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They All Love Joe

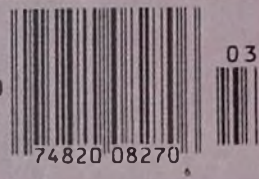
Bobby Previte's
Excellent Adventure

Bill Frisell Band's
No-Frills Touring

Ronnie Earl
Soulful, Searching & Sober

Kenny Barron
Challenger on Call

Joe Henderson,
tenor influence
for our time





MITCHELL SEIDEL

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Cover photograph by Teri Bloom.

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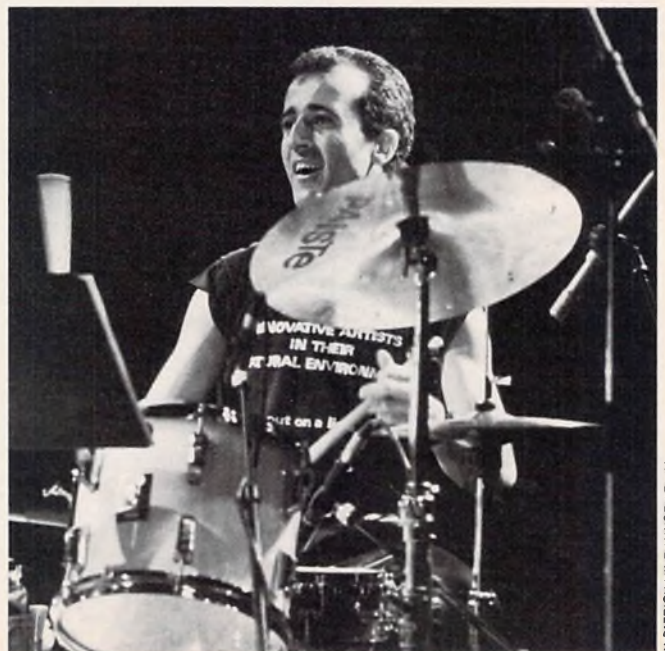
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W. PATRICK HINELY WORKPLAY

The SOUND That Launc

He's not Pres-like or Bird-like, not Trane-ish or Newk-ish. None of the stylistic adjectives so convenient for critics work for tenor saxist Joe Henderson. It's evident he's listened to the greats, to Lester Young, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins—to them and all the others he's enjoyed. But he doesn't play like them, doesn't *sound* like them. Joe Henderson is a master, and, like the greats, unique.

When he came along in the '60s, jazz was happening every which way, from mainstream and avant to blues, rock, and then some, and *everything* that was happening he played. Henderson's saxophone became a Triton's horn and transformed the music, whatever the style, whatever the groove, into himself. And he's no different (or, really, always different) today. There's no "typical" Joe Henderson album, and every solo is, like the soloist, original and unusual, thoughtful, and always from the heart.

"I think playing the saxophone is what I'm supposed to be doing on this planet," says Joe Henderson. "We all have to do *something*. I play the saxophone. It's the best way I know that I can make the largest number of people happy and get for myself the largest amount of happiness."

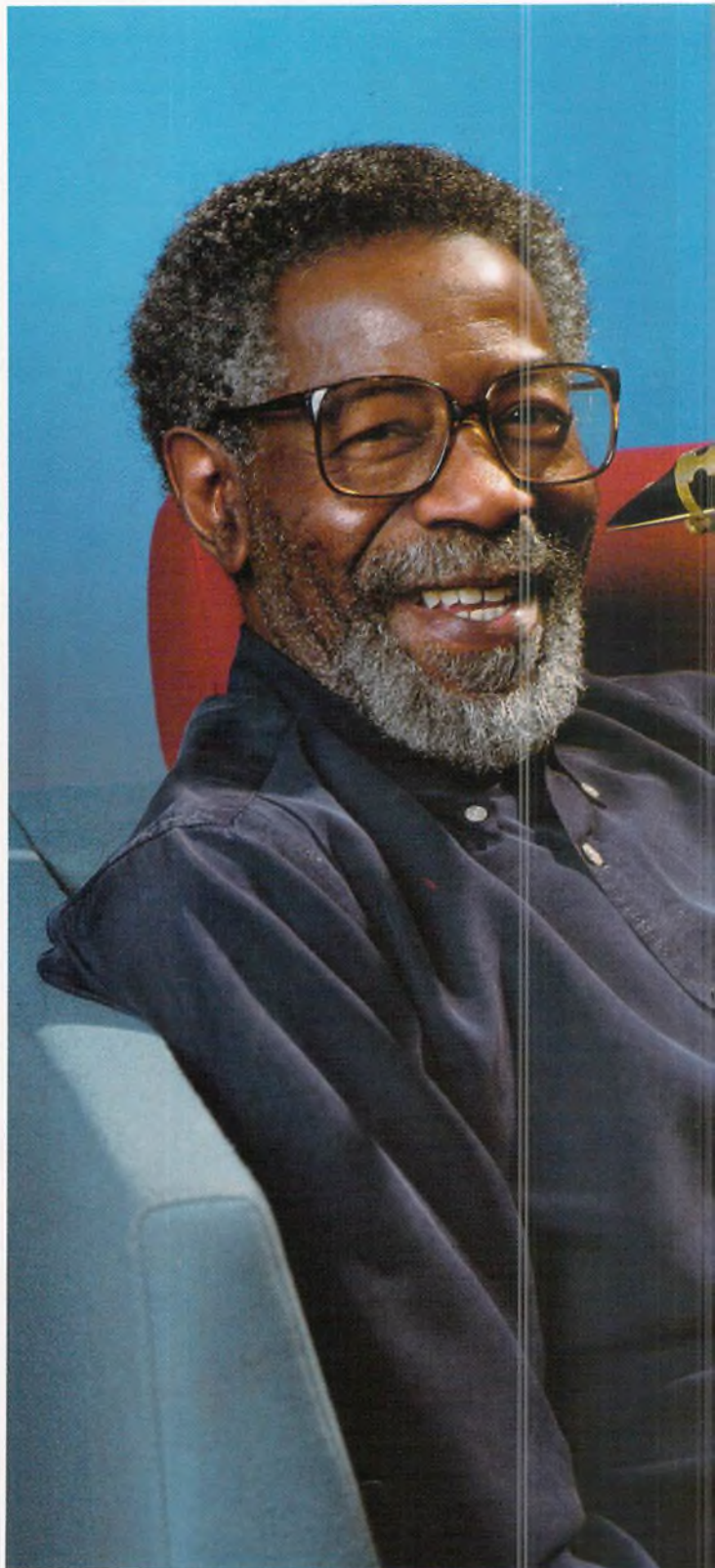
Joe was born April 24, 1937, in Lima, Ohio. When he was nine he was tested for musical aptitude. "I wanted to play drums. I'd be making drums out of my mother's pie pans. But they said I'd gotten a high enough score that I could play anything, and they gave me a saxophone. It was a C melody. I played that about six months and went to the tenor. I was kind of born on the tenor."

Even before he played, Joe was fascinated by his brother's jazz records. "I listened to Lester Young, Flip Phillips, Stan Getz, Charlie Parker, all the people associated with Jazz at the Philharmonic. This stuff went into my ears early on, so when I started to play the saxophone I had in my mind an idea of how that instrument was supposed to sound. I also heard the rhythm & blues saxophone players when they came through my hometown."

Soon he was playing dances and learning melodies with his friends. "I think of playing music on the bandstand like an actor relates to a role. I've always wanted to be the best interpreter the world has ever seen. Where a precocious youngster gets an idea like that is beyond me, but somehow improvisation set in on me pretty early, probably before I knew what improvisation was, really. I've always tried to recreate melodies even better than the composers who wrote them. I've always tried to come up with something that never even occurred to them. This is the challenge: not to rearrange the intentions of the composers but to stay within the parameters of what the composers have in mind and be creative and imaginative and meaningful."

One melody that's become almost as much Henderson's as the composer's is "Ask Me Now" by Thelonious Monk. He's recorded it often, each performance an odyssey of sounds and feelings.

"I play it 75 percent of the time because I like it and the other 25 percent because it's demanded that I play it. I sometimes have to play it twice a night, even three times. That tune just laid around for a while. Monk did an incredible job on it, but other than Monk I don't think I heard anyone play it before I recorded it. It's a great tune, very simple. There are some melodies that just stand by themselves. Gershwin was that kind of writer. You don't even have to improvise. You don't have to do anything but play the melody and people will be pleased. One of the songs like that is 'Lush Life.' That's for me the most beautiful tune ever written. It's even more profound knowing that Billy Strayhorn wrote it, words *and* music, when he was 17 or 18. How does an 18 year old arrive at that point of feeling, that *depth*?"



ned a Thousand Horns

By Michael Bourne



Lush Life is the title song of Henderson's new album of Strayhorn's music. "Musicians have to plant some trees—and re-plant some trees to extend the life of these good things. Billy Strayhorn was one of the people whose talent should be known. Duke Ellington knew about him, so that says something. There are still a lot of people who haven't heard Strayhorn's music, but if I can do something to enable them to become aware of Strayhorn's genius I'd feel great about that."

Lush Life is the first of several projects he'll record for Verve. Don Sickler worked with Henderson selecting and arranging some of Strayhorn's classics and, with Polygram Jazz VP Richard Seidel, produced the album. Henderson plays "Lush Life" alone, and, on



"Joe Henderson is the essence of jazz," says guitarist John Scofield. "He embodies musically all the different elements that came together in his generation: hard-bop masterfulness plus the avant garde. He's a great bopper like Hank Mobley or Sonny Stitt, but he also plays out. He can take it far harmonically but still with roots. He's a great blues player, a great ballads player. He has one of the most beautiful tones and can get as pretty as Pres or Stan Getz. He's got unbelievable time. He can float but he can also dig in. He can put the music wherever he wants it. He's got his own vocabulary, his own phrases he plays all different ways, like all the great jazz players. He plays songs in his improvisations. He'll play a blues shout like something that would come from Joe Turner, next to some of the fastest, outest, most angular, atonal music you've ever heard. Who's playing better on *any* instrument, more interestingly, more cutting edge yet completely with roots than Joe Henderson? He's my role model in jazz."

the other songs, he's joined for duets to quintets by four of the brightest young players around: pianist Stephen Scott, bassist Christian McBride, drummer Gregory Hutchinson, and trumpeter Wynton Marsalis (see "Reviews" p. 33). That the interplay of generations is respectful, inspirational, and affectionate is obvious.

"I think this was part of it, to present some of the youngsters with one of the more established voices. This is the natural way that it happens. This is the way it happened for me. I wouldn't have met the people I met if it hadn't been for Kenny Dorham, Horace Silver, Miles Davis, people I've been on the bandstand with. They introduced me to their audience. We have to do things like this. When older musicians like me find people who can continue the tradition, we have to create ways to bring these people to the fore."

Henderson came to the fore in the '60s. He'd studied for a year at Kentucky State, then four years at Wayne State in Detroit, where he often gigged alongside Yusef Lateef, Barry Harris, Hugh Lawson, and Donald Byrd. He was drafted in 1960 and played bass in a military show that traveled the world. While touring in 1961 he met and played with Bud Powell and Kenny Clarke in Paris. Once he was discharged in 1962 he settled in New York, where so many of his friends from Detroit were already regulars and where



MITCHELL SEIDEL

trumpeter Kenny Dorham became a brother. "Kenny Dorham was one of the most important creators in New York, and he's damn near a name you don't hear anymore. That's a shame. How can you overlook a diamond in the rough like him? There haven't been that many people who have that much on the ball creatively as Kenny Dorham."

Henderson's first professional recording was Dorham's album *Una Mas*, the first of many albums he recorded through the '60s as a sideman or a leader for Blue Note. This was the classic time of Blue Note, and what's most remarkable is the *variety* of music Henderson played, from the grooves of Lee Morgan's *The Side-*

Wayne Shorter, and I were the only constants in the band. I never knew who was going to show up. There'd be a different drummer every night—Tony Williams, Jack DeJohnette, Billy Cobham. Ron Carter would play one night, next night Miroslav Vitous or Eddie Gomez. Chick Corea would play one night, next night Herbie Hancock. It never settled. We played all around but never recorded. This was previous to everyone having Walkman recorders. Miles had a great sense of humor. I couldn't stop laughing. I'd be on the bandstand and I'd remember something he said in the car to the gig, and right in the middle of a phrase I'd crack up!"

Henderson's worked more and more as a leader ever since, and recorded many albums, like *Lush Life*, with particular ideals. He recorded "concept" albums like *The Elements* with Alice Coltrane and was among the first to experiment with the new sounds of synthesizers. He composed tunes like "Power To The People" with a more *social* point of view. "I got politically involved in a musical way. Especially in the '60s, when people were trying to affect a cure for the ills that have beset this country for such a long time, I thought I'd use the music to convey some of my thoughts. I'd think of a title like 'Black Narcissus,' and then put the music together. I'd try to create a nice melody, but at the same



"Joe is a master," says Stephen Scott, the young pianist on Henderson's new album. "When you first hear him, the first thing you identify with in his sound is the blues, no matter what he's playing. He'll deal with some advanced harmonic or rhythmic concept, but it all starts with the blues. . . . Joe uses so much space when he plays, and, as a piano player, you have to learn to play in the cracks so that you won't get in the soloist's way. Joe starts in the cracks!"

winder to the avant sounds of Andrew Hill's *Point Of Departure*. Whatever was happening musically, Joe Henderson was a natural.

"That's part of what I wanted to do early on—be the best interpreter I could possibly be. I wanted to interpret Andrew Hill's music better than he could write it, the same with Duke Pearson and Horace Silver. I'd study and try to find ways of being imaginative and interesting for this music without changing the music around. I didn't want to make Horace Silver's music different from what he had in mind. I wanted to make it even *more* of what he had in mind."

He joined the Horace Silver band for several years and fronted a big band with Kenny Dorham—music he'll recreate and record this year at Lincoln Center. He worked with Blood, Sweat & Tears for a minute in 1969 but quit to work with Miles Davis. "Miles,



"What's amazing about all the times I've played with him is that Joe never has a bad night, never has a bad *minute*," says Renee Rosnes, the young pianist with Henderson's working quartet. "He's a great improviser. Every solo has a beginning, a middle, an end. He'll play a motif and develop it, and later on you'll have forgotten it, but he'll come back to it. He can take anything and take it to the limit. That's true of all my favorite players—that they don't have any limitations. Joe inspires me to always reach for the depths of every tune."

'I think playing the saxophone is
what I'm supposed to be doing on this planet.
It's the best way I know
that I can make the largest number of people happy
and get for myself
the largest amount of happiness.'

time, when people heard it on the radio, a title like 'Afro-Centric' or 'Power To The People' made a statement."

Words have always inspired Joe Henderson. "I try to create ideas in a musical way the same as writers try to create images with words. I use the mechanics of writing in playing solos. I use quotations. I use commas, semicolons. Pepper Adams turned me on to a writer, Henry Robinson. He wrote a sentence that spanned three or four pages before the period came. And it wasn't a stream of consciousness that went on and on and on. He was stopping, pausing in places with hyphens, brackets around things. He kept moving from left to right with this thought. I can remember in Detroit trying to do that, trying to play the longest meaningful phrase that I could possibly play before I took the obvious breath."

Henderson names Truman Capote, Norman Mailer, Herman Hesse, and the Bible among his favorites. "I think the creative faculties are the same whether you're a musician, a writer, a painter. I can appreciate a painter as if he were a musician playing a phrase with a stroke, the way he'll match two colors together the same as I'll match two tones together."



"Joe Henderson is one of the most influential saxophone players of the 20th century," says another tenor saxist, Branford Marsalis. "I learned all the solos on *Mode For Joe* and the records he did with McCoy Tyner, a lot of the stuff he's on, like *The Prisoner*. He was one of the few saxophone players who could really play what I call the modern music, that really came from the bebop tradition but extended the harmonic tradition further. There's a small group of guys in that pantheon: Coltrane, Wayne Shorter, Warne Marsh, Lucky Thompson, Sonny, and Ornette, and Joe Hen. He's an amazing musician. I'm really jaded. I don't really go to the clubs anymore. There's not really anything I want to hear—except when Joe's in town. And when Joe's in town, I'm there every night!"

players who are putting stuff out as if it's their music and *they* didn't create it. I did."

He's nonetheless happy these days and amused about some of the excitement about *Lush Life*, that the new album, like every new album from Joe Henderson, feels like a *comeback*. "I have by no means vanished from the scene. I've never stopped playing. I'm very much at home in the trenches. I'm right out there on the front line. That's where I exist. I've been inspired joining the family at Polygram in a way I haven't been inspired in a long time. I'm gonna get busy and do what I'm supposed to do." DB



"Joe Henderson and Wayne Shorter emerged at the same time with their own sounds and rhythms and tunes. They inspired me as a young player," says one tenor saxist, Joe Lovano. "He's always had his own voice. He's developed his own concepts with the inspirations of the people he dug but without copying them. I hear Joe in other tenor players. I hear not only phrases copped from Joe but lately I hear younger cats trying to cop his sound. That's who you are as a player: your sound. It's one thing to learn from someone, but to copy his sound is strange. Joe's solo development live is a real journey—and you can't cop that! He's on an adventure whenever he plays."

He tells a story uniquely as a soloist and composer and he's inspired many musicians through the years. But what sometimes bothers Henderson is when others imitate his strokes and his colors but don't name the source. He heard a popular tenor saxist a while ago and was staggered. "I heard eight bars at a time that I know I worked out. I can tell you when I worked the music out. I can show you the music when I was putting it together. But when guys like this do an interview they don't acknowledge me. I'm not about to be bitter about this, but I've always felt good about acknowledging people who've had something to do with what I'm about. I've played the ideas of other people—Lester Young, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Lee Konitz, Stan Getz—and I mention these guys whenever I do an interview. But there are

EQUIPMENT

Joe Henderson plays a Selmer tenor sax, number 56923, with a Selmer D-Star mouthpiece and La Voz medium-soft reeds.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- as a leader**
- LUSH LIFE*—Verve 314 511 779
THE BEST OF JOE HENDERSON—Blue Note CDP 7 95627 2
PAGE ONE—Blue Note B2-84140
OUR THING—Blue Note B2-84152
IN 'N OUT—Blue Note CDP 7 46510 2
INNER URGE—Blue Note CDP 7 84189 2
MODE FOR JOE—Blue Note CDP 7 84227 2
THE KICKER—Milestone OJCCD 465-2
THE STATE OF THE TENOR—Blue Note DCP 7 46296 2
THE STATE OF THE TENOR VOLUME TWO—Blue Note CDP 7 46426 2
AN EVENING WITH JOE HENDERSON—Red CD 123215-2
- with others**
- IN THE IDIOM*—Denon 33CY-1483 (w/ Randy Brecker)
A CITY CALLED HEAVEN—Landmark LCD-1530-2 (Donald Byrd)
UNA MAS—Blue Note CDP 7 46515 2 (Kenneth Dorham)
TRUMPETA TOCCATA—Blue Note CDP 7 84181 2 (Kenneth Dorham)
HAPPENING NOW—hat ART CD 6008 (George Gruntz)
THE PRISONER—Blue Note CDP 7 46845 2 (Herbie Hancock)
BLACK FIRE—Blue Note CDP 7 84151 2 (Andrew Hill)
- POINT OF DEPARTURE*—Blue Note CDP 7 84167 2 (Andrew Hill)
RED CLAY—CTI 40809 (Freddie Hubbard)
STRAIGHT LIFE—CTI 6007 (Freddie Hubbard)
THICK IN THE SOUTH—Columbia CK 47977 (Wynton Marsalis)
THE SIDEWINDER—Blue Note CDP 7 46137 2 (Lee Morgan)
THE RUMPROLLER—Blue Note CDP 7 46428 2 (Lee Morgan)
SUNBURST—Concord Jazz CCD-4486 (Walter Norris)
WAHOO—Blue Note BST 84191 (Duke Pearson)
SWEET HONEY BEE—Blue Note BST 84252 (Duke Pearson)
FOR THE MOMENT—Blue Note CDP 7 94859 2 (Renee Rosnes)
MOUNTAIN IN THE CLOUDS—Atlantic 1622 (Miroslav Vitous)
PROFILE—Reservoir 119 (Valery Panomarev)
SOMETHING TO CONSIDER—Verve 849 557-2 (Stephen Scott)
SONG FOR MY FATHER—Blue Note CDP 7 84185 2 (Horace Silver)
THE CAPE VERDEAN BLUES—Blue Note CDP 7 84220 2 (Horace Silver)
THE REAL MCCOY—Blue Note CDP 7 46512 2 (McCoy Tyner)
NEW YORK REUNION—Chesky JD51 (McCoy Tyner)

No Semi, No Roadies, No Set List

BILL FRISELL BAND

By Howard Mandel



ALDO MAURO

Over breakfast, members of the Bill Frisell Band interact as they do onstage. Here's guitarist Frisell, sleepy-seeming and greyer than he's appeared before but still the fearless leader, flashing from humble to strong statement just as his probing leads are liable to explode from lyrical linearism into a dazzling cluster. Here's stalwart and capable bassist Kermit Driscoll, supporting or expanding upon whatever comes to the fore. Drummer Joey Baron arrives late—he's nursed a terrible cold since the band's return from two almost uninterrupted months in Europe, and, suffering an abnormally high fever, fronted his trio with saxophonist Ellery Eskelin and trombonist Steve Swell at the Knitting Factory the other night. Nevertheless, Baron's chipper, uplifting, and to the point.

The Frisell band has just released *Where In The World?* on Elektra/Musician, its

culmination as a quartet since cellist Hank Roberts has left to pursue his own aims. As on its suites "Some Song And Dance" (abetted by a sax trio) and "Hard Plains Drifter" (arranged by John Zorn) on Frisell's 1989 *Before We Were Born*, the band conflates aspects of jazz, rock, and country musics into evocations of deeply personal experience. Composed sections retain the freshness of conviction, communal improvisations rampage with daring self-assurance and ultimate good nature.

Yet a current of dark reflection cuts through the quietism of *Where In The World?* Perhaps it's Frisell's determination to forge ahead in the face of the challenges of the '90s. As it prepares for a February concert in Brooklyn, a coast-to-coast U.S. tour in March with The President (led by keyboardist Wayne Horvitz, who produced *Where In The World?*, and with whom Driscoll now

plays bass), then another European trip in May, the Bill Frisell Band reaffirms its commitments to honest, exploratory interaction—and to having fun.

Howard Mandel: *I've been listening to Where In The World?, but I still don't have a good grip on who's doing what—the strings sound so close.*

Kermit Driscoll: Yeah, I'm playing all this high stuff, sometimes Bill is playing lower than I am, and then there's Hank Roberts, whose range on cello is huge.

HM: *Bill, back to the clustering of the strings' sounds, with Hank Roberts gone—I understand he wanted to pursue his own music—is it more important for Kermit to come up to where your range is by playing a five-string fretless?*

Bill Frisell: Yeah, and it's amazing what Kermit's doing. A lot of the music was written for four voices, and now we end up covering parts. His fifth string makes his bass lower than the average bass, so he's doing this weird leapfrogging, sometimes playing two completely independent lines, one the bass line and the other harmonics, at once. It's really cool.

KD: But it's stuff Bill wrote, and knew was possible to do. When we go into improvisation it extends a little bit, but I try to use the same ideas. It's like music written for classical guitar.

BF: You figured a lot of it out; you were kind of forced into that situation, 'cause I hadn't thought of only one person playing all that.

KD: You'd have to hear the band now, as a trio, to hear it. It doesn't show up on our record.

HM: *Is there much overdubbing on Where In The World?*

BF: A little bit; in one or two places, I added another guitar, but it's basically the sound of the band as it was then.

HM: *I recognize Bill's attack, his employment of the volume pedal—and then I realize Kermit's bowing his bass . . .*

BF: Oh yeah, we've been playing so much live I forgot he plays acoustic on the record.

KD: I don't carry it on tour, our schedule and travel is too tough, and it's about all I can do to be there with an electric and my bag.

HM: *The upright bass contributes to the band's acoustic aura.*

BF: Yes, and a few of the tunes we recorded in this big space that used to be a church. The tunes with bass and cello in this room had a real acoustic sound.

HM: *It's extraordinary that you're always playing electric instruments, but are so attentive to acoustics.*

BF: I really like playing with acoustic instruments, and not overwhelming them. With an electric guitar, you can easily wipe them

“When we played the Village Vanguard I invited a lawyer who brought his friends, people who think of jazz as Gene Krupa playing ‘Sing, Sing, Sing.’ They loved it. You don’t have to like jazz to love this music.”



out. I like to find the place where I’m right there with them.

KD: There are extremes—at moments we get incredibly loud. But whenever we set up, the goal is, “Play to this room.” If the sound’s bouncing around, you can’t play the same as in a road club. At our soundchecks we play without the club’s PA system, to see what affect we have in the room right away.

BF: Soundchecks take about an hour, and we’ve been lucky in the last year to have our own sound person, Claudia Engelhart, who also works with Zorn’s Naked City. Last fall we did some gigs in the States without her after we’d had her for a while, and it was a drag.

HM: *You don’t carry your own sound board, do you?*

BF: We don’t carry anything but our guitars—Joey doesn’t even carry cymbals. We borrow stuff everywhere, so we have different amps every night. This works better in Europe, where they’re more used to it than here, but still we get some suspect equipment. It would be great to have roadies and take our own amps and more instruments with us, but I don’t see it in our near future.

Claudia balances our sound in the room—and we don’t use monitors, we set up in a semi-circle, so we play to ourselves and trust her to take care of what’s out front. But over the years we’ve put a lot of energy into playing the room without a PA, making our own balance.

HM: *Are you currently playing material mostly from Where In The World?*

BF: No—that’s what’s unbelievable to me about these guys, because they know everything I ever wrote. So literally milliseconds before we start playing I decide what we’re going to hit with, and it’s just BAM! It’s such a luxury not to have to figure out set lists, to be completely spontaneous. I can draw from my whole compositional history.

HM: *Do you think the trio’s how it’s going to be for a while?*



Kermit Driscoll

HYOU VIELZ

BF: I feel that’s it now. It’s kind of frustrating after years of plugging away, and having just done a quartet record, but Hank really wanted to stay home; he agreed to go on tour, but I felt if he was going to leave we should make a clean break. He missed our last tour, too, breaking a finger the week before we were scheduled to leave, so we’d worked out a lot of the covering of parts then, and realized we could do it. Now it’s just getting better and better—especially after these two months, I’m ecstatic about what’s going on. It’s gotten to some sort of spiritual level for me. And last week we played in Holland with Guy Klucevik, the accordionist. He killed me—he immediately got in with what we’re doing. So I’ve decided we’re a trio, but when the chance comes to have other people . . . at St. Ann’s in Brooklyn clarinetist Don Byron is going to play with us. There’s a singer named Victor Gazy we might do something with. We might do some things with a horn section. But it’s exciting musically to have things opened up, so I don’t want to try to replace Hank.

HM: *Did you give Guy your music to study?*

BF: We had one rehearsal, but he listened to all the records and I gave him all the parts. He worked hard, but I think there are very few people on the planet, if there are any, who could do what he did.

KD: As Bill was saying, we’d start something and he’d know just where we were. In Europe we’d play whole sections of sets where there wasn’t any written music, we were playing completely free. There were even times we started and ended that way; usually we go out to link some tunes, or in the middle of a tune we abandon it.

HM: *You do that by eye contact?*

KD: By ear. Guy jumped right into that

playing.

BF: He even initiated things without getting in the way. We were playing free and went into “Rambler,” and he knew what to do. I have the radio tape.

KD: I want to hear that.

HM: *Do you tape yourselves often when you’re touring?*

KD: Now that we have Claudia we do.

BF: This fall she taped everything. I don’t know when we’ll have a chance to listen to it, but I have a fantasy about making a record out of some of that stuff. We could never come close in the studio to some of what goes on live.

HM: *You’re more self-conscious in the studio?*

BF: Even if you’re not nervous in the studio, things happen on a gig. Every night you’re thrown into something different. You’re on the train for 24 hours, you get off the train and you’re in some bizarre place, someone’s yelling at you from the audience. Weird things occur in the music you can’t artificially set up.

HM: *If you added a horn section, you’d have to write parts.*

BF: Right.

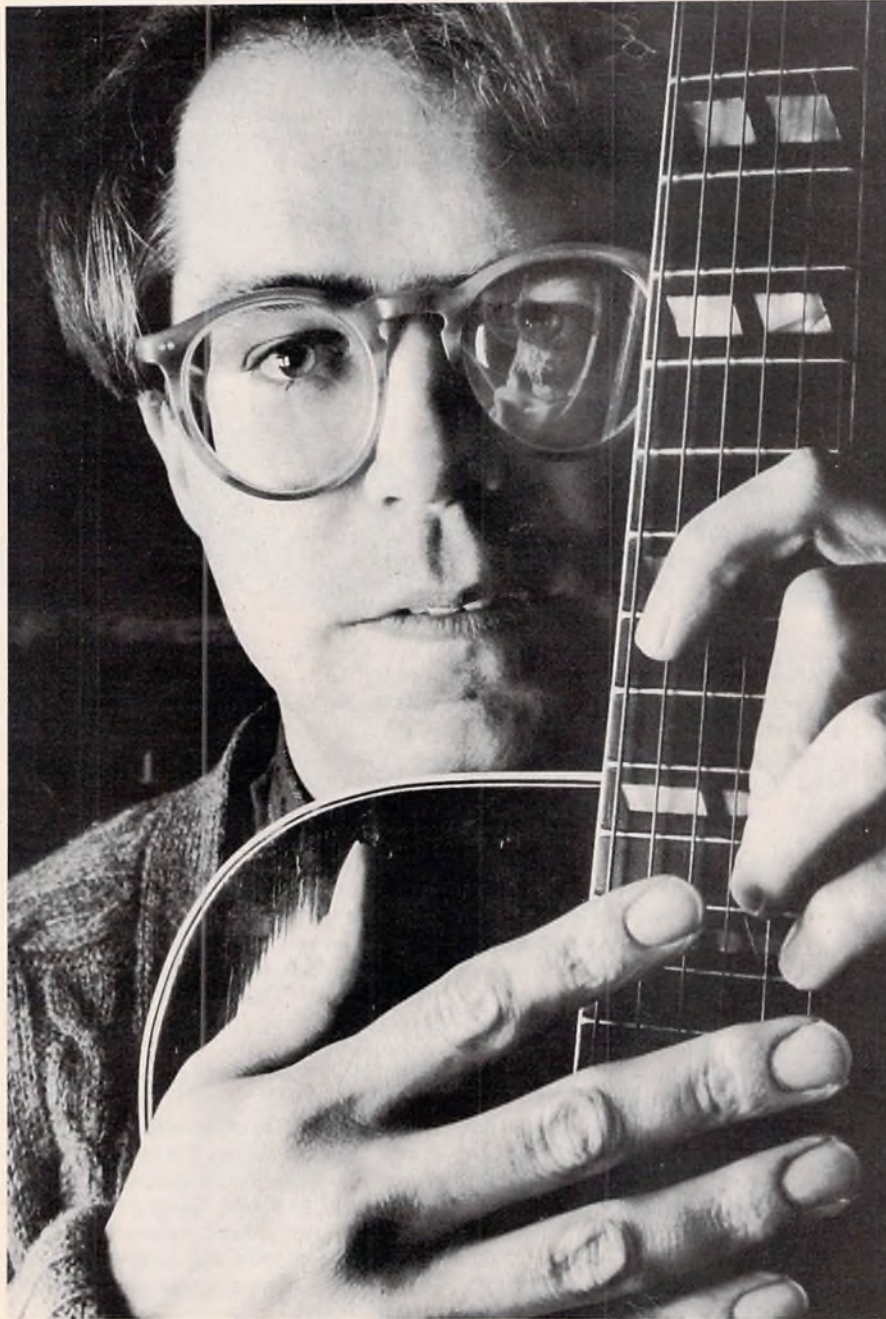
KD: The right people might be able to jump in.

BF: We did that on the *Before You Were Born* record, with Julius Hemphill—that was our first attempt.

HM: *Do you think you’re limited by where you’re playing, or how often, because of the type of music you’re playing? I mean, because it’s not in the bop tradition, because it’s electric?*

BF: Say something Joey—you haven’t said anything yet.

Joey Baron: I think people see our



Bill Frisell

“These guys know everything I ever wrote. So literally milliseconds before we start playing I decide what we’re going to hit with, and it’s just BAM! It’s such a luxury not to have to figure out set lists, to be completely spontaneous.”



HM: You like the association with jazz, then?

BF: I’m not ashamed of it, but I don’t really care. It doesn’t matter what it’s called. It bothers me that people use these names to box things away. What we do comes out of jazz, it has a lot of stuff that attracted me to jazz in the first place. But we don’t confine ourselves to a certain era; we use everything we know. That’s what all the great jazz players do. Sonny Rollins plays everything that comes through his mind. Monk and Charlie Parker played popular tunes, and everything that was around them. As far as the young beboppers go, there ought to be room for everybody to do what they want. It’s not their fault they’re getting work, and record company support. The record companies have a tendency to jump on whatever is a hit.

HM: Have there ever been any suggestions from your record company [Elektra/Musician] about the kind of direction you should take?

BF: No. Bob Hurwitz, our producer, is a strong presence and has high standards for what we do; but if there was ever any hint of pressure, I’d be gone in two minutes. They signed me—and I went with them—because they like what I was doing. I mean, if anyone thinks I recorded “Chain Of Fools” for any reason but that I love the way Aretha Franklin sings, and wanted to copy her thing . . . but Joey hates my version of that tune. He thinks I should have used a real drummer, not a drum machine.

HM: What do you like best about what your boss does, Joey?

JB: This band is a place where I can come and not be expected to do any specific thing. I can bring whatever’s in my background, and it’s not judged, the way it is in straight jazz circles. It has to do with attitudes. In this band, there are no attitudes—we take whatever’s there. Some nights I’ll play straight time, some nights I’ll do the opposite—and whatever I do is taken seriously—

instrumentation before they hear what we do, and automatically think “fusion,” but what we do is not fusion. Club owners or concert promoters hear what we do, or get the message it’s not fusion, and they think it’s too risky to take a chance on.

BF: But when we play . . .

JB: When we play people break down their walls. All kinds of people like it. They don’t bother calling it anything. They just enjoy it.

BF: There’s really nothing weird about the music. Everybody says, “Oh, this is avant garde. . . .”

JB: I don’t think there’s anything weird about the music . . .

KD: When we played the Village Vanguard I invited a lawyer who brought his friends, people who think of jazz as Gene Krupa playing “Sing, Sing, Sing.” They loved it. You don’t have to like jazz to love this music.

HM: Do you even call what you’re doing jazz?

JB: I just think of it as music. If someone wants to call it jazz, I don’t see what’s wrong with it. From my chair it seems like we’re drawing on jazz as much as we’re drawing on other elements.

ALDO MAURO



Joey Baron

HYOU VIELZ

"This band is a place where I can come and not be expected to do any specific thing. I can bring whatever's in my background, and it's not judged, the way it is in straight jazz circles. It has to do with attitudes. In this band, there are no attitudes—we take whatever's there."



which allows me to take myself seriously as a musician. This goes for all of us. It's the healthiest environment in which to create music.

You know, I had professional experience when I was just turning 20 playing with Carmen McRae. Like her music, Bill's is very soulful. When most people would let out 64 notes, she'd think about it and maybe let out a hum or one phrase. Bill's like that, too—he waits for the right idea.

KD: 'Til he just feels like playing something.
JB: Kermit does that, too, and that's my background. I mean, I've learned there's something about providing solid leadership—that's what's great about this band. Bill's a great bandleader: he provides safety for us to know we can play what we feel,

and talk about it if we want to. When it comes to playing the music, it's not like I'm punching a timecard—instead, the time has come to put myself on the line. Sometimes when I'm playing I forget it's Bill's band, because it's just so open.

BF: Well, sometimes I agonize over trying to figure out something for them to play, but when I say something it usually makes things worse. It works better if I just let them go.

KD: If there were lots of parts, they'd disappear after a month on the road, anyway.

Bill does expect miracles—he's not lax at all. It's serious—but we all want the same things. We're always serious, but we're having fun at the same time. It means we can go out there and play anything, and know we're not going to be fired for it the next day.

HM: *When you're playing on a gig, Bill, do you ever hear something these guys do that takes you in a different direction?*

BF: Oh yeah, that's what I live for: for these guys to surprise me. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Bill Frisell says, "I'm afraid I've turned into one of those guitar collectors. I mostly play my Steve Kline custom guitar, which has a small body and a Steinberger-like neck, so there's not tuning pegs on the top of the neck. But I also found an old Gibson L-4 at a garage sale for \$75 which I used on *Where In The World?*, and a Guild Songbird, which is a small, hollow-bodied acoustic with a pickup, that I think will be good for concerts. My wife bought me a Tele—I didn't know anything about them.

"I've got a Weymann banjo—I think the company was big in the '30s and '40s—and a Weymann four-string tenor ukelele, which I tune like a guitar's treble strings. I use D'Addario XL 110 strings, the third heaviest gauge for electric guitars, and I like Mesa Boogie amps, which I often borrow on the road, or the Music Man that I have at home, or old Fenders, or little Marshalls."

Kermit Driscoll plays a Modulous Graphite five-string fretless bass, and a custom four-string made by Roger Sadowsky; he's on a list to buy a Sadowsky-crafted five-string fretless which will be made of wood, his preference. His acoustic bass is a non-descript plywood model from the '30s. Kermit likes Hartke, SWR, and Trace Elliot amps, all of which provide punch and cover his wide range with depth.

Joey Baron plays whatever drums he's given

on the road, and according to the band's sound engineer Claudia Engelhart, "Joey can take any drum kit—he gets the weirdest when we travel—and make it sound like an orchestra just by tuning it up."

"I prefer an 18-inch bass drum, 8 x 12-inch mounted tom, 14 x 14-inch floor tom, 5 1/2 x 14-inch snare," Baron reports. "When I'm home I use Robert Spizzichino cymbals, 16-inches—a ride, a sizzle, and a weird one that's fanged at the edge like a Chinese cymbal, but has sizzles and is so unusually small it has a strange tone. And a high-hat. My own set is a Sonor but I don't endorse anyone. Drum kits seem pretty much the same to me. I put tape on the ride cymbal when I'm playing with Bill to clear up the constant ringing; his sound is so long I have to contrast with it, and I like something more dry and to the point.

"My sticks are Vic Firth 5Bs," Baron continues. "American classics—good medium sticks which allow both hard hitting and light play. I use any wire brushes I can get my hands on, preferably Reds from London, England, which are very small. Cowbells, woodblocks, and that sort of stuff are not normally part of my set up, but I'll bang on whatever's lying around, like for instance a metal chair."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

BILL FRISELL

(See **DB** May '89 for a listing of earlier releases.)

as a leader

WHERE IN THE WORLD?—Elektra/Musician 61181
IS THAT YOU?—Elektra/Musician 60956
BEFORE WE WERE BORN—Elektra/Musician 60843

with Paul Motian

BILL EVANS—JMT 834 445
ON BROADWAY VOLS. 1 & 2—JMT 834 421 & 834 440
MONK IN MOTIAN—JMT 834 421

with John Zorn

NAKED CITY—Elektra/Nonesuch 79238
SPILLANE—Elektra/Nonesuch 79172
COBRA—hat ART 0234
THE BIG GUNDOWN—Elektra/Nonesuch 79139

with various others

ANOTHER HAND—Elektra/Musician 61088 (w/David Sanborn)
ROBIN HOLCOMB—Elektra/Musician 960983 (w/Robin Holcomb)
STRANGE MEETING—Antilles 422 842 648 (w/Power Tools)

JOEY BARON

CARMEN McRAE AT THE GREAT AMERICAN MUSIC HALL—Blue Note 70982
DEEP DOWN—Soul Note 1121 (w/Enrico Pieranunzi)
HORIZONS—Concord Jazz 267 (w/Fred Hersch)
SARABANDE—Sunnyside 1024 (w/Fred Hersch)

TRANSPARENCY—JMT 850 002 (w/Herb Robertson)
X-CERPTS. LIVE AT WILLISAU—JMT 872 013 (w/Herb Robertson)

SANCTIFIED DREAMS—Columbia 44073 (w/Tim Berne)
FRACTURED FAIRY TALES—JMT 834 431 (w/Tim Berne)
BLACK PASTELS—JMT 1959 (w/Hank Roberts)

MINIATURE—JMT 1960
CAN'T PUT MY FINGER ON IT—JMT 849 147 (w/Miniature)

ONLY TRUST YOUR HEART—Concord Jazz 4355 (w/Toots Thielemans)

SPY VS. SPY—Elektra/Musician 60844 (w/John Zorn)
NAKED CITY—Elektra/Nonesuch 79238 (w/John Zorn)
LIVE AT THE KNITTING FACTORY VOL. II—A&M 5276 (solo)

LIVE AT THE KNITTING FACTORY VOL. IV—A&M 750215332 2 (w/Miniature)

ANOTHER HAND—Elektra/Musician 61088 (w/David Sanborn)

TONGUE IN GROOVE—JMT 849 158 (w/BaronDown Trio)

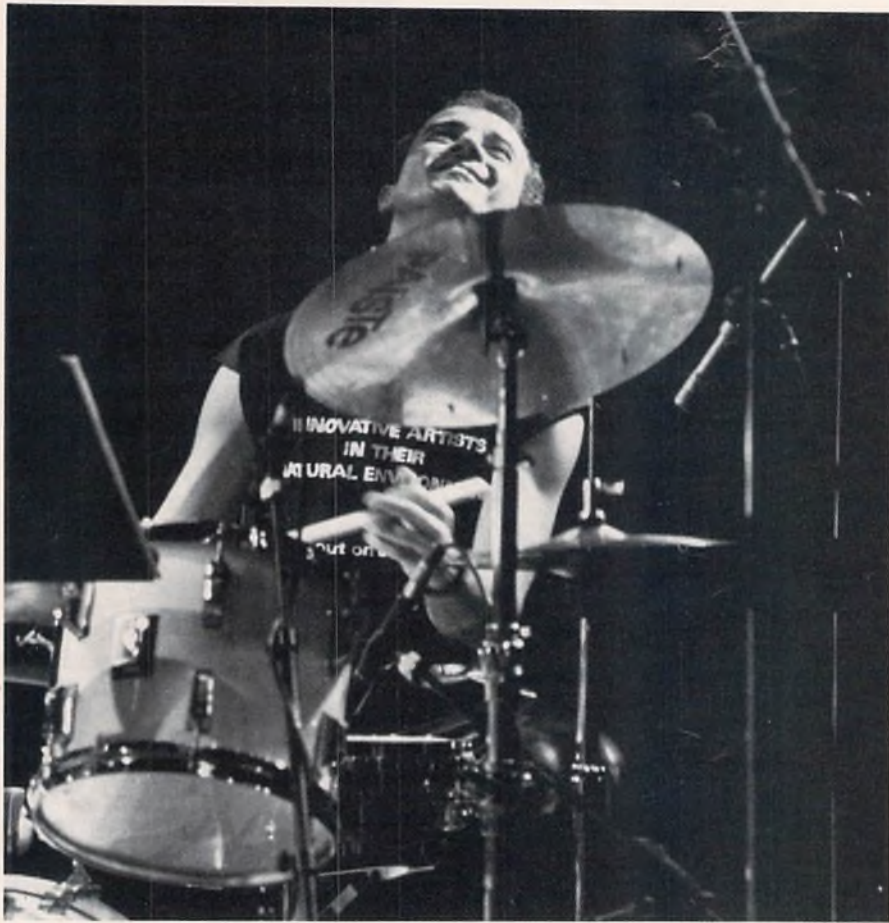
KERMIT DRISCOLL

LIVE AT THE KNITTING FACTORY VOL. IV—A&M 750215332 2 (w/New And Used)

MIRACLE MILE—Elektra/Musician 79276 (w/Wayne Horvitz and The President)

CYNICAL HYSTERIE HOUR—Japanese CBS/Sony 24DH5291 (w/John Zorn)

THOSE WHO KNOW HISTORY—SST 193 (w/Henry Kaiser)



W PATRICK HINELY WORKPLAY

Bobby's Excellent Adventure

BOBBY PREVITE

By Bill Milkowski

We're sitting in a Manhattan coffee shop a couple of blocks from Bobby Previte's Upper West Side apartment. It's an early morning breakfast/interview situation and Bobby is half hoping that we'll eat our ham and eggs, drink our coffee, and just skip the second part of the deal.

Not that he's trying to be uncooperative. Bobby is a genuinely friendly, likable guy, and he's entirely willing to converse on a variety of topics—death, wildlife, JFK assassination theories, the New York Giants failed bid for a Super Bowl repeat. The only topic he feels really uncomfortable talking about is his music. He hates to indulge in the whole intellectual process of dissecting it, analyzing it, explaining it. He hates talking about his intent and abhors the notion of comparing his albums, *Empty Suits* vs. *Weather Clear, Track Fast*. "Those things don't concern me, really. Ultimately, I approach everything the same way because I'm me. The differences between those two projects is obvious if you just listen to them. But then again, I wouldn't know how to describe it. I could but it would be very boring."

Bobby also doesn't like to talk shop about

his drumming technique in various contexts, and he steadfastly refuses to provide an equipment list, though he will reveal the particular pencils and staff paper he uses for writing his scores. He avoids talking about production details on precisely how certain sounds were achieved. "I don't want listeners to know that this part was sampled or that part was played baritone sax and bass clarinet. To me, that eliminates some of the mystery. I just want people to experience the music without all this needless information."

Maybe he is trying to be uncooperative.

He pauses, takes another sip of coffee, and slyly replies, "So what else do you wanna know?"

"I dunno, Bobby. What do you wanna say?"

"Not much. What do they wanna know?"

I guess he's referring to *Down Beat* readers. Or maybe he's referring to *Down Beat* critics, who in 1990 voted Previte #1 Talent Deserving Of Wider Recognition in the composer category. Whatever, it's clear that this is not going well.

And suddenly it dawns on me. I understand the reason that Bobby so desperately dreads doing interviews and reading about

himself in magazines. It's because he's such a perfectionist. No, he's more than that. Bobby is a bona fide control freak. He labors intensely over every step of the recording process, from composing to rehearsing to performing, engineering, mixing, and even mastering. He describes the whole undertaking in passionate terms. "It's like going into battle. It's like war. Total immersion," he says, also describing the tremendous sense of freedom that only comes after he has left Masterdisk, New York's premier mastering studio.

"Records are very important for me," he continues. "If I'm going to make one, it's gonna have to pass some kind of standard for me. Otherwise, I'll never forget it, ever. I don't want records out there that I didn't give just about everything I could to the making of it. I just don't want a record around like that. I mean, why? For me, the reason to do a record is to add something to people's lives. Not just to add to the general clutter just because you're supposed to make one every year. When I make a record, I commit myself to the process, so it better be good and it better be seamless. Every minute on that record better be happening. Every *second* of that record better be hap-

pening. Because otherwise I'm just wasting your time and my time."

Like other driven auteurs—Orson Welles, Woody Allen, Vince Lombardi—Bobby needs that control. He must have the reins. And he's uncomfortable now because he can't control this interview. He agonizes over imperfection and cannot tolerate inaccuracies, incompetence, or laziness on the part of writers. Or of fellow musicians.

Laziness, it seems, is a big pet peeve with Previte. "You have to work very hard to make what you do every day," he maintains. "Even in everyday life, you have to work very hard to surprise yourself and to do things to keep yourself and the people around you alive. And everything else is laziness. I hear music all the time where people just put down an ostinato bass line and play over it. You know . . . who cares? It's just another case of people being lazy. Their minds are stuck in one way of doing everything. I see this across the board, not just in music. I see that all the time. People are just damn lazy sometimes.

"Everyone has their level, and I think you know when you're performing under your level. That's just being lazy. It's a lack of care. I think each individual knows that. And if you know it and you're doing it, then you should stop it."

But perhaps his biggest pet peeves are the two terms that critics have routinely applied to his music—"eclectic" and "downtown." He especially hates the latter term. For the record, Bobby Previte is *not* a member of the Downtown New York scene. The fact that he has worked in the past with such Downtown denizens as John Zorn, Elliott Sharp, and Arto Lindsay is strictly that—in the past. Since his early years of scrambling for gigs around the East Village at places like Chandelier, 8BC, and Darinka (all long since defunct), Bobby Previte has gone on to bigger and better things. Like the Moscow Circus.

Bobby was on tour in Europe during the summer of 1991 when he got a call one June day in Vienna from Jonathan Rose of Gramavision Records. Rose spelled out an enticing proposition over the phone:

"Okay Bobby, here's the deal . . . you're to write all the new music for the Moscow Circus. The show is about two hours long. You write the music by the end of July, we record it in early August, the Circus opens in September. You'll get a video of all the acts. You'll have to go to the Soviet Union. . . ."

The time constraints—Bobby had to compose a complete two-hour score in the two weeks he had open in July—made it an especially daunting task for any composer to tackle. "I almost said no," he recalls. "But it was such an exciting prospect. Not only was it setting music to movement, it wasn't dance. It was a circus! I mean, how many times does something like that come tumbling across your doorway. So I said to myself at the time, 'I have to do this.'"

Previte had some previous experience in scoring films, having done the music to an underground video titled *Bought & Sold*, a dark, sordid tale of a runaway's life in New York City. But scoring music for clowns, equilibrists, trapeze artists, and jugglers on giant balls is a horse of a different color.

The first step was to travel to Leningrad (since renamed St. Petersburg after the fall of communist power in Russia) and attend a performance of the Cirk Valentin, the highly stylized Soviet circus created by director and choreographer Valentin Gneushev. "I met the director and choreographer and got as much as I could from them about the general esthetic of what they were trying to do," says Bobby. "I brought back a video of the whole show and just jumped in and started doing it. I would get up in the morning, turn the video on, and just watch it over and over with the sound off until I purged myself of all the music that I remembered being associated with the circus. That was step one. Step two was to study the physical movement of the acts, and step three was translating that into music. And usually, once I understood the form of the movement, the music sort of presented itself to me."

For an overture, Bobby sampled several different recordings of traditional circus music and scored out a piece to be played on sampling keyboard in real time. "The overture was meant as a tip of the hat to all the great circus music that came before. I wanted something with those traditional sounds, to make that gesture before we began, as if to say, 'Here's what was, now we'll show you what ours is.'" (At a recent performance with his Empty Suits band at Town Hall, where they opened up for the Lounge Lizards, Bobby played that same sampled overture himself on a DX7 to kick off his set.)

His next task was to create a theme that would run through the whole two-hour performance, reappear-

On being associated with the downtown scene:

"It's like being associated with any scene . . . a classical scene, a bebop scene, or whatever. It's a jail, in one sense. And I think anybody who is constantly classified in any one scene will agree with me. It's a jail because it's hard to get out of. But we musicians don't invent those things. Those are terms invented by writers who want to try and conveniently explain or describe something. But I really don't know what that term means. I don't even live downtown."

On mic'ing his drum kit in the studio:

"If there's anything that makes me throw a record out the window immediately, it's that tinny, trebley AKG cymbal sound. I just hate that. It's awful. Those microphones make the cymbal sound like it's about three inches around. I mean, if I'm going to carry these heavy 20-inch cymbals to a recording session, I want them to sound like they're 20 inches. I don't want them to sound like they're three inches across, which they do a lot of times on records I've heard.

"And that's just laziness on the part of an engineer whose attitude is, 'These are the microphones we always use on cymbals.' They blindly put those mics up as a matter of course. But when I see those microphones in a studio, I say, 'Take that shit off my drums.' I say that about any microphone that accentuates the high end. I mean, why would you want to accentuate the high end? It's

already there. What you should try to do is key in on the low mids and the richness of the cymbal, not that high stuff. So I generally go with Shoepps microphones or BMKs."

On being compared to Charles Mingus as a composer:

"Please . . . that's obscene!"

On his sources of inspiration:

"Who knows? Just sounds. I listen to a lot of music. I don't know. I'm not trying to be difficult, but I really don't spend my time trying to think, 'Now where did I get this or that idea from?' Whenever I get an idea, I'm so thrilled to have one I don't bother to think where I got it from."

On crossing over into different genres:

"I'm not here to make a pastiche of genres. I dislike that very much if someone tries to describe my music that way. I don't think of it as going between genres—I'm just writing the stuff. I may use instruments associated with different genres but there is a sameness of the sound I want and I think is achieved. I used pedal steel guitar on *Claude's Late Morning*, but that is not a country album by any stretch of the imagination. And just because I use harp doesn't mean it's classical music. People have to get by their instrument bias. If they hear a certain instrument, they assume that this music has to be a certain genre. Well, I don't subscribe to that." —B.M.

ing in various disguises through harmonic implications and time-signature changes. "I wanted to tie things together sonically," he explains. "All the acts, for instance, that performed in the air, I linked in terms of sounds. The notes were different but sonically they referred to each other . . . certain timbres at certain times just to give it a feeling of unity."

Creating themes for Sergei Loskutov, the 10-year-old wunderkind who performs a delightful tribute to Charlie Chaplin, was relatively easy. Barrelhouse-piano motif. And the ethereal Angel theme was no problem. What else would one compose for a 12-year-old boy soaring through the sky in an ethereal sequence of acrobatic feats straight out of a Botticelli painting but ethereal, angelic music? More challenging was Rattango, an art-deco presentation featuring the exquisite movements of a white rat who moves in tandem with his human partner. For that unusual pairing of artist and rodent, Bobby went with a tasteful classical motif.

Once he finished composing the entire two-hour score, he rehearsed it and eventually recorded it with an ensemble of New York musicians, including bassist Mark Helias, violinist Mark Feldman, trumpeter Herb Robertson, Empty Suits pianist Steve Gaboury and harpist Carol Emanuel, among others. But that was only the beginning of Bobby's excellent adventure.

He returned to Russia in August to teach the music to the Russian musicians who would perform it live each night at the circus. The whole rehearsal process took 11 days, and there were some serious wrinkles to iron out along the way.

"I was locked into the instrumentation. They had only a certain number of musicians, and these were the instruments they played. So I had to write for those particular instruments. But I expanded it somewhat. I insisted that they must get a sampler and that they must use an acoustic guitar and percussion for certain sections. Basically, the piece was scored out for synthesizers, guitar, bass, and a lot of MIDI equipment. But I did what I could to make it not sound like one big gigantic electronic synthesizer score. So I stayed away from the worst patches on earth, like trumpet, and I made sure to balance it out with acoustic sounds."

Communicating his musical ideas was a struggle at first. Not only was there a language barrier to overcome, but these Russian musicians were not exactly hip to musicians jargon. As Bobby explains, "It was hard. I couldn't say things to them that I could say to an American musician. They simply didn't understand. Like the word 'pocket' as in the expression 'in-the-pocket.' I couldn't describe that to them. There were many situations like that, and invariably I would have to do something else to try and



W. PATRICK HINELY/WORKPLAY

get my point across."

That's where Marina Golovchenko came in. "She was my interpreter, guide, advisor, and guardian angel who got me in, around, through, and, perhaps most importantly, out of Moscow on that brilliantly intense evening."

He's referring to the historic evening of August 18, when *putsch* came to shove in Moscow and former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev found himself "visited" by plotters. Bobby's hotel during this short-lived coup attempt was located next door to the Kremlin. As Bobby wrote of that experience:

"That night I was standing in Red Square [now called Free Russia Square]. I turned to Marina and asked her if she thought there would be a civil war soon. She said no, this must not happen. When she and my driver came to pick me up the next morning the

tanks were pointed at the spot where we were standing. And all along our drive to the Circus, tanks stood at each building where information was disseminated [*Tass, Pravda, Izvestia*].

"Now, for the first time, I could see for myself the difference between the Western press view of events and what really occurs. Because while television was busy shining up their 'production' of the coup—preparing the logo, getting the theme music right, you know—the Russian people were quietly and calmly at work dealing with a situation that seemed to me to be almost second nature to them."

He returned to his hotel that night with a flight back home scheduled for six the next morning. A curfew had been ordered between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. Violators would certainly be detained, possibly arrested.

"On the main road to the airport we ran into a blockade of tanks and soldiers. The driver got out to explain as my interpreter and I waited in the car, watching the flashing lights and the too-young men with their machine guns at the ready. Just relax, don't get out, she said. Right.

"Apparently, an officer had been hurt and his car burned by some partisan earlier, so no one could go through—maybe the civil war was beginning. We turned back, and I thought that was that. But our driver, I think at my interpreter's instigation, took a series of back roads, finally coming to another road block. On this occasion, that beautiful word *da* [Russian for 'yes'] hung in the night air, and I was on my way out. At the airport the driver looked me dead in the eye and wished me luck. I felt I should be saying that to *him*."

Hardly your average gig.

The Cirk Valentin came to New York in November and ran for a brief engagement on Broadway at the Gershwin Theatre. It was hailed by theater critics as "innovative and avant garde . . . the most wildly imaginative bit of family entertainment to hit town since France's Cirque du Soleil." Several reviewers also made mention of the haunting, evocative score by New York composer Bobby Previte. And as I recall, not one referred to him as a Downtown New York composer.

Bobby must be pleased.

DB

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

WEATHER CLEAR, TRACK FAST — enja R2 79667
EMPTY SUITS — Gramavision R2 79447
MOSCOW CIRCUS — Gramavision R2 79466
CLAUDE'S LATE MORNING — Gramavision 18-8811
PUSHING THE ENVELOPE — Gramavision 18-8711
BUMP THE RENAISSANCE — Sound Aspects SAS 008

with John Zorn

THE BIG GUNDOWN — Icon/Nonesuch 79139
SPILLANE — Elektra/Nonesuch 79172
COBRA — hat ART 2034

VOODOO — Black Saint 0109

with Elliott Sharp

LARYNX — SST 194
VIRTUAL STANCE — Dossier ST 7526

with Wayne Horvitz

THE PRESIDENT — Dossier ST 7528
BRING YR CAMERA — Elektra/Nonesuch 60799
THIS NEW GENERATION — Elektra/Musician 60759

with David Fulton

MARCOS & HARRY — Dossier ST 7543
LIKE CHIGNIK — Dossier ST 7519

Soulful, Searching & Sober

RONNIE EARL

By David Whiteis

On *Surrounded By Love*, his new album on Black Top (1069), guitarist Ronnie Earl segues from crisp Chicago blues through airy jamming reminiscent of the Allman Brothers' mushroom-fueled *Eat A Peach* period, and into hard-swinging Texas/California sophistication—all within the first five minutes. The set, which includes master-guitarist Robert Jr. Lockwood as well as such longtime Earl compatriots as Sugar Ray Norcia (harp and vocals) and Per Hanson (drums), maintains both musical and emotional coherence despite its eclecticism, and it's all held together by Earl. He solos with his trademark ease and commitment, but he also spends a lot of time in the background, seasoning the stew like a master chef with his comping and chording.

It almost seems too easy—the gifted young guitarist who cut his teeth jamming with Otis Rush and Big Walter Horton, then joined Roomful Of Blues when Duke Robillard left the band in 1979, now hobnobbing with greats like Lockwood and firing off dextrous elaborations on half a dozen thematic traditions within a single song. But beneath the ease lies a commitment that allows Earl to stride bravely into areas that would intimidate a lesser man: the lyrics of "That's When My Soul Comes Down" on the new *Surrounded By Love* are naked soul-tearing worthy of Percy Mayfield at his most uncompromising, made even more gripping by the ascendant, exposed-nerve testifying of Earl's solo.

That kind of courage has marked Earl's entire career. He's embraced transitions of the most radical kind: his own evolution from a Chicago-style guitarist sitting in at the Speakeasy in Cambridge, Massachusetts to a sophisticated fretman capable of holding his own in the horn-drenched jazziness of Roomful Of Blues; then from that secure-but-limiting gig to a solo career that's found



LISA SEIFERT

him simultaneously expanding into more advanced jazz directions and reclaiming his beloved urban blues roots through collaborations with living legends like Lockwood and Earl King.

Then there've been the personal victories. Earl is disarmingly open about his longtime addiction to alcohol and cocaine, and the difficult sanctuary he's found in sobriety over the last three years. Characteristically, he sought all these freedoms at once, and he's never looked back: "I left a very successful band that packed houses every night," he remembers. "I didn't know what was going to happen, and it was real scary. You should also know that I got married, and that all those things happened at once: I went out on my own, I got married, and I got sober."

Earl's music and conversation are characterized by a directness that challenges the listener. It may be partly the result of the soul searching that accompanies sobriety—saxophonist Frank Morgan confronts you with that same unsettling combination of steely strength and open vulnerability—but it's also the legacy of a life spent immersed in what Earl considers the most uncompromisingly honest music in the world.

"It's 'soul' music," he says about the blues. "My whole philosophy of playing is to play with soul. I see it in all the music I love. I love Charlie Parker. I love Ray Charles. I love Otis Spann. To me it's like breathing. I couldn't describe to you what it feels like to play, but to me it's the music with the most emotional life, soulfulness. It gives me that warm feeling that maybe some people used to look for in heroin and stuff."

It's a strange time to be a young bluesman. Suddenly the racks are bulging with recordings by sneering young white men in leather and dark glasses, posing in front of ghetto rib joints, firing off endless three-chord progressions to thunderous boogie-shuffle

beats and screaming da blooz through throats scarred with phlegm and grit. A musician like Earl, who's played with almost unheard-of integrity for years ("I've always just wanted to be a contributor to the music; I'm not interested in being a big star."), must wonder if the millenium has arrived and left him out. Will there be any room for unpretentious honesty in the blues of the future?

"Absolutely," he says. "I know there's a lot of people playing, but to me it's very special music and there's not a whole lot of *special* people out there playing, who try to keep the music simple, who don't overplay, who are contributing and playing with soul, not just getting over with a white crowd somewhere. It's like life and death, y'know? That's how I play, and I don't see a whole lot of that."

The roadsides are littered with the broken careers of artists who've reaped anonymity, frustration, and eventual bitterness as the price for that kind of integrity in an industry where ephemeral tastes dictate "product," and higher visions are followed at great peril. But Earl is confident that fate can't throw anything at him he can't handle.

"When I was drinking and drugging I was feeling sorry for myself on a regular basis. Now, my key words are I have to keep an attitude of gratitude. I'm playing in this dump tonight, but I can make it a wonderful experience. I think about the fact that Robert Nighthawk played in places just like this. My wife was sitting with me the other day, we were listening to Earl Hooker. I was starting to feel sorry for myself a little bit—playing in bars after 15 years!—and she looked at me and said, 'I bet Earl Hooker played in a lot of bars.' That kind of said everything."

Earl counts young men like Anson Funderburg, the Vaughan brothers (Jimmy and the late Stevie Ray), and Chicago's Johnny B. Moore among his favorite players; and, of course, he feels that the spirit of the masters—departed greats like Earl Hooker and Eddie Taylor, those still playing such as Lockwood and Otis Rush—will never die. But he's not interested in dissecting music, and he evaluates others' playing by the same standards by which he evaluates his own. "I don't take inventory," he says. "Do they mean it, or are they trying to be somebody they're not? Am I being moved? That's my bottom line: *am I being moved?*" **DB**



GYPSY ZABORSKIE

Challenger On Call

KENNY BARRON

By Fred Bouchard

Freeman, Benny Golson, Bobby Hutcherson, Eddie Harris, Eddie Henderson, Ella Fitzgerald, Lionel Hampton, Jimmy Owens, Ray Anderson, Ray Drummond, Sheila Jordan. Add duets or co-led bands with Ted Dunbar, Red Mitchell, John Hicks, Buster Williams. He's on two Spike Lee soundtracks. The man's got credits.

Beyond yeoman duty, Barron is a composer and craftsman of a high order. Stanley Turrentine, Hubbard, Getz, Gillespie—even Benny Golson—have recorded his melodies. An early successful pioneer on electric piano, Barron sensibly scaled his response to the instrument's inherent limits on touch and shading by playing succinct, uncluttered ideas and chugging phrases. He's written 12-tone pieces ("Row House") for combos and for string quartet. Masterpieces of creativity and inspiration include *Scratch*, a happy match with bassist Dave Holland and drummer Daniel Humair.

Barron co-founded Sphere in 1982 with Charlie Rouse initially to pay tribute to Thelonious Monk. Sphere moved on to originals and Charlie Parker, but Barron still explores Monk's deep book and smoothly assimilates that playful style. *The Only One*, a new trio session dedicated to Monk, fleshes out austere, monastic lyricism with no Monk originals. This, the Getz, and other recent dates show Barron, like fine Barolo or Bordeaux, smoothly improves with age.

Born of a musical family in that once very musical city of Philadelphia, Kenny followed the example and contacts of brother Bill. Bill led Kenny to some of his early gigs around 1960 at home with Mel Melvin, Philly Joe Jones, and Jimmy Heath. After Detroit gigs with Yusef Lateef, he moved to New York's Five Spot with James Moody.

Moody hipped Dizzy Gillespie, who hired

Barron in 1962. "Kenny's got something," said Mr. G, pleased to rejoin forces with him in January at the Blue Note. "He can stretch like a watchband. He knows the rules. He's a great accompanist. You're always moving forward with harmony and resolving chords. The moment you get into a group of changes, you think about ways of getting out of it. Kenny's accompaniment is always on the go; he doesn't sit on chords, but he doesn't push you either."

Carol Sloane, who called on Barron to play Scullers (Boston) and record *Love You Madly*, esteems him from a singer's viewpoint. "Kenny's a space man," she says, including in her praise Jimmy Rowles, Norman Simmons, Tommy Flanagan, and Stefan Scaggiari. "They leave you all this beautiful space to stretch out in. They embellish and add to what you're doing and make you secure. His Maybeck solo album was so brilliant, I called him up. I'm a big fan."

Reed master Nick Brignola, who knows Barron only from studio dates, affirms the immediate rapport. "Kenny can take it inside, outside, adapt to new styles and players: I can't say enough. He's like a natural athlete who has the moves down. In the art of accompaniment, Kenny's the logical successor to Tommy Flanagan. His teaching will positively effect future generations."

Joanne Klein, his personal manager of 10 years, knows the man behind the music. "Kenny's invariably on time, even-tempered, trustworthy, conscientious. He has stamina, a positive attitude. You don't worry whether he's up, down, off, on. He's spoiled me for working with most other musicians. He's flexible and consistent, in playing and personality. On the stand, there's always a challenge, never a fight."

Barron's ambitions lay more in honing his craft than in running the show. "Always the best man, never the groom" has held true until lately: Barron at 48, a remarkably versatile and delightful sideman, was content to run his Manhattan gigs (e.g., other-home Bradley's with longtime friend, drummer Ben Riley and a prime assortment of bassists) and bi-annual Muse sessions.

Kenny Barron is one of that small handful of pianists who can be depended upon to make a date come alive. No matter the context, Barron packs a surefire blend of discipline, authority, experience, musicianship, understanding, and taste. Invariably, he lifts proceedings to a higher plane.

Like Ozzie Smith at shortstop, Barron is as prolific as he is consistent. Gotham's oft-summoned pianist for 20 years, Barron has a discographical lode of 300-plus albums. *The New Grove Dictionary Of Jazz* lists him with saxophone heavies James Moody, Jimmy Heath, Yusef Lateef, Sonny Fortune, and Joe Henderson. Sturdy, handsome work came with Dizzy Gillespie (1962-'66), Freddie Hubbard (1967-'78), and Ron Carter (1976-'82). Lucid beauty illuminated the duets and quartets of Stan Getz's phoenix-like twilight (1985-'91). On record, a counterpoint ran with his late elder brother Bill Barron (1960-'88), an intriguing experimenter.

Bielefelder's Katalog '85 lists in print Barron as sideman with 50 leaders over an awesome range: Chet Baker, George Benson, John Blake, Joshua Breakstone, Larry Coryell, Al Gafa, Buck Hill, Buddy Rich, Chico Freeman, Frank Foster and Frank Wess, Hannibal Marvin Peterson, J. J. Johnson and Al Grey, John McNeill and Tom Harrell, Jon Faddis, Michal Urbaniak, Sharon

Barron's slowly emerging leadership has been due to economy as well as temperament. "I wasn't interested in leading a band," admits Barron. "Today it's almost silly to have a band. There are few places to work and it's all on the leader to pay air fare and hotels. With Diz, we'd stay on the road for months at a time; today, it's hard to do two weeks in the U.S. [Though] I lost money on my quintet's only tour, I run it because it's so much fun to play with; you never know what's going to happen. Everybody lets go in different directions—it never gets boring. Music doesn't have to be difficult, but it should be challenging."

Barron's avowed influences—Art Tatum, Monk, and Tommy Flanagan—come out strongly. He carries on tradition with no ax to grind. "I'm no innovator," he says. "I grew up playing bebop. But I've played so much avant garde with Bill and Freddie Hubbard it gives me a spirit of adventure. It depends on the environment and the people involved."

A warm collaboration developed in the '80s with the late Stan Getz. Getz, an instantly identifiable tenor giant with a sixth sense for teammates, said that Barron and he were "fellow romantics." "What he may have meant," says Kenny in his matter-of-fact way, "is that he was a lyrical player, and that's what I aim for—playing melodically. We both could play ballads all night long. We like to tell little stories. He liked to play pretty; I like to play pretty."

"Though Stan had more personal crises and tragedies than I, we both wanted people to feel what we felt. If you want somebody to cry, you have to be able to cry yourself. You put yourself in that mood, you try to project what you're feeling at the moment. We didn't strive for this: it just happened." It happened for this listener on *People Time* and *Serenity*.

Barron's career in music education bolsters his traditions. It may well have been fostered by brother Bill, who was chairman of the music department at Wesleyan University. "Bill and I talked about musical ideas a lot," says Barron. "His approach was very analytical and academic, whereas I tend to be more emotional. You really need a combination of the two. Bill had unusual ideas about composition; he made you think about how you might want to approach improvisation or ornamentation. He was very thoughtful even while playing. He'd go after things, like Trane scales or McCoy [Tyner] fourths."

Since joining the faculty of Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J. in 1973, Barron has taught piano and harmony to young professionals like trumpeter Terence Blanchard and drummer Ralph Peterson. "Three days a week there," says Barron, "helps me put things in order, to organize

information sequentially. I often learn from the students. Some graduate students are so professional you could send them on a gig. Some have tremendous chops—I might ask them, 'How'd you do that?' At that point it's less teaching than an exchange on a higher level."

What advice does he give students? Barron replies: "Young players know what to do if they're serious. You have to practice; that

"Music doesn't have to be difficult, but it should be challenging."



goes without saying. I stress the need to get out and hear the music live. Don't rely on records. Talk to the cats. That's really important. When you sit at home and listen, you memorize and analyze solos. You need to respond.

"One student from New Jersey came to hear me play with Joe Henderson, and admitted it was the first time he'd ever been to Manhattan. I was flabbergasted—I mean, here's this aspiring professional jazz musician and he's never even seen New York!

"When I go out to hear music live," says Barron, "I hardly ever see electric keyboards. Younger players are researching what went on before bebop and swing: the Marsalises, Roy Hargrove, Vincent Herring, Antonio Hart, Justin Robinson . . . pure

unadulterated music, no frills. They are using the standards I grew up on, old chestnuts like 'Embraceable You.' They know the songs you learn chord changes from, like 'Cherokee,' 'Moment's Notice.' They are digging out tunes by Sonny Clark and Duke Pearson. This is all nice to hear."

When asked to name favorite albums, Barron had ready replies. "I'm very happy with my new one, *Quickstep* [see "Reviews" Dec. '91]. We actually worked the Village Voice for a week [first, so] it had a chance to jell and develop. We all played great—very relaxed with lots of spirit.

"As sideman, Bill's last one, *The Next Plateau*, was a challenge. The music was hard and the rhythm section was very good. On *The Kicker* with Joe Henderson [Milestone OJCCD 465], I was relatively new to New York, and in fast company! Good spirit in the way people felt toward one another, and Joe's playing is always incredible.

"I've been listening to Brazilian music—[singers] Elis Regina, Milton Nascimento, Gilberto Gil, Djavan. Harmonically, they're very sophisticated. The Brazilian influence has been part of my repertoire for some time."

Post-bop with his quintet, romantic ballads with Stan Getz, cutting-edge modernism with brother Bill, avant garde with Freddie Hubbard, zesty combos with a jazz who's who, a new slant on samba. . . . Kenny Barron has played his handsome, built-to-last music far and wide, lo, these 30 years. He's so musical, dependable, and even-tempered, it's a fair bet he'll be at it another 30. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Kenny Barron bought a Steinway "S" in 1988; he is a Steinway artist. Before that, he played an upright ex-player piano. His favorite piano is the seven-foot Steinway at Rudy Van Gelder's studio. He used a Fender Rhodes on Muse dates (string synthesizer on *Lucifer*), but never giggered on them. Today, he dabbles with a Yamaha DX7 synthesizer

at home, on which he composes at night with headphones. "I'm looking at a Korg M-1," he adds. "It's like a mini-recording studio. You get an idea of what anything sounds like before you put it on paper: Sequencer, rhythm, and drum machines are built in, so in essence you can make overdubs."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Kenny Barron has been key man on record dates since he came out on *The Tenor Stylings Of Bill Barron* (Savoy, 1961), notably with Dizzy Gillespie, Joe Henderson, James Moody, Stan Getz. He made many records on Atlantic with Yusef Lateef, Freddie Hubbard, and Sonny Fortune. He's led over 40 record sessions of his own.

as a leader

- AT MAYBECK HALL — Concord Jazz 4466
- SPIRAL — East Wind 709
- AT THE PIANO — Xanadu 188
- THE MOMENT — Reservoir 121
- THE ONLY ONE — Reservoir 115
- LEMURIA SEASCAPE — Candid 79508
- AUTUMN IN NEW YORK — Uptown 2726
- GREEN CHIMNEYS — Criss Cross 1006
- SCRATCH — enja 4092
- QUICKSTEP — enja 79669
- LIVE AT FAT TUESDAY S — enja 507149
- WHAT IF? — enja 501309
- INVITATION — Criss Cross 1018
- GOLDEN LOTUS — Muse 5220

LUCIFER — Muse 5070

with Stan Getz

- PEOPLE TIME — Emarcy 314 510 823
- APASIONATO — A&M 75021-5297 [Grammy nominee]
- ANNIVERSARY — Emarcy 838 769 [Grammy nominee]
- SERENITY — Emarcy 838 770
- VOYAGE — Blackhawk 51101

with Sphere

- BIRD SONGS — Verve 837 032
- FLIGHT PATH — Elektra/Musician 60313
- FOUR IN ONE — Elektra/Musician 60166
- LIVE AT UMBRIA JAZZ — Red 207

with Bill Barron

- THE NEXT PLATEAU — Muse 5368
- VARIATIONS IN BLUE — Muse 5306
- JAZZ CAPER — Muse 5235
- THE HOT LINE — Savoy Jazz 1160

with Nick Brignola

- RAINCHECK — Reservoir 108
- ON A DIFFERENT LEVEL — Reservoir 112
- WHAT IT TAKES — Reservoir 117

Key

- Excellent ★★★★★
- Very Good ★★★★★
- Good ★★★★★
- Fair ★★★★★
- Poor ★★★★★



Bobby McFerrin/Chick Corea

PLAY—Blue Note B4-95477: *SPAIN; EVEN FOR ME; AUTUMN LEAVES; BLUES CONNOTATION; 'ROUND MIDNIGHT; BLUE BOSSA.*

Personnel: McFerrin, vocals; Corea, acoustic piano.

★★★★★

True to the title, this live duo session has the off-the-cuff quality of a chance meeting between two masterful improvisers gathering to "play" over—and play around with—several jazz chestnuts. Corea and McFerrin, both blessed with technical adroitness, eclectic musical influences, and a playful—almost puckish—sense of humor, make the most of their time together.

Somewhat like a Robin Williams of the jazz vocal scene, McFerrin has a natural gift for impersonation. He flits from sound to sound, from timbre to timbre, and from persona to persona, with a kind of restless intensity. But those running leaps of register and instrumental roles amount to more than just gimmickry. The role-playing goes both ways. McFerrin slips into a very convincing bassist role under Corea's solos, while Corea lays a fluid tapestry under McFerrin's improvisations. In this released setting, Corea taps into his encyclopedic storehouse of jazz piano idioms with a fluid grace sometimes missing from his Akoustic and Elektrik band projects. Rather than merely display chops, the duo tends to plunge into play-ful tête à tête dialogs, extending the forms of the standards that make up the repertoire.

Nothing is played straight. McFerrin does a comic turn as a bored lounge lizard in introducing "Autumn Leaves," then turning the famous melody into silly putty. The wry patter yields to the more serious matter of investing

new energy into a venerable standard. Their reading of Ornette Coleman's "Blues Connotation" has a peppery, boppish charm which shifts gears into a percolating one-chord vamp, segueing into a musky version of "'Round Midnight."

A refreshing departure from Corea's and McFerrin's respective, ongoing projects, *Play* is essentially a good case study in both jazz rapport and a belief in the power of spontaneous creative combustion. In short: the power of play is at play. (reviewed on cassette)

—Josef Woodard

Franz Koglmann



Franz Koglmann

L'HEURE BLEUE—hat ART CD 6093: *LEOPARD LADY; MOON DREAMS; MY OLD FLAME; MONOBLUE; NIGHT AND DAY; BAITE; IT ISN'T EASY; L'HEURE BLEUE; SLOW FOX; FOR BIX; BLUE ANGEL; BLACK BEAUTY; NACHTS.* (70:35)

Personnel: Koglmann, trumpet, flugelhorn; Tony Coe, clarinet, tenor saxophone; Burkhard Stangl, guitar; Klaus Koch, bass; Misha Mengelberg, piano (cuts 3, 6, 9, 13).

★★★★★

When the first few strains of "Leopard Lady" first lurched from my speakers, I thought a phone line had suddenly broken in. Rather, it was only Stangl's Frisell-like electric guitar zig-zagging its way across what is essentially a low-key, conversational piece of music, akin to West Coast jazz minus any familiar melody lines. The textures are smooth, soft-focus, easy-going, angular but lacking in the kind of dry, experimental stuff found on some of composer/bandleader/trumpeter Franz Koglmann's earlier recordings. "Moon Dreams," "using and modifying Gil Evans' arrangement," continues "Leopard"'s mood, minus any solos.

Koglmann's Chet Baker influence comes through "loud" and clear on a relatively straight reading of the standard "My Old Flame," one of four duets with pianist Mengelberg. "Baite" showcases Mengelberg's light, chordal touch alongside Koglmann's breathy, almost Miles-like tone (c. *Sketches Of Spain*). "Slow Fox" and "Nachts" contrast as more somber, classical-sounding duets.

Koglmann's Monoblue Quartet is a fascinating mix of sounds, European modernism juxtaposed with standards. There's regular cohort Stangl's alternating Jim Hall/Frisell guitar mixing it up with web-weaver Koch's rich acoustic bass (echoes of Dave Holland), vet Tony Coe's breathy tenor sax (Ben Webster, Paul Gon-salves) and spicy clarinet (shades of Jimmy

Giuffre and Tony Scott), and, of course, Koglmann's trumpet and flugelhorn. "Monoblue"'s cool, almost aloof tones are countered by the quizzical reading given Cole Porter's "Night And Day," a rendition leaving one to conclude, "I didn't know what time it was." Koglmann's reggae-flavored arrangement of "It Isn't Easy" is reminiscent of Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, again minus the heat. His arrangement of Duke's "Black Beauty" is expectedly playful, and about the only real "swinger."

Not surprisingly, a drummer hardly seems necessary, the atmospherics, arrangements, compositions, and instrumental articulation asking little in the way of a strong pulse, meter, or syncopation. Thoroughly melodic, a tad briny, polite, and even quirky at times, *L'Heure Bleue* is also engaging, essentially warm and intimate "art music" in the spirit of Koglmann's 1987 *About Yesterdays Ezzthetics* (hat ART CD 6003), another date distilled in the jazz esthetic from a late-20th century Viennese perspective. (reviewed on CD)

—John Ephland



Wallace Roney

OBSESSION—Muse MCD 5423: *OBSESSION; SCENARIO ONE; ALONE TOGETHER; SEVEN; BLACK MOON; DONNA LEE.* (42:43)

Personnel: Roney, trumpet; Gary Thomas, tenor sax, flute; Donald Brown, piano; Christian McBride, bass; Cindy Blackman, drums.

★★★★★

Donald Brown

PEOPLE MUSIC—Muse MCD 5406: *THE BISCUIT MAN; GASLIGHT; PRISM; RERUNS FROM THE SIXTIES; OVER AT HERBIE'S JUKE JOINT; I LOVE IT WHEN YOU DANCE THAT WAY; GHAYLON; BOOKER T.; INTENSIVE CARE UNIT (I.C.U.).* (53:30)

Personnel: Brown, piano; Vincent Herring, alto (cuts 2, 4, 7, 9) and soprano (1, 5) sax, flute (3, 6, 7); Steve Nelson, vibes; Bob Hurst, bass; Daniel Sadowick, percussion; Samarai Celestial (Eric Walker), drums, vocals (6); Lenora Helm, vocals (6).

★★★★★

These two records have much in common—besides the fact that bandleaders Brown and Roney are both ex-Jazz Messengers—in that both are also committed to keeping one foot planted in the tradition while toeing the music forward with the other.

Roney's fourth record as a leader rings with echoes of Miles, but in the broadest, and best, sense. Roney chooses that familiar Harmon-mute sound on "Alone Together," and "Seven"

haunts with an aching melancholy. But it is clearly his voice that delivers terse, insistent lines and clear leaps to the upper register, as on his fast-moving "Obsession." In the same vein, Thomas, his tenor deep and full, builds intensity with passion, not facile licks. As for swing, this band has it, whether on the rambunctious "Donna Lee" or McBride's slinky "Black Moon." Swinging, too, is Blackman, who contributed the introspective "Scenario One." Humming and popping under the band, Blackman's martial rhythms drive the piece subtly yet ever so funkily, and her snare sound is superb.

And then there is Brown, whose comping teases and coaxes, then deftly answers the soloists he backs on both records. *People Music*, his third album as a leader, bangs open with the uptempo blues "Biscuit Man" as Herring threads out long, careening soprano tones, then quickens his pace. On Duke Pearson's "Gaslight," a smooth, strolling thing, Herring's alto is sweet and urgent, Nelson's vibes warm and lulling. And again, if swing is what's desired, this band delivers. Hurst and Celestial dig deep and groove hard; check out their interplay on the uptempo "Intensive Care Unit" or their dancing precision on "Reruns From The Sixties," in which Hurst's acoustic bass makes for a very funky funk tune. In all, though, it is Brown's "Booker T." that sums up the spirit of his playing and that will make your heart take a listen. Here, he converses, unaccompanied, with the secular and the spiritual, making sinners and saints of us all. (reviewed on CD)

—Suzanne McElfresh

from within the band, and the arrangements incorporate the rhythm section beyond time-keeping and the expected accents.

Whittaker plays powerfully, but he doesn't hog the spotlight. Tunes such as Davis' "Sum Drum" and Craig's "Bastian's Bounce" include drum fills and solos, and the Ellington-Tizol standard "Caravan" has plenty of drum battery behind the soloists. But for all his muscularity, the leader is also musical in his taste and attack.

Among the other band members, Hall, part of the Mercer Ellington-led Duke Ellington orchestra, bristles with the fire and assurance of a young Freddie Hubbard. Davis shows roots in Cannonball, and Lakey comes from the J. J. Johnson-Curtis Fuller school. Karlsson's block-chord solo on Jimmy Raney's "Minor" is outstanding, and Craig walks a mean line throughout the album. (reviewed on CD)

—Owen Cordle



Sebastian Whittaker

SEARCHIN' FOR THE TRUTH—Justice JR 0202-2: *SUM DRUM; SEARCHIN' FOR THE TRUTH; TROPICSVILLE; BASTIAN'S BOUNCE; BLUE SKY; CARAVAN; HODGE PODGE; WATCHIN' OUT FOR BENNY; MINOR; LIFT EVERY VOICE & SING.* (59:00)

Personnel: Whittaker, drums; Barry Lee Hall, trumpet; James Lakey, trombone; Jesse Davis, alto sax; Stefan Karlsson, piano; David Craig, bass.

★ ★ ★ ½

Whittaker's second album goes along with today's acoustic jazz trends: the ensemble sounds of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, Cannonball Adderley's quintet and sextet, and the Jazztet are recalled. As a drummer, Whittaker seems part Blakey, part Louie Bellson. He's more supple than Blakey, more boppish than Bellson. The program includes mostly originals



Rara Machine

BREAK THE CHAIN—Shanachie 64038: *MENYO; RARA MOUVE; BANMWENLANMOU; MAN MAN PIMBA; IBO; WOULE; LINA; KASE CHENNI; ZETWAL.* (50:49)

Personnel: Clifford Sylvain, vocals, bamboo, jembe, congas, drum machine programming, percussion; Gerald Sylvain, conga, vocals; Donald Guillaume, drums, vocal; Jeffé Guillaume, bass, vocals; Ricardo "Tiplume" Frank, guitar, vocals; Wemyr Jn. Pierre, keyboards (cuts 4,8); Jacques Barbot, percussion (4); Sheilla Degraff, Florence "Zhea" Caze, Nadia Pressage, Sabrina Koldjensen, Sheena Rock, Richard Soline, vocals; Tom Michel, alto sax, flute; Syd Judah, trumpet; Yves Abel, bass (4).

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

While Afro-Cuban and Brazilian sounds bubble through the jazz and fusion mainstream, Haitian rhythms remain relatively unknown, perhaps because the dominant *compas* beat—a mellower cousin of the Dominican *merengue*—offers little variation. But a new generation of Haitian bands is breaking the mold, among them Clifford Sylvain's Brooklyn-based Rara Machine, who draw simultaneously from primal voodoo rites and high-tech, pan-African pop. Based on the festive *rara* rhythms of the Haitian carnival, Sylvain's music layers slick vocal, guitar, and synthesizer lines over an assortment of homemade percussion, masking socio-political messages with party-hearty effervescence.

The songs are a smooth melange of indigeneous and international influences. "Rara Mouvé" lends a folk anthem the glossy feel of

Guadeloupe *zouk*, while "Banmwelanmou" gives disco a spin, and "Man Man Pimba" delivers a Creole rap. "lwo" hints at Trinidadian *soco*, "Woule" at Zairean *soukous*, "Lina" at Cuban salsa, and "Zetwal" at funky jazz. But Sylvain, who studied African culture in Nigeria and Latin drumming with Mongo Santamaria in New York, digests his cosmopolitan borrowings so completely that everything sounds Haitian, percolating to a *rara* beat that's felt even when it's not explicitly present. Entrancing but never scary, *Break The Chain* is a voodoo charmer. (reviewed on CD) —Larry Birnbaum



Jack DeJohnette

EARTH WALK—Blue Note CDP 7 96690 2: *It's TIME TO WAKE UP AND DREAM; BLUE; WHERE OR WAYNE; PRIESTESSES OF THE MIST; EARTH WALK; ON GOLDEN BEAMS; ONE ON ONE; LYDIA; MONK'S PLUMB; IT'S TIME TO WAKE UP AND DREAM.* (74:24)

Personnel: DeJohnette, drums; Michael Cain, MIDI acoustic grand piano, synthesizers; Gary Thomas, tenor sax, flute; Greg Osby, alto, soprano saxes; Lonnie Plaxico, acoustic, electric basses; Joan Henry, animal sounds (cut 5).

★ ★ ★ ★

Jack DeJohnette once told an interviewer that he likes the term "multidirectional" to describe his music. No wonder; this virtuoso drummer has tried more than a few avenues. Writing for his current Special Edition group on *Earth Walk*, the *Bitches Brew* alumnus updates the idea of fusion with a global perspective, returning to some old chestnuts in the process.

On "Where Or Wayne," plangent modal riffs played by soprano saxophonist Greg Osby recall Wayne Shorter. DeJohnette's writing comes full circle to the future, though, with the relentlessly swinging "One On One." He drives the beat with an interplay of colors, meshing with Lonnie Plaxico's limber bass lines while Osby dukes it out with tenor player Gary Thomas. Quick changes in direction make "One On One" as unpredictable as it is hypnotic. The bristling syncopations of "Monk's Plumb" also hit the mark. Here, as ever, DeJohnette works harder to propel the music with his light, fast touch than he does to draw attention to himself.

Pianist Michael Cain is a feisty addition to the group, which otherwise has been together for five years. When things start to get predictably fushion-ish, he stirs them up. And Cain's solo on "Lydia" molds dissonance into a surprisingly tender ballad. (reviewed on CD)

—Elaine Guregian

Mr. Low Blow

by Owen Cordle

I've always thought of **Joe Henderson**, one of the heavyweights of our times, as Mr. Low Blow and Mr. Unpredictability—both good qualities for a jazz tenor player. These refer to his control and use of the low register and his sound of surprise. Although not an avant gardist, he plays free within structure, or he connects melodic ideas without delineating every chord underneath; thus he seems to improvise free melody. His sound is at once sturdy, lean, overtone-conscious, and hard-hitting. Rhythmically, he leaves mortals in the dust at every turn.



MITCHELL SEIDEL

The one and only Smokin' Joe

Joe has been here since the '60s, when he was a staple for Blue Note. But last year he appeared on part one of *Soul Gestures In Southern Blue*, Wynton Marsalis' trilogy on Columbia, and this year he has a new contract with Verve after performing on pianist Stephen Scott's debut on the same label. He also performs on new albums by pianist Walter Norris and trumpeter Donald Byrd. Whether by fate or design, the rediscovery of Joe Henderson is at hand, to which the jazz fan can justifiably proclaim, "It's about time."

On *Lush Life: The Music Of Billy Strayhorn* (Verve 314 511 779; 61:51: ★★★★★½), we have the tenor man in solo, duo, trio, quartet, and quintet settings with, variously, Marsalis, Scott, bassist Christian McBride, and drummer Gregory Hutchinson. Alone, he embellishes the title cut like a pianist: bits of melody interspersed with dazzling runs. His sound is light, almost Getzian, and there is the substance and shadow of tone and subtone throughout. The three quintet tracks, "Johnny Come Lately," "A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing," and "U.M.M.G.," show the fluid interplay of trumpet and tenor, with Marsalis' solos echoing Henderson's rhythmic agility. The rhythm-section musicians rise to the company, singly and collectively, with Scott even more impressive than on his own debut. Think of this album as an X-ray into the music of Billy Strayhorn and the soul of Joe Henderson: no foreign notes mar the scene.

On Norris' *Sunburst* (Concord Jazz CCD-4486; 57:05: ★★★★★½), Norris is a rose, Henderson a thorn. The pianist, who teaches in Berlin seven months a year, suggests Roland Hanna in his percussive attack and overt romanticism (definitely not the Bill Evans school of piano). An underrated player, he decorates from the inside out, as his solos on six standards and his three originals prove. Henderson, who flits and punches his way

through harmonic cadences, is more oblique, and Cole Porter's "So In Love" gives us his prowess with the low notes. Larry Grenadier plays bass, Mike Hyman drums: integral parts of your above-standard jazz quartet.

On Byrd's *A City Called Heaven* (Landmark LCD-1530-2; 61:26: ★★★★★½), there is an opera singer, a hard-bop sextet, and Henderson, the Devil's advocate. The leader's ensemble concept is more impressive than his solo ability on trumpet and flugelhorn. A couple of pieces salute Art Blakey. Two others feature Loric

Stevens' operatic voice: MJQ-like accompaniment (by vibist Bobby Hutcherson, pianist Donald Brown, bassist Rufus Reid, and drummer Carl Allen) on "Remember Me," adapted by Byrd from a Henry Purcell opera, is a match; but aggressive modal jazz backing on the title tune, a spiritual, is incongruous. Nevertheless, credit Byrd with partly trying to break today's jazz trend of living in the past, and give him extra points for hiring Joe Henderson, whose career from the start has been an extrapolation of extraordinary ideas. (reviewed on CD) **DB**



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The R&B Equation, Part 3

by Dan Ouellette

The incredible eight-CD collection, *Atlantic Rhythm And Blues 1947-1974* (Atlantic 7 82305-2) is an audio encyclopedia of r&b music on the once-fledgling, now-major label founded by Ahmet Ertegun and Herb Abramson in 1947. The company built its empire on the upstart music of the postwar '40s—an amalgam of big-band swing, small-combo jazz, gritty rural blues, exuberant gospel, and New Orleans gumbo. While Atlantic has already reissued digitally remastered CD sets by several of its artists—and promises to release more in the near future—this boxed set is the quintessential collection for understanding the evolution of r&b into rock & roll, modern pop, Memphis soul, Miami soul, and early funk over the span of 28 years. While not all the pieces on this comprehensive compilation are recommended, the set as a whole is a valuable case study in modern music history.

Volume 1, 1947-1951 (75:38: ★★★★★) covers the seminal r&b years and features rootsy blues beller Joe Turner, sassy blues vocalist Ruth Brown, jazz bands led by Tiny Grimes, Willis Jackson, and Joe Morris, the innovative rhumba-boogie piano stylist Professor Longhair, and a crew of superb session tenor saxophonists, including Johnny Griffin,



Ray Charles: achingly raw

Wilbert "Red" Prysock, and Frank Culley. Clyde McPhatter and the Drifters, LaVern Baker, and Ray Charles make their grand Atlantic entrances on *Volume 2, 1952-1954* (73:32: ★★★★★), but it's Turner's mammoth crossover hit, "Shake, Rattle And Roll" that is the CD's pivotal song, stimulating the headlong drive toward rock the rest of the decade. Unfortunately, Turner tries to recapture that success by twice retooling the song in 1955 (the derivative "Flip Flop And Fly" and "The Chicken And The Hawk") on *Volume 3, 1955-1957* (74:38: ★★★★★) before regaining respect a year later with the blues-drenched

gems "Corrine Corrina" and "Midnight Special Train." The third disc is characterized by the rise in popularity of such exceptional gospel-influenced vocal groups as the Clovers, the Drifters (sans McPhatter), and the Coasters.

The Coasters dominate *Volume 4, 1958-1960* (73:12: ★★★★★), eschewing the grit of r&b for the Leiber & Stoller adolescent pop of "Yakety Yak," "Young Blood," "Charlie Brown," "Poison Ivy," and "Along Came Jones." Yet this is also the time period when Ray Charles truly came into his own, recording his best Atlantic sides, including the unrestrained "Let The Good Times Roll" (with Quincy Jones conducting a great r&b big band featuring David "Fathead" Newman on tenor sax). On *Volume 5, 1961-1965* (74:13: ★★★★★), r&b is invigorated with the influx of new styles and artists. There's a Memphis soul by such exquisite, riff-driven instrumental Stax/Satellite/Volt bands as the Mar-Keys ("Last Night") and Booker T. & The MG's ("Green Onions"), the early signposts of the soon-in-coming funk explosion (James Brown's backup band recording the delicious instrumental "Mashed Potatoes"), and the emergence of important new rockin' soul singers Tina Turner, Joe Tex, Otis Redding, and Wilson Pickett. While you have to suffer through the saccharine strings on ex-Drifter Ben E. King's "Amor," you do get lots of treats: all the Drifters' best tunes, Rufus Thomas' get-down-funky "Walk The Dog" and Chris Kenner's

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36

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ELVIN JONES



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 34

"Land Of A 1000 Dances," later popularized by Pickett. This is my favorite disc of the bunch.

Not far behind is *Volume 6, 1965-1967* (74:47: ★★★★★), which, in addition to all the *Big Chill*-ish songs by Redding, Pickett, Sam & Dave, Percy Sledge, and Aretha Franklin, features such soul chart successes as Willie Tee's "Teasin' You" and the spunky Thomas-Redding duo, "Tramp." *Volume 7, 1967-1969* (73:20: ★★★★★½) showcases Franklin at her hit-making best, contains Redding's posthumous Number One single on the soul and pop charts ("Sittin' On The Dock Of The Bay"), and includes the lesser-known, but nonetheless energetic, funky instrumentals "Soul Finger" by the Bar-Kays and "Memphis Soul Stew" by tenor sax session man King Curtis. Plus, there's the dynamic, bluesy jazz "Compared To What" by Les McCann and Eddie Harris, recorded live at 1969's Montreux Jazz Festival. By the time you finally reach *Volume 8, 1970-1974* (73:27: ★★★), you come to the sad realization that the original, unrefined, and rousing nature of r&b had been eclipsed by smooth—and oftentimes slick—studio production that rendered the music vapid. During this time, soul-pop singers like Roberta Flack and Donny Hathaway carried the black music torch until disco reared its ugly head a few short years later. Thankfully, the rediscovery of roots music during the '80s and the revitalization of interest in the early pioneers of r&b have sparked an

interest in a collection like this.

One of the most noteworthy stars of the Atlantic r&b box is the inimitable **Ray Charles**, who deservedly has his own impressive three-CD box set, *The Birth Of Soul—The Complete Atlantic Rhythm & Blues Recordings, 1952-1959* (Atlantic 7 82310-2; 48:36/50:03/52:33: ★★★★★). Charles' achingly raw and bluesy vocals and his piano playing, eclectically influenced by gospel-blues, jump boogie, big-band swing, bebop, and country, makes this set a winner. While Charles leans heavily on Nat King Cole sweetness and Charles Brown rowdiness on his first couple Atlantic sides, he quickly settles into his own distinctive soulful style, unleashing the romping "Mess Around" and the ecstatically sung "Don't You Know." The two other discs plot Charles' arrival as the preeminent black singer and bandleader of the r&b '50s. No "Yakety Yak" pop accommodation to the white teenage audience here. Instead, you get spirituals transformed into secular r&b grooves, including the hip "I Got A Woman," the buoyant "This Little Girl Of Mine," and the gently swinging "Hallelujah I Love Her So." Then, of course, there's Charles' signature piece, "What'd I Say," the tune that more than any other captures the depth of his unbridled soulful intonations. The unfortunate omission in the box set is Charles' work from his last Atlantic LP, *The Genius Of Ray Charles*, released in 1960 and still a strong catalog seller today. (all reviewed on CD) **DB**



**Jimmy Lyons/
Andrew Cyrille**

BURNT OFFERING—Black Saint 120130:
POPP-A; EXOTIQUE; BURNT OFFERING. (48:38)
Personnel: Lyons, alto sax; Cyrille, drums.

★★★★

**Andrew Cyrille/
Vladimir
Tarasov**

GALAXIES—Music & Arts 672: *GALAXIES & ACTION V; No. 11; SUMMIT; ONE UP, ONE DOWN. (56:27)*
Personnel: Cyrille, drums; Tarasov, drums, electronics.

★★½

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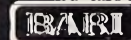
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flexible, plain best drummers. He can swing like a mofo, feather the beat into lacy patterns, or glue together abstruse group rambles through uncanny *hearing*.

In duet, the drummer's usually a one-person rhythm section, but with Jimmy Lyons, roles get blurred. The late, great Lyons (who, like Andrew, cut his teeth with Cecil Taylor) is noted for his blues-crying, whipsaw abstractions. No avant altoist absorbed more Bird, though quick quotes from Ayler's "Ghosts" ("Popp-A") and Trane's "One Up, One Down" ("Exotique") point to other sources. But Jimmy had a drummer's soul, and *Burnt Offering* is about rhythm. His busy note-bundles are balanced by clipped, short but metrically varied phrases, and staccato bursts like snare tattoos. He scatters notes and still sounds terse.

Meanwhile, Andrew may play a quasi-tonal function. On "Popp-A," his squeeze-bulb bicycle horn sometimes merges with alto harmonics, sometimes hockets a melody back and forth with it. (Typical Cyrille: take a seeming gimmick and make music with it.) For "Exotique," his clave-derived cymbal pattern functions as a drone behind Jimmy's plaint, an effect which dissipates when snare accents rise to the top. The pair show anyone with ears that *free* and *groove* needn't conflict.

The live *Galaxies*, from a 1990 tour, abounds with cross-cultural goodwill, but it's a mismatch between a master of time and a percussionist more interested in color. Russia's Tarasov, late of the acclaimed Ganelin Trio, spends part of his time triggering orchestral and other samples from drum pads. He can string them together well, but the net effect's often E.L.P.-ponderous. Save for their tight, short paraphrase of that same "One Up . . ." the noodle factor's high too, as if Andrew bends too far toward Vlad's diffusion. Soviet jazz took root in a hostile environment; maybe that's why Tarasov misses Cyrille's propulsive giddiness. (reviewed on CD) —Kevin Whitehead



Eliane Elias

A LONG STORY—Manhattan CDP 7 95476 2: *BACK IN TIME*; *A LONG STORY*; *HORIZONTE*; *JUST KIDDING*; *LIFE GOES ON*; *THE NILE*; *GET IT*; *JUST FOR YOU*; *KARAMURU*; *LET ME GO*. (49:46)

Personnel: Elias, piano, synthesizer, vocals; Mark Ledford, vocals; Jon Herington, guitar; Bob Berg, tenor sax; Marc Johnson, Lincoln Goines, Anthony Jackson, Jeff Andrews, bass; Peter Erskine, Dave Weckl, drums; Mino Cinelu, percussion; Othello Molineaux, steel drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

After demonstrating post-bop mastery on her

first four solo albums, Eliane Elias returns to her Brazilian roots with an engaging collection of atmospheric grooves that's more new-age pop than jazz. Each of the 10 confectionery tracks stands alone as a delectable morsel, but together they're just cloying, with little dynamic or melodic variation. *A Long Story* is mostly painted in a single pretty pastel, with crisp bossa rhythms, static chords, intricately introspective piano lines, and muted echoes of Weather Report and Return To Forever.

Elias and Mark Ledford flavor "Just Kidding"

with Manhattan Transfer-style vocalese, and Jon Herington apes George Benson on "Just For You." Bob Berg honks smooth, late-night TV blues behind Elias' striding left-hand vamp and Othello Molineaux's steel drums on "Karamuru," while "Horizonte" captures the lyrical inflections of the late Brazilian pop star Gonzaguinha, to whom it's dedicated. Elsewhere it's hard to tell one tune from another, as Elias scats wispily, plays unison lines with Berg or Herington, and dubs synthesizer washes under

CONTINUED ON PAGE 39

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Crossover Dreams

by Bill Milkowski

The two biggest pop phenomena of the late '80s were unquestionably rap and metal. At the outset of the decade, rap was strictly a black-urban happening, a means of communication set to a beat with angry street poets playing the role of modern-day griots. Meanwhile, metal was relegated to the lily-white suburbs. By the mid-'80s, pioneers began bringing both worlds together. Producer Rick Rubin worked in crunchy distortion guitars on Run-DMC's "King Of Rock" and "Rock Box." Run-DMC finally gained massive crossover acceptance by reworking the old Aerosmith hit, "Walk This Way." The precedent was set and other groups like the Beastie Boys and Public Enemy followed the lead. Now, several savvy groups are blending hip-hop and heavy metal, hoping to come up with a quintessential (and highly marketable) sound for the '90s.

The Hard Corps' Def Before Dishonor (Interscope/Arista 7 91756-2; 46:49: ★★★) is a blatant attempt at crossing over to both camps. More than half of the tunes on the debut album by this six-man, two-tone rock & rap band from Nashville were produced by Jam Master Jay of Run-DMC fame. And just as he tapped into rock's archives with "Walk This Way," he mines the same territory here with a rap remake of AC/DC's metal classic "Back In Black." Melding a white-rock power trio to a black hip-hop crew might seem like a good idea on paper. But the rapper's frat-party messages here don't carry the weight or threatening edge that make the idiom so vibrant, so controversial, so real.

On about half of **Blood Sugar Sex Magik** (Warner Bros. 26681-2; 73:57: ★★★), **Red Hot Chili Peppers** put up the funk. The rest of this Rick Rubin-produced disc strays from the solid P-Funk formula into realms of Beatlesque folk ("Breaking The Girl"), Neil Youngish acoustic intimacy ("I Could Have Lied," "Under The Bridge"), and straightahead, ham-fisted rock ("Suck My Kiss," "The Greeting Song"). Bassist Flea locks in tightly with drummer Chad Smith and funky rhythm guitarist John Frusciante on "Mellowship Slinky," "If You Have To Ask," and "Sir Psycho Sexy," three songs where the P-Funk formula prevails. But this rock-solid rhythm section screams out for a strong frontman. And until they find someone with the ferocious charisma of a Tim Dog or Chuck D (Public Enemy), the Chili Peppers are destined to remain an Average White Band for the '90s.

24-7 Spyz go for the grind on this five-song EP. **This Is...** (eastwest/Atlantic 91807-2; 19:51:★★★★). A metal-rap offering of Slayeresque proportions, it features the fiery guitar work of Jimi Hazel. Harder and funkier than Living Colour, the Spyz wail on top of thick grooves laid down by bassist Rick Skatore and new drummer Joel Maitoza, a no-frills neanderthal skins basher. And new frontman Jeff Broadnax is exactly what the Chili Peppers need. "My Desire" and "Peace & Love" show superior songwriting ability and Hazel's guitar work is positively scary on "Earthquake," an



MICHAEL LAVINE

The Family Stand: hard and in-the-pocket

old Larry Graham vehicle that also serves as a slap-bass showcase for Skatore. Full-tilt thrashing with their amps cranked to 11.

Crossing over into Prince's pop-funk territory on **Moon In Scorpio** (eastwest/Atlantic 91803-2; 74:13:★★★★) is **The Family Stand**. They unveil the find of the year in vocalist Sandra St. Victor, a soulful songstress whose gospel-tinged wailing falls somewhere between Randy Crawford and Mavis Staples, with a touch of Tina Turner's nastiness thrown in. "Shelter" is a toe-curling showcase for her inspired pipes. They rock hard and in-the-pocket while also offering food for thought on "New World Order" and "Plantation Radio," an indictment of an industry that deems it necessary to have a Paul Simon or a Sting discover music by non-white artists before it can become "legitimate" (a situation that rapper Guy Route refers to as the "Christopher Columbus Syndrome"). Guitar heroes Ronnie Drayton and Vernon Reid add their pyrotechnic touches on a couple of tunes, providing the crunch in this potent crossover formula.

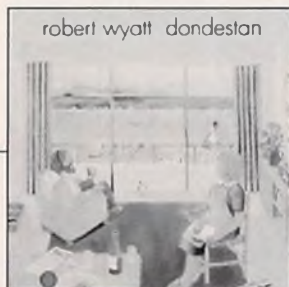
Easily the most provocative offerings of this roundup are **Urban Dance Squad's Life 'N Perspectives Of A Genuine Crossover** (Arista 18672-2; 56:52:★★★★½) and **MC 900 Ft Jesus' Welcome To My Dream** (Netwerk/I.R.S. X2-13114; 41:56:★★★★). An eclectic Dutch group, Urban Dance Squad creatively combines rap, thrash, funk, sound collages, ska, and Arabic harmonies in one intriguing package. "Son Of Culture Clash" best describes their modus operandi. Guitarist Rene "Tres Manos" Vanbarneveld offers a touch of Freddie Roulette on slide guitar and frontman Patrick "Rudeboy" Remington is an audacious, stream-of-consciousness rapper. This band is bursting with talent and ideas. Picture a funky world-music version of Jane's Addiction.

Meanwhile, the Texas-based group MC 900 Ft Jesus draws on different influences in their multi-culti mix. "Falling Elevators" is coming directly out of Miles Davis' *On The Corner*, complete with haunting muted trumpet and layers of congas. The raps range from humorous ("Adventures In Failure") to chilling ("Killer Inside Me") to esoteric beat-poetry excursions like "Dali's Handgun." The arrangements are grounded in funk but far more ambitious than the average hip-hop fare (dig the bass clarinet on "U-Zone" and "Falling Elevators"). This stuff doesn't have the commercial potential of a Red Hot Chili Peppers, but it's far more musically satisfying from my (jazz-biased) point of view. (all reviewed on CD)

DB

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37

the airy textures. Most effective is the closing "Let Me Go," the only non-original composition, which Elias sings wistfully in Portuguese with her keyboard as sole accompaniment. (reviewed on CD)
—Larry Birnbaum



Robert Wyatt

DONDESTAN—Gramavision R2 79469: *COSTA; THE SIGHT OF THE WIND; CATHOLIC ARCHITECTURE; WORSHIP; SHRINKRAP; CP JEEBIES; LEFT ON MAN; LISP SERVICE; N.I.O. (NEW INFORMATION ORDER); DONDESTAN.* (44:56)

Personnel: Wyatt, vocals, keyboards, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ½

So, the Cold War's over, the Soviet Union has

disintegrated, and capitalism is sweeping across Mother Russia. For Robert Wyatt, the struggle continues. *Dondestan* is the politically-conscious Wyatt's first collection of post-*perestroika* songs, and he hasn't mellowed noticeably.

Wyatt comes from the same tradition of progressive English folk-pop which later generated Billy Bragg. In his post-Soft Machine career, Wyatt's high, somewhat frail voice has been featured in collaborations with Michael Mantler, Carla Bley, and Nick Mason. (He also played keyboards for Brian Eno on *Music For Airports*.) Recent solo projects (e.g., *Old Rottenhat*—1985) had a low-tech, homemade sound, with rudimentary keyboards and rhythm tracks fleshing out acerbic social commentary and hummable ditties.

Dondestan is better-crafted work, with Wyatt's vocals floating over his vaguely Eastern keyboard textures and improved, diversified percussion. He and lyricist/partner Alfreda Benge snipe at organized religion and rail against exploitation of the third world. "New Information Order" (co-written with Soft Machine crony Hugh Hopper) assails privatization. The title track falls curiously flat, reducing problems of Palestinian refugees to a shuffling nursery rhyme. (Wyatt's love of singalong tunes is his downfall here.)

Robert Wyatt is crabby, unreasonable, unrepentant, ironic, and stubborn; and it's nice to have him at large. (reviewed on CD)

—Jon Andrews



Conrad Herwig

THE AMULET—Ken 016: *THE AMULET; RECURRENT DREAMSCAPE; WAKE UP 6; RADIUS; INVISIBLE MEANS; BOSTON HARRY; WARM SUNDAY; REFRACTION.* (60:31)

Personnel: Herwig, trombone; Randy Brecker, trumpet, flugelhorn; Richie Beirach, piano; Ron McClure, bass; Adam Nussbaum, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

Herwig, one of the young lions of the trombone, has built up a sparkling resume as a choice bone player for hire. On his latest release, his first with a quintet format, Herwig weaves a kind of compelling magic as a composer and arranger. More than a showcase for Herwig's considerable skills as a player, this quintet date succeeds in presenting a fresh collective sound.

With its poise, sublimated ferocity, and general sense of cool, the band recalls the great

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Miles Davis quintet of the mid-'60s as well as Dave Holland's underrated mid-'80s quintet. Herwig's inventive, but smooth voicings for trombone and trumpet twist and twine around the rhythm section.

As a soloist, Herwig devises clean but thoughtful routes of expression. Fleet phrases gracefully set up swooping glissandi or pensive long notes. He opens the adventurous "Refraction" eerily, with rumbling multiphonics in antic conversation with Brecker's plaintive trumpet. Nussbaum kicks in some rhythm and

Herwig is off and boning, swingingly. Finally, the hard-bopping melodic theme is stated, leading into a syncopated rope-a-dope between Nussbaum and Beirach.

The real charm and solidity of *The Amulet* has to do with an emphasis on the whole over the parts, and on the structure belying the improvisations. A sense of form is always evident—not in a neoconservative definition, but as an understood point of departure. And depart they do. (reviewed on CD)

—Josef Woodard



Paquito D'Rivera

HAVANA CAFE—Chesky JD60: *HAVANA CAFE; JEAN PAULINE; THE SEARCH; LOOK AT YOU; IMPROVALSATION; CONTRADANZA; WHO'S SMOKING?; THE RETURN; BOSSA DO BROOKLYN; WHAT ARE YOU DOING TOMORROW NIGHT.* (58:38)

Personnel: D'Rivera, alto and soprano saxes, clarinet; Fareed Haque, guitar; Ed Cherry, guitar (cuts 2,7); Danilo Perez, piano; David Finck, bass; Jorge Rossy, drums; Sammy Figueroa, percussion.

★★★ 1/2

Ray Barretto

HANDPRINTS—Concord Picante GCD-4473: *TERCER OJO; BLUES FOR LETICIA; DANCING WINDS; KWANZA; HANDPRINTS; BRANDY; TRIANGLE; SANTA CRUZ; CARIBENA; JAMPRINTS.* (49:06)

Personnel: Barretto, congo drums, percussion; Steve Slagle, soprano and alto saxes, flute; Hector Martignon, piano, keyboards; Ed Uribe, drums, percussion; Jairo Moreno, bass; Barry Olsen, trombone; Tim Ouimette, trumpet, flugelhorn; Amadeo Pace, guitar (6).

★★★ 1/2

In the dozen years since his defection from Cuba, Paquito D'Rivera has established himself as the standard-bearer of the Latin jazz movement, equally at home in bebop, salsa, samba, and classical contexts. His latest album finds him in an unusually dark and edgy mood, with a band that can't quite keep up with his mercurial technique. Meanwhile, Brooklyn-born Ray Barretto, a sideman on many classic hard-bop sessions, is making another of his periodic stabs at the jazz market after years of salsa stardom. Like D'Rivera, he easily outshines his accompanists, but though his young band plays with considerable verve, the repertoire isn't up to snuff.

Havana Cafe's title track, a Mingus-flavored mambo by Panamanian pianist Danilo Perez, sets the album's tone, with D'Rivera's sleek alto runs, urgent yet detached, cascading over agitated rhythms. "The Search," Fareed Haque's seething samba, has a similarly anxious feel, but other tunes fit patly into quiet-storm or vintage bebop molds, with D'Rivera and Haque going for baroque on two brief classical cuts. Only Paquito and bassist David Finck stay cool at the mostly rushed tempos, while Perez stiffens and Haque falters, falling back on bluesy cliches.

Handprints comes on like gangbusters but quickly runs out of steam, as Steve Slagle's exposive opener, "Tercer Ojo," gives way to a succession of radio-ready lightweights. The band is tight and cooking, with crafty mini-big-band blends and solid, if risk-free, solos by horn men Slagle, Barry Olsen, and Tim

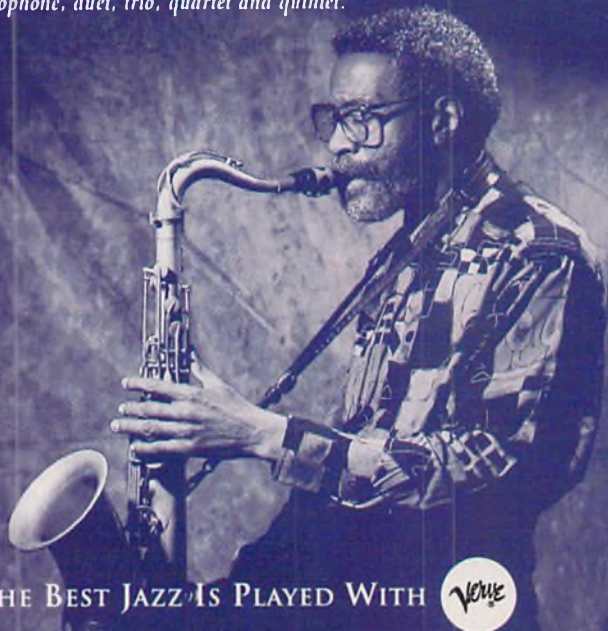
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It is with great pride that Verve adds to its prestigious roster one of the giants of jazz improvisation and composition, tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson.

THE NEW YORK TIMES recently described him as "a master at the height of his powers."

This stunning collection, a tribute to the late Billy Strayhorn, is Henderson's first new studio recording in over ten years. It boasts a talented young rhythm section comprised of pianist Stephen Scott, bassist Christian McBride, drummer Gregory Hutchinson and very special guest, trumpeter Wynton Marsalis on three tracks. They interpret Strayhorn's music in performances for solo saxophone, duet, trio, quartet and quintet.



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Quimette. But the all-original compositions are bland and conventional, and Barretto's luminous display of conga prowess only throws the threadbare material into sharper relief. His 1973 jazz date, *The Other Road*, took a more open-ended approach and sparkled; the chart-bound *Handprints* plays it safe and sputters. (reviewed on CD) —Larry Birnbaum



Harold Budd

BY THE DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT—Opal/Warner Bros. 9 26649-2: *POEM: AZTEC HOTEL; BOY ABOUT 10; ARCADIA; DEAD HORSE ALIVE WITH FLIES; THE PHOTO OF SANTIAGO MCKINN; THE CORPSE AT THE SHOOTING GALLERY; ALBION FAREWELL; POEM: DISTANT LIGHTS OF OLANCHA RECEDE; DOWN THE SLOPES TO THE MEADOW; SHE DANCES BY THE LIGHT OF THE SILVERY MOON; BLIND BIRD; SAINT'S NAME SPOKEN; THE PLACE OF DEAD ROADS; A CHILD IN A SYLVAN FIELD; POEMS: BOY ABOUT 10, WINGS, NO NAME, ADVENT.* (54:18)

Personnel: Budd, piano, Hammond B3, synthesizer, vocal; Bill Nelson, acoustic and electric guitars; B. J. Cole, pedal steel guitar; Mabel Wong, viola; Susan Allen, harp.

★★★★

Harold Budd likes to keep it simple. He writes pretty, solitary melodies that seem to float in the air. Although known for keyboard music, Budd now depends on a variety of other instruments for various textures. Instead of layered synthesizers, Budd's forlorn tunes are played by piano, viola, or guitar, anchored by spare chords or by the mesh of Bill Nelson's electric guitar with B. J. Cole's pedal steel. Clean. Simple.

The ensemble adds warmth to Budd's compositions, which can seem chilly and distant when performed only by keyboards. Cole's pedal steel beautifully complements the Western themes which run through *By The Dawn's Early Light*. Harp and viola allude to more traditional chamber music.

After composing avant-garde classical music, and collaborating with Marion Brown (on Coltrane-inspired themes), Nelson, Brian Eno, and the Cocteau Twins, Budd objects to being pigeonholed. The label he especially hates is "new age," with its quasi-mystical baggage. He has a point. Does "Dead Horse Alive With Flies" sound like a new age title?

By The Dawn's Early Light includes a few short tracks on which Budd reads his poetry. Don't be dissuaded by this. Without engaging in literary criticism, it's safe to say that the poems don't get in the way of the music, which deserves to be heard. (reviewed on CD)

—Jon Andrews

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Charlie Musselwhite

SIGNATURE—Alligator ALCD 4801: *MAKE MY GETAWAY; BLUES GOT ME AGAIN; MAMA LONG LEGS; .38 SPECIAL; IT'S GETTIN' WARM IN HERE; WHAT'S NEW?; HEY! MISS BESSIE; ME AND MY BABY AND THE BLUES; CATWALK; CHEATIN' ON ME.* (46:57)

Personnel: Musselwhite vocals, harmonica; An-

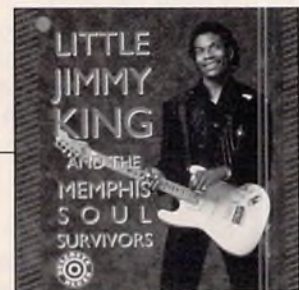
drew Jones, Jr., guitar; Artis Joyce, bass; Tommy Hill, drums; Art Baron, trombone (cuts 3, 8); Lenny Pickett, tenor, baritone saxes (3, 8); Lou Soloff, trumpet (3, 8); John Lee Hooker, vocal, guitar (10).

★ ★ ★ 1/2

With the passing of Paul Butterfield, Mississippi-born, Memphis-bred, Chicago-schooled Charlie Musselwhite reigns as undisputed white champion of the blues harmonica. After half a decade without a domestic release, he came back last year on *Ace Of Harps*, a rawboned session with his tight road band. *Signature* basically repeats that formula, adding such frills as a horn section on two tracks and a guest appearance by John Lee Hooker. Without a strong single like Ace's "River Hip Mama," the album comes up short, but Musselwhite has always been more exciting on stage than on wax.

His laid-back, gravel-on-demand vocals—a little like Mose Allison with a sore throat—are

passably potent on untempo rockers like "Make My Getaway" and slow drags like ".38 Special," but on the jazzy "Mama Long Legs" he falls embarrassingly flat. His Little Walter-inspired harp, however, is consistently superb, squealing into the stratosphere on "Blues Got Me Again" or crooning like Larry Adler's "mouth organ" on the standard "What's New?" The all-star brass section sounds dismayingly generic, but Charlie's working trio, featuring guitarist Andrew Jones, Jr., is unpretentiously slick, and the ageless Hooker casts a hoodoo spell over "Cheatin' On Me," inadvertently emphasizing Musselwhite's shortcomings as a singer. (reviewed on CD) —Larry Birnbaum



Little Jimmy King

LITTLE JIMMY KING AND THE MEMPHIS SOUL SURVIVORS—Bullseye Blues/Rounder CD BB 9509: *KING'S CROSSTOWN SHUFFLE; SAME LOVIN'; BORN AGAIN; WILD WOMAN; EVERY NIGHT; ANOTHER BLUES STRINGER; SEX MACHINE; LOVIN' SOMEONE ELSE; ANOTHER MAN'S COLOGNE; DOIN' MY OWN THING; MY MUSCADINE WINE.* (48:46)

Personnel: King, vocals, guitars; Melvin Lee, bass; Cedric McCarty, Greg Morrow (cut 1), drums; Archie Turner, piano, organ (6,10); Ron Levy, organ (1-5,7-9,11); Teenie Hodges, rhythm guitar (2,3,7); Andrew Love, tenor sax (1,2,5,11).

★ ★ ★ ★

Smokin' Joe Kubek

STEPPIN' OUT TEXAS STYLE—Bullseye Blues/Rounder CD BB 9510: *COMIN' HOME TODAY; I WONDER WHY; NATURAL BORN LOVER; EVERYBODY'S TALKIN'; SQUARE BUSINESS; HANDS ON IT; SMOKIN' JOE'S CAFE; THAT'S ALL I WANT; STEPPIN' OUT; LONELY DAYS.* (41:05)

Personnel: Kubek, lead, slide, tremolo guitars; B'nois King, vocals, second guitar; Greg Wright, Fender bass; Phil Campbell, drums; Ron Levy, organ, piano; Sax Gordon, tenor sax; "Tino" Barker, baritone sax.

★ ★ ★ ★

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When Ron Levy introduced Rounder subsidiary Bullseye Blues in 1990 with Charles Brown's stunning comeback album, he no doubt had in mind the great indie labels of the late '40s and early '50s—Imperial, Atlantic, Aladdin, Specialty, labels that heralded the emergence of r&b as a powerful music force. Like those labels, Bullseye has showcased raw, new talent in its fledgling existence. Two of the most recent discoveries are the bruising blues-rock guitarist Little Jimmy King and the Strat-blastin' Texas blues guitarist Smokin' Joe Kubek. Both make

exciting r&b statements on their debuts.

King and his Memphis Soul Survivors heat the house right from the get-go with the blazing, horn-riffin' "King's Crosstown Shuffle" that features the southpaw axeman delivering a scorching extended guitar solo. That sets the pace for the rest of the album where the Memphis-based King dazzles, serving up stinging licks in exclamatory runs, bending notes into wails and snarls, and driving riffs through his wah-wah pedal to give the music a rocking bite. Influenced by Hendrix (note the bluesy, psychedelic grooves on the Jimi tribute, "Another Blues Stringer") and mentored by Albert King (he's gigged in the elder bluesman's touring band the past four years), King successfully integrates the muscle of rock with soulful blues sensibilities.

Smokin' Joe Kubek sparks his band's r&b with the Texas touch. He struts his Strat stuff right out of the shute with the cookin' "Comin' Home Today" and then delivers blistering slide leads on the rowdy "Natural Born Lover" (for the take, it sounds like appreciative yelping and whistling fans jammed the studio to give it a live-in-the-club feel). For further sonic variety, Kubek dashes in watery tremolo fills on "Everybody's Talkin'" and Jimmy McCracklin's "Steppin' Out." Added bonus in Kubek's band is second guitarist B'nois King, who joins Smokin' Joe for a superb, note-for-note dual-Strat break on the spicy, swinging "That's All I Want," one of the album's highlights.

As for producer Levy, you can tell he's enjoying the hell out of these sessions just by listening to the exhilarating organ solos he unleashes on "Wild Woman" with King's band and on "Square Bizness" on Kubek's album. (reviewed on CD)

—Dan Ouellette



Ed Shaughnessy

JAZZ IN THE POCKET—Chase Music Group CMD 8028: *ST. MARK; REAR VIEW; A LONG WAY HOME; SALT PEANUTS; SEAWARD; SPLIT-BRAIN; JUST FRIENDS; NEW SUIT; I'M HOME HONEY; TA KI TA.* (57:05)

Personnel: Shaughnessy, drums; Tom Peterson, tenor sax; Bruce Paulson, trombone; Tom Ranier, piano; John Leitham, bass.

★★★

Ed Shaughnessy, the man with the mutton-chops in *The Tonight Show* Orchestra for 27 years, has led this compact little unit during his off-hours for five years. Although his recorded work goes back at least as far as a Billie Holiday Verve date in 1954, this is his

first album as helmsman.

The ensembles are muscular, precise, and tight as a drumhead, and the repertoire is mostly home-grown. The feeling is consistently contemporary with shifting moods and time signatures within many of the pieces. They almost make a straight-down-the-line swinger like "Just Friends" seem like a throwback. Shaughnessy, who is one of the finer, more musical drummers in jazz, is self-effacing. His solos are mostly brief and to the point, save for a bit of a stretch on "Salt Peanuts" and an

interesting but anomalous conversation with himself at the end on "Ta Ki Ta." The sound of his drum set sounds oddly cramped and fabricated at a couple of points, a problem that is probably more the engineer's than the drummer's. Paulson's trombone work is pristine and quick-footed. Peterson's sound is hard without being brittle, with a slightly softened *Saturday Night Live* bite. Together they blend well. Their solo work is lively, although neither registers as strongly individualistic. (reviewed on CD)

—John McDonough

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Trane Tracks

by Bill Shoemaker

John Coltrane recorded for at least 14 record companies from 1955 through 1958, yet his "early period" is closely identified with his work for Prestige. Apart from three sessions as a member of the Miles Davis Quintet, most recently collected in *Chronicle: The Complete Prestige Recordings Of Miles Davis* (PCD-012-2), Coltrane recorded 25 times for Bob Weinstock's label in



R. HOWARD

John Coltrane: easy to love

30 months, resulting in 12 albums that he led or co-led, and 20 albums where he appeared as a sideman or as part of a leaderless blowing session. As an improviser, Coltrane's grasp caught his reach during this period, and Prestige recorded every step in the process, though few of them were the giant steps of his Atlantic and Impulse! years. *John Coltrane: The Prestige Recordings* (16PCD-4405-2; 18:48:20 total time: ★★★★★) is an essential document; still, there are hours of material in this thoroughly annotated and painstakingly packaged 16-CD set that are easier to love than to put on a pedestal.

Five of the first 10 sessions paired Coltrane with at least one other tenor, providing stark stylistic contrasts. In addition to "Tenor Madness," the famous encounter with Sonny Rollins that climaxed with 12 wondrous choruses of traded fours, Coltrane spars with Hank Mobley on pianist Elmo Hope's spirited sextet date; with Mobley, Al Cohn, and Zoot Sims in a set that could have been titled *Four Others*; with Belgian Bobby Jaspar—another mismatch—in a two-tenors-'n'-two-trumpets format, also featuring Idrees Sulieman and Webster Young; and, in Coltrane's first outing as co-leader, with Paul Quinichette. Despite occasional lapses in execution and continuity, Coltrane runs rings around most of his cohorts with his brilliant tone, harmonic density, and soaring sense of line.

These groupings were just one side effect of Weinstock's intense production schedule. Since Weinstock apparently preferred maximizing the amount of material recorded at a session, often forgoing the refinements possible through multiple takes, the scope of original

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compositions were generally limited to blues and "I Got Rhythm" variations, of which Mal Waldron's pungent themes are the most effective from these sessions. When the material was challenging, as on *Dakar*, a Waldron-directed date pivoting Trane against Pepper Adams' and Cecil Payne's baritones, the musicians confront their unfamiliarity with the material on the master takes with mixed results.

The year 1957 was a watershed one for Coltrane, as he overcame his substance abuse problem and benefitted greatly from a stint with Thelonious Monk, which, along with his emerging leader status, accounts for the excellence pervading most of the latter sessions. Coltrane's renewed energy and discipline highlight his first two dates as a leader, but it's three sessions with Red Garland, producing *Traneing In*, which inspired Ira Gitler's "sheets

of sound" description of Coltrane's approach, and three LPs under the pianist's name, where Coltrane's rapid-fire, serpentine lines reached a new plateau, spurred on by his hand-in-glove rapport with Garland (a Davis bandmate), and the flinty trumpet of Donald Byrd. As he does in a few other key junctures, producer Orrin Keepnews wisely disrupted strict chronological presentation to allow these dates to be heard sequentially.

Lack of rehearsal and retakes would still be evidenced by flawed performances, most notably Garland's solo on McCoy Tyner's chromatic blues, "The Believer." Still, the overall cohesiveness of even such albums as the collective *Wheelin' And Dealin'*, and dates led by tuba player Ray Draper, guitarist Kenny Burrell, and tenorist Gene Ammons (Coltrane burns on alto with Jug's octet), is markedly

improved. And, his last six sessions as a leader—usually with a nucleus of Garland, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Art Taylor—find Coltrane in masterful form. But, they were scattered over eight albums, many of which were only released after he had left the label—hence cover photos of him playing soprano, which he never used for Prestige. Restoring the chronology of this portion of Coltrane's discography is just one of the services provided by this important collection.

Coltrane's feverous recording pace continued through the Impulse! years, balancing accessible, formatted sessions like *Ballads* and the collaborations with Ellington and velvety vocalist Johnny Hartman—which were cherry-picked, along with Trane's other Impulse! discs to compile *The Gentle Side Of John Coltrane* (Impulse! GRD 107; 67:51:

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★★★★)—with boundary-stretching works like *Interstellar Space* (GRD 110; 54:12: ★★★★★), a 1967 suite of duets with drummer Rashied Ali. *The Gentle Side* is particularly instructive for tracking the evolution of pieces like "Lush Life," "Soul Eyes," and "I Want To Talk About You" from their first incarnations on Prestige—Trane's cadenza on the latter became more labyrinthine with the years. (The live take of "Spiritual," released on the original LP issue, has been left off due to time-length considerations.) Of Coltrane's last recordings, *Interstel-*

lar Space makes the best case for the formalism that accompanied his spiritualism; to this end, Ali's ability to convey pulse through phrase and shading is better heard here than on ensemble works stuffed with auxiliary percussion. *Interstellar Space* also suggests, when placed with the work represented by *The Gentle Side* aside less cogent work from his last outpourings, that Coltrane's later discography has more in common with the Prestige recordings than first meets the ear. (all reviewed on CD) **DB**

Tales of Tatum

by John Litweiler

Tatum, Hines, Monk, Yancey, Powell, Taylor—who was the greatest jazz pianist of all? Ten new CDs of unaccompanied Tatum solos provide an irresistible answer.

These solos are like nothing else in jazz. Nowadays, we're used to pianists who conceive in direct melodic lines, whereas **Art Tatum** treated songs like lions treat raw meat—seizing them from all different directions, tossing them about. False directions, paradoxes, linear conflicts, and juxtapositions of styles are the material of his interpretations. Among jazz pianists, probably only the very different Cecil Taylor has offered such fabulous technique. And surely nobody else in jazz ever combined such an active sense of humor with pure musicality. Tatum loved to demolish moods, slaughter clichés, parody other pianists, toss in hilariously irrelevant snatches of familiar classics, and develop insane clashes of line, accompaniment, and style.

Ongoing rhythmic/harmonic flux was his method. By his first Decca solos, at the age of 23, he had compounded his dazzling art from romantic concepts (Chopin to the 20th century), stride piano, and Hines' innovations of rhythmic discontinuity and advanced harmony. The difference was, Tatum was little interested in improvisation, dealing largely in decoration, ornamentation, variation instead. His near-infinite brilliance at rhythmic breakup and reharmonizing, abetted by recurring interruptions of long runs, made his interpretations fascinating.

Sixteen of the 20 tracks on *Classic Early Solos (1934-1937)* (Decca GRD-607; 57:18: ★★★★★) are from his first Decca sessions, and the first features you notice are his dazzling technique and rhythmic anarchy. Tatum's ability to conceive and execute compound musical ideas at such a dizzying rate of speed is hardly to be believed, and it makes for savage stride send-ups of James P. Johnson and especially Fats Waller. The alternate takes of "After You've Gone" and especially "Liza" are intriguing for the way they show Tatum shaping his performances, elaborating on his ideas from one take to the next; Tatum's arrangements of many of his pieces, incidentally, remained essentially the same for decades, changing largely by discreet accretion and rhythmic/dynamic variety. The four 1937 tracks that conclude the disc are especially brilliant, and "Stormy Weather" is a revelation: here, for a change, Tatum sustains and develops a fascinating line of melodic variations and explorations—a great contrast to the rest of his solos, and a marvelous answer to those who maintain that he couldn't improvise.

The two-CD set, *The Standard Sessions: 1935-1943 Transcriptions* (Music & Arts 673-2; 74:31/74:45: ★★★★★), shows, in 61 solos, how Tatum's art grew in the years of his greatest fame and influence. The 1935 session is a mild letdown, with much Waller in his playing and some less satisfying remakes of Decca pieces; possibly Tatum was wary of time restrictions, for most of his *Standard* solos are shorter than the shortest Deccas, and often

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JAMES J. KRIEGSMANN

Art Tatum: humor plus pure musicality

his last chorus is speeded into overdrive tempos, concluding in only a few seconds. By the 1938 session, Tatum was opening up, adding clever new melodies to "Ain't Misbehavin'," turning the passive sentiment of "In A Sentimental Mood" into something flowery and active, destroying the self-pity of "I'll Get By" with a bright tempo. The titles "Get Happy" and "Hallelujah" capture much of the mood of the 1939 and 1943 sessions. Modern jazz partisans will note the favorite Tatum phrase in "Lullaby In Rhythm" that, 16 years later, became central to Thelonious Monk's classic "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," and there are versions of Massenet's "Elegie" and Dvorak's "Humoresque" recorded before Tatum's famous 1940 Decca versions. Tatum was absorbing more of the linear, as well as rhythmic, ideas of Hines and his follower Teddy Wilson, so "I've Got The World On A String" is an affectionate smile at Hines.

The boxed set of *The Complete Pablo Solo Masterpieces* (Pablo 7PACD-4404-2; 71:00/69:00/71:00/71:00/71:00/79:00/79:00:★★★★) is most certainly worth its high price; moreover, its seven CDs are scheduled to be made available separately, too; this music is a precious part of everyone's jazz heritage, and not only for devoted collectors. In fact, disc four is at the height of Tatum's achievement, music to rank with classic Armstrong, Parker, Coleman—and with the finest of Hines and Monk—while one, two, three, and six are nearly as wonderful. Tatum recorded 121 solos for Pablo's Norman Granz in 1953-55, and the final four solos in this box date from a famous Hollywood Bowl appearance in 1956, the year of Tatum's death. Now that LP lengths free him from time restrictions (his previous recordings were for 78s and transcriptions), he's free to expand or condense his interpretations at will; now that the recording quality is vastly improved, his range of dynamics expands.

There's a new-found freedom of movement and a fresh sense of drama about his Pablo studio solos. For instance, the 1953 "Humoresque" is the longest of his four versions, and best, the result of added pauses and dynamic variety. Typically of Tatum, only 14 of his Pablo songs were composed by jazz artists; the rest are good and bad pop tunes from the heyday of Broadway, Hollywood, and dance bands. To hell with good taste—Tatum takes as much delight in assaulting stuff like "Come Rain Or Come Shine" and "Taboo" as in innately provocative songs like "Blue Skies" and "Out Of Nowhere." "Taboo" proves an extravaganza of

accompanying lines, including a charged bop-Latin rhythm, stride, classical, and boogie settings. Speaking of dynamics, note the variety of piano touches with which Tatum makes "Just A-Sittin' And A-Rockin'" vivid.

So many wonders! The sudden, strident blues in "I'm In The Mood For Love." The lovely "To A Wild Rose" chorus in the middle of "Memories Of You." The energy Tatum derives from the opening phrase "Aunt Hagar's Blues" shares with "Black Coffee," and his delightful confusion of the two songs. The way Tatum's

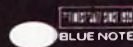
ornamentation takes over "Too Marvelous For Words," utterly losing the melody; the witty augmentation of "Moonglow" harmonies—suddenly the listener realizes Tatum has raised the key a half-step. Other listeners will discover their own favorites from this bounty. It's best to take Benny Green's overripe program notes with a glass of seltzer (some of his notions are quite untrue); but, of course, this does not detract in the least from the music, some of the most wonderful ever created by a 20th century American. (all reviewed on CD) **DB**

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THE FINEST IN JAZZ IS ON BLUE NOTE

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1 Miles Davis

"Red" (from *Aura*, Columbia) Davis, trumpet; Palle Mikkelborg, composer, producer, conductor; electro-acoustic orchestra.

Miles, but it could be Wallace Roney, or Don Cherry—that nebulous, cute, high-register stabbing around. Something from *Aura*? It's hard to tell whether those are synths or horns. This is transitional to *Tutu*, when Miles went all the way commercial. Was Mikkelborg influenced by Marcus Miller, or vice versa?

Miles started losing me in the '60s—before then, he was my idol. I'm glad he made his million dollars, but it's hard to do dynamics with electric instruments, and jazz has *interplay*—this might have been overdubbed. It doesn't move me as a jazz performance; as easy-listening, 4 stars.

2 Dizzy Gillespie with Johnny Richard's Orchestra

"On The Alamo," "Lullaby Of The Leaves" (from *The Dizzy Gillespie Story*, Savoy) Gillespie, trumpet; Richards, arranger.

A Harry James-type on a Dizzy trip? Bravura, but boppish. Fire the orchestrator—is it Hefti? Good technique, but his taste is less than profound. He's trying to be interesting, but it's a mistake to try to make string players swing—let the jazz players do that, and the strings do what *they* do best. Good trumpet playing, though; I wanted more of it. 4 stars.

"Lullaby Of The Leaves"? A Lalo Schifrin-Dizzy collaboration? 5 stars for Dizzy on this one. He's the best trumpet player who's ever walked the face of the earth, in any kind of music. Still had some swing in his sound then. People identify his tone with a flashy player's and miss Dizzy's depth, his harmonic sophistication. Nobody approaches the level of this cat.

3 Chet Baker

"But Not For Me" (from *Let's Get Lost*, *The Best Of Chet Baker Sings*, Capitol/Pacific Jazz) Baker, trumpet, vocal; Russ Freeman, piano; Carson Smith, bass; Bob Neel, drums.

It took me a long time to appreciate Chet Baker, because of extra-musical things—he got so much support he wouldn't have if he'd been black. But he never turned his back on jazz, never sold out. He was sensitive to thought. Like other West Coast guys, he was on a Miles trip, but his sound is so distinctive. I like his singing, too. I like his scat singing, and most scat to me is like bad

JACK WALRATH

by Howard Mandel

Trumpeter Jack Walrath played traditional jazz as a youth in Montana, then went through a free-jazz period. In the mid-'70s he joined Charles Mingus, and helped arrange the bassist's last recordings. Since then he's become a mainstay of Mingus Dynasty and the orchestra conducted by Gunther Schuller which performs Mingus' *Epitaph*. Walrath's own records include *Master Of Suspense* (with Willie Nelson singing "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry") and *Neohippus* on Blue Note. He's recently released *Gut Feelings* (Muse—see "Reviews" Sept. '91), composing with elements from Japanese gagaku, calypso, North African, and gospel musics for quintet and strings.



This is Walrath's first Blindfold Test; he was told nothing in advance about the albums and CDs played.

opera singing. Chet's recordings are consistent; he wasn't limited, he could always fit in. I like his New York records with George Coleman best. This is straightahead, good music. 4 stars.

4 Tom Harrell

"Brazilian Song" (from *Form*, Contemporary) Harrell, trumpet; Joe Lovano, tenor sax; Danilo Perez, piano; Charlie Haden, bass; Paul Motian, drums.

Tom Harrell—it's his phrasing, what he plays, his kind of writing. He likes that two-beat samba feel. George Young on sax—no, someone who listened to Michael Brecker—oh, maybe Joe Lovano. Charlie Haden—he's unmistakable. I like this, it's the top of the line for what it is, but I don't hear enough blues influence. 5 stars for Lovano's solo, 3½ overall. These guys are my generation, they deserve more recognition, and Tom's the very best. So I expect him to stretch out more.

5 Charles Mingus

"Epitaph" (from *Town Hall Concert*, Solid State) Mingus, bass, composer; Clark Terry, trumpet; Quentin Jackson, trombone; Dannie Richmond, drums; Eric Dolphy, Charles McPherson, Charlie Mariano, Jerome Richardson, Pepper Adams, reeds; Toshiko Akiyoshi, piano; others uncredited. Recorded 1962.

That has to be the original "Epitaph," the Town Hall concert, which has the reputation of being one of the worst jazz records ever made—but some of it doesn't sound so bad.

There were six trumpets—Clark Terry, Snooky Young, Richard Williams, who else? Quentin Jackson on trombone?

I like this better than the way we've been doing it. It's messed up and not together, but there is a *thing* to it, it's *happening*. Ours is more rehearsed; they had no rehearsal, the parts were still being copied. But this makes more sense, it holds together, it has soul, even if everyone—Mingus included—gets lost. His music doesn't come off unless it's changing all the time, and I think that's the jazz tradition: to go *beyond* the tradition. 5 stars for this one, compared to two for "Epitaph" as we play it now.

6 Ron Miles

"Witness," "Pithecanthropus Erectus" (from *Witness*, Capri) Miles, trumpet; Fred Hess, tenor sax; Art Lande, piano; Ken Walker, bass; Bruno Carr, drums.

Randy Brecker? Something Don Grolnick might do, the march, then breaking out—and a subliminal Albert Ayler influence. Geri Allen with Marcus Belgrave? They mix up time, and the pedal points are major, which opens up possibilities. I like it. Lester Bowie, which would make it the Leaders. Sounds fresh. 4½ stars. I'll give "Pith" 5 stars. The trumpeter really takes it somewhere that makes sense—why didn't I think of that? Identity-wise, I can't figure him out—that's good! He's a weird composite—so weird it's original. I'm really enthusiastic about this; it's what free music should be, covering the musical bases. The funk's in it, a sense of humor, *movement*. I can use this—can I buy it somewhere? He reminds me of me!

DB