

Tito Puente's 100th LP - Eddie Daniels - Sunnyland Slim

# DOWN BEAT

*Jazz, Blues & Beyond*

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The guitar guru's  
continuing journey through jazz and classical

SOUND SURFING WITH

## JOHN McLAUGHLIN

### FOUR-WAY START

- Guitarists
- ➔ Albert Collins
  - ➔ Foley
  - ➔ Mark Whitfield
  - ➔ Eric Johnson





John McLaughlin



Tito Puente



Eddie Daniels



Albert Collins

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# DOWN BEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

**PUBLISHER** John Maher

**EDITORIAL DIRECTOR** Frank Alkyer

**MANAGING EDITOR** John Ephland

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR** Dave Helland

**DESIGN** Jay Crawford Design

**PRODUCTION MANAGER** Gloria Baldwin

**CIRCULATION MANAGER** Elaine Rizleris

**PRESIDENT** Jack Maher

**ALBUM REVIEWERS:** Larry Birnbaum, Fred Bouchard, Owen Cordle, Elaine Guregian, Frank John Hadley, Peter Kastaks, Art Lange, John Litweiler, Howard Mandel, John McDonough, Bill Milkowski, Dan Ouellette, Ben Sandmel, Gene Santoro, Bill Shoemaker, Jack Sohmer, Stephanie Stein, Robin Tolson, Ron Weiburn, Kevin Whitehead, Josef Woodard.

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**CONTRIBUTORS:** Larry Birnbaum, Michael Bourne, Tom Copi, Lauren Deutsch, John Diliberto, Leonard Feather, Mitchell Feldman, Andy Freeberg, Art Lange, Howard Mandel, John McDonough, Bill Milkowski, Paul Natkin, Herb Nalan, Gene Santoro, Mitchell Seidel, Stephanie Stein, Pete Weidling, Josef Woodard, Scott Yanow.

**CORRESPONDENTS:** Albany, NY: Georgia Urban; Atlanta: Dorothy Pearce; Austin: Michael Point; Baltimore: Fred Douglass; Boston: Fred Bouchard; Buffalo: John P. Lockhart; Chicago: Jim DeJong; Cincinnati: Bob Nave; Cleveland: C. A. Colombi; Detroit: Michael G. Nastos; Las Vegas: Brian Sanders; Los Angeles: Zan Stewart; Minneapolis: Mary Snyder; Nashville: Dave Jenkins; New Orleans: Joel Simpson; Philadelphia: Russell Woessner; Phoenix: Robert Henschel; Pittsburgh: David J. Fabilli; San Francisco: Michael Handler; Seattle: Joseph R. Murphy; Toronto: Mark Miller; Vancouver: Vern Montgomery; Washington, DC: W. A. Brower; Argentina: Max Seligmann; Australia: Eric Myers;

Belgium: Willy Vanhassel; Brazil: Christopher Pickard; Finland: Roger Freundlich; Great Britain: Brian Priestley; India: Vinod Advani; Italy: Ruggero Slossi; Jamaica: Maureen Sheridan; Japan: Shoichi Yui; Netherlands: Jaap Ludeke; Norway: Randi Hultin; Poland: Charles Gans; Senegambia: Oka Drame; South Africa: Howard Belling; Sweden: Lars Lystedt.

**EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING PRODUCTION/OFFICE/ ADMINISTRATION & ADVERTISING OFFICE:**

180 West Park Ave  
Elmhurst, IL 60126  
1-708/941-2030  
FAX: 708/941-3210  
John Maher, Advertising Sales  
1-708/941-2030  
**East:** Bob Olesen  
720 Greenwich St., New York, NY 10014  
1-212/243-4786

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Jimi Hendrix once said, "Music is like the waves of the ocean. You can't take it home with you. It's constantly moving all the time."

British guitarist/composer

*John McLaughlin*



# *Lifetime of Devotion*

By John Ephland

st cut out the perfect wave and

mi serves as a source of iron for many, including

ndleader John McLaughlin. Perhaps, it has something to do with Hendrix's approach to music.



The All-Purpose Percussion Orchestra: Trilok Gurtu in concert

For the 49-year-old McLaughlin, that's exactly how he's approached his professional career. McLaughlin began in earnest in the late '50s with Big Pete Deuchar and his Professors of Ragtime. Transforming the styles of inspirations Tal Farlow, Django Reinhardt, Muddy Waters, Big Bill Broonzy, Miles Davis, and John Coltrane, McLaughlin continued his '60s incubatory experiments with Georgie Fame's Blue Flames, the Graham Bond Organisation, and Brian Auger's Trinity. And then there were gigs with, among many others, rockers Eric Clapton, Jack Bruce, Mick Jagger, and (later) Hendrix, as well as jazzers Tony Oxley, Dave Holland, John Surman, and Karl Berger. Oh yeah, add guitar teacher to his resume with such promising talent as student/future-Led Zeppeliner Jimmy Page. In '68, McLaughlin's first band cut a record, the loose-limbed *Extrapolation*. Moving to the U.S. in '69, he turned sideman again in Tony Williams' seminal Lifetime band. And, with all due respect to guitar greats John Scofield and Pete Cosey, McLaughlin's stint with Miles ('69-'70) has yet to be equalled in terms of impact, style, and heat. His 1970 sojourn, *My Goal's Beyond*, set the stage for what has now become primarily an acoustic, "world music" approach.

The electric/acoustic tango would continue, however: Mahavishnu Orchestra, Shakti, guitar duos and flamenco trios, the One Truth Band, an updated Mahavishnu Orchestra, and continual sideman dates, including a role as house guitarist with leading man Dexter Gordon in the '86 film *Round Midnight*.

But, with two very important—and diverse—releases in 1990, "Johnny McLaughlin, electric guitarist" appears to be headed for extinction. We may be talking about the end of an era in guitar history. One of music's greatest guitarists appears to have arrived at a distillation point.

You see, the man looks and sounds *extremely* satisfied with his new acoustic arsenal. Advances in guitar technology appear to have given McLaughlin the best of both worlds: centered around MIDI converters and synthesizers, the electric guitar's power, dynamic range, and array of options are now wedded to his acoustic guitar, an instrument loved for its dexterity and feel, tonalities and warmth.

Given such a wedding, the solid-body electric takes on the appearance of a former lover, attractive only to a point. "I haven't played it in five years," McLaughlin explained. "I don't even know if I'll play it again. . . . But if I get the urge, I'll pick it up and play it."

"The urge." That's it in a nutshell. "If I had the appetite, I would have played it again." (Note the past-tense usage.)

The appetite for *any* kind of guitar was interrupted last year, thanks to a near-fatal accident. McLaughlin was doing a bit of furniture rearranging when a TV set fell on one of his hands. Cancellation of a major 1990 spring tour has been the only

apparent fallout. It did, however, take him two months before he could touch, let alone play, the guitar. How close a call was it?

"Well, I've got a big bump here," he said, pointing to his left index finger. "I don't think it's ever going to go away. But," as if it wasn't delightfully obvious from the previous evening's performance, "I can play. Fortunately, I missed the bone by a sixteenth of an inch. I was very lucky."

In case anyone's wondering, the two key 1990 albums referred to earlier are *The Mediterranean*, with the London Symphony Orchestra and duets with longtime associate/keyboardist Katia Labeque; and *Live At The Royal Festival Hall*, with Indian percussionist Trilok Gurtu and electric bassist Kai Eckardt-Karpeh (see "Reviews" Aug. '90). Of the two, it's the Festival Hall recording with the John McLaughlin Trio that begs comparison with Shakti, a stunning, "world music" band from the mid-'70s that combined John and his acoustic, 13-string guitar with Indian musicians playing tabla, mridangam, ghatam (all percussion instruments), and violin. Both bands are vivid examples of East-West syntheses, with the Trio suggesting elements of McLaughlin's electric, and ferocious, Mahavishnu days. Could there have been a design to the latest group?

"No, I don't think so. I didn't set out to look for anything in particular. But," McLaughlin grew reflective, "it reminds me of a song, a very popular song that Trane [John Coltrane] recorded: 'My Favorite Things.' We all have our favorite things, and sometimes we even forget what they are, but they nevertheless stay there in the subconscious."

As with Shakti and its dazzling tablaist Zakir Hussain, the John McLaughlin Trio is surrounded and driven by rhythms. In this case, the "chair," since 1988, has been held by percussionist Trilok Gurtu, an all-purpose drummer who's carved out a solo career alongside gigs with McLaughlin and the pioneering, world-music band Oregon. To see and hear him perform is like taking in a one-man, world-of-percussion menagerie. Sitting, squatting, kneeling, standing, using sticks, brushes, bare hands, and anything else that might lend itself to rhythmic ideas, Gurtu plays "traps" with the fervor of an Elvin Jones, tablas with the dignity and precision of a sage Indian classical musician, and assorted percussion instruments not unlike another master of the genre, Airtu. All this without a thing to sit on. The man must be in tremendous physical condition, considering the fact that he not only uses all four limbs, but is constantly changing position to better avail himself of all that surrounds him. Only by seeing (and hearing) can the viewer believe what is happening. Needless to say, Trilok Gurtu adds an incredible dimension to the virtuosic playing of John McLaughlin.

And yet, the East-West parallels with Shakti were nonexistent as far as Gurtu was concerned. "When I asked Trilok to join me in a musical venture, it was without any thought of Shakti. I love the way he plays. He has a very interesting concept and approach to time. In a way, he's like a mirror image of myself, coming from the Orient—because, he's a jazz drummer, he's a classical, tabla-trained, North Indian classical musician. But, he's a jazz musician more than an Indian musician. I mean," McLaughlin related, "I had classical training, but I'm not a classical musician. I don't even pretend to be. I don't even *want* to be a classical musician. I'm happy to be the kind of musician I am.

"But here we have somebody who's grown up in the Far East, in the Orient, who has this tremendous love for jazz music. And the way he plays, too. And of course, since the acoustic guitar is pretty sensitive to volume, a regular trap kit is *really* tough, it's really hard to play with because it's too loud. You start beating on the drums, and my guitar starts shaking like this [*demonstrates with a wave of his hands*]."

So, for McLaughlin's purposes, there is now the virtual meeting of East and West in a percussionist/drummer. There's also the meeting of the past with the present: Billy Cobham playing "hand in hand" with Zakir Hussain and a coterie of bangers, tinklers, and special-effects specialists—so to speak.

To the group of casual listeners (to which I inadvertently assigned myself), therefore, the John McLaughlin Trio appears to revolve around a strong rhythmic foundation, much like early Shakti. Harmony and melody account for a great deal, but isn't Gurtu's presence determinative?

"With one extremely important exception. In fact, I can't agree with you, from my point of view, because the harmonic movement that goes on in this show is quite complex in some pieces. It may not be evident because there's no keyboard playing behind me. You don't hear it, but the construction is there nevertheless; and some of it is quite complex, which never existed in Shakti.

"This became a problem in Shakti, because I really wanted to contribute more Western music to Shakti. Shakti was a wonderful group, but as long as I kept going in the Indian tradition, Northern or Southern, you revolve around a tonality and you can change a raga or change a scale, but harmonic movement is



A handful of beauty, circa 1977: Shakti days with John and his famed 13-stringed acoustic

And no lush chords. But even with Shakti, there was . . . "I had a 13-string guitar for that; but then we had a violin player, which went great with a guitar. But that's why I like bass guitar even more than bass, because it's *bass guitar*. On a bass, you can't play chords; on bass guitar, you can play chords."



ENZO FARBER

**T**his year marks the 20th anniversary of the founding of the original Mahavishnu Orchestra, with activities of all kinds taking place. With keyboardists Katia and Marielle Labeque, McLaughlin has produced (and contributed material to) a new jazz recording, *Love Of Colors*, due out in July on Sony Classical. This past February in Paris, McLaughlin performed his second concerto for guitar and orchestra to standing ovations. Titled *Europa*, he employed the full-scale, 85-piece Orchestre de Paris. This summer, the John McLaughlin Trio, with new bassist Dominique Di Piazza, will be on tour throughout North America. Stops will include Seattle, Vancouver, and JVC/Saratoga.

As with any great jazz musician, McLaughlin's rich musical past continues to shine through to the present. Recent CD reissues of classic Mahavishnu Orchestra and Shakti material include *Visions Of The Emerald Beyond*, and *Shakti, With John McLaughlin*. Other CD reissues will include spring releases of the "complete" Tony Williams Lifetime, with organist Larry Young and McLaughlin on *Emergency!* (the Lifetime material with bassist Jack Bruce awaits CD reissue) and McLaughlin's leader-date premier, *Extrapolation*.

From that fertile late '60s, early '70s period of jazz meets rock, perhaps McLaughlin's most stirring work was with Tony Williams, and Miles, particularly on *Bitches Brew* and *A Tribute To Jack Johnson*. The music that came from these collaborations gets back to that Hendrixian maxim about music "moving all the time." "It's true I recorded some records with Miles during this period. The work I did with Tony Williams and Larry Young, those two years we spent together ['69-'70] were very important. Tony is a kind of drummer, a kind of musician that forces you to adopt a different approach, which is necessarily good. I'm a great believer in that, and I even do that to my musicians.

definitely a no-no. I would do it, in a kind of spiral movement around the central tonality, and I would expand on it that way. And I would tell [violinist L.] Shankar, 'You can put this scale over this, even though it sounds funny.' Or, I [would try to] put this chord over that tonality, because we have the drone all the time.

"I wanted to work with Shankar to develop more incorporation of Western movement, which is really, more or less, harmonic. Indians know a lot about melody; but harmonically, this is really the Western contribution to music. But, you know, with people who are already accomplished musicians, it's really tough to get them to change the way they think.

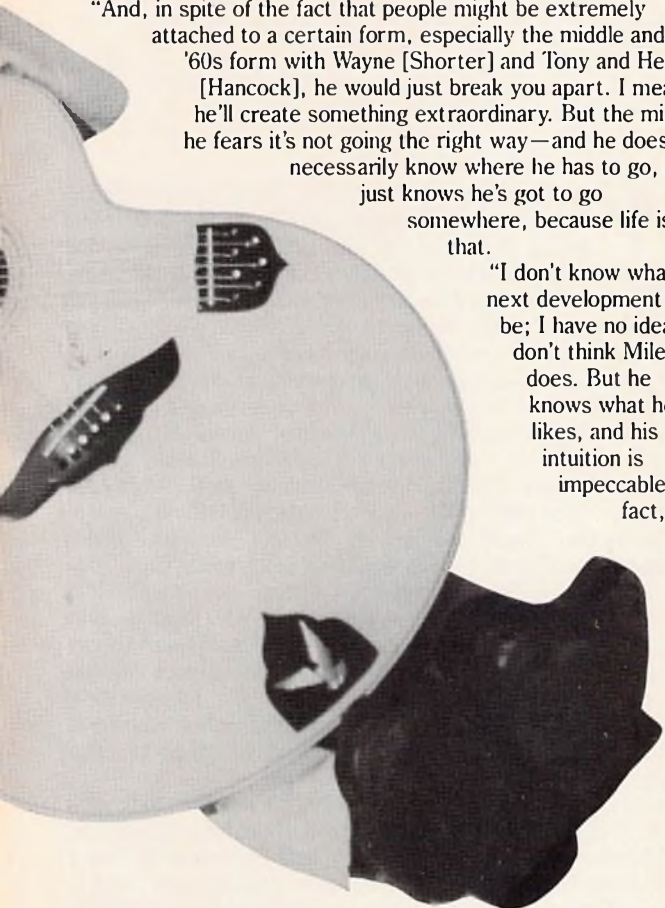
"The trio is very much harmonic movement, but you don't hear it, you hear it in a linear way because there's no keyboard pad."

"We are all creatures of habit, in a way; some habits are good and some not so good. So, we replace the not-so-good with the good. But then the good habits, they don't stay good; unless you rework them, they'll fail you. You have to constantly rework habits, ways of thinking, in approaches to music, in approaches to playing. And so, I'm a great believer in smashing those things and being obliged to look for new ways."

As for Miles, "If I had a hat, if I had a wig, I'd take it off [to Miles], because Miles has played more than a small part in my musical education, and in a lot of people's musical education. He's a real master in that sense of working with musicians. You just have to see Miles, and see how he works. I think it's obvious that my views are really just a reflection of his constant research. He's never betrayed anybody, and this is really wonderful. He's never betrayed himself, and, by doing that, never betrayed me as one of his greatest admirers and listeners."

"And, in spite of the fact that people might be extremely attached to a certain form, especially the middle and late '60s form with Wayne [Shorter] and Tony and Herbie [Hancock], he would just break you apart. I mean, he'll create something extraordinary. But the minute he fears it's not going the right way—and he doesn't necessarily know where he has to go, he just knows he's got to go somewhere, because life is like that."

"I don't know what the next development will be; I have no idea. I don't think Miles does. But he knows what he likes, and his intuition is impeccable. In fact,"



THE PHOTO RESERVE/MIKE TAPPIN

McLaughlin stated with utmost sincerity, "we all have impeccable intuition, if we just listen to it. . . . Miles is continuing the same tradition he began so many years ago."

What about the current wave of young neoboppers, for the most part led by the brothers Marsalis? Certainly, McLaughlin said, the original Branford/Wynton band was derivative of mid-'60s Miles. Things have changed since those relative halcyon days of the early '80s. Maybe for appearance's sake only. "In spite of all his words, Wynton loves Miles more than anybody in the world," he declared with complete certainty. "Every time he plays his trumpet. I mean, I know he's doing more dixieland now. It was always a surprise to me how the music of Miles—particularly prior to the period when I began with him—was much neglected in the United States. And so, we have to thank people like Wynton and Branford Marsalis for bringing that up to a greater level of public awareness. . . ."

"You cannot belittle what Branford's doing, or people like that. Branford's quartet is like the classic Coltrane quartet, of which there exist very few examples; his is one of the only ones. For me, it's important, first of all, because he's a wonderful man, a wonderful player; and he can give great inspiration in that way.

And so, it's difficult to just reduce [what they do] to a carbon copy. We can't really belittle the importance of the classical expression of jazz."

It all sounds wonderful, but aren't we talking about two kinds of musicians here? "Yeah, it's a double-bladed sword. If you think about it, if you just remove yourself from the situation, you'd be happy not to be bogged by this—it's like a bog. But it's bigger than me. . . . I don't have a choice, I have to go with it, that's all. And music is incapable of lying to anybody, especially to musicians. Only we can lie to ourselves; the music cannot lie."

"So, I trust it implicitly, and I have faith that I will be going in the right direction, whatever it is. But," McLaughlin grinned, as if recalling Hendrix, "you know, sometimes I envy these people who have found this little niche." DB

## THE JOHN McLAUGHLIN ARMORY

John McLaughlin's bridging of musical worlds can be seen in his ongoing quest for the perfect guitar make-up. His Abraham Wechter acoustic guitar is equipped with a Fishman hexaphonic transducer capable of providing a separate output signal for each of the guitar's six strings. Those signals are sent to his Photon guitar synthesizer (made by PhiTech) via a built-in PhiTech MIDI connection and forwarded to two book-sized Yamaha TX-7 synthesizers.

The signal from a Fishman Piezo transducer, used to pick up the guitar's acoustic sound, is sent through a TC digital 31-band equalizer and BSS DPR 901 dynamic equalizer. In addition, McLaughlin uses two Lexicon reverbs (PCM70 and LXP 1) and a Neumann KM 85 microphone with a Klark Teknik DN 360, 31-band equalizer.

From that lengthy list, McLaughlin is particularly fond of his TX-7s. "It's a very, very intelligent unit. For example, you can program it so it responds to notes on the guitar, which means you can call up patches and you can program different sounds, whatever you want, up to 16 synthesizers. On a given note, on the fretboard, it will call up a configuration, or a new MIDI configuration. Everything's done from the fingerboard, you don't have to touch the machine. It's very smart."

"Plus, I get to play in unison. I can play with the guitar, one TX7 or two. So, the melody definitely can carry more weight. From the guitar, I can build up polychords in a way that's normally only possible on a keyboard. This is very interesting, because the guitar is there all the time, which is the sound that I love. I can bring an element in at a moment's notice, and this is very interesting for the trio."

He continues to use the scalloped, scooped-fret guitar fingerboard he made famous while playing Wechter's drone-stringed acoustic (seven drone strings and six regular strings) with Shakti.

McLaughlin plays D'Addario strings.

## JOHN McLAUGHLIN SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

### as a leader

LIVE AT THE ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL -- JMT 834 436  
 MEDITERRANEAN CONCERTO -- Columbia MK 45578  
 JOHNNY McLAUGHLIN, ELECTRIC GUITARIST -- Columbia CK 46110  
 MY GOALS BEYOND -- Rykodisc RCD 10051  
 EXTRAPOLATION -- Polydor 841 598  
 DEVOTION -- Celluloid CELCD 5506  
 MUSIC SPOKEN HERE -- Warner Bros. 23723 (out of print)  
 BELO HORIZONTE -- Warner Bros. 3619 (out of print)  
 ELECTRIC DREAMS -- Columbia 35785 (out of print)  
 WHERE FORTUNE SMILES -- Pye 12103 (out of print)

### with Mahavishnu Orchestra

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 A TRIBUTE TO JACK JOHNSON -- Columbia PCT 30455  
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### with Ai Di Meola/Paco De Lucia

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 FRIDAY NIGHT IN SAN FRANCISCO -- Columbia CK 37152

### with various artists

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### with Carlos Santana

LOVE DEVOTION SURRENDER -- Columbia CK 32034

### with Carla Bley

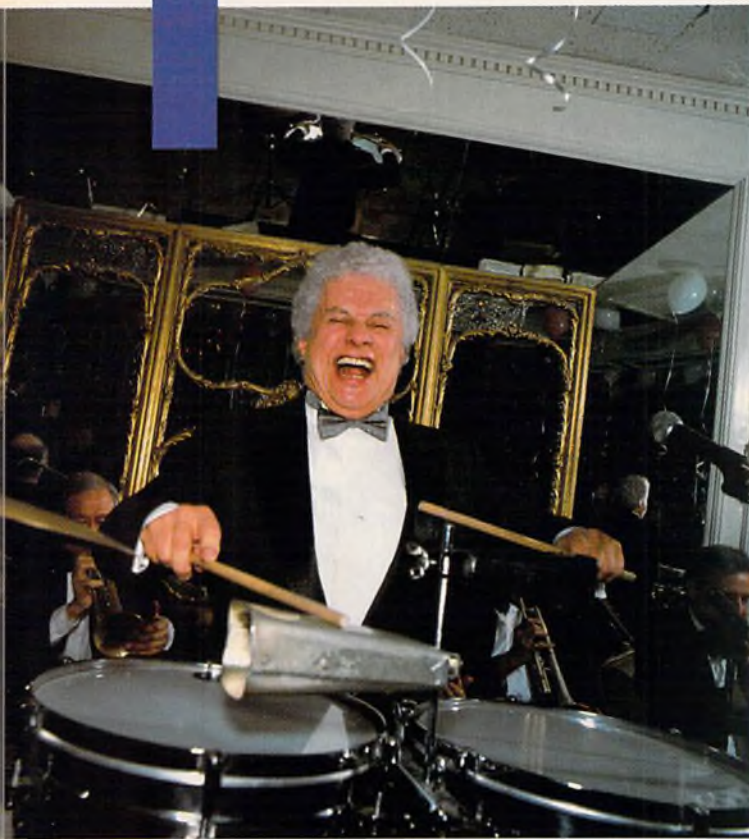
ESCALATOR OVER THE HILL -- JCOA/ECM 839 310

### with Larry Coryell

SPACES -- Vanguard VMD 79345  
 PLANET END -- Vanguard VSD 79367 (out of print)

# TITO PUENTE

## King of the Middle World



By Fred Bouchard

What drama it is to watch Tito Puente play timbales! The master of a million strokes on the bottomless drums, the winner of four Grammys (including one for 1990), winner of DB's '89 Readers Poll for top percussionist, the leader of 100 albums (the 100th being *Out Of This World* with 10-piece ensemble), the writer of 400 published compositions, Puente is also a comic with a thousand faces.

He grins as he tosses off a simple pattern, grimaces at a more difficult one, shakes his jowls with a furious cannonade, clenches his teeth with a stage-whisper *pianissimo*, purses his lips and makes a dimple of concentration in a *bolero* (ballad) at the vibraphone, frowns as he hits a *cascara* (side rimshot), stiffens like a tin soldier as he rattles off his signature reveille tattoos.

With another onstage to play off, his face goes into mime's dialogue. At the Charles Hotel's Regattabar (as regular a Cambridge haunt as Concord Picante is his label), Puente clowns with Millie P., a stunning Latin-pop singer aspiring to jazz who happens to be his cousin. As they blaze fours on twin timbales, Puente's visage registers: a gracious smile of patronage, an "Oh" of mock surprise (eyes and mouth in unison) observing a good lick, a tongue bit in determination to show his pupil a neat trick, an arched eyebrow of appreciative appraisal, a sly glint of thinking up a topper, a final proud grin that abandons mock competition.

Showmanship has come late to Puente, but he takes to it like a duck to water. Though Puente studied timbales with Montesino, was influenced by Milt Jackson's vibes and Stan Kenton's brass, and idolized Gene Krupa on traps, his mugging pays dues to Jonathan Winters and Harpo Marx. As with Satchmo and Dizzy, Puente's grin'n'wink have broken down walls in a lifelong role as ambassador to his staunch Latino dance fans and growing audiences of big band and bebop listeners. (Open-mindedness got a boost, too, when Puente saw the royalty checks roll in after Carlos Santana recorded his "Oye Como Va.")

Puente's quick-witted playfulness masks the gruff wariness of a seasoned trouper and makes a straight man of the journalist:

FB: Would you consent to an interview?

TP: "Sure, but don't ask me where I was born, when I was born, or why I was born." (New York's Spanish Harlem, 4/20/23, to play and preach Latin drums worldwide.)

FB: You've been called, as musical fashions come and go, the King of Mambo, King of Timbales, King of Salsa, King of Latin Music. Is it true you don't like being called The King?

TP: "It's better than being called The Queen."

And then, quite seriously: "You have to live up to it every minute. You always have to be topping yourself. The younger generation sits there with their arms folded and says, 'Show me.' If you drop a stick, they say, 'He's having a heart attack!'"

Puente's seriocomic bandstand "stick" even bats around his initials: TP can be Top *Puertoriqueno*, Total Percussionist, Toilet

Paper! This guy rests on no laurels, still works hard for his dreams. Never mind he was top banana at New York's Palladium through the '50s and '60s, set up a *personal* scholarship fund for percussionists growing since 1979. His cocky self-mockery stems from 40 years with a boot in both camps and stubborn resistance to pigeonholing. Audiences support him staunchly, but the industry remains baffled.



MITCHELL SEIDEL

The Grammys gambit is typical: one year he's in jazz, the next he's back in Latin. "The Grammys have never had a Latin Jazz category," says Puente. "I've been trying for years. We're not too many: Michel Camilo, Paquito D'Rivera, Cal Tjader. When they put me in jazz, I have to compete with Dizzy, Basie, Marsalis." Puente recently won a 1990 Grammy in the "Tropical Latin Performance" category for his composition "Lambada Timbales" off of *Goza Mi Timbal* (largely due to a hot drum feature, not two Sonny Rollins remakes), played timbales on two more nominees (Poncho Sanchez' *Chili Con Soul* and Millie P(uento)'s debut), and owns three more (from 1979, '83, and '85). (Puente was also honored this past year with a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.)

It also comes from keeping the *clave* (the little sticks which hold the heartbeat, or the "one," of Latin rhythm) on a delicate balance of street beats, hard booking, mastering instruments and arranging, and feverish bandstand work. Puente played Miami society bands, studied at Juilliard, led his Kenton-brassy band on the alto saxophone. He added his highly original vibes by 1950, his current inspiration being Bobby Hutcherson. "Fans used to say, 'Here comes Tito with his venetian blinds!'" jokes Puente. "I'd take marimba on gigs, too, but my band boy'd want a raise."

Though variety was the spice of his success during the dance band years, the '80s have found Puente's mission and forte to be forging the best of Latin and jazz music into his unique style. "Sometimes jazz can be boring, but I give it a new twist. Latin music can be boring, too, because it's only tonic and dominant. [You take an] exciting progressive melodic line, then combine it with exciting rhythms—like Dizzy did years ago with Chano Pozo on 'Manteca': that's the marriage we're after. You gotta know about jazz to play these things."

Puente knows jazz, all right. His octet kicks off sets with tight, bristling jazz charts, with heated sax solos by Mario Rivera and Tito's rapid-fire timbales and mellow vibes. Puente writes more sharply and conceives more hiply today than a listen to his century of albums shows. Early dates (some scarce RCA and Tico sides have been released on Palladium [Spain]) show verve, dash, clarity, and wit, and a danceability that never lets up. Puente's Concord corpus affront his Latin Jazz Ensemble whittles at bebop classics like a jalapeno-powered Jazztet. Startlingly crisp charts limn the familiar (Coltrane's "Giant Steps," Golson's "Killer Joe") and the rarefied (Monk's "Pannonica" and Neil Hefti's "Repetition" feature Phil Woods' searing alto).

These jazz tunes are still played at danceable tempos and Puente sees audience response high for dance. "The new generation of Central and South American students want representation on campus. When we jammed two, then three shows at Bates College, the kids opened a dance space. I just played a backbeat on timbales and cymbals over the same jazz tunes."

Puente prefers playing college concerts and concert halls. "At concerts you get more attention and respect. Dancers drink and pick up chicks; they don't listen. At dances, people stand in front of the stage and don't dance."

Puente eyes the future in his sunny, driving manner. "I'm on the Duke Ellington statue committee with Chico O'Farrill and president Bobby Short. We're building a statue in bronze at 110th and Fifth—Duke at the piano surrounded by babes. I was a big admirer of Duke's: we lived in the same building, we're both Taurus. Maybe one day when our Latin music gets more recognition, we'll be up there, too. It's coming."

DB

## TITO PUENTE SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

### with his Latin Jazz Ensemble

- OUT OF THIS WORLD—Concord Picante 4448
- GOZA MI TIMBAL—Concord Picante 4399
- SALSA MEETS JAZZ—Concord Picante 4354 (w/ Phil Woods)
- UN POCO LOCO—Concord Picante 4329
- SENSACION—Concord Picante 4301 (w/ Terry Gibbs)
- MAMBO DIABLO—Concord Picante 4283 (w/ George Shearing)
- EL REY—Concord Picante 4250
- ON BROADWAY—Concord Picante 4207
- LIVE AT MONTREUX '80—Latin Percussion 474

### as a sideman

- RHYTHMSTICK—CTI 847 199 (w/ Dizzy Gillespie, et al.)
- CHILE CON SOUL—Concord Picante 4406 (w/ Poncho Sanchez)
- TITO PUENTE PRESENTS: MILLIE P.—RMM 80375 (w/ Millie Puente)
- ALGO ESPECIAL PARA RECORDAR—Fania 1304 (w/ Celia Cruz)
- TU Y YO—Tico 1125 (w/ La Lupe)



MITCHELL SEIDEL

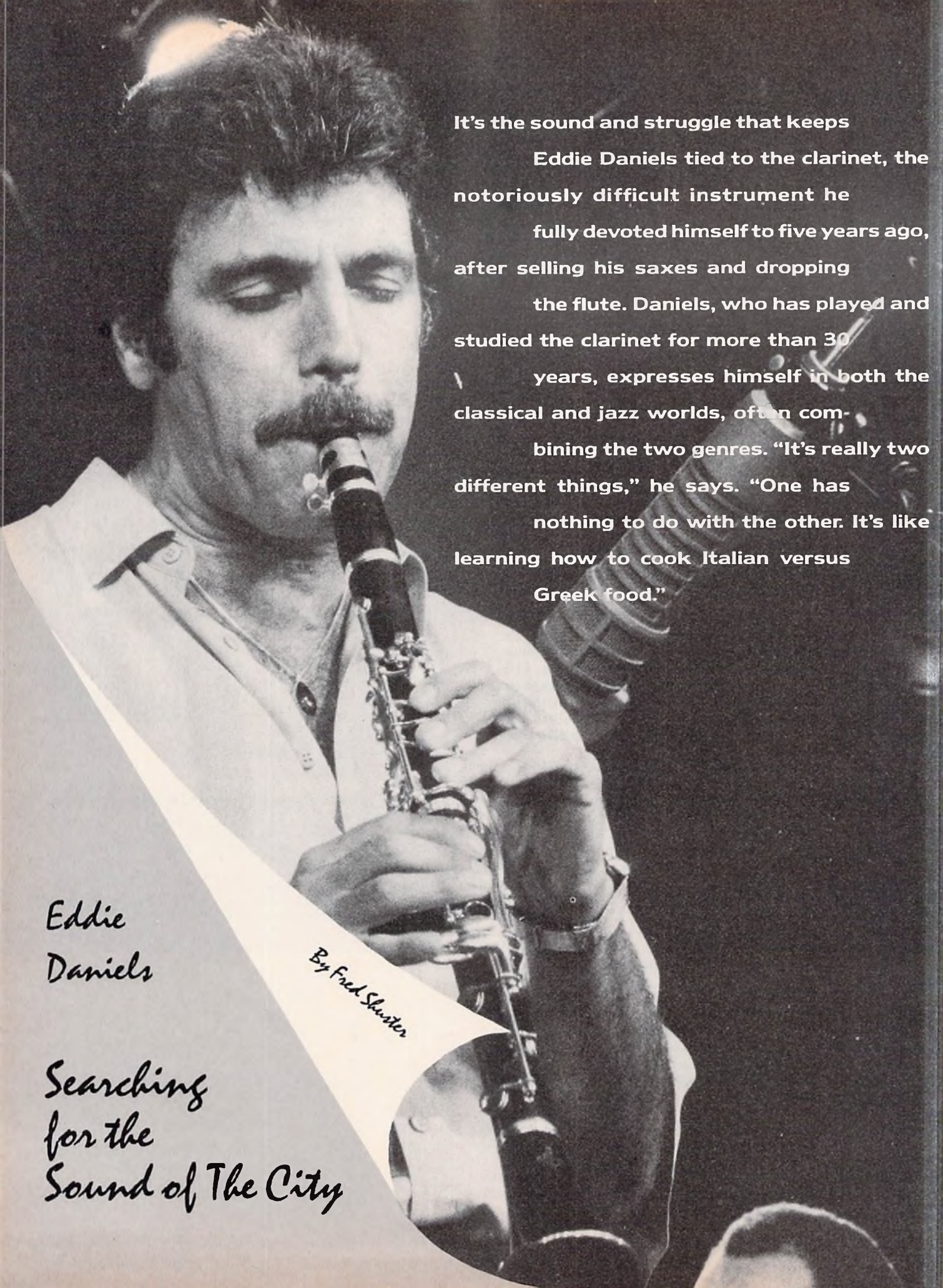
## TITO PUENTE'S EQUIPMENT

"On percussion, I'm an LP [Latin Percussion] exclusive artist. Four sets of timbales, cowbells, chekere, claves—you name it."

Puente has two upright pianos in his home on Long Island, a Steinway and a Baldwin. "They have great sound for uprights; they sound like grand pianos," says he. He has been using various synthesizers and computers to compose music for *Mambo Kings Play Songs Of Love*.

Puente owns and plays several vibraphones—among them Yamaha, Deagan, and Musser. He also owns marimbas and xylophones.





It's the sound and struggle that keeps Eddie Daniels tied to the clarinet, the notoriously difficult instrument he fully devoted himself to five years ago, after selling his saxes and dropping the flute. Daniels, who has played and studied the clarinet for more than 30 years, expresses himself in both the classical and jazz worlds, often combining the two genres. "It's really two different things," he says. "One has nothing to do with the other. It's like learning how to cook Italian versus Greek food."

Eddie  
Daniels

*By Fred Shuster*

Searching  
for the  
Sound of The City

As if to illustrate this diversity, two new discs by Daniels reached the stores this month . . . *This Is Now* for GRP (a collection of straight-ahead jazz burners, featuring pianist Billy Childs), and *C.M. Weber Clarinet Quintet And The Brahms Clarinet Quintet* on the audiophile Reference Recordings label. That release features Daniels in concert with the Composers String Quartet.

"Jazz is not something you learn," Daniels, 49, explained in an interview at a fellow musician's home in the Hollywood Hills. "You have to be able to swing, to improvise. Real jazz is an expression from a deep place. It's an outgrowth of who you are and the need to say certain things."

With that in mind, how does Daniels straddle the jazz/classical fence? And what do fellow players in both fields think of his accomplishment? Daniels has won first place in the clarinet division of the DB Readers Poll for the last five years. Late last year, Daniels traveled to Germany with the highly-regarded, Chicago-based Vermeer String Quartet, one of many classical music performances Daniels has done during the past 12 months.

Dick Waller, principal clarinetist of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and the Aspen Music Festival Orchestra, said Daniels has the right educational background needed to tackle the classics. "Benny Goodman had some of the legitimate background, but little of the mechanics of the instrument that Eddie has. He does something that no other clarinetist I know of does."

Daniels, who was born in Brooklyn, New York, attended that city's High School of Performing Arts and Brooklyn College before receiving a master's degree in clarinet from the Juilliard School of Music in 1966. That year, he joined the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, where he stayed for six years. Daniels also studied with the late Daniel Bonade, former principal clarinetist with the Philadelphia Orchestra and a mentor for classical clarinetists throughout the world.

"The clarinet is my daily struggle."

"When I was a kid, my mother said, 'You've got to learn how to play the clarinet right, you've got to be the best,'" said Daniels. "And I was reacting to that by playing jazz as a way to get out all of the frustration at having to be the best. It helped release the pressure because you don't have to be the best when you play jazz. You just have to be yourself. It's like a natural therapy for human beings."

Daniels explained the clarinet is so irritating to play because "it doesn't take air in a very easy way. It kind of backs up on you. There's resistance in the blowing of it. So, you have to work with

it, especially in the jazz realm. With classical, you learn that resistance and it works for the music. But when you want to express yourself through jazz, that's when the clarinet becomes harder. It doesn't take expression easily. When you pick up an alto or tenor sax and blow, it makes a loud noise right back at you. And it's fun. The clarinet is my daily struggle."

With his latest GRP release, Daniels has attained one of his primary goals: to contemporize the sound of the clarinet in the same direct way alto saxophonist David Sanborn strikes such a chord with his particular sound. "The alto sax has the sound of the times, that high, emotional ring the big cities have. Try and do that on the clarinet in the language of today and it's much harder. That's always been my aim. Even when I get it to sound good, the next day I pick it up and that sound is gone. I don't quite have that connection with the emotion that I want, so that it sounds real natural."

Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, who hired Daniels for the recording of *The Hub Of Hubbard*, said the clarinetist "is able not only to get the beauty out of the instrument, but its different textures, too. I'm glad to see him branching out. People need to hear him as a soloist."

Daniels said he is often amused when classical musicians announce they want to play jazz. "It's like they want to have jazz as a little toy. Having jazz as a toy is like wanting to become a Buddhist monk and become enlightened in 10 minutes. It just doesn't happen. It's a deep art form that has roots. The jazz language has a specific accent. If you use the wrong accent, it ends up sounding like something else entirely."

Along with the emotional content, the physical approach to the instrument must change when Daniels makes the shift from jazz to classical music. "It's the difference between a large gesture and a small gesture. When you're playing Mozart, for instance, the gestures are very measured and very small and the emotion is within a very limited context. When you're playing jazz, you may have a lot of stuff burning inside of you and you're expected to get it out. There's no limit on that gesture when you're playing jazz. Like, when Sanborn goes for a high note, he just screams it out and you get it. There are no limitations. In Mozart, you couldn't do that. You could hit that high note loud, but it's got to start at a certain place, grow in a certain way, and stop on time."

But Daniels, who currently lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico, didn't believe at first that the clarinet could cut it in the future of jazz. "But, when I heard Buddy DeFranco play, I thought, 'Gee, there's potential in this instrument.'"

Still, the struggle continues. On a daily basis, Daniels puts in a minimum of three hours practicing. Nonetheless, the clarinet still has the power to ruin his day.

"I'm always afraid something terrible will happen, that the sound won't come out, that the instrument will squeak. So my everyday life includes getting up in the morning and seeing if it works, if I can get this thing to work the same way everyday. And it just doesn't. It fights you. But I love both the sound and the struggle because I think there's a voice coming out of the clarinet through me that's a new expression."

Few would disagree.

DB

## EDDIE DANIELS SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

### as a leader

... *THIS IS NOW* — GRP 9635  
*NEPENTHE* — GRP 9607  
*BLACKWOOD* — GRP 9584  
*MEMOS FROM PARADISE* — GRP 9561  
*TO BIRD WITH LOVE* — GRP 9544  
*BREAKTHROUGH* — GRP 9533  
*BRIEF ENCOUNTER* — Muse MCD 5154  
*STREET WIND* — Marlin 2214  
*MORNING THUNDER* — Columbia 36290  
*THIS IS NEW* — Columbia 10005  
*A FLOWER FOR ALL SEASONS* — Choice CRS 1002  
*FIRST PRIZE* — Prestige PR 7506

### with Freddie Hubbard

*THE HUB OF HUBBARD* — MPS 825956-2

### with Composers String Orchestra

*C.M. WEBER CLARINET QUINTET IN B<sup>b</sup> AND BRAHMS CLARINET QUINTET IN B MINOR* — Reference Recordings RR40

### with Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra

(Daniels on tenor)

*LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD* — Solid State SS 18016

*CENTRAL PARK NORTH* — Solid State SS 18058

*CONSUMMATION* — Blue Note BST 84346

*MONDAY NIGHT* — Solid State SS 18048

*THAD JONES/MEL LEWIS AND THE JAZZ ORCHESTRA* — Solid State 18003

### with Cincinnati Pops

*BIG BAND HIT PARADE* — Telarc 80177

### with Don Patterson

*THE RETURN OF DON PATTERSON* — Muse MR 5005

## EDDIE DANIELS' EQUIPMENT

Eddie Daniels plays a Buffet R-13 clarinet and #4 or V12 Vahdoren reeds. A mouthpiece designed by Daniels will be in the stores this spring.

"Sound is the most important thing to me," he explains. "I strive for warmth of sound. I want the clarinet to feel like velvet, so my mouthpiece makes it easier to achieve that for me and I hope for others."

# record & cd reviews

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



## CHARLIE HADEN/ LIBERATION MUSIC ORCHESTRA

**DREAM KEEPER**—Blue Note CDP 7 95474 2: *DREAM KEEPER (DREAM KEEPER PART 1, FELICIANO AMA, DREAM KEEPER PART 2, CANTO DEL PILON 1, DREAM KEEPER PART 3, CANTO DEL PILON 2, HYMN OF THE ANARCHIST WOMEN'S MOVEMENT, DREAM KEEPER PART 4); RABO DE NUBE; NKOSI SIKELI' I AFRIKA; SANDINO; SPIRITUAL.* (48:43)

**Personnel:** Haden, bass; Tom Harrell, trumpet, flugelhorn; Earl Gardner, trumpet; Roy Anderson, trombone; Ken McIntyre, alto saxophone; Branford Marsalis (cuts 1, 5), Dewey Redman (2-4), tenor saxophone; Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone, flute; Sharon Freeman, french horn; Joe Daley, tuba; Amina Claudine Myers, piano; Mick Goodrick, guitar; Paul Motian, drums; Don Alias, percussion; Juan Lazzaro Mendolas, pan pipes, wood flutes; Oakland Youth Chorus (1, 5); Carla Bley, conductor.

★★★★★

It's been 21 years since the first recording of the Liberation Music Orchestra, and its message is no less meaningful or urgent today. How rare it is to hear music—beautiful, inspiring music—with a conscience and a soul. True, music is an abstract, non-rhetorical art form, but here the themes, from El Salvador, Cuba, Venezuela, the Spanish Civil War, and South Africa, create an extramusical backdrop which helps promote an awareness of war and other social and political injustices.

The LMO emphasizes involvement and cooperation in deed as well as thought. The main thrust of the music is in ensemble; the soloists blend into the fabric of the arrangements and are supported by the orchestra. (Credit Carla Bley's brush for the subtle touches—such as pan pipes and trombone behind Ken McIntyre's alto on "Canto Del Pilon 1"—as well as the broad strokes.) Though the orchestra's personnel has changed somewhat, certain constants remain from the band's previous recordings on Impulse and ECM. Bley's rich arrangements make characteristic use of tuba, french horn, and massed brass, and she once more weaves a striking medley, threading her haunting setting of Langston Hughes' poem "As I Grew Older" in and out of the traditional material on the title composition. Mick Goodrick's acoustic guitar again lends a tranquil authenticity to the Spanish moods, echoing the late Sam Brown on the group's debut. But there are new details, too. The rip-snorting trombone role has passed from Roswell Rudd to Gary Valente to, here, Roy Anderson. Tom Harrell's bright, piercing trumpet replaces Don Cherry's pluck. Ken McIntyre brings a unique sizzle to

his solos. And the Oakland Youth Chorus adds a special poignance to "Dream Keeper" and "Spiritual."

The music may lack the boiling undercurrent of rage and near-chaos that so energized their debut, but this is replaced by a sense of solidarity and resolve. At the center of it all is the warm, human sound of Haden's bass, soloing eloquently, and providing the foundation for the passion and intensity of the saxophonists in "Nkosi Sikeleli Afrika," the vibrancy of "Feliciano Ama," "Rabo De Nube"'s longing, and the affirmation of Haden's own "Spiritual." The dream is safe in his hands. (reviewed on CD)

—Art Lange



## KEITH JARRETT

**TRIBUTE**—ECM 847 135-2: *LOVER MAN (Lee Konitz); I HEAR A RHAPSODY (Jim Hall); LITTLE GIRL BLUE (Nancy Wilson); SOLAR (Bill Evans); SUN PRAYER; JUST IN TIME (Charlie Parker); SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES (Coleman Hawkins); ALL OF YOU (Miles Davis); BALLAD OF THE SAD YOUNG MEN (Anita O'Day); ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE (Sonny Rollins); IT'S EASY TO REMEMBER (John Coltrane); U DANCE.* (54:29/60:40)

**Personnel:** Jarrett, piano; Gary Peacock, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

★★★★½

**EXPECTATIONS**—Columbia CK 46866: *EXPECTATIONS; TAKE ME BACK; THE CIRCULAR LETTER (FOR J.K.); SUNDANCE; BRING BACK THE TIME WHEN (IF); THERE IS A ROAD (GOD'S RIVER); VISION; COMMON MAMA; THE MAGICIAN IN YOU; ROUSSILLON; NOMADS.* (77:43)

**Personnel:** Jarrett, piano, soprano saxophone (cuts 2-5,8,10), tambourine (2,5,8,11), organ (11); Charlie Haden, bass; Paul Motian, drums; Sam Brown, guitar; Dewey Redman, tenor saxophone; Aírto Moreira, drums, percussion; unidentified strings and brass.

★★★★½

Keith Jarrett's Standards Trio has played a central role in jazz's recent re-acquaintance with "standards," those songs made famous by America's great pop songwriters (Gershwin, Porter, Berlin, etc.); or, in the case of jazz, songs also associated with their composers and/or players. In most cases, the attention being given has been a little hard to swallow: displaced musicians, due primarily to age, playing "Stardust" or "My Funny Valentine" do little to recreate the world in which the music was originally made, and played. Yes, there are always exceptions. *Tribute*, a live recording from 1989 (and their best yet), is one of them. *Expectations*, originally a two-record set from

1972, has become Jarrett's one and only album for Columbia (thanks to idiotic purging of real jazz by then-President of CBS Clive Davis; remember when the label had Ornette Coleman, Charles Mingus, and Bill Evans?). The music is as different from *Tribute* as Jarrett's solo-piano recitals. Given their respective contexts, it's a real treat to hear these discs side by side.

For Jarrett, there may be a bit of inherent wisdom in retaining the facile team of Gary Peacock and Jack DeJohnette. The last 15 years or so have demonstrated that successful bridging of generations is easier said than done. This is particularly true when the repertoire is on the traditional side. Cute, cloying renditions are the standard with standards, unfortunately, perhaps reflecting unease with the material, or some kind of need to remake the music in one's own image. Not so in the case of *Tribute*, a stunning musical communion that finds Jarrett, Peacock, and DeJohnette swinging their little asses off one moment, playing it slow, delicate, and heartfelt the next.

Playing it relatively straight, and respectful, the trio's interpretations are true to the music's essence. For all three, the music forms (and informs) their respective approaches. The result? Sustained interaction and ongoing musical conversations. "Just In Time"'s bounce and drive speak to the song's joyous intentions of love found in the face of doubt and fear. Each member comes, shares, and leaves as the song works its way along. "Lover Man"'s swinging, soulful, medium-tempo treatment is preceded by a one-minute Jarrett intro—the man's romanticism is in full bloom. In most cases, it's obvious the melodies have them spellbound: They can't let go of "It's Easy To Remember," having run the changes and solos, they return one more time before closing.

None of the tributes were written by the ones being tributed (listed in parentheses above). It would have been interesting to know the reasoning behind the selections, the trio's personal connections to artist and song. In any event, DeJohnette's playing is his best since his '70s days with the Directions and New Directions bands. Peacock's crucial presence keeps the trio together. And Jarrett's lush chromaticism and gritty swing (with Jerry Lewis impersonations thankfully under-recorded) make the ballads slow-dance delights and uptempo numbers cause for celebration. Of the two Jarrett songs, "Sun Prayer" and "U Dance," it's "U Dance"'s mildly engaging Latin feel that mars an otherwise perfect album.

As for 1972's *Expectations*, the music holds up better than ever. (How many jazz albums from that era can you say *that* about?) For some reason, the song sequence has been reversed for the CD: sides 1 and 2 are reversed, as are 3 and 4. The afro and tie-dyed shirt are gone, but Jarrett's lasting musical eclecticism—thanks, in large part, to a recent stint in Miles' band—comes shining through in a set of 11 originals that, oddly enough, do not include one number that "swings." Ornette's influence is keenly felt throughout "The Circular Letter (For J.K.)," "Bring Back The Time When (If)," and "Roussillon"; Jarrett's propensity for soul and funk reinvent the genre on "Take Me Back," "The Magician In You," and "Common Mama"; and his orchestral pieces, "Expecta-

tions," "Sundance," "Vision," "Common Mama," and "Nomads," suggest a real gift for working with larger ensembles.

Brothers in arms Haden, Motian, Redman, the late, underrated Sam Brown, and Airtio all evoke images and memories of a time when collaborations could produce just about anything. Seen together, it's hard to say which album—*Tribute* or *Expectations*—better addresses the potentials of jazz. (reviewed on CD)  
—John Ephland



## STEVE LACY AND MAL WALDRON

**HOT HOUSE**—Novus 3098: *HOUSE PARTY STARTING; HOT HOUSE; I'LL KEEP LOVING YOU; FRIDAY THE 13TH; MISTRAL BREEZE; THE MOOCHE; PETITE FLEUR; SNAKE OUT; RETREAT.* (54:28)

**Personnel:** Lacy, soprano saxophone; Waldron, piano.

★ ★ ★

## STEVE LACY WITH DON CHERRY

**EVIDENCE**—Prestige/New Jazz OJCCD-1755-2: *THE MYSTERY SONG; EVIDENCE; LET'S COOL ONE; SAN FRANCISCO HOLIDAY; SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR; WHO KNOWS.* (34:00)

**Personnel:** Lacy, soprano saxophone; Cherry, trumpet; Carl Brown, acoustic bass; Billy Higgins, drums.

★ ★ ★

The vast scope of Steve Lacy's career precludes any definitive representation by just two recordings. You're doing well to find a single pair of albums that speak to one phase of Lacy's evolution with any real authority. Though they were recorded almost 30 years apart, *Hot House* and *Evidence* convey considerable insight into the iconography of Lacy's formative years, and how Bechet, Ellington, Monk, and others have since loomed large in his music.

There's just one problem. These are not very compelling collections. One reason is the restrained temperament Lacy has always brought to this material, a striving for correctness best exemplified by his well-documented faithfulness to Monk's compositions. It even rubs off on Don Cherry throughout much of the 1961 New Jazz date. Only a few of Cherry's surprisingly unprovocative solos, such as his rollicking take on Monk's "San Francisco Holiday," suggest he was riding shotgun on Ornette Coleman's Shermanesque march

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see

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APRIL 28

Wichita Jazz Festival, KS

MAY 2-5

Otter Crest Jazz Weekend, OR

MAY 9-12

Central Park West, Los Angeles, CA

MAY 17 & 18

Horton Grand Hotel, San Diego, CA

MAY 19

Tucson Jazz Society, AZ

MAY 20

Four Queens Casino, Las Vegas, NV

MAY 22 & 23

Yoshi's, San Francisco, CA

MAY 24-27

Sante Fe Jazz Weekend, NM

MAY 28-30

Dakota Bar & Grill, Minneapolis, MN

May 31 & June 1

Pops for Champagne, Chicago, IL



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through jazz orthodoxy. (reviewed on CD)

The recital ambiance of *Hot House* points up more discrete factors. There is a notable difference in Mal Waldron's familiarity and ease with a sizeable portion of the program from Lacy's. Pianist Waldron is a major stylist, whose stripped-down left hand, tightly knitted voicings, and chisled, permutative lines are responsible for some of the deepest and most satisfying blues ever waxed. Yet, as on Herbie Nichols' sly "House Party Starting" and Bechet's supple "Petite Fleur," Waldron often seems cautious, even heavy-handed, retreating into his own vocabulary rather than tackling the composition. (reviewed on cassette)

Yet, these collections contain some very real, if unexpected, pleasures. Lacy and Cherry nail "The Mystery Song," tapping the sensuous, haunting nuances of this lesser-known 1932 Ellington composition. Bud Powell's poignant ballad, "I'll Keep Loving You," receives a glowing-embers reading from Lacy and Waldron. No less predictable are Lacy's best solos, including a streamlined stretch on "Evidence" and pungent phrase-turning on "Let's Cool One."

*Hot House* and *Evidence* may be a cut below, respectively, *Sempre Amore* (Soul Note SN 1170) and *Reflections* (Prestige/New Jazz OJCCD 063-2), but they are, nonetheless, substantive statements from major artists.

—Bill Shoemaker



## STING

**THE SOUL CAGES**—A&M 75021 6405 2:  
*ISLAND OF SOULS; ALL THIS TIME; MAD ABOUT YOU; JEREMIAH BLUES (PART 1); WHY SHOULD I CRY FOR YOU; SAINT AGNES AND THE BURNING TRAIN; THE WILD WILD SEA; THE SOUL CAGES; WHEN THE ANGELS FALL.* (48:18)

**Personnel:** *Sting, vocals, bass, synclavier, mandolin; Manu Katche, drums; Kenny Kirkland, David Sancious, keyboards; Dominic Miller, guitars; Branford Marsalis, saxophone; Kathryn Tickell, northumbrian pipes; Paola Paparella, oboe; Ray Cooper, Vinx, Bill Summers, Munyungo Jackson, Skip Burney, Tony Vacca, percussion.*

★ ★ ½

If this were Sting's debut album, he might be heralded as a rising star. But given that he's

one of the pop world's bona-fide superstars, there's a lot more to be expected from him than what we find on *The Soul Cages*, which has its inspired moments but also drones on through long stretches of musical listlessness. Most of the songs do rise above standard pop fare. Generally, there is careful attention given to quality lyrics, Sting's inimitable tenor is in fine shape, and his band of well-polished musicians is tight. Plus, the sonic quality via the new audio recording technology called QSound is topnotch. But where's the passion, where's the soul to these songs? Apparently, even though Sting sings of swimming toward the light on the dynamic title number, his tortured soul—like the drowned sailors at the mercy of the Poseidon figure in the song—has been trapped in a lobster cage for most of the other numbers on the album.

Sting paints a dreary world with the ghost of his shipbuilding father a haunting presence throughout. Purportedly, the ex-Police man underwent a cathartic experience penning these tunes as a way of overcoming writer's block. But in their delivery, there's little evidence of his emotional purging, with one exception being the upbeat, jazzy "Jeremiah Blues (Part 1)," where Sting dives into the tune and releases the band from its mooring to give the album a well-needed instrumental punch with dreamy piano tinklings, snarling guitar lines, and playful sax meanderings. Even though the opening tune, "Island of Souls," is a provocative



## MULE BONES AND SAXOPHONES

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Also Available: **Taj Mahal/TAJ** (Gramavision 79433)

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(Gramavision 79462)

These James Brown alumni prove to be the epitome of funk and form one of the tightest horn sections in music, as they combine elements of funk, jazz, and R&B for a soulful collection that will excite any music lover.

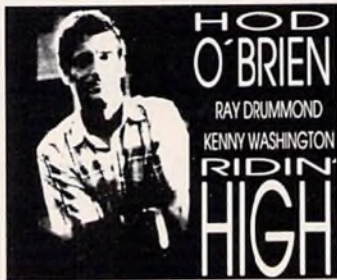


GRAMAVISION

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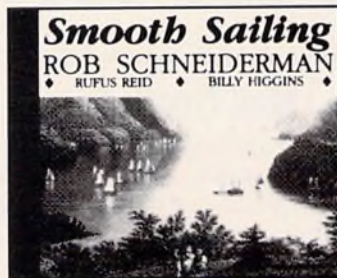
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## record & cd reviews

short story that sets the scene for the rest of Sting's journey, it is sung with such cool detachment that an ardent response by the listener is imperiled.

Highlights include "All This Time," a basic uptempo pop song with percolating guitar and mandolin rhythms, and "Aunt Agnes And The

Burning Train," a breezy instrumental with a Mediterranean music flavor that is surprisingly simple and joyous. Low points are the unsubstantial "Why Should I Cry For You" and "When The Angels Fall," an overly-long musing that may have worked without the superfluous two-minute fade. (reviewed on CD) —*Dan Ouellette*

## (MOSTLY) GOLDEN GOLSON

by Frank-John Hadley

**H**ear the name **Benny Golson** and flash on "I Remember Clifford," "Whisper Not," and "Stablemates." These everlasting supernovas and a jazz firmament full of more scintillating Golson songs, many newly-appointed, give convincing evidence of the 62-year-old *bel esprit's* tremendous composing and arranging acumen. But let's not overlook his artistry that extends beyond the pen: Benny's an outstanding tenor player who distills the essence of mainstream jazz without evincing any signs of conservativeness and predictability.

The ongoing reissue avalanche affords us ready access to several dates featuring Golson's handiwork. First along chronologically is *The Other Side Of Benny Golson* (Riverside OJCCD-1750-2; 37:41; ★★★); a 1958 blowing session which points up the burgeoning instrumental facility of a Jazz Messenger who even early on in his jazz life was known best as an arranger (for Dizzy's big band) and a writer (for Donald Byrd, myriad others). Enjoying his coming-out bash, Golson throws caution to the wind in roused-by-Trane-and-Byas choruses on a passable set divided between originals and borrowed tunes. His rapid-fire fingers, however, outrace the rise of ideas and muddy his emotional vitality. A young Curtis Fuller on trombone, meeting up with the technically imposing saxophonist for the first time, solos facily, if none too expressively, in a J.J. Johnson bag. Themes are together handled with ingratiating spirit ("Strut Time," "Jubilation"), sinking heart ("Blue Tear"), or robotic dispassion ("Are You Real?"). To the album's benefit, Miles Davis' drummer Philly Joe Jones is *always* right there, a quiet, strong presence.

Golson and trumpeter Art Farmer's *Meet The Jazztet* (MCA CHD-91550; 40:27; ★★★½), first released in 1960, provides more pleasure. It forever profits from you-know-who's bright-eyed, punching arrangements and compositions ("Clifford," "Blues March," "Killer Joe," "Park Ave. Petite"), a perceptive, productive frontline (the co-leaders plus Fuller), and a lay-it-on-the-line rhythm section (pianist McCoy Tyner, drummer Lex Humphries, and Art's brother Addison on bass). This short-lived edition of the Jazztet swings with soul-dripping energy as it puts across the themes and riffs to 10 songs, disappointing only on speed demons "Avalon" and "Serenata." Soloist Golson's uptempo playing has more warmth and coherence than in '58, and on the ballad "Easy Living" he tugs on his heart, fostering a harmonically rich romanticism worthy of influ-



DAVID WORKMAN

Jazztet some: (l-r) McCoy Tyner, Art Farmer, Addison Farmer, Benny Golson

ences Don Byas and Lucky Thompson. Farmer, a respected veteran at 31, sings melodic phrases stirring on the medium and fast numbers. He fills "Clifford" with lyricism. Fuller draws from a well of inspiration in his feature spots.

A few years after the Jazztet shut down in 1962, Golson disappeared into the bowels of Tinseltown to write for television and the big screen. By 1980, at long last, he and tenor were back on the jazz scene. *California Message* (Timeless/Bellaphon CDSJP 177; 46:45; ★★), however, casts a decided pall. Addressing his own evergreens and new songs, Golson the improviser isn't impressive, save for his sophisticated embracement of "Clifford." Furthermore, the ubiquitous Fuller sounds emotionally gauche and the electric piano of Bill Mays is frosty.

Golson would soon rebound. The reorganized Jazztet's *Moment To Moment* (Soul Note) and a workout with Fuller entitled *One More Memory* (Timeless) furnished proof of his spontaneity, fervent imagination, and unflagging sparkle. Another notable album, *Time Speaks* (Timeless/Bellaphon CDSJP 187; 49:40; ★★★), now reissued, sees Golson spurred by the redoubtable trumpeters Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw, and by pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Cecil McBee, and Ben Riley at the traps. Golson steadies himself after some irresolutely expressed excitement on opener "I'll Remember April" and makes his improv on five decently arranged songs display a commanding personal vision. On a session "dedicated to the memory of Clifford Brown," the six stellar musicians suggest some of the crackling fire and beauty of the Brown/Roach quintet—savor Duke Jordan's "Jordu" (a Max and Brownie favorite), Golson's "No Dancin'," and the Shavian waltz, "Theme For Maxine." Hubbard and Shaw, with their distinct tones and attacks, are most worthy scions of Brown throughout. (all reviewed on CD)

DB



## PONCHO SANCHEZ

**CAMBIOS**—Concord Picante CCD-4439: *Yes-Terdays; El Sabroso; Cambios; My Foolish Heart; Hey Bud; Insight; In A Sentimental Mood; Pique; Sky Dive; Chanko.* (57:51)

**Personnel:** Sanchez, congas, percussion, lead vocals; David Torres, piano; Tony Banda, bass, vocals; Ramon Banda, timbales, percussion; Sal Cracchiolo, trumpet, flugelhorn; Art Velasco, trombone, vocals; Gene Burkert, alto and tenor sax, flute; Jose "Papa" Rodriguez, bongos, percussion, vocals; Freddie Hubbard, trumpet, flugelhorn (cuts 1,4,9).

★ ★ ★

## DANIEL PONCE

**CHANGO TE LLAMA**—Mango 162 539 877-2: *Chango Te Llama; Bacalaitos; Mas Blues; Oferere; Bilongone; Midnight Mambo; Latin Perspective; Recoje Y Vete.* (39:18)

**Personnel:** Ponce, congas, shekere, bata drums; Oscar Hernandez, piano, synthesizer; Sal Cuevas, bass; Robbie Ameen, drums (1-7); Steve Berrios, drums (8), bata drums (4); Marc Quiñones, timbales; David "Piro" Rodriguez, trumpet (1,2,4,5,8); Mike Mossman, trumpet (3,6), flugelhorn (7); Angel "Popo" Vasquez, trombone; Mario Rivera, flute (1,7,8), tenor sax (2,4,5); David Sanchez, tenor sax (3,6,8); Edgardo Miranda, cuatro (2,8), guitar (4); Joe Gonzalez, guiro (2,5,8); Hector Hernandez, bata drums (4); Tito Allen, Milton Cardona, vocals (1,2,4,5,8)

★ ★ ★ ½

Two conga drummers, Daniel Ponce, a Cuban-American based in New York, and Poncho Sanchez, a Mexican-American from Los Angeles, approach Latin jazz from different perspectives: Ponce's music is jazz-flavored salsa, while Sanchez's is salsa-flavored jazz. Recent albums by another *conguero*, Jerry Gonzalez, have refreshed an idiom as old as bebop itself. But here, the music, though amiable and polished, never strays far from established formulas.

Daniel Ponce knew nothing of jazz before arriving in the U.S. in 1980, but learned fast; his blinding hand speed and expressive touch quickly made him a session favorite. His solo career has been more problematic: his debut album goosed Afro-Cuban tradition with avant-electronics; the follow-up made a crossover stab with fusion charts and recombinant rhythms; and now, *Chango Te Llama* finds him still groping for direction with a repertoire split between jazzed-up and dance-ready material—mostly uptempo and all original. Produced by pianist Oscar Hernandez, the album often recalls the sound of salsa in its mid-'70s

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**THE NURTURER**—Blue Note 95139: *NIGHT'S SHADOW*; *NO. 3*; *IT'S GOOD TO BE HOME AGAIN*; *MARCUS' TIME*; *NIGHT OF POWER*; *OUR GANG*; *SILENCE AND THE SONG*/*THE NURTURER*; *LE GOO WOP*; *LULLABY OF ISFAHAN*.

**Personnel:** Allen, piano; Marcus Belgrave, trumpet; Kenny Garrett, alto saxophone; Robert Hurst, bass; Jeff Watts, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

While a bumper crop of young jazz pianists go about exploring "the tradition," Geri Allen has attended the business of exploring the tradition of exploring. Allen's appealing musical attributes extend organically from inside to outside and back. Refreshingly, she is not obsessed with the display of pyrotechnics, nor the easy quotation of her historical antecedents.

Quite apart from her collaborative efforts, most notably in the trio with Paul Motian and

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# record & cd reviews

Charlie Haden, Allen the leader has produced albums that are probing and—in a healthy sense—unsettled. *The Nurturer* is actually more contiguous—more of a piece—than earlier Allen albums, but not so rigid that it would exclude brief interlude pieces which nicely disrupt any conventional sense of pacing.

If tags count for anything, Allen's milieu of choice is a kind of post-hard-bop quintet vernacular. But she takes such delicious departures as on "Marcus' Time," in which a boppish melody and joyful fours-trading skitter atop Watt's New Orleans-flavored drum-kit lankiness.

Allen's ensemble for this recording contributes mightily to the overall intrigue and integrity of the outing. It is a group effort from the opening tune, "Night's Shadow," and the band achieves a few yeasty moments with a Henry Threadgill-like looseness. As he demonstrates too infrequently on the Miles Davis gig, saxophonist Kenny Garrett improvises systemically, with motifs and directions that loop around and follow some elusive but ultimately binding logic.

Allen's own solos typically manage an adept balancing act: eloquence and self-examination. The combination is a rare one, and the mark of an artist tethered to her own sense of rhyme and reason—and no one else's. (reviewed on cassette) —*Josef Woodard*



## SHEILA JORDAN

**LOST AND FOUND**—Muse MCD 5390: *THE VERY THOUGHT OF YOU; GOOD MORNING HEARTACHE; ALONE TOGETHER; THE WATER IS WIDE; ANTHROPOLOGY; LOST IN THE STARS; I CONCENTRATE ON YOU; MY SHINING HOUR/WE'LL BE TOGETHER AGAIN.* (48:10)

**Personnel:** Jordan, vocals; Kenny Barron, piano; Harvie Swartz, bass; Ben Riley, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

## BETTY CARTER

**DROPPIN' THINGS**—Verve 843 991-2: *30 YEARS; STAR DUST/MEMORIES OF YOU; WHAT'S THE USE OF WOND'RING; OPEN THE DOOR '90; DROPPIN'*

*THINGS; I LOVE MUSIC; WHY HIM; DULL DAY (IN CHICAGO).* (61:40)

**Personnel:** Carter, vocals; Marc Cary, Geri Allen (cut 2), piano; Torus Mateen, bass; Gregory Hutchinson, drums; Freddie Hubbard, trumpet (4,5,7,8); Craig Handy, tenor saxophone (4,5,7,8).

★ ★ ★ ★

Today, master singers Betty Carter and Sheila Jordan are smiling. Carter's in her glory with a second Verve title whose appeal extends beyond devotees to casual jazz fans. Betty Bebop's achieved her commercial triumphs without sacrificing any of the artistic integrity that has stood her in good stead some 40 years. Jordan, another unyielding and inveterate individualist, is enjoying the release of her first album in the States since the mid-'80s, thanks to Joe Field's Muse label.

Carter's latest is a New York club performance from May 1990. It, of course, showcases an unerringly precise, luccent alto voice—one of the most instantly recognizable in jazz—taking the risks of an especially creative instrumentalist. Surprising divisions of notes, intervallic agility, easeful changes in key and tempo, poignant use of silence, and careful attention to dynamics are part and parcel of her great artistry. For the Bottom Line shows,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40

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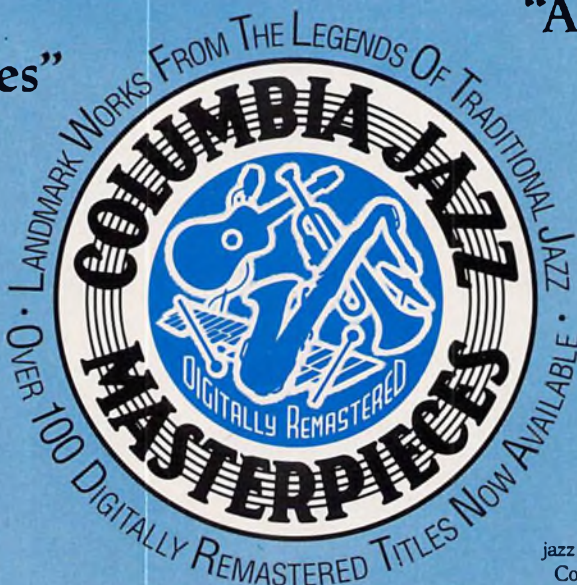
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## WHITHER JELLY ROLL?

by Art Lange

**D**id he really invent jazz, as he claimed to have done? It's impossible to say, of course, but there's no doubt that **Jelly**

**Roll Morton** was one of the crucial midwives who presided over its birth, circa this century's first and second decade. Now, RCA/Bluebird's five-CD set, *The Jelly Roll Morton Centennial: His Complete Victor Recordings* (2361-2-RB-B; 72:06/74:00/62:48/67:11/65:52: ★★★★★), gives us occasion to reconsider his role as innovator, and his residual influence today.

These are not Morton's first recordings (those ear-opening solos and various small groups from 1923 and '24 were last available on Milestone LPs) nor final ones (1940 dates, currently on Commodore); they're not even, precisely, his "complete" output for Victor. (Collectors will note that 17 performances included on French RCA's four double-LP releases of *The Complete* . . . —where he backs blues singers or appears under slapstick gaspipe clarinetist Wilton Crawley's "leadership"—aren't here.) But they are a meaty slice of musical

Americana, some of the greatest Early Jazz and earliest Great Jazz we have.

What gives his claim credibility, given our hindsight and the period's scanty documentation, is the fact that Morton formalized structural elements from ragtime along with New Orleans ensemble polyphony, with a grace and grandeur still striking. His solo piano recordings reveal that he *thought* with a composer's sense of form and an arranger's ear for diversity and balance, so that when he "orchestrated" for seven instruments the music's drama is a tug-of-war between surprise and inevitability. 1926-'27 classics like "Smoke House Blues," "The Pearls," and "Wolverine Blues" are stately, confident, and brilliantly organized; more adventurous uses of color and contrasting moods, such as the three clarinets on "Dead Man Blues" and the violin and bass clarinet on "Someday Sweetheart" are audacious and deeply moving. "Wild Man Blues" even sports doubletime sections anticipating Monk's "Brilliant Corners."

Why, then, are the later, larger groups less satisfying, especially when compared to contemporaneous work by Ellington and Armstrong? For one thing, Morton seemed chained to New Orleans rhythms long after swing was in (he persisted in using tuba instead of string bass, and, except for Baby

Dodds, chose dull drummers). Too, his fondness for "sweet" music and desire for popularity got in the way, so that his later pieces were too song-oriented, lacking the riffs, breaks, and concise formal details that invigorated his small ensembles. He never found a compatible conception for big band. And finally, the rise of the virtuoso (thanks to Armstrong) took the music's emphasis away from the composer. Compare the role of a trusty, self-effacing George Mitchell or Ward Pinkett—warm, substantial, and devoted to the arrangement—with the dazzle of a Red Allen; arrangements loosened to allow individual freedom, texture was lost, and the character of the composition suffered. So minor gems like "Blue Blood Blues," "Little Lawrence," or "New Orleans Bump" (a painfully obvious Ellington imitation) were the exception.

Morton's best music is unique, indispensable, exhilarating; in it we hear values and concepts expanded upon by not only Monk and John Lewis, but Charles Mingus (who acknowledged his debt with "My Jelly Roll Soul"), Andrew Hill, Anthony Braxton, Henry Threadgill. Two CDs would have given us *only* his best; five CDs may be more than anyone save the hardcore listener needs. But if you love jazz, you need to know Jelly Roll. **DB**

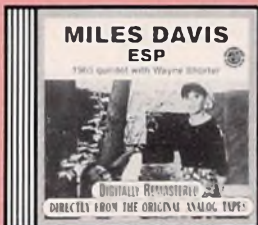
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 38

this strong woman—an exemplary parent, businessperson, songwriter, and musician—chose to do swinging updates of vintage originals ("Open The Door," "Someone Else Will Grow Old, Too" now called "30 Years," the instrumental "Jumps" transformed with lyric added into "Droppin' Things"); scat caprices ("I Love Music," "Dull Day"), and a couple stirring ballads ("What's The Use," "Why Him"). Straddling slow tempos is her forte, and the "Star Dust/Memories" medley cut in the studio with kindred spirit Geri Allen on piano becomes an unforgettable wonderment for the Brooklynites' lightness and discriminating curiosity in the phrasing. Yes, Allen's a compelling player, and so are Carter's concert *enlants terribles*—pianist Marc Cary in particular, whose precision and lucidity of statement dwarfs that of stage guests Freddie Hubbard and Craig Handy.

Hearing Jordan (a criminally underrecorded contemporary of Carter's who also knows bebop inside out), improvise the melodies and rhythms of "Alone Together" and Bird's "Anthropology" is worth the price of *Lost And Found*. But she's at her most gripping when imbuing words with emotion of incalculable weight. Her gently authoritative voice, almost never middle-age cloudy, gets to the essential core of Billie Holiday's "Good Morning Heartache"—where defiance, vulnerability, and sensuality exist as her own, not Lady Day's.

(Equally eloquent interpretations of Holiday songs are found on Jordan's altogether superb *Portrait Of Sheila*, her debut album in 1962, reissued on Blue Note.) Whether singing in remembrance of Norwegian vocalist Radka Toneff on Kurt Weill's "Lost In The Stars" or guiding her ruminant vocal instrument through the folkloric Scottish ballad "The Water Is Wide," Jordan offers a nosegay of heart and soul.

Also, Kenny Barron, given plenty of solo spots on this one- or two-takes session, along with drummer Ben Riley and Jordan's onetime working partner Harvie Swartz manning bass, echo her musical/emotional sophistication. (reviewed on CD)

—Frank-John Hadley



## MEL LEWIS JAZZ ORCHESTRA

**TO YOU (A TRIBUTE TO MEL LEWIS)**—MusicMasters 5054-2-C: PAPER SPOONS; 5½ WEEKS; A NIGHTINGALE SANG IN BERKELEY SQUARE; NOCTURNE; ABC BLUES; BOB BROOKMEYER; TO YOU. (62:49)

**Personnel:** Earl Gardner, Joe Mosello, Glenn Drewes, Jim Powell, trumpets, flugelhorns; John Mosca, Ed Neumeister, Douglas Purviance, Earl McIntyre, trombones; Stephanie Fauber, french horn; Dick Oatts, Ted Nash, Joe Lovano, Ralph Lalama, Gary Smulyan, woodwinds; Kenny Werner, piano; Dennis Irwin, bass; Dennis Mackrel, drums.

★★★★

The easy thing is to get sentimental about Mel's death. You feel this keenly on the title tune, a lovely piece by Thad Jones, Mel's co-leader in the early days. Then there are the tasteful drum fills, so remindful of Mel throughout the album. Mel picked his successor well. The hard part is to not get too sentimental. Musical stasis could occur, and this band has never been stuck in a particular bag. It won't be now, judging by the charts by Jim McNeely, Nash, Neumeister, Werner, and Bob Brookmeyer, the band's godfather, on this album.

It has been said previously, but Thad and Mel made complexity swing. There's a legacy

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of buoyant density—if that isn't a contradiction in terms—in the writing and playing of this band. The younger writers have taken the concept and run with it. A lot happens in a chart like Nash's "5½ Weeks," a bossa nova, but it's all very mobile. You can tell that the band has been together a long time because of the shading and phrasing.

Brookmeyer exercised a strong influence on the band with charts like "ABC Blues," "Willow Tree," and "Willow, Weep For Me" in its formative years in the '60s, and he helped again when Thad left in 1978. The band revisits "ABC," which sounds as fresh as it did on that first album in 1966, and Werner's "Bob Brookmeyer" follows in tribute to the master's concert-style writing. McNeely's humorous "Paper Spoons," Werner's "Nocturne," and Neumeister's arrangement of "Nightingale" suggest both Thad and Brookmeyer.

I'm partial to the old albums, but this one is fine. It proves that life goes on and reiterates the 25-year impact of Thad's writing and Mel's touch, taste, and leadership. That tough and beautiful New York wall of sound, now known as the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, rises again. (reviewed on CD) —Owen Cordle



## WORLD SAXOPHONE QUARTET AND AFRICAN DRUMS

**METAMORPHOSIS**—Elektra Nonesuch 79258-2: *THE HOLY MAN; LULLABY; METAMORPHOSIS; SU MAMA AH ZUMU; AFRICA; BALLAD FOR THE BLACK MAN; MASAI WARRIORS DANCE; LOVE LIKE SISTERS; LO CHI LO; FEED THE PEOPLE.* (61:32)

**Personnel:** Oliver Lake, alto and soprano saxes, flute (cut 2); David Murray, tenor sax, bass clarinet (5); Homier Bluiett, baritone sax; Arthur Blythe, alto sax; Mor Thiam, gmba, gabala, gum gum, rain stick, bgno, vocals (2,3); Chief Bey, asiko, signal drum, shakere; Mar Gueye, limbo, m'beum m'beum, gring m'biss m'biss; Melvin Gibbs, electric bass (1,2,5).

★★★★★

At last, a World Saxophone Quartet album for the feet as well as the head and heart. The WSQ has always been capable of creating fierce momentum without a rhythm section through the phrasing, comping, and interplay of their four horns. Bluiett's "Hattie Wall" from '87's *Dances And Ballads* and his arrangement of "Night Train" from '89's *Rhythm And Blues* are prime examples of that.

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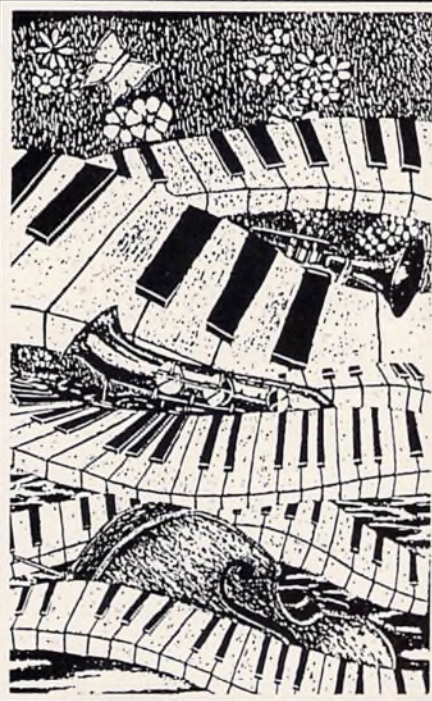
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The drums, of course, add meat to WSQ's formula, grounding their harmonic abstractions and raucous blasts with a churning undercurrent that slowly insinuates itself on your body's dance mechanism. Enthralling grooves like Lake's "Africa," Bluiett's "Masai Warriors Dance," and Murray's "Su Mama Ah Zumu" are hard to resist. And those same driving polyrhythms push Murray to some cathartic, Aylesque heights on his somber "Ballad Of The Black Man" and the rousing finale, Bluiett's 11-minute urgent plea, "Feed The People."

Blythe proves to be a valuable addition to

the group (having replaced charter member and principal composer Julius Hemphill). He contributed the title cut, a swaggering bit of freebop cacophony that grooves as it screams, and he burns in a spirited alto duel with Lake on "Africa," which also features some marvelous bass clarinet skronking by Murray. Another high moment in this remarkably strong album is Murray's churchy anthem, "Lo Chi Lo," in which everybody gets off with sanctified intensity.

So far, all four WSQ projects on Elektra Nonesuch have been concept albums. This is one concept that clicked in a big way. (reviewed on CD)  
—Bill Milkowski

## FROM PITY TO PARTY

by Larry Birnbaum

**T**he blues has long been stereotyped as music of gloom and doom, but recent releases show the balance tipping toward party sounds that won't put a tear in anyone's beer. As gut feeling and up-from-the-roots experience give way to studied imitation and flashy technique, established Southern and Midwestern artists are brushed aside in favor of fresh, mostly white

talent from the East and West Coasts. Fortunately, it's not all sunshine and roses: old masters are still being discovered in the blues cradles of Mississippi and New Orleans; Chicago veterans are still raising sand; and some new faces are actually seasoned journeymen who've paid enough dues to play the blues with conviction and flair.

**Elvin Bishop**, one of the first white electric blues guitarists, saw his solo career soar in the '70s, only to slump through the following decade. *Don't Let The Bossman Get You Down!* (Alligator ALCD 4791; 39:45; ★★½) finds him recycling good-timey roadhouse riffs with little of his early intensity. Never much of a singer,

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Elvin Bishop: on cruise control

PAUL NATHAN

Bishop raps goofily and tears off stinging guitar runs over his band's crisp horn lines, but mostly he just coasts. Like Bishop, **Tom Principato** is less a strict blues stylist than an all-around guitarist with a bent for rock, country, and jazz. He and his band, **Powerhouse**, touch all the bases on *In Orbit* (Powerhouse POW 4032 CD; 41:52: ★★★), from '40s jump to New Orleans r&b, Western swing, and Memphis blues. Principato's glossy guitar shows the influence of Les Paul and Chet Atkins as well as B.B. King, but his singing is lackluster, leaving tenor sax legend Sil Austin's two guest spots to highlight the album.

**Chris Cain** sticks closer to the blues on *Cuttin' Loose* (Blind Pig BP-74090; 45:41: ★★★), with jazzy B.B. and Albert King-inspired guitar and vocals that catch every nuance of B.B.'s timbre without any of the passion. His band is taut and supple, but his self-written material—not quite authentic, not quite original—soon wears thin. Also from the West Coast, **Rod Piazza and the Mighty Flyers** are laid-back and rootsy on *Blues In The Dark* (Black Top CD BT-1062; 50:47: ★★★). Piazza has Little Walter's harmonica style down cold, but when he concentrates on vocals, the music runs out of steam. **Little Charlie and the Nightcats** feature the tag-team of guitarist Charlie Baty and harpist/singer Rick Estrin. Recorded at two California clubs, *Captured Live!* (Alligator ALCD 4794; 57:05: ★★★) is studio slick and emotionally shallow, with Baty and Estrin flaunting their chops between mannered Estrin vocals. The showy instrumental work palls on Chicago-style tunes, but Baty's giddy Western swing excursions are mesmerizing.

**Deanna Bogart** started off playing Western swing, but on *Out To Get You* (Blind Pig BP-73890; 39:24: ★★★½), she whips boogie, blues, country, jazz, and rock into a frothy cabaret blend that's more pop than blues. Her soft-core vocals and piano breeze through a repertoire of '40s-style novelty boogies and country-pop originals, with Danny Gatton's guest guitar solo on "Ethel's Place" flashing momentary intensity. By contrast, Roomful of Blues leader **Greg Piccolo** stays in one bag and grooves throughout his solo album, *Heavy Juice* (Black Top CD BT-1061; 46:58: ★★★½). Backed by present and former

Roomful members, all steeped in the brassy sound of the jump era, Piccolo keeps vocals to a minimum and lets his brawny, hot-blooded tenor sax do the honking on vintage tunes by the likes of Buddy Johnson, Roy Milton, and Jimmy Forrest. A blazing version of Albert Collins' 1958 hit "The Freeze," with Duke Robillard doing guitar honors, is as modern as it gets.

**Joe Louis Walker** gets thoroughly modern on *Live At Slim's* (HighTone HCD 8015; 53:55: ★★★). Like his former labelmate Robert Cray, this San Francisco singer/guitarist adds rock flavors to the soul-blues genre while purists once rejected as too commercial. More conventional than Cray, Walker can play slide like Muddy Waters but cuts deeper on Buddy-Guy- and Magic Sam-styled material, going beyond his models with arresting bursts of staccato picking. Though his lyrics rarely stray from familiar turf, his singing has the natural grain and gospel-trained power to communicate personal emotion in the true blues tradition, Huey Lewis' guest harp spot notwithstanding.

True blues are no stranger to **Johnny Littlejohn**, one of a shrinking pool of Mississippi-bred Chicagoans still grinding out the classic '50s sound. *Johnny Littlejohn's Blues Party* (Wolf 120.859: ★★★) includes tracks by Howlin' Wolf sound-alike Taildragger and bassist Willie Kent, whose raw voice is powerfully buoyed by Billy Branch's harp on "One More Mile." Littlejohn's own gruff, Muddyish vocals and keening Elmore James-like slide guitar have a deep-dyed, hard-luck-and-trouble authority. From the same Chicago Blues Session series comes *Magic Slim And Nick Holt And The Teardrops* (Wolf 120.856: ★★★½). Nicknamed by his friend Magic Sam, **Magic Slim** plodded his way to recognition after Sam flamed out, steadily tightening his grip on the mournful West Side groove. His and his bassist brother **Nick Holt's** roughhewn vocals have a down-home feel, and his guitar plumbs the depths of the blues without a trace of ostentation. (both reviewed on LP)

In a long career divided between Mississippi and New Orleans, singer/guitarist **Boogie Bill Webb** has absorbed much of this century's musical heritage, from ragtime, boogie, and the country blues of his mentor, Tommy Johnson, to urban blues, r&b, and soul. All that and more can be found on *Drinkin' And Stinkin'* (Flying Fish FF-70506; 43:56: ★★★½), produced by drummer and DB contributor Ben Sandmel, who strives valiantly to keep a beat behind Bill's erratic ramblings. Webb's raspy voice and ragged guitar have an eccentric charm, and his quirky version of King Curtis' "Soul Serenade" is downright psychedelic. More contemporary but earthier still are **Roosevelt "Booba" Barnes and the Playboys**, the weekend headliners at Barnes' club in Greenville, Mississippi. Backed only by bass and drums, Booba mimics Howlin' Wolf's harp, guitar, and vocals and mangles sleek modern tunes by Bobby Bland and Greenville's own Little Milton into rowdy gutbucket stomps on his debut album, *The Heartbroken Man* (Rooster Blues CD R72623; 54:39: ★★★). This is the Delta blues today, hog wild and catfish funky, not only a cathartic form of expression but an irresistible invitation to party down. (reviewed on CD except where noted) **DB**

hat

- expect the unexpected

warne marsh\*  
ne plus ultra



It's hard to understand why Warne Marsh was so neglected during his lifetime. It's harder still to substantiate the charges with which his music was branded - cerebral, cold, unemotional, uninvolved. This album alone, one of his best, should have been enough to put such absurd slurs to rest. The music on *Ne Plus Ultra* is intimate, warm, passionate, risky. There is much beauty to be shared.

Today, when it's rare to find real talent combined with an imaginative vision, we should value Marsh's total individuality. He was not one to shout, rather, his lines would insinuate their message, subtly, seductively, but - if you paid attention - with inevitable intensity. Some have questioned his repeated returns to the Tristano repertory - here, *Lennie's Pennies*, 317 E. 32nd, and *Subconscious-Lee* - which was, in turn, based on even more repetitiously consumed standards. But this served a purpose. Marsh would revisit pieces because their intricacy offered reconsidered extemporizing (not variations upon the theme, or mere paraphrase, but true invention of new, brilliant melodies with reference to the original) and their subliminal familiarity allowed, as Tristano always claimed to prefer, the id to control the creative process, and not the ego.

The performances on *Ne Plus Ultra* exemplify this. The level of invention, of creativity, is frequently so high that, when the themes emerge or return at tune's end, they sound improvised, spontaneous - which only adds to the exhilaration of the harmonized passages. Too, the spiral counterpoint between Foster and Marsh is daring, remarkably complementary, and convincing. The whole here is greater than the sum of the parts.

This is a particularly effervescent, efficacious quartet. Foster is not, as Clare Fischer points out, a Konitz clone; he posits buoyant phrasing and a fruity tone quite unKonitzian. Parlato and Tirabasso are not time-keepers - time is not an issue here; Marsh especially has escaped such constraints - and their playing, together and separately, breathes with a suppleness that affords a multi-directionality of possibilities that supports Marsh as much as it frees him.

It frees him to draft lovely, linear labyrinths, and liberate himself without resorting to ever retracing his steps. The angularity of his phrasing the product of an uncanny combination of unorthodox intervals and harmonies and offbeat accents indivisible from each other - is ingenious, often inconceivable (picture Lester Young playing Bach and you're part-way there), but he convinces us of the beauty behind its singular logic ... couched in a tone that betrays no stress, as tensile as steel wool and as soft as cotton. What he plays is a constant surprise, and sublime.

Though one's curiosity may at first be drawn to *Touch And Go*, inspired by the same attitudes which provoked the Tristano sextet's *Intuition and Digression* in 1949, and even freer than their "total freedom," the truly timeless music is to be heard, I believe, on the other, "structured" tunes. The dependency - the interplay - of each part to the other, and yet the independence of thought and detail, is rare and marvelous. How did they manage it? They listened; so should we.

\* hat ART CD 6063

- Art Lange  
August 1990

hat ART: A WORK IN PROGRESS

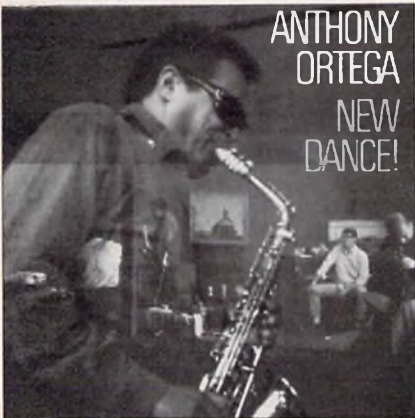
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ANTHONY ORTEGA  
NEW DANCE!

ANTHONY ORTEGA hat ART CD 6065  
NEW DANCE!

Duos with Chuck Domanico and trios with Bobby West & Bill Goodwin. Recorded Oct. 15, 1966 & Jan. 14, 1967 in Los Angeles

**New Dance!** is, simply, a phenomenon.

...The freedom, the spontaneity, of the duo and trio's empathetic approach owes nothing, really, to the Coltrane/Ayler thrust prevalent in this period. (Actually, the clarity and linear independence of their counterpoint was closer to the then-unfashionable principles of Lennie Tristano.) Ortega was obviously searching for a new, personal avenue of expression, and (as did McLean in his own manner) adopted elements of Ornette Coleman's freely associative narrative philosophy. (Which is not to say that Ortega sounds anything like Ornette - he doesn't.) Perhaps Sonny Rollins was an influence - the early '60s being Rollins' freest, most experimental years. Then there's Ortega's melodic sensitivity, a sustained but restrained lyricism, reminiscent of aspects from the playing of Paul Desmond, Lee Konitz, and Jimmy Guiffre - impressionists all, as opposed to the predominant, overt expressionistic gestures of Eric Dolphy.

But this is feeble conjecture. Better to suggest some measure of Ortega's individuality. Free of his former Parkerisms, Ortega's "asymmetrical" phrases in 1966 achieved uninhibited candor. When he offers permutations of lyp licks - as on **My Buddy** and **Conversation Piece** - they seem ripped from their familiar context, abbreviated and rephrased into a private, intimate, self-sufficient syntax. His rhythmic and harmonic assurance (they go hand-in-hand) is as comfortable as breathing - and as irregular. He stretches phrases to expressive ends without concern for chord changes or bar lines, in relaxed yet intense impulses, and even the silences are exquisitely proportioned.

His playing, then, can't be considered in terms of conventional "solos" - they're elastic, elusive, elliptical statements that comprise the whole of the music's structure. The music ends when the emotional impetus ends. In other words, this is pure improvisation, personalized by Ortega's painfully direct feelings - sometimes melancholy, yearning, or vulnerable (especially in the introspective ballads **The Shadow Of Your Smile** and **Sentimentalize** where exposed nerve ends jangle), but strong, eloquent, and passionate, too. Bathed in tonal shades of grey, his reflections breathe poignant, stark, spark and spirit.

Domanico, too (as, to a lesser extent, are West and Goodwin on their tracks) is responsible for the striking nature of the music. His improvising is alternately tender and fervent; alert and aware, never obtrusive, ever cognizant of the precise balance and flow necessary. His poise is admirable, and his capella moments unwind cogent melodies, not mere patterns, that bite and snap with the exhilaration of his attack. West, in tone and temperament, may remind you, as he did me, of Charlie Haden (high praise indeed); Goodwin's drumming is cool and chaotic.

Anthony Ortega never again recorded music of this impact or immediacy. (A '78 quietest date returned to customary, safe, song forms.) His sole masterpiece, **New Dance!** is not an historical document, but a timeless example of singular expression, of majestic improvisational creativity. Its lasting values of honesty, imagination, and human interaction sound as modern and fresh and vital as the moment they were born. This music is still new, still dances with joyful abandon and beauty.

— Art Lange/July 1990

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## RAY DRUMMOND

**THE ESSENCE**—DMP/Telarc 480; *THING'S AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE; WHISPER NOT; WHAT AM I HERE FOR; EMILY; WEE; THE ESSENCE; LOVE WALKED IN; IMAGINATION; MR. HIGGINS; SUH.*

**Personnel:** Drummond, bass; Hank Jones, piano; Billy Higgins, drums.

★ ★ ★

## HANK JONES

**THE ORACLE**—EmArcy 846 376-2; *INTERFACE; BEAUTIFUL LOVE; THE ORACLE; BLUES FOR CM; YESTERDAYS; BLOOD COUNT; MAYA'S DANCE; JACOB'S LADDER; TRANE CONNECTIONS.* (56:35)

**Personnel:** Jones, piano; Dave Holland, bass; Billy Higgins, drums.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

There are no contrivances in which an acoustic trio playing standards can hide. No gimmicks to conceal slipshod playing or lazy thinking. The trio format is jazz at its most exposed and ingenuous. And *The Essence* is typical of its unpretentious pleasures. Here is an even-tempered program of eight mostly familiar tunes, explored in a way that makes them pleasantly unfamiliar and salts them with little surprises.

Jones' playing is bright, melodic, conversational, and full of soft-spoken good sense. The textures are airy and uncrowded, and the moods are gentle and easygoing, except for

## GEORGE LEWIS' BLUE NOTES

by Jack Sohmer

**A**lthough born in the right place at the right time—New Orleans in 1900—clarinetist **George Lewis** was totally unknown outside his home town until he was almost 42. But then, by a quirk of fate, he was hired to play in a pickup recording band organized around the recently unearthed trumpet legend, Bunk Johnson. Only months later, Lewis made his debut leader date with a similarly-styled group including Avery "Kid" Howard, a much younger Armstrong-inspired trumpeter, veteran trombonist Jim Robinson, banjoist Lawrence Marrero, bassist Chester Zardis, and drummer Edgar Mosley. Originally issued on Blue Note's specially created subsidiary label, Climax, these 12-inch 78s now provide the basis of *The Complete Blue Note Recordings Of George Lewis* (Mosaic MD3-132; 3 hours, 53 minutes: ★★ ★ 1/2), a three-CD boxed set that includes, in addition to this seminal 1943 session and its alternate takes and rehearsal tracks, many previously unissued titles and takes from subsequent Blue Note dates.

Highlights of this first, admittedly rough session are "Just A Closer Walk With Thee," "Just A Little While To Stay Here," "Fidgety Feet," and "Milenburg Joys"; and, although Howard and Robinson are present throughout, there were several changes in the rhythm sections of the '54 and '55 performances; changes that, although not causal, nevertheless accompanied the band's growing tendency towards over-stylization and incipient commercialism. By mid-decade, these musicians were no longer fulfilling their traditional roles within the communal life of New Orleans, playing functional music for their primarily black neighbors. Now, in the folk-conscious '50s,

thanks to an unprecedented surge of media publicity, they were being lionized as resurrected cultural artifacts miraculously preserved from a bygone age. And one consequence of this attention was that the Lewis band increasingly resorted to such crowd-pleasing vocal numbers as "Bill Bailey" and "Move The Body Over" in a misguided attempt to please their new audience, one that consisted largely of artsy dilettantes and self-styled social anthropologists. At the same time, however, Lewis also tried to satisfy the tastes of his more knowledgeable fans, the historically-minded record collectors, by incorporating into his repertoire—for the first time!—such 1920s classics as King Oliver's "Canal Street Blues" and Louis Armstrong's "Heebie Jeebies," "Savoy Blues," and "Mahogany Hall Stomp," all of which can be heard in this set.

All things considered, George Lewis was by far the best clarinetist to have emerged as a result of the New Orleans Revival. But he cannot be regarded the equal of his fellow New Orleanian contemporaries: clarinetists Albert Nicholas, Edmond Hall, Omer Simeon, and Barney Bigard. For, unlike Lewis, these men had all benefitted from formal study during their early years. In comparison, Lewis was a primitive. As far back as the '20s, while the others were in Chicago and New York playing with the top big bands of the day, Lewis remained at home working funerals and parades, neighborhood bars and dancehalls. Unarguably, he was an anachronism, even in the '40s. But at his best, he can still move the sympathetic listener with the throbbing emotionalism of his vibrato, the fluency of his arpeggiated runs, and the vitality of his ensemble counterpoint. The proof of his impact is still evident today in the playing of hundreds of clarinetists working in trad bands all over the world. (To place an order, contact Mosaic Records, 35 Melrose Place, Stamford, CT 06902.)

DB

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the swift, streamlined "Wee" (aka "Allen's Alley," from the original 1946 Coleman Hawkins Victor record on which Hawkins didn't play), which is almost Basieish in its economy. The tunes are models of improvisational frameworks, especially Johnny Mandel's beautiful "Emily." Billy Higgins, who's played drums with everyone from Bo Diddley to Ornette Coleman, plays a restrained and tasteful Jo Jonesish turn on brushes on "Mr. Higgins, Suh." Overall, no show stoppers, but an album's worth of timeless music. (reviewed on cassette)

Bassist Dave Holland replaces Ray Drummond on *The Oracle* from EmArcy, thus making these two sessions comparative studies in acoustic double bass playing. Whereas Drummond's solos roll easily with the flow on *The*

*Essence*, consistent with the material, Holland's time signatures on *The Oracle* tend to be a bit more exotic, which is also consistent with mostly original material. His solo work overall has a dexterous tension and push, with his turn on "Trane Connections" possessing tremendous power. Each bassist in his own way, however, brings grace to an inherently cumbersome instrument.

Holland also brings three of his own compositions along. His "Blues For CM" is both lush and earthy in Jones' hands, as is Billy Staryhorn's 1966 "Blood Count." And Higgins' snare-and-cymbal counterpoint on "Trane" is beautifully thought through. Jones' piano is consistently stimulating in such company. (reviewed on CD)  
—John McDonough

## AFRICA'S CALL, AND RESPONSE

by Gene Santoro

Given Africa's sheer size and number of cultures, you'd have to be deaf or a racist to assume there's a quintessentially "African" music. Section by section, generalizations can make a little more sense, even if they inevitably distort. Trying to limit this already narrow selection to recently released albums also distorts. How can you talk about Nigerian music without mentioning King Sunny Ade's once-powerful, now-unhip *juju*, that wonderful dancefloor float? Then there's the enormous impact of Zairean *soukous*, the tangy whipped mix of Afro-Cuban rumbas, Nigerian highlife, and indigenous Congo sounds that dominated postwar music in central Africa thanks to the huge reach of Zairean radio, with pivotal fig-

ures like bandleader/guitarist Franco, singer/vocalist Tabu Ley, and outstanding female vocalist Mbililia Bel.

The tradition that underlies the music of Francophone West Africa, thanks to the regional predominance of the Mandingo tribe, hinges on a hereditary musician class of griots or *jalis*. Trained from childhood to perform for rites of passage and social occasions, their function is to preserve oral history, singing the ancient tales and praises of their employers to the accompaniment of the 21-stringed *kora* or *balafon*. Guinea is part of Mandingo territory, and home to **Jali Musa Jawara**. Recorded in 1983, an instant classic that's finally been released here, *Yasimika* (Hannibal 1355; 33:30: ★★★★★) is a stirring performance of haunting sensuality. The patterned dual guitars, the wetly plunking *balafon*, the blithely skipping *kora* weave a hypnotic web beneath Jawara's acrobatic melismata, answered by a female trio whose harmonizing voices eerily recall girl groups like the Chiffons. Jawara's smooth mi-

hat

- expect the unexpected



MIKE WESTBROOK TRIO hat ART CD 6061  
LOVE FOR SALE  
Recorded live December 7 & 8, 1985  
at Dunois Paris

*Love For Sale* is a chilling divertissement of cabaret songs, all the more striking and immediate for their intimacy of presentation. The recurring thread that ties these disparate songs together claims that life is lonely, cruel, and unforgiving; only revenge is sweet. Such a (sometimes satiric, sometimes deadly serious) fin de siècle sensibility of world-weariness, pessimism, and despair - under the guise of entertainment - is no doubt influenced by the shrewdly confrontational collaborations of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill (represented here prominently by Kate Westbrook's venomous version of *Seeräuber Jenny*, from *The Three-penny Opera*). Then too, to concoct a particularly bitter brew, Westbrook also borrows from his own oeuvre - *A Poison Tree* from *The Westbrook Blake*, *Titanic Song* from *Mama Chicago*, and (omitted from this recording) *Enfance* from *The Cortège*...

...Which brings us to the program's focal point, the vocals. There's no avoiding the obvious: Kate Westbrook is an engaging vocal actress. She deftly adopts a different characterization for each song, dependent upon the demands of the lyric. Possessor of a remarkable range (both dramatic and tessitura), she can adjust the nuance, tone, and attack of each note/word to vivid effect. Hear the way she spits out *Love For Sale*'s verse, her vehemence (as opposed to the usual shrug of the shoulders) in *Buddy Can You Spare A Dime*, the fire-and-ice demeanor she brings to *Lush Life*. She turns into a witch for *A Poison Tree*, a cackling shrew in *England Have My Bones*. Throughout every song her presence is gripping, her virtuosity (from a gargle to a luscious coy croon) electrifying.

Over the years Mike Westbrook has proposed a variety of views of life, of the world. Often vicious, yet spellbinding, *Love For Sale* is not a pretty, but an undeniably haunting, one.  
- Art Lange  
August 1990

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## record & cd reviews



Joseph Shabalala of Ladysmith Black Mambazo

crotonal surfing, a blend of Africa and Islam, echoes in modern singers like Salif Keita and Youssou N'Dour.

On the Atlantic coast, **The Gambia** cuts a slice of Senegal's heart, but its importance to traditional sounds far outstrips its puny size. Somewhat ironically, *Ancient Heart: Mandinka And Fulani Music Of The Gambia* (Axiom 539 880; 40:06: ★★★★★), an outstanding, diverse primer for the highly varied and mesmerizing sounds of those two related tribes, relies mostly on recently-favored ensembles rather than the usual single griot. Many members of those ensembles are related to famed griot **Foday Musa Suso**, one of the region's widely acknowledged virtuosos who's collaborated with folks like Herbie Hancock, Bill Laswell, and Philip Glass. Co-produced by Laswell and Suso, *Dreamtime* (CMP 3001; 68:26: ★★★★★) features Suso's dry voice enticingly encircled by a whirl of his overdubbed instruments.

As happens most everywhere else, cities are where Africa's new sounds are born, and urban Senegal has birthed a heady brew of old and new, *mbalax*. Largely recorded in Paris,

*mbalax* first entered the U.S. via Toure Kunda. But its prime exponent is **Youssou N'Dour**, the slippery-voice modern griot backed by a full rock band. His latest, *Set* (Virgin 91426: ★★★★★), lopes and leaps and pummels with fiercely stuttering rhythms that spin your head like fired-up salsa. Haloed by sharp-created internationalist charts that incorporate everything from griot traditionalism to reggae tinges, N'Dour's rollercoaster singing is peerless: smoothly undulating, passionate with a touch of weary blues anxiety.

Besides Sunny Ade's Yoruban-drum-powered *juju*, Anglophone Nigeria's most visible pop export has long been **Fela Anikulapo Kuti's** expansive Afrobeat. A politically outspoken rebel who's been jailed and refused exit visas repeatedly (until recently) by the Nigerian government, Fela invented Afrobeat by fusing the one-chord funky vamps of his idol James Brown, jazzy solos, and indigenous Nigerian polyrhythms. *O D O O* (Shanachie; 61:08: ★★★★★) is a typical-enough excursion. Each half-hour cut opens with Fela's enormous band, Egypt 80, baring underlying percussion polyrhythms, then gradually layering on guitars, keyboards, horns, and vocals. Songs swell into an irresistible juggernaut of sound that ebbs and crests and sucks you in as effortlessly as an ocean undertow.

The ongoing-though-lessened influence of Zairean *soukous* can be heard on *Virunga Volcano* (Virgin 91408: ★★★½). Born in Zaire, singer/composer **Samba Mapangala** has a husky, evocative voice buoyed by the gracefully skipping, seductive instrumental crosstalk of his **Orchestre Virunga**. The bass bumbles, the guitars skitter and sheen, the horns

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cut odd angles across the top, and the sensual voices come in and out in circular, flowing call-and-response.

Musically speaking, Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) came into the late 20th century when **Thomas Mapfumo**, an outspoken opponent of the white-minority regime, invented *chimurenga*. Inspired by Bob Marley's reggae, Mapfumo's hybrid telegraphed political stances via traditional proverbs as it adapted electric instruments to the ancient rhythms and arpeggios of his Shona people. *Spirit Of The Eagle* (Virgin 91410: ★★★★★) offers a solid overview of Zimbabwe's musical variety, putting Mapfumo (represented by two fine cuts) in some perspective.

South Africa's sprawling musical variety—*mbaqanga*, *mbele* chorales, its own jazz outgrowths from Abdullah Ibrahim to Johnny Dyani—is impossible to encapsulate with a recording or two, but there are a couple of reasonable places to start. One is **Lady-smith Black Mambazo's** aptly-titled *Classic Tracks* (Shanachie 43074: ★★★★★½). A valuable context-provider is *Freedom Fire* (Virgin 91409: ★★★★★), which boasts the frog-voiced **Mahlathini**, the incredibly sexy, piercing call-and-response singing of the **Mahotella Queens**, the sparkling guitar of Marks Mankwane, and the charmingly propulsive, exhilarating undulations of its wickedly buoyant rhythms.

Last but not least, reggae has—in one of those circle-around-the-ocean cultural flows—taken deep root throughout western and southern Africa. The Ivory Coast boasts **Alpha Blondy**; South Africa bred **Lucky Dube**. Each of them follows the political path staked out by Marley and the original Wailers. Blondy, the longer-established, has a recent compilation, *The Best Of Alpha Blondy* (Shanachie 43075: ★★★★★). Dube, who emulates the gruff-voiced Peter Tosh, serves up *Prisoner* (Shanachie 43073: ★★★★★), which plumbs reggae styles from classic to dancehall. **DB**



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**JUST FRIENDS: A GATHERING IN TRIBUTE TO EMILY REMLER, VOL. 1**—Justice JR 0502-2: BRONTOSAURUS WALK; REMILY; WILLOW WEEP FOR ME; JAZZ JAM; BESAME MUCHO; EQUINOX; HELLO & GOODBYE; NOVA NICE; BLUES ON THE SPOT; SOFTLY, AS IN A MORNING SUNRISE.

**Personnel:** Herb Ellis, guitar (cuts 2-5,9,10); Steve Masakowski, guitar (1); Terry Holmes, guitar (2,3,5,9); Kristen Buckley, guitar (6); Leni Stern, guitar (8); Marty Ashby, guitar (8); Lincoln Goines, bass (1,6,8); Eddie Gomez, bass (2,4,10); Bob Felder, bass (3,5,9); Steve Bailey, bass (7); Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums (4,6,8,10); Ricky Sebastian, drums (1,7); David Deberg, drums (3,5,9); Bill O'Connell, piano (1,4,6-8,10); David Benoit, piano (3,5,9); Nelson Rangell, alto sax (3,9); Jay Ashby, trombone (7,10).

★ ★ ★ ½

Emily Remler, the gifted, swinging young jazz guitarist from New Jersey, died on May 4, 1990 just a few months shy of her 33rd birthday. Last year, Justice Records released her last studio album, *This Is Me*. Some of the players from that session have returned to pay tribute to their fallen comrade, along with Emily's mentor Herb Ellis and close friends like Steve Masakowski, Leni Stern, Nelson Rangell, Marvin "Smitty" Smith (who played on her fine

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# record & cd reviews

1988 Concord album, *East To Wes*), Eddie Gomez (who played on her 1984 Concord album, *Transitions*), and David Benoit (the pianist whom Emily had toured with in '89).

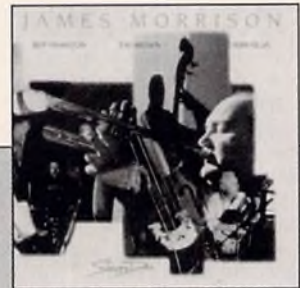
The program kicks off in turbulent fashion with Masakowski's "Brontosaurus Walk," perhaps the finest example of the guitarist's flowing bop chops on record (he's also recorded with Blue Note artists Mose Allison and Rick Margitza). Ellis, the epitome of relaxed swing, eases into "Remily" and a bluesy reading of "Willow Weep For Me" before busting loose on an uptempo "Jazz Jam" with Smitty and Gomez, quoting Charlie Christian along the way.

Kristen Buckley echoes Emily's affinity for Wes Montgomery on a subdued version of Coltrane's "Equinox," a tune Emily recorded and liked to play live. Ellis returns to testify on the slow-as-molasses "Blues On The Spot," which also features some sanctified Sanbornesque alto wailing by Rangell. And the program closes on a tender note with a Gomez arrangement of "Softly," highlighting the lyrical trombone work of Jay Ashby, a key player from the *This Is Me* session.

Clearly a labor of love, this tribute album reminds us of her fire, finesse, and irrepressible swing. Herb Ellis put it best when he said, "My

part on this album is just a way of saying goodbye, and I love you." (reviewed on CD)

—Bill Milkowski



## JAMES MORRISON

**SNAPPY DOO**—Atlantic 82175: *You Are My Sunshine; But Beautiful; A Brush With Bunj; Autumn Leaves; Snappy Doo; Le Belleclair Blues; The Shadow of Your Smile; Chega De Saudade (No More Blues); Jitterbug Waltz; The Old Rugged Cross; Zander.*

**Personnel:** Morrison, trumpet, trombone, euphonium, saxophones, piano; Herb Ellis, electric guitar; Ray Brown, bass; Jeff Hamilton, drums.

★ ★ 1/2

Australia's James Morrison plays trombone very well, trumpet well, and some other instruments well enough. He's a natural doubler—quadrupler—who'd nonetheless do well to stick to what he does best.

On trumpet, he's often compared to Ruby Braff, which makes sense. Like Ruby, he has a nice, fat sound, and shows no strong affinity for bop—he's least sure whizzing through Ray Brown's fast title romp. But his penchant for curving squeezed notes bears the imprint of Sweets Edison (a Gene Harris Superband mate), and his high-note pyrotechnics are out of Armstrong's showboat phase. On trombone, his dark, burnished ballad sound ("But Beautiful") lets him stretch in another direction. But even there—or "Autumn Leaves," where he does Mangelsdorff's sung multiphonics—he heads for the upper register whenever he gets worked up. He hasn't quite developed independent approaches to different axes.

The first five titles are for quartet; on the remaining quasi-big-band numbers, he plays all the instruments listed above, with three Superband colleagues filling the gaps. It's one of those I've-always-wanted-to-do-this projects, but one listens in vain for something to make it more than a novelty. Morrison can phrase like (and play all the parts in) a section, and handles some tricky part-by-part syncopations on Jobim's "No More Blues." "Belleclair" features some Ellingtonian wah-wahs, yet Morrison's charts tend to be generic, heavy with Severinsen-esque brass squeals. (He's written pretty background voicings for "Shadow," but his lead alto's limp.) His brass-band-to-bluesy take on the gospel tune "Old Rugged Cross" flirts with kitsch; he doesn't connect with the material emotionally.

For better and less gimmicky Morrison, try his live *Swiss Encounter* with Adam Makowicz (East-West 91243). (reviewed on cassette)

—Kevin Whitehead

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**ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO SOWETO** — DIW DIW-837: *COMING SOON; AFRICAN WOMAN; FUNDAMENTAL DESTINY; FRESH START; KHAULEZA; THE BOTTOM LINE; BLACK MAN.* (48:51)

**Personnel:** Lester Bowie, trumpet, flugelhorn, percussion; Joseph Jarman, soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxes, flute, synthesizer, percussion; Roscoe Mitchell, soprano, alto, tenor, and bass saxes, flute, piccolo, percussion; Malachi Favors Maghostut, bass, percussion; Famoudou Don Moye, percussion; Amabutho Male Chorus (Elliot Ngubane, lead vocals, percussion, keyboards; Joe Leguabe, vocals, percussion; Zacheus Nyoni, Welcome "Max" Bhe Bhe, Kay Ngwazene, vocals) (cuts 2,5,7).

★ ★ ★ ★

The Art Ensemble of Chicago deftly extend the sphere of their Great Black Music to the lilting rhythms and bouyant melodies of the South African townships on *Art Ensemble Of Chicago Soweto*. Yet, instead of a total immersion in the idiom, the AEC intriguingly incorporate the traditional stylings of the Amabutho Male Chorus with their own unique orientation. *Soweto* is not quite a bona fide collaboration, as Amabutho appears on only three tracks featuring their own compositions—"African Woman" and "Black Man," two danceably cooking AEC arrangements, and "Khauleza," a call-and-response-based a cappella. This is a limited partnership, but a synergistic one, resulting in the AEC's most accessible album since '78's *Nice Guys* (ECM 827 876).

*Soweto* is an album that should be initially heard uninterrupted, from beginning to end. Otherwise, subtle crosscurrents of essence and sensibility can be flattened or fragmented. Whether it's the permutating pulse of "Fundamental Destiny," a simmering Joseph Jarman blowing vehicle, close on the heels of the dance rhythms of "African Woman," or the mournful, foreboding voicings of the collective "The Bottom Line" echoing "Khauleza," there is a mirroring and shadowing of materials that is the program's central strength.

While the material featuring Amabutho gives *Soweto* world-music warmth, much the same way that "Jah" functioned on *Nice Guys*, there are ample portions of the bracing music that continue to keep the AEC ahead of the curve. At the pivotal midpoint of the program, Roscoe Mitchell's "Fresh Start" is classic hardcore AEC, as rousing fanfares and ruminative polyphony rise from riveting groundswells.

The simultaneous stylistic diversity and programmatic cohesion on *Soweto* is impressive. And so is the message. (reviewed on CD)

—Bill Shoemaker

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**STRING ALONG WITH ME**

by Bill Milkowski

A spate of recent guitar-oriented releases bears scrutiny. First, let us praise **Jimmy Raney**. The reclusive guitarist is alive and well and playing as brilliantly as ever. Perhaps a step slower than in his heyday (check out Mosaic's *The Complete Recordings Of The Stan Getz Quintet With Jimmy Raney*, a three-CD set covering the classic period of 1951-'53—see "Reviews" Jan. '91), he's still swinging with remarkable ease in that inimitable warm-tored voice of his. On the aptly-named *The Master* (Criss Cross Jazz 1009; 59:08: ★★★★★), from '83, Raney tempers his technical wizardry with a relaxed, slightly-behind-the-beat sense of swing that makes the date feel good. His mercurial exchanges with pianist Kirk Lightsey on Bird's "Billie's Bounce" and Cole Porter's "It's All Right With Me" speak of the chemistry at work here. Lightsey matches Raney solo for solo and drummer Eddie Gladden swings the session with authority. Whether burning on uptempo numbers like Porter's "Just One Of Those Things" or playing it introspective on intimate ballads like J. J. Johnson's "Lament," Raney's liquid phrasing is smooth and unhurried, his articulation impeccable. His sax-like linear approach and advanced harmonic concept provided perhaps the first link between Charlie Christian and Charlie Parker. Forty years later, that still sounds good.

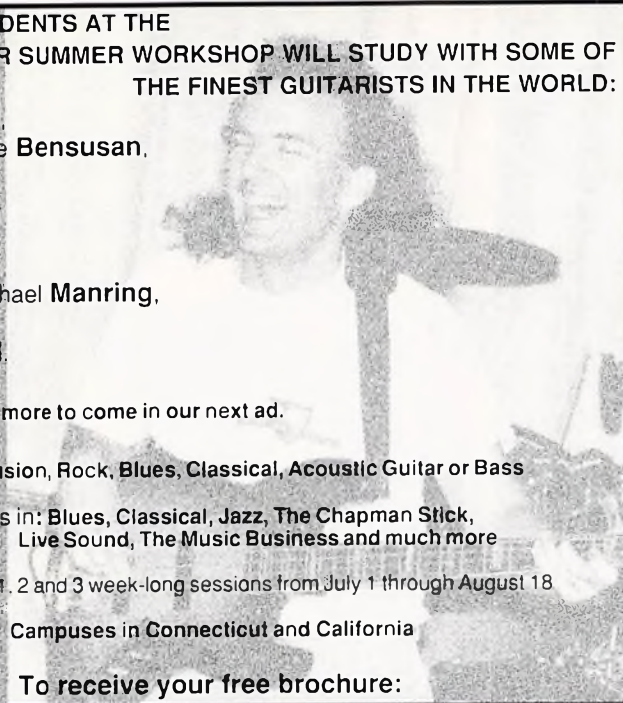
Going from mastery to mediocrity, **Ray Obiedo's Iguana** (Windham Hill Jazz WD-0128; 44:48: ★★) is a slick package of soothing ballads and feel-good fusion fare geared toward the happy jazz crowd. Its emphasis on backbeat and the repetition of simple, hummable melodies guarantees this record tons of airplay and sales. Apparently, there's a big market for such vacuous stuff. Go get 'em, Ray.

*Jim Hall & Friends, Volume 1* (MusicMasters 5050-2-C; 67:02: ★★★★★) shows the dangers of recording live concerts; namely, you can't stop in the middle of song to retune if your guitar should happen to go out of whack, a desperate predicament **Jim Hall** found himself in during his duet with Gerry Mulligan on "All The Things You Are." Clams ensue, and after finishing that song on a sour note, you can hear him quickly tuning his flat G string. He *almost* gets it right in time for their next duet on "Prelude To A Kiss." These flaws aside, the CD highlights Hall's piano-like comping style and uncanny finesse in a program of telepathic duets with longtime collaborators Ron Carter ("Alone Together," "St. Thomas"), Bob Brookmeyer ("Skylark" and "Begin The Beguine"), and Mulligan, augmented by three challenging chamber pieces featuring the guitarist with rhythm section and string quartet. The most ambitious of the chamber pieces is a heady exercise called "Thesis," written by the guitarist in 1953 when he was attending the Cleveland Institute of Music. The most musically satisfying moments of the concert come during Hall's sensitive duets with trombonist Brookmeyer.

Though **Rick Stone** is not yet on the masterful level of a Jimmy Raney or Jim Hall,

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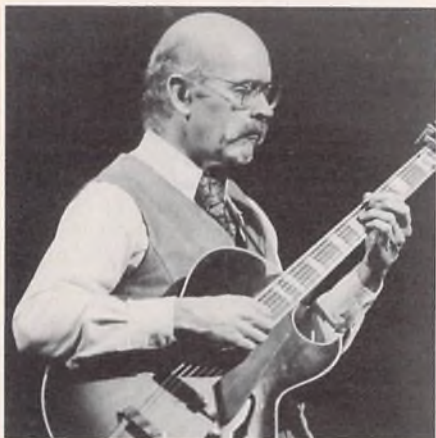
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TOM COPPI

Jim Hall: telepathic

he's certainly coming out of that tradition on *Far East* (Jazzand JCD002; 56:11: ★★½). His fluid, warm-toned lines show an obvious command, though his phrasing is still a tad too polite, too exacting compared to the more daring, rhythmically inventive work of his elders. Raney and Hall were major players on the scene 40 years ago. Stone is presently working toward a masters degree in Jazz Performance at Queens College. And therein lies the difference. Stone's playing is highly competent yet somehow too measured, too careful. He never really goes out on a limb and catches fire in the heat of the moment, though he comes closest on Bobby Porcelli's "Green House" and Mal Waldron's "Vodka." A real plus here is the presence of pianist Kenny Barron.

Like Harry Connick Jr., young **John Pizzarelli** harkens back to another era. He is Nat King Cole to Connick's Frank Sinatra, a charming cabaret crooner with sly phrasing and an instinctive sense of swing. On *My Blue Heaven* (Chesky JD38; 59:55: ★★½), Pizzarelli demonstrates his love for the swinging sounds of the early '40s Nat Cole Trio, comping percussively on a fat-body jazz guitar like Oscar Moore while laying down some smooth vocal work, à la Nat. He flaunts some Charlie Christian single-note chops on the jivey "I'm An Errand Boy For Rhythm" and tosses off some cool scat-a-long unison lines on "Lady Be Good" and Dave Frishberg's clever "Can't Take You Nowhere." Some of this stuff crosses over into Connick's pop camp and some of it ("Take My Smile" and "Best Man") gets a little too cutesy, but Pizzarelli's relaxed, swinging manner always sells the song. Highlights include a father-son guitar duet with Bucky Pizzarelli on "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," a kind of seven-string summit, and a swinging rendition of "Zoot Walked In," Frishberg's tribute to tenorman Zoot Sims.

**Traut/Rodby's** *The Duo Life* (Columbia CK 46137; 57:55: ★★) is a sequel to their 1989 debut, *The Great Lawn*. Basically a Jim Hall-Ron Carter duet for the *thirtysomething* set, guitarist Ross Traut and upright bassist Steve Rodby (see "Riffs" Feb. '91) play instrumental versions of well-known pop standards that their generation grew up with (Burt Bacharach's "Don't Make Me Over," Thomas Bell's "People Make The World Go Round") interspersed with jazz standards (Wayne Shorter's "Fall") and originals (Traut's "Trout Stream"

and "Downstream"). Soothing fare that oozes out of the speakers and takes the edge off urban angst, it's too hip for new agers and too limp for jazzers. Good playing, good chemistry, narrow dynamic. All release and no tension.

**Jack Wilkins** provides tons of tension while offering moments of gentle release on *Alien Army* (MusicMasters 5049-2-C; 54:09: ★★). A diverse package ranging from radioplayable happy jazz ("Happy Eyes") to angular freebop ("Fornix") to fusion fusillades ("Chess") and gentle ballads ("Moon Rain"), it puts Wilkins to work in contexts other than the straightahead, bop-flavored settings he's favored in the past. Pushed by Michael Forma-

nek's booming, upright bass lines and Mike Clark's crisp drum grooves, Wilkins cranks on the distortion pedal and unleashes with fusion fury on "Pod Dance," reminiscent of Larry Coryell's Eleventh House, while on the tumultuous "Fornix," he crosses into James Blood Ulmer territory. Marc Puricelli adds nice synth and piano touches throughout and blends beautifully with Wilkins on the haunting ballad "Romance." A dynamic, new fusion group for the '90s, with guts to match their chops.

**Joe Beck** plays it loose and jazzy on *The Journey* (DMP CD 481; 61:31: ★★), a far more adventurous date than his three previous DMP releases. In the sparse trio setting with drummer Terry Clarke and bassist Chip Jack-

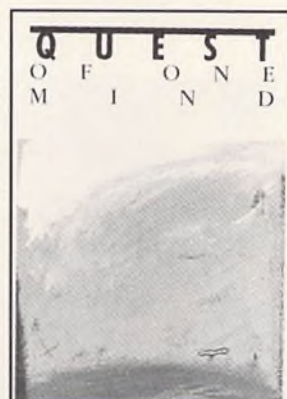
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son, he stretches in a Wes bag on "Killer Joe" and flows over the changes with legato conviction on "Invitation" and "Taste Of Honey," affecting a warm, straightahead jazz tone. On the Latin-flavored "Quidado," he cranks up the distortion, sounding like a Carlos Santana with bebop chops, and on "Prime Meridian," he breaks with the straightahead program by wailing fusionesque licks on a guitar synth. The stuff with vibist Dave Samuels is a little too precious for me. I much prefer the exploratory paths the trio heads down, best exemplified on the probing Beck original "I Don't Know" and a highly interactive rendition of "Body And Soul."

After flirting with fusion, **Bireli Lagrene** returns to the purity of acoustic guitar on *Acoustic Moments* (Blue Note CPD 7 95263 2; 44:03: ★★★★★). The 24-year-old virtuoso bal-

ances amazing chops with uncanny nonchalance and inherent Gypsy lyricism on fresh arrangements of John Coltrane's "Impressions," Jerome Kern's "All The Things You Are," and Jaco Pastorius' "Three Views Of A Secret." Bireli also flaunts some Jacquesque electric bass work on "Bass Ballad" and teams with pianist Michel Camilo on the burning "Claire Marie," reminiscent of Al Di Meola's acoustic romp with Chick Corea on "Short Tales Of The Black Forest." The unaccompanied title cut is breathtakingly beautiful. And for a laugh, he throws in nearly two minutes of raucous neo-classic electric guitar thrashing at the tag, appropriately called "Metal Earthquake." His most versatile project yet.

*Tribal Tech* (Relativity 88561-1049-4: ★★★★★½) is the finest of **Scott Henderson's** four Tribal Tech albums. This time out

he's not only sharing the billing with bassist extraordinaire Gary Willis, a key composer for the group, he's also loosened up the form considerably. The tight-assed arrangements from his *Spears* days have been replaced by more organic compositions that flow out of the Weather Report vibe, particularly on pieces like "Signal Path" and the burning "Got Tuh B," propelled by Willis' Jacquesque bass lines and spiced by David Goldblatt's Zawinul-flavored synth lines. Henderson remains one of the strongest, most distinctive legato stylists among solid-body electric guitarists, ranking right up there with Allan Holdsworth. And his toe-curling licks on "Big Girl Blues" cut deep with Albert King intensity. This album confirms Henderson's place at the top of the fusion heap, both as a player and as a composer. (reviewed on cassette; all others on CD) **DB**

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**1 LENNY BREAU.** "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" (from *LEGENDS OF JAZZ GUITAR, Vol. 1, Rhino*) Breau, solo guitar.

That's gotta be Lenny Breau. I don't know this record, but I could tell right away by the way he picks with his right hand, plus the harmonics he's playing. The first guy I heard playing harmonics like that was Larry Coryell back in 1980. And he told me he got it from Lenny Breau. I've gotten into it myself lately. It's a great thing because it really gives the guitar a different range. With harmonics you can make the guitar sound like a harp. And the thing that amazes me about Lenny is sometimes he sounds like two, three guitarists playing at the same time. The first time I heard him, I was sure there were two guitarists playing because he was playing the chords plus the melody on top. Then, I finally found out he plays a seven-string guitar with a high A, which allows him to cover a lot of ground. He really impressed me a lot. This tune I know, "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy." This version is unbelievable. As many stars as I can give.

**2 TUCK ANDRESS.** "Louie Louie" (from *RECKLESS PRECISION, Windham Hill*) Andress, solo guitar.

Tuck Andress? He amazes me, too, because rhythmically what he does is unbelievable. I haven't heard this but I'm aware of his stuff with Tuck & Patti. I don't know this song but it's really a great groove. What I like about his playing is that it's very full. When he does comping you don't miss anything. He plays drums, bass, chords, melody all at the same time. He has an unbelievable rhythm feel. His time is great. I understand he has a very strange technique with the right hand. He taps all over the place, slaps strings and stuff. I'm really looking forward to seeing him, even if it's on a videotape. This song I would give 4 stars.

**3 TRIBAL TECH.** "Elvis At The Hop" (from *TRIBAL TECH, Relativity*) Scott Henderson, guitar; Gary Willis, bass; Joe Heredia, drums; David Goldblatt, keyboards.

Scott Henderson? Yeah, I love Scott Henderson. He's one of my heroes. He's the type of guitarist who really has a signature. I mean, I don't know this tune but I could tell it was him in one note. He really has a special vibrato, for one thing. And I also recognize his tone. Another thing I like about his playing is he plays with distortion but at the same time his articulation is so clean. You can hear every note, which is really amazing. I had a chance to hear him several times with the Zawinul Syndicate. He's one of my favorite guitar players, without a doubt. I really loved his last record,

**BIRELI LAGRENE**

by Bill Milkowski

**T**he gypsy phenom has been in the public spotlight for 20 of his 24 years, having made his first public appearance as a solo guitarist at the age of four. At seven, he was improvising on Django Reinhardt themes and at age 12 made his first major breakthrough at a competition in Strasbourg, France, where he took first prize. One year later, he was hailed as the uncontested star of a gypsy festival at Darnstedt. A tour with Stephane Grappelli in 1980 catapulted young Bireli onto the international scene. That same year, he was introduced to American audiences via *Routes To Django*, his Stateside debut recorded live when he was 13. Two years later, his *Bireli 15* showed maturation, though he was still very much living in the shadow of Django.

The mid-'80s was a period of exploration for Bireli. He toured with Larry Coryell and Miroslav Vitous, Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker, and in 1986 made an extensive European tour with Jaco Pastorius. In 1987 he cut his Blue Note debut, *Inferno*, which was an attempt to



break the ties to Django and burn with fusion fury. He followed that up in 1988 with *Foreign Affairs*, an album that featured more volatile electric guitar work interspersed with solo acoustic interludes.

During 1989 he became a member of the "Super Guitar Trio" alongside Larry Coryell and Al Di Meola. His latest Blue Note project, *Acoustic Moments*, is a return to the purity of acoustic guitar, featuring fresh arrangements of jazz standards mixed with lyrical originals (see "Reviews" p. 52). This was Bireli's first Blindfold Test.

*Nomad*. He's a great composer, man. It's rare to find guitar players who compose like that. He really has great taste. And his bass player, Gary Willis? Unbelievable. So strong. 5 stars for this, no problem.

**4 JOHN SCOFIELD.** "Mr. Coleman To You" (from *MEANT TO BE, Blue Note*) Scofield, guitar; Marc Johnson, bass; Joe Lovano, tenor sax; Bill Stewart, drums.

Oh, it's Scofield. He has that touch, too. Very particular. One note and you can recognize him. Personally, I must say I don't listen too much to guitar players. I'm more influenced by other instruments, which is why I'm not that strong in recognizing guitar players, except those that I know, like Scott Henderson, Mike Stern, and John Scofield. They're so different from one another and they each have a particular sound. Scofield is amazing. He's one of my favorite guitar players, too. I saw him at Fat Tuesday's a couple of years ago with the band he had with Dennis Chambers and Gary Grainger. This was unbelievable. Great band. This sounds more open-ended than that band, more jazzy. It's great. I really liked his album *Flat Out*. And this sounds really interesting.

Whatever he does, he always has great taste. And he also picks great musicians to play with. For me, he could play whatever

and I'd always recognize him. And that's very important. Because today, there's so many guitar players and it's really hard to recognize them all. But people like Scofield, Allan Holdsworth, and Frank Gambale really stand out. 5 stars for John Scofield.

**5 ALLAN HOLDSWORTH.** "City Nights" (from *SECRETS, Intima*) Holdsworth, guitar; Jimmy Johnson, bass; Vinnie Colaiuta, drums.

Allan Holdsworth. He's my main man. I love this guy. He sounds like his music doesn't have anything to do with the guitar, it could be a saxophone. He gives such a wide range to the guitar. Nobody was playing like that before him, really. You know, people like Django Reinhardt and Charlie Christian, they brought something new to the music. And god knows that it's hard today in the '80s and '90s . . . there's so much music going on, it's really hard to bring something which is personal to the music. But Holdsworth . . . no problem for him. He amazes me. I remember the first time I heard him was with the I.O.U. band with Jeff Berlin. It blew me away. To tell you the truth, I didn't know if it was guitar or something else. The notes were so fluid. The phrasing he has is really unbelievable. I don't know how he does it. 5 stars, easy. **DB**