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STEVE LACY's

Relentless INTENSITY

Keeping Standards with

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Cover photograph by Lauren Deutsch.

FEATURES

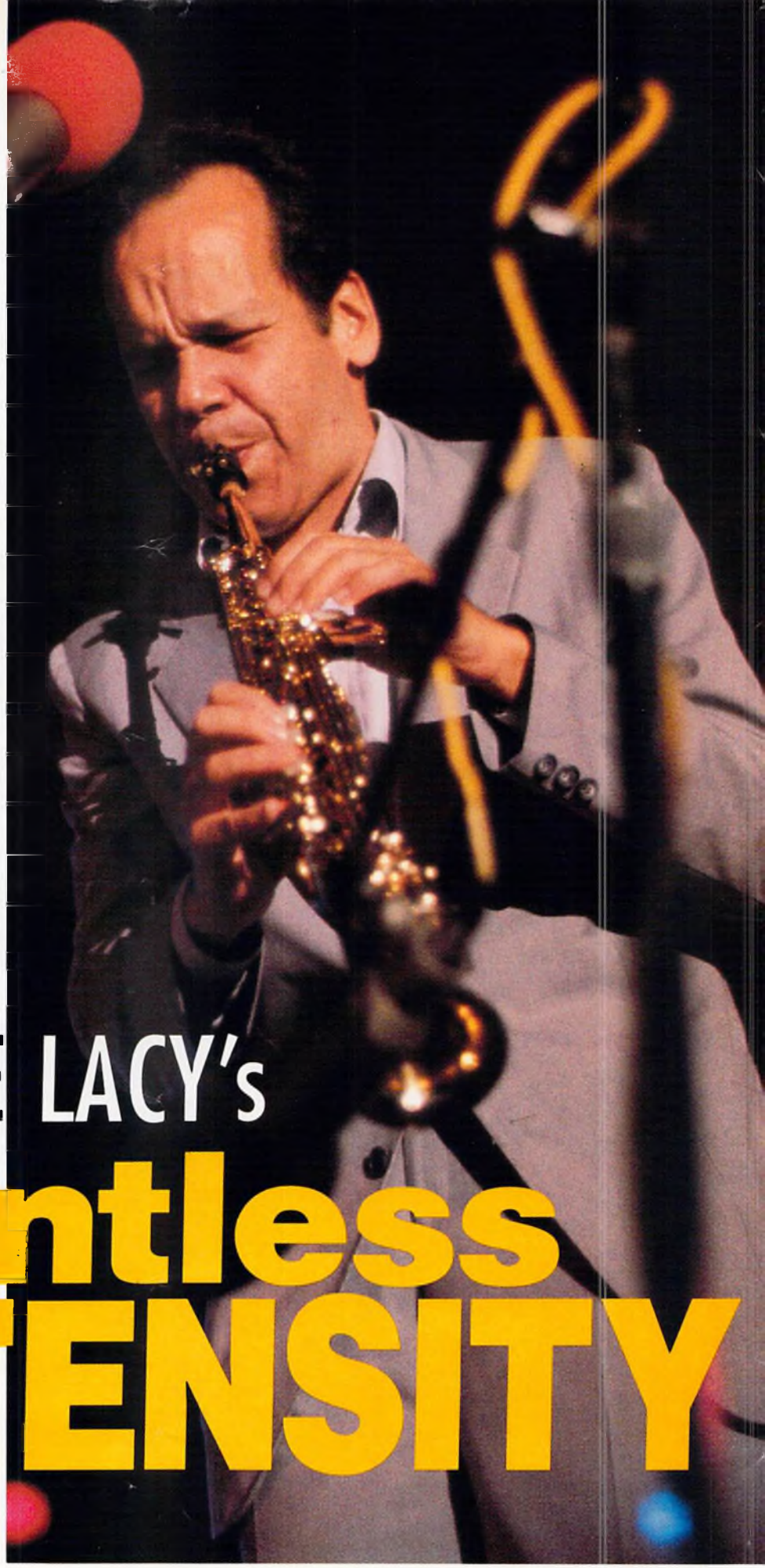
DEPARTMENTS


GARY NULL

Doc Severinsen leads the Tonight Show Band

'This record is a typical first set for us,' opined Steve Lacy recently from his Paris home about the newly released *Live At Sweet Basil*. Solely on the merits of the Lacy Sextet's first club recording, one might think the legendary soprano saxophonist is unduly modest; after all, this is a definitive recording by one of the great jazz groups of our time.

But anyone who heard the perennial DB poll-winner and *future* Hall of Famer's Sextet—which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year—on their watershed, six-week '91 North American tour will tell you this is a level-headed assessment.



STEVE LACY's Relentless INTENSITY

By Bill Shoemaker

Whether you caught them at their Sweet Basil stand, at the Boston Globe Jazz Festival, or at a downright smoking three-set night at Washington's One Step Down, the Sextet stoked their fires with the lilting swing of "Prospectus," the languid wash of "The Bath," the exotic tinge of "The Wane," and the pyrotechnics of "Morning Joy" and "Blinks." But, the intensity and cohesiveness of their first set's interplay would soon prove to be but a baseline, as the Sextet would effortlessly turn up the heat in succeeding sets.

"The next record will be the second set. It's a little hotter," explained Lacy. "Actually, the very next record will be *Remains* [for hat ART], a solo record I did last year. The piece, 'Remains,' is a dance commission I received, a *danse macabre* of a skeleton in a tomb. It's a scary piece to see and perform, too. And I've redone *The Way*, which I haven't touched in quite a few years. You'll be surprised at how it has changed."

It's usually at this point, a few minutes into a conversation with Lacy, that the relentlessness of his schedule sinks in. The quintessential jazz nomad, Lacy, at 58, maintains a pace that would drain a musician half his age; that goes a long way in explaining how he has been able to encompass almost the entirety of jazz's century-long legacy within an odyssey he began as a teenage dixieland revivalist. Just back from dates in Italy, Lacy will put time in on *Vespers*, a Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund commission to be premiered at New York's Town Hall in June, '93, before going to Germany for a radio broadcast of *Clangs*, a song cycle begun in the early '70s, with a 12-piece ensemble, including bass and soprano voices, piano, vibes, four horns, bass, and percussion. It's as if Lacy's life is an ongoing creative deluge.

"'Deluge' is a good word for how the work comes," Lacy concurred. "That's what 'Rain' on the big band CD [*Itinerary*] is all about, that accumulation and release.

"There is a catch-up phase happening now," theorized Lacy, reflecting on his growing American audience, his entry into the arena of American funding institutions, and his ongoing relationship with a major American label, RCA/Novus. "People are starting to catch up with me and this band after 20 years.

"I think one reason it has taken some people this long to get interested in the band is that, formally, what we do is complex, because what we do is largely based on words, language. The use of literature is the primary characteristic of what we do. It's more complicated than sets of chord changes or standards. They're songs, but they haven't become standardized, codified. Even when no one is singing, the words are there. It's like when Lester Young was playing 'Body And Soul,' he was singing the words. This is an old tradition that I've updated with different kinds of lyrics.

"I always think of the band when I write. I learned to do that from Ellington. He was a master at that. He knew and loved his men so well that he could experiment with his material. He played with it. That's what I want with my pieces, material capable of being played with endlessly: the more you play with it, the more ramifications you find, the more ways to play it, the more things to play from it. The pieces are toys, in a way—that's something I learned from Monk.

"The pieces can go through a lot of changes before they're done, really done. Like 'The Sun' [from *Itinerary*]. That piece goes back to '68. It was written for a German television show and performed by a band with Enrico Rava, Karl Berger, Paul Motian, and Kent Carter. I loved that group—trumpet, soprano, vibes—it was a beautiful sound. That was the first time Irene [Aebi, the Sextet's vocalist and one-woman string section] was singing. After that, we may have played the piece twice in 20 years, in Paris during the '70s.

"But the piece was constantly changing, even though we rarely found the right circumstances for it. At first, the piece was just

LAUREN DEUTSCH

side BY side

"It's a miracle that he still plays with me," remarked Steve Lacy of saxophonist Steve Potts' 20-year tenure with Lacy's band. "He could be out there with his own band in a minute."

MICHAEL WILDERMAN

Steve Potts

Potts is a rarity in jazz, a musician who has gained nearly legendary status by, for the most part, forgoing a career as a leader to pursue his creativity in another's ensemble. But, for Potts, who studied with Eric Dolphy and Charles Lloyd, and performed with Chico Hamilton, Ron Carter, and Joe Henderson before moving to Paris in 1972, his long partnership with Lacy hasn't diminished his artistic identity.

"A lot of people think sitting next to one of the greatest saxophonists of the century would adversely influence me, like I would sound like him," said Potts. "But that's not true. It's by being next to somebody like him that I can develop my own personality even further, because I know what *not* to do; not to copy him or anybody else. He's a prime example of this."

Prime examples of Potts' individuality can be found in his duets with Lacy, where Potts' soaring bluesiness and Lacy's peeled phrases contrast most vividly. The rapport documented on recordings like *Flim-Flam* [see "Reviews" Apr. '92] is not simply a case of two guys knowing each other like a book; it's the type of symbiotic creativity epitomized by M.C. Escher's lithograph of two drawn hands arching around each other, sketching the shirt sleeve from which the other emerges. Arguably, among Lacy's recent crop of duo recordings, featuring Maarten Altena, Evan Parker, and Mal Waldron, Potts has been Lacy's most provocative counterpart, as Potts' seemingly telepathic sense of counterpoint prods exuberant performances from the soprano giant.

"Just being there [in the Sextet], though, should say a lot as far as my priorities in making an individual music that is Steve Lacy's, a music that also has a lot of components that stem from the musicians. The Sextet is like an extension of an orchestra like Duke Ellington's, where the core of the musicians stayed together for 30 or 40 years to create an individual sound that's unique in jazz. One of the things I'm apprehensive about jazz today is that everybody sounds alike, and everybody sounds like someone else. But, this group is unique. A unique sound, a unique feeling, is one of the important messages of all the innovators in this music."

Potts dedication to Lacy's music is not deterring his recently increased visibility as a leader. Not only did Potts lead trio sets with Lacy Sextet colleagues bassist Jean-Jacques Avenel and drummer John Betsch (pianist Bobby Few is the Sextet's sixth member) at Canadian jazz festivals last year, but he's also leading an intriguing Paris-based group featuring a distinctive saxophone-accordion front line and a decidedly European sound; their debut is *Pearl* (CC Productions 002).

"I've lived in Europe for 20 years. That's reflected in my music. It's part of who I am." —*B.S.*

"What the reboppers are doing is the dixieland revival of today. The dixieland revival was just as serious back then, and just as modern and contemporary when it happened. People thought they were very hip doing that. Me, too, when I was 16."

MICHAEL WILDERMAN

Steve Lacy with (l-r) Jean-Jacques Avenel, Irene Aebi, and Steve Potts

intervals. There's an interval for each paragraph of [R. Buckminster] Fuller's text, like a litany. A priest has certain intervals, like fifths and fourths, and he can say the words in a natural way; that was the way this piece was made. Gradually through the years, I saw how to accompany that, and the rhythmic structure became clearer. The instrumentation changed over the years; at first, we had bowed bass scales, and chords on the vibes. Then the big band project presented itself [in 1990], my golden opportunity to let all the complexities unfold.

"I've been monkeying around with most of the pieces on the big band CD for 20 years, but I scored them for the occasion—worked very hard on it—except the last piece ['Itinerary'] that [composer/arranger/flugelhornist] Franz Koglmann arranged. I never had an experience like that, where someone took a piece of mine and scored it like that. I found it very, very challenging, problematic, and interesting. By contrast, it illuminates what went before, a codicil.

"For me, the big band recording is an important culmination. Just the fact that it exists, that you can listen to it, is a fulfillment. It's made the interplay between past and present more apparent. It's been unjustly ignored over there [in the U.S. jazz press]; but, I've been happy with the discussion it has prompted in the press here.

"Just as *Itinerary* was dedicated to Gil Evans, so is a section of *Vespers*—there are also sections for Miles Davis, Stan Getz, Mingus; there will be seven in all. With *Vespers*—the texts are by a Bulgarian mystic poet named Blaga Demitrova; somebody told me she's the Minister of Culture in Bulgaria—I'm adding brass to the Sextet to get the sound I'm after: trumpet, trombone, and, if the traffic will bear it, tuba, also. More so than with the big band pieces, there's a boiling-down going on, particularly in the vocal works, to a folk-song style, where the melodies are simpler, repeating small ideas while the words change. It's a style I'm arriving at after many years of doing complicated things. After writing hundreds of songs, I'm able to bend the words better now to a more simplified style. Not that the pieces are simple to perform, but they're simple to listen to. And *Vespers* will be easy to produce; unlike *Futurities*, this is simply a concert piece.

"One of my unrealized goals is to bring *Futurities* to the States. It's an expensive show—nine musicians, two dancers, a giant decor by [painter] Kenneth Noland, lights. We've played it all over Europe, but it's an American commodity, and it should be seen there. It's not like the old days with [trombonist] Roswell [Rudd]—we would get a place to play, put up posters, sell tickets, divide the money. It's difficult to nurture projects like that there now because the meter is always running.

"The financial pressures may help explain the phenomena like the young beboppers, or reboppers. What they are doing is the dixieland revival of today. The dixieland revival was just as serious back then, and just as modern and contemporary when it happened. People thought they were very hip doing that. Me, too, when I was 16: this music is very serious, we want to learn it, and play it the best we can. It's a place to begin. You have to start somewhere.

"I think they should be encouraged, but they better hurry. When I was young, Cecil [Taylor] told me that. He told me, 'Better get a notebook.' I thought, 'A notebook?' But, finally, I saw what he meant: I better get moving, get on with the research. So, anybody playing rebop, if they're serious about playing, they should get a notebook. I have a lot of notebooks." **DB**

EQUIPMENT

"At the moment, I'm using a Selmer Super Action, the first series," Steve Lacy explained. "I've had it about eight years, a wonderful horn. I have an Otto Link #12 mouthpiece, a number that doesn't exist—he made it especially for me. I use a very, very soft reed, a Marca 1½—Marca is a small company in France who makes the best reeds for soprano. This combination of a wide mouthpiece and a very soft reed is ideal for me, but I would not recommend that anyone start out that way."

"I use a Selmer Mark VI alto and a Mark VI soprano," said Steve Potts. "They're custom-made, with gold-plating inside the bells, a technique used on trumpets to improve the sound. My alto mouthpiece is a Claude Leakey 6 ••• and my soprano mouthpiece was custom-made by Fred Lambertson, a private maker in California. I use Van Doren reeds—a #2 on the alto, and a #1½ on soprano."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DB's previous two Steve Lacy discographies—May '80 and Dec. '87—listed over 125 titles; and these predate the CD reissue explosion that have further muddied the discographical waters. So, rather than attempt a comprehensive listing that no doubt will be redundant of earlier efforts, this listing covers post-'87 releases and reissues to serve as a CD consumer's guide. —*B.S.*

as a leader

LIVE AT SWEET BASIL – RCA/Novus 0124-63128
REMAINS – hat ART 6102
MORE MONK – Soul Note 121210-2
ITINERARY – hat ART 6079
ANTHEM – RCA/Novus 3079-2-N
MORNING JOY – hat ART 6104
THE DOOR – RCA/Novus 3049-2
ONE FELL SWOOP – Silkheart 103
MOMENTUM – RCA/Novus 3021-2
ONLY MONK – Soul Note 121160-2
THE GLEAM – Silkheart 102
THE CONDOR – Soul Note 121135-2
FUTURITIES, PART II – hat ART 6032
FUTURITIES, PART I – hat ART 6031
THE FLAME – Soul Note 121035-2
TROUBLES – Black Saint 120035-2
TRICKLES – Black Saint 120008-2
EVIDENCE – Prestige New Jazz OJCCD 1755-2
REFLECTIONS – New Jazz OJCCD 063-2
SOPRANO SAX – New Jazz OJCCD 130-2

with Mal Waldron

3 – hat ART 6073
2 – hat ART 6072
1 – hat ART 6071
HOT HOUSE – RCA/Novus 3038-2-N
SEMPRE AMORE – Soul Note 121170-2

with various others

FLIM-FLAM – hat ART 6087 (w/ Steve Potts)
HIGH, LOW AND ORDER – hat ART 6069 (Maarten Altena)
CHIRPS – FMP 29 (Evan Parker)
THE ICP ORCHESTRA PERFORMS NICHOLS-MONK – ICP 026 (ICP Orchestra)
CHANGE OF SEASON – Soul Note 121104-2 (Misha Mengelberg & Han Bennink)
REGENERATION – Soul Note 121054-2 (Misha Mengelberg & Han Bennink)
SONGS – hat ART 6045 (Brion Gysin)
GLOBE UNITY SPECIAL '75 – FMP 40 (Globe Unity Orchestra)
JAZZ ADVANCE – Blue Note 84462 2 (Cecil Taylor)


TERI BLOOM

Maintaining Standards

KEITH JARRETT & DAVE GRUSIN

By Becca Pulliam

What could be more intriguing than a conversation between the prickly Keith Jarrett and the smooth Dave Grusin? They both play the piano and compose in and out of jazz, although Grusin's ventured into keyboards and computers while Jarrett is a self-described Luddite (with a smile) whose artistic tools are his Steinway and a pencil. Perhaps their sharpest disagreement was about instruments. Grusin tried to posit that synthesizers are made musical by the nuances applied to the electronics. For Jarrett music is food, and synthesizers are plastic broccoli. And they sound like cigarette smoke.

"You've heard of dixieland. I think most of jazz now is Disneyland! It's 3/4 scale, its streets are clean, and the buildings are empty. The reality's smaller, and the advertising's bigger." –Keith

But these men hold a lot in common. They're smart. They're aware of each other. They seem to enjoy high-quality conversation. They talk about details and envision the bigger picture. They have fun with it. They're concerned about the world, and they care about music. Invite either one of them to your campus not just to perform but to lecture!

Both have recently released collections of American standards. Grusin's *The Gershwin Connection*—a dozen 1991 arrangements featuring appearances by sidemen and soloists from the GRP family—just won him a Grammy for arranging. Jarrett's *The Cure*—with bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette—is a 1990 performance at Town Hall. For these two individualists, the return to standard material became the focus of a wide-ranging discussion that took place at the GRP offices overlooking Manhattan—a high perch from which Jarrett introduced his "flatland" perspective on the two-dimensionality of most music today. Both had a lot to say. Here is the essence of their conversation.

Becca Pulliam: *Does the world really need another "All The Things You Are"?*
Keith Jarrett: The world needs more than that.

BP: *Please elaborate.*
KJ: I can say for myself why standard tunes have played a big role recently was because I found the music world going too far to "possessiveness." Everyone had to be doing their own thing. So the standard tune format freed the trio from any responsibility other than making music.
Dave Grusin: Well, I started out as an arranger of standard material, and I went from that to writing "original" music for film. I can say that the relief that Keith describes about doing your version of material that already exists *is* a real relief.
KJ: You've heard of dixieland. I think most of jazz now is Disneyland! Meaning that it's 3/4 scale, its streets are clean, and the buildings are empty. The reality's smaller, the advertising's bigger. I heard an early Ornette record that I hadn't heard in a long time, and it's so willfully creative. To me that's not Disneyland music. But one reason

everybody's coming out with things that say "standards" all over them is because melodists are disappearing. Song is disappearing. And I think song is disappearing because the soul of the planet is also not so strong. I think melody is the soul.

DG: I don't think a lot that we've known and loved, I don't think it could be written now. I miss whatever it was in our society that gave us *The George White Scandals*, gave us a possibility of Rodgers and Hart

KJ: Depends on the tune. Some of those original things are so terrible! One chord change could make the tune good.

DG: Incidentally, my perception of Gershwin is that he already figured out what the best substitution changes were going to be.

KJ: I think that's true of Gershwin because, contrary to many of the standard tune writers, he's not writing vertically. He's writing how a line moves in harmony under . . .

HARRISON FUNK

Dave Grusin directing the GRP All-Star Big Band

songs stepping out of those shows. They weren't all wonderful, but there were always these little gems that stepped out.

KJ: They're more precious if they're not being done now, too. I think our perceptions—if we aren't careful—start reducing along with what's missing in the world. It won't take much, just a little let-go, and then we'll say, "Hey, that's not so bad. I heard something that was worse than that the other day." Right?

DG: [*laughs*] Absolutely.

KJ: When I think of "song," [I think of] fluid or roundedness. But what you're hearing more and more [today] are edged textures. They go along with digital watches; and that goes with the information age, because in the information age how do you know what is valuable information and what isn't? It's all information.

BP: *When a young player comes along and plays a tune wrong, is that evolutionary or is that not doing one's research?*

DG: The "thumb lines" . . . [*countermelodies played by a pianist's left thumb*]

KJ: It's all counterpoint. "My Man's Gone Now" is one of the tunes that—if you had to analyze it in blocks—you'd come to places in the tune where you'd say, "What?!" But if you know Gershwin's actual original score notes, and see that there's a moving line from [point] A to [point] B, and in between is a voice-leading note, you'd go, "Ah!" [*satisfaction and relief*].

DG: Particularly the bridge. There are chord progressions as amazing as anything you could think of using today with traditional harmony.

KJ: Somehow I associate the counterpoint, the lines moving under other lines, as an awareness of the roundness of time. And so on the "flatland," Gershwin's poking up through there, which is why those things remain unable-to-be-made-better. He not only had the inspiration for the discrete components of these pieces, but he had the inspiration for the glue between those components.

DG: I think what George Gershwin was trying to do, particularly at the end, was consciously synthesize jazz and classical music.

KJ: Because of that, the other writers end up being much better to play as an improviser. They gave you some very inspired things, but there's a fill-in-the-blanks process. You are not stuck with an already-existing best-possible method.

BP: *About the lyrical aspect of this, as pianists, improvisers, and performers, is the lyric in your mind as you play?*

DG: As an accompanist, I know a lot of songs from having learned them to play for a singer, so lyrics are kind of married at that point.

KJ: Accompanying is a subject all to itself, very unmentioned, but it's another art form.

BP: *Neither of you is particularly an accompanist.*

KJ: Well, I feel like I am.

DG: Yeah, me, too.

KJ: I'm always accompanying Gary [Peacock] and Jack [DeJohnette]! [*laughter*] I played for numerous vocalists in the early stages of my pianism and I wouldn't know what to trade it [for]. There's something about doing that, especially with a voice, with words. You're dealing with pauses that would never exist in an instrumental—elasticity and dynamics.

DG: That's been my life. I'm not a solo pianist. I don't perform. I like to play on records, and I like to play in the studio, and I like to work with other musicians. But I started out being in demand in college because I was a good accompanist. I always had a feel for it, a sensitivity and an attempt to support it, and I think that's why I became an arranger.

KJ: That's perfect. That describes, I mean it *explains* what he does!

DG: Yeah, that's why I became an arranger. That's why I became a film composer, because I'm supporting something else.

KJ: In other words, he's good at relating and I'm not! [*they both laugh*] Just kidding.

BP: *Is there a lost opportunity because film music doesn't generate standards anymore?*

DG: Oh my god, please don't let songs come from that medium [*laughs*], or we're in trouble forever.

KJ: I'm glad you said that!

DG: Usually what happens in a film project is that there's some kind of thematic thing that hopefully shows up, and I can say, "Yeah, this feels good to me." Then, if there's a chance anywhere in the film for a reading of that and it makes sense musically, then somebody says, "That should really be a nice song." And then the lyric comes out to be one of those wonderful lyrics that also could make sense on its own. Those are a

lot of "if's," and the number of times that happens are few.

KJ: Down Beat is a jazz-tinted magazine at least. Right?

BP: *"Jazz, Blues & Beyond" is on the cover.*

DG: We're not sure what the beyond is but . . .

KJ: Today you're speaking to someone who is considered by some people to be a jazz musician, so I'll take this opportunity to say that jazz is risk, and without the risk there's no reward either for the player or for the audience. And when I see the classical music world—which I've been seeing very much of recently—I'm beginning to realize how precious that really is. Classical players shake their heads at the *allegro*, their hair flies around and the audience wakes up and applauds. The notes are what they are, and it can only be the best of those notes. A jazz player on a certain night, something can happen and from that point on he is not the same. He'll be playing the rest of his life, and he'll have that as part of him.

DG: I think you treasure those moments. If you're realistic you don't expect them to happen every bar or every chorus.

KJ: The risk is that it won't; and most of the time, it won't! [*laughs*]

DG: But the challenge is that you try to stay on the edge. You put yourself on the edge so that if it's available to happen, you're ready for it to happen. I don't do that. Keith does that more with more fluidity and more constant putting himself out on the edge.

KJ: I put myself there, but what happens is never as good as it could be. People come

"I miss whatever it was in our society that gave us The George White Scandals."

–Dave

and say, "How did you do that?" They think that they're hearing the best it could be, and I'm saying to myself, "Next time . . . ."

DG: But if you didn't feel that way, they might not have that opinion even of what they think you were going for. The standard would have been somewhere else.

KJ: Which is exactly why I used the word "standards" when we did *Standards Volume 1* in '83. Everyone thought it was standard tunes. That isn't why. Standards. Basic standards. Standards for doing what we were about to do.

BP: *You don't play standards as solos. It sounds as though this is a communal thing, these standards.*

KJ: You are communing with a vast stretch of time. You can change the past if you're aware of it. I think you can communicate to previous eras by dealing with some of the material from those eras.

DG: When one is learning classical music, for instance, you're really studying history. If you go back to the repertoire, why do you play that trill this way? When you play Mozart you're playing it this way. If it were Beethoven, you would play it this way. Even though jazz is more compressed and newer, I think it's a similar thing.

BP: *I wonder why Stevie Wonder's songs are not becoming standards. He's prolific, they have a message, there's a melody. Is jazz going in a different direction from songwriting?*

KJ: I think they're too rich. There's a richness in the harmonies that you can't escape from an improvising point of view. They're beautiful things but I would leave

them alone.

DG: I know some of the rhyme schemes that we've come to accept drive lyric writers crazy. Stevie is such a talent that when he performs his stuff he can make it happen. I think the marriage of the performance and the writer is too close to break. Marvin Gaye is a better example of that kind of songwriting that maybe has life outside of the original performance.

BP: *Where else do you look?*

DG: I tell you where I don't look is [*he gestures out the window to the southeast*] Broadway.

KJ: Jazz depends on an individual person to make it happen even if it's trivial material, which it often should be 'cause it works nicely. But I don't think we deserve standards. [*long pause*] Why should we expect there to be standards at this time? Why should we expect there to be something permanent when nothing else is that way? Why should there be music that will last forever now? And anyway, I think we have enough music.

DG: I think we need more music, but we don't need standards. I know that there are people who feel that they are part of the tradition of songwriting, that they are as dedicated as they could be asked to be. I'm thinking of Marilyn and Alan Bergman, who write lyrics to Michel Legrand themes. And they've written some beautiful things. They truly believe in the Tin Pan Alley tradition. Maybe those things will emerge as a continuation of the Rodgers and Hart songbook. I don't know. I know that they're not being written as reactions to contemporary life as we've come to know it, and I think what Keith's saying is that contemporary life is not conducive to writing those things.

KJ: Not only am I saying exactly that, but I just realized that I'm also saying [that] if we want to take advantage of this time now, we shouldn't be thinking about writing standard tunes. I think it's time to remember the first musicians. I think it's time to imagine ourselves in as primitive a state as we really are; and if we can do that, the standards will eventually arise—if there are such things as standards.

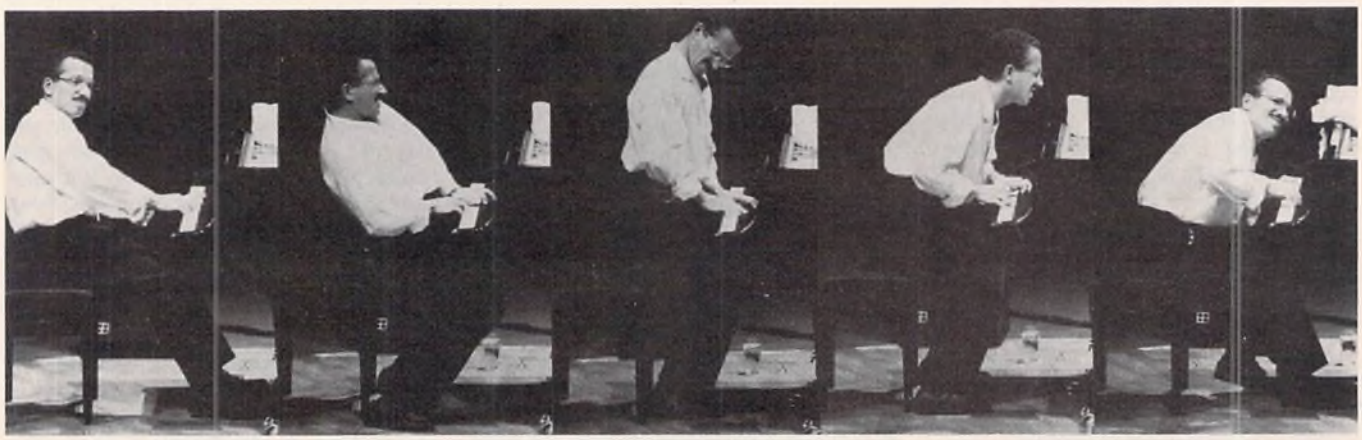
DG: Also, you know, we limited this discussion to music.

BP: *It's been pushing on the boundaries.*

DG: There are a lot of things that are so important when you stop to think about it. [*Looking south from West 57th Street over a wide but smoggy panorama of midtown Manhattan and beyond, with the Hudson River and Jersey to the east, he seems to pull this example from thick air.*] I have 65 heifers, and they're all going to calf this spring. And if something happens in the middle of the night to one of those calves and there's a difficulty in delivery, none of this matters to me. None of it. I think all of us have times in our lives when [music] is the be-all-and-end-all. It certainly was for me early on. But in the overall spectrum of things, we've got a lot of other problems in this country.

KJ: You're out there as a musician, and meanwhile you're realizing that it's a drop in the bucket. But when everybody's looking at the bucket as though it's so important, when the whole music world is so blown up like a blimp, and when video—and we didn't even get to this—video represents the flatland to me more than anything there is. We are a visual culture. We don't know we're using our ears when we're using them. But we are choosing what to look at. That can only end up being a culture that gets manipulated by the images it sees. Image is nothing. Image turns on and off. But reality is the cows. Not a film of the cows. Not a film of someone playing the music.

Ezra Pound said, "Nothing matters save the quality of affection." As a soloist in jazz, you have the responsibility to have a strong quality of affection for what you're doing every time you play. That's a nice quote, especially in this computer age. DB



HYOU VIELZ

Keith Jarrett and his dancing partner

EQUIPMENT

Keith Jarrett owns two Steinway pianos, one German, one American. His two harpsichords were made by Tatsuo Takahashi in 1988 (double manual Italian/German style) and Carl Fudge in 1982 (double manual, after Taskin). He also has a clavichord and a virginal, both made by Fudge.

Dave Grusin isn't a hardware collector. He uses a Yamaha DX711FD and Korg M-1 and T-3 keyboards plus an Atari Stacy laptop computer with Hybrid Arts MIDI-track note-processing software. "Everything is used only for writing and sequencing demo material," Grusin explains. In concert he prefers a Yamaha acoustic MIDI grand piano.

JARRETT SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

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

THE CURE – ECM 849 650
TRIBUTE – ECM 847 135
STANDARDS, VOL. 1 – ECM 811 966
STANDARDS, VOL. 2 – ECM 825 015
STANDARDS LIVE – ECM 827 827
PERSONAL MOUNTAINS – ECM 837 361

GRUSIN SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

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

as a leader

THE GERSHWIN CONNECTION – GRP 2005
HAVANA (SOUNDTRACK) – GRP 2003
THE FABULOUS BAKER BOYS (SOUNDTRACK) – GRP 2002
THE BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES (SOUNDTRACK) – Atlantic 82177
THE DAVE GRUSIN COLLECTION – GRP 9579
MIGRATION – GRP 9592
CINEMAGIC – GRP 9547

with various others

LOVE IS GONNA GETCHA – GRP 9603 (w/ Patti Austin)
WELCOME TO THE ST. JAMES CLUB – GRP 9618 (Rippingtons)

Ska's The Limit

COURTNEY PINE

By Fred Bouchard

After the complex intensity of jazz "visions," "urges," and "journeys," Brit saxophonist Courtney Pine's striking saucy, akimbo stances with laid-back Jamaicans come as a relief. Played with Kingston cats and produced by dancehall hit master Gussie Clark, Pine's new *Closer To Home* slinks him into yet another world of jazz fusion.

"What I'm up to now is ska," Pine says in Antilles' plush West London studio. Ska—reggae's jolly, bluesy, precursor using r&b, brisk brass solos, hard third beats—was embraced early by Bob Marley and Jimmy Cliff. "I guess I'm ready to show my own traditions," admits Pine. "I've talked about my reggae links; not many people know that ska was there first. My band of guys used to play reggae, but have jazz feeling. We play 'Donna Lee.'"

I hear Pine's "EST" (he lays piano tracks on it) and comment on his Websterian breathy burliness. "I have to be a different player when I play ska," explains Pine, "because I don't know what to play yet. I visualized that clip—you know it? Duke Ellington plays as his band walks down the stairs one by one; then Ben comes down, picks up his horn, starts to solo. Guys say you shouldn't imitate, but I know I'm not going to be playing Ben Webster!

"I like to show other young guys: 'Somewhere in your artillery you should have Ben Webster. Listen to him, know why he played with vibrato.' It helps you play ballads to have that kind of grounding. It seems cliché now, but a lot of young guys don't know; they say, 'We'll just go for a loud r&b sound.' That stuff only lasts for a period of time."

If the jazz-ska connection brings Pine a wider audience, he's ready. "It will be interesting to see," he observes, "how [Britain's] melting pot resolves by the turn of the century. A new [gang] of jazz players want to be in the pop charts. I want a Top 40 hit that gets chops and tradition across. I won't use a drum machine to do it! It can be done, probably more easily here than in the States. With no Greenwich Village scene, I try to convince producers that people will come to a big hall [e.g., Sadler Wells Theater] for jazz, and they do. It's definitely happening."

Pine's easy camaraderie—evident in his openhanded, cheerful playing—will speed its acceptance. "I have to try twice as hard [overseas] to show there's valid music in this tradition. We've had Joe Harriott, Dudu Pukwana, Ronnie Scott [England's top-notch jazzmen], but my career could end or go someplace else tomorrow. They liked [my jazz-reggae] band in Japan last September."

Pine recalls 1985 as a pivotal year: he toured with Elvin Jones and Art Blakey, grand masters of percussion preaching jazz gospel, and played in the orchestra of George Russell, the jazz world's most influential composer/educator. As Pine learns, so shall he teach, and the jazz oral tradition looms large.

About blues, for example. "My first night with Art Blakey, Wynton showed me that whether you go east or west, you've got the blues. I'd thought people [jammed on blues] because they didn't know the chord changes! But—hang on!—blues is not just 12 bars. You can have nine bars, [no] turnaround. It isn't just three chords: there's a reason for them. There's blues in ¾, or ⅞. There are so many different ways to play blues, you have to *un*-derstand the language before you can step up and do it properly.

"What I learn I try to pass along. 'If he can do it, so can I,' I said when I saw Wynton, and guys say that when they see me. That's what I want to happen. I go around to London jam sessions with my saxophone looking for young musicians. Wednesdays its the Wag Club on Wardour St. [Soho]; 606 is after-hours in Chelsea.

"It's nice for saxophonists to get together casually. I met Wayne Shorter in an airport, and he said, 'Well, this is how John Coltrane practiced.' I was like—!!! If Wayne Shorter can do that for me, why can't I do that for somebody else? Some young musicians ask if I can teach them. I tell them, 'I don't teach, but we can practice together.' Or just talk it over." Pine's community embraces family, friends, colleagues, idols, upstarts.

As Jamaica looms large for Pine, so Africa and India crowd the realm of his dreams. Pine attributes his global longings to environment. "We're exposed to all kinds of music here in England at a very early age. We're so close to Poland, Turkey, Africa, Asia. Paris has a very open scene."

Pine plays flute and soprano in duet with tablaist Talvin Singh. "He was born like me, first generation in England. He knew my language; we could hang. He knows western style, plays traps and tabla with Suzy and the Banshees. [Ragas require] control playing over 16 beats at very slow tempo. You improvise your way through that and come back and hit the one. It's like slow-walking on a tightrope! That's taken my ambitions for improvising to another world."

Pine was born in Westbourne Grove, international melting pot of West London, on March 18, 1964. Neither his parents, emigrés from Kingston in the '60s, nor his sisters were involved in music.

"I picked up a recorder in grade school, followed along on clarinet in secondary school. Nobody in my family could say, 'Do it this way.' I was 13, a rebel year. Except for football and cricket, I didn't go out much. I wasn't into joyriding, so I'd go up to my room and make noise, and nobody could tell me I was doing it wrong. There was stage band stuff, Weber and Mozart in the school orchestra. By the time I was getting good at Mozart, the saxophone came along." Pine gigged with friends at 15, played pro ska and reggae at 16.

Pine clearly grooved to seeing Sonny Rollins decked out as a cowboy, then hearing him gun down "Wagon Wheels" on *Way Out West*. He has a go at "I'm An Old Cowhand" on *Vision's Tale*. "I'd been brought up with calypso, ska, reggae as a backdrop to pop, but I wanted to get into jazz. I got the best cover I could find and put it on, and there was this guy playing as if he were in a ska band! But he had a different rhythm section—Shelly Manne? Hang on! He sounded—West Indian! There was the link.

"If I'd heard Charlie Parker first, I might have felt alienated. But Sonny Rollins was playing something I could understand: calypso! He was like my uncle! That sucked me into the music completely."

Just as Pine picked up the clarinet to launch out of childhood, he chose jazz to free himself from post-Empire British strictures. "We don't have acceptance in this country; we're still pioneers. There are things you can't do. English culture's frightening like that. I'm going to latch on the greatest thing I see to enhance my playing, and that's jazz. It has no boundaries. That's why I play jazz saxophone instead of classical clarinet.

"In Boston, Delfeayo [Marsalis, producer of all but Pine's first and last albums] brought me to Wally's. That was the experience of my life! There was a line of 10 tenor players who could all play like Sonny Rollins! Mark Whitfield was there, just out of Berklee. They made me feel welcome, not, 'Aliens, over there!'

"Except for football and cricket, I didn't go out much. I'd go to my room and make noise, and nobody could tell me I was doing it wrong."

"I find players want to come onstage in clubs with me. That's a great compliment. Kenny Garrett came onstage in L.A., but even young guys come up and strike relationships with you. You look out and see saxophones in the audience—that's great! In England, they sit at the back and just wait. Americans are hungrier because there are so many great players. You can't expect to do well your first time up, but it's healthy to try.'

Everything Pine does is geared to music. "If I play badminton, I call the whole band and we discuss strategy. When I chill out, I listen to ragamuffin music: Half Pint, Shabba Ranks.

"[On my] computer, I input saxophone patterns and it plays back random Turkish scales I would not [otherwise] hear. You tend to lean the way the saxophone plays, but this thing makes you lay off easy notes and work harder. I picked up Slonimsky's *Thesaurus Of Scales And Melodic Patterns* for piano; that forces you to play with unusual intervals that don't feel nice but open your ears.

"I don't want to go onstage and play what I've practiced. I want to start from a fresh point. I'd rather fall over than just play something that I know, a comfortable 2-5-1."

Hopes bloom in Pine's mind like mangos on a tree. A short list of projects:

1. Make a classical bass clarinet album.
2. Perfect octave trills on the saxophone. "I saw Sun Ra play North Sea, and Marshall Allen played a trill over a fourth in quavers, almost a yodeling thing. I've done it for five [of the 12 chromatic] notes so far, at the speed of semiquavers."
3. Play with more musicians. "I played a track on Branford's last album with Tain [Jeff Watts] and Bob Hurst. I brought my saxophone and my son Jamaal down with me. After that, my playing went like this [*slants hand up*]. I said, 'That's that: now I can do this!' "
4. Write more film scores. "I had a hand in Alan Parker's *Angel Heart* score, and I've done some work for BBC TV."
5. "I want to play saxophone like a drum." He grins, ear to the pads as his fingers flit up and down the keys. **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Courtney Pine plays Selmer Mark VI saxophones (tenor, alto, soprano), Yamaha curved soprano, Selmer bass clarinet, Gemeinhardt flutes (alto, C). For composing, he plays a Kurzweil 250 with extensive MIDI setup and a WX-7. His computer battery includes an Atari Notator, Korg Wavestation, E-16 tape recorder, and Soundtrax MIDI PC. "I've heard double-reed instruments in Turkey, but so far I've resisted temptation! I prefer WX-7 over EWI, because EWI takes me away from the horn. I have to practice it, but I don't have the time to dabble with it. There's enough work to do here [*taps his tenor*]. When Sonny Rollins said, 'There's more enjoyment out of getting it out of one horn,' he turned me around."

Mouthpieces, Pine reports, are typically an ongoing discovery. "I sat down with Fred Gregory to make some mouthpieces for tenor. I wanted a metal mouthpiece that sounded like ebonite. We did it for a while, then my interest changed. Branford [Marsalis] took me over to Dave Guardala, and we're in the process of getting something together. My regular setup is an Otto Link 10-star which has been cut open to a 12 by a guy here in England. It's been doctored up with nail varnish on the inside.

"For alto, I've been using a Wolfe Tayne Mayor—he only made a few of them. It's a copy that came out in the '70s of the Cannonball thing in ebonite—a great sounding piece. On soprano, I've got various things, but I always go back to the Selmer H. From time to time, I use a Branford reject Guardala piece. Depends on the session: I want a different sound playing 'Skylark' or 'Chelsea Bridge' than when I'm backing Kate Bush or Mick Jagger. On bass clarinet I use a Selmer G."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as leader

CLOSER TO HOME — Antilles 510 769

WITHIN THE REALMS OF OUR DREAMS — Antilles 848 244

THE VISION'S TALE — Antilles 842373

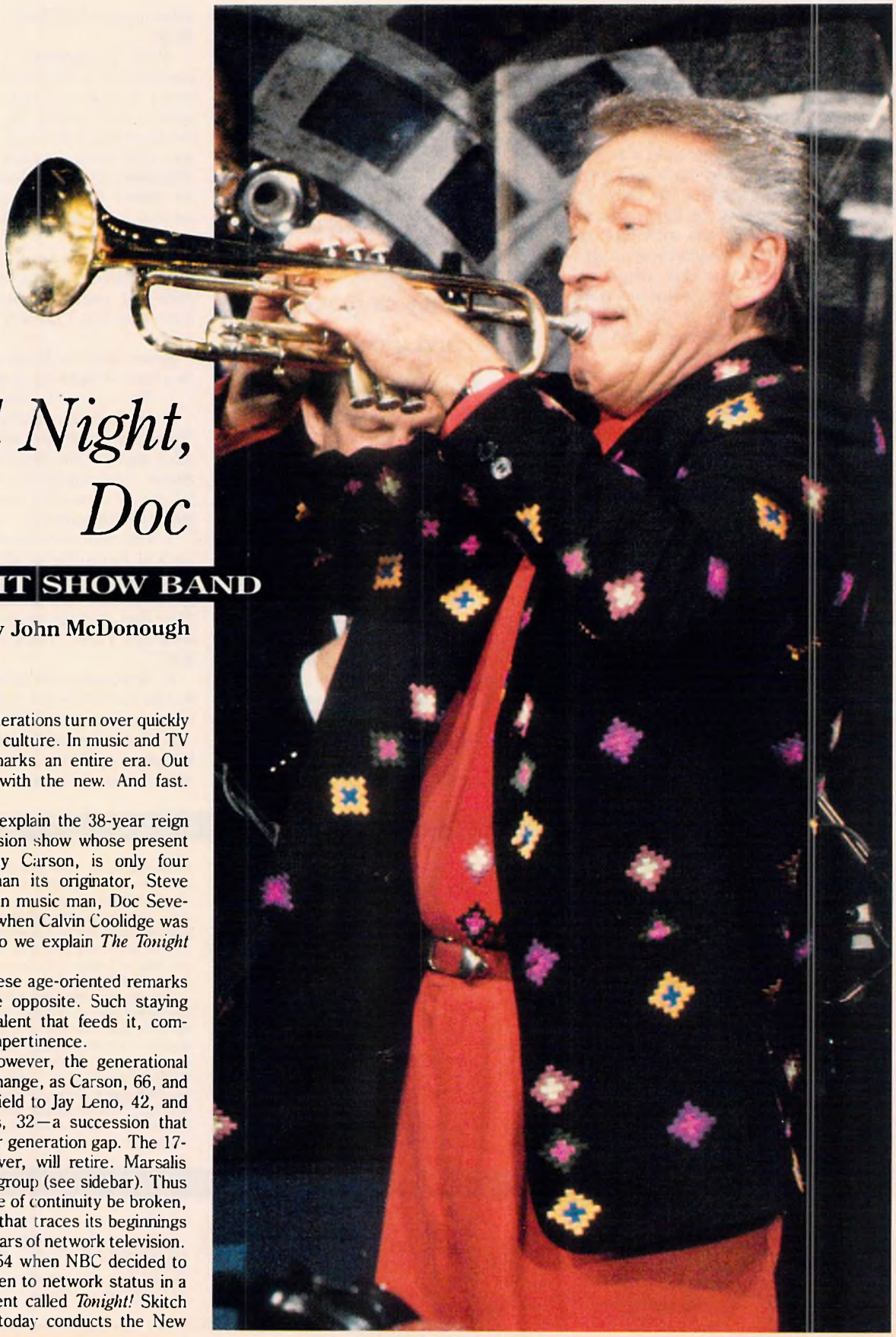
DESTINY'S SONG + THE IMAGE OF PURSUANCE — Antilles 842772

JOURNEY TO THE URGE WITHIN — Antilles 842687

as a sideman

OUT OF MANY, ONE PEOPLE — Antilles 90681 (w/Jazz Warriors)

THE BEAUTYFUL ONES ARE NOT YET BORN — Columbia 46990 (Branford Marsalis)



Good Night, Doc

TONIGHT SHOW BAND

By John McDonough

The generations turn over quickly in pop culture. In music and TV a decade often marks an entire era. Out with the old, in with the new. And fast. Right?

So how do we explain the 38-year reign of a nightly television show whose present incumbent, Johnny Carson, is only four years younger than its originator, Steve Allen? Whose main music man, Doc Severinsen, was born when Calvin Coolidge was president? How do we explain *The Tonight Show*?

I don't make these age-oriented remarks snidely. Quite the opposite. Such staying power, and the talent that feeds it, commands awe, not impertinence.

On May 22, however, the generational guard finally will change, as Carson, 66, and Severinsen, 64, yield to Jay Leno, 42, and Branford Marsalis, 32—a succession that will jump a 32-year generation gap. The 17-piece band, however, will retire. Marsalis plans only a small group (see sidebar). Thus will a very long line of continuity be broken, along with a band that traces its beginnings back to the first years of network television.

That was in 1954 when NBC decided to promote Steve Allen to network status in a midnight experiment called *Tonight!* Skitch Henderson, who today conducts the New

GARY NULL

York Pops Orchestra, assembled the first band. The days of the swing bands were over, but many of the star sidemen had settled into cushy network jobs in New York. The first *Tonight!* band was an octet with two French horns, partially a reflection of Henderson's affection for Claude Thornhill. He also recruited Bobby Rosengarden (drums), Eddie Safranski (bass), Lou McGarity and Will Bradley (trombones), Herb Dawson (tenor sax and oboe), and a 27-year-old virtuoso named Carl "Doc" Severinsen on trumpet. "Skitch was smart enough to get out of our way," Rosengarden recalls. "In that way he was a great conductor."

Allen remained until January 1957, then left *Tonight!* for full-time prime time. Lionel Hampton sat in on the farewell telecast. For the next six months the *Tonight!* band was reduced to a succession of piano trios (Lou Stein, Mort Lindsay, and Johnny Guarnieri) as NBC experimented with a doomed magazine format hosted by Jerry Lester.

When the Jack Paar era began that summer, *Tonight!* got its first big band, with Paar's friend Jose Melis, a Cuban pianist, conducting. Almost to a man, musicians who were around NBC then give the band low marks. "None of the good players wanted any part of that band," says Rosengarden. "I stayed on staff but refused to work the show." Another NBC reedman confirms Rosengarden. "I subbed once but said I'd quit before I'd stay in that band." Not that it mattered. Paar preferred talk to music. By the time he and Melis left in March 1962, however, *The Tonight Show* had become a national institution.

"A lot of money that Johnny could have put in his pocket he's put into the band instead. He doesn't get the credit he should."

The coming of Carson in October marked the renaissance of the big band and the beginning of its present core. Skitch Henderson came back and built the best band in broadcasting. Severinsen returned as well plus the cream of the famous NBC staffers: Hymie Schertzer, Al Klink, Sid Cooper (reeds), Will Bradley and Buddy Morrow (trombones), Bernie Glow, Jimmy Maxwell, and Yank Lawson (trumpets) all became regular members. Henderson also brought trumpeters Clark Terry in from Ellington and Snooky Young and Joe Newman from Basie. Plus Gene Bertoncini (guitar), Tommy Newsom and Walt Levinsky (reeds), and Rosengarden, Ed Shaughnessy, and Grady Tate (drums). The band was soon at a new peak.

"Johnny booked a lot of jazz musicians as guests," Bertoncini recalls. "I got my first chance to accompany Duke and Jack Teagarden. Stan Getz brought the house down with 'Here's That Rainy Day.' And Buddy Rich would sit in with the band before he got his own outfit." The band also got frequent air time, doing an instrumental chart on the first 15 minutes. Newsom was co-writer of the show's closing theme, "The Way I Feel About You."

In September 1966 Henderson suddenly left for reasons that neither he nor musicians in the band will discuss. Milton DeLugg, a respected free lancer, took over for a year. But Carson had ideas of his own, and after a contract showdown with NBC in the spring of 1967 that left the network on the mat, he had the clout to enforce them.

Doc Severinsen had been one of the band's most valuable assets for years, and his rise was no surprise to fellow musicians. "Doc always had a great comic sense," says Levinsky. In the '60s he began building his name with a series of pop-jazz albums for Command Records that were a model of trumpet craftsmanship. Finally in October 1967 Doc officially took over the job he would hold for the next 25 years.

The band took a contemporary turn under Doc. "He put in an electric bass," says guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, "and even had me playing guitar with a wah-wah pedal." When the show moved permanently from New York to Los Angeles in May 1972, Snooky, Newsom, Shaughnessy, Ross Tompkins, John Audino, and Don Ashworth moved with it. Louie Bellson helped recruit such top replacements as Conti Candoli, Maurey Harris, and Pete Christlieb. (Candoli and Shaughnessy started their careers together as sidemen with Charlie Ventura in 1948.) Since then few marriages have held together

HEERE'S BRANFORD

JOHN BOOZ

Branford Marsalis will become musical director of *The Tonight Show* when Jay Leno succeeds Johnny Carson May 22. He'll have some say about the musical guests and will front an eight-piece band with pianist Kenny Kirkland, bassist Bob Hurst, drummer Jeff Watts, guitarist Kevin Eubanks, trumpeter Sal Marquez, trombonist Matt Finders, percussionist Vicki Randall, and perhaps a second saxophonist.

Yes, essentially, this is a jazz band, but Marsalis doesn't consider the gig a mission on behalf of jazz. "I'm not trying to bring jazz to the masses. You can't. Jazz is too difficult, too intellectual a music for the masses to deal with. I'm not going to turn the average person on to jazz. I'm not trying. What you can bring to the masses is a sensibility of good musicianship."

Nonetheless, says Marsalis, standards of Ellington and Monk, Gershwin and classic songs will resound among the outcues. "My motto is, 'If a song doesn't have a melody, we will not play it.' Stevie Wonder is someone who writes melodies. Sting does it. Peter Gabriel does it. Those are songs we'll be playing, and James Brown instrumentals, hip shit from the '70s, fusion, and, of course, jazz."

Marsalis, like Leno, hopes the music, like the show, will appeal across (and beyond) the spectrum of *Tonight Show* watchers. "We're shooting for 50- and 60-year-olds, 20- and 30-year-olds, and from talks I've had with Jay it's not going to be a hip show for the hip. It's going to be a show that deals with talent, and that should make for a very eclectic mix of music. We're going to deal with people who are open to music that sounds good. The object is not to get the most popular groups for the ratings but to establish a clientele of *really* hip people of all ages."

And will Marsalis continue *The Tonight Show* tradition of bandleader-as-foil? "Perhaps I'll be the Rochester to Jay's Mr. Benny." —*Michael Bourne*

as implacably as the Tonight Show Band personnel. That's the way Severinsen wanted it from the beginning. "It's the difference between a studio band," he says, "and a real big band. We play together every night."

Money doesn't hurt either. Conti Candoli says he could make a good living doing just *The Tonight Show*, but has the time to do film and jazz gigs in addition. Carson has been the band's most influential patron. "A lot of money that Johnny could have put in his pocket," trombonist Bruce Paulson once said, "he's put into the band instead. He doesn't get the credit he should."

The more successful Carson became, however, the less was heard from the band. Since the show went to an hour (from 90 minutes) in 1980, a band number has become a rarity. "We have a huge book," says Tompkins, "stuff by Don Menza, John Bambridge, Bill Holman, the best guys. The audience gets a lot of music the rest of the country never hears."

Johnny Carson, Lionel Hampton, and Bobby Rosengarden, circa 1965

Severinsen has nothing to regret though. After May 22, he and nearly everyone else will have plenty to keep them busy, first when the entire band hits the road in June for a farewell concert tour; then each on his own as they scatter. Beyond that, Severinsen will continue his appearances with various symphonies as both soloist and conductor. He also has a small contemporary fusion unit called Xebron ("Doc has never let himself drop back," says Newsom) and plans to do big band work from time to time.

Shaughnessy, who was drummer on Steve Allen's first album for Columbia in 1951, has his own group and does frequent clinics and festivals. He works consistently with Bruce Paulson and Tom Peterson (tenor saxes), both longtime Tonight Show Band members.

After Ross Tompkins plays his last *Tonight Show* on May 22, he flies off for a concert the next day at the South Carolina Jazz Festival in Columbia. This summer he'll be at Clark Terry's Music Camp, with festival work in between. "It's been a good 25 years," he says, "but I won't be looking back that much."

Pete Christlieb has appeared on many Concord Jazz and Pablo albums, mostly with Louie Bellson during his 21 years with the Tonight Show Band. He works outside jazz dates, often with fellow band members, and is one of the busier musicians in what's left of the studio scene in L.A.

Conti Candoli has been increasingly busy lately with Lighthouse All-Star concerts, with whom he'll tour Europe and Japan this year. He also performs with his famous brother Pete, and plans to share some of the Tonight Show Band's mother lode of charts with students at clinics. He just did a second Lighthouse album and has a quintet CD, *Sweet Simon*, coming out this month on Best—with Pete Christlieb.

No musician has deeper credentials in big band history than Snooky Young, 74, who's lead trumpet reaches back to the days of Jimmie Lunceford's prime in the late '30s up to the first Thad Jones/Mel Lewis band, with a long period with Basie in between. He says he hasn't thought much about what comes after his 30-year run with *The Tonight Show* and its farewell tour. "I'll take gigs as they come," he says. "People call." Among them, Dizzy Gillespie. He'll be doing the festivals and jazz parties. His most recent big band work, outside of the Tonight Show Band, was the Charlie Mingus *Epitaph* album.

As for Tommy Newsom, who came to NBC out of the Airmen of Note and Benny Goodman's Russian band, "I'll let the chips fall where they may. I hanker to do some festivals. Small band stuff is my preference; you know, just show up and play with whoever's there." He also plays in a 10-piece rehearsal band every Tuesday, something he obviously enjoys. But do they play for audiences? "Not much," he says.

Ask 47-year-old Ernie Watts his plans, and you'll get a huge list of projects. He has a new record this month on CTI with Gilberto Gil, Jack DeJohnette, and Eddie Gomez, and sessions on GRP, including Arturo Sandoval's tribute to Clifford Brown, *I Remember Clifford*. He recently recorded in France with pianist Alan Broadbent and is working on a project with drummer Billy Cobham. His working quartet includes Joel DiBartolo, who has played bass in the Tonight Show Band for more than 15 years and teaches at the Dick Grove School of Music.

Of all the band's sidemen, probably none has been more venturesome than Watts, who's recorded with everyone from the Rolling Stones to Charlie Haden. Asked if traditional big band work has remained interesting to him after 20 years with *The Tonight Show*, he says yes. "It's my background. I grew up playing with contemporary big bands. The first recording I ever did was with Buddy Rich's '60s band [*Big Swing Face* and *The New One*, both on World Pacific]. I believe all music is connected, and I want to be involved in as much of it as I can. I'll miss the band. But when something's eliminated I think it's to make room for something better." **DB**

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Tonight Show Band/Doc Severinsen
ONCE MORE WITH FEELING – Amherst 94405
THE TONIGHT SHOW BAND – Amherst 93311
THE TONIGHT SHOW BAND, VOL. 2 – Amherst 93312
MERRY CHRISTMAS – Amherst 94406

Conti Candoli
SWEET SIMON – Best 92101
JAZZ INVENTION – Contemporary 14051 (w/Lighthouse All-Stars)
AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL – Candid 79510 (Lighthouse All-Stars)

Pete Christlieb
MOSAIC – Capri 74026 (Bob Cooper)

Tommy Newsom
AND HIS TV JAZZ ALL-STARS – Lazer Light 15 331

Doc Severinsen
FACETS – Amherst 93318 (Ernie Watts)

Ed Shaughnessy
JAZZ IN THE POCKET – CMG 8028

Ross Tompkins
CONCORD ALL-STARS – Concord Jazz 117
AND HIS GOOD FRIENDS – Concord Jazz 65

Snooky Young
HORN OF PLENTY – Concord Jazz 91

Ernie Watts
AFOXE – CTI 79479

Meister Of Melancholy

FRANZ KOGLMANN

By John Corbett

The year is 1969. You are in an Austrian nightclub, in the city of Vienna, seated at a table sipping cappucino and munching on Sacher torte. Thelonious Monk tops tonight's bill; but first, the club owner appears onstage to announce the evening's opening act: "Damen und Herren, tonight we are proud to present the finest free-jazz group in all of Vienna: the Masters of Unorthodox Jazz. Please put your hands together for tonight's special guest, on trumpet and flugelhorn . . . Frrrranz Koglmann!"

Okay, so it sounds more like superheroes lost in a film noir fantasy than an entry in the jazz archives. But this plausible jazz moment was embellished straight from the casebooks of Herr Koglmann himself, a living testament to the existence of free music in Austria. "I was never a member of the Masters, just played as a guest," says the 45-year-old Koglmann. "But I liked them. They were painters and only dilettantish musicians, but in an interesting way. It was the opposite of all that I learned in the conservatory, completely free and really . . . unorthodox!"

Twenty-odd years later, it is clear that this Viennese unorthodoxy might well have faded into complete oblivion if not for the tenacity of Franz Koglmann. Hardly manifest, the thread that took him first into free jazz and subsequently into his now-fomenting cross between European classical music, free improvisation, and older American jazz is marked by the decisions and reconsiderations of a reflective mind. Trumpet studies from age 14 pointed young Koglmann in the direction of classical performance and composition, but a live concert by Miles Davis abruptly changed his line of sight. As he recalls: "I realized it would be really stupid to be a trumpet player in a symphony orchestra playing Beethoven, on one hand, and on the other, to compose so-called contemporary classical scores for *nobody* to play. Jazz musicians compose their own music, and they play it. That's the real thing."

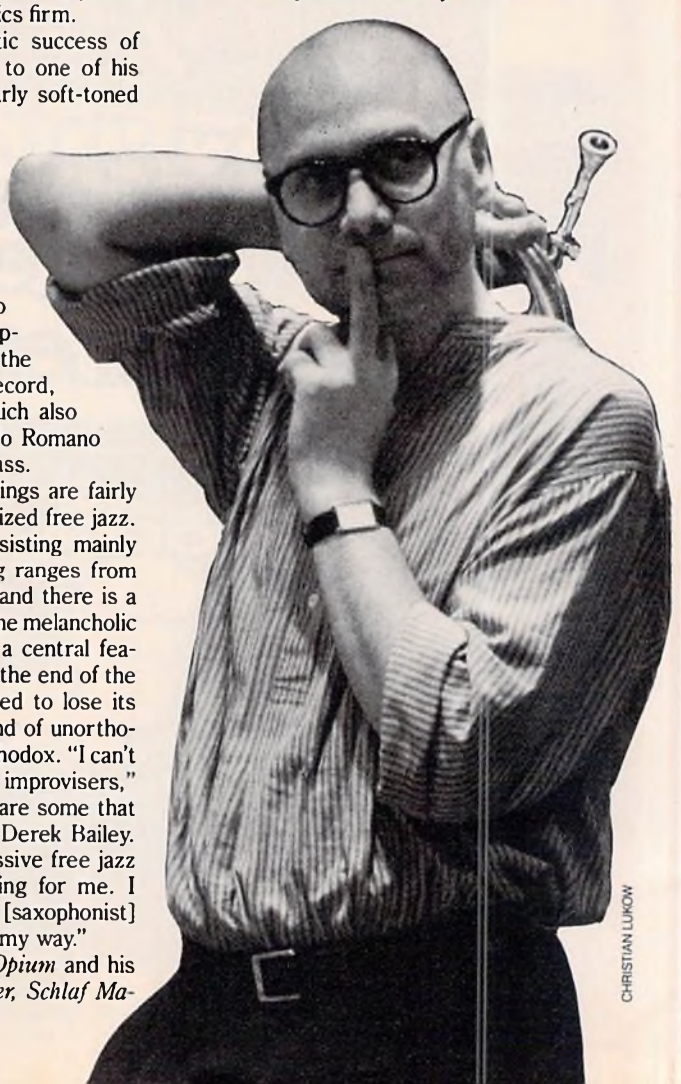
As one of the first students of the jazz faculty at the State Conservatory of Vienna, Koglmann had studied bebop and traditional jazz, but before long he was ensconced in the free scene. Although he didn't hang up his trumpet completely, around this time he also began to concentrate more on flugelhorn. After seeing Steve Lacy live in Paris in 1971, he asked the soprano saxophonist to join him on his first record. "I loved his introspection," remembers Koglmann. "When I first heard him, I thought: 'Here's the Chet Baker of free jazz!'" In 1973, they recorded *Flaps* for Koglmann's new label, pipe Records, supported by two members of the Masters of Unorthodox Jazz (bassist Toni Michlmayr and drummer Walter M. Malli) and a computer engineer (Gerd Geier) that Koglmann had met on a student job as a night porter for an electronics firm.

Emboldened by the artistic success of this record, he sent a copy to one of his favorite musicians, the similarly soft-toned and concise trumpet player Bill Dixon. "I thought maybe he'd be impressed," laughs Koglmann. He was impressed. And Koglmann was surprised to receive an unsolicited acceptance from Dixon to play in Vienna. Seizing the opportunity, Koglmann featured the trumpeter on his second record, 1976's *Opium For Franz,* which also employed free-luminaries Aldo Romano on drums and Alan Silva on bass.

Both of these early recordings are fairly straightforward, skillfully realized free jazz. Composition is minimal, consisting mainly of short themes, the blowing ranges from meditative to hot and heavy, and there is a hint of the plaintive element, the melancholic undertone, that has become a central feature of his later work. But by the end of the '70s the free thing had started to lose its appeal for Koglmann, its brand of unorthodoxy seeming increasingly orthodox. "I can't say that I broke with the free improvisers," he specifies. "Because there are some that I like so much, like guitarist Derek Bailey. But the typical kind of expressive free jazz became more and more boring for me. I mean, I respect the energy of [saxophonist] Peter Brötzmann, but it's not my way."

The eight years between *Opium* and his next record, *Schlaf Schlemmer, Schlaf Magritte* (soon to be reissued on hat ART), presented Koglmann with a creative impasse that resulted in yet another rethinking of his musical direction. As a special project for a late-'70s festival, Koglmann chose to unite jazz and classical musicians in a performance of original music. This notion has since germinated into the variable group he calls the Pipetet.

"For me it was very organic," he remembers. "The different lines of my life came together at this one point, and this mixture of chamber music and jazz interested me. But I'm not a child of third stream. I never really heard it, just knew it by name. Later I heard Bob Graettinger and all the Gunther Schuller records." With this reorientation, Kolgmann's identity gradually shifted from player to composer and arranger, from jazz musician to composite conceptualist. By the mid-'80s, he had begun an extremely fruitful relationship with the Swiss hat HUT/hat ART label, whose ongoing support and sympathetic production values have proved ideal for him—he, in turn, being the exemplary omnibus hat-ARTist. At present, he is going into the studio with bassist Gary Peacock and pianist Paul Bley to record what



CHRISTIAN LUKOW

will be his seventh release for them, with a program of compositions by Dick Twardzik, Annette Peacock, and Koglmann.

In a strange way, the pipes and mixtures that dot Koglmann's lexicon may serve as the best clue to his music. He is a compositional tobacconist, uncovering commonalities between classical music and jazz, and more broadly between music, visual art, film, poetry, and philoshophy, binding them in a Euro-blend that is entirely new, not derivative or imitative. "Even the earliest European music, Gregorian chant, is not pure," he muses. "It is a mixture of Byzantine, Jewish, Greek, and Italian influences. And jazz is a mixture of African music and European instruments and harmonies. In a typical bebop tune you hear the same chords as in a Wagner opera. If you think about the diminished chords at the beginning of *Tristan und Isolde*, you can hear 'All The Things You Are.' Both cultures are great mixtures, and for me it is a normal idea that these cultures should come together as a new mixture."

Although he is an avowed musical elitist, Koglmann tows an otherwise conventional postmodern party line. As he sees it, the classical and modernist movements of America and Europe—from bebop, cool jazz, and romanticism to free jazz, free improvisation, chance and serial composition—have played themselves out, their pioneers having explored all the options inherent in their various musical languages. For him, it is crucial to be able to choose from any of these forms, not to adhere to one alone. "It is a wrong idea to stay in one system," he insists. "That was necessary for Schoenberg and Webern, for example, because they had to find out all the possibilities of the system. But now we know the possibilities. And free jazz and free improvisation found the end of their ways the same as 12-tone music did. It is absolutely necessary in our times to use all the systems we have and use them together."

Koglmann puts this dogmatic anti-dogmatism to work by combining and contrasting compositional methods. Listen to the innovative quintet arrangements of standards with Lacy and the astounding Swiss drummer Fritz Hauser on *About Yesterdays Ezzthetics*. Or the droll citation collages of *A White Line* (which caused something of a stir with liner notes by Kolgmann concerning the differences between black and white jazz that he now calls "an overstatement"). Or take "Constantine's Dream," from *The Use Of Memory*, which was inspired by Renaissance painter Piero della Fracesca. Afraid that it might become a mere period piece, Koglmann decided to use a tone row "to stay in this century." On the same release, "Chateau de Bouges" attempts to apply the film editing technique of Alain Resnais to music. "He has a special way of cutting," suggests Koglmann. "It is the opposite of flashback, a flashforward. I tried the same in composition. You hear an element and don't know why. And five minutes later you remember all the elements, you have them all together and then you know when they were there."

For another example of his methodological flexibility, listen to the Pipetet's ". . . Flüchtig, Ach! Wie Die Jahre" on *Ich*. In the middle of writing a waltz theme, he was seized with the need to insert a fugue for trombone and tuba. "But the fugue is always broken up, so you hear part of the fugue, then part of the waltz," he grins. "Theoretically, you could separate them and make a complete fugue and waltz." At the same time, Koglmann is quite open to suggestion, as evidenced on four duets with Dutch pianist Misha Mengelberg on his latest release, *L'Heure Bleue* (see "Reviews" Mar. '92). "We didn't rehearse," says Koglmann. "I wrote him parts, but he said, 'No, forget the parts. I'll just listen to your line.' So I played it solo. We said, 'Okay, we play now,' and we recorded. I really liked it because he immediately checked out the best way to do everything. He has an incredibly good ear and he played much better than I could write for him!"

"Yesterday's revolutions are today's academicism. The revolutions of the day before yesterday have a stimulation effect like mellow wine."

Koglmann calls his artistic non-allegiance "contemporary mannerism," an embrace of artificiality and rejection of naturalism in art. Indeed, the episodic, often kaleidophonic combinations of jazz, free, and classical forms on his hat ART releases support his claim that the only way to create something new is to delve into the past, to "start again," as he says, "to find a way not to come back to the same end point." He defies his father's generation: "Yesterday's revolutions are today's academicism." But he adds: "The revolutions of the day before yesterday have a stimulation effect like mellow wine. For that reason, Schoenberg is telling me more than [John] Cage, [Lennie] Tristano, more tham [Cecil] Taylor."

For Koglmann, choices of musical material largely revolve around an overarching concern to strike a balance between the two poles of his interest: melancholy and rationality. He sees the latter of these as a feature of his involvement in "Latin" (i.e., French and Italian) culture—Jean Cocteau, Paul Valery, Marcel Proust, Igor Stravinsky, and more recently, Olivier Messien, whom he calls "a French expressionist." As for melancholy, it is clearly in his blood, as well as his music. "Vienna is a melancholy city," he reports. "I think it has to do with the Slavic influences . . . they are an extremely melancholy people."

Turning away from his preoccupation with dedications and pastiches, Koglmann is now trying to distill melancholy, and he is currently at work on an abstract suite for an 18-piece version of the Pipetet which will relate to Vienna. Asked whether his understanding of melancholy has anything to do with the blues, he suggests: "Well, the blues is always major and minor at the same time. You have the major third in the chord, and in the melody you have the blue note. Maybe this gives it an affinity to Viennese music, like [Alban] Berg." But then he hesitates: "I'm not sure. I mean, what is the blues for a man from Vienna?" **DB**

EQUIPMENT

Koglmann prefers his old French Courtois flugelhorn, but he also has a Bach Stradavarius model 165 that he says "looks more like a cornet." On these he uses a Tilz mouthpiece ("normal width, not too wide and not too narrow"), and on his Schilke trumpet he uses a Zottola mouthpiece given to him by Bill Dixon.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

L'HEURE BLEUE – hat ART CD 6093
THE USE OF MEMORY – hat ART CD 6078
A WHITE LINE – hat ART CD 6048
ORTE DER GEOMETRIE – hat ART CD 6018
ABOUT YESTERDAYS EZZTHETICS – hat ART CD 6003
ICH – hat ART CD 6033
SCHLAF SCHLEMMER, SCHLAF MAGRITTE – pipe 153
OPIUM FOR FRANZ – pipe 152
FLAPS – pipe 151

with Georg Gräwe

HANS EISLER – Auf Ruhr 670 006

with Andrea Centazzo Mitteleuropa

MITTELEUROPA LIVE – Ictus 0012
CJANTS – Ictus 0023/24

with Trio Kokoko

GOOD NIGHT – Creative Works CW 1002

with Paul Bley

12(+6) IN A ROW – hat ART CD 6081

with Steve Lacy

ITINERARY – hat ART CD 6079

Key

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

Howard Shore/ Ornette Coleman

NAKED LUNCH: MUSIC FROM THE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK—Milan 73138 35614: *Naked Lunch; Hauser And O'Brien (&) Bugpowder; Mugwumps; Centipede; The Black Meat; Simpatico/Misterioso; Fadela's Coven; Interzone Suite; William Tell; Mujahaddin; Intersong; Dr. Benway; Clark Nova Dies; Ballad/Joan; Cloquet's Parrots (&) Midnight Sunrise; Nothing Is True, Everything Is Permitted; Welcome To Annexia; Writeman. (48:35)*

Personnel: Shore, composer, conductor; Coleman, alto saxophone (cuts 1, 2b, 4, 6, 8, 10-12, 14, 15b, 17, 18), composer (2b, 11, 14, 15b, 18); Barre Phillips, bass (2b, 11, 14, 18); Denardo Coleman, drums (2b, 8, 11, 14, 17, 18); J.J. Edwards, sintir (8); Aziz Bin Salem, nai (8); David Hartley, piano (6b); the Master Musicians of Joujouka (15b); London Philharmonic Orchestra (1, 2a, 3-6a, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15a, 16, 17); Homer Denison, orchestrations.

★★★★★

Naked Lunch's action drifts between claustrophobic bohemian New York and a hallucination of North Africa. Composer Shore wanted a jazz soloist and Ornette fit: he'd recorded in Morocco and grown up on Bird, who's evoked by Ornette's main theme quotes from "If I Should Lose You," which could be the screenplay's title, and Shore's strings-with-oboe backdrops. ("Centipede"'s transparent string writing sounds like Ornette, but it's not.)

Shore may make the best use of the jazz soloist in movies since 1965, when Getz blew over Eddie Sauter charts for *Mickey One*. Ornette's unifying lead voice blurs distinctions between the movie's worlds. His pleading sound, and the way he works endless variations on scant materials—mostly his own favorite licks—matches David Cronenberg's twitching double takes on twisted images. The altoist's crackpot bebop is what jazz would sound like to mid-'50s folks shooting up bug powder. Coleman set out to play his version of Bird, Shore says, but he still sounds just like Ornette. (Which suggests playing Bird as he hears him is what he's always done.) Four superb tracks are for acoustic trio with Denardo and simpatico Barre Phillips worth the price as is.

For contractual reasons, against Shore's protests, Ornette gets no mention in the film's opening credits. The CD redresses that wrong. Even allowing for a few altoless tracks and inevitable filler, this is the hot new Ornette record. (reviewed on CD) —*Kevin Whitehead*

Don Byron

TUSKEGEE EXPERIMENTS—Elektra Nonesuch 9 79280-2: *Waltz For Ellen; Tuskegee Strutter's Ball; In Memoriam: Uncle Dan; Next Love; Tears; Mainstem; Diego Rivera; Tuskegee Experiment; Auf Einer Burg. (62:11)*

Personnel: Byron, clarinet, bass clarinet; Bill Frisell, guitar (cuts 2-6); Lonnie Plaxico (2,4-6), Reggie Workman (3,7), Kenny Davis (8), bass; Ralph Peterson, Jr. (2,4-6), Pheeroan akLaff (7,8), drums; Edsel Gomez (4,5), Joe Berkovitz (8,9), piano; Greta Buck, violin (7); Richie Schwarz, marimba (8); Sadiq, poet (8).

★★★★★

Ralph Peterson

ORNETTOLOGY—Blue Note B4-98290: *Ornettology; The Substance Of Things Hoped For; Nemesis; Iris; Status Flux; I Mean You; Sneak Attack; Congeniality; There is No Greater Love.*

Personnel: Peterson, drums, cornet (9); Don Byron, clarinet, bass clarinet; Bryan Carrott, vibraphone; Melissa Slocum, bass.

★★★★

Welcome to the postmodern world, where surf music, circuses, and Sun Ra never went out of style. Post-mod colleagues Don Byron and Ralph Peterson blend prebop, freebop, fusion, and classical flavors without blinking an eye, whipping up an eclectic hodgepodge as smooth and tasty as a bittersweet chocolate mousse. Though both play on each other's sessions, Byron's is the more venturesome, with a shifting cast of players to match its kaleidoscopic mood swings. Peterson's "fo'tet," with instrumentation inevitably suggesting Benny Goodman's quartet, is more conventional, but its luminous colors cast old traditions in a scintillating new light.

Byron, who won early attention as a klezmer virtuoso, limits the Yiddish inflections to a few sobs and horse laughs on his solo debut, but his woody, resonant clarinet is packed with pathos. The album's title refers to two projects at Alabama's Tuskegee Institute—a study of untreated syphilis in a group of unsuspecting black men and the over-exacting recruitment of black aviators during World War II—but the mood is more sorrowful than angry. Byron struts his classical chops on his elegiac "Waltz For Ellen" and his spiritual styling on Schumann's "Auf Einer Burg," and wails witty, ominous blues with Reggie Workman on "In Memoriam: Uncle Dan." He trades twitchy chamber licks with Greta Buck's fiddle on "Diego Rivera" but finds his most congenial foil in Bill Frisell, whose omni-direction guitar smelts a brass band's worth of molten metal as Peterson clatters and crashes with astute abandon. (reviewed on CD)

The drummer is less impetuous on his own date; with Bryan Carrott's vibes radiating a pastel glow, Peterson churns sensitively, crisp and snappy at pin-dropping volume, tight and compact on his stormiest solos. Byron, too, is restrained, floating Wayne Shorter's "Iris" on a velvet cushion or subtly transplanting Monk's "I Mean You" from swing to space. Peterson's compositions lean toward late bop and early fusion, and his drumming, even at its freest, keeps a strong, even pulse. But his telescopic take on the jazz heritage—including a Dixieish cornet solo on "There is No Greater Love"—reveals a fourth-stream sensibility as refined as the music itself. (reviewed on cassette)

—*Larry Birnbaum*

Artie Shaw

THE LAST RECORDINGS—MusicMasters 01612-65071-2: *Imagination; Besame Mucho; My Funny Valentine; Too Marvelous For Words; I Can't Get Started; The Sad Sack; Dancing On The Ceiling; Someone To Watch Over Me; Mysterioso; The Chaser, Pied Piper Theme; Love Of My Life; Rough Ridin'; Yesterdays; Lyric; Bewitched; Lugubrious; S'posin'; Tenderly; When The Quail Come Back To San Quentin. (56:39/56:57)*

Personnel: Shaw, clarinet; Tal Farlow, guitar; Hank Jones, piano; Tommy Potter, bass; Joe Roland, vibes; Irv Kluger, drums.

★★★★

On January 6, 1972 Artie Shaw and Buddy Rich sat side by side on Johnny Carson's couch. After the war stories and bantering, Rich stopped joking, looked Shaw in the eye, and told him that he'd "betrayed" his duty to a great talent by turning his back on the clarinet. Rich's severe attitude left Shaw nonplussed at what was simultaneously a profound homage

and a point-blank denunciation.

This two-CD collection of 1954 sextet pieces adds a lot of weight to Rich's remarks. Shaw, in the final clarinet performance of his career, plays extended solos with a resplendent grace and elegance that carries over all of the distinctive shape and form but little of the fever that marked his '30s playing. With neither band or stopwatch bearing down on him, he lays out long, spacious, and gentle lines full of sinewy bends and twists of phrase. The texture is dry, the urgency tamed, even at up tempos, though there's really nothing above medium-fast here. Shaw's magnificent stop-time fours with Kluger on "Chaser" are a kind of epitome of relaxed swing and mutual attentiveness. Catch the ghost of "Frenesi" in there. Expect a few pinches of harmonic hide-and-seek as well in the name of modernism. Plus Hank Jones and Tal Farlow at their considerable best.

Eight of the tracks are previously unissued takes of titles on the Clef/Verve LPs or the 1984 Book of the Month box set ("Imagination," "Lyric," "Chaser," "Piper," "Rough," "Ceiling," "Started," and "Lugubrious"). And two ("Mysterioso," "Bewitched") are new titles altogether. Comparisons are instructive. Shaw's ideas (e.g., the brief interpolation of "Sweet Georgia Brown" into "Piper") are often so stable, it's sometimes hard to tell the alternates from the issued takes. But then this was a working group, and this is a cross section of its standing repertoire—beautifully recorded, by the way, with a natural, open presence. Time has taken nothing from either the sound or the music. (reviewed on CD) —*John McDonough*

Manhattan Jazz Quintet

MANHATTAN BLUES/MANHATTAN JAZZ QUINTET REUNION—Compose 7301-2: *Blues March; St. Louis Blues; Manhattan Blues; Sweet Basil Blues; Blues In The Night; Basin Street Blues; Bags' Groove. (57:20)*

Personnel: David Matthews, piano; George Young, tenor saxophone; Lew Soloff, trumpet; Eddie Gomez, bass; Steve Gadd, drums; John Scofield, guitar (cuts 1, 2, 6).

★★★★

Central Park Kids

PLAY MOZART—Compose 7300-2: *Divertimento In D Major, K136 (1st Mov.); Symphony No. 40 In G Minor, K550 (1st Mov.); Piano Concerto No. 21 In C Major, K467 (2nd Mov.); Alla Truca From Piano Sonata No. 11 In A Major; Symphony No. 40 In G Minor, K550 (2nd Mov.); Symphony No. 25 In G Minor, K183 (1st Mov.). (47:47)*

Personnel: David Matthews, piano; Chris Hunter, alto saxophone; George Young, tenor saxophone; Lew Soloff, trumpet; Gil Goldstein, synthesizer; Chip Jackson, bass; Danny Gottlieb, drums; Central Park Strings (Anahid Ajemian, Elena Barere, Arnold Eidus, Barr Finclair, Charles Libove, Alan Martin, Matthew Raimondi, Richard Rood, Richard Sortomme, violin; Mark O. Shuman, Nathan Stutch, Charles McCracken, Jesse Levy, cello).

★★★★

David Matthews of the Manhattan Jazz Quintet, like John Lewis of the other MJQ, has a flair for concept and thematic development. A skillful arranger, he gets the most from his material and sidemen. And on these albums, Lew Soloff plays as well as any living jazz trumpeter.

There is a critical cliché that studio musicians such as these play roles and not real music. It doesn't happen here—this is jazz without jive.

On the blues album, Matthews' piano shows

a Basie- or Gil Evans-like economy. George Young's tenor is fancier, with mercurial runs reminiscent of James Moody and Mike Brecker. Soulful, too. Soloff ranges over jazz trumpet history: Clark Terry-like inflections on Benny Golson's "Blues March," Dizzy leaps and vocalizations on Matthews' "Sweet Basil Blues" and Milt Jackson's "Bags' Groove," Miles' muted musings on "Basin Street Blues." Eddie Gomez's bass is too loud in the mix, but you'd have to be in a body cast to not move to his beat anywhere on the album. Steve Gadd's flamboyance and suppleness are integral parts of the group's bold presentation of modern blues. The album title says it best. Implicit are the sophistication of Manhattan and the expressiveness of the blues.

With *Play Mozart*, it's oil-and-water time again—your basic immiscibility theory (or so the critical notion goes). Matthews tells us that Gil Goldstein's synthesizer is aboard to keep the strings swinging. It does. Again, Soloff stands out. His Mozartian statements are devoid of corn or the "I'm hip" attitude. (Check out tracks two, five, and six.) Birds of a feather, the saxophonists convey edginess and the capacity to blister. The album feels like jazz, and its success goes back to arranger Matthews, who gives us believable transitions between genres and allows the cats plenty of room to blow. This is one of the better proofs that not all critical concepts are true. (reviewed on CD)

—Owen Cordle

Bob Mintzer

ONE MUSIC—DMP CD-488: *One People; One Music; City Of Hope; Navajo; Old Friends; Rich & Poor; Look Inside; The Big Show; The Song Is You; The Challenge. (55:08)*

Personnel: Mintzer, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet (cuts 4, 8), EWI (1, 6, 8); Russell Ferrante, keyboards; Jimmy Haslip, bass; William Kennedy, drums; Don Alias, congas.

★ ★ ½

Yellowjackets

LIVE WIRES—GRP GRD-9667: *Homecoming; Bright Lights; The Dream; Freedomland; Downtown; Claire's Song; Geraldine; The Spin; Wildlife; Revelation. (69:31)*

Personnel: Mintzer, EWI, soprano saxophone; Russell Ferrante, keyboards; William Kennedy, drums; Jimmy Haslip, bass; Michael Franks, Brenda Russell, Marilyn Scott, vocals (3); Take 6, vocals (10); Paulinho Da Costa, percussion; Steve Croes, synclavier (7).

★ ★ ★ ½

Warren Bernhardt

REFLECTIONS—DMP CD-489: *Everytime We Say Goodbye; Stone Ground; Some Other Spring; Cordobaglia; Reflections; Tuzz's Shadow; Re: Person I Knew; My Funny Valentine; The Gift; Catwalk; A Prayer For My Family.*

Personnel: Bernhardt, piano; Bob Mintzer, tenor saxophone (7,10), bass clarinet (2); Jay Anderson, bass; Jeff Hirschfield, drums; Chuck Loeb, guitar (4).

★ ★ ★

Bob Mintzer, who plays virile, agile sax on his own dates (be they funk quartet or dry, lean big band), may guest effectively. Here he marks three dark tracks with pianist Bernhardt,

and, as the new dude in Yellowjackets, adds lean beef to their fusion stewpots. After nine albums in 12 years, YJ wanted a horn boost since co-founder Robben Ford (1980-'82) and Marc Russo ('83-'89), and turned to the ex-Buddy Rich player/arranger. Nice move. As a New York post-Coltrane schooler, Mintzer stands by bulldogged modal blowing, muscle and street smarts, tightlipped literalism not heavily into expressiveness.

For *One Music*, the "New Yellowjackets" (plus Alias' conga juice) go largely acoustic in a subdued studio; tempos go neither slow nor fast (except "Challenge"), but lope. Mintzer's bass clarinet may ("Navajo") lick at Eric Dolphy's eccentric, swirling mannerisms, but his tenor is tart M. Brecker-base. Ferrante's synth bouquet ("City Of Hope" squeezebox, "Rich" strings) augments firm grand piano. Repertoire, nearly all Mintzer funk, is pleasant (pushy Latino-bop "Look Inside") but forgettable, except Ferrante's wistful "Old Friends." Kern's "The Song Is You," a terror for changes, stoops to bland, glossy duettery. One music, yes, but not just variations on one tune!

On *Live Wires*, YJ rear heads in public, blare smart sass at L.A.'s howling Roxy, and dig spots with Franks & Co. and religiously ecstatic Take 6. The tunes and (ironically) the energy here blow *One Music* away: jolly, easygoing, packageable excitement is YJ's main buzz. Mintzer's EWI (some soprano or tenor) joins Ferrante's bubbling synthesizer's many guises to forge sonic unison rainbows for the latter's catchier rural ("Claire's Song") or bop-laced ("Freedomland") neofunk. Mintzer grabs juicy soprano over "Dream"'s breath of unity and hardy tenor on loose-limbed, kicking "Geraldine." And all the while, Kennedy and Haslip keep a-chuckin' that steady backbeat; when they stop ("Spin", "Wildlife") things get arid fast. "Revelation" will gain heavy rotation as much for Mintz' hot tenor as impassioned gospeltry by the Bama Bible Boys.

Warren Bernhardt, a mellow tall guy whose tasty, spacy annual DMP albums reflect years with Clark Terry and Steps Ahead and countrified affection for Bill Evans' gentle impressionism, looks to labelmate Mintzer (annual big band dates) for vim to spice three of 10 quiet trio tracks. The trio tickles classic Evans style on lively "Reflections" and Evans' pensive "Re: Person I Knew," but goes four-square hymnic on "Gift" and "Stone." Mintzer's vulnerably reedy solos add velvet. "Tuzz's Shadow" creeps slow but travels far, builds spooky chords to keen statements—my top pick. A brisk, Greensleevish "Catwalk" serves well as lone steamer; "Prayer" ends soft, Mintzer deadpan.

—*Fred Bouchard*

A Wrestle With Cecil

by John Corbett

Nostalgia: longing for a time when things were safe and stable—the jazz industry often seems mired in it, caught up in passings, anniversaries, revivals, tributes. Pianist **Cecil Taylor** remains the steadfast anti-nostalgist. His project is to assail safety and stability in order to enjoy that simplest but scariest of experiences: to "feel." All the same, this does not mean that Taylor eschews sentiment, even romance. Take his solo release *Looking (Berlin Version)* (FMP CD 28; 69:42: ★★★★½), recorded at the end of 1989. A relaxed, slightly reserved Taylor emerges here, full of flame but more than ever investigating a kind of majesty, grandeur, lyricism, and elegance. Sustain helps, and he's never used the pedal so much. This rounds some of the more

SPENCER RICHARDS

Cecil Taylor: infernally present

percussive angles of his music; it lets him savor notes a bit, emphasizing intervallic as much as rhythmic density. Over the years, Taylor has developed several trademark strategies: mirror image left and right hands (sort of instant retrograde inversion); stately bass-chord figures; identical patterns rapidly shifted from register to register. On the long piece that forms the bulk of this recording, these are contrasted, mutated, grafted together, and truncated, serving both as genetic material and as thematic guideposts through the underbrush of improvisation.

Taylor's string-dominated quintet Corona recorded a second *Looking (Berlin Version)* (FMP CD 31; 71:35: ★★★★). Together with last year's fantastic Feel Trio version, these constitute a triptych that beautifully represents Taylor's solo concerns, marks his developing relationship with percussionist/shaman Tony Oxley, and indicates the current trajectory of his group concept. Violinist Harald Kimmig eggs on Cecil's slasher side, matching tones and whipping around wildly without getting too scribbly or vague. Oxley's right there, constantly listening to Cecil, responding and suggesting with his huge sound palette. Cellist Muneer Abdul Fataah puts a minor drag on things, mucking up William Parker's bass sound and swimming upstream in the music's whitewater. But it's an exciting endurance test—no quarter given, nary a rest taken.

Almost exactly two years prior, a different five-piece unit produced *Live In Vienna* (Leo CD LR 174; 71:21: ★★★), a distant, documentary-style recording. Leroy Jenkins' violin has a different role from that of Kimmig's, more independent and less entwined in Taylor's lines. Though alto saxophonist Carlos Ward actually plays little, I find him quite nice, slick, and soulful with an oddly Lou Donaldson-ish sound. Thurman Barker isn't the best drummer for Taylor (better when Steve McCall augmented him on the kit), but his marimba and bells mix well with Taylor's timbre.

With Ronald Shannon Jackson in peak rhythmic form, the group that made *One Too Many Salty Swift And Not Goodbye* (hat ART CD 2-

6090; 72:30/75:31: ★★★★★) in 1978 was arguably the finest larger C. T. Unit to date. Recorded shortly after the landmark studio sessions for New World Records, this is the sextet's epic final concert, restored to its entirety on two CDs with the addition of three Taylor-less stage warmers. (Now, I suppose, it's four too many . . . and hello). Without all that bothersome flipping, the CD format makes the big adventure more approachable. To suggest the magnitude of the journey, intrepid altoist Jimmy Lyons hardly appears for the first hour-and-a-half (CD 2, track 4). Of course, the infernal pianist is present all along, growing especially tempestuous when others drop out.

Where Taylor's Units tend to emphasize momentum, his guest appearance on two-thirds of the **Art Ensemble Of Chicago**'s *Thelonious Sphere Monk* (DIW-846E; 60:40: ★★★★) shifts things towards a roomier, more relational interaction. A long poem/percussion piece recalls Joseph Jarman's early recitations, "Caseworks" unfolds slowly into a gorgeous group composition, and "Excerpts From Fifteen Part 3A" faces Taylor with the coherence and sheer sonic variety of the Art Ensemble at its best. This disc includes Cecil's first recordings in the company of a synthesizer; maybe, in light of this, Oxley will take out his intriguing electronics. Two Monk covers and an intro/outro theme are less exceptional (still fun), but the tracks with Taylor are unique and wonderful, really something special. (all reviewed on CD) **DB**

Joanne Brackeen

WHERE LEGENDS DWELL—Ken 021: *Where Legends Dwell; Oahu Lizard; Picasso; Helen Song; Cosmic Ties Or Mud Pies; Doris And Anders; Edgar Irwin Pol; For Stan; Can This McBee; Asian Spell; Jump In Jack; How To Live Like A Millionaire. (70:27)*
Personnel: Brackeen, piano; Eddie Gomez, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.
★★★★½

BREATH OF BRAZIL—Concord Picante CCD 4479: *Madalena; Velas; Aguas De Marco; Guessing Game; Breath Of Brazil; Sue Encanto; Loro; So Many Stars; Anos Dourados; Brasileiro Escondido; Flora; Samba Do Soho. (67:03)*
Personnel: Brackeen, piano; Eddie Gomez, bass; Duduka Da Fonseca, drums; Waltinho Anastacio, percussion.
★★★½

SPECIAL IDENTITY—Antilles 422-848 813-2: *Special Identity; Mystic Touch; Egyptian Dune Dance; Enchance; Einstein; Evening In Concert; Friday The Thirteenth. (46:03)*
Personnel: Brackeen, piano; Eddie Gomez, bass; Jack DeJohnnette, drums.
★★★★★

More consolidator than innovator, Joanne Brackeen has taken 25 years to establish herself as one of jazz's premier postbop pianists. Never flashy, her thoughtful style—a buoyant, moody synthesis along the romantically impressionistic lines of Evans, Corea, and Jarrett—looks inward rather than out, and she's slightly out of synch with the airy bossas of *Breath Of Brazil*. But in familiar company on *Where Legends Dwell*, playing an all-original set, she extends herself with jolting rhythmic contrasts and knotty improvisations that nod to Tyner and Taylor. And in the looser, more expansive context of the reissued *Special Identity*, a 1981 date with the same trio, her radiant technique is simply breathtaking.

Duduka Da Fonseca is splashy and brittle on *Breath Of Brazil*, and Brackeen leans heavily on frequent foil Eddie Gomez, who throbs lyrically in the bottom register and scampers furiously at the top. Struggling to sink her teeth into bittersweet compositions by Ivan Lins, Antonio Carlos Jobim, and Gilberto Gil, she strips away much of their Brazilian flavor without penetrating their emotional core, leaving a decorative, almost cocktailish prettiness. She's more successful on her own tunes—"Guessing Games," "Brasileiro Escondido," and the title track—but here the Brazilian feel is limited to percussion. Only on Egberto Gismonti's breathlessly uptempo "Loro" does her analytical approach connect with idiomatically challenging material. (reviewed on CD)

Brackeen is in her element on *Where Legends Dwell*, with Gomez and Jack DeJohnette deftly following her every twist and turn. Tipping her hat to Miles, she rhapsodizes in a flamenco mode on "Picasso," then puts free jazz in a tight corset on "Cosmic Ties Or Mud Pies." Edgy but sharply focused, she layers a delicate Oriental theme over jumpy drums and a solid bass vamp on "Asian Spell," seethes with boppish tension on "Jump In Jack," and shatters a nursery-like motif into abstract fragments on "How To Live Like a Millionaire." The three players communicate telepathically through moods from nostalgia to high anxiety, their intense concentration knitting even the twitchiest passages together. (reviewed on cassette)

Special Identity, the last of three successive sessions Brackeen cut with Gomez and DeJohnette around 1980, displays all the trademarks of her current style: tricky multi-part compositions, alternately thorny and breezy improvisations, dazzling two-handed rhythmic coordination, and a firm sense of structure that

keeps her roiling excursions in tasteful check. But here her accompanists, while closely supportive, give her more breathing space, and she stretches out in solos that give free rein to romantic invention. The title track, juxtaposing, gospel, Latin, and bebop motifs, suggests a sort of acoustic fusion; "Egyptian Dune Dance" generates restless energy over a jittery vamp; and "Einstein" crackles with intellectual tension. It's a bravura performance that makes today's neo-bop epigones sound tame and timid by comparison. (reviewed on CD)

—Larry Birnbaum

Albert Ayler

LOVE CRY—Impulse! GRD-108: *Love Cry; Ghosts; Omega; Dancing Flowers; Bells; Love Flower; Love Cry II; Zion Hill (alternate); Universal Indians (alternate); Zion Hill: Universal Indians. (54:17)*

Personnel: Ayler, tenor saxophone (except cuts 1, 10), alto saxophone (1, 10), vocals (1, 9, 11); Donald Ayler, trumpet (1-3, 5, 7, 9–11); Call Cobbs, harpsichord (3, 4, 6, 8, 10); Alan Silva, bass; Milford Graves, drums.

★★★★½

From Buddy Bolden's sources to Jelly Roll's formalism to Shepp's Sousa tributes, marching bands and jazz have family ties. Worldwide dissemination of brass-band culture is one reason jazz has taken root far and wide. But few jazz musicians not weaned on New Orleans drummers vibrated to the march like Cleveland's Ayler.

The 1967-'68 *Love Cry* illuminates the connection. It's good introductory Albert, less loose and forbidding than his earlier, writhing trio classics. Half these pieces are under four minutes, the singsong/martial themes crisp. ("Universal Indians" is his masterstroke of economical writing: two notes in a repeating phrase.) Like the brass band, Ayler seems to spring from everywhere. Sentimental Irish melodies run into field hollers on "Love Cry," the kind of tempoless song that left its mark on late Coltrane. "Omega" is a chipper maypole dance whose rippling triads give a whiff of beer-hall sauerkraut.

With his bellyful slow vibrato, and an acute if rarely acknowledged time sense—dirges float like driftwood, the dances shout with an urgency more civic than spiritual—Albert has enough in common with now-digested late Coltrane to be accessible at last. (Graves and Silva and bugling Don Ayler are right on him; Cobbs' harpsichord swirls don't sustain, so the sound's leaner than Trane's quartet's.)

The word "Indian" describes a people but

not what part of the world they're from. For Albert, hearing so many potent connections, we're all Universal Indians. (reviewed on CD)
—Kevin Whitehead

Grateful Dead

INFRARED ROSES—Grateful Dead GDCD 40142: *Crowd Sculpture; Parallelogram; Little Nemo In Nightland; Riverside Rhapsody; Post-Modern Highrise Table-Top Stomp; Infrared Roses; Silver Apples Of The Moon; Speaking In Swords; Magnesium Night Light; Sparrow Hawk Row; River Of Nine Sorrows; Apollo At The Ritz. (58:32)*
Personnel: Jerry Garcia, guitar, synthesizers; Bob Weir, guitar, synthesizers; Phil Lesh, bass, synthesizers; Mickey Hart, Bill Kreutzmann, drums, percussion, synthesizers; Brent Mydland, keyboards, synthesizers; Branford Marsalis, soprano, tenor sax (cut 12); Bruce Hornsby, piano, synthesizers (7); Willie Green III, percussion (5); Vince Welnick, synthesizers (7).

★ ★ ★ ½

You don't have to be a Deadhead to appreciate the new *Infrared Roses*. Where most live recordings strive for a realistic recreation of "greatest hits," producer Bob Bralove created this surreal collage from the Dead's instrumental improvisations and solos, constructing soundscapes not found in nature. You sense that these experiments and explorations are the band's favorite part of the show. The most powerful music involves the "Rhythm Devils" percussion section of Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann locking into the quasi-telepathic interplay Hart calls the "Magic Ride." On "Post-Modern" and "River Of Nine Sorrows," acoustic and electronic percussions are enhanced by Bralove and Dan Healy's hyper-real sonic imagery.

Other passages feature guitar and keyboard arcs and abstractions. Not surprisingly, Jerry Garcia's guitar pulls everything together. On "Apollo At The Ritz," saxophonist Branford Marsalis sounds uncomfortable in the unfamiliar terrain of the Dead's communal rock improvisation.

Bralove handles MIDI programming for the Dead, which includes extensive use of MIDI-controlled synth brass, strings, and percussion by the entire band. From a tech perspective, this is impressive, but in the Dead's quest for new and interesting noises, the electronics can get out of hand. Bralove's ambitious production ignores context, and risks losing direction and coherence; but the end result is faithful to the Dead's restless spirit. (reviewed on CD)
—Jon Andrews

Caravan Collision

by John McDonough

There have been enough **Duke Ellington** compilations coming out lately to support a running monthly column in this magazine. Here are 10 that have come our way.

Reminiscing In Tempo (Columbia/Legacy CK 48654; 76:05: ★★★) is a souvenir of the PBS *American Experience* program of the same name. Errors abound and the terrible sound of at least one soundtrack ("Cotton Tail") does Columbia's Japanese bosses no credit. The same piece issued by the Smithsonian, though upcut by eight bars, sounds vastly better. "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" was recorded in mid-1943, not 1940. "Grievin' " is *not* an unissued take. And so on. On the other hand, the more filled-out 1938 reworkings of "East St. Louis Toodle-O" and "Black And Tan Fantasy" are tours de force for trumpeter Cootie Williams. "Come Sunday" by singer Mahalia Jackson is sublime. And it's good to have the title piece, "Reminiscing In Tempo," back again. This leisurely four-part piece drifts in a pensive, brooding mien, as if Ellington assumed that the "serious" music he aspired to write required such concentrated solemnity. It's too long, too, but it's absorbing.

Only about five performances of "Reminiscing" exist, and one, slightly revised, is on

Duke Ellington, 1944

Carnegie Hall, November 13, 1948 (VJC-1024/25-2; 76:47/75:24: ★★★★½), the best Carnegie program since 1944. Among the musical and historic delights in this sumptuous concert are Ben Webster and the debuts of "Tattooed Bride" and the magnificent "Lush Life." Among the disappointments are "Tootin' Thru The Roof" and particularly "Cotton Tail," wasted at absurdly fast tempos.

The spirit of the old Cotton Club shows is the focus of *Jungle Night In Harlem* (RCA/Bluebird 2499-2-RB; 68:30: ★★★). The material was contrived mostly as incidental music

for stereotypical shows about black life for white customers. Very little lasted, and Steve Lasker's album notes wisely steer clear of any overwrought claims to genius. These are the learning years for Ellington. The set also contains the two long 1932 medleys which Lasker said in 1985 were recorded in stereo (see DB May '86). Oddly, though, he makes no mention of this astounding discovery in his notes. These versions are mono.

Ellington's small-group recordings began in the mid-'30s with the 45 miniatures collected on *The Duke's Men: Small Groups Vol. 1* (Columbia/Legacy C2K 46995; 65:50/62:12: ★★★★½), the first of a complete reissue, sans alternates. Although not everything has held up equally well, singular masterpieces such as "Caravan," "Echos Of Harlem," "Blue Reverie," and at least a dozen others are enduring revelations. And volume 2 will be better still. All this plus, from original producer Helen Oakley Dance, a valuable memoir that deserves a Grammy award for album notes.

Ellington's three 1941 transcription sessions have been familiar items to collectors. All but three of the 27 sides are now in *The Legendary Blanton-Webster Transcriptions* (VJC 1003-2; 73:40: ★★★★), which may not include all the pieces one wishes he might have recorded but capture the band with excellent fidelity at its height. Here are the first recordings of "Take The 'A' Train," "Perdido," and others.

Live At The 1957 Stratford Festival (Music & Arts CD-616; 54:13: ★★★★) was actually recorded about a week after Duke's resurrection at Newport in 1956. The program emphasized his current Capitol LP then, *Ellington Showcase*, and features several scarce tunes ("Clarinet Melodrama," "Trambean," "Macarena") and something called "Hark, Duke's Trumpets," which later became "Bassment" on the *Spacemen* LP. With alto saxist Johnny Hodges back and trumpeter Clark Terry on hand, the band was at its highest peak since 1941.

Happy Reunion (Signature AK 4030; 33:55: ★★★) may be skimpy on time, but a 1957 small group is intriguing in four short tunes for the deft precision of Terry, Hodges, clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton, and drummer Sam Woodyard at his best. The rest feature Duke and tenor man Paul Gonsalves in a 1958 quartet setting. The jacket falsely lists "Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue," which turns out to be only a fast blues by Gonsalves. Poor packaging lists neither personnel nor dates on the outside.

The band held its ground through 1960 when *Hot Summer Dance* (Red Baron AK 48631; 63:59: ★★) was recorded. (Much of this CD was issued years ago on a rare Unique Jazz LP.) Overall, this is rather uneventful Ellington in a standard program, though recorded with a fine live presence. Another truth-in-packaging error: "Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue" includes only "Diminuendo." Producer Bob Thiele should be more careful.

Finally, Prestige has two straight CD conversions with original cover art. *The Duke Ellington Small Bands* (OJCCD 624-2; 42:00: ★★½) covers 1967-70 as the band moved into its final decline. Six tunes by a Hodges-Brown-Carney octet are vintage Ellington, but Wild Bill Davis' organ on the 1970 cuts is stuffing straight from the roller rink. And not even Duke was immune from sirens of rock which clutter his rhythm section ("Rockochet"). On *Featuring Paul Gonsalves* (OJCCD 623-2; 39:00: ★★★★), the tenor visits feature numbers normally reserved for others. Although the band was between peaks, it still held high ground and Gonsalves was in fine form for this outing. His "Caravan" is downright spooky. (all reviewed on CD) DB

Zorn/Lewis/Frisell

MORE NEWS FOR LULU—hat ART CD 6055: *Blue Minor; Hank's Other Tune, News For Lulu; Gare Guillemins; Minor Swing; KD's Motion/Windmill; Funk In Deep Freeze; Eastern Incident; Lotus Blossom; Melanie; Olé; Blue Minor; Peckin' Time; Blues, Blues, Blues; Melody For C. (77:50)*

Personnel: John Zorn, alto saxophone; George Lewis, trombone; Bill Frisell, guitar.

★★★★

John Zorn

FILM WORKS 1986-1990—Elektra Nonesuch 9 79270: *White And Lazy; The Golden Boat; The Good, The Bad And The Ugly; She Must Be Seeing Things. (68:37)*

Selected Personnel: Zorn, alto sax (cuts 2, 4); Carol Emanuel, harp; Robert Quine (1-3), Bill Frisell (3, 4), guitar; Arto Lindsay, guitar, vocals (1); Melvin Gibbs, bass (1); Anton Fier, drums (1); Vicki Bodner, oboe (2); David Weinstein (1, 3, 4), Anthony Coleman (2, 4), Wayne Horvitz (3, 4), keyboards; David Shea, turntable, vocals (2); Robert Previte, drums, marimba (2-4); Marty Ehrlich, tenor sax, clarinet (4); Ciro Baptista (2), Nana Vasconcelos (4), Brazilian percussion.

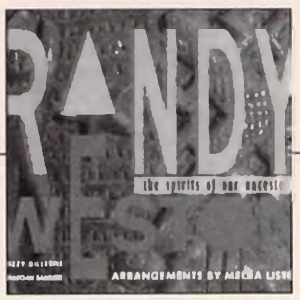
★★★★

In spite of the accolades, I didn't care much for the first installation of *News For Lulu*. Dorothy Ashby excepted, I'm all in favor of Zorn's Hard Bop Recovery Project. But it seemed a pity to so constrict three such capable improvisers, an exercise in constraint and control rather than a laconic tribute to the tunesmiths.

That said, I find *More News For Lulu* quite likeable. Three new pieces include Misha Mengelberg's "Gare Guillemins," a rare taste of the Dutch improviser's important early songbook (see also Zorn's three excellent quartet selections on *October Meeting 87* on Bimhuis Records). But two more integral things distinguish this live session, recorded in Paris and Basel a year and a half after the first. Namely, an average extra minute per track and Frisell's exceptional, something-he-ate guitar work. Frisell dollops out loopy lap-steelisms on Freddie Redd's "Olé" and aquabatic atmospherics on Big John Patton's "Minor Swing" with great effects. And Zorn chomps down hard on the closing head of Sonny Clark's "Eastern Incident," followed by a weird, whispery tango coda. The first *Lulu* miniatures were artificially confining. Here they do what they should: they focus the improvisations and make them terse and exciting.

An irony lurks beneath the surface of *Film Works*. While the influence of soundtracks (Godard and cartoons especially) on Zorn's conception was supposedly to cause him to

flit from one thing to another at light speed, when actually composing for films he takes his time developing ideas and setting moods. Not a lot of time, mind you, but more than a little. *She Must Be Seeing Things* is wide-ranging and evocative, and the swatch of Morricone's best-known is good for a smile. But *The Golden Boat*, composed for the incredible Raul Ruiz, is the standout, featuring Ornettish alto, a supersaturated organ solo, a record collage by David Shea, and some lovely composition, particularly the Jon Hassell-like "Theme." Only *White And Lazy* seems to need the film for support, its guitar jams rather empty and inert on their own. Gorgeously packaged, with extensive notes by Zorn, this CD of film suites demonstrates for him what he has long claimed for others: that the soundtrack is not peripheral or extraneous, but an art unto itself. (reviewed on CD) —*John Corbett*



Randy Weston

THE SPIRITS OF OUR ANCESTORS—Antilles 511 896: *African Village Bedford-Stuyvesant 1; The Healers; African Cookbook; La Elaha-Ella Allah/Morad Allah; The Call; African Village Bedford-Stuyvesant 2; The Seventh Queen; Blue Moses; African Sunrise; A Prayer For Us All.*

Personnel: Weston, piano; Idrees Sulieman, Dizzy Gillespie (cut 9), trumpet; Benny Powell, trombone; Talib Kibwe, alto sax, alto flute; Billy Harper, Dewey Redman, tenor sax; Pharoah Sanders, tenor sax (3), gaita (8); Alex Blake, Jamil Nasser, bass; Idris Muhammad, drums; Azzedin Weston, Big Black, percussion; Yassir Chadly, genbri, karkaba, clapping, vocals (4, 8).

★★★★½

Randy Weston's West Indian father taught him to value his African heritage, and though the Brooklyn-born pianist modeled his style after Ellington and Monk, he steeped himself in African culture during a residency at a Moroccan club and extensive travels around the continent. Early tunes like "Hi-Fly," "Little Niles," and "Berkshire Blues" became standards, but their expatriate composer waited decades for recognition. In 1990 he won raves for his three-album *Portrait*s series—saluting Duke, Thelonious, and himself (see DB Nov. '90)—and now he's put out a double-CD retrospective of his later, Afro-oriented material, orchestrated for a superb cast of underrated stalwarts by his old collaborator Melba Liston.

Aside from some exotic instrumentation, there's nothing on *The Spirits Of Our Ancestors* that Weston hadn't done by 1970; and yet it's fresher, freer, and bolder than today's antiseptic neo-bop. His solo version of the blues-bopping

"African Village Bedford-Stuyvesant" sets a deep, rumbling tone, and the full-band reprise crackles with percussive energy as soloists Dewey Redman, Benny Powell, Billy Harper, and Idrees Sulieman race through modal runs. "The Healers," its moody, wee-hours atmosphere shimmering over a twin-bass ostinato, is a showcase for Liston's arranging talents and Talib Kibwe's dulcet alto flute, while "African Sunrise" frames Dizzy Gillespie's sparkling trumpet in a congenial, conga-driven setting.

Pharoah Sanders, whose reputation has diminished as his musicianship has grown, spices the meaty Caribbean blues of "African Cookbook" with his squalling tenor and colors the loping "Blue Moses" with the nasalized, microtonal inflections of the North African *gaita*. The most esoteric track, "La Elaha-Ella Allah/Morad Allah," leaves jazz behind to explore Saharan sounds, with Yassir Chadly wailing in Arabic over Jamil Nasser's bass and Azzedin Weston's percussion. The rest is more mainstream, made special less by African flavoring than by the exquisite communication between the players and their deep feeling for Weston's music. (reviewed on cassette)

—*Larry Birnbaum*

Bahia Black

RITUAL BEATING SYSTEM—Axiom 314-510 856-2: *Retrato Calado; Capitao Do Asfalto; The Seven Powers; Uma Viagem Del Baldes De Larry Wright; Olodum; Guia Pro Congal; Gwagwa O De; Follow Me; Nina In The Womb Of The Forest. (42:08)*

Personnel: Carlinhos Brown, guitar, percussion, vocals (cuts 1, 2, 4, 6, 9); Olodum: Antonio Luis Alves de Souza (leader), Bartolomeu P. Nunes, Luiz C. S. Alves, Jose De Souza, Antonio Carlos S. Brito, Gilmario M. de Andrade, Jose Carlos Dos Santos, Luis C. Moreira, Edilson Da Silva Neiva, Luis C. M. Monteiro, drums (1-3, 5-7, 10); Wayne Shorter, soprano sax (3, 7); Herbie Hancock, piano, prepared piano (3,7); Bernie Worrell, Hammond B-3 organ (1, 2, 6); Henry Threadgill, flute (2); Larry Wright (4, 8), David Chapman, buckets (4, 8); Tony "Funky Drummer" Walls, drums, metal (4, 8).

★★★★

Robert Musso

ACTIVE RESONANCE—Muworks MUW 1008: *A Dream Supreme; Alliance; All Funked Up; Tanar!; To Cross The Rubicon; Ancient Silk Road; Amu Darya; The Squidge; Home Growning; A Late One. (58:12)*

Personnel: Musso, electric, acoustic six- and 12-string guitars, six-string bass, electric sitar, moon lute, mandolin, banjo-ukelele, treatments and all other stringed instruments; Thomas Chapin, alto sax, saxello, musette; Aiyb Dieng, conga, chatan, bells, shakers; Martin Obeng, conga, bongos, cowbells, apentemma, frikywa; Richard Graham, drumbec, flexitone, shakers, berimbau, cuica; Bernie Worrell, keyboards (3, 10); Tanar Catalpinar, vocals (4); Bootsy Collins, vocals (3); Bill Laswell, bass (1-6, 8, 10); Bil Bryant, drums (3, 6, 8, 9); Jair-Rohm Parker Wells, bass (9); Jonas Hellborg, bass solo (3); other drum tracks courtesy of Material.

★★

For the past decade, bassist/producer Bill Laswell has explored numerous permutations of the hybrid band. On *Ritual Beating System*, he records two disparate groups of "street" musicians (from Brazil's Bahia region and from New York's Times Square area), adds a few of his regulars (Hancock, Worrell, Threadgill), and ends up with a refreshing album that celebrates the legacy of the drum, the energy of the street, and the universality of what can only be called soul music.

This album is all about context. The first

surprise is the blend of Carlinhos Brown's Portuguese sighings and softly strummed guitar with Worrell's Hammond B-3, creating a whole that is definitely more than the sum of the parts. The same can be said for the power of hearing a cut by the Bahian drum ensemble (Olodum) next to one by the New York drummers (Wright, Chapman, and Walls). Stylistic differences are there but the sensibility is one, as drums meet buckets and samba meets funk. On Olodum's cuts with Hancock and Shorter, Hancock offsets the drummers beautifully on "The Seven Powers," but Shorter rings truer on "Gwagwa O De"; overall, these tracks would have been better as shorter statements.

Active Resonance is also a hybrid album, though a much less effective one. Here, Musso (who has worked with Laswell over the past decade as Material) and a group of diverse musicians somehow get lost in a mushy melange. A few cuts distinguish themselves ("Tanar!" because of Catalpinar's vocals, the bluesy "A Late One" because of Worrell's organ, and the ska-ish "To Cross The Rubicon" because of Obeng and Dieng's drumming), but most of the album is a murky, funk-pop-world-music blend in which even real drums sound like drum machines. And though he plays a dozen or so instruments on the album, Musso's own voice is muffled, neither offending or exciting. (reviewed on CD)

—*Suzanne McElfresh*

Finger Picks

by Dan Ouellette

JO AYRES

Stefan Grossman

Simply put, the guitar is an incredible instrument. It can accommodate a broad range of styles—from simple Appalachian folk to esoteric free jazz; it can be played with a standard EADGBE tuning or exotic-sounding open tunings that evoke unusual textures, colors, and moods; and it has a rich history, several chapters of which have been documented by Shanachie Records' impressive Guitar Artistry series and the label's important Yazoo vintage record reissues.

Back at the turn of the century when black spirituals, field hollers, and the ragtime rage were giving birth to much early blues, the instruments of choice were the piano and banjo. Even **Charlie Patton**—the king of Delta blues and the first true blues celebrity—didn't pick up a six-string until 1907, when he was 16. By the time he mastered the guitar, he was not only growling and picking out gutbucket country blues and religious numbers highlighted by shimmering bottleneck and knife-slide riffs, he was driving black music into new territory. *The King Of The Delta Blues* (Yazoo 2001; 68:53: ★★★★½) is an invaluable historic collection of 23 songs from the late '20s and early '30s that captures the pioneering bluesman belting out seminal barrelhouse and church blues, stomping his feet, banging the guitar while keeping a syncopated one-two beat, snapping strings, and running a knife along the fretboard in a tart, bluesy slide sustain. There are three unissued takes here, including the slide-happy "Hammer Blues," and one of the finest country blues ever recorded, "I'm Goin' Home." While the disc's sonic quality is as scratchy as Patton's baritone is gritty (the songs on this CD, as well as the following disc, were compiled from rare 78s that were remastered and, in some cases, restored), it's well worth putting up with the background noise.

Masters Of The Delta Blues: The Friends Of Charlie Patton (Yazoo 2002; 72:26: ★★★★) is an excellent collection of early country blues tunes by guitarists and vocalists that Patton in some way influenced. There are killer tunes by Delta blues greats Bukka White ("Promise True And Grand") and Tommy Johnson ("Canned Heat Blues"), but the real treat of this album is bottleneck guitarist Son House's percussive slide riffs and fills on several numbers, including the roughhewn "Dry Spell Blues" and the cooking "My Black Mama."

The **Stefan Grossman**-produced collection *Black Melodies On A Clear Afternoon* (Shanachie 98011/12; 71:22: ★★★★) features Grossman and Dutch master guitarist **Ton Van Bergeyk** arranging 34 vintage black American tunes, including ragtime and dixieland jazz, in fingerpicking styles reminiscent of such guitarists as Blind Blake and Mississippi John Hurt. Culled from five LPs recorded between 1972-75, they feature a wealth of fingerpicking punctuation—dots, dashes, and accents—as well as quick jabs of

notes juxtaposed with bluesy sustains. The arrangements are inspired, the guitar execution exceptional, and the accompanying liner notes and tablature for each song prove to be very informative for the practicing guitarist.

The only downside to *Black Melodies* is that there's a relatively limited scope to the style of music Grossman has chosen to work with. Not so with the remarkable European fingerpicking guitarists collection, *The Art Of Fingerstyle Guitar* (Shanachie 98009/10; 69:51: ★★★★★). The styles are so wide-ranging—blues, folk, jazz, Irish, Celtic—that the album doesn't flag a bit. There are shifting meters, suite-like song structures, impressionistic excursions, and minor-to-major scale changes. Plus, there's a compelling drama inherent in many of the pieces, especially Peter Finger's intriguing and exquisite "Sabine." Lots of big-name European guitarists from the '60s acoustic guitar renaissance—Davey Graham, Bert Jansch, John Renbourn, Dave Evans, Leo Wijnkamp, Jr.—are on display here. Again, a tab/music booklet is included and Duck Baker's liner notes are excellent. (all reviewed on CD) **DB**

Astor Piazzolla

THE VIENNA CONCERT—Messidor 15922: *Fracanapa; Verano Porteno; Caliente; Decarisimo; Libertango; Revirado; Invierno Porteno; Adios Nonino. (42:48)*
Personnel: Piazzolla, bandoneon; Fernando Suarez Paz, violin; Oscar Lopez Ruiz, guitar; Pablo Ziegler, piano; Hector Console, bass.

★ ★ ★

Dino Saluzzi

MOJOTORO—ECM 511 952: *Mojotoro; Tango A Mi Padre; Mundos; Lustrin; Viernes Santos; Milenga (La Punalada); El Camino. (43:26)*
Personnel: Saluzzi, Celso Saluzzi, bandoneon; Felix Z. Saluzzi, tenor, soprano saxophones; Armando Alonso, electric guitar; Guillermo Vadala, electric bass; Jose Saluzzi, drums, percussion; Arto Tuncboyaci, percussion, voice.

★ ★ ★

Tango: urbanized rural music fed on African and Caribbean rhythms, whorehouse origins exaggerated, came up the river, innovators meet bitter resistance, then become status quo. Its main ax, an ungainly metal contraption from Germany, circa 1850. Sound familiar, jazz fans?

By 1984, and this nicely recorded Vienna concert, Piazzolla resembled Bird less than John Lewis. His quintet chimes like the MJQ—solidly dependable, in tune, its stateliness sometimes pushing prim ("Invierno," echoes of Pachelbel and the baroque). You wish they'd break out of the choreography more and let loose, as on "Verano" or "Adios"'s string-glissing episodes.

Tango oughta be nasty. The bandoneon, its saxophone, is a long-reach bass concertina, sensual but raucous. The sound of a metal reed wheezing when bellows suck air sticks with you. By the end of "Adios," revolutionary music has started sounding like a national anthem.

Fellow Argentine Saluzzi opens out the tango concept, in a very ECM-friendly way: a spacious sonic field, nasal saxophone and (give producer Manfred Eicher credit) world-mixing less abrasive and dumb than most, though one international source here is Italian spy movie music. The occasional Morricone vocal moments are delivered by the resourceful but very tasteful percussionist Arto, an i-less Airto.

What gets lost is the bandoneon. The Saluzzis go for the high, sweet notes instead of the nobly sweeping, profound basses in the orgasmic rhythm which is tango. With pastorals like "Santos," Dino loses the dance, loses the nasty. It don't mean a thing if the bellows don't ring. (reviewed on CD) *—Kevin Whitehead*

Hicks Clicks

by Owen Cordle

A Chicago jazz critic picked pianist **John Hick**'s *Live At Maybeck Recital Hall, Volume 7* (Concord Jazz CCD-4442; 53:49: ★★★★) as one of the top 10 jazz albums of 1991. In doing so, he applauded the whole Maybeck series for giving often-underrated pianists, many of whom are known more as accompanists than as leaders, a chance to stretch out alone. His point is well taken on this album, for here we have not only the customary hard-hitting Hicks

HYOU VIELZ

John Hicks: unpretentious

(reminiscent of McCoy Tyner) of sideman "fame" but also a solo pianist who suggests Bill Evans, Art Tatum, Bud Powell, and Oscar Peterson.

This is a fluent, two-handed recital with harmonies and arpeggios spiraling up and fast-fingered runs criss-crossing each other. "Blues For Maybeck Recital Hall" cooks with the force of a Peterson, and "Blue In Green" revisits the Evans chordal sound. "All Of You" and "Rhythm-A-Ning" offer the Hicks touch we're more used to hearing. The contrasts among the performances show that there's more breadth to Hicks than we may have realized.

On *Power Trio* (Novus 3115-2-N; 47:24: ★★★½), Hicks, bassist Cecil McBee, and drummer Elvin Jones perform the brand of hard-charging ensemble work and heavyweight interplay stated in the title. The trio turns each tune into a power play with intense internal climaxes and a dynamic attack. The portrait of the pianist is more one-sided in this program, which includes John Coltrane's "Cousin Mary" and "After The Rain" (also heard in a more atmospheric version on the Maybeck album) and Ellington's "Duke's Place" and "Chelsea Bridge," among others.

Hicks, McBee, drummer Andrew Cyrille, and tenor saxist David Murray become the Bob Thiele Collective on *Sunrise Sunset* (Red Baron AK 48632; 60:53: ★★★★), one of the first releases on veteran producer Thiele's newest label. After the title track, this is an album of ballads: "Body And Soul," "'Round Midnight," "Goodbye," et al. Hicks often doubles the tempo for his solos—more heavyweight swing—while Murray usually sticks with the original tempo. The saxophonist, in one of his best albums outside the World Saxophone Quartet, plays wildman rhapsodic tenor—not free jazz but stretching the boundaries of tone (à la Archie Shepp, Sonny Rollins, and Ben Webster) and harmony.

Ballads also dominate *Two Of A Kind* (Evidence ECD 22017; 60:42: ★★★★★), a lovely duo album by Hicks and bassist Ray Drummond originally issued on Theresa. The pianist's lyrical, Evans-like voicings set the mood while the bassist's fat, bear-hug notes add to the warmth. No one hurries here—these are intimate performances, as unpretentious as a conversation between old friends. "I'll Be Around," "For Heaven's Sake," and "A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square" are among

the ballads. For counterbalance there are Bud Powell's "Parisian Thoroughfare" and the standard, "Without A Song"; proof enough that this duo pours its feelings into faster-paced tunes as well as romantic ballads.

Is That So? (Timeless CD SJP 357; 69:27: ★★★★½) adds New Orleans drummer Idris Muhammad to the Hicks-Drummond equation: a more rounded trio than the Power Trio. You get more variety in the program, greater scope in Hick's playing, and the invigorating, often subtle undercurrent of parade drumming in Muhammad's solos. Drummond leads "Yesterdays" and "Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise"—he plays the *bass* end of the instrument—and solos throughout the album. Again, there's no pretense, just three artists getting together and letting the magic take over. (all reviewed on CD) **DB**

Billy Pierce

ONE FOR CHUCK—Sunnyside SSC 1053D: *Chuck's Groove; Strictly Taboo; Second Thoughts; Woodworks; All The Way; There's A Small Hotel; Wayne's World; From This Moment On; Thelma's Heart; Tryst; Solar; I'm Getting Sentimental Over You.* (73:37)
Personnel: Pierce, tenor, soprano saxophone; Bill Mobley, trumpet, flugelhorn; Mulgrew Miller, piano; Ira Coleman, bass; Alan Dawson, drums.

★★★

It's acknowledged that bebop is the center of jazz now. This album is a good example. On one hand, the musicians play the changes expertly—they have their lines together. But on the other, they're hardly distinguishable from the masses. Too much of a good thing can have a leveling effect, and we see this today.

As masterful as the lines are, there's little expression in the music. Only veteran drummer Dawson's solo on "From This Moment On" and his boppish accompaniment generate heat. There's a too-cool confidence about the rest

of the band, three-fifths of whom are regulars in the Tony Williams Quintet. Mobley, an outsider, does, to his credit, bring a Lee Morgan-like flavor to several solos. "Solar" and "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," unaccompanied tenor solos, roll along nicely, almost as if a rhythm section were present. Pierce's soprano, heard on "Wayne's World" and "Tryst," is more individualistic. The usually dependable Miller is . . . well, dependable throughout.

It's hard to judge if the vague air of detachment is intentional. Whatever, there's a dearth of warmth. (reviewed on CD) —*Owen Cordle*

Ruth Brown

FINE AND MELLOW—Fantasy FCD-9663-2: *Fine And Mellow; I Ain't Got Nothin' But The Blues; A World I Never Made; Salty Papa Blues; I'll Drown In My Own Tears; Knock Me A Kiss; It's Just A Matter Of Time; Don't Get Around Much Anymore; Nothing Takes The Place Of You; I'll Be Satisfied. (46:23)*

Personnel: Brown, vocals; Frank Owens, piano; Bobby Forrester, organ; Rodney Jones, guitar; Bill Berry, cornet (cuts 1-5,10); Virgil Jones, trumpet (6-9); Buster Cooper, trombone (1,2,4); Jeff Clayton (1-5,10), Bill Easley (6-9), alto sax; Herman Riley (1-5,10), Victor Goines (6-9), tenor sax; Jack Nimitz, baritone sax (1,2,4); Al McKibbon (1-5,10), Bob Cranshaw (6-9), bass; Sherman Ferguson (1-5,10), Akira Tana (6-9), drums.

★★½

Though she started off copying the bluesy ballad stylings of Billie Holiday and Dinah Washington, Ruth Brown conquered the charts as an uptempo shouter. As an r&b star in the early '50s, she helped touch off the rock & roll revolution. Her voice, still powerful, has lost much of its youthful suppleness; and while the material on *Fine And Mellow* is of appropriate vintage, Frank Owens' neo-trad arrangements are clichéd and heavy-handed compared to the faddish but vibrant charts of the original period. Rhythm & blues, after all, was more than just blues in a jazzy setting.

Brown pays her respects to Holiday ("Mellow"), Washington ("Salty"), Ellington ("Don't Get Around"), and Ray Charles ("I'll Drown"), but sings none of her own hits. The vocal throb that made her early ballads ache with vulnerability is gone, replaced by a bluff, no-nonsense demeanor that doesn't compensate for her darker and more limited range. The two accompanying ensembles—one recorded on the East Coast, the other out West—play with more spirit than flair, saluting but not recapturing the glory of a vanished era. (reviewed on CD) —*Larry Birnbaum*

Sun Days

by Bill Shoemaker

Sun Ra's discography is one of the largest in jazz, due mainly to the prolific output of his own Saturn label since the '50s. It's also one of the most muddled, as even Ra and Saturn producer Alton Abraham disagree on essential data. Shedding considerable light on this singular artist, Evidence Music has embarked on an ambitious CD reissue project, restoring key Saturns to print after absences as long as 25 years. For listeners versed mainly in latter-day Ra, these albums provide insight into Ra's pioneering of electric keyboards, as well as his evolution as a boundary-breaking composer, an encyclopedic pianist, and a passionate arranger.

Jazz In Silhouette (ECD 22012-2; 44:41: ★★★★), *Super Sonic Jazz* (ECD 22015-2; 49:32: ★★★★), and *Sound Sun Pleasure* (ECD 22014-2; 48:00: ★★★) encapsulate the threads of Ra's work in the '50s—well-crafted distillations of contemporary idioms and showcases for his more exotic, yet marshalled, compositions. The short running time of *Pleasure* (c. '58-60, El Saturn 512) accommodated the addition of Ra's first seven sides (c. 1955, released in 1973 on El Saturn 485). They fit well together, as both feature fairly stock arrangements of standards, with Hatty Randolph's serviceable vocals up front. Several

GEORGE F. SCHULTZ PRESENTATIONS

Early Sun Ra: arpeggiating the cosmos

cuts underpin the collection's historical import, including Ra's earliest unaccompanied solo, "Piano Interlude," a brief, intriguing exercise in arpeggiating a chord. There are two Dameronish tunes, "You Never Told Me That You Cared" and "Enlightenment," now a Ra anthem, which begin to detail his collaboration with the late trumpeter Hobart Dotson.

Dotson and a second, Cubop-spiced version of "Enlightenment" figure prominently on *Silhouette* ('58, El Saturn 205). Dotson shines as a soloist, holding his own with the likes of John Gilmore, Julian Priester, and James Spaulding on the furiously swinging "Blues At Midnight" and "Ancient Aiethopia," a prototype of latter, incantory blowing vehicles. *Silhouette* was waxed two years after *Super Sonic Jazz* (Saturn 216), an equally adventurous album that must have reached Coltrane's attention. Beyond the album's ahead-of-the-Miles-curve use of modes, the intro to "El Is A Sound Of Joy" and the A section of "Springtime In Chicago" feature harmonic structures Coltrane would delve into during his Atlantic years. The other prescient performance on a set where Ra plays exhuberent bop, blues, and boogie is "Advice To Medics," an electric piano solo employing techinques that would be later identified with Cecil Taylor.

Ra's solo concepts first found album-length venting on El Saturn 509, '66's *Monorails And Satellites* (ECD 22013; 32:46: ★★★★), the most revelatory set of the batch. His Hendersonian syncopations find a sly new power in his more unorthodox solos, giving his massive clusters added rhythmic punch. There is also a deceptive looseness to his time and touch when walking the bass or slapping the melody; Ra's compression of meter and varied attack highlight an emotionalism often obscured by his showmanship with the Arkestra.

Much controversy surrounds El Saturn 508, *Holiday For Soul Dance* (ECD 22011; 32:01: ★★★)—a much smaller group than listed is used, and several factors suggest that this rather polite standards set is from the early, not late, '60s. Certainly, such a set from the late '60s would have more of the seam-splitting energy of the standards included on *Sunrise In Different Dimensions* (hat ART CD 6099; 71:09: ★★★★), an '80 festival date. *Holiday* still provides, along with solid solos from Ra, Gilmore, and cornetist Phil Cohran, an in-depth look at Marshall Allen before a thicker timbre

and a squall-like intensity came forward in his work. The altoist's outing is perhaps the best argument for the earlier date for *Holiday*; by '80, Gilmore was carrying the standards, aided on *Sunrise* by the glass-breaking high notes of trumpeter Michael Ray, while Allen tackled energy-music chores, often on oboe, as on "Disguised Gods. . . ."

Evidence has scheduled an October release of five more Saturn titles, including *My Brother The Wind, Vol. II* and *Night Of The Purple Moon*. Stand by for liftoff. . . . **DB**

Jimmy Giuffre 3

1961—ECM 849 644-2: *Jesus Maria; Emphasis; In The Mornings Out There; Scootin' About; Cry, Want; Brief Hesitation; Venture; Afternoon; Trudgin'; Ictus; Carla; Sonic; Whirrrr; That's True, That's True; Goodbye; Flight; The Gamut; Me Too; Temporarily; Herb & Ictus. (44:34/47:18)*

Personnel: Giuffre, clarinet; Paul Bley, piano; Steve Swallow, acoustic bass.

★★★★★

Steve Swallow

SWALLOW—XtraWATT/ECM 314 511 960-2: *Belles; Soca Symphony; Slender Thread; Thrills And Spills; William And Mary; Doin' It Slow; Thirty Five; Ballroom; Playing With Water.*

Personnel: Swallow, electric bass; Steve Kuhn, piano; Carla Bley, organ; Karen Mantler, synthesizer, harmonica; Hiram Bullock, electric guitar; Robbie Ameen, drums; Don Alias, percussion; Gary Burton, vibraphone (cuts 2, 9); John Scofield, electric guitar (4, 6, 8).

★★★

Who decides which jazz albums should be reissued? No one asked for my advice, but I strongly approve of ECM's improbable rescue of two Jimmy Giuffre 3 dates from the undeserved oblivion of the Verve vaults. *1961* compiles two remarkable albums, *Fusion* and *Thesis*, which find the drumless trio reaching across stylistic boundaries to create a prototype for "chamber jazz" incorporating collective improvisation.

Listeners who associate Giuffre with the "Four Brothers" sound he arranged for Woody Herman, or with small groups featuring Jim Hall, will be pleasantly surprised by *1961*. The trio welds musical ideas circulating that year, including West Coast cool, third stream classical fusion, and Ornette Coleman free jazz. Historical value notwithstanding, the music sounds fresh and current.

Giuffre gives his trio freedom to roam, interact, and converse. Paul Bley is relentlessly interesting on these sessions, whether supporting Giuffre with dark, unusual chords, or playing counterpoint to Giuffre's melodies. Clear, detailed sound highlights Giuffre's breathy tone and the timbre of Steve Swallow's acoustic bass. Although Verve forgot about this music, the trio remembered, reuniting decades later for *The Life Of A Trio* (see "Reviews" Nov. '91). (reviewed on CD)

Swallow's current work is as far removed from the asceticism of *1961* as Club Med is from a monastery. *Swallow* rarely departs from the recipe used in the bassist's 1987 *Carla* and in recent small-group Carla Bley records (with similar personnel). Cushy arrangements padded with multiple keyboards frame springy stop-and-go rhythms. Bley's three-chord organ vamps set up Swallow's lead bass and solos from former employers Gary Burton and John Scofield. Grooves (fast and slow) are everything here. Sweet, frothy, and vaguely tropical, *Swallow* is the musical equivalent of a banana daiquiri. It's lightweight fun, if not completely satisfying. (reviewed on cassette)

—Jon Andrews

1 Marcus Roberts

"Trinkle, Tinkle" *(from Alone With Threee Giants, BMG/Novus) Roberts, piano; Thelonious Monk, composer.*

It was a Monk composition, but I don't know the name of it. The music was something I've heard before—there wasn't a note where I hadn't heard that identical sequence in different things. And then as the person went further into it, they were playing it kind of Monkish and adding their own thing to it. It sounded like a person who had a very classical technique, because it was almost flawless, very different from the type of technique you would get out of Chick or Monk. What fascinates me most is when a particular person digs into the history and then runs that through their own spirit and comes out with a music out of that. And this person hadn't done that but is very musical. It's good music, and I think this person is a very talented pianist, and they obviously can observe different styles and are very good at doing it. 4 stars.

2 Earl Hines

"Shiny Stockings" *(from Blues So Low, Stash) Hines, piano.*

The main thing about that was the spirit of it. It was really funny. Was that "Shiny Stockings"? It was making me laugh. This person really loves music. That's an older style of stride piano, but they went from a very soft, easy, relaxing feeling to the big-band thrust, with the drums and everything playing. And it was funny how they took the piano solo as if they were accompanying a bass. I liked it a lot. At one point there was a double glissando going down the piano. The techniques were very interesting, and they definitely were equipped for playing what they were playing. It was fun. 5 stars.

3 Hicks, McBee, Jones

"Cousin Mary" *(from Power Trio, BMG/Novus) John Hicks, piano; Cecil McBee, bass; Elvin Jones, drums; John Coltrane, composer.*

Was that a Trane tune? I think they did a little differently on the out chorus—kind of a minor mode. The pianist had great ideas, with the modern vocabulary. I wonder if it was someone left-handed, because the left hand was really doing lots of things. The rhythm section was good, but I was wishing somehow that the drums could have connected with the pianist's left hand. The right hand didn't have the same quickness as the left. As a pianist who works with a lot of rhythm sections, I would say something to the drummer. The bass reminds me of Cecil. I love that school of bass playing—it's just endless feeling. It's more innovative than a lot of things that are done on the bass, so I really enjoyed it. 4 stars.

4 Ran Blake

"Parker's Mood" *(from Breakthru, Improvising Artists) Blake, piano.*

That was a different way to play the blues. It had the real slow blues feeling, and by using slightly more modern harmonics, it got a really different effect. Some of the harmonies weren't that much different, but it was using harmonies in a different place. I like things like that, where someone takes something and says, "What kind of effect will this give?" So it was really interesting for what it was, more or less a one-feeling mode. It wasn't going way down or way up and putting a whole feeling in one tune. But for the blues, I really enjoyed that—putting the minor seconds in there in a completely different way. I know Monk used to do things like that, but this was very different. So I liked it, because it's different. 4 stars.

5 Randy Weston

"African Village Bedford Stuyvesant" *(from The Spirits Of Our Ancestors, Antilles) Weston, piano.*

That last chord was great. It's really interesting to explore the bottom of the piano like that. It's just a different sound that not many people work with. I also liked the way they were doing rhythms back and forth, things that aren't explored on the piano that much. But once they got into it, it stirred up my imagination, and I was hearing all kinds of other things that could have gone on. Maybe they just wanted a certain range, but it just made me want to explore. I thought, "What are they going to do next?" But they didn't—they stuck right in there. Of course, they might have this as the first part of a recording and have the next one extend and do something different. But I really enjoyed what I heard, and I wanted just a little bit more of something that they themselves made me want by what they did. 4½ stars.

6 Gonzalo Rubalcaba

"Blue In Green" *(from The Blessing, Blue Note) Rubalcaba, piano; Charlie Haden, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.*

That was "Blue In Green." It's a ballad, and I think it was played really musically. It was phrased very, very sensitively. It had things coming where you didn't necessarily expect them. For playing something in a very peaceful ballad style, I think that was elegant. That's the most I can say, that I liked it for that mode. The bass reminded me of Charlie Haden. Actually, I really wanted another chorus where the pianist did even more in the same vein, but it just had an elegance about it. 5 stars. **DB**

JOANNE BRACKEEN

by Larry Birnbaum

Born and raised in Ventura, California, Joanne Brackeen learned piano by copying her parents' Frankie Carle records; she tuned in to jazz as a teenager but wasn't totally committed till she heard Ornette Coleman. After gigs with Dexter Gordon and Charles Lloyd, she moved to New York in 1965 and worked with Art Blakey, Joe Henderson, and Stan Getz. In the mid-'70s she went solo, often recording in duo or trio settings with sidemen like Cecil McBee, Eddie Gomez, Billy Hart, and Jack DeJohnette. Since last fall Brackeen's had four albums released: a samba-spiced date with Gomez and two Brazilian percussionists; a European session with Hart and Swiss bassist Walter Schmucker; and two discs with Gomez and DeJohnette: a new recording and a digital reissue of a brilliant 1981 LP (see "Reviews" p. 40).

Her style, ranging from airy romanticism to dense atonality, defies easy categorization. Her technique is prodigious, with a remarkable left- and right-hand independence that lends itself to the rhythmic twists of her complex and impassioned but always logical compositions. On this, her third Blindfold Test, she generally declined to guess the personnel. "I really listen to very little music," she says. "But of course, life is music, so I listen to it 24 hours a day."