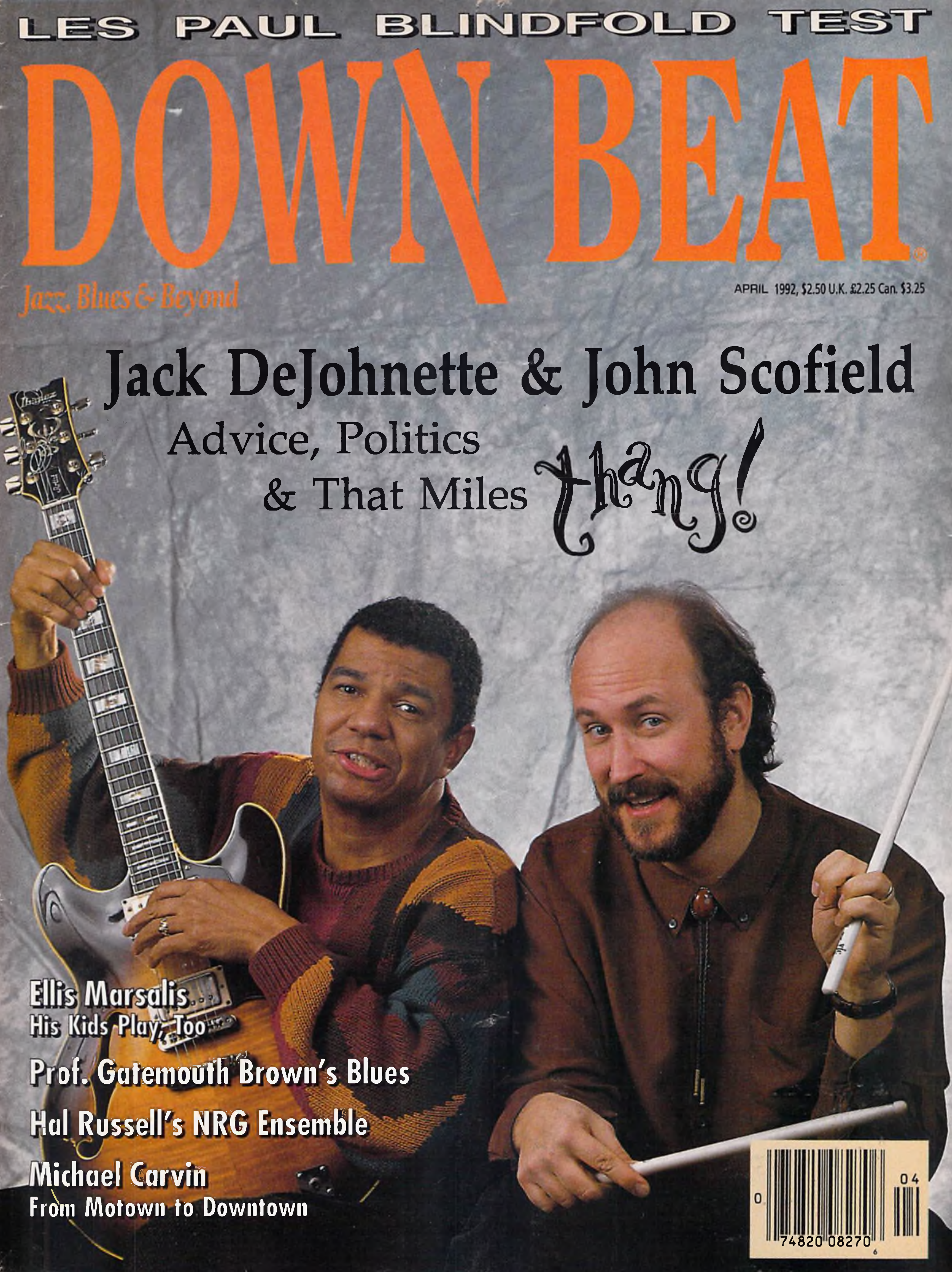

LES PAUL BLINDFOLD TEST
DOWN BEAT
Jazz, Blues & Beyond
APRIL 1992, $2.50 U.K. £2.25 Can. $3.25
Jack DeJohnette & John Scofield
Advice, Politics
& That Miles thang!
Ellis Marsalis
His Kids Play, Too
Prof. Gatemouth Brown's Blues
Hal Russell's NRG Ensemble
Michael Carvin
From Motown to Downtown
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Creativity, Advice, Politics & The Miles Factor
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"Gatemouth" Brown with daughter Renee

Jack
John
TERI BLOOM

fun,
creativity,
adv

...ice, Politics & the Miles Factor

By: Bill Milkowski

They are birds of a different feather. Jack DeJohnette lives in the rural quietude of Woodstock in upstate New York. John Scofield prefers the pace of big city life. Jack's idea of a family outing is to visit a Seneca Indian reservation to get in tune with nature and learn more about the Native American movement. John takes his family to outings at the Sky Rink, a glitzy outdoor ice-skating rink high atop a Manhattan high-rise on 10th Avenue.

Jack's new Special Edition album, *Earth Walk* (his debut on Blue Note, see "Reviews" Mar. '92), is a celebration of positive thoughts and spirituality, inspired by Native American folklore. John's new Blue Note album, *Grace Under Pressure* (his third on Blue Note), is an unabashed celebration of the electric guitar, featuring fellow six-stringer Bill Frisell.

Different folks, and yet they have more than a little in common—Miles Davis being perhaps the most obvious and strongest bond between them. Jack's tenure with Miles, from 1969 to 1971, covered such turbulent ground as *Bitches Brew*, *Live-Evil*, and *Live At Fillmore*. John's tenure, from 1982 to 1985, included appearances on *Star People*, *Decoy*, and *You're Under Arrest*. Both came away from those gigs with invaluable lessons about music and about life. We spoke to both musicians one afternoon at the Scofield residence in Manhattan.

BILL MILKOWSKI: *Can we talk about Miles? Did the two of you play together at that Paris tribute concert last summer?*

JACK DEJOHNETTE: No, I didn't make that one, unfortunately.

JOHN SCOFIELD: I was there. I played with John McLaughlin and Miles' current rhythm section. It was wonderful. We just played one tune called "Katia." Miles played a little trumpet and some synthesizer. And that was the last time I saw him. His last words to me were, "Come on back, we're gonna play some more in a minute." Which was sort of prophetic.

JD: I would say, if you believe beyond this, beyond everything that we hear and see, then we *will* play some more.

BM: *Could you tell at the time you saw him that he was sick or hurting?*

JS: No, I thought he looked good. This was a concert where there were something like 15 different groups that he played with. Many of the people he used to play with came out and played one tune with him. So he made it all the way through the rehearsal and the gig, and it was something like a three-hour concert. But he looked good and played good. He seemed in really good spirits. And he was funny, man, cracking jokes.

JD: I saw the videos of the Montreux concert at the memorial service [at St. Peter's Church in Manhattan]. He looked good and he sounded great on that Gil [Evans] stuff. Quincy showed that footage after the service, so we heard him playing "Summertime." I had tears in my eyes, man. His phrasing just killed me. It was unbelievable. [See DB Oct. '91]

BM: *I wonder if he knew that he was gonna check out soon.*

JD: He might've had a sense of that because he was doing a lot of stuff right up until the end. He was painting furiously. But Miles always was moving fast. He hated to sit in one spot.

JS: It's interesting that the only time he ever got together and played any of the old music was right before he died. The concerts in Montreux and Paris were, I think, about the only times he ever looked back. He probably wanted that feeling one more time, to see his friends again, play with some of those people. I think it was as much social as anything.

JD: But there's something else that happened with him, too, in the later years. He got looser somehow and more generous with people, giving encouragement to younger musicians. And he was more communicative with his audience. It wasn't so much a distraction to him as it was in the earlier times when, in order for him to play the way he played, he was detached from the audience. A lot of people accused him of turning his back, but he had to do that so he could give the people something of beauty . . . that sound, the space, and the phrasing . . . I think with Miles, as is

true of any artist, the art came first. Music was first and foremost with him.
JS: I never met anybody who enjoyed talking about jazz so much. People said, "Well, Miles isn't into jazz anymore, he's into Prince." But when I was playing with him, it seemed like all he thought about was what he did, which was blow and improvise and make music. And he loved to talk about his time with Coltrane and playing with Charlie Parker. Somehow during the period I was with him, he thought about Bird a lot. Because he was his original idol. So for me it was so informative to get that input from one of those guys, from Miles, who really was a jazz musician, who really was there in the '40s. He really lived that and was so in love with that whole thing, and you could tell in his playing. I don't care what anybody says about he was playing Michael Jackson tunes or whatever, he was the most "jazz" musician I ever met, as far as the intensity of the improvisation and the communicativeness of his solos. He always improvised in the moment.
JD: He knew he had a gift for galvanizing players and the audience. When he walked on the stage or even walked in a room, he had charisma, power. Even if he wasn't around, he still had an effect on people. I mean, here we are talking about him.
JS: We're still mesmerized by him. Sometimes with the band, somebody else would be soloing and we'd be all over the place playing behind him, and if Miles didn't think it was happening he could play a couple of notes and pull it together. And I've really rarely seen anybody do that. Usually you think the drummer has to keep it together, or the rhythm section has to tighten it up. But this guy, the trumpeter, with just a few notes, could align the rhythm of the group so that everything made sense.
JD: Right, and I think he was teaching the guys how to be out front and communicate with the people personally, too. He'd walk them up to the front of the stage to take a bow.
JS: Yeah, I never wanted to go out there at all. I wanted to stay back by the amps.
JD: But that was a real nice gesture. I didn't see it as clowning, I just felt it was a way of being communicative to the audience. Those are things that never used to happen when I was in the band. I was with Miles when he was making that transition, when Keith [Jarrett] and Chick [Corea] were in the group. We'd play the Fillmore East and you'd see Miles just watching the opening groups, Laura Nyro or Sly Stone or whoever. And he'd notice how the audience would react to Sly. You could see that Miles really wanted to figure out how to get to that. That was the next level for him. And I think he did that really well. But the *style* of Miles never did change. I think from the *Bitches Brew* period up to now, it stayed that way, where you had this merging of multiple sounds and chords. And also, I don't think he ever got Gil out of his mind. When the synth came, it was perfect for him because he could get that kind of thing happening in a chord that Gil could do with an orchestra. Marcus Miller really jumped on that and really did it justice. He just set Miles up, right up until the very end. The stuff he wrote for Miles is great, particularly the *Siesta* album, which was a beautiful tribute to Gil . . . I remember the week we worked at the Paul's Mall Jazz Workshop in Boston. He kept playing these Buddy Miles tapes for me. Miles had this way of showing you something without having to say it. We'd sit in his Lamborghini, he'd put in this tape, crank it up, and I'd get the picture. "Okay, I hear what you want. You want a Buddy Miles groove with my technique, right?" And he'd smile real big and say, "Yeah!" Anyway, this week at the Jazz Workshop, Miles was playing long solos and he was moving a lot, which was rare. But Columbia couldn't get remote trucks to come down that week and record it . . .
JS: I was there, man! I went to Berklee and I was there for two nights.
JD: That stuff was amazing, man. Don Alias and Juma Santos were playing percussion. Man, that stuff was fun-*kee*! Because Michael Henderson was playing electric bass and Keith was playing Fender Rhodes. It was bad!
JS: It was incredible. That was the first time I heard Miles, in that little club right next to Paul's Mall.
JD: That was it. That was what he really wanted, and we couldn't document it. *Live-Evil* had that one thing on it, "What I Say." That was a hot track. And "Funky Tonk." Yeah, I had fun with that. But this entire night at the Jazz Workshop was *it*. I heard that Jan Garbarek was in the audience and has a tape of it. I would love to hear that some day.
JS: One of my favorite Jack DeJohnette recordings is this bootleg tape that I got a copy of . . . you guys playing during some of the first months you were with Miles [1969]. Dave Holland, you, and Chick and Wayne. It was a tape that Richie Bierach gave me that circulated around New York. You guys didn't record that much 4/4 type stuff; but, man, this was incredible. There's a blues that Miles plays a long solo on. Amazing!

ALMA BERK
jack

JD: Yeah, I remember that. But I guess the best thing that Miles taught us, not only in music but in life, was that we should learn to accept change, to embrace change rather than fear change.
JS: Miles was so great, because when you think of all the different elements he allowed to come together, he was so open. And just his playing with Hermeto [Pascoal] and Keith and Airto all together, and then still doing it his own way. He was so open to new things and bringing it into the music. He seemed to thrive on that stuff. And when you look at his career and all the different things he did, it's just such a lesson, that you can't sit still. You gotta allow that unexpected thing to come in and kick you in the butt and make you be more creative. You have to or else you just sit there and nothing happens.
JD: And that's what we need to allow to happen in our society, in our government, in our lifestyle, in our environment. We need to incorporate that attitude in all those areas so that everybody truly has equality all the way around. The changes that have happened in the last five years, nobody dreamed that they would happen so fast. So people who all thought that things were gonna be the old same ol' same ol' are getting caught short. They're getting scrambled. Our president, corporations . . . stuff is happening so fast, they can't come up with answers because they've been holding on to this old status quo. And you know, time waits for no one. People who are moving, who are thinking, like Miles, know that you gotta stay on your toes, you gotta tune into what's happening right now so that we can also be prepared for the future, too. This is something that our country needs now . . . We need new paradigms for everything, for the times. And *they* will change as time moves on. But then if we are in tune with nature and the planet, we will intuitively know, instinctively, when to make changes. We will automatically be in sync with the process of nature. But what we're doing now, everything is going against it. And we have to relinquish control.
BM: *That's why the act of improvisation is particularly daring right now, because it's about relinquishing control and taking risks in an era where everybody else is playing it safe. To be an improviser, to have an original voice right now, is a subversive act. It's certainly not encouraged by the industry, either by record company heads or*

radio programmers.

JD: And to be an improviser means . . . there's this argument that to play jazz is much harder than rock music. Bullshit. If you're innovative and you're playing fresh ideas, that's hard. If you're someone who's playing licks and cliches, that's easy. That's not risk-taking, that's playing it safe. There's a difference.

BM: *There are young musicians out there with unique, original voices trying to break through, but the door is closed to them because they are told by marketeers that their music doesn't fit anywhere.*

JD: Why does it have to fit somewhere? That's bullshit.

BM: *Ask the people who run the industry.*

JD: But we can't sit and wait on the industry to bail us out of this situation you're talking about. We have to pick ourselves up by our ass and start to do something. You have some independent companies here. Most of the alternatives are on European labels now, and also those artists don't work a lot in the States, which is a sad state of affairs. I'd love to be working more here in America, but I just won't because I refuse to get into a situation that just wouldn't be up to a standard that I need to have to do what I need to do. So I just wait, and I hope that will change in the future. But we can't just sit around like victims. We have to say, "What can we do about this? What little thing can we do to change it?"

JS: I think you just gotta stick with it.

JD: But it's easy for you and I to say that. What do we do, though, for the younger musicians who are coming up, who have some talent? What labels should they go to? How do they survive in a small town? What's the hope for them?

JS: Boy, I wish I knew, except keep plugging away. And maybe it's naive but I really believe that quality wins out in the end. It may not be tomorrow, but if you stick by your guns it's gonna work out. I'm sorry, that's the only thing I can say. And that there are people who really like music and appreciate individuality. Not very many of them, and they're probably not the corporate heads of American record companies. But there are a few, so try and cultivate them.

W. PATRICK HINELY WORK/PLAY

BM: *But the situation is not the same now as when you and Jack came to New York. The cheapest apartment you can possibly find in town now is a dump for $800 a month. How much was rent when you came to New York?*

JS: A hundred-fifty.

JD: Eighty-two dollars.

BM: *That's a dream world. It's about commerce now. You gotta come up with $800 every month, or share your apartment with six other musicians.*

JS: It's certainly not an easy life. Probably harder than it ever was. And there are fewer gigs. But I can't feel too negative about right now because that's all I got is right now. You know? I wish I had something to say to young musicians about what to do. All I can say is keep doing it and be true to yourself. Because that's the only thing you can do that will make you unique. And maybe guys like Jack and me and people like us who are successful at playing creative music will serve as an example that there is a way. We're an alternative to the normal processed music and culture that is out there. So we actually become more valuable the more processed the rest of the stuff out there is. And I start to value it more and more every year. And for myself and Jack and Miles and the people I admire, it's more than just making an album or having a hit song—it's about a whole lifetime of trying to say something when you play.

BM: *Jack, you have mentioned that you like musicians who are more extreme, as opposed to more conservative players.*

JD: Well, I like players with personality. I mean, guys in Duke's [Ellington] band had personality. The music comes alive with personality. When the guys play my songs, invariably, they sound different every night because I encourage them to take liberties with the melody, with the expression, so it doesn't get boring. I like character and all that comes with that.

JS: If there is a definition of jazz, it seems to me one of the things would be playing with character, having your own sound. And that's what Jack's talking about. He likes people with character and character in their music. And that's hard, man. To be able to have your own music, to be yourself, to have yourself shine through musically. And when I think of the essence of that, I think about Miles and people that I've met that have been so strong. It really does come through in their music. It always comes down to who's got something to say.

JD: But you know, sometimes I find the term "jazz" difficult. Some of the stuff we do goes beyond that label. So I came up with my own label—multi-directional music. And now I amended it by saying it's multi-directional contemporary improvisational music. I recently got into an argument with Wynton Marsalis about this whole thing. He was going on about what jazz is and what jazz isn't, and you know Wynton . . . he tends to mouth off a bit. I think he has been doing some good stuff for music in terms of like the Lincoln Center Jazz series, working with youth and other things, so what he has been doing is admirable. But we got into this thing about what jazz is, and I said, "Wait a minute. What do you mean? Define what jazz is. Is jazz Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers? Duke Ellington? Count Basie?" I said, "There's all kinds of improvisation. Are you talking about world improvisation? Because if you are, then you have to talk about Ukrainian music, East Indian music, country & western music." I mean, people like Roy Clark. He's an improviser. And so, you're looking at all kinds of other ethnic musics and other types of music where improvisation is involved. Is that jazz? Or is that not jazz? And I stumped him when I said that. Certain people identify the jazz sound with the trumpet-tenor lineup. That's jazz to them. But to me, it goes beyond that.

JS: Yeah, it's so awful, this labeling. And when you hear musicians do it, too, it's almost like . . . when Wynton says all that stuff, I just wonder if he thinks about that when he plays. I would think that he's just trying to play music. But when people like Wynton try to pigeonhole too much, they're doing a disservice to being a creative human being. Because they're putting limits on it, and there should be no limits on what anybody hears in their head.

JD: And Wynton knows that, too.

BM: *And it's not just about who can make the changes.*

JS: Not at all . . . it's to play and say something with a sound.

JD: It's not about playing changes, it's about playing ideas. It's about ideas and imagination. Miles liked people like Don Cherry because he has imagination. And he liked Lee Morgan for the same reason. He had that swagger in his sound, but he was also a thinker.

JS: When I think about Lee Morgan or Don Cherry, their music is just a whole personality. I see this personality, I feel this whole thing, and I've never talked to Lee Morgan and had no idea what he was like, but I feel like I know something about him from listening to his music. It's as vivid to me as somebody I do know. That's a beautiful thing to speak through your instrument that way.

BM: *John, you have some pretty extreme moments on your new album.*

JS: Well, what are you gonna do when you have people like Bill

Frisell, Joey Baron, and Charlie Haden? It would be such a waste of time for us to not let something like that happen.

BM: *How did that session come about?*

JS: Basically, I wanted to do a special project that was different than my quartet, something in between *Meant To Be* and the next quartet record I'm doing for Blue Note. And I wanted it to be a guitar record. Originally, it was going to be with Pat Metheny. We had plans to do a record together. It's sort of on hold now, but I had been writing with him in mind. When that didn't work out, I thought of Bill. I had played with him over the years in Bass Desires and I wanted to do it again. But I wanted to do it in a situation where I wrote all the music. I had some ideas for what we could do to explore our playing further. Bill is not only one of the greatest guitar players that ever lived, he's also one of the greatest comping and orchestrating musicians to work with. He can really make the music come alive, completely in a non-soloistic, orchestrator-type way. So he was a perfect choice. Plus, there's just something that two guitars can do together. When you have a piano player it turns into this thing where the guitar kind of plays like a horn. But when it's two guitars, you both assume both roles. And it's not like lead and rhythm, it's a total blend. But it has to be with the right guy. I played a lot of guitar jams when I was at Berklee that I really hated. Everybody just throwing around this kind of guitar language, doing showoff stuff. But with somebody like Bill, that never happens. All these little telepathic things happen when we play together, and it's so completely natural. As much as I love to play with the acoustic instruments, there's just something special that happens when two guitarists play together. You're just sonically so hooked up with another guitar. It's a kind of a feeling that I never get from playing with any other instruments.

BM: *This album was also a chance for you to play with Charlie Haden again.*

JS: Yeah, another one of the elders. I mean, Charlie really was there when Ornette [Coleman] put together that style of music that really influenced everybody. There are certain things you can do with him that would never be quite the same with anybody else, especially the freer-type things. I knew Charlie would take them in a real interesting direction after the head. And Joey and Bill and I are all big fans of that kind of playing, so we all kind of idolize him, really. He's one of the big influences in our music.

BM: *A good example of his influence on this session can be heard on "Pretty Out."*

JS: That's Charlie's territory. The tune is just a head and then we play free. Usually we kind of play it in the same tempo as the head is in, but you can hear on this, the second take, Charlie went to this other kind of related weird over-tempo or something. And it just got this other layer of freedom and kind of implied rhythm. It was beautiful, and Joey picked right up on it. I heard Charlie do that sort of thing to Keith's music and Ornette's music, and I always wanted to sort of be there when it happened.

BM: *Yeah, you can't write that sort of stuff.*

JS: You can't even talk about it. It just has to be heard and felt, you know?

BM: *Jack, can you tell us about this upcoming project you're producing?*

JD: We're doing a special project for Toshiba/EMI that is based on an idea I had. I'm a big fan of Living Colour. We've been going to see them since they came out. No doubt they are one of the few groups out there making social/political statements as well as good music. Will Calhoun came by to a concert that we did at the Beacon Theatre with Herbie [Hancock], Pat, Dave [Holland], and myself. Will is a very creative individual. He does other things apart from Living Colour. A lot of people think that's all he's about, but he studied with Horacee Arnold, so he's a good jazz player, good all-around drummer. Anyway, we'll be doing the project with Will and [guitarist] Vernon Reid from Living Colour and with John Scofield as a special guest. There are a lot of guitarists out there, but John has a real unique thing. When you hear him, it's unmistakable. John has this slippery, slidey technique, and he has this bluesy distorted tone . . . a different kind of a sound. And he also has an amazing harmonic concept, which you hear utilized in some of the stuff he did with Miles, like on *Decoy*. He comes up with some different shit. Nobody plays it like him. And I have a good hookup with John . . . both Johns, him and Abercrombie. It's comfortable when you play with them. But his slippery, slidey style and Vernon's style, I thought, would sound great together.

JS: Yeah, I like Vernon. I always dug him. He sounds really good in Living Colour. I don't know what the concept is gonna be for this project. It's really Jack's thing. He hears me in with those guys, and I'm kinda letting Jack take the steering wheel on this. **DB**

JACK'S EQUIPMENT

Jack DeJohnette plays Sonor Hilites with a 6½ × 14-inch snare and three rack toms that are 8 × 8, 9 × 10, and 11 × 13 inches. His floor toms are 15 × 14 and 17 × 16 with a 16 × 22-inch bass drum. Jack also has his own line of Sabian "Jack DeJohnette" signature cymbals and Vic Firth "Jack DeJohnette" signature sticks. He also uses a Korg T-3 and Korg 01/W/FD synthesizers.

DEJOHNETTE SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

EARTH WALK—Blue Note 96690
AUDIO-VISUALSCAPES—MCA/Impulse 2-8020
IRRESISTIBLE FORCES—MCA/Impulse 5992
ALBUM ALBUM—ECM 823 467
SPECIAL EDITION—ECM 827 649
NEW DIRECTIONS IN EUROPE—ECM 829 158
NEW DIRECTIONS—ECM 829 374
SORCERY—Prestige 10081
COSMIC CHICKEN—Prestige 10094
HAVE YOU HEARD?—Milestone 9029
COMPLEX—Milestone 90022

as a sideman

HERE'S TO THE PEOPLE—Milestone 9192 (w/Sonny Rollins)
ANOTHER HAND—Elektra Musician 61088 (David Sanborn)
THE CURE—ECM 849 650 (Keith Jarrett & Gary Peacock)
TRIBUTE—ECM 847 135 (Keith Jarrett & Gary Peacock)
THE BLESSING—Blue Note 97197 (Gonzalo Rubalcaba)
IN OUR STYLE—DIW-819 (David Murray)
PATRICE—Warner Bros. 26659 (Mark Whitfield)
TO KNOW ONE—Blue Note 98165 (Joey Calderazzo)
STRAIGHT STREET—DIW/Columbia 48961 (Harold Mabern)
MINOR MUTINY—Columbia 48976 (Ryan Kisor)

JOHN'S EQUIPMENT

John Scofield's main guitar for the last several years has been his trusty Ibanez AS-200. He also continues to play through two Sundown amps and uses D'Addario strings.

SCOFIELD SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

GRACE UNDER PRESSURE—Blue Note 98167
MEANT TO BE—Blue Note 95479
TIME ON MY HANDS—Blue Note 92894
FLAT OUT—Gramavision 79400
PICK HITS—Gramavision 18-8805
LOUD JAZZ—Gramavision 18-8801
BLUE MATTER—Gramavision 18-8702
STILL WARM—Gramavision 18-8508
ELECTRIC OUTLET—Gramavision 8405
WHO'S WHO—RCA/Novus 3071-2-N
BAR TALK—Arista/Novus 3022
ROUGH HOUSE—Arista/Novus 3018
OUT LIKE A LIGHT—enja 4038
SHINOLA—enja 4004

as a sideman

SWALLOW—ECM 314 511 960 (w/Steve Swallow)
MANHATTAN BLUES—Compose/Sweet Basil 7301 (Manhattan Jazz Quintet)
INSTRUCTIONS INSIDE—Manhattan/Blue Note 96545 (Vince Mendoza)
BLUESTRUCK—Blue Note 93671 (Terumasa Hino)
IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT—Bluemoon 79153 (Harvie Swartz)
STRAIGHT TO MY HEART—Blue Note 95137 (Bob Belden Ensemble)
BLUES 'N DUES ET CETERA—enja 6072 (George Gruntz)

His Kids Play, Too

ELLIS MARSALIS

By Kevin Whitehead

RICK OLIVER

Which member of the Marsalis family: a) is associated by insiders with the house band on a L.A.-based TV show; b) blew tenor sax in a pop band briefly; c) after years playing bop-based music, got interested in traditional New Orleans jazz; d) received a helping hand from his father early on? If you answered: a) Branford, b) Branford, c) Wynton, and d) Wynton, Branford, Delfeayo, and Jason, you wouldn't be wrong, but some other right answers are: a) Ellis, b) Ellis, c) Ellis, and d) Ellis.

In light of family connections, Ellis Marsalis may appear an enigma. On the one hand, he's the patriarch of black (musical) conservatives as unlike Clarence Thomas as possible, never afraid to declare which precedents they honor and which ones they'd rather ignore. On the other, Ellis was hanging out with Ornette Coleman in 1956, trying to find a place for the piano in his shape-shifting music as established players snickered on.

A few liberal-minced conspiracy theorists have cast Ellis in the role of evil svengali, turning his kids into narrow-minded dogmatists. But when you meet Ellis, you discover pretty quickly he doesn't fit the bill. Yes, his children's musical preferences do echo his own, but buzzwords like "free jazz" and "Anthony Braxton" don't make him froth at the mouth like Wynton or Delfeayo. Ellis is affable, voluble, and likes to laugh. Meeting him, you do know where his kids' gift of gab comes from.

Marsalis has a self-deprecating air that's hard not to like. Columbia Records had brought Ellis to New York in early February, to plug his latest album, *Heart Of Gold*, at a small evening reception, where label staffers lobbed him fawning questions like, "You've influenced lots of piano players. Who are some?" Ellis raised his brows quizzically before responding, "I'm surprised to hear I've influenced any piano players."

We spoke for four hours earlier that day, in Ellis' hotel suite, knocking back orange juice from a half-gallon container and munching room-service food. He talked freely about everything from Louisiana politics and ultra-rightist David Duke ("He got 37 percent of the vote against a guy nobody wanted. A person who couldn't do any better than that isn't really dangerous. An annoyance, maybe.") to people who ask if he isn't jealous of Wynton's success. ("I said, 'Are you jealous of your grandmother?'") Curiously, the one topic that made him terse as Hemingway was the one he was supposed to be discussing, *Heart Of Gold*.

We should talk about your new album. "What about it? It's new." *It must be nice to be able to get Ray Brown and Billy Higgins for a rhythm section.* "Yeah, it is." *What should listeners focus on to pick up on what you do best?* "Swing."

Of course that last word carries a lot of freight. The subtle rhythmic displacements he brings to the repeated notes in the melody of "Surrey With The Fringe On Top" confirm that swing is indeed the salient feature of his style. But if he thinks the

Ellis with his photogenic sons Delfeayo, Branford, and Wynton

'Sometimes when I watch the way they work, I can say, "Well, Branford works more like I do, Wynton works more like his mom."'

album is some landmark achievement, he's not saying.

Ellis Marsalis was born in New Orleans—uptown, near Xavier University—on November 14, 1934. The first instrument he picked up was clarinet, and the first he gigged with was tenor sax, honking away in a high school r&b band, the Groovy Boys. He was playing a little piano, too—pianist Ed Frank had showed him three chords to get him started, and he took lessons while at Dillard University. "I vacillated between the tenor saxophone and the piano while I was at school. I didn't really get serious about the piano until I graduated in 1955. The decision had a lot to do with hearing a tenor saxophone player named Nat Perrilliat. I was sittin' in on piano at the Dew Drop Inn and this cat started to play, and I didn't know what he was doing. So I stopped playing to listen." Marsalis lets out a laugh. "After I heard that, there was no doubt in my mind that I was going to play piano.

"I had studied, but since I wasn't a piano major, my pianistic approach wasn't like Phineas Newborn or Oscar Peterson, who had studied the instrument and played all those Chopin mazurkas. But I did know how to practice, so eventually, I turned myself into a pianist.

"I'd heard Petersen in '50, when he had just come to this country. He and Ray Brown were a duo at the time. Peterson totally wiped me out—he was the piano player I listened to mostly. I didn't really get to Bud Powell till much later, maybe as much as 20 years. See, I was a band piano player—that's what I call it, a band player. So while I knew about Bud, I had no inclination to try to play like that." You might assume a Wynton Kelly influence since Ellis has a son named for him, but he says that was wife Dolores' idea. She just liked the name.

Ellis' first association of note, in the mid-'50s, was with the modernist American Jazz Quintette. Ed Blackwell, heavily into Max Roach at the time, was its drummer. The AJQ was solidly hard-boppin'—there's more than a little Bud in Ellis' solos on their one LP, by the way—but the band also paid implicit tribute to Crescent City roots, with Alvin Batiste's clarinet sharing the front line with Harold Battiste's tenor.

In the summer of 1956, Ed and Ellis and Harold drove out to Los Angeles to visit Blackwell's friend Ornette Coleman, (Ornette had spent time in New Orleans a few years earlier.) This was two years before Coleman's first record date; Ellis recalls the altoist's freebop concept was coming along but still developing. "I could appreciate what Ornette was trying to do without really understanding a lot of it, because I was with him on a daily basis. When he and Blackwell and I would go and sit in someplace, I never knew what to play. I would just try to hear something and play it. Musicians would stand in the back and laugh, like you might laugh at a situation 'cause you're hoping it goes away."

Marsalis only stayed a couple of months, but returned to California before the end of the year as an enlisted Marine. It was a cushy tour of duty. Mostly he played piano in the band on the Marines variety show, *Dress Blues*, which ran locally on Sundays at noon. He'd back such artists as Connie Stevens, Sammy Cahn, and Martha Tilton.

On returning to New Orleans, Marsalis assembled a quartet with Perrilliat (who later went with Fats Domino) and the late James Black, Ellis' drummer off and on for the next 25 years. They recorded one album, *Monkey Puzzle*, for the musicians' co-op label AFO. Ellis' dad gave them a gig in his motel's lounge, the Music Haven. (The pianist's theme, "Swingin' At The Haven," his lone original on *Heart Of Gold*, first appeared on *Monkey Puzzle*.) In '62 Marsalis, Parrilliat, and Black made an album with itinerants Nat and Cannonball Adderley, but not much came of it.

Inevitably, Ellis had contemplated a move to New York, but never figured out how to afford it. In 1960 he and Dolores had Branford, the first of their six sons—the last, 14-year-old Jason, guest drums on pop's new album—and Marsalis began teaching music in schools to pay the bills, first in suburban Jefferson Parish, later in the Cajun town of Breux Bridge. In '67—back in New Orleans, and out of work—a chance conversation with the manager at Al Hirt's club led to his joining that trumpeter's band. The repertoire was small, Al was into playing comedian as much as trumpet, and the band was mostly made up of Dr. John-style rockers. Ellis stayed three years. He didn't start playing real NOLA traditional music until he joined the French brothers' Storyville Jazz Band in the '70s. (That's where he learned King Oliver's "Dr. Jazz," which gets a two-beat treatment on *Heart Of Gold*.)

In the '70s Marsalis led a quintet which his CBS bio claims combined indigenous New Orleans music with modern jazz. Ellis demurs with a snort: "We were doing things like 'Where Is The Love,' by Donny Hathaway and Roberta Flack, Marvin Gaye's 'What's Goin' On,' Seals and Crofts' 'Hummingbird.' We had some good original stuff, but I'm telling you, it has two or three steps ahead of a rock band."

Ellis Marsalis might have been just another hometown hopeful who never cracked the big time, except that New Orleans got itself an arts magnet high school in 1974, and got Ellis to head the music

department. In so doing he became, along with Chicago's Walter Dyett, one of those rare secondary-school educators with a knack for turning out jazz musicians: Wynton, Branford, Donald Harrison, Kent Jordan, Reginald Veal. . . . But Ellis deflects credit from himself toward a principal who was willing to go to bat for the school, the best faculty he'd worked with anywhere, a flexible program that let teachers address students' individual needs, and the hothouse atmosphere of the city itself. He left in '86. These days he teaches music at the University of New Orleans, where he aspires to nurture pianists who can play everything—as New Orleans musicians like him have always done, if only to survive—who can tackle the formidable challenge of accompanying singers. "It's a difficult proposition, because a lot of it is based on psychology, not music. You have to know when to stay out of the way, and when more support is needed. You're constantly exposed in front of countless numbers of strangers, and have to make it work on cue. It's like a marriage."

'Jazz is almost like professional wrestling. Anything goes in wrestling, and anything goes in jazz.'

Does Marsalis hear a lot of his own attitudes in the music of his children, swing-obsessed mainstreamers who, like him, dig Ornette but not the subsequent avant-garde? "It's hard for me to pick out me. Most of my attitudes about music came in bits and pieces over the years. I didn't go straight at it like them. But sometimes when I watch the way they work, I can say, 'Well, Branford works more like I do, Wynton works more like his mom."

Forming his attitudes over a long period has given him a long historical view which may explain why he's not obsessed with denouncing impure music like Wynton or screed-scribbling Delfeayo. Experience teaches that time weeds out the dreck. "Every successive generation looks at what came before, and that's where validation comes from, no matter how long it takes." In other words, there's no point getting upset if people think Kenny G is jazz, because in 30 years, who'll remember Kenny G? Definitions of the music have always been loose. "If you start a football team and call it the NFL, you're gonna have a thousand lawyers on your head. If you have a band with some tin cans, two washtubs, and a bucket and call it jazz, nobody's gonna say nothing. Jazz is almost like professional wrestling," he laughs. "Anything goes in wrestling, anything goes in jazz."

When the talk touches on the Marsalis dynasty, Ellis says Dolores wears the genes in the family. She's related to Ellington bassist Wellman Braud on her father's side, clarinetist Alphonse Picou on her mother's, and maybe trad trombonists Wendell and Homer Eugene, too. (The Eugenes in turn are related to NOLA's Barbarin dynasty and guitarist Danny Barker. Small town.) Maybe the conspiracy buffs should consider her as the source of her sons' contentious streak—remember when Dolores wrote to *Down Beat* (Oct. '84) to take sarcastic issue with something Wynton had said in an interview?

"When people talk about heredity, I always say, 'Check her out,'" Ellis says with a grin, "'cause musically, I ain't related to nobody." Except, of course, what's their names. DB

EQUIPMENT

Ellis Marsalis is a Steinway artist, which means when a venue rents a piano for him to play, Steinway charges the hall only for cartage. He has a Steinway grand at home. "I've got an ancient Macintosh computer and Finale software, which I'm still trying to learn. I don't compose with it, but that doesn't bother me. There are so many other uses for it: put your music in it, print it out, change the keys." He still composes with paper, and pencils provided "by Mitsubishi of Japan."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as leader or co-leader

HEART OF GOLD—Columbia 47509
ELLIS MARSALIS TRIO—Blue Note 96107
PIANO IN E—Rounder 2100
HOMECOMING—Spindletop 105 (co-leader w/Eddie Harris)
THE NEW NEW ORLEANS MUSIC: VOCAL JAZZ—Rounder 2067 (Lady BJ; one half of CD only)
SYNDROME—ELM 4834
FATHERS AND SONS—Columbia 37972 (Wynton Marsalis and Branford Marsalis; one half of this cassette-only release)
CLASSIC ELLIS—AFO 910428 (reissue of *Monkey Puzzle*)

with various others

RETURN TO THE WIDE OPEN SPACES—Amazing 1021 (David "Fathead" Newman and Cornell Dupree)
IN THE BAG—OJCCD 648 (Nat Adderley)
ROYAL GARDEN BLUES—Columbia 40363 (Branford Marsalis)
THE RESOLUTION OF ROMANCE: STANDARD TIME VOL. 3—Columbia 46143 (Wynton Marsalis)
THE VISION'S TALE—Antilles 422 842 373 (Courtney Pine)

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But Don't Fence Me In

CLARENCE "GATEMOUTH" BROWN

By Geoffrey Himes

When Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown visited Washington, D.C., recently, the 67-year-old Texan presided over his eight-piece band like a professor leading a survey course in American music—taking them through a hard-driving Texas blues, then a smoothly swinging jazz tune, then a Cajun two-step, next a modern funk number, a country ballad, and then back to the blues. Granted, not many professors come to class in a big black cowboy hat, a black suit embroidered with silver swirls, and a string tie, but Brown did have the requisite pipe. As his three horn players took their solo turns, Brown leaned back on his stool, puffing on his pipe as an approving smile wriggled between his moustache and tidy goatee.

Brown finally stood up from his stool and straightened his Gibson Firebird guitar, the one with the hand-tooled leather "Gatemouth" scratchboard. That's the only signal he gave, but the band instinctively cleared the way for his solo, dropping back dynamically to allow him to emerge from the mix. Because the adjustments were made with technique rather than technology, there were no sudden changes in the players' robust tone and you could still hear everything—the comping as well as the solo.

And what a solo it was. The tune was "Digging New Ground," a Basie-like instrumental that Brown wrote for his new Alligator album, *No Looking Back*. As his band swung hard, Brown built a solo that had the elongated phrases of a horn player but also the percussive twang of a guitar. He was able to get this odd mix of legato fluidity and electric bite because he doesn't use a pick but instead plays with his thumb and first two fingers; so one note flowed into the next. He began with some murmuring guitar phrases, added some exclamation points, and soon had his guitar shouting by the time the hard-riffing horns rejoined him.

That's the practice; but Professor Gatemouth is also full of cantankerous theories, and he's not bashful about sharing them. Brown is renowned for playing a wide range of American musics for more than 40 years—but he's none too pleased with the shape of American music today.

"No one plays with any dynamics anymore," he complains. "Everyone has two volumes: loud and off. A lot of them don't have any identity; they're playing what you've already heard, and they're frustrated, so they cover up by turning up."

Brown puffs his pipe and goes on. "Another thing. No one knows what the blues is these days. Some of these characters get up and scream all the worst lyrics—'my mama fell off a freight train' and all that negative stuff—along with the worst way of playing—just pounding in your head. And they call *that* the blues. Then they go off stage and read about blues people who died of drugs and alcohol, so they figure they have to live that same kind of life.

"The blues should be a healing music. That's why people don't get into my band unless they're willing to play positive music. That means being disciplined, free of alcohol and drugs, and not too much womanizing. When you're on the bandstand working, that's all you're doing. You don't come into my band expecting to be a star. You learn to back off and give everybody a chance."

Back on the bandstand at Washington's Kennedy Center, Brown put down his guitar and picked up his fiddle. He sawed at it with abbreviated, scraping strokes that reinforced the backbeat. The tune was "Stop Time," a funky blues, featuring quick, syncopated phrases punctuated by stops.

"Most violin players are classically trained to play those long, long notes, but that don't mix with the kind of music I'm playing," Brown explains. "They have to go all the way around to get to step one, but I cut across the field to where I want to go.

"I've been called an unorthodox fiddler

and guitarist, and I like that. Those short, choppy notes give you a drive, a feeling, and that's what the music needs. Most of these jazz violinists now, there's nothing happening, and there's no feeling. Let them stop trying to be perfect and play some music for a change. The simpler the music, the better it will taste."

Clarence Brown's daddy was Fiddlin' Tom Brown, who worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad and played for house parties on weekends. The older Brown played nothing but country and Cajun music on the fiddle, guitar, mandolin, banjo, and accordion. That was the first music Gatemouth learned.

It wasn't until he was a teenager, during World War II, that Gatemouth's musical interests expanded to include the Texas blues of T-Bone Walker, the Texas jazz of Arnett Cobb, the swing of Count Basie, and the jump-blues of Louis Jordan. Brown first billed himself as the "Singing Drummer," but with Walker dominating the region Brown soon taught himself guitar. Don Robey—owner of the Bronze Peacock, the most illustrious black-owned club in Texas—heard Brown and invited him to Houston. In 1947, a 23-year-old Brown arrived in Houston, looking for some of Walker's fame and fortune.

The youngster got his chance one night when Walker fell ill with an ulcer in the middle of a show. No sooner was Walker helped from the stage than Gatemouth leaped from his seat and plugged in his guitar. Brown started playing every hot blues and boogie riff he knew, and by the end of the night, the whooping audience was stuffing money into his shirt and pants. Robey was impressed, and the club owner got Gatemouth a deal with Aladdin Records in Los Angeles.

Not much happened with those sides, and Robey—who was tired of exporting all his Texas discoveries to labels in New York, Chicago, and L.A.—decided to start his own label, Peacock Records, with Gatemouth as his first artist. Local successes with numbers like "I've Been Mistreated" and "Boogie Rambler" led to national r&b hits like "Dirty Work At The Crossroads," "Okie Dokie Stomp," and "Ain't That Dandy." The latter two songs still show up regularly in Gatemouth's sets.

Robey was notorious for paying off disc jockeys and short-changing artists, but Brown nonetheless credits his old boss for giving him the national reputation that allows him to keep playing 40 years later. He does admit, though, that he often fought with Robey about the unvarying diet of blues that Brown recorded for Peacock. Even back then, Gatemouth wanted to record jazz, country, and Cajun tunes, but he couldn't convince his employer to buck the formula.

"I don't like to be listening to the same old stuff all the time," he explains. "And I can't stand up on a bandstand and play the same style of music every night. It's a big world, and I try to look at all kinds of music; I even try to look at a lot of things beyond music—at kids, millionaires, the frustrations of the world. People ask me what I did to survive so long, and I say, 'I grew like a child.' I refused to do the same thing and kept growing and changing."

'Music wasn't made to be played by yourself. Music wasn't meant for one man to be a hog over. Music was meant to be shared with your fellow musicians and the world around it.'

After leaving Peacock in 1959, Brown bounced around. He played jazz in Bogota, Colombia; he recorded some country sides in Nashville; he even worked as a deputy sheriff in Farmington, New Mexico. In 1971, he joined the "Chicago Blues Festival" tour of Europe and started recording eclectic sessions for the Barclay and Black & Blue labels in France. Having reestablished his reputation in Europe, he was able to come back to the States on his own terms, playing his gumbo of blues, jazz, country, and Cajun at festivals and in the studio for Rounder Records.

He recorded an album with Nashville super-picker Roy Clark (1979's *Makin' Music*, which also included percussionist Airto Moreira and the Memphis Horns) and won a Grammy Award for his 1981 album *Alright Again*. Brown is currently trying to turn his boxes of journals into an autobiography; a New York film crew is working on a documentary about him. Admiring folk-punker Michelle Shocked sings a duet vocal on his new album, and longtime fan John D. Loudermilk (who wrote "Tobacco Road" and "Abilene") wrote three new songs. The fullness of the band's sound is obvious on "C Jam Blues," which they swing hard and fast, the horns and piano building a towering wall of harmony that Brown's high-pitched guitar notes stab with tiny pinpricks.

"I like jazz with some drive, like Count Basie, Ray Brown, Clark Terry, Louis Jordan, Hank Crawford, Buddy Tate, Woody Herman, and Arnett Cobb. I liked the shorter, uptempo Ellington stuff, but I didn't when he got real watery. A lot of these cats today, if they're playing jazz, I'm flying over the moon. To play jazz, you should play each tune for a reasonable amount of time with a lot of energy—get in and get out and go on to the next one."

Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, professor emeritus of American roots music, leans back in his chair, tilts his cowboy hat over his forehead, and relights his pipe. Before he dismisses his class, though, he adds one more lesson to his lecture. "And if you lose the melody," he says, "you might as well give up the song. If you can't hum it, it's not worth anything to me." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Brown uses a 1966 Gibson Firebird guitar, both in the studio and on the road. He bought it used in Durango, Colorado, in '68. "It's the master of all guitars—maybe not for anyone else, but for me. I know it and it knows me." He likes the low action on strings (he uses Dean Markley Strings), and he runs it through a Music Man amp. "That's a good amp," he says, "very clean. I don't use all that distortion crap." He just started occasionally using a second guitar he got in Paris—a hollow-body Washburn, a copy of a Telecaster with a stainless-steel body and a wood neck.

He doesn't even know what kind of fiddle he plays. "It's a copy of a Strad[ivarius]," Brown says. "But it sounds good to me. I wouldn't know the difference between a million-dollar fiddle and a $300 fiddle as long as they both sound good." He does know that he uses Barcus-Berry pickups on both his violin and viola and runs them through a second Music Man amp. He also keeps a Young Chang piano around the house.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

NO LOOKING BACK—Alligator 4804
STANDING MY GROUND—Alligator 4779
PRESSURE COOKER—Alligator 4745
REAL LIFE—Rounder 2054
TEXAS SWING—Rounder 11527
THE ORIGINAL PEACOCK RECORDINGS—Rounder 2039
ONE MORE MILE—Rounder 2034
ALRIGHT AGAIN—Rounder 2028
BLACKJACK—Music Is Medicine 9002
THE NASHVILLE SESSION, 1965—Chess 7003

with various others

MAKIN' MUSIC—MCA 3161 (w/Roy Clark)
ROCK'N'ROLL GUMBO—Dancing Cat 3006 (Professor Longhair)
LUV IN THE AFTERNOON—Concord Jazz 4429 (Jeannie & Jimmy Cheatham)
ARKANSAS TRAVELER—Mercury 314 510 101 (Michelle Shocked)

The Fires Of Hal

HAL RUSSELL

By John Corbett

W. PATRICK HINELY WORK/PLAY

Hal commingles with Mars Williams in Berlin, 1991

"Thank you, ladies and gentlemen," quips a grey-haired man in nasal monotone. "For our next number, we would like to play something you're sure to enjoy . . . if that is at all possible." Whether in the spotlight of a big festival in Berlin or in the intimate darkness of Chicago's Club Lower Links, Hal Russell is always disarmingly humorous, ironic without being condescending, self-effacing but never morose. "I want to keep from becoming so deadly serious," he explains. "That kills me when people get up there and pretend they're doing some f**king very serious thing. Man, they should be thinking about having some fun. To me, that's what jazz has always meant!"

For Russell, always is a long time. He's been involved in music for most of his 66 years, picking up drums at age four. "I would set up a small band of lead soldiers in front of the radio," he recalls, "pretending that they were the members of an orchestra." At Riverside-Brookfield High School, outside Chicago, he had a quartet that played original charts. A scholarship took him to the University of Illinois. "I had a big band there," he says. "Hal Russell and his Orchestra . . . a Lionel Hampton-style band. Big, raucous; we used to play at fraternity houses and blow out the walls."

Summers were spent on the road with various big bands. "At the time there was a shortage of musicians due to the war, so I played with people like Woody Herman, Claude Thornhill, and Boyd Raeburn. They were mainly doing vaudeville, playing five or six shows a day, then you got a break during the movie, and came back after. As a stage band we would have to back tap dancers, singers, magicians, various acts—I was undoubtedly influenced by the show business aspect of it."

Like many young players in the mid-1940s, Russell's life was irreversibly changed by bebop; Parker and Gillespie's Guild recordings shifted his muscial perception completely. "The thing that fascinated me most was the freedom allowed the drummer," he remembers. "Up to then we used to keep time on the bass drum; everything was pretty straight. Then we heard these little fills that Kenny Clarke and Max Roach did. That changed my entire concept overnight."

The decade of the '50s drew Russell completely into the bebop life, both musically and personally. Based in Chicago, gigging around the Midwest, tripping to New York, he worked constantly with an incredible chain of players. "I played with a lot of now-famous people. At that time they were just other musicians, they hadn't reached stardom. When I played with Miles in 1950, he was about on par with me in terms of musical knowledge. *The Birth Of The Cool* had come out, but there weren't too many people buying that."

With Davis, he backed Billie Holiday at the Regal, and he worked with a veritable who's-who of famous jazz musicians: Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Stan Getz, Mildred Bailey, Duke Ellington, Erroll Garner. "This is hard to remember, because drugs seemed to take over my life," says Russell, who was a dedicated heroin addict for 10 years. At the end of the '50s, he got the monkey off his back, started doing commercial jingles (" . . . a drag, man") and playing lounges. "It wasn't too bad," he admits. "Some of the acts I played with were really good, like Tony Bennett, June Christy, Jonathan Winters, Woody Allen, the Kingston Trio, Barbra Streisand. There were a thousand people. Name some people—I probably played their show!"

Though uniquely American, Hal Russell has spiritual kin in the British musicians who have used session experience as fuel for experimentation with open form. Guitarist Derek Bailey backed Dinah Shore, reedman Tony Coe soloed for Henry Mancini, reedman Lol Coxhill played with soul and r&b bands—nevertheless, each has been drawn to the possibilities of free and extended jazz. When it is suggested that avant-garde jazz should "pay up or shut up," Russell grows impatient. "Why? What does that statement mean? It doesn't mean a goddamned thing to me. The first time I heard Monk, I hated it. The same is true of Duke, I couldn't stand it. This is the same. It just takes a certain amount of concentration and listening, and you will like free music. What *we* have to do is produce a music that satisfies us. If we please ourselves we stand a pretty good chance of pleasing the audience, or at least attracting some new people."

Russell's stance on free music is seasoned. In 1959, he had a regular gig at Chicago's Rumpus Room with Gene Esposito on piano, Russell Thorne on bass, and Joe Daley on tenor saxophone. "Joe, Russel, and I said: 'Wouldn't it be fun if we didn't have to do all the things that we've done up to now, if I didn't always have to keep time, or if the horn player could play off different changes or no changes?' So we started with 'Nica's Dream,' took that and went out. We told Gene to stop playing because we didn't want a piano putting down any chords. Immediately, we discovered that it was no good to take other people's tunes, that we write our own stuff. That was how the Joe Daley Trio was formed."

Of course, more or less concurrently, Paul Bley's days with Ornette Coleman were also numbered. "As a matter of fact, we didn't know about Ornette until after we started experimenting," assures Russell. After a few years, an RCA scout heard the trio and signed them on for a hugely unsuc-

cessful record, *Newport '63*, which was mostly studio material. "People didn't play like that," Russell remembers. "At the time it was way out." Thorne soon left the group, and eventually Daley drifted back to bop.

But Hal Russell had been bitten by the free-jazz bug, and he persisted in playing it. With the encouragement of his wife, Russell decided to handcraft his own group, and the better part of the '70s were spent auditioning band members. "We went through a thousand different personnel changes, people who didn't work, people who showed some promise. I tried a singer, I tried commercial gimmicks, but mainly they weren't good enough. Then I came across the right personnel."

With Dizzy at Columbia College, 1983

At the Rumpus Room, 1960

With some modifications, this "right" bunch forms Russell's core corps, the NRG Ensemble (as in "En-er-gy"). As if by design, in 1979, Russell started playing tenor saxophone (now his main ax), soprano saxophone, and trumpet—in addition to drums and vibes. "This throws me into a completely different improvising scene," he explains. "When I change from tenor to trumpet, I cease to think like a tenor player and I start thinking . . . trumpet! My ideas are not the same. The benefit in changing instruments is the different train of thought it sets off in me."

With this change, versatile percussionist Steve Hunt took over Russell's main drum duties. Muscular bassist Kent Kessler and bassist/guitarist/trumpeter Brian Sandstrom now flank Russell along with reed cowboy Mars Williams, who left the group briefly to tour with the pop band Psychedelic Furs. After 10 years of struggle—"terrible gigs for nothing, loft concerts at my home, just a hobby"—NRG has had its big break, touring Europe and releasing *The Finnish/Swiss Tour* on (of all unlikely places) ECM Records. "The whole success thing has been the story of our relationship with [writer/producer] Steve Lake," says the ever-humble Russell. "Starting with the Moers festival of 1990."

Through its tough formative years, the group was anything but stagnant. It amassed a giant original repertoire with contributions by all members, and it put out several self-bankrolled records, one with saxist Charles Tyler. "I prefer the way ECM does it," smiles Russell. "They send you a check, a big check. I think the guys in the band prefer that, too." Along with NRG classics like "Hal The Weenie" and "Raining Violets," the group has worked on a number of longer suites. *Fred*, dedicated to Fred Astaire, won over the audience at the 1986 Chicago Jazz Festival. There's also *Time Is All You've Got* for Artie Shaw, *St. Valentine's Day Massacre*, *The Sound Of Music* (imagine the full soundtrack as rendered by Albert Ayler circa *New York Eye And Ear*), and an in-the-works piece enticingly titled *The Hal Russell Story*. For its follow-up release, ECM is looking at one of these.

Of late, the group has started using a new method of composition. Hal dredges an old tune from his bottomless pit ("It's crazy, I just know millions of them!") and the band finds a way of playing along, composing on the spot. For Russell, there is no great divide between free and pre-free; kookiness, swing, and experimentation go hand-in-hand. "This is where my vaudeville experience comes in," he suggests. "See, at the time, people seemed to be having a lot more fun playing. That's what I want to recreate. I want to make sure that people have a good time playing with me. And consequently, I want the audience to have a good time, too. I'm just trying to get them to enjoy it as much as I do." **DB**

HAL'S PALS

In addition to the NRG Ensemble, Hal Russell always maintains several auxilliary bands. "Things happen that change it all, make you wonder what you might be into next. I keep all these groups going because each one shows me something a bit different." Currently, he's very excited about a nascent partnership with pianist Joel Futterman ("makes me wonder if I missed the piano thing entirely!"), with whom he just played in Berlin.

He has a rock-oriented trio called NRG 3, with Ed Ludwig on drums and Noel Kupersmith on bass. Named for Hal (nee Harold Luttenbacher), the Flying Luttenbachers are yet another group. Currently looking for a bassist, they feature Chad Organ on tenor and Weasel Walter on drums and "other things . . . like screaming. Weasel has a really nice, high-pitched scream," agree Russell and his wife Barbara. "I keep finding new ways of doing things," says the sexagenarian saxophonist. "One should keep striving for new experiences, new ways of playing. That's why I don't think there'll be any end to it. We haven't exhausted free jazz, by any means!"

—*J.C.*

EQUIPMENT

Hal's tenor is a 40-year-old Selmer Bundy, on which he uses Rico plastic-cover reeds (#4). He plays a 35-year-old Martin soprano with the same reeds, an Olds studio-model trumpet with a Parduba 3½ Star double-cup mouthpiece, and a 1960 set of Deagan vibes. He uses K Zildjian cymbals with his Gretsch drumkit, which was a birthday gift from his mother.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

THE FINNISH/SWISS TOUR—ECM 511 261-2
HAL ON EARTH—Hal Russell Music (cassette only)*
CONSERVING NRG—Principally Jazz PJP CD02
HAL RUSSELL NRG ENSEMBLE—Nessa N-21
EFTSOONS—Nessa N-24 (w/Mars Williams)

with Joe Daley Trio

NEWPORT '63—RCA LSP 2763

with Charles Tyler

GENERATION—Chief CD 5

*Hal Russell Music: 1816 Sterling Ct., St. Charles, IL 60174

From Motown To Downtown

MICHAEL CARVIN

By John Ephland

How many drummers can claim that they've played with and for everyone from comedian Bill Cosby on through to Cecil Taylor and the Four Tops? Likewise, our mystery guest happened to be a top session drummer for '60s Motown sides and a regular with B.B. King; he even jammed with Jimi Hendrix and drummer Buddy Miles. Give up? Try on big and brawny Michael Carvin, whose *Revelation* (5399) is nothing if not a full-blown bebop date featuring trumpeters Claudio Roditi and Cecil Bridgewater and reed player Sonny Fortune (see "Reviews" Feb. '92).

If your introduction to the Houston-born, 47-year-old Carvin starts with his three-of-a-kind titles for Muse (the other two being 1989's *First Time* (5352) and *Between Me And You* (5370), from '90), you'd think this guy is strictly bebop. After all, his delicate yet swinging and energetic drumming sounds tailor-made for the idiom.

But don't limit him. "I love all music; it doesn't matter to me, as long as it's good," intones the easygoing Carvin. And yet, this trappist's journey started with a very clear, perhaps limiting message from his drummer father, Henry Carvin, Sr. "My father sent me to Los Angeles in 1963, when I was 18. He wanted me to be a big band drummer; this was his dream. He would always tell me, 'Don't waste your time in those clubs, be a studio drummer, do TV work. And play the big band, play the big band.' " Sage advice coming from someone who himself played the scene with the likes of Jimmie Lunceford and Louis Armstrong.

"I was in L.A. a year and joined organist Earl Grant's 32-piece big band. That's where I started. Then I started doin' record dates, which are all sight-reading dates. Many times, you have no idea what you're gonna record, there's no rehearsal, which is beautiful. That moved me into TV. When you do a TV show, you're gonna play for everything—they have comedians on where you have to play bump & grinds, when guys have little skits, or you'll do something with a tap dancer, with brushes. One time, 'Hogan' [the late Bob Crane], from the '60s TV comedy *Hogan's Heroes*, came on the *Barbra McNair Show*. This guy," Carvin guffaws, "used to play drums, so they wanted him to do a drum solo, kind of like a gag. So, I played the drum solo [from the orchestra pit], but I had to match his hands while he's doin' his lines, not touchin' his drums. He was fakin' it, using skin patches on the tips of his sticks just in case.

MITCHELL SEIDEL

"That's what I dug about it. Every day was a learning experience; you never knew what was gonna happen. And it was good money. During the same time, I was working with Henry Mancini. I would record from 6 a.m. to 12 p.m., with lots of sight-reading pressure. I used to take off for a week and do absolutely nothin'. I got to the place where if I wasn't working, I didn't even want to *think*.

"In 1967, after a tour of duty in Vietnam, I got a call to open up for comedian Richard Pryor at the Troubadour club in L.A. I put together music that fit what he was gonna be doing. Then I got a call to go on the road with Bill Cosby. We did 76 one-nighters in a row—by plane. By the 20th day, I didn't know if I was goin' or comin'. Coming out of that, Motown [Records] called me. I took my group then—the Tool Company, with guitar, bass, and drums—to Motown, and we stayed there in Detroit from 1968 to 1970. We'd work Monday through Friday, 9 to 5. I'd catch a plane and fly back to L.A. We laid down rhythm tracks for everyone from Martha Reeves & the Vandellas to the Four Tops, Temptations, and Gladys Knight.

"I came back to L.A. in 1970 'cause I wanted to play jazz. I was playing with pianist Hampton Hawes in a trio. L.A. drummer Shelly Manne was doing the TV show *Daktari*. When he worked late in the studio, Shelly had me subbing for him with his band at his club, Shelly's Manne Hole."

By 1972, Carvin was working in vibist Bobby Hutcherson's band, a band that included a front line of Freddie Hubbard and Jackie McLean. After being hired out of Bobby's band by Freddie, Carvin eventually went on to work with, among others, McCoy Tyner, Dexter Gordon, Dizzy Gillespie, Abbey Lincoln, Alice Coltrane, and Cecil Taylor. In 1974, Carvin co-led a fiery duet date with Jackie McLean titled *Antiquity* (Steeplechase, out of print). Carvin's first outright leader date, *The Camel* (Steeplechase 1038), came the following year. Both albums feature all-original programs.

By 1983, the itch to make more of an impact on the music world led Carvin to start his own school of drumming in New York City. "What happened was, I'd be hangin' out in clubs in New York, and all I heard was, 'The young drummers can't swing, the young drummers can't swing.' This was around the late '70s. So I said, 'I'm gonna get me a drum school, and show these cats that young drummers *can* swing.' "

Having taught at, among other places, Rutgers University (1979-85), the author of the book *Something For All Drummers* has also conducted clinics all over the world. As for the setup at Carvin's Manhattan location (104 5th Ave.): "We have vibes, two drumsets, timbales, a stereo system, blackboard, all in a loft space. I spend about 10 hours a week, seeing 10 students for one hour each." Speaking of students, notable alumni include Ralph Peterson, Jr., Michael Shrieve (of Santana fame), and Wilby Fletcher (McCoy Tyner, Lena Horne, Roy Ayers, Harry Belafonte).

The classroom isn't the only place you'll find Carvin with his students. "I also have an all-drum band, the Young Drummers of America. It's comprised of six drummers who are students of mine. We do an August concert each year at Cami Hall, across the street from Carnegie Hall. This year'll be our ninth," Carvin beams. Commenting on the design of the group, he believes "that it's very important to learn how to play with another drummer, because all drummers have their own time. And for one drummer to play with another drummer will make it easier for him to play with a band. We only use the drumset, but do all kinds of things—African rhythms, Latin rhythms, it might be a classical thing. . . ."

Or a movie thing, a comedy thing, a country & western thing. . . . **DB**

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

John Coltrane

THE MAJOR WORKS OF JOHN COLTRANE—Impulse! GRD-2-113: *Ascension (Edition I); Om; Ascension (Edition II); Kulu Se Mama; Selflessness. (67:30/74:29)*

Personnel: Coltrane, Pharoah Sanders, Archie Shepp (cuts 1,3), tenor saxophone; McCoy Tyner, piano; Jimmy Garrison, Art Davis (1,3), bass; Elvin Jones, drums; Freddie Hubbard (1,3), Dewey Johnson (1,3), trumpet; John Tchicai (1,3), Marion Brown (1,3), alto saxophone; Donald Garrett, bass clarinet, bass (2,4-5); Joe Brazil, flute (2); Juno Lewis, percussion, vocal (4-5); Frank Butler, drums, percussion (4-5); Sanders, Garrett, Brazil, percussion (2).

★★★★★

Call them expanded or extended works—with Coltrane, bigger wasn't necessarily better. Lots of his major works are for quartet. But this box is a major event, because it contains "Edition I" of *Ascension*, available only briefly before being replaced with the standard "Edition II."

There's no space here for lengthy exegesis of *Ascension*, so do yourself a favor and check Ekkehard Jost's wonderful analytic book, *Free Jazz* (Da Capo). Jost makes musical sense out of what bewildered folk like my poor friend John McDonough hear as noise. Ornette's 1960 *Free Jazz* intertwines independent lines; '65's *Ascension*, as Jost says, merges individual statements into the whole, in complete communion. The more musicians, the greater the effect. (The players Coltrane tapped, from Freddie Hubbard to black Danish free saxophonist John Tchicai, cut a broad slice from the New York avant scene.) The difference between Coleman's album and Coltrane's is the difference between dixieland heterophony and the life of an organism. Ornette's double quartet has inspired few similar projects; Coltrane's whipped-up prayer meeting was *the* free jazz model for years to come. Listening to "Edition II" now, you can tell why it shook listeners up then. Hearing the more out, more gloriously roiling "I" for the first time (Trane's first choice for release, though he soon changed his mind) makes you shiver. "II" sounds natty and tame by comparison.

Major Works continues producer Michael Cuscuna's efforts to rescue the Impulse! catalog from the disgrace it fell into under MCA. (See "Trane Wrecks" Nov. '90.) Packaging these '65 works together makes sense; the three longest, which had been spread over two LP sides each, appear as seamless wholes. Trane scholar David Wild's notes are fine, but A. B. Spellman's old *Ascension* liner essay should've been included, too. It's a definitive portrait of the event.

Added troops thicken the meaty late-quartet sound on "Selflessness." They fill a different function on the lesser "Mama" and "Om": vocal chants, perceived Africanisms, and small percussion instruments all point toward the Chicago vanguard soon to come. But AACMers shied away from Trane's torrential peaking, figuring he and umpteen disciples had taken energy music as far as it would go. German free players took up this challenge, but that's a whole other story. (reviewed on CD)

—*Kevin Whitehead*

Just Friends

A GATHERING IN TRIBUTE TO EMILY REMLER (VOLUME TWO)—Justice 0503-4: *Conversation Piece; Too Soon; I Hear A Rhapsody; Diaries; Kings Cross; Time After Time; Em In Mind; Blues For Herb; Happy Birthday. (49:24)*

Personnel: Herb Ellis, Steve Masakowski, Leni Stern, Kristen Buckley, Terry Holmes, Marty Ashby, guitar; Steve Bailey, Eddie Gomez, Lincoln Goines, Bob Felder, bass; Ricky Sebastian, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, David Derge, drums; Bill O'Connell, David Benoit, piano; Nelson Rangell, alto saxophone.

★★★★

Volume two of this heartfelt tribute to the late Emily Remler has some inspired, touching moments. Like Leni Stern's melancholy "Kings Cross," in which her gentle guitar cries out for her fallen friend. Or Steve Masakowski's dark and introspective "Diaries."

But this is not strictly a somber occasion. Guitarist and mentor Herb Ellis keeps it on the light side with a bouncy rendition of "Time After Time" and a singing "Blues For Herb," demonstrating quicksilver agility at the ripe old age of 71. (Another recent showcase of the septuagenarian's chops is the excellent *Roll Call*, also on Justice.) And pianist Bill O'Connell offers a giddy second-line arrangement of "Happy Birthday," with drummer Ricky Sebastian providing the funky, slow-rolling New Orleans groove. (Emily spent the early part of her career in the Crescent City.)

Bassist extraordinaire Steve Bailey dips into his bag of post-Jaco tricks on "Conversation" and guitarist Kristen Buckley turns in a solid, singing performance on "I Hear A Rhapsody," a favorite standard of Emily's. Another highlight is Marvin "Smitty" Smith's explosive drum solo on the brisk samba, "Em In Mind," a piece composed by Emily's fellow teacher at Duquesne University, Marty Ashby. (A substantial portion of the proceeds from both volumes of *Just Friends* is being donated to the Emily Remler Jazz For Kids Fund. Direct inquiries to Marty Ashby at The Manchester Craftmen's Guild-Music Hall, 1815 Metropolitan St., Pittsburgh, PA 15233; 412-322-1773.)

For a deeper insight into the music of Emily Remler, also check out the recently released retrospectives, *Standards* (CCD-4453) and *Compositions* (CCD-4463), spanning her career with Concord Jazz from 1981 to 1988. (reviewed on cassette)

—*Bill Milkowski*

Anthony Cox

DARK METALS—Antilles 314-510 853: *Conclusion/Beginning; In A Way; Malik; Dust; Warlike; Gambre; Molly; Saari; Dark Metals; Dark Metals II; Dark Metals III; Cheryl; Samba Je Hed. (63:14)*

Personnel: Cox, bass; Dewey Redman, tenor saxophone (cuts 1-5,8,12); Mike Cain, piano (1-3,8-12); Billy Higgins, drums (1-3,5,8,12), guitar, vocal (7,13), gambre (6).

★★★★½

Marty Ehrlich/ Anthony Cox

FALLING MAN—Muse 5398: *Falling Man; Lament In Passing; Wheels/Dice; Phanthoms; The Terrible Twos; Segue; Bird's Mother; The Protector; You Don't Know What Love Is; Mississippihouse. (46:08)*

Personnel: Ehrlich, soprano, alto, tenor saxophones, clarinet, flute, alto flute (except 8); Cox, bass.

★★★★

No premature jazz baby made a leader before his time, Cox was 35 before he made these albums, his first under his own name. The wait was well worth it. Anthony's not just a bass virtuoso—with springy swing, ringing but decidedly bassy tone, and the ability to steer myriad paths through a chord sequence—but a savvy leader who gives us Dewey Redman's

best showcase in years, and reveals a side of Billy Higgins few knew existed. (He sings two sambas, and plays guitar and its African cousin, the gambre.) With Dewey and Billy aboard, much of *Dark Metals* has an Ornette-y sense of adventure, the aggressive trio "Warlike" in particular. There is a lot of textural and thematic variety, but the ballads, smokers, Bird's "Cheryl," and Higgins' string features all boast the same lyrical sensibility; this isn't one of those piecemeal, look-I-can-play-five-styles records. Pianist Cain, featured on three contrasting "Dark Metal" duets, has the versatility and taste to keep up with his distinguished companions. An ironclad winner.

Cox and Marty Ehrlich have worked as a duo since the early '80s. (With drummer Bobby Previte, they make a trio called Play.) Given Marty's multi-instrumentalism and Anthony's clear articulation even at breakneck tempi, their interplay may recall the '70s' fine Sam Rivers/Dave Holland duo. They're supremely attentive to each other's moves, and spring-board off some beautiful melodies: Jaki Byard's "Bird's Mother," Marty's "Mississippi-house," and the standard "What Love." Ehrlich has always had a beautiful singing tone on alto and tenor; for my dough, *Falling Man* also displays his most fiery and persuasive soloing on record. It's no coincidence he and Dewey sound so good on these discs, with a great bassist to prod 'em. Cox coaxes. (reviewed on CD) —*Kevin Whitehead*

Magic Sam

GIVE ME TIME—Delmark DD-654: *Give Me Time; You Belong To Me; That's Why I'm Crying; You're So Fine; Come Into My Arms; I Can't Quit You Baby; Sweet Little Angel; That's All I Need; What Have I Done Wrong; Baby, You Torture My Soul; I'm So Glad; Shake A Hand. (38:14)*

Personnel: Sam, vocals and electric guitar; Eddie Boyd, vocals (cut 5).

★★★★★

Like Robert Johnson, Magic Sam died young, at the brink of stardom, and no bluesman besides Johnson has made a greater impact with a smaller recorded legacy. His studio output—two LPs for Delmark, plus a couple of albums worth of issued and unissued singles for Cobra, Artistic, and Chief—has been augmented with amateur recordings of performances at the Ann Arbor Blues Festival and a West Side Chicago club. And now Delmark has released a casual solo set taped in Sam's living room in early 1968 by his friend and sometime-producer Bill Lindemann.

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Oblivious to the occasional chatter of his four small children, Sam sings and plays as though he were on stage. His gospelly, gritty-sweet tenor soars to a piercing wail, while his guitar stitches mordant lead lines and springy chords into full-blown arrangements. He rewords the soulful "That's All I Need" (from his first album) to create "Give Me Time," nodding to the Supremes, then recasts the old lyrics, under the original title, as a minor-key lament. Among other revelations is his version of the Otis Rush hit "I Can't Quit You Baby." All in all, it's sort of a Music-Minus-One album in reverse, an aural textbook of modern blues techniques—with an added touch of genius. (reviewed on CD) *—Larry Birnbaum*

Dirty Dozen Brass Band

OPEN UP WATCHA GONNA DO FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE—Columbia 47383: *Use Your Brain; Open Up (Whatcha Gonna Do For The Rest Of Your Life); The Lost Souls (Of Southern Louisiana)—Cortege/Do I Have To Go/Mourning March/The Inquest/Shout; Deorc Sccadu (Dark Shadow); Dominique; Charlie Dozen; Song For Lady M; Remember When; Darker Shadows; Eyomzi.* (55:07)
Personnel: Gregory Davis, Efrem Towns, trumpet; Roger Lewis, baritone sax; Kevin Harris, tenor sax; Charles Joseph, trombone; Kirk Joseph, sousaphone; Raymond Weber, Lionel Batiste, Jenell Marshall, drums.

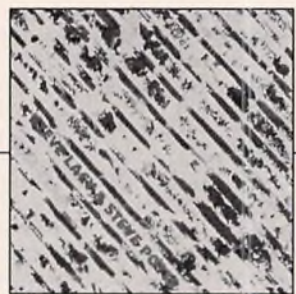
★ ★ ★ ½

By now, the main surprise with those Crescent City heroes, the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, is not that they have evolved into an important institution in American music, but that the world is actually listening in and soaking it up. Just goes to show: the power of brass—now taut, now slippery—slinky/funky rhythms, and the seductive lure of New Orleans traditions won't be denied.

While they have dipped into the realm of campiness—doing up "the Flintstones" theme, for instance—and courted a wider audience by working with Elvis Costello, the DDBB has its own sense of mission, as amply demonstrated on *Open Up*, their third album on Columbia. Except for the celebratory closing romp, "Eyomzi," by the late South African bassist John Dyani, the tunes here were penned by the bandmembers and explore the aspects of funk, gospel, and second-line music that spawned them.

For the most part, the players, individually, are as conservative as the collective whole is eclectic and elastic. But Kevin Harris' tenor sax solo turns dark and angry on "The Inquest," (from the six-part suite, *The Lost Souls (Of Southern Louisiana)*) as blues lines give way to atonal smears. For contrast, bari saxist Randy Lewis, the band's longest-standing member, goes it alone on his "Song For Lady M," a lament. Down in the tonal basement, Kirk Joseph's sousaphone blats in a most propulsive way.

In a funny way, this may presently be the most "radical" popular group around. With the DDBB, there's comaraderie, safety—and also danger—in numbers. (reviewed on CD) *—Josef Woodard*



Steve Lacy/ Steve Potts

FLIM-FLAM—Hat ART CD 6087: *The Crust; Flim-Flam; 3 Points; The Whammies; Rimane Poco; The Gleam.* (66:02)
Personnel: Lacy, soprano saxophone; Potts, alto, soprano saxophone.

★ ★ ★ ★

Steve Lacy/ Evan Parker

CHIRPS—FMP 29: *Full Scale; Relations; Twittering; Nocturnal Chirps 1; Nocturnal Chirps 2; Nocturnal Chirps 3.* (59:09)
Personnel: Lacy, Parker, soprano saxophones.

★ ★ ★ ★

Lacy knows what he likes—more often than not, his sextet playing his own music. But he does feel the urge to try something fresh once in awhile, without diverging too much from his usual procedures. Playing free—as on '85's mostly live *Chirps*, with the great English sopranoist Evan Parker—Lacy's improvising shows the same intervallic logic as his compositions. (This CD version adds 17 minutes of music to the old LP issue: three postscripts recorded after the concert.) Lacy's style is linear, economical, unhurried. Parker's tends to be circular, dense, and multilayered, but he likes to confound expectations, too. On *Chirps*, he sometimes sounds uncannily like another Lacy. Evan doesn't mirror Steve's lines, but he replies in kind, echoing Lacy's exacting progress while retaining his own harder tone and attack. (Only rarely—like a few minutes before "Full Scale" ends—does Lacy move toward Evanesque hyperactivity.) Parker leans toward his friend's style not to pay homage through imitation, but to make the music whole, organic, orderly.

The ever-undervalued Steve Potts has been Lacy's foil for 20 years; on *Flim-Flam* they step

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away from Lacy's sextet but not his tunes. Mostly they play off each other as you'd expect—Potts' hot staccato offsetting Lacy's cool-water legato—occasionally converging on mile-high squeals. It's a small miracle Potts developed his own rich, distinctive soprano tone working alongside such a pervasive model; where they trade licks on "3 Points," you can tell them apart instantly. Yet on this set it's Lacy who sometimes leans toward his partner's brawnier style, front-loading his usually languid attack. Against Potts' riffing alto on "The Crust," he digs into scribbling phrases resembling—well, Evan's. In duos, without the safety net of the rhythm section, these saxophonists do whatever's necessary to keep the music aloft, the listener transfixed. (reviewed on CD) —*Kevin Whitehead*

Bruce Dunlap

ABOUT HOME—Chesky JD 59: *River House; Tecolote; Spokes; Crepuscular; Updraft; Evaristo; About Home; Bad Cloud; Slowly But Surly; Gift Of The Magpie; Tesuque.* (68:00)
Personnel: Dunlap, six-, seven-, and 10-string acoustic guitars; Billy Drewes, tenor sax; Jamie Haddad, drums, percussion; Dan Kolton, bass; Steve Shehan, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ½

Guitarist Bruce Dunlap relocated to Santa Fe a few years ago, and *About Home* shows how Southwestern influences have guided his work. Hispanic folk music and Indian mythos inform Dunlap's pretty tunes, but don't get in the way of his focused compositions with swinging rhythms and tricky chordal patterns. He's a disciplined, understated player with a strong melodic sense and has wonderful technique, but uses it with discretion. Dunlap's playing, on "About Home" and "Tesuque" in particular, has an easy flow and a "singing" quality, with a lot of heart.

Several tunes prominently feature Billy Drewes' tenor sax. Drewes has a warm, breathy tone, especially on the ballad "Slowly But Surly." The way his tenor whirls through the unpredictable melodic twists of "Spoke," dancing in and out of Dunlap's changes, reminds me of Stan Getz, or maybe Joe Lovano.

The acoustic austerity and lyricism of *About Home* invite comparison to the ECM school of guitar (imagine Towner's intricacy with Metheny's Latin bounce), but with less stylized production, and a bright, upbeat tone. The 11 originals are a generous serving of Dunlap's music, with no filler added, and the recorded sound has resonance and warmth. (reviewed on CD) —*Jon Andrews*

Wolf In The Box

by Larry Birnbaum

Howlin' Wolf's records have been reissued and his story retold so often, there might not seem much left to play or say. But despite earlier CD releases of his original albums, *The Chess Box* (MCA CHD3-9332) was inevitable. Among its 72 chronological tracks are all the familiar classics, plus obscurities long available on bootleg imports and enough second-rate singles and album tracks to make it a retrospective instead of a greatest-hits collection. There are snippets of rasping Wolf talk, three previously unreleased cuts, and a 32-page booklet.

LEE TANNER

Howlin' Wolf: always a modernist

Chester Burnett got his moniker from Funny Papa Smith's 1930 smash, "The Howlin' Wolf," not from his grandfather, as he maintains on *Disc One* (70:58: ★★★★), which runs from his first hit, "Moanin' At Midnight," in 1951, to just after his third, "Evil," in 1954. His early sound, captured by Sam Phillips in Memphis, is already more urban than rural, with Willie Johnson's proto-fuzz guitar closer to T-Bone Walker than Charlie Patton. The fidelity takes a quantum leap when Wolf arrives in Chicago, but the material is mostly warmed-over until bass player Willie Dixon steps in. After galvanizing "Smokestack Lightnin'," the second track on *Disc Two* (73:59: ★★★★½), Willie Johnson bows out; but like piano and drums, guitars are generally just bricks in Wolf's massive wall of sound, with his own harmonica the main solo instrument. Wolf again wrestles with rehashed repertoire until Dixon returns with a string of winners, including "Back Door Man," "The Red Rooster," and "I Ain't Superstitious." Wolf's least favorite song, "Wang Dang Doodle," is the juggernaut of them all, while "Spoonful" boasts the top guitarist, who sounds more like Jody Williams than Hubert Sumlin, the listed performer, or Freddie King, who later claimed credit.

Always a modernist, Wolf makes uncompromising use of horns by 1963, when *Disc Three* (69:04: ★★★★) came in. Sumlin's quirky-jerky guitar finds the spotlight on "Killing Floor," but many solos attributed to him are more likely Buddy Guy's. Wolf's hot streak extends for a while after the final split with Dixon, but later it's all downhill, from the clumsy acoustic solo on "I'm The Wolf" to the pathetic dialog warmup with Eric Clapton on the *London Sessions* version of "The Red Rooster." But his huge gravel pit of a voice held out to the end, an enduring testament to the glory of the blues. **DB**

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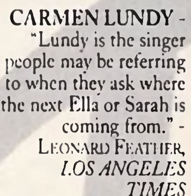

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A Vat Of Nat

by Jack Sohmer

Like Louis Armstrong and Fats Waller before him, **Nat King Cole**'s widest fame was earned not by his stature as a pacesetting, influential jazz instrumentalist, but as a vocalist whose innate charm, easygoing manner, soothing timbre, and unforced sense of humor won the hearts of countless people who otherwise might not have been caught dead listening to jazz. But all the time that they were lapping up all of his latter-day treacle, jazz fans the world over were lamenting his lapse from grace. How could a pianist whose perfected style (essentially a highly personalized synthesis of Earl Hines, Art Tatum, Teddy Wilson, and Milt Buckner), genuine blues feeling, immaculate touch, consummate command of swinging rhythm, and harmonic daring so casually turn his back on this abundance of talent in order to churn out endless streams of increasingly commercial vocal pap for the masses?

Whatever the reasoning behind his ultimate defection, we cannot complain about the scarcity of early Nat on available reissues, including the massive *The Complete Capitol Recordings Of The Nat King Cole Trio* (Mosaic 138; 17 hours total time: ★★★★★). The box contains 18 almost-hour-length CDs—or 27 LPs—of Nat's work between 1942 and 1961, a period

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Nat with Oscar Moore and Johnny Miller

for the most part before the jazz content of his recordings began to dwindle to the point of invisibility. Included in this mammoth set are 349 tracks, two thirds of which never made it to LP, and more than 60 of which are jazz instrumentals. Representative of the Trio's work at this time are such classics as "Sweet Lorraine," "It's Only A Paper Moon," "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Route 66," and "Easy Listening Blues." Also included for the sake of completeness, although recently released on a single Capitol CD, is the 17-track *After Midnight Sessions* album from 1956 that showcases Nat with his then-current rhythm section plus drummer Lee Young and guest stars Harry Edison, Willie Smith, Juan Tizol, and Stuff Smith.

Despite the foregoing emphasis on the pianistic values inherent in the Trio's recordings, equal attention should also be paid to not only Nat's superior singing throughout, but to the jazz talents of his collaborators as well. The first and most widely represented team heard here features the brilliant, top-ranking Christian/Reinhardt-influenced guitarist, Oscar Moore, and yeoman bassist Johnny Miller; but, by late 1947 their places were taken by the slightly less impressive Irving Ashby and Joe Comfort, themselves to be replaced in early 1952 by John Collins and Charlie Harris. However, by the time of this last change in personnel, the Trio as such was but a memory, having already become by 1949 a quartet, what with the addition of bongoist Jack Costanzo and the gradual relegation of the guitar and bass to supporting roles only.

Besides all of the commercially recorded sides, including both familiar and unfamiliar 78s and LPs, previously unissued masters, and originally flawed but now speed-corrected takes, this set also brings together all of the recordings the Trio made for Capitol Transcriptions, a series of studio-recorded performances designed for radio station use exclusively and never before now made available for public purchase. Admittedly, this collection, by definition, also makes available some best-forgotten but easily bypassed trivialities, especially from late 1947 on. But the proportion of outright corn (e.g., "Ke Mo Ki Mo," "Old MacDonald Had A Farm," "All I Want For Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth") is so minute in comparison to the genuinely musical moments throughout that to exact even a half-star penalty in our rating would seem, at the very

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least, a Draconian severity. (Mosaic Records: 35 Melrose Place, Stamford, CT 06902.)

Now, as if all of the foregoing were not enough to fill your Cole bin, there is also the thankfully budget-priced, five-CD package of the 1941-45 radio transcriptions for the C.P. MacGregor Studio, *Nat King Cole: The Trio Recordings* (Laser Light 15915; 3½ hours total time: ★★★★½). This compilation—which features the original trio with Oscar Moore and Johnny Miller—duplicates more than a few of the same tunes, albeit in different performances. But it also offers many other numbers that are not represented in the Capitol series, such as "Little Joe From Chicago," "Solid Potato Salad," and "A Trio Grooves In Brooklyn." Unlike Mosaic, though, which supplies a lavish, highly informative 64-page booklet with biographical and analytical essays by Will Friedwald and a discourse on Nat's piano style by Dick Katz, as well as a complete discography of the period covered, Laser Light gives us just what we pay for: a no-frills flight back to a time when musicianship and popularity were not yet mutually incompatible. (all reviewed on CD) **DB**

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Buddy Guy & Junior Wells

DRINKIN' TNT 'N' SMOKIN' DYNAMITE—Blind Pig BP71182: *Ah'w Baby/Everything Gonna Be Alright; How Can One Woman Be So Mean; Checking On My Baby; When You See The Tears From My Eyes; Ten Years Ago; Messing With The Kid; Hoodoo Man Blues; My Younger Days. (44:55)*
Personnel: Guy, vocals, guitar; Wells, vocals, harmonica; Pinetop Perkins, piano; Bill Wyman, electric bass; Terry Taylor, guitar; Dallas Taylor, drums.

ALONE & ACOUSTIC—Alligator ALCD 4802: *Give Me My Coat And Shoes; Big Boat; Sweet Black Girl; Diggin' My Potatoes; Don't Leave Me; Rollin' And Tumblin'; I'm In The Mood; High Heel Sneakers; Wrong Doing Woman; Cut You Loose; Sally Mae; Catfish Blues; My Home's In The Delta; Boogie Chillen; That's What You Want Me To Do/That's Allright. (59:36)*
Personnel: Guy, vocals, guitar; Wells, harmonica.

★★★★½

Buddy Guy and Junior Wells have been partners since 1958, but Junior always got top billing until Buddy's recent Eric Clapton-assisted comeback. *Drinkin' TNT 'N' Smokin' Dynamite*, the CD reissue of a hot 1974 Montreux festival performance, is basically Junior's show, with Buddy playing the perfect foil and Rolling Stone Bill Wyman leading a surprisingly solid rhythm section. *Alone & Acoustic*, a 1981 Paris duo session originally released on the French Isabel label, is something else again: a stark, revelatory showcase for Guy's plaintive singing and pseudo-Delta guitar, with Wells' pungent harmonica in a sensitive accompanying role.

If not for the French announcer and Buddy's comment that he prefers European audiences, the Montreux session could almost pass for a Chicago club date, but the passion is somehow perfunctory. Wells blows slick, Sonny Boy-ish harp and growls trademark tunes like "Messing With The Kid" and "Hoodoo Man Blues" with the funky precision of a James Brown, while Guy plucks tasty fills and solos with a subtlety that belies his ax-strangling reputation. Terry Taylor's slide guitar intrudes, but Wyman, Pinetop Perkins, and Dallas Taylor stay out of the way and in the groove. The high point is Buddy's featured vocal on "Ten Years Ago," where Junior croons "mouth organ" blues à la Larry Adler.

The two bluesmen swap vocals on their duet album; but in this intimate setting, Wells' usual flamboyance is subdued and Guy's raw, introspective singing shines through. And while

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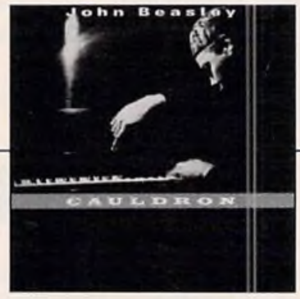
Junior picks his harp spots with finesse, Buddy's six- or 12-string guitar is everywhere. He plays tribute to John Lee Hooker on three songs, though his acoustic style—not real country blues, yet authentic in its own way—owes more to Muddy Waters and Lightnin' Hopkins. The material blends country and city influences, from Tommy McClennan's Mississippi classic, "Catfish Blues," to Ricky Allen's West Side standard, "Cut You Loose." But all of it, including five originals and some improvised verses, comes out sounding exquisitely traditional. (reviewed on CD)

—*Larry Birnbaum*



John Beasley

CAULDRON—Windham Hill Jazz 01934 10134: *Beehave Yourself; Sierra; Cado Bayou; Catalina; 11:11; Run And Hide; Zulu King; I'm Outta' Here. (55:10)*

Personnel: Beasley, piano, synthesizer; Steve Tavaglione, soprano and tenor saxes, EWI; Bob Sheppard, flute, bass clarinet, tenor sax; Dean Parks, guitar; Peter Erskine (cuts 5-7), Ricky Lawson, drums; Ricky Minor, John Patitucci (5-7), bass; Bill Summers, Daryl Munyungo Jackson, percussion.

★ ★ ★ ½

Vernell Brown, Jr.

STAY TUNED—A&M 75021 5382: *Seize The Moment; Everybody Needs A Friend; Reminiscing; Hot Potatoe; Living The Dream; Moving On; Mirror Image; Stay Tuned; Where's The Funk; Whoever You Are; Night Walker; 138 MPH. (54:26)*

Personnel: Brown, Jr., acoustic and electronic keyboards; Land Richards, drums; Ernest Tibbs, bass; Darryl Richards, soprano and tenor saxophones; Raymond L. Brown, trumpet and flugelhorn (6, 11); Reginald Young, trombone (6, 11); Gary A. Bias, saxophone (6, 11); Gregory Cook, guitar; Lenny Castro, percussion; Tyrone Bowen, Lynne Fiddmont Linsey, Brigitte Bryant, Nadirah Ali, Alfie Silas, Mortonette Jenkins, Vonciele Faggett, vocals.

★ ★ ½

John Beasley and Vernell Brown, Jr. are two Los Angeles-based keyboardists who love a grand piano and work the area just to the right of capital-J jazz—where jazz and pop meet. But their respective new projects show separate strengths and weaknesses: Beasley's compositions neatly twist existing pop-jazz conventions, while Brown samples ideas on the jazz-pop-r&b groovy train with varying success.

Beasley is well-known around L.A. for his

solid playing and writing skills as well as for a stint with Miles Davis following the *Amandla* album and tour. The Miles association can be detected on Beasley's fine solo debut, with its oblique funk/hip-hop grooves, angular-but-hummable melodies (especially on "Sierra" and "Catalina"), and the pseudo-trumpet tone of Steve Tavaglione's EWI (electronic wind instrument). The overall production sheen and subtle deviations from norms of pop-jazz may be partly attributable to the production work of Walter Becker, whose recent projects with Bob Sheppard and Andy Laverne reflect a common, and refreshingly inventive, approach to familiar terrain.

On his second album, Brown extends the promise of his debut without fully consummating that promise. Brown displays his versatility, to some extent. Blue notes and chromatic sidetrips dignify the funk pulse of the opening "Seize The Moment," and the title cut is a shuffling ode to optimism that borrows from Donald Fagen's *Nightfly*. The melody of "138 MPH" is a rapid volley of unison lines and a good workout for the band which otherwise cruises along quite pleasantly. Too much of the album, though, settles into that post-Crusaders mode of medium-heat jazz-funk that's growing like a fungus these days. (reviewed on CD and cassette, respectively)

—Josef Woodard

Dave Valentin

MUSICAL PORTRAITS—GRP GRD-9664: *Musical Portraits; Lady Laurie; Cat Tail; Winter Sunset; Firecracker; The Day That You Love Me (El Dia Que Me Quieras); Venus; Brazil; King Of The White Cloth; Little Puerto Rico; Prelude To A Kiss. (55:20)*

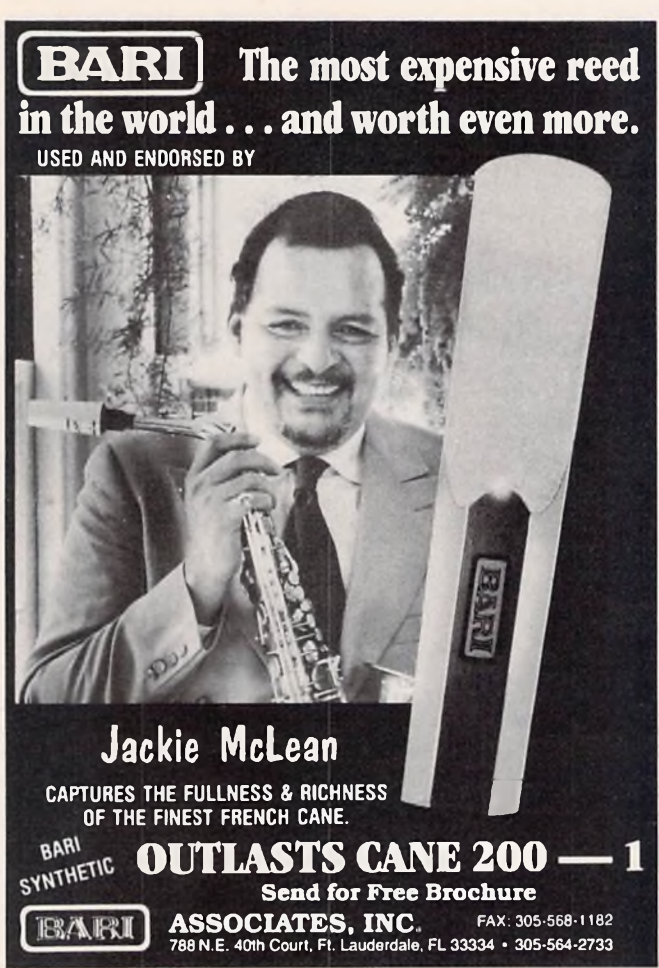
Personnel: Valentin, flutes, panpipes, ocarinas, bamboo flutes, clay flutes, porcelain flutes; Bill O'Connell, piano, synthesizers; Lincoln Goines, bass; Sammy Figueroa, percussion; Richie Morales, Robbie Ameen, drums; Oscar Stagnaro, bass (cuts 1,8); Milton Cardona, vocals, bata drums (8); Steve Shapiro, synthesizer programming.

★★★

Valentin has cranked out 14 albums since signing with GRP in 1978, tootling smooth Latin-tinged fusion in the tradition of Herbie Mann and Hubert Laws. *Musical Portraits* is this year's model, featuring mostly acoustic textures but maintaining the dreamy funk flavor of previous electric outings. At worst, as on the vapid title track, it harks back to the disco-jazz of the '70s; at best, on a live Ellington tribute, it shows why the flutist has kept his reputation several notches above the usual quality of his studio work.

Too often Valentin's polished, nimble technique is trapped in a mechanical formula, with more variation in tempo than mood and little feeling beyond an amiable wistfulness. Ethnic experiments offer some variation, but his Peruvian bird calls on "Winter Sunset" are just an atmospheric afterthought, and his warmly nostaglic reading of tango master Carlos Gardel's "The Day That You Love Me" is smothered in salsa percussion. Sammy Figueroa's congas, however, are right at home on "Little Puerto Rico," and Milton Cardona's bata drums and Afro-Cuban chanting shine in the incongruously contemporary setting of "King Of The White Cloth." But only on "Prelude To A Kiss," a duet recorded at Montreux with pianist Bill O'Connell, does Valentin really stretch, displaying a willingness to take risks that's too rewarding not to try more of. (reviewed on CD)

—Larry Birnbaum



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Personnel: Sharp, doubleneck guitarbass, soprano sax, lapsteel guitar, voice; Zeena Parkins, electric harp, keyboards; Samm Bennett, drums, percussion; David Linton, drums.

★ ★ ★ ½

Paul Dresher/ Ned Rothenberg

OPPOSITES ATTRACT—New World/Countercurrents 80411-2: *Orient And Tropic; The Long Seven; Yuuniik; Sidi Infi/Bolero In Straight Jabs; The Edge Of Sleep; Shriek; The Paddling Floes; This Endup; Opposites Attrack; Skronk; Straight Jabs Redux/Finale. (56:30)*

Personnel: Dresher, electric guitar; Rothenberg, shakuhachi, alto and tenor saxes, bass clarinet; Anthony Jackson, electric bass (cuts 1-8, 11); Mark Dresser, acoustic bass (1-8); Samm Bennett, acoustic, electronic percussion (1-8, 11); Bobby Previte, drums (1); Gene Reffkin, percussion (1).

★ ★ ★ ★

Samm Bennett/ Chunk

LIFE OF CRIME—Knitting Factory Works KFWCD-110: *Life Of Crime; Demolition; Come And Gone; Maddalena OK; Killer Road; Business As Usual; Hell Outta Bessemer; Shut Up; The Front Lines; Welcome To The War; New York Transit Cop; All Undone; Gonnawanna; I Found Out; In My Dream. (48:10)*

Personnel: Bennett, lead vocals, electronic, acoustic percussion; "the dog," guitar, recorder, backing vocals; Oren Bloedow, Jerome Harris, bass, backing vocals; Billy Martin, Tim Spelios, drums, percussion.

★ ★ ★

Elliott Sharp's group Carbon sounds like New York City to me. Carbon's music is jittery and aggressive, wound way too tight and ready to explode. Sharp uses Carbon as a vehicle for his rock-based compositions, usually short, intemperate outbursts played at breakneck tempos. Like his sometime colleague, John Zorn, Sharp writes compressed, hyperactive music for short attention spans.

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Nat Cole is not forgotten, and one who remembers best is Nat's brother Freddy Cole. Freddy, born in Chicago in 1931, was the youngest of the Cole kids. "Everybody was a musician...I started playing piano when I was 6 and then went to the New England Conservatory for my music education. I graduated in 1956 but where I really learned was around the streets of New York."

Freddy was already *gigging* while in school and nowadays he's playing clubs and cabarets all around the United States and the world. That he's the brother of so great and famous an entertainer is both a blessing and a curse. Freddy loved Nat, but because he's Nat's brother he's always expected to sing Nat's songs, and being so identified with Nat often, ironically, overshadows Freddy's own gifts as a performer. Hence the title song of this album, ***I'm Not My Brother, I'm Me*** *(SSC 1054D)*.

"I've always done some of Nat's things. I'd stay away from *Mona Lisa* and songs like that, but Nat had such a wealth of songs that I can do songs Nat did that nobody knows Nat did." And does the audience, at last, know who's singing now? "I've been pretty lucky," said Freddy Cole. "After a while, they hear it's me!"

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test. You can hear Blood Ulmer harmolodics, death metal, hardcore, Beefheart blues, industrial electronics, and maybe a trace of surf music. (What more can you ask?) Through it all, Sharp generates insistent riffs, and there's always a solid beat, courtesy of drummers Samm Bennett and David Linton. Like New York City, *Datacide* is omnivorous and unique, with an intensity that can wear you down after prolonged exposure.

Opposites Attract pairs Ned Rothenberg, downtown reed improviser, with Paul Dresher, a second-generation minimalist composer and guitarist who favors Fripp & Eno-style tape-loop systems. This four-year collaboration developed unexpected aspects of both musicians: Rothenberg's energy is channeled into focused melodies and cyclical structures. Dresher shows his wild side as an improviser (though still Frippic). The common ground for Dresher and Rothenberg is an improvisational jazz-ethnic fusion which utilizes sampling and tape-loop technology. They call it "musical techno-primitivism," and it sounds like world music from an imagined planet. On "Orient-Tropic" and the suite "The Untold Story," Rothenberg's shakuhachi and sax can be heard soloing against and mingling with rock guitar, Samm Bennett's African drumming, and Balinesque strings, augmented by Dresher's samples and loops. *Opposites Attract* is imaginatively conceived, and a creative breakthrough for Dresher and Rothenberg.

The ubiquitous Samm Bennett steps out front as leader of his onomatopoeic band, Chunk. Chunk's *Life Of Crime* is a surprisingly "inside" pop album with intelligent lyrics and engaging rhythms. This is warm, open music and not like New York City at all. Bennett is an appealing crooner (reminiscent of Elvis Costello circa *Imperial Bedroom*), but what distinguishes Chunk is Bennett's use of imaginative percussion and odd (or found) sounds in otherwise mainstream settings. Bennett writes some good songs, particularly "Hell Outta Bessemer," but as a singer, he needs to stretch, and break out of that croon now and then. (all reviewed on CD) —*Jon Andrews*

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Chops To Go

by Robin Tolleson

The term "fusion," the "F word," is really a large umbrella under which a rich diversity of sounds can be found. **Ray Russell**'s *A Table Near The Band* (Last Chance LCM001; 50:41: ★★★★) showcases some of the best musicians out of the current British scene. Drummer Simon Phillips is versatile, always exciting, and on this date he shows off a more sparse, orchestral side at times, too. Bassist Mo Foster nails all the time and feel shifts, and saxman Iain Ballamy is borrowed from Bill Bruford's Earthworks for the occasion. Some of the grooves are a mix of primitive and sophisticated, à la Lounge Lizards. They create colorful textures like Group 87 did, and some of the sounds are reminiscent of Miles and Marcus Miller's *Siesta* soundtrack. Despite the ample chops on hand, they are not an overbearing group. They don't hesitate to mix it up in spots, but use their talents for the good of the band.

Judging by three new releases featuring guitarist **Frank Gambale**, two from guitar conceptualist **Mark Varney**, Gambale rarely rests these days. The **Varney Project**'s *Truth In Shredding* (Legato 1004-B; 55:13: ★★★★) features former Chick Corea drummer Tom Brechtlein, a seriously grooving Jimmy Earl on bass, and Allan Holdsworth on guitar and the shadowy Synthaxe, a very compelling foil for Gambale's high-powered antics. Frank's acoustic solo on "The Fall" adds a subtle touch as opposed to the knockout punch he delivers on "Not Ethiopia" (one of *three* Brecker Brothers songs covered) or the ripping fadeout on Wayne Shorter's "Ana Maria."

On Varney's *Centrifugal Funk* (Legato 1005-B; 61:24: ★★★), Gambale is joined by drummer Joey Heredia, keyboardist Freddy Ravel, saxman Steve Tavaglione, and rhythm guitarist Mike O'Neill. Guitarists Brett Garsed and Shawn Lane tear what's left of the house down whenever they get the chance. After their frightful attacks on Miles' "So What," there's really no way Gambale can cut them, but he gives it a go. There are some fine musical moments here, but Gambale doesn't need to get into a shouting contest with anyone, and that's what this is too much of the time.

Gambale's new solo release, *Noteworker* (JVC 2001: ★★★), is dedicated to a more mainstream, sophisticated, pop side of the guitarist, doing some more vocal tunes. His voice was encouraging on *Thunder From Down Under* (see "Reviews" Aug. '90), but here it sounds a bit strained. Dave Weckl and Steve Smith alternate on skins without noticeable distinction. The band is held in check by the material to some extent, with little chance to really air it out. One exception is "Jet Rag," an electric collage of sounds from Gambale and Weckl that's strong, melodic, and live, like a Jeff Beck/Jan Hammer jam. It's by far the most original-sounding track of the bunch. After listening to the Varney releases, you wouldn't think I'd want to hear Gambale rip, but I think he held back a bit too much.

Gambale fans will likely flip over the debut release from guitarist **Marc Bonilla**, *EE Ticket* (Reprise 4-26725: ★★★★½). This is

Frank Gambale: high-powered antics

much more than hype, as Bonilla burns with some licks and tunes that bring to mind a young, fiery Steve Morse. With a true flair for the outrageous, and a most tasteful, mature approach to it all, he's put together an entertaining package that covers a tongue-in-cheek breakneck boogie; a wild, unabashed jam in 9/8; a lovely, highly Satrianic ballad; and lots of other cool jams. Guests like Keith Emerson, Troy Luccketta, and Ronnie Montrose contribute well, but there's no question who's the star of this show.

Steve Laury plays expressive chorded solos on acoustic and electric guitar on *Passion* (Denon 81757 9043 2; 41:48: ★★★), and proves that he's more than just a Ritenour, Benson, or Klugh wannabe. Keyboardist/bassist Ron Satterfield adds vocals on two Brazilian-flavored songs that highlight the action, and co-writes all the material with Laury. They emphasize melody and song form, with enough room for stretching spaced through the arrangements to make them palatable. Laury can rev it up, and throws some curveballs to keep it from sounding too "nice."

Among jazz-pop keyboardists, Bob James, the Grusin brothers, and David Benoit come quickly to mind. But for that genre, **Keiko Matsui** is as fine an all-around talent as there is. She proves her playing, composing, and arranging skills again on *Night Waltz* (Sin-Drome CGD 1800; 41:25: ★★★½). On the title track, she shows off a pointed, graceful, acoustic touch, with some strong synth work in the background. "The White Gate" is a feature for saxmen Eric Marienthal and Mike Acosta, while Matsui's "Hope" features some tough and tasty guitar work by Ron Komie. And "Grey Cliffs" is typical of her writing—there's a majestic flair, but it doesn't sound pretentious. It's also nice to hear the distinctive, smooth pipes of former Santana vocalist Greg Walker again on a couple tracks.

Misha Segal is an Emmy-winning composer/player on the Left Coast, and his *Zambooka* (MusicMasters 01612-65068-2; 48:49: ★★½) is crafted as scrupulously as a Steely Dan track. Chick Corea and Grant Geissman are called in on one track each, and Freddie Hubbard appears on a bland, funked-up take of Cole Porter's "I Love You." "Trumpet Man In Search Of A New Planet" is a nice composition, and features guest trumpeter Mark Isham, but the tune cries out for a live drummer. Jorge Patrono programs the percussion with a knowing touch, but several tunes could have used some live fire. DB

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Mal Waldron

OUR COLLINE'S A TREASURE—Soul Note 121198: *Spaces; Our Colline's A Treasure; Chez Pascale; The Git Go; Because Of You I Live Again.* (42:17)
Personnel: Waldron, piano; Leonard Jones, bass; Sangoma Everett, drums.

★★★★

Ghiglioni/Rava/Waldron

I'LL BE AROUND—Soul Note 121256: *Am I Blue?; They Can't Take That Away From Me; You Don't Know What Love Is; All Or Nothing At All; Glad To Be Unhappy; I'll Be Around; Yesterdays; Where Are You?; Darn That Dream; But Not For Me.* (44:45)
Personnel: Tiziana Ghiglioni, vocal (except cuts 3,5,7); Enrico Rava, trumpet (except 5,6,8); Mal Waldron, piano (except 7,10).

★★★½

Two new Waldron albums take him back to the '50s in different ways. Back then he was one of the first pianists to draw on Monk's economical approach, even as some folks claimed Monk was too quirky to spawn followers. Mal's economy takes a different form—as he's said, he'll take two or three notes and milk them dry before moving on to the next few and doing likewise. He uses that durable strategy often on *Colline*—yet here he explicitly evokes Monk a couple of times; the melody of his ballad "Chez Pascale" winks at "Ruby, My Dear," and his final flourish on "Spaces"—a thrice-chiming treble chord—is a Monk trademark. The nimble rhythm section helps reinforce the pianists' resemblance, but where Monk's open spaces tend to be light and airy, Mal may sound like he's brooding at the keys. Even so, his playful side comes out, notably in "Spaces"'s spry melody; his style is flexible enough to suggest a range of feeling. Nothing much new—just a reminder of how good he's always been.

Mal was Billie Holiday's last accompanist, from '57 to '59. His playing with her was more overtly lyrical and less obsessive than elsewhere. That's also the case on *I'll Be Around*, a Holiday-dedicated trio date with two Italians: lyrical, ruby-toned trumpeter Rava and Ghiglioni, one of Europe's best jazz singers. Her English isn't bad, and she avoids overkill, hewing close to the written melodies. (Stylistically, she's closer to Helen Merrill than Holiday, though her timbre is richer than Merrill's.) In a way, this session's a minimal rethink of a Holiday/Teddy Wilson date: a program of ballads, singer, and hot soloist buoyed by reliably discreet piano. Duos and solos add welcome variety, but the trio's sturdy mutual support is paramount.

—*Kevin Whitehead*

LES PAUL

by Bill Milkowski

MITCHELL SEIDEL

Inventor, guitarist, storyteller, legend. Les Paul is all of these and more. Catch him at his regular Monday night gig at Fat Tuesday's in New York and you're bound to get an earful: behind-the-scenes tales of working with Bing Crosby, Art Tatum, Nat Cole, the Andrews Sisters; stories of life on the road with Mary Ford; anecdotes about discovering reverb, echo, delay and multi-track recording; details about the inventions of the electric guitar.

Now approaching 77, Les is still going strong. Acute arthritis in his hands has slowed him down but not dampened his spirit. Somehow he still manages to execute the same cascade-like runs and vicious string bends on his signature Les Paul. Les is currently enjoying something of a revival. Capitol recently released a four-CD boxed set covering his work with Mary Ford from the golden decade of 1948-1958 (see "Reviews" Feb. '92). Columbia will soon be releasing a batch of new Les Paul recordings featuring guest appearances by superstar guitarists in the fields of rock, jazz, country, and blues.

1 Django Reinhardt

"The World Is Waiting For The Sunrise" ***(from Djangology '49, RCA/Bluebird) Reinhardt, guitar; Stephane Grappelli, violin; Gianni Safred, piano; Carlo Recori, bass; Aurelio de Carolis, drums.***

Well, first of all, it's "The World Is Waiting For The Sunrise." Mary and I had a hit with that one back in 1951. As for who this is, if it ain't Django it's a darn good imitation of him. I kind of think it's Django toward the end, after the war. [*later*] Yeah, that's Django alright. Django, to me, probably would be the number-one choice of all the guitar players in my life. I have the same handicap he had [lacking the use of two fingers in the left hand], but I don't really consider it a handicap at all. You do have to finger things in another manner, but you're saying the same thing. It's what you say, it's not how you play. He played with a lot of heart and drive. You talk about kickin' somebody in the ass, Stephane would never doze off with Django around because he was out there to wake everybody out. So I would rate Django as one of the most influential, if not *the* most influential, jazz guitar players of all.

2 Jeff Beck

"Where Were You" ***(from Guitar Shop, Epic) Beck, guitar; Tony Hymas, keyboards.***

What's the name of that cat who played that one song that was kind of popular years back . . . "Sleepwalk." [ed: Santo & Johnny] That sounds almost like this thing, kind of like steel guitar. But this . . . I don't know where he's going with it. It doesn't do much for me. I have no idea.

B.M.: *It's Jeff Beck.*

L.P.: Really? Boy, I woulda never guessed that. It's so far from Beck. He's a darn fine player, but this is not really characteristic of his playing. I played alongside Jeff Beck and I'll tell ya, you really gotta roll up your sleeves and dig in when you play with him. I expected to hear him play a couple of my licks and move around a little bit. But this time he played something that . . . maybe if I listened to it more times I'd get it.

3 Danny Gatton

"Cherokee" ***(from Unfinished Business, NRG) Gatton, guitar; John Previti, bass; Brooks Tegler, drums.***

I think it's Danny Gatton. He copies me a lot here . . . all those sped-up guitars and things. I know Danny from years ago. When I first met him he was a complete copy of me. There wasn't anything he played that I didn't play. And I told him that he had to find his own style. I think he has found his own style but he's still got a problem. There's something about his thing that just does not translate well to records. The live show is one thing but the records tend to sound dated for some reason. And if I knew the reason, I'd tell him. But he's a great, great player and I wish him well.

4 Herb Ellis & Joe Pass

"Seven Come Eleven" ***(from Two For The Road, Pablo) Ellis, guitar; Pass, guitar.***

It's "Seven Come Eleven." Here we go with a Herb Ellis-Barney Kessel thing. It sounds like two guys in that world with that front pickup/hollow-body sound. And once you get into that world, I'll be damned if you're gonna tell one of them from the other. It could be Kenny Burrell. Not Joe Pass because you don't hear him running bass lines there. It's not Herb, either. Herb plays with more power, I think. Sounds like two old-timers sweatin' it out, trying hard to be Charlie Christian.

B.M.: *It's Herb Ellis and Joe Pass.*

L.P.: [*laughter*] I'll be damned, the two guys I said it wasn't! [*as the tune progresses*] Now you're hearing a little Joe. Now he's playing his bass lines and comping behind Herb. You get Joe Pass all by himself and he can pretty well stun ya. He's got some shit going that's darn good. And the same thing with Herb Ellis. If you're not swinging, he's gonna make you swing. Of that whole bunch of guys who play hollow-body guitar on the front pickup, I think Herb Ellis has got the most drive. But I think he and Joe held each other back on this recording. I've heard both of them play better.

5 Jimmy Raney

"Just One Of Those Things" ***(from The Master, Criss Cross) Raney, guitar; Kirk Lightsey, piano; Eddie Gladden, drums; Jesper Lundgaard, bass.***

I would say this is Tal Farlow. Or maybe Jimmy Raney. Tal copied Jimmy a lot. He idolized him. Raney has a tendency, like Tal Farlow, to play more notes but have that deep tone. Same technique, same way of picking. Not cross-picking but a hybrid type of picking. The thing about both of those guys is sometimes they stray too far from the melody. And that makes me a little nervous. I remember one time seeing Tal playing at a club and I decided to do an experiment. I walked along the bar and asked everybody what song he was playing and nobody had any idea. It was "How High The Moon," but the only people in the whole place who knew that were Tal, his bass player Gary Mazzaroppi, and me.

Case closed. You gotta get that message across. Don't leave that melody. You gotta hang around it. I mean, when you get a tune like "Stardust" or "Body And Soul" or "I Can't Get Started," boy, you got a bible in your hands. You don't have to fool around with those. You don't put technique in there just because you have the ability to play it. If it don't belong there, then for godsakes don't play it. A lot of guys have a lot of technique—Danny Gatton, Al Di Meola, Django, Tal Farlow, Jimmy Raney. And maybe it's more of a hindrance than a help. I could be a million miles off target, but I don't think I am. **DB**