muhai Richard Abrams. In the '80s, Lewis made some splendid recordings with Stan Getz (learning how to play with high intensity at low volume), and played alongside Naná Vasconcelos, Greg Osby, and Tim Berne on an album by bassist Mark Helias.

Lewis is a firm believer in the old pay-your-dues apprenticeship system and in the importance of developing an individual style. He's critical of the premature-leader syndrome which characterizes the industry now. At 40, Lewis is finally gearing up to make an album of his own—he talks of using the Harlem Boys Choir on one cut—and is easing into being a leader by co-directing *Horizon* with Watson. "The band has a special way of breathing as a unit, rhythmically and especially dynamically—that's where I can really play the way I want to play. You may see me playing with a lot of groups, but whenever you see *Horizon* playing, you will see me."

Which is not to say he won't still squeeze in a side gig or two. After his week at the Vanguard with Kenny Barron, Lewis headed up to Montreal to make an album with altoist P.J. Perry, returned to New York for a live recording with Clark Terry, then flew to Europe for a tour with The Very Big Carla Bley Band. And after that. . . . **DB**

VICTOR LEWIS EQUIPMENT

"Equipment isn't always the definitive factor in determining a cat's sound," Victor Lewis cautions. "Art Blakey could sit down at any drums, tune 'em up, and play, and sound like Art Blakey." Victor's own set is a "senior citizen—it has many ailments, but provides the sound I want to hear." His drums are 12-year-old Premiers: 18-inch bass, 14-inch floor tom, 12-inch rack tom and 7½-inch snare. He also uses two "old" A. Zildjian cymbals, a 22-inch ride and 20-inch sizzle, "a 20-inch Paiste crash that's dying on me," and Vic Firth 5B sticks.

VICTOR LEWIS SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Lewis is on way too many records to squeeze in here; this list focuses on recent releases and seven albums Victor mentions as personal favorites (*).

as a sideman

WHAT IF?—Enja 5013 (w/Kenny Barron)*
HEAVY HEART—Watt/ECM 817 864 (w/Carla Bley)*
ANNIVERSARY!—EmArcy 838 769 (w/Stan Getz)*
THE STOCKHOLM CONCERT—Gazell 1013 (w/Stan Getz)
LINEAGE—Blue Note 93670 (w/Benny Green)
THE CURRENT SET—Enja 5041 (w/Mark Helias)
CURVEBALL—Sunnyside 1045 (w/Geoff Keezer)
HEAVY SPIRITS—Arista/Freedom 1008 (w/Oliver Lake)
FURTHERMORE—Landmark 1526 (w/Ralph Moore)
CORRIDOR TO THE LIMITS—Sunnyside 1043 (w/Rufus Reid)
PROMISE ME THE MOON—Warner Bros. 3051 (w/David Sanborn)*
MINGUS EPITAPH—Columbia 45428 (w/Gunther Schuller)
ROSEWOOD—Columbia 35309 (w/Woody Shaw)*
IRON MEN—Muse 5160 (w/Woody Shaw)
THE MOONTRANE—Muse 5058 (w/Woody Shaw)
COUNTIN' ON THE BLUES—Enja 5051 (w/John Stubblefield)*
THE INVENTOR—Blue Note 91915 (w/Bobby Watson & Horizon)*

Wynton Marsalis. Chuck Mangione. Kenny Garrett. Johnny Griffin. Keith Jarrett. Geoff Keezer. Terence Blanchard. Freddie Hubbard. Robin Eubanks. Curtis Fuller. Woody Shaw. Philip Harper. Cedar Walton. Bobby Timmons. Mulgrew Miller. Lee Morgan. Brian Lynch. Wayne Shorter. Jackie

McLean. Donald Harrison...

Messengers all. And the message they communicated was forged in the unquenchable fire of swing. The man behind the bellows—the blacksmith of hard-bop, with drums that rang with strength and durability, like iron on an anvil—was the late Art Blakey.

The Jazz Messengers have been the crucible of mainstream values and straight-ahead swing for 35 years, and yet their only constant was the man at the helm. Blakey's bands set standards of honesty, unswerving dedication, power, and pride of presentation. This, simply, accounts for their popularity, through jazz's lean years as well as its rich ones. The Jazz Messenger name stood for something—for a style of music, rooted in the blues but bubbling with bebop's optimism, that let you tap your foot without insulting your intelligence; for a level of commitment and quality no matter who was in the band.

And you might not know who was going to be in the band when you bought a ticket. It didn't matter. The name was a guarantee. Much has been written about Blakey's abilities as talent scout. The truth is that newcomers were frequently recommended by the outgoing member, or had to survive a trial-by-fire audition, on-stage, in front of paying customers. But Blakey's experience and intuition told him whether they were Messenger material or not. Just as surely, he could sense when it was time for someone to move on, to graduate from sideman to leader in his/her own right. He never felt that he should hoard talent, to make himself look good, but believed that all of jazz would benefit from many groups, filled with Messenger alumni, spreading the message of good music. This explains the revolving-door policy, and the parade of top-class instrumentalists, usually on their first big-league gig, who passed through the Academy of Art.

"Art was about finding your own voice in music and he taught me to be ready for anything. He knew so much music and he was liable to drop anything on you," explains Geoff Keezer, who had been the Messenger piano player for the past year. "The main thing he showed me was how to keep reaching."

It seems remarkable that each edition of the Jazz Messengers took on its own musical character, while remaining true to the message. Blakey put it thusly, "The message my men have tried to deliver, no matter which personnel we had, was jazz. When you get away from swinging, get away from developing along the lines that were started by Diz and Bird and Max, you may be in danger of losing the essence of jazz." It was Blakey's wisdom as a leader, however, that allowed the individual musician to find his own voice within the system. Allowed? It forced them, giving bandmembers solo showcases in each set, and requiring youngbloods to work out personal solutions to those same old tried-and-true tunes from the Messengers' book. Then, too, remember, Blakey may have been the spirit, the cheerleader, the conscience, the anchor, and the traffic cop in the band, but he was not the musical director. He always would delegate that authority to composer/arrangers like Benny Golson, Wayne Shorter, or Bobby Watson, insuring new charts to stand alongside the sure-to-be-requested familiar favorites, and fresh points of view to attract new listeners.

... Donald Byrd. Wallace Roney. John Gilmore. Billy Harper. JoAnne Brackeen. Benny Green. Art Farmer. Ira Sullivan. Gary



Art Blakey, 1919-1990

Bartz. Lonnie Plaxico. Wilbur Ware. Kenny Drew. Junior Mance. Reggie Workman. Peter Washington. Benny Golson. Bobby Watson. John Hicks. James Williams. . . .

The list is long, but there is perhaps no better way to honor and simultaneously celebrate Art Blakey's unprecedented career than to cite the wealth of musicianship that he taught, inspired, made music with. Blakey's recorded legacy? Well, with hundreds of Jazz Messengers albums available at one time or another, it's hard to choose a handful of favorites. Personally, I'd pick the two volumes caught live in 1955 *At The Cafe Bohemia* (Blue Note 46521 and 46522), when the band—Horace Silver, Hank Mobley, Kenny Dorham, and Doug Watkins—was still a co-op. And the Atlantic album with guest pianist Thelonious Monk. And *Moanin'* (Blue Note 46523), of course. And . . . where do you stop? (For more, see "Reviews" p. 38.)

For all the deserved acclaim accorded to Blakey the bandleader, we risk lessening the achievement of Art Blakey the drummer. We shouldn't forget that he was a rhythmic innovator.

His sound and sense were unique. He found ways of incorporating polyrhythms well before Elvin Jones brought them to light behind John Coltrane. Even with a drum kit of reduced size by today's measure, he created an innately textural approach to accompaniment, changing drum pitch with elbow or stick pressure, rattling on the chrome, obtaining a rainbow of colors from his cymbals, dropping bombs, stressing alternately subtle and intense dynamics (Freddie Hubbard once told Art Taylor that playing with Blakey was like sitting on an atom bomb.) Blakey's personality—exhilarating, devout, friendly—was on display when he drummed, which is why so few have been able to rip off his style. Burt Korall once wisely suggested that Blakey's real drum legacy was in such "free" and colorful practitioners as Sunny Murray and Milford Graves. His skeletal approach to melody and varied timekeeping effects made him the best accompanist for Monk—as well as Herbie Nichols, for whom he all but orchestrated the crucial drum parts. And his early forays into African-style drum choirs predated the present World Music trend by decades.

Typically, his three most recent recordings contain moments that, in retrospect, touch us in special ways, and reveal key aspects of Art Blakey, the man and the musician. The extended drum solo on *I Get A Kick Out Of Bu* (Soul Note 121155) reminds us of his percussive skills and imagination. His unexpected singing of "For All We Know," on the lively jam with Dr. John and Fathead Newman, *Bluessiana Triangle* (see *DB*, Aug. '90) now sounds especially poignant. And there's a snatch of in-studio instruction to be heard on *One For All* (A&M 75021 5329) that defines Blakey the inspirational bandleader. He says, "Y'all get in the studio and you try to make everything so goddamn clinical. Two months from now when you hear this tune, you won't recognize it yourself. You ain't gonna play it the same way every night. Use your imagination. That's what jazz is all about. If you don't have any imagination, you might as well quit . . . just go on and play. You make a mistake, make it loud, so you don't make it next time. Okay, let's go." What follows is drum thunder.

Keezer sums up the feelings of two generations when he says, "I just want to say, 'Thank you Art. I'm glad I had the opportunity. It's been an experience I'll cherish for my entire life.'" —Art Lange

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



OSCAR PETERSON

THE LEGENDARY OSCAR PETERSON TRIO LIVE AT THE BLUE NOTE—Telarc CD-83304:

HONEYSUCKLE ROSE; LET THERE BE LOVE; PEACE FOR SOUTH AFRICA; SUSHI; MEDLEY: I REMEMBER YOU, A CHILD IS BORN, TENDERLY; SWEET GEORGIA BROWN; BLUES FOR BIG SCOTIA. (73:25 minutes)

Personnel: Peterson, piano; Herb Ellis, guitar; Ray Brown, bass; Bobby Durham, drums.

★★★★ ½

OSCAR PETERSON LIVE!—Pablo 2310-940:

THE BACH SUITE; CITY LIGHTS; PERDIDO; CARAVAN.

Personnel: Peterson, piano; Joe Pass, guitar; David Young, bass; Martin Drew, drums.

★★★★

The "original" Oscar Peterson Trio—or more accurately, the best remembered Oscar Peterson trio—was a velvet zephyr of a group that played from about 1953 to 1958 with just piano, bass, and guitar. It had a civility and precision about it because drummerless groups sometimes are like that. Like the pianist, it owed a lot to Nat Cole.

On the Telarc CD the Peterson "trio" is actually a quartet with drummer Bobby Durham on all tracks, a fact which the front packaging seems loathe to admit. Trio or quartet, though, it brings four master musicians together—really together—and the music is terrific.

"Sweet Georgia Brown" has been on Peterson's playlist since the '40s, but Ellis and Brown certainly justify another hearing, especially for the a capella exchanges between Peterson and Ellis during a four-minute prologue. Their fast flow of eighth notes wrap the tune in long, swirling, streaks of music. It's not the notes one hears; it's the streaks, the tails on the comets. Technique may be second nature to Peterson, but there's no coasting here. He draws on the disciplines of the improviser as well as the athlete and plays to his limits.

The other high moment here is neither fast nor athletic. "Peace For South Africa" is a slow, gospeliish composition by Peterson and reminiscent of his "Hymn To Freedom" in its moving melodic splendor. (reviewed on CD)

Peterson the composer gets a wider birth in *Oscar Peterson Live!* recorded in 1986. The centerpiece is the three-part "Bach Suite: Allegro, Andante, and Bach's Blues." "Allegro" is really two distinct and free-standing pieces with separate tempos and themes, both simple and compelling and neither with any visible relationship. The second of the two themes is a lively fugue which Peterson and Martin Drew imbue with a tremendous, propulsive power. The short "Andante" flows into a moderate blues that is starkly simple and somewhat

dark. "City Lights" is a pretty waltz by Peterson but provides sparse momentum for improvisation.

Almost as if to atone for this lack, "Perdido" is barely hinted at through the many variations. "Caravan" seems unnecessarily inclined to bombast and thunder bolts. But then it's intent seems to be to summarize as wide a range of the group's dazzle as can reasonably be assembled in one number. And you'll be dazzled. (reviewed on LP)

—John McDonough



VAUGHAN BROTHERS

FAMILY STYLE—Epic ZK 46225: HARD TO BE; WHITE BOOTS; DIFW; GOOD TEXAN; HILLBILLIES FROM OUTERSPACE; LONG WAY FROM HOME; TICK TOCK; TELEPHONE SONG; BABOOM/MOMMA SAID; BROTHERS. (40:49 minutes)

Personnel: Stevie Ray Vaughan, guitars, vocals (cuts 1,4,6-8); Jimmie Vaughan, guitars, steel guitar (5); organ (9); vocals (2,4,7); Al Berry, bass (1-4,6-9); Preston Hubbard, upright bass (5,10); Larry Aberman (1-4,6-9); Doyle Bramhall (5,10), drums; Stan Harrison, alto and tenor saxes (1); Steve Elson, baritone and tenor saxes (1); Richard Hilton, piano (6); keyboards (7); organ (9); Nile Rodgers, guitar (9); Rockin' Sydney, accordion (10); David Spinner (1,4); Tawatha Agee (2,7,9); Brenda White-King (2,7,9,10); Curtis King, Jr. (2,7,9); George Sims (4), background vocals.

★★★★

Shortly after Double Trouble bandleader and blues guitar ace Stevie Ray Vaughan died in a late August helicopter crash, Epic released *Family Style*, his first-ever collaboration album with older brother Jimmie (lead guitarist of the Fabulous Thunderbirds). Was this a marketing strategy to prey on fan sentimentalism?

No foul play in this case. Not only was the album originally slated for a September release, but this is no slipshod project; there's not a weak tune in the bunch. Bros. Stevie Ray and Jimmie swap guitar licks—even passing a single Stratocaster back and forth in a guitar conversation on "Brothers"—on 10 very diverse blues-based numbers, ranging in tempo from a slow 'n' sweet instrumental and a circa-'60s soul ballad to a robust blue-collar r&b tune with Stax-influenced horns and a lunkified pop cooker with a great dance groove.

There's a brotherly enthusiasm and playfulness present here—an intuition of style (one brother's solo seamlessly leads into the other's), a spirit of spontaneity (Stevie opens the album by saying, "Roll and I'll just feel something"—and he and Jimmie proceed to

romp), and the fun of a family reunion (especially in the songs where background vocalists Tawatha Agee, Brenda White-King, and Curtis King, Jr. whoop it up) Unfortunately, this rousing, good-times party and this extraordinary fraternity was way too short-lived. (reviewed on CD)

—Dan Ouellette



KENNY GARRETT

AFRICAN EXCHANGE STUDENT—Atlantic Jazz 7 82156-2: JA-HED; MACK THE KNIFE; AFRICAN EXCHANGE STUDENT; SOMEDAY WE'LL ALL BE FREE; ONE WORLD THROUGH; STRAIGHT STREET; SHAW; LULLABY OF ISFAHAN; ONE FINGER SNAP; YOUR COUNTRY-NESS; NOSTRADAMUS. (66:50 minutes)

Personnel: Garrett, alto sax, flute (cut 3), vocals (3); Mulgrew Miller, piano (1-4,6-11); Charnett Moffett (1-4,6,9); Ron Carter (5,7,8,11), bass; Tony Reedus (1-4,6,9); Elvin Jones (5,7,8,10,11), drums; Rudy Bird (3,4,8); Tito Ocasio (3,4); Steve Thornton (3,4), percussion.

★★★★ ½

Garrett's been turning heads touring and recording with Miles' band the last few years, flooding sections of pieces with exhilarating alto sax solos. Also a veteran of Freddie Hubbard and Art Blakey's bands, the young sax player employs an incredibly tight rhythm team (including one-time Coltrane drummer Elvin Jones—acknowledged by Garrett as a major influence on this album—and brilliant pianist Mulgrew Miller). They handle a diversity of jazz styles, ranging from a loping waltz number and a colorful lullaby with waterfalls of percussion to muscular hard-bop with blizzards of wailing sax notes and Afrocentric jazz filled with polyrhythmic percussion and staccato sax lines.

There's not a cliché within earshot in Garrett's playing as he expressively sputters, screeches, wails, pouts, and squeaks unusual sax tones at emotional climaxes and then calms the storm by fluidly swinging into a gentle, melodically-based piece. Yet just when you think Garrett may be traipsing into too-safe, too-smooth territory, he begins to paint outside the lines (for example, when he quickly wanders from and finally abandons the melody in his fine rendering of "Mack The Knife" or when he interrupts the impressionistic musical setting of "Lullaby Of Isfahan" with disturbing sax jabs or when he lifts the conclusion of "Someday We'll All Be Free" into a joyful realm).

Garrett's at his best when he's most emotive. The title composition is the highlight primarily because it is so charged with conflicting evo-

cations of beauty, mystery, danger, ecstasy, pain, and humor expressed in the vocal cries of Garrett's sax. Those excursions are intense, and the very real catharsis experienced by Garrett is extremely contagious to the listener. (reviewed on CD) —Dan Ouellette



JON HENDRICKS

FREDDIE FREELOADER—Denon 81757 6302 2: *JUMPIN' AT THE WOODSIDE; IN SUMMER; FREDDIE FREELOADER; STARDUST; SUGAR; TAKE THE "A" TRAIN; FAS' LIVIN' BLUES; HIGH AS A MOUNTAIN; TRINKLE TINKLE; SWING THAT MUSIC; THE FINER THINGS IN LIFE; LISTEN TO MONK; SING SING SING.* (58:31 minutes)

Personnel: Hendricks, Judith Hendricks, Aria Hendricks, Kevin Fitzgerald Burke, Al Jarreau, George Benson, Bobby McFerrin, the Manhattan Transfer (Tim Hauser, Janis Siegel, Alan Paul, Cheryl Bentyne), vocals; the Count Basie Orchestra directed by Frank Foster, tenor saxophone; Jerome Richardson, Joe Temperley, Stanley Turrentine, saxophones; Randy Sandke, Wynton Marsalis, Lew Soloff, trumpet; Britt Woodman, Al Grey, trombone; Romero Lum-bambo, guitar; Larry Goldings, Tommy Flanagan, piano; Andy McCloud, George Mraz, Tyler Mitchell, Rufus Reid, bass; Clifford Barbaro, Jimmy Cobb, Duffy Jackson, drums; Ron McBee, percussion; Andy Stein, Al Rogers, Barry Finclair, strings; Margaret Ross, harp.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

You wonder if the blank page ever stares back at Jon Hendricks. It would seem not, so prolific is he. The genius of fitting lyrics to instrumental solos is at it again with an all-star cast and a panorama of jazz tunes. His all-encompassing perspective makes you think of a Quincy Jones or a Gene Lees. To wit, this set runs the gamut from Hendricks doing Satchmo to Hendricks doing Coltrane, from the vocal ensemble doing Basie to Gil Evans, from the poignancy of Hendricks' lyrics on "In Summer," a Brazilian song by the Italian composer Bruno Martino, to the jive of Basie's "Jumpin' At The Woodside."

You really must listen to this album; a reviewer can only point out some of its peaks. For starters, there's Hendricks and Monk. Who could ever imagine lyrics to a swirling melody like "Trinkle Tinkle"? For blues lovers, Hendricks and Al Grey swap truths on "Fas' Livin' Blues." The title track is the *piece de resistance* with McFerrin, Jarreau, and Benson in the solo roles of Wynton Kelly, Miles Davis, and Cannonball Adderley (Hendricks is Trane) from Miles' *Kind Of Blue* album. All the swing items feel right, too, with voices becoming instru-

ments yet still articulating the lyrics.

If you think the five-star rating implies that everyone has an academically perfect voice, forget it. This is jazz. You take the individual idiosyncracies and maximize (good corporate word) the end result. You take these musicians, combine them in various groups, apply an imaginative and viable concept, and turn them loose. If you are Jon Hendricks, it'll work grandly. (reviewed on CD) —Owen Cordle



ANDY SUMMERS

CHARMING SNAKES—Private Music 2069-2-P: *MEXICO 1920; CHARMING SNAKES; BIG THING; RAINMAKER; CHARIS; MICKEY GOES TO AFRICA; INNOCENCE FALLS PREY; PASSION OF THE SHADOW; MONK GETS RIPPED; EASY ON THE ICE; THE STRONG & THE BEAUTIFUL.* (51: 44 minutes)

Personnel: Summers, guitar and banjo (cut 6); Bill Evans, soprano and tenor sax; Chad Wackerman, drums; Doug Lynn, Sting (2), Darryl Jones (4), bass; Brian Auger (1, 10, 11), David Hentschel (2-4, 6, 8-10), Herbie Hancock (2, 3, 7), keyboards; Ed Mann, percussion (3, 4, 6, 8, 11); Mark Isham, trumpet (4, 6, 9, 10).

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

After two albums of ambient atmospheres and exotic textures, the former Police-man comes charging out of the gate hard on *Charming Snakes*. Pushed by Chad Wackerman's big backbeats and challenged by Bill Evans' urgent sax work, Summers rises to the occasion and rips off some most impressive guitar work, particularly the Holdsworthian legato abandon and whammy phrasing he displays on "Mexico 1920" and the aggressive edge he flaunts on the bombastic "Big Thing."

As if determined to enter the fusion-guitar hero sweepstakes alongside Allan Holdsworth and Frank Gambale, Summers waits on almost every track. This is no New Agey offering. From start to finish, *Charming Snakes* is about grooves and stretching out. His ex-partner Sting joins him on the reggae groove of the title cut while former Miles and Sting sideman Darryl Jones pumps the bass on the energetic "Rainmaker," which features some of Andy's most lyrical guitar work on the album.

"Charis" is an affecting intimate duet with Evans on soprano while "Mickey Goes To Africa" tries to combine Andy's interests in Kurt Weill and juju music. More edgy guitar theatrics on the hard-hitting "Innocence Falls Prey" (which sounds closer to Elliott Sharp than Allan Holdsworth) and on "The Strong & The Beautiful," both powered by the appropriately-named Wackerman. Most eccentric cut on the album is Andy's twisted homage to Theloni-

ous Monk, "Monk Gets Ripped," which sounds alternately like vintage Tony Williams Lifetime and something that might've been on Hal Willner's idiosyncratic Monk tribute album of a few years back.

There's a lot of guitar here. Personally, I didn't think Andy had it in him. I panned his textural New Agey fare. I applaud this noteworthy effort. The lad's got chops on top of being clever. (reviewed on CD) —Bill Milkowski



MICKEY HART

AT THE EDGE—Rykodisc RCD 10124: #4 *FOR GAIA; SKY WATER; SLOW SAILING; LONESOME HERO; FAST SAILING; COUGAR RUN; THE ELIMINATORS; BRAINSTORM; PIGS IN SPACE.* (48:04 minutes)

Personnel: Hart, various percussion, including whistles, rainstick, rattles, processed crickets, Matrix-12, Roland D-50, Emulator II, processed bell, Remo toms, slit gongs (hollow log), Engelhart Comet Bells (metal percussion), kalimba (thumb piano), cowbells; Jerry Garcia, processed crickets (cut 1), electric guitar (2), guitar synthesizer (7); Zakir Hussain, duggi tarang (tuned metal drums) (2, 3, 5), processed tabla (2, 3), tar (3), shakers (4), tabla (5), dholak (double-headed cylinder drum) (5); Joze Lorenzo, berimbau (musical bow) (4); Sikiru Adepoju, dundun (4, 5, 7); Babatunde Olatunji, djembe (wooden hourglass drum) (4, 5, 8), cowbell (5), shekere (5, 8), Engelhart Hex Bells (6), slit gong (8); Creek Hart, Linn 9000 drum samples (7); Taro S. Hart, Kawasaki Electronic Drums (7); Airto Moreira, extended voice (9).

★ ★ ★ ½

In a music encyclopedia published circa 1950, only 18 instruments were listed in its percussion section. On Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart's new solo album, he uses over 18 percussion instruments himself. Of course, the encyclopedia was unashamedly written from a European classical music perspective, which has traditionally seen rhythm as subservient to melody and harmony. Meanwhile, Hart's curiosity and obsession with the spiritual and historical heritage of the world's percussion has led him to explore the elemental mysteries of rhythm on *At The Edge*.

Hart enlists the support of two incredible percussionists, Indian tabla master Zakir Hussain and African drum legend Babatunde Olatunji (whenever either player joins Hart, the piece sparkles), for this pilgrimage into the land of rhythms. Best described as a soundtrack for a percussion creation myth, the album opens with gentle dreamscapes of synthetically-produced environmental sounds and pri-

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DOWN FOR THE COUNT

by John McDonough

Concord Records has a new CD it calls *Dear Mr. Basie* (CCD-4420; 60:58 minutes: ★★★) by the Frank Wess/Harry Edison Orchestra, a unit assembled for a 1989 tour of Japan. But it's really a composite of the **Count Basie** band itself from the '50s and '60s. The personnel reads like a vintage Clef or Roulette LP jacket: Joe Newman, Snooky Young, Eddie Jones, Marshall Royal, Benny Powell, Al Grey, plus Wess and Edison. It could be nearly any Basie band. This outfit is a chip off the old block. Wess and Billy Mitchell are a well-matched tenor pair here, and Edison and Newman trade eights on "Battle Royal" with the former ending with a quote from the bebop standard, "Allen's Alley." Edison is dense, crisp, and even a little less redundant than usual, but Newman has sounded firmer before. The wonderful Snooky Young is poorly showcased on the umpteenth record of "Li'l Darlin'." Given the occasion, it's too bad more thought wasn't given to a fresher repertoire.

The Basie band had always been a musicians' band. In the '50s it became a singers' band, and three good examples have just been reissued. *The Greatest* (Verve 833 774-2; 31:43: ★★★★★) finds Basie with his most popular singer ever, Joe Williams, in a program of Rogers & Hart, Gershwin, Arlen, Kern, and others. The charts are Buddy Bregman's, who was not a Basie arranger and whose presence may help explain why most fans have preferred the earlier *Basie Swings-Williams Sings* collection. His writing is heavy on brass exclamation points of the triple-fff magnitude. They give the band a somewhat stiff, stout-hearted-men quality, despite much smooth reed writing. But it works well for Williams, whom I've always found a more convincing pop than blues singer anyway and who is a great voice here. More important, this album is a nice illustration of how influential people influence each other. The Basie/Hefiti sound had a big impact on postwar big bands. This album is a reminder that Basie was the hippest accompanist any modern singer could want.

Tony Bennett was among the earliest, first for Columbia and then on the present *Basie/Bennett* album for Roulette in 1959 (Roulette/Capitol CPD 7938992; 30:41: ★★½). But Bennett does an odd thing. Having gotten what he wanted most, he proceeds to cut out its heart. The arrangements (and most of the piano) here are by Ralph Sharon, Bennett's longtime musical director. I don't think I'm taking anything from Sharon's fine talent to wonder why Bennett would not take Basie on his own terms: with Basie. In any case, the singer and band have a natural jazz kinship and seem to enjoy the meeting immensely. The only ringer, a ballad called "Growing Pains," would have been a lovely piece on any other album but has nothing to do with anything going on here.

The best of the singer collaborations was the first encounter with Frank Sinatra, *Sinatra/Basie: An Historic Musical First* (Reprise 1008-2; 32:34: ★★★★★). Neal Hefti, the founding strategist of the Basie second coming, tied singer and orchestra together in such a



The Count, Nov. '59: hip accompanist

smoothly designed little package here that we get the best of both worlds: a superb Sinatra album and a first-rate Basie record. The result is a partnership. Example: Not even the Williams set left room for any soloists. Here you'll get Frank Wess, Frank Foster, plenty of the band and, yes, even a crackling Sonny Payne tickling Sinatra's feet on "Looking At The World Thru Rose Colored Glasses." Sinatra responds well. His brushed diction gives the lyrics a rolling, legato drive that slides over the band as lightly as any soloist.

Count Basie: Kansas City 6 (Pablo OJCCD-449-2; 45:00: ★★★★★) is among the Basie Pablos of the '80s Fantasy is bringing out on its Original Jazz Classics line; in this case, with one five-minute track added. Eddie Cleanhead Vinson gets a blues vocal, but this is basically a close-in Basie chamber session with Louie Bellson, Joe Pass, and trumpeter Willie Cook. Moods vary. "St. Louis Blues" is a stately, slow-motion, Basie-Pass duet; "Blues For Little Jazz," the only non-blues track in sight, is an explosive, little generic riff in the image of Roy Eldridge. Such music seems to grow better with each year that passes, and a long future lies ahead.

Finally, comes *Count Basie 1947: Brand New Wagon* (RCA/Bluebird 2292-2-RB; 51:24: ★★★★★), with the band that went down for the count by 1950. Basie had fame, top musicians, and the backing of RCA Victor on his side in the late '40s. Yet, doom yawned before him. A DB poll of the period told the sad story. With only 15 votes to his name (out of about 2,600 cast), Basie sank to 20th place under the weight of too many Stan Kenton ballots. For years, the Basie Victors have carried the stigma of a band at the end of its rope, of empty form with only shadows of substance. So how come they sound so genuinely lovely these days? The original Jo Jones/Freddie Green/Walter Page rhythm section is here. What more could one want? And even a smart original like "Bill's Mill" (by Kentonite Gene Roland!) finds the band walking in the nimbus of its 1939 glory. But with modernism ringing in the air, maybe it was impossible then to listen to anything in 1947 with 1939 ears. Today, who remembers 1947? (Not, alas, the annotator, whose all-purpose puffery says virtually nothing about this period.) Here's the music, holding up just fine, thank you. (all reviewed on CD) **DB**

REVELATION OR REVOLUTION?



Photo: Sandra Eisner

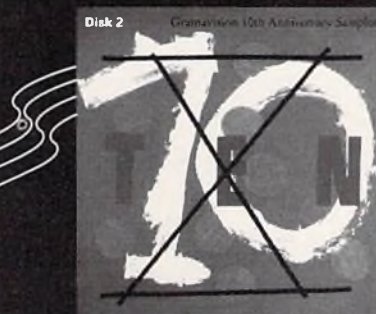
BOBBY PREVITE EMPTY SUITS

Drummer/Composer Bobby Previte takes us through the looking glass for the next evolution of sound. Linear compositions from the cosmos to the next apocalypse. Revelation or revolution?! You be the judge. (Gramavision 79447)



JOHN SCOFIELD SLO SCO: BEST OF THE BALLADS

The elder statesman of jazz guitar presents a collection of his favorite romantic ballads from his Gramavision days for a stunning, introspective retrospective. *Slo Sco*. (Gramavision 79430)



GRAMAVISION 10th ANNIVERSARY SAMPLER VARIOUS ARTISTS

This double CD set, at a single disc price, is a wonderful retrospective to commemorate and celebrate the ten year history of this unique and acclaimed label. Over 145 minutes of music affords veteran Gramavision fans the opportunity to hear some of the artists they may have missed and gives new listeners the chance to hear what they have been missing. (Gramavision 79461)

GRAMAVISION

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mordial subterranean currents Light arrives on cut three with a Hussain-Hart duet where, finally, torrents of exotic rhythms are released from the darkness. Unfortunately, up to this point, the album could pass as calming New Age background musak. And the real awakening doesn't come until the spirited numbers "Lonesome Hero" and "Fast Sailing." Gone is the dripping water as we're jettisoned into polyrhythmic paradise the rest of the way—with the exception of "The Exterminators," which is deadened by dull synthesizer washes.

Plaudits for keying on the power of percussion to communicate and for experimenting with a variety of colors and textures. Low scores for the slow start. (reviewed on CD)

—Dan Ouellette



NELSON RANGELL

NELSON RANGELL—GRP 4624: *RAIN FOREST*; *TOMORROW (BETTER YOU, BETTER ME)*; N.Y.C.; *PRELUDE TO A KISS*; *STARLIGHT WHISPERS*; *BRASILIA*; *GINN' THE "HI" SIGN*; *THE CAROUSEL*; *STONE COLD*; *WISHES FOR YOU*; *IF I COULD*. (55:47 minutes)

Personnel: Rangell, soprano, alto, tenor saxophones, piccolo, flute, vocal (cut 6), whistling (11); Michael Bearden, Jeff Jenkins, Jay Rowe, keyboards; John Van Epps, Synclavier; Paul Eulin, computer programming; Kip Kuepper, keyboards, bass; Drew Zingg, guitar; Brian Keane, percussion programming, acoustic guitars; Victor Bailey, Wayne Braithwaite, bass; Charles "Poojie" Bell, Steven Holloway, Darrin Johnson, drums; Jur Mall, Jim Mola, Faruk Tekbilek, Don Alias, Emedin Rivera, Michael Nieland, percussion; Norma Jean Wright, Lucy Martin, background vocals.

★ ★

Twenty-nine-year-old Nelson Rangell covers some kinda territory on his second album for GRP (his third overall). As the personnel list shows, he's quite the multi-instrumentalist, including a tune where he simply whistles with minimum accompaniment (on Pat Metheny's "If I Could"). The styles range from funk to Latin to pop jazz and then some.

Great. However, aside from the mildly intriguing beats and group interplay of "Rain Forest" and the David Sanborn-like lilt of "Stone Cold," the net effect of *Nelson Rangell* is talent showcased in the service of indistinction. All of pop-jazz's weakest qualities are realized here: nondescript writing, formulaic beats and arrangements, a seemingly incessant pandering to, in this case, a significant but overwrought style of soul sax playing. Not meaning to single him out, Rangell's "love horri" lacks any edge

or personality that might distinguish it from the apparently endless line of generic players mimicking Sanborn, Grover Washington, Jr., Michael Brecker, and—dare I say?—Kenny G. (And even though *Nelson Rangell* showcases his virtuosity on a number of instruments, in this reviewer's opinion, Rangell's approach to the saxophone is determinative.)

If your idea of jazz is to play it as a soundtrack for a little touchy-feely, well, then, I guess, this kind of thing might do just fine. For example, Rangell's treatment of the one standard here, Ellington's "Prelude To A Kiss," is embalmed by Jeff Jenkins' overly lush, atmospheric keyboards and Rangell's dotting alto sax theme statements. No improv, just a nice, gentle tease for a little late-nite peek-a-boo.

To repeat, Rangell has talent, playing every instrument here with authority. But then, talent isn't everything. What's important, in this instance, isn't so much whether or not someone skillful is selling out. Rather, *Nelson Rangell* raises the bigger and more personal question of style: If Rangell, like too many others, can make it without being distinctive (his first GRP release did very well on radio), is there any incentive for him to find his own voice? (reviewed on CD)

—John Ephland



BOBBY BRADFORD

ONE NIGHT STAND—Soul Note 121 168: *COMIN' ON*; *SHO' NUFF BLUES*; *ALL THE THINGS YOUR MOTHER DIDN'T TELL YOU*; *WOMAN*; *BONES*; *ASHES*; *ORNAIE*. (66:24)

Personnel: Bradford, cornet; Frank Sullivan, piano; Scott Walton, bass; Billy Bowker, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

DETAIL

IN TIME WAS—Circulazione Totale 86 07 06: *IN TIME WAS (Parts I-III)*. (48:07)

Personnel: Bradford, cornet; Frode Gjerstad, tenor saxophone; Johnny Dyani, bass; John Stevens, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Bobby Bradford will travel. The cornetist with the big, mobile bugling sound—John Carter's longtime compatriot, and Ornette's other favorite brass voice—here blends into two very different quartets—playing inside, halfway out, and all the way out.

For his *One Night Stand* in Florida with the Frank Sullivan Trio in November 1986, Bradford brought along some pieces with familiar changes—like "All The Things . . ." whose chords come from the obvious place, but whose melody nods to "Birth Of The Blues"—

and some freebop pieces with written heads but no fixed chords. It's a good set, though the sound is only fair (the opening to "Comin' On" abruptly kicks on while already in progress).

Of course Bobby's at home winding his way through the more free pieces, but he sounds less at ease on the straightahead "Bones" ("Body And Soul" under a thin new skin). In truth, the album's more interesting for how the bop-based hometown trio reacts. Sullivan in particular digs into the spirit of the outward-bound stuff. On "Woman"—an openly textured piece built on a piano drone—he superimposes some light harmonic shifts. But he usually opts for a more linear approach, a variation on Paul Bley's durable solution to the problem of how a pianist might approach music without regular changes—by thinking melodically more than harmonically. Some folks say the test of free players is whether they can play changes; a test of mainstream jazz musicians is whether they can do without a harmonic map. Sullivan and company make the grade either way.

Recorded in England in July '88, the American-Norwegian-South African-English quartet Detail plays not "non-idiomatic" free stuff but real free jazz. The organizing principles are all jazz-rooted—riffs, accompanied solos, swinging rhythm, conversational interplay—even if orchestrated on the spot. Bradford really shines, dovetailing with Gjerstad's brawny tenor, and declaiming wiry, brassy lines that show what he has in common with Don Cherry (despite Bobby's rounder, more assured sound). Steveris and the late Dyani push the quartet through a variety of moods and situations. Detail demonstrates what a highly demanding and varied discipline free jazz really is. (reviewed on CD)

—Kevin Whitehead



BUCK HILL

CAPITOL HILL—Muse MCD 5384: *TENOR MADNESS*; *CHELSEA BRIDGE*; *STUMPIN' AT THE SAVOY*; *JAZZ BALLAD*; *ON THE TRAIL*; *SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME*; *HAIL TO THE REDSKINS*; *VIERO BLUES*. (50:46)

Personnel: Hill, tenor saxophone; Barry Harris, piano; Ray Drummond, bass; Freddie Waits, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

At a time when Bop Brats dominate the headlines, and the obits are getting longer and sadder, Jazz needs Buck Hill more than ever. The wailing mailman is at once a fully-formed legend and a relatively recent discovery. After working the Washington, D.C. club scene for 30 years, sometimes putting down the horn for

months or years at a stretch, Hill recorded some exceptional albums for Steeplechase in the '80s. The '90s were ushered in with an appearance on Shirley Horn's latest on Verve,

and well-received sets with Horn as well as his own at the Chicago Jazz Festival. Yet, *Capitol Hill* is a first—a Buck Hill date on a U.S. label, a seminar in swing that Branford, Courtney, et

al., should take to heart.

Somebody in New York must have named this album, because Buck's amalgam of bop, blues, and swing was formed on 14th & U. and

SANTA DONE GOT HIP

by Frank-John Hadley

Certain as snowfall on a North Pole night, Mr. Claus is coming to town with his sleigh piled high with Yuletide CDs, cassettes, and (for one last run?) records. Time again to trim the tree, hang the holly, and prime yourself for his arrival by tipping the waissail-bowl to ol' reliables such as Charles Brown's "Merry Christmas Baby," Trane's "My Favorite Things," Satch's "The Night Before Christmas," Bab Gonzalez's "Be-Bop Santa Claus," Jimmy Witherspoon's "Christmas Blues," Miles' "Blue Christmas," Johnny Adam's "Christmas In New Orleans" . . .

"Onward Prancer! Onward!" Across the wintry miles hurry brand new holiday titles as well as familiar delights rewrapped for those insisting on the aural snow of digitally remixed CDs. Not surprisingly, sentimentalism pervades the bunch: All the artists seem to have let themselves be intoxicated with the charm and good will of the material. Only Scrooge or Stan Freberg or Andrew Dice Poseur could suggest any of them were motivated by the scent of greenbacks.

Get past the don't-show-Mrs. Claus cover pix of a Santa's helper flaunting her gams and you'll find *Yule Struttin'* (Blue Note B4-94857; ★★★½) a very decent seasonal collection. Wise man Dexter Gordon's previously unreleased rendition of "Merry Little Christmas" and the Count Basie Orchestra ho! ho! ho-ing through "Jingle Bells" are enjoyable. Equally so, if more demanding on the cerebellum, are John Scofield's wry version of over-roasted chestnut "The Chipmunk Song" and pianist Benny Green's recital of T. Monk's ("never before recorded") "A Merrier Christmas." Of several more contributors to a Blue Note Xmas only Stanley Jordan (smug) and Eliane Elias (coy) disappoint these ears.

A *Jazzy Wonderland* (Columbia 46805; ★★★) is another once-a-year "family" gathering. Ellis Marsalis treats us to a loving and canny piano study of "This Is Christmas." The arbitrary pairings of Terence Blanchard & Monte Croft (an up-and-coming vibist), Marlon Jordan & Delfeayo Marsalis, and Harry Connick, Jr. & Branford Marsalis all cloak traditional tunes in the raiment of serious good jazz. The wonderful Tony Bennett warms up "White Christmas" and Full Circle marshal panoramic drama treating "Little Drummer Boy." On the debut side, Nancy Wilson, Kirk Whalum, Richard Tee, and a few more CBS hangers-on lend glitzy pop-r&b or marginal varieties of jazz to the label's "season's greetings."

True joy lies at the heart of *Christmas With Etta Jones* (Muse MCD 5411; 47:45 minutes; ★★★). An involving singer any time of the year, Miss Jones enlivens a program of sugar



Dexter Gordon: the gift of jazz

plums with a measured blend of optimism, sensuality, and ruefulness. Blues color her phrases, most apparently on "Merry Christmas Baby" and "The Christmas Song," and the warmth of it spreads over you like the first sip of hot mulled punch. Tenorman Houston Person, her collaborator of 22 years, heads up one of two simpatico small groups; don't miss his heartfelt grip on the melody of "Merry Little Christmas." Despite padded instrumental breaks on two numbers and a coal-in-stocking "Home For Christmas," the album's a lovely gold star at the top of the tree.

Veteran **Charlie Byrd** celebrates the season, too, using his unamplified guitar to give literal readings of an intelligently chosen assortment of popular and lesser-known traditional songs: *The Charlie Byrd Christmas Album* (Concord Jazz CCD-42004; 39:26; ★★★). We get four CD add-ons to the original 1982 program, and they're of a piece: soft, steady glows of a mantelpiece candle.

Kevin Gibb's maiden recording date happens to be an Xmas card emblazoned *Christmas Presence* (Concord Jazz CCD-4432; 37:33; ★★). Cuddling shopworn standards, the Boston-based pianist/synthesist and two confidants stroll us into the Santa's Village of Schmaltz. Gibb means well and shows decent technique (George Shearing's an influence), but he's catering to the crowd who passionately shop at Neiman-Marcus and chill out in tony piano bars.

Quincy Jones loves 'em. So should anyone partial to gorgeous solo voices and harmonies. **Inner Voices**—Darlene Koldenhoven, Morgan Ames, Clydene Jackson-Edwards, Carmen Twillie—pack debut *Christmas Harmony* (Rhino R2 70714; ★★★) with angelic spirit and crackling-fireplace intimacy; these West Coast session sirens cover a heady lineup of secular and sacred originals, traditional tunes, and obscurities. In their (mostly a cappella) expositions, they often use tone, timbre, and dynamics with the invention and facility of a solid mainstream jazz horn player. Their conviction seems absolute.

Hop aboard for a sleigh ride back in time. The Armed Forces Radio Service played an important role in gladdening the spirits of the boys overseas during the 1940s, and *Christmas Jubilee* (Vintage Jazz Classics VJC-1016-2; 77:07; ★★★) collects two glowing Yuletide shows for black troops from their *Jubilee* series. The '45 AFRS broadcast offers the wit of host Ernie "Bubbles" Whitman, the Basie Orchestra in full throttle, and mawkish but enchanting Basie small-group dalliances with the Delta Rhythm Boys, Lena Horne, and Bing Crosby respectively. The '47 program includes the Duke Ellington Orchestra (on three feature songs), Art Tatum (by himself), the Nat Cole Trio, and His Highness Louis Armstrong mixing it up with Jack Teagarden (on "Jack-Armstrong Blues," with Louis' All-Stars). Delightful. Four of seven non-*Jubilee* "bonus tracks" that round off the audio-splendid CD are carols sung by a tentative Frankie Sinatra.

"Christmas is coming, I don't have a lousy dime, ever since I had you woman, had nothin' but hard luck," laments Washboard Pete on (what else?) "Christmas Blues," one of 14 Savoy treats (from the '40s and '50s) decorating *Mr. Santa's Boogie* (Savoy Jazz ZDS 1157; 39:15; ★★★). Captivating are Bird's classic rendering of "White Christmas" (live at the Royal Roost in '48, co-featuring Kenny Dorham); Johnny Guarnieri's wild visit to a certain chubby fellow's viper's den, "Santa's Secret"; and r&b/blues numbers by singers Big Maybelle, the Ravens, Gatemouth Moore, Little Esther Phillips, and Jimmy Butler. Oddball tinsel: A novelty number with someone named A.B. Green doing "Rudolph the Reindeer" doing . . . sounds like Bart Simpson.

Stan Kenton's *A Merry Christmas!* (Capitol CDP 7 94451 2; 34:36; ★★★)—a 1961 set now digitally remastered—jumps out of the speakers and bowls one over with brass, brass, and more brass. Nineteen pieces strong. Carol adapters Kenton and Ralph Carmichael don't traffic in overindulgence, really, and the horns supply more than extreme musicodramatic effect and garish color—there are subtleties of sound galore and inventiveness to the charts. Just stay away from Kenton's hearthside chat, "What Is A Santa Claus?"

One more package under the **DB** tree. *Christmas Guitars* (Green Linnet GLCD 1103; 48:13; no rating), first released last year, is the perfect antidote to the unavoidable glitz and hucksterism of the modern-day holiday season: All proceeds from its sale go to the National Coalition for the Homeless. Larry Coryell, John Scofield, and the late Emily Remler are the jazz ambassadors of good tidings on this 19-track CD that brings together 18 plectrists from an array of stylistic camps. Enjoy, and remember those with less. (all reviewed on CD save *Yule Struttin'* and *A Jazzy Wonderland* on cassette).

We will sing a new song/That sounds like the old song: Noel. —E. Rhysh **DB**

7th & T. There is as much Ammons and Stitt as Newt in his "Tenor Madness"; his sophisticated finesse on "Chelsea Bridge," which includes one of his delicious cadenzas, effortlessly gives way to gutbucket frolic on "Hail To The Redskins." In addition to a vernacular refined over almost 50 years, the age-old pragmatism of swing is at work in Hill's music—this is about swaying and patting your foot; anything that works, you use. And Buck uses everything—even Ferde Grofe's corny "On The Trail"—with the kind of casual precision that sends the greenhorns running to the woodshed.

If there is a shortcoming to *Capitol Hill*, it is that only one Hill original is included. "Jazz Ballad" is both a breathy ballad and a breathtaking bop sprint, rolled up in one. Still, the inspired pairing of Hill with the equally wise and wily Barry Harris, and a truly ecumenical program, make *Capitol Hill* a welcomed addition to Buck Hill's still woefully scant discography. (reviewed on CD) —*Bill Shoemaker*



ROBERT CRAY

MIDNIGHT STROLL—Mercury 846 652-2: *THE FORECAST CALLS FOR PAIN; THESE THINGS; MY PROBLEM; LABOR OF LOVE; BOUNCIN' BACK; CONSEQUENCES; THE THINGS YOU DO TO ME; WALK AROUND TIME; MOVE A MOUNTAIN; HOLDIN' COURT; MIDNIGHT STROLL.* (50:08)

Personnel: Cray, guitar, vocals; Richard Cousins, bass; Jimmy Pugh, keyboards; Kevin Hayes, drums; Tim Kaihatsu, guitar; The Memphis Horns: Wayne Jackson, trumpet and trombone, Andrew Love, tenor sax.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

The slick stylings of *Strong Persuader* and *Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark* didn't do it for me. But with *Midnight Stroll*, I've become a believer. Robert Cray is capable of rising above polite radioplay fare and delivering an honest-to-goodness soul-stirring performance. He does so on at least a few occasions throughout this surprisingly tough album.

I'm still reeling from Cray's inspired vocal performance on "These Things." On that earthshaker, his voice swoons and struts like sassy Aretha, growls like Bobby Blue Bland or Solomon Burke. And at one cathartic point in the tune, he just throws back his head and screams to the rafters. Robert never got so mean or sang with such conviction on any of his past outings. Guitaristically, he tackles that soulful original composition with a tough blend of Pop Staples reverb and Johnny Guitar Watson's sense of economy and nastiness.

The Memphis Horns add a soulful touch

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DAVE KOZ

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"Castle Of Dreams,"
"Emily" and
"Nothing But The Radio On."

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throughout, providing those Stax/Volt punctuations so closely associated with classic Otis Redding. Their presence is most effective in evoking the Stax r&b mood on "Bouncin' Back" and "My Problem," another inspired Cray original. Richard Cousins lays down formidable, grooving basslines and locks in nicely with new drummer Kevin Hayes. Their chemistry clicks on two earthy shuffles, "Labor Of Love" and the CD bonus track, "Holdin' Court." And they form a deep pocket on the title cut, a menacing blues built on the riff from Jimi Hendrix's "Who Knows."

Tunes like "Consequences" come off as formulaic remakes of past Cray successes like "Smokin' Gun." But that is the exception not the rule on this album. Cray digs deep on *Midnight Stroll* and comes up with the genuine goods. (reviewed on CD) —*Bill Milkowski*



**FRENCH/FRITH/
KAISER/THOMPSON**

INVISIBLE MEANS—Windham Hill WD-1094: PEPPERMINT ROCK; TO THE RAIN; LIZARD'S

TAIL; MARCH OF THE COSMETIC SURGEONS; SUZANNE; QUICK SIGN; BEGGING BOWL; KALO TAKARIVA; INVISIBLE MEANS; LOCH LOMOND; THE BOOK OF LOST DREAMS; DAYS OF OUR LIVES; THE EVENING NEWS; THE NEARSIGHTED HERON; NOW THAT I AM DEAD; HUNTING SUNSETS; KILLING JAR. (68:56 minutes)

Personnel: John French, drums, lead vocals; Fred Frith, bass; Henry Kaiser, guitars; Richard Thompson, guitar, lead vocals; Catherine Keen, mezzo-soprano opera vocals (cut 4).

★ ★ ★ ½

The music world has rarely seen a supergroup as talented as this foursome. Thompson founded the Brit folk-rock group Fairport Convention, cut some great albums with his wife-at-the-time Linda, then released a bunch more impressive efforts on his own. Kaiser has played with dozens of pop, rock, jazz, and

**THE HOUSE THAT
ART BUILT**

by *Owen Cordle*

When a famous musician dies, we all compose mental obituaries based on his music, his reputation, and our experiences. **Art Blakey's** music was hard-bop, a tough, unsentimental, swinging medium. He had a reputation as an outspoken champion of jazz, a leader who brooked no jive, who surrounded himself with young firebrands who would become stars. It appears that critics rediscovered him about the time jazz rediscovered itself as the sound of youth in the '80s. His Jazz Messengers fit the ideal of a group with jazz integrity, and Blakey fit the ideal of the survivor/mentor/leader. Youth, as well as age, always wants to know the secret that will turn it into a great jazz musician. Blakey had it—the keep-working philosophy—with its dual implications of steady employment (the social angle) and personal artistic growth (the woodshedding aspect).

1961 and '62 were classic years for the band, *Three Blind Mice, Vol. 1* (Blue Note CDP 7 84451 2; 54:25 minutes: ★★½) and *Vol. 2* (Blue Note CDP 7 84452 2; 63:06: ★★★★★½), reissued live dates from the period, reiterate the brilliance of Freddie Hubbard's trumpet, the originality and obliqueness of Wayne Shorter's tenor and writing, the tonal warmth of Curtis Fuller's trombone, and the soulful spark of the rhythm team of Blakey, pianist Cedar Walton, and bassist Jymie Merritt. *Vol. 2* is better because of more ensemble performances (as opposed to solo features), more exciting solos, and Blakey's greater interaction. It has been said before, but dig how he tailors his attack to each soloist's style. Highlights: Fuller's amusing minor-key arrangement of the title tune (*Vol. 1*) and Walton's blazing "Mosaic" (*Vol. 2*), which is full of the drummer's thunder. (reviewed on CD)

Later Messengers echoed the spirit of the earlier groups, both in writing and solo work. The 1988 band, heard on *I Get A Kick Out Of*



Bu (Soul Note 121 155-1: ★★★★★), was willing to take risks in letting the feelings flow. Trumpeter Philip Harper's "Yang," the opener, shows his improvisational connection with the late Lee Morgan, always a trumpeter with feeling. "Good Morning, Heartache," a feature for tenor man Javon Jackson, implies his respect for the Hank Mobley, take-your-time approach, although his sound is harder than Mobley's was. Leon Dorsey has the unenviable job of bassist in this band, and trombonist Robin Eubanks is aboard, too, suggesting not only Fuller but also the rangier styles of non-Messengers Bill Watrous and Frank Rosolino. Pianist Benny Green's spare, swinging bebop approach contrasts effectively with the effusiveness of the horns. Blakey has a long, invigorating drum solo called "Drum Solo No. 7" on side two of the LP. There are some ensemble mistakes in the album, but that's jazz. (reviewed on LP)

Two albums from 1990 capture a different band, four horns instead of three. Jackson is the lone holdover on *Chippin' In* (Timeless SJP 340; 70:09: ★★★★★), which also includes trumpeter Brian Lynch, trombonist Frank Lacy (spelled by Steve Davis on three tracks), tenor saxophonist Dale Barlow, pianist Geoff Keezer, and bassist Essiet Okon Essiet. Except for "Kenji's Walk," another long drum solo, ensemble pieces make up the album. The two tenor

men display similar styles, closer to Joe Henderson this time, with Barlow more fluid than Jackson. Lynch uncorks high notes and twisting lines throughout. Keezer is a splashier pianist than Green, as Lynch's "Byrdflight" and others demonstrate. Lacy's "Aquarius Rising" and Keezer's arrangement of Billy Strayhorn's "Raincheck" are also confident, powerful charts. Everyone is in good form on this album. (reviewed on CD)

Not so on *One For All* (A & M 75021 5329 4: ★★★★★), recorded in April and featuring the same band sans Lacy. Lynch and the tenors sound more like academic change-runners instead of the take-charge soloists of *Chippin' In*. Davis, a Fuller bop man, and Keezer come to grips with the spirit of the tunes better. Four solo features slow down the pace. (In essence, hard-bop tolerates more than appreciates ballads, so there's usually a stage-wait quality about these performances, no matter how well done.) Between "Here We Go," the opening tune, and the second tune (confusion exists as to its title—possibly it's the title track—because on the advance cassette one of the tunes does not appear), we hear Blakey admonishing the band, "Use your imagination. If you make a mistake, make it loud. . . ." (reviewed on cassette)

That's Art.

DB

free-jazz improv artists; Frith twisted out strange guitar sounds with such experimental British bands as Henry Cow, and French concocted complex drum recipes for several Captain Beefheart LPs.

Their first collaboration was 1987's *Live, Love, Larf & Loaf*, an excellent package of tunes that were scattered all over the musical map. FFKT return with that wonderful eclecticism (folk, blues, pop, rock, jazz improv, East Asian, and a touch of opera). They throw in a ton of satire and humor (a spooky tune by French about posthumous rock success sung with Bobby "Monster Mash" Pickett-like vocals and a Kaiser song with lyrics consisting entirely of TV soap opera names and a middle section that includes lots of loopy guitar zips). And they also manage to end the album with one of the best songs I have ever heard ("Killing Jar," Thompson's sobering, poignant tale of what happens to a kid who grows up constantly being told he's not good).

Kaiser's guitar work is superb throughout (he gets lots of different textures out of his axe, ranging from a bagpipe sound to blistering rock licks) as are his mysterious and delicately drawn instrumentals. There's also Thompson's sardonic rock-opera number, "March Of The Cosmetic Surgeons," in which an aging mezzo-soprano diva praises the good Dr. Krikstein (it's hilarious!) and an army of plastic surgeons march in a crazed procession chanting, "We nip and tuck all day," "We liposuck all day," and finally, "We hack and gouge all day."

It's too bad the surgeons didn't snip some of the weak songs out of this collection. A rock version of the traditional folk tune "Loch Lomond" doesn't work, nor do many of French's songs, some of which are far too ordinary (read: mainstream) for this collection. Thompson's "Peppermint Rock" is a catchy rock number, but also nothing special compared to his other songs on this album. Prognosis: surgery would have been helpful—not a major operation, but an out-patient job to get rid of a few blemishes. (reviewed on CD)

—Dan Ouellette



SCOTT HAMILTON

RADIO CITY—Concord Jazz CCD 4428: *APPLE HONEY; YESTERDAYS; I'LL BE AROUND; THE TOUCH OF YOUR LIPS; CHEROKEE; TONIGHT I SHALL SLEEP; RADIO CITY; MY IDEAL; WIG'S BLUES; REMEMBER.* (56:50 minutes)

Personnel: Hamilton, tenor saxophone; Gerry Wiggins, piano; Dennis Irwin, bass; Connie Kay, drums.

★ ★ ★

GENE HARRIS/SCOTT HAMILTON

AT LAST—Concord Jazz CCD 4434: *YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE; IT NEVER ENTERED MY MIND; AFTER YOU'VE GONE; THE LAMP IS LOW; AT LAST; BLUES FOR GENE; I FALL IN LOVE TOO EASILY; SOME OF THESE DAYS; STAIRWAY TO THE STARS; SITIN' IN THE SANDTRAP.* (65:15)

Personnel: Harris, piano; Hamilton, tenor saxophone; Herb Ellis, guitar; Roy Brown, bass; Harold Jones, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Scott Hamilton, who sometimes used to be dismissed as an anachronistic throwback a decade ago, was actually a one-man avant garde, it seems a decade or so ahead of his time. Or so it would appear from the recent *Time* magazine cover story that proclaimed a youthful renaissance movement in traditional jazz values and honored its principle messiah, trumpeter Wynton Marsalis. But in all the hubbub, it somehow forgot to mention Hamilton (or his frequent partner, cornetist Warren Vache), who called a younger generation's attention to such values in the late 1970s. Back then, though, only the convinced were listening.



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Wide Open Spaces

Bassist Michael Formanek explores some fresh musical territories on this intriguing concept piece. An album full of surprises, odd juxtapositions, irreverent touches and forceful improvisations, all underscored by one of the most powerful and accomplished bass players today. (Enja 79648)

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record & cd reviews

Oh well, maybe these two new Hamilton CDs will speak louder than a *Time* cover. They certainly speak well for themselves. His comforting sound and mirror-smooth swing also speak in absentia for some Hamilton antecedents who are no longer about to speak for themselves: Ben Webster, Zoot Sims, et al.

The format of each album is similar: 10 numbers, most of them standards, but not overdone ones; a couple of originals that sound vaguely familiar, compact playing times in which no piece overstays its welcome, and tempos that run the gamut but tend to favor ballad rather than battle speed. Hamilton is sufficiently secure in his own playing so that rhythm sections seem to make no perceptible difference to him. Both are both excellent. The one on *Radio City* is clock-like and precise,

particularly in Connie Kay's hi-hat cymbal triplets. The *At Last* section with Gene Harris has a bit more slosh and play in it. Both serve Hamilton well.

So do the tunes. On the *At Last* CD particularly, you just don't hear titles like "Some Of These Days," "You Are My Sunshine," or even "After You've Gone" (once a widely played jazz tune) much anymore. So their sugary progressions not only sound as rich and ineluctable as ever, they sound fresh, too. Herb Ellis fills out the group nicely with a welcome second front-line voice. And Harris' first chorus on "It Never Entered My Mind" is as stripped down and stark as anything you've probably heard since Sonny White on the original Billie Holiday "Strange Fruit." (reviewed on CD)

—John McDonough

MIDDLE-AGED OVERHAUL

by Bill Shoemaker

Drummer Paul Lovens, whose bracing duet with **Cecil Taylor** was curiously lost in the stampede of critical acclaim for the 11-CD megabox, *Cecil Taylor In Berlin '88* (FMP—see "Reviews" June '90), has a simple assessment of the pianist: "Cecil is a river of mercury." Berlin has become the headwaters for Taylor's most inspired torrents recently, as further evidenced by the Feel Trio's *Looking (Berlin Version)* (FMP CD 25; 72:17: ★★★★★). Not only is Taylor at his most dazzling, but he has rarely been more responsive; no wonder that, in the company of bassist William Parker and drummer Tony Oxley, Taylor submits to a collective identity. A suite of envelope-pushing passages that downshift to detailed ruminations, *Looking* is a cogent updating of Taylor's 30-year practice of rhythmic compression and release. Oxley's swirling cymbal washes and flinty cadences are key; not only does he prod Taylor, but, perhaps more importantly, he pushes Parker more than any previous drummer in Taylor's units. Oxley's contribution to Taylor's music is comparable to that of Dennis Charles, Sunny Murray, or Andrew Cyrille—a major factor why the Feel Trio is Taylor's first great post-Jimmy Lyons unit.

Taylor's Berlin recordings cap a decade ushered in by a series of mold-breaking solo recordings like *Garden (Part 1)*: hat ART CD 6050; 51:46/*Part 2*: hat ART CD 6051; 41:21: both ★★★★★. This concert recording, originally released as a double LP, should be heard in its entirety—hence, the single rating. *Garden* is representative of Taylor's solo music of the early '80s, which, taken as a whole, is a pivotal body of work in Taylor's discography, as it introduced a new level of introspection and middle-aged vulnerability. The program has a slowly unfolding structure and an incrementally revealed emotional core. There are striking "slow motion" passages where Taylor's ferreting of the harmonic

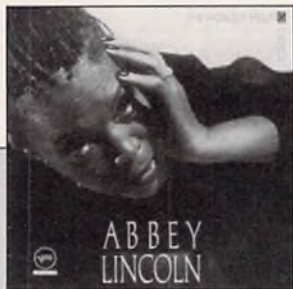


TOM COPI

interstices of his materials are thoroughly explicated. Only after an hour are the various threads brought together in "Stepping On Stars," an exquisite ballad brimming with trademark octaves, trills, and arpeggios. Taylor's *Garden* is as melancholic as it is tranquil, but it provides a respite from his usual levels of brilliant intensity.

Smoke (FMP CD 23; 70:43: ★★★★★) is a far-ranging dialog between Sunny Murray, whose conceptual overhaul of jazz drumming is comparable to Taylor's pianistic innovations, and German pianist Alex von Schlippenbach, certainly a beneficiary of Taylor's revolution, but an artist nowhere near as reliant on Taylorisms as he is often suggested to be. In addition to surging, percussive, free-music orthodoxy, the duo explores everything from straight, unchased Monk on "Trinkle Tinkle" to the moody rhapsodies forwarded 25 years ago by Andrew Hill and Paul Bley on the pianist's "Down The Mission." The level of communication between Schlippenbach and Murray is unflaggingly high, their music consistently engaging. Luckily, their partnership is not a hit-and-run proposition. (all reviewed on CD)

DB



ABBEY LINCOLN

THE WORLD IS FALLING DOWN—Verve 843 476: *THE WORLD IS FALLING DOWN*; *FIRST SONG*; *YOU MUST BELIEVE IN SPRING AND LOVE*; *I GOT THUNDER (AND IT RINGS)*; *HOW HIGH THE MOON (LA LUNE EST GRISE . . . MON COEUR AUSSI)*; *WHEN LOVE WAS YOU AND ME*; *HI FLY*; *LIVE FOR LIFE*. (49:22)

Personnel: Lincoln, vocals; Clark Terry, trumpet, flugelhorn; Jackie McLean, Jerry Dodgion, alto saxophone; Alain Jean-Marie, piano; Charlie Haden, bass; Billy Higgins, drums; Ron Carter, arranger.

★★★★★

ABBEY SINGS BILLIE—Enja 79633: *WHAT A LITTLE MOONLIGHT CAN DO*; *I ONLY HAVE EYES FOR YOU*; *GLOOMY SUNDAY*; *CRAZY HE CALLS ME*; *STRANGE FRUIT*; *LOVER MAN*; *THESE FOOLISH THINGS*; *I'LL BE SEEING YOU*; *SOUL EYES*; *IL WIND*. (56:56)

Personnel: Lincoln, vocals (cuts 1-8); Harold Vick, tenor saxophone; James Weidman, piano; Tarik Shah, bass; Mark Johnson, drums.

★★★½

Great lyric singing demands acting skills, so it figures that Abbey Lincoln—an accomplished actor last seen (too briefly) in *mo' better blues*—is in the top handful of living jazz singers. Like Billie Holiday, who encouraged the young Abbey, she can dramatize without ripping down the drapes: witness the macabre, suicidal "Gloomy Sunday" on *Abbey Sings Billie*. But like Holiday at her early best, Lincoln's most endearing when most enthusiastic. Her pitch-range was never great and (as you can hear comparing these '87 and '90 recordings) its upper limit is descending, but her wine-dark tone and gleam-eyes line readings more than make up for any technical limits.

Traces of Billie's phrasing linger in Lincoln's style, but she's internationalized Holiday's lessons thoroughly by now. Which may be why she sounds a bit confined on 1987's live all-Billie recital; it's as if she's trying to squeeze into an old prom dress. It's okay, and there are a few standouts—"Moonlight," "Crazy," a fittingly swoony "Lover Man," and "I'll Be Seeing You," a cornerstone of Abbey's club sets—but she's more at home now with music she tailors for herself.

Which is one reason *The World Is Falling Down* is one of 1990's best. That, and the band. No disrespect to her working trio and the late Harold Vick on the live date, but they can't compete with the Haden-Higgins team and the inspired pairing of soloists Jackie McLean and Clark Terry, whose plunger work almost steals two cuts. The reason he doesn't steal them is that those tunes are Abbey's own, the title track and "I Got Thunder (And It Rings)"

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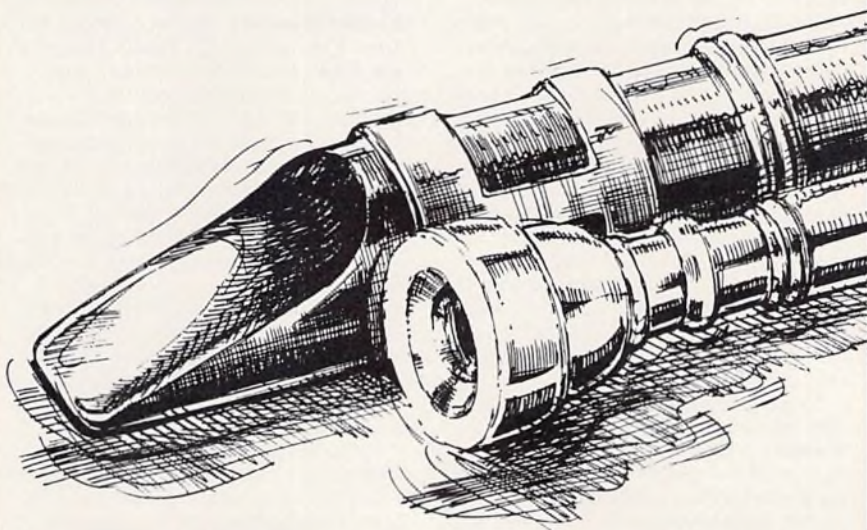
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ACCESSORIES

(love that dada-poetic trope). They're some of the jauntiest, finger-poppingest Lincoln on record. But she can overcome even her own moon-June lyric to Haden's broody "First Song," and can sing about "the meadows of

your mind" on Michel Legrand's "Spring" without snickering. True, she has a little breath trouble here and there on the album, but her artistry renders that irrelevant; her records really hold up, flaws and all. (Reviewing Ab-

bey's *Talking To The Sun*—recently reissued on Enja—in the January '87 **DB**, I foolishly awarded it a measly four stars. My apologies, Ms. Lincoln—if I had it to do over, I'd make it five.) (reviewed on CD) —Kevin Whitehead

CLASSICAL FOUR PLAY

by Art Lunge

Right now, the **Kronos Quartet** is probably at the top of their game. Possibly the only such ensemble that performs contemporary scores almost exclusively and still fills each concert SRO—*Rolling Stone* magazine has called them classical music's "Own Fab Four"—they're in the envious position of being able to commission new works constantly, and record what they will.

Over the years they've had a long, successful collaboration with composer **Terry Riley**, and *Salome Dances For Peace* (Elektra/Nonesuch, two discs, CD 9 79217-2; 71:12/47:42 minutes: ★★★½) is the latest, longest, most variegated installment. Riley's been known to dabble in jazz improvisation, Indian ragas, and is one of the originators of classical "Minimalism"; this two-hour epic includes passages of Native American repetition, Mid-Eastern melismatic motifs, and swirling, Sufi-esque dances along with those other influences (all of which owe a serious debt to new-music pioneer Henry Cowell). The musical program has Salome crashing the underworld, hobnobbing with shamen, and seducing great gods, all in the name of world peace. The sounds are suitably atmospheric and picturesque, suggesting winds across sand dunes or agitated cosmic battles. There are moments of stasis, scooting lines, and dynamic and dramatic contrasts, along with stretches of unrelieved tedium. But Kronos' handling of the wide range of effects and rhythms is never in doubt.

Their newest collection, *Black Angels* (Elektra/Nonesuch CD 9 79242-2; 61:41: ★★★), is similarly programmatic, with each of the five pieces by different composers a response to war or civil conflict. Most striking is the title composition by George Crumb, subtitled "13 Images From The Dark Land," and inspired by the Vietnam War. Kronos really digs into the ear-opening, non-string sonorities, the in-your-face dynamics, and electronic effects closer to Hendrix than any classical precedents. Dmitri Shostakovich's *String Quartet No. 8*, a standard repertory work commenting upon WWII horrors, begins as a lament but incorporates grotesque distortions of material not dissimilar to Crumb's approach; if Kronos fails to milk the last drops of passion here, they're still effecting. (The other three pieces, by Tallis, Marta, and Ives, are relatively minor pieces by



Rova Saxophone Quartet: spontaneous reactions

comparison.)

Kronos' greatest competition for ink in the musical press seems to be the British-bred **Arditti Quartet**. Their eponymous disc, *Arditti* (Gramnvision CD 79440; 72:59: ★★★★★), flaunts their virtuosity while maintaining remarkable poise and musicality. They give Beethoven's *Grosse Fugue* a new-music edge, and exquisite works like Conlon Nancarrow's *Quartet No. 3* and Ruth Crawford-Seeger's *Quartet 1931* sound bracing, surprising, and yet inevitable. Their technical perfection risks overwhelming the evocative events in Roger Reynolds' *Coconino . . . a shattered landscape*, but is breathtaking in Iannis Xenakis' *Tetras*, which mimics electronic extravagances with outrageous glissandi, sirens, knocks, growls, violent shifts, and antagonistic (pseudo-Beethovenian?) polyphony.

For something completely different, there's Arditti's recording of *String Quartets 1-5* by the late Italian composer Giacinto Scelsi (Salabert/Actuel, two discs, CD 8904-5; 63:23/58:27: ★★★★★, distributed by Harmonia Mundi USA). These are fantastic works, the earliest of which explore "conventional" post-Schoenberg structures with blocks of sound, atonality, repetition, and impetuous polyphony. But the later works (after 1957) use extreme microtonality, slow or static timbral effects, drones, and dramatic, enigmatic modulations to hypnotic ends. There is a mystical, metaphysical aura surrounding these sounds, and they demand a radical rethinking of the listener's approach to music. Too, they demand phenomenal concentration and commitment from

performers, and Arditti responds with superhuman precision—so much so that, again, one is tempted to miss the message, blinded by their virtuosity. But the discs (rounded out by a *String Trio* and piece for soprano voice and six instruments) are highly recommended to those unafraid of uncompromising new musical vistas.

Our last four-tet plays not strings but reeds—the **Rova Saxophone Quartet** interpreting Alvin Curran's *Electric Rags II* (New Albion CD 027; 66:01: ★★★★★). Though an esteemed "classical" composer, Curran has worked frequently with improvisors like Evan Parker, Steve Lacy, and Musica Elettronica Viva. Here he has concocted a multi-sectioned score with built-in surprises for both player and listener; the individual saxists trigger MIDI synthesizers hooked to an elaborate computer plan which ensures spontaneous reactions, sometimes echoing, sometimes altering, sometimes elaborating what they play. Though they display their usual control and invention, Rova is farthest removed from their Braxton/Roscoe Mitchell roots, and their blowing instigates percussion, "found" collage tapes, voices, and other non-sax sonorities. The music's moods run from somber to exuberant, and there are references to other musics (aren't the "Other Brothers" riffs and "Mood Indigo" paraphrase a borrowing from Woody's Four Brothers? And the static harmonies of "To Giacinto" a homage to Scelsi?). The short sections flow together, à la Riley's *Salome Dances For Peace*, too, but the emphasis here is on interaction: of musical parts, of musician and his material, of man and machine. (all reviewed on CD)

HOT STUFF

by Jack Sohmer

The prevailing public impression of **Stan Getz'** early playing seems to hang on recollections of the lovely, upper-register, Frank Trumbauer/Lester Young-like tone he had already perfected by 1948, when he recorded his classic lyrical improvisation on Woody Herman's "Early Autumn." This impression was sustained in ensuing years by some very popular ballad recordings, as well as by the role he played in disseminating the bossa nova. But faithful aficionados of jazz had long known that there was much more to Getz than merely a compelling sound and a talent for melodic expression. They had known from the start that he was also just as capable as any of his contemporaries of heated improvisation at challenging tempos. With the release of *The Complete Recordings Of The Stan Getz Quintet With Jimmy Raney* (Mosaic MD 3-131; 2 hours, 36 minutes: ★★★★★), a fuller understanding of the breadth of Getz' talent should now become possible for all, since this three-CD collection of live and studio dates by his 1951-53 combos presents the first realistic picture of Getz

from this period to have been available for many years.

By the time Getz had left Herman's band in 1949, he had already earned himself an avid following among young bop fans, and it was precisely this contingent of hip enthusiasts who provided the core audience for the tenorman's first quartet, which shortly became a quintet with the acquisition of **Jimmy Raney**. It is important to note that this guitarist, whose cool sound and legato articulation most closely approximated Getz' own conception, was the tenorman's only front-line mate before Bob Brookmeyer took his place in the spring of 1953.

The live date from Boston's Storyville opens the album and, significantly, contains the greater number of faster tempos. Such tracks as "The Song Is You," "Mosquito Knees," "Move," "Parker 51," "Hershey Bar," "Rubberneck," and "Budo" will immediately belie the notion that Getz was only comfortable with ballads and, somewhat later, lilting Latin melodies. On these selections, as well as many more throughout, Getz proves himself an early master of cookery, 52nd St.-style. Indeed, on this 67-minute opening disc, there is only one ballad, "Everything Happens To Me," and one medium blues, "Jumping With

Symphony Sid." Favorable mention should also be made of Getz' rhythm section, which, in October 1951, consisted of Al Haig, Teddy Kotick, and Tiny Kahn. The remainder of the sessions were all studio dates with different "regular" rhythm sections: August 1951, with Horace Silver, Leonard Gaskin, and Roy Haynes; December 1952, with Duke Jordan, Bill Crow, and Frank Isola; and April 1953 (recorded under Raney's name for Prestige), with Hall Overton, Red Mitchell, and, once again, Isola.

Bassist Crow, who is also the author of the wonderful *Jazz Anecdotes* (Oxford Univ. Press—see "Ad Lib" Oct. '90), wrote the biographical pieces on Getz and Raney, as well as the descriptive notes for each session. Audiophiles may possibly object to the inconsistency of sound quality that is noticeable in some spots, but since there exists no set of master discs for the two Roost studio dates, the producers had to do the best they could by dubbing, track by track, from a variety of different labels and a plethora of less than satisfactory taped copies. Michael Cuscuna says that the remastering job was "a nightmare." But we all owe him a debt of gratitude for going to the trouble. (To place an order, contact Mosaic Records, 35 Melrose Place, Stamford, CT 06902)

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MARK WHITFIELD

THE MARKSMAN—Warner Bros. 9 26321-4: *THE MARKSMAN; THE BLUES, FROM WAY BACK; IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD; A LONG WAY FROM HOME; MEDGAR EVERS' BLUES; LITTLE DIGI'S STRUT; THE VERY THOUGHT OF YOU; NAMU; THERE IS NO GREATER LOVE.*

Personnel: Whitfield, guitar; Marcus Roberts, piano; Reginald Veal, bass; Herlin Riley (cuts 1, 3, 5-9), Troy Davis (2, 4), drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

LARRY CORYELL

SHINING HOUR—Muse MCD5360: *NEFERTITI; APATHY RAINS; YESTERDAYS; FLOYD GETS A GIG; THE DUKE; MY SHINING HOUR; THE SORCERER; ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE.* (49:40 minutes)

Personnel: Coryell, guitar; Kenny Barron, piano; Buster Williams, bass; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

Youth versus age is an old story. Youth wants to put everything in, age is more selective. This is the tale of these two albums taken together, although Whitfield, 23, shows plenty of maturity and Coryell, 47 (which can hardly be called old), shows plenty of youthful fire.

On Whitfield's debut album, you notice that he comes from the Wes Montgomery and George Benson school, with occasional nods to Jim Hall and Stanley Jordan. He plays long lines and has a singing tone. An editor might tell him, open up those lines with some breathing room and vary the dynamics and attack. There's a good example right on his album. His name is Marcus Roberts, whose molific development, sense of irony, and economical bent make him a John Lewis for the '90s. Both Whitfield and Roberts are natural blues players, as "The Blues, From Way Back," "Medgar Evers' Blues," and "Little Digi's Strut" demonstrate. (These three are among six Whitfield compositions on the album.) As a ballad player, the guitarist favors a low-key stance—the subtle, lyrical mood instead of brazen romanticism. Make no mistake, this is a young fret master who plays the guitar and not the amplifier. Consequently, one of the main attributes of this session is its warmth.

At 23, Larry Coryell was dealing out the jazz-rock blues on his record debut with Chico Hamilton. The scope of *Shining Hour* illustrates how he has grown into a comprehensive jazzman. "Nefertiti" and "The Sorcerer," for example, are pieces from the Miles Davis Quintet of the mid-60s, and Coryell's approach is as spacious and free yet structured as the Quintet's was. Plus there's genuine excitement as the band members feed off each other. Occa-

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sionally Coryell conjures up the gypsy longing of Django Reinhardt, as on Brian Torff's "Apathy Rains," a duet with Barron. Then along comes "The Duke"—strictly the '50s—and the guitarist again sounds right at home. His "Floyd Gets A Gig" exemplifies his depth as a bluesman. But this is more than a one-man show. Coryell's cohorts are all recognized jazz giants, both young (Smith) and older (Williams and Barron). Their experience in selecting the right notes, the right timing, the right expressiveness shines throughout this album, as does Coryell's judicious editing and climactic phraseology. (reviewed on cassette and CD respectively)

—Owen Cordle



MARK ISHAM

MARK ISHAM—Virgin 4-01293: *HONEYMOON-NIGHTS; I NEVER WILL KNOW; MARIONNETTE; AN EYE ON THE WORLD; BLUE MOON; ASHES AND DIAMONDS; TOWARD THE INFINITE WHITE; SONG OF THE FLYING FISH; TURKISH DELIGHT.* (46:18)

Personnel: Isham, trumpet, keyboards, electronics; David Torn, guitars; Doug Lunn, electric bass (cuts 1,3,5,7-9); John Patitucci, acoustic bass (2,3); Terry Bozzio (1,3,7,9), Peter Van Hooke (2,5), drums; Alex Acuña, drums (4), percussion (8); Chick Corea, piano (6); John Novello, organ (1,3,4,6,9); Tanika Tikaram, vocals (2,5); Peter Mannu, acoustic guitar (1).

★ ★ ★ ½

In trying to reach out to a wider audience with this progressive pop project, Mark Isham could be the Chuck Mangione of the '90s. But we're talking here of the *Land Of Make Believe* Mangione, not the cloying "Feels So Good" Mangione. This is first-rate stuff: well-crafted, intelligent, tasteful, evocative. The melodies grab while Isham's haunting trumpet works its way into your subconscious. It has tension as well as release, substance as well as style.

After dealing in movie soundtracks and strictly textural soundscapes like last year's *Tibet* for Windham Hill, Isham shifts his focus back to trumpet, the instrument he came up playing in the '70s. His warm-toned, Miles-inspired horn is particularly effective on melancholy ballads like "Marionnette," a spacious number anchored by John Patitucci's big-toned, economic, upright bass lines. On the majestic world beat of "An Eye On The World" he sounds like Mangione meets Peter Gabriel. And on the album's bashing finale, a raucous "Turkish Delight" spurred on by David Torn's edgy guitar layers, he sounds like a candidate for the next edition of King Crimson.

Isham proves an able accompanist on two vocal tunes, "I Never Will Know" and a '90s

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pop remake of "Blue Moon," both featuring the alluring, enigmatic vocals of Tarita Tikaram (recalling Isham's work with another smokey-voiced chanteuse, Marianne Faithfull, on his *Trouble In Mind* soundtrack).

Chick Corea guests on the album's lone soundscape, an ethereal rubato piece entitled "Ashes And Diamonds." The rest of the cuts are powered by Terry Bozzio's muscular backbeats and Doug Lunz's electric bass lines, with Torn's jangly chords and fuzz lines providing yet more backbone. A strong offering from a fine trumpeter who has emerged from the ether to restake his claim on the instrument. (reviewed on cassette) —*Bill Milkowski*



PRINCE

GRAFFITI BRIDGE—Paisley Park/Warner Bros. 9 27493-2: CAN'T STOP THIS FEELING I GOT; NEW POWER GENERATION; RELEASE IT; THE QUESTION OF U; ELEPHANTS AND FLOWERS; ROUND AND ROUND; WE CAN FUNK; JOY IN REPETITION; LOVE MACHINE; TICK TICK BANG; SHAKE!; THIEVES IN THE TEMPLE; THE LATEST FASHION; MELODY COOL; STILL WOULD STAND ALL TIME; GRAFFITI BRIDGE; NEW POWER GENERATION (Pt. II). (68:32 minutes)

Personnel: Prince, various instruments, arrangements, compositions; Candy Buffer, Eric Leeds, sax; Atlanta Bliss, trumpet; Joseph "Amp" Fiddler, keyboards; Clare Fischer, orchestral arrangement (cut 16); George Clinton, Morris Day, Mavis Staples, Tevin Campbell, vocals.

★ ★ ★

Prince's latest journey in mind and funk starts with a confessional letter. "Dear Dad," he intones in a low voice, "things didn't turn out like I wanted them to. Sometimes I feel like I'm going to explode." Whereupon a menacing boom segues into the backbeat-happy "Can't Stop This Feeling I Got." Thing is: this Prince album sounds less like it is going to explode than most. At his best over the last decade, Prince has been the reigning funk *auteur*, exploring areas of genre-smashing, gender-bashing r&b/rock/pop where Sly Stone, Jimi Hendrix, and George Clinton have gone before.

Prince has mastered a brand of explosive intimacy, sketching out on the themes of lust and spiritual inquest. Musically, too, Prince works the studio in refreshing ways, piling texture upon texture, altering fashion by, say, simply leaving out the bass or stripping away any reverb. *Graffiti Bridge* is the aural companion to his third film project and it remains to be seen how the kinesthetic whole works. The sound aspect fails to excite the sense of risk and even revelation we've come to expect from him in the past.

Still, Prince rules his own court, and includes in this sampling such extra-Prince operations as sassy rap-sodies from The Time, the green-horn Tevin Campbell ("Round and Round"), gospel fortitude from Mavis Staples, and a slinkfunk *tete a tete* with George Clinton on

"We Can Funk." Funk and controversy change their faces every few years, and—stacked up to the hip-hopping shuffle feels rampant now—this year's Prince project sounds like a sparkling thing of a slightly outmoded yesteryear. (reviewed on CD) —Josef Woodard

OUT OF THE LOOP

by Kevin Whitehead

Every summer, when this easterner comes to Chicago for the Jazz Festival, he's impressed by the vitality of that city's jazz scene, and by how many of its talented players remain hometown celebs. These albums should help spread the word about a few.

Von Freeman has been heard too little as a leader. *Walkin' Tuff* (Southport 0010; 68:35 minutes: ★★★★★), recorded in 1988, is a heaping helping of the braying tenorist who shows there's more to music than playing quote-unquote in tune. Von's vocalized tone and flexible pitch make his "Nature Boy" almost grotesque, but his overflow emoting gets to the heart of the song. Freeman's sound reminds us that Chicago's the northernmost tip of the blues belt (and that he went to school with Gene Ammons)—you can trace his approach all the way back to plantation field hollers. Mostly he's backed by one of two local rhythm sections (Jon Logan, Carroll Crouch, and Wilbur Campbell or Kelly Prince, Dennis Carroll, and Mike Raynor). He plays "How Deep Is The Ocean" straight but a capella, in implicit tribute to AACM solo-sax pioneers like Braxton and Roscoe Mitchell.

Tenor man **Edward Petersen** is one of the city's best younger (i.e., under 40) saxists. Half of *Upward Spiral* (Delmark 445; 56:04: ★★★★★½) was taped live at the North Side's Green Mill, but doesn't always capture the excitement I've heard him generate live. Petersen has a hometown blues tenor's big eccentric quavery sound, tempered with an obvious appreciation for Coltrane. But his ballads, notably "I Didn't Know What Time It Was," are kinda young-cat strident. Fareed Haque's electric guitar and Rob Amster's electric-sounding bass add modernist touches to the waltzing "Objects In The Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear," and the twisting "For Dan" even toddles close to fusion, though forceful work by pianist Brad Williams and drummer Jeff Stitely help pull it up. It appears Petersen is still considering his options, and like any musician he can do what he chooses, but I'd love to hear him in more blues-oriented settings à la Von's CD.

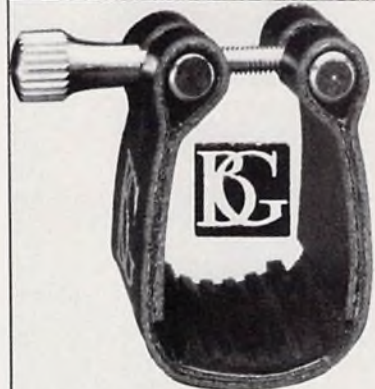
Nat Adderley praises altoist **Mike Smith** for emulating without note-for-note copying brother Cannonball's style. In short, Smith's Chicago's answer to New York's Vince Herring. Smith's *Unit 7* (Delmark 444; 50:53: ★★★★★) is billed as "A Tribute To Cannonball Adderley." All the tunes save one are drawn from Cannon's book (like "Dat Dere" and "Work Song"), and Mike's own composition recalls the ill-conceived *Cannonball's Bossa Nova* LP. Such a

program invites direct comparison with his inspiration, and Smith can't quite live up to it. The problem's one a lot of stylists face: Cannon simply sounds closer to the source—aka Charlie Parker—than Smith. Mike's got chops and a pleasingly plump tone, but he doesn't sear the air as Adderley did. The rhythm section is distinguished Chicago vets Jodie Christian, John Whitfield, and Robert Shy; Ron Friedman plays good trumpet and flugel, and doesn't impersonate Nat.

Pianist **Don Bennett**, on and off the local scene for decades, reawakens with *Sleeping Giant* (Southport 0012; 75:27: ★★★★★½). He's a hard-swinging, two-handed pianist who's soaked up so much good stuff from his forebears that comparisons are pointless—the sort of artist the word "mainstream" was coined for. Bennett has finesse; "Makin' Whoopee" is a study in varied dynamics and density, confirming his orchestral approach to the box. He has a surging attack on his hard-bop originals (which may not be radical, but are fresher than "Dat Dere"), and which are beefed up by two or three horns, drawn from the ranks of trumpeters Art Hoyle and Steve Smyth, Ed Petersen, and altoist Arthur Porter, yet another Cannon-styled sizzler. This is one CD that might be too long—most tracks are over seven minutes, and "All The Things You Are" has too few quirks to justify 16. Eric Hochberg's bass is right on the case, along with two kicking drummers, Darryl Erwin or Paul Wertico.

Trumpeter **Malachi Thompson** joined the AACM in the late '60s and has been heard lately with fellow AACMer Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy. His best set as a leader I've heard, *Spirit* (Delmark 442: ★★★★★½), shows him off as a basically inside player who wisely accepts the AACM's gains as part of the mainstream. On "I Remember Clifford," he tempers his post-Brownie/Freddie bright-toned neobop with some of Bowie's biting raspberries. Like Lester (or Von) he broadens his expressive range by dickering with pitch. Thompson brings the same mix to "Spirit Of Man," his Silver/soul-jazz update, enlivened by Nasar Abedey's broken drum rolls and James King's forward-thrust bass riffing. (Throughout, Carter Jefferson's brawny tenor nicely complements the leader.) "No More Hard Times" sounds rather like a Brass Fantasy backbeat blues; Leon Thomas shouts and yodels the good news. Save for the airplay-bid "Back To The One," crooned by diva Arnae Burton, it's solid stuff. No recording date's given, but Albert Dailey (who died in 1984) plays piano on some cuts. Thompson has lived in and out of the Windy City for 20 years (he's back now), but Chicago attitudes stay in the blood. (reviewed on LP; all others on CD) **DB**

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1 RANDY WESTON.

"Misterioso" (from *Portrait Of Thelonious Monk*, Verve) Weston, piano; Monk, composer.

That's someone influenced by Monk. It's not Monk: the recording is too recent and he never used congas. There were also technical things that weren't Monkish: an Oscar Peterson phrase or two. Names that come to mind are Abdullah Ibrahim and Marcus Roberts, who won the Monk competition. That was good; I'd say 4 stars.

2 ART FARMER. "Mox Nix"

(from *Modern Art*, United Artists) Farmer, trumpet, composer; Benny Golson, tenor sax; Bill Evans, piano.

I used to play "Mox Nix" when I was at Germantown [Penn.] High with [altoists] Jimmy Vass and Sonny Fortune. That must be Art Farmer and Benny Golson. If I were to hazard a guess on the pianist, I'd say Tommy Flanagan or Hank Jones; their touch is similar, but it's more Hank's concept. 5 stars, for performance and memories.

3 ELIANE ELIAS. "Dindi"

(from *Plays Jobim*, Blue Note) Elias, piano; Eddie Gomez, bass.

I thought it might be Herbie [Hancock] at first, but it wasn't his concept. It may have been someone like Michel Petrucciani, though I haven't heard much of him. The tune was "Dindi." The sound has an ECM quality, slightly echoey. The bassist sounded like Mike Richmond, someone of that school; good intonation. Nice, 4.

4 MARCUS ROBERTS. "The Governor"

(from *Deep In The Shed*, RCA Novus) Roberts, piano, composer.

I like the tune, very interesting, with a Monkish sound and humor in the melody. The arrangement shows Ellington or Mingus influence with unusual intervals. Pianist sounds like McCoy [Tyner] for his voicings, but not his lines. They played it well, 4.

5 EARL HINES. "Skylark"

(from *Hines Does Hoagy*, Audiophile).

That's someone who's influenced or wants to play either like Art Tatum or Fats Waller. To me he isn't quite making it. He obviously has some technique, but there are things that are missing. The piano is also out of tune, which is distressing to me as a pianist. It makes many things sound wrong. 3.

6 FRED HERSCH. Ravel:

"Prelude" from *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (from *The French Collection*, Angel).

KENNY BARRON

by Fred Bouchard

"Always the best man, never the groom" is an expression which applies to Kenny Barron, 47, one of the most remarkable, versatile, and delightful keyboard veterans. Best pianist to many great horn players from James Moody (1961), Dizzy Gillespie ('62-64), brother Bill Barron ('60-88) to Stan Getz ('85-), Barron was among the early and rare successful experimenters with electric keyboards (as his five lead dates among a score of Muse albums attest) but has since embraced acoustic piano. At the 1990 Aruba Jazz Festival workshops, Barron's avowed influences are Tatum, Monk, and T. Flanagan.

Though he co-founded the Monk-oriented band Sphere (1982-88) and has run super trios on wax (e.g., *Scratch*, on Enja) and live (e.g., Ben Riley and Rufus Reid at Bradley's), Barron's leadership has been slow to emerge. His 9/90 appearance at Cambridge, Mass.' Regattabar (his 10th in five years) was his first as a leader and had Eddie



MITCHELL SEIDEL

Henderson and John Stubblefield in the front line, as on the recent album *What If* (Enja). Other recent releases as a leader include Ray Drummond and Ben Riley (*The Only One*, Reservoir) and co-leader John Hicks (*Rhythm-A-Ning*, Candid). In his first BT, Barron was given no information, except for #10. He prefaced observations with "I could be wrong . . ." and showed no curiosity post-BT, preferring to wait for its publication, saying "Let me be surprised."

This pianist obviously has a strong classical background. I'd say Fred Hersch. I heard him with [bassist] Mike Formanek in a Japanese restaurant recently, and I know he's been playing classical concerts. Another tip is the excellent recording—I've recorded in Fred's studio; you can hear everything clearly. 4.

7 ANDREW HILL. "Pumpkin"

(from *Black Fire*, Blue Note) Personell as guessed.

This is a very interesting composition, and it's well played. That might be Andrew Hill; sounds like Joe Henderson on horn. Andrew has a tendency to probe when he plays, digging things out. I like that. 5.

8 AHMAD JAMAL. "Eclipse"

(from *Jamal Plays Jamal*, 20th Century).

This reminds me technically of Ahmad Jamal, whom I've heard the last few summers in Europe. But—this is electric piano, which I've never heard him play. You can't identify anybody's touch [on it], so I have to rely on his style and concept. Ahmad's compositions are rhythmic and he writes "compositionally." He doesn't sit still, lots of fast finger movements. Ahmad's nuances are lost on electric piano, but 4 for him.

9 LIONEL HAMPTON/ART TATUM/BUDDY RICH.

"Perdido" (from *Great Encounters*, Pablo).

Because it's an old recording of vibes, I'd say Hamp. Because the piano is stride with a nice technique, I'd say Teddy Wilson. For both, 5 stars. If it's not Teddy, Earl "Fatha" Hines. No bass player, right? Tasty brushes.

10 MULGREW MILLER.

"Work" (from *Work*, Landmark).

Whoever that is is *really* influenced by Monk, without being a clone. Again I'm going to say Marcus Roberts. I don't think it could be Thelonious; if it is, I've never heard that composition before and the technique is much more fluid. It's one of the "kids." They really get Monk's sound. 4.

FB: That's Terri Lyne Carrington [drums], Charnett Moffett [bass], and Mulgrew Miller [piano].

KB: Really? Hmm. Wow! It is a Monk tune. I've never heard it. That's incredible. I wouldn't have thought Mulgrew'd play so Monkish. He's really captured the essence of Monk. Same producer, too [Orrin Keepnews]. Well, the last few times I've heard Mulgrew, he really knocked me out. That's what it is—he's so flexible, can do so many different things . . .

FB: Like yourself.

DB